From the Margins to the Mainstream:

Philanthropy and social movements furthering diversity, equity & inclusion in society

June 2020
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1) **Background**

The importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in our society is more apparent than ever. The corrosive effects of structural inequality have been starkly demonstrated in recent times, as we see the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic take a disproportionate toll on minority communities around the world. Meanwhile, the emergence of powerful new protest movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo in response to ongoing challenges of widespread police brutality and sexual harassment have led to heightened awareness around the world of the extent to which violence and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality and other characteristics remain hugely problematic, despite hard-fought wins over many years.

And it is not only overt bias that is problematic. There is a growing recognition that unconscious biases of many kinds exist across society — affecting everything from employment practices to the design of everyday products.\(^1\) Awareness of the potential for technology to exacerbate these challenges has further sharpened focus on such issues.\(^2\)

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have long been at the forefront of efforts to make society more diverse, equal and inclusive. For many of them, philanthropic giving from individuals, foundations and companies is a vital source of support that has enabled them to continue with work that might otherwise be impossible to fund. As such, philanthropy has played an important part in bringing about many of the examples of social progress that we have seen throughout recent history.

But we should not assume that the relationship between philanthropy and issues of inequality and diversity is straightforward or unproblematic. There are often power dynamics at play within philanthropy that can be difficult to overcome; and some would even argue that because philanthropy is reflective of wealth that was created within existing systems, it can never be a truly effective tool to address the fundamental structural flaws of those systems. Civil society organisations are not themselves immune from criticism, either.

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not diverse enough;\(^3\) that conscious, unconscious and systemic racial bias are rife;\(^4\) and that the ways in which organisations are structured or operate makes them less inclusive than they could be. As a result, CSOs are not always reflective of the people and communities they serve, and this undermines their potential.

History is a valuable, although not always perfect, guide when it comes to understanding both the opportunities and the challenges of the interaction between philanthropy and social movements to further diversity, equity and inclusion. On the positive side there are many inspiring examples of campaigns driven by civil society and powered by philanthropy which have resulted in progress within society: in fact, to at least some extent (as we shall see), philanthropy has played a role in almost all efforts to bring marginalised groups into mainstream society and give them greater recognition and fairer treatment. However, there are just as many examples which highlight ways in which philanthropy has fallen short or created other problems.

To disentangle the positive lessons from the cautionary ones we need to dig a little deeper and identify key themes and trends across the different examples that can tell us something about the strengths and weaknesses of philanthropy. By doing so we can gain valuable insights that can help us in efforts to ensure that the version of philanthropy we adopt is the most effective possible tool when it comes to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in our society.


\(^4\) E.g. [https://charitysowhite.org/](https://charitysowhite.org/)
2)  **Strengths of Philanthropy**

I)  **Giving Voice to Minority Groups and Views**

The most fundamental way in which philanthropy can foster diversity is through its role as a means of support for civil society. This is because a healthy, pluralistic civil society is one of the key means of overcoming a major deficiency of most models of democracy: the “tyranny of the majority”.

In both direct and representative systems of democracy, minority groups are often prevented from expressing their choices in any meaningful way through standard means simply because they lack the numbers required to do so. Whilst this remains ‘democratic’ in a strict sense, many have argued that it is flawed because it results in an unjust treatment of minority interests, and can amount to effective “mob rule” if left unchecked.

Civil society can be seen as an important mechanism for counterbalancing this problem by offering people a means to associate and thereby pool their power to the point where they are able to exert influence on public discourse, public policy and spending decisions even though they may remain firmly in the minority within society as a whole.

The historian R. J. Morris notes that voluntary organisations have throughout history played a vital role in this regard, by giving those within marginalised communities a means of finding and asserting their shared identity, or amplifying their voice to ensure their concerns are heard:

> “One major contribution which the voluntary association has made to ordering the complexities of urban and industrial society has been its contribution to the history of ‘out-groups’ groups which were excluded from a significant share in the legitimate structure of power. The middle classes, women and the working people of the labour movement all used voluntary societies, at different times and in different ways, to formulate new

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5 For more, see Davies, R (2019) “Does Philanthropy Help or Hinder Democracy?”, CAF Giving Thought blog, 18th October
identities and values, to experiment with new forms of social action and relationships and to provide support to each other. They all went on to make and sustain a claim for a share in that legitimate power that goes with recognition and status within a dominant ideology, with an easy and uncontested place and open access to the power and resources of the state.”

Stanford political philosopher Rob Reich, meanwhile, argues in his recent book Just Giving that one can even make a case that this role of civil society in providing a means for minority interests to be pursued is sufficiently important that it should be recognised by the government through the tax system. Furthermore, he argues, this is in fact the best justification for offering tax breaks on charitable donations:

“The result is that citizen groups that cannot muster a majority consensus about a particular public benefit provision through the regular democratic political process will still have a tax-supported means to pursue their minority or eccentric goals. Ordinary associational rights guaranteed by a liberal society protect the liberty of every citizen to join with others to pursue dissenting or conflicting visions of the public good and the production of public benefits; the justification for subsidising this liberty through tax incentives is to enhance or amplify all citizens’ voices, stimulate their contributions to civil society, and assist minorities in overcoming the constraints of majority rule.”

The value of philanthropy, then according to these arguments is that by supporting a pluralistic civil society that provides people with a space to associate freely, it enhances democracy in a way that should benefit those in minorities.

II) Risk-Taking

Another potential strength for philanthropy is the ability to take risks. It is sometimes claimed that philanthropy is capable of taking risks that neither public sector funders nor private

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7 Reich, R. (2018) Just Giving: why philanthropy is failing democracy and how it can do better, p. 131.
sector investors could tolerate, and that this makes it particularly good at driving social innovation. Whether this is true, or whether all philanthropy lives up to this ideal, is a topic we have explored previously. However, it seems clear that at its best philanthropy can take risks that it is hard to see coming from any other sources.

In terms of diversity, equity and inclusion, the most pertinent type of risk is probably the kind that comes with supporting unpopular or marginal causes. Philanthropy has, in many cases, played a vital role in the early stages of furthering particular aspects of diversity by being willing to provide support to groups pursuing issues or goals that have little or no wider public support and are viewed as highly controversial and risky. At these early stages, two key aims are often to build a sense of community and shared identity around an issue and to establish links between this community and others that might offer solidarity and support. Support from funders who are able to tolerate the level of political and reputational risk this might bring can provide an absolutely vital lifeline.

Taking risks may not simply be desirable for philanthropy, but essential. As far back as 1952, The Nathan Report quoted the director of the Carnegie UK Trust at the time as saying “I think it is the business of trusts to live dangerously.” As new questions are being asked about the legitimacy of philanthropy and its role within a democracy this question of risk has once more come to the fore. Some critics, such as Rob Reich, have argued that the most compelling justification for big philanthropy (particularly the kind that relies on endowed structures like trusts or foundations) is the role it plays in social “discovery” or innovation that cannot be undertaken by the state (or is unlikely to be, at least). Clearly this requires philanthropy which is willing to take risks, so if “discovery” is the key legitimising criterion for big philanthropy then it follows that philanthropy must be willing to take risks. If, however, elite philanthropy merely sticks to what is safe, or to replicating things that could be done by the public and private sector, then it is harder to see how it can be defended from its many critics.

Probing this issue slightly further, what is it about philanthropy that might enable it to take risks? There are many different factors, but two really stand out: having a longer-term time horizon and being able to go against the status quo.

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When it comes to taking a long-term view, the point is that philanthropy can (or at least should) be able to operate outside short term political or market cycles. This gives it an advantage when it comes to playing the sort of longer-term game required to drive change on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Since philanthropic funders are able to stick with issues for longer, they can ride out short-term fluctuations in public or political mood and concentrate on things like establishing an evidence base through research, developing advocacy skills or strengthening grassroots organisations, so that the required pieces are in place as and when the time becomes right to push for legislative or policy change.

The ability to run counter to the status quo is also vital for philanthropy. As the social reformer Thomas Hare said in 1861:

“I regard endowments as an important element in the experimental branches of political and social science. No doubt the nation at large may take on itself the cost of such tentative efforts, but this involves taxation; and the assent of the majority to increased taxes could not be justly demanded by philanthropist or projectors, and certainly would not be obtained until their speculations had taken such a hold upon the public mind as no longer to require an exceptional support or propagation. The most important steps in human progress may be opposed to the prejudices, not only of the multitude, but even of the learned and leaders of thought in a particular epoch.”

In part, this stems from the ability to take a longer-term view as outlined above, but it is even more fundamentally about accountability. Philanthropy, many critics argue, is unaccountable—and because it does not have to answer to voters or shareholders—and this is seen as a real problem. Yet the flip-side is that this lack of straightforward accountability has in many cases been an important factor in enabling philanthropy and civil society to challenge the status quo and thereby drive social change. That is why recent suggestions by the Charity Commission for England and Wales that charities should be measured against public opinion have worried many.

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Of course philanthropic funders and the charities they support must demonstrate public benefit, and should always try to ensure public trust in how they operate. They should also aim to be accountable: to their supporters and, more importantly, to the people and communities they serve. However, charities and funders should not be beholden to the court of public opinion. To make them accountable in this way will undermine their ability to champion unpopular or challenging causes, and thus stifle their vital role in driving social change.

Putting these elements together, we get a picture in which philanthropic giving (from major donors, institutions or the general public) plays a vital role in supporting organisations and efforts that drive a cycle of bringing issues from the margins to the mainstream and then changing society to ensure that it is more diverse and inclusive. As highlighted in Figure 1 below, this will involve a wide range of activities that may include building grassroots support, strengthening advocacy, funding legal challenges, political engagement, or building public awareness and support. Through these, and other, means the legislative, policy or social change required to make our society more diverse and inclusive can be achieved.

![Diagram](image)

*Fig 1. The process of bringing issues from the margins to the mainstream*

This is a cycle we can see in numerous examples from the UK’s rich history of charitable campaigning, which has led to many of the key milestones of social progress that we take for granted today such as the abolition of slavery, women getting the vote, the decriminalisation

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*trust and confidence’ of charities*, Directory of Social Change blog, 9 October; Pratten, B. (2019) *Trust isn’t a popularity test*, Sheila McKechnie Foundation blog, 30 October
of homosexuality or furthering rights for disabled people. This is one reason we should be concerned about growing antipathy towards charitable campaigning in the UK and elsewhere around the globe, as the phenomenon of the “closing space for civil society” sees governments erode many of the key rights of free speech and association that make it possible for CSOs to play this role.\(^{12}\)

Part of the problem here is wilful ignorance of history. Campaigning by CSOs or charities is often characterised as a new phenomenon, and one which represents an unwarranted incursion of charities into the political sphere. However, if we push back on the idea that “the political sphere” is the sole reserve of party politics and also understand the historical context properly, then it is clear that campaigning by charities and civil society organisations has long been a major driver of social progress, and in fact represents a crucial part of the system of checks and balances that exist in any healthy democracy.

III) Building Civic Engagement and Agency

Before we move on from considering the strengths of philanthropy in this context, it is important to note a further point: that it is not the only the outcomes produced via philanthropy that can help to drive diversity, equity and inclusion, but the process used to achieve them. For one thing, it has long been recognised that philanthropy and voluntary action have intrinsic value by virtue of their ability to give people agency and teach them vital skills of civic engagement. Hence, as the 1952 Nathan Report noted, voluntary action is often the “nursery school of democracy”\(^{13}\)

In addition to teaching people new civic skills, involvement in philanthropy and voluntary action can also create new connections between them. In particular, by bringing people from diverse walks of life together, it can build the “bridging social capital” that is such an

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\(^{13}\) Great Britain, Charitable Trusts Committee (Nathan Committee) (1952) *Report of the Committee on the Law and Practice Relating to Charitable Trusts* §53, p.12
important part of overcoming social division and fostering healthy, diverse communities. As the Chair of the Charity Commission for England and Wales, Baroness Stowell, has argued:14

“Charitable behaviour has a unique potential to bridge divides and help us confront uncertainty with purpose and hope... Acts of charity bring people together - in place and in shared aims, attitudes and achievements.”

At a time when there are widespread concerns that our society and communities are more divided than ever, this seems like a particularly important role for philanthropy and voluntary action.

We have considered some of the potential strengths of philanthropy when it comes to supporting diversity, equity and inclusion, but if we are to realise this potential then it is equally important to be aware of some of the weaknesses of philanthropy in this context and the potential challenges it might bring.

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14 Charity Commission for England & Wales (2018), Baroness Stowell: The Future of Charity, Speech given at the RSA, 5 October

Registered Charity number 268369
3) **Weaknesses of Philanthropy**

I) **Paternalism, Power & Inequality**

One of the major criticisms of philanthropy has long been that it is paternalistic: too often based on a model where those with resources decide what the needs are and how they should be addressed, without ever asking the people or communities affected or engaging them in the decision-making process about how resources should be used. A 1901 cartoon in the satirical magazine Puck (Fig. 2) mocked Andrew Carnegie for his paternalistic approach, depicting him in his study at Christmas, looking at plans for a new library whilst the cherubic character of Puck tries to alert him to the presence of two destitute people at his door, saying: “Books are so cheap and libraries so abundant that even the poorest man has all the literature he wants. Now why not provide respectable homes for the people who are too old to work and who were never able to save anything from their scanty wages;—and so keep them from beggary, starvation and suicide?”\(^{15}\)

Some famous critics have taken their critiques further and argued that the paternalism of philanthropy is reflective of a deeper issue: namely the inherent power imbalance between donor and recipient. At its heart, they argue, philanthropy always relies on there being “haves” and “have-nots” because in some sense it is about the former voluntarily choosing to give some of their assets away to benefit the latter. Inequality and unfairness are therefore seen as *preconditions* for philanthropy, which then reflects the power imbalances in the society in which it takes place. Thus while philanthropy can be effective at addressing immediate needs, such critics argue, it does not really address the underlying structural causes of poverty and other social issues. For those who criticise on these lines, philanthropy is more a part of the problem than a part of the solution when it comes to tackling societal inequality and unfairness.

\(^{15}\)“A Christmas Reminder”, Cartoon by Udo Keppler for *Puck Magazine* 18 December 1901.
This goes to an even longer-standing issue that is right at the heart of questions about the role of philanthropy: what is the distinction between charity and justice, and which should we aim for? For hundreds of years people have grappled with this tension— in the late 1700s, for instance, the philosopher Immanuel Kant argued in his *Lectures on Ethics* that:

"We have an impulse to benevolence, but not to righteousness. This impulse makes a man merciful and charitable to his neighbour, so that he makes restitution for an injustice of which he is quite unconscious; though unconscious of it only because he does not properly examine his position. Although we may be entirely within our rights, according to the laws of the land and the rules of our social structure, we may nevertheless be participating in general injustice, and in giving to an unfortunate man we do not give him a gratuity but only help to return to him that of which the general injustice of our system has deprived him."\(^{16}\)

Oscar Wilde picked up on this idea in his *Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), arguing that:

"We are often told that the poor are grateful for charity. Some of them are, no doubt, but the best amongst the poor are never grateful. They are ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, and rebellious. They are quite right to be so. Charity they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalist to tyrannise over their private lives. Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table? They should be seated at the board, and are beginning to know it."\(^{17}\)

The problem for such critics comes when philanthropy or charity becomes a substitute for justice, rather than something which sits alongside it. Furthermore, by giving those with means a way of addressing the symptoms of societal ills without ever having to address their underlying causes, it can obscure the need for more radical systemic change. Friedrich Engels (perhaps unsurprisingly given his later career...) was highly critical of philanthropy on this point in his study of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*:

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\(^{16}\) Kant (1980) *Lectures on Ethics* (trans. Louis Infield) p. 194

\(^{17}\) Wilde (1909) *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, p. 9.
“Philanthropic institutions forsooth! As though you rendered the proletarians a service in first sucking out their very life-blood and then practising your self-complacent, Pharisaic philanthropy upon them, placing yourselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when you give back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them! Charity which degrades him who gives more than him who takes; charity which treads the downtrodden still deeper in the dust, which demands that the degraded, the pariah cast out by society, shall first surrender the last that remains to him, his very claim to manhood, shall first beg for mercy before your mercy deigns to press, in the shape of an alms, the brand of degradation upon his brow.”

A slightly more measured version of this argument - that we must not lose sight of the distinction between charity and justice and that the former is not a substitute for the latter - can be found in the words of Dr Martin Luther King, who reminded us that: “Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.” And we shall see shortly that this tension has been at the heart of many efforts to drive greater diversity, equity and inclusion; with those who favour pragmatism often willing to accept the necessity (at least in the short term) for appealing to charity and philanthropy for support, whilst those who favour idealism may argue that the acceptance of such support undermines their claims for justice and as such is better avoided.

II) Representation

A related issue when it comes to philanthropy’s role with regard to diversity, equity and inclusion is that it is often not sufficiently representative of those it is seeking to serve. If philanthropy merely reflects the existing structures of power within society, this is not surprising: marginalised people and communities by definition have little power, so they are as likely to be excluded from philanthropy as they are from many other things. And this brings us back to the problem of paternalism: if philanthropy is solely reliant on models where

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18 Engels (1892) The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, p. 278
19 King, M. L. (2019) Strength To Love
those with assets are relied upon to identify the needs and decided how best to address them, and the people actually affected by those decisions are excluded from the table, then almost by definition the process becomes paternalistic rather than empowering.

With this challenge in mind, our response must be to take a more intentional approach to philanthropy that aims to overcome these barriers. This may be by ensuring greater diversity among decision-makers in philanthropic institutions: there is certainly plenty to suggest that there is far more to be done in terms of making charities and CSOs more representative of the people and communities they serve. Or it may be by adopting models of philanthropy which seek to be more inclusive and to enable genuine transfers of power as well as financial assets. The recent growth of interest in participatory models of grantmaking and philanthropy seems to suggest that many accept these issues need addressing, and are facing up to them.20 There is still plenty more to be done to bring these approaches firmly into the mainstream (and to move beyond supportive rhetoric to practical reality), but these are encouraging signs.

III) The Downsides of Plurality?

A final potential downside of philanthropy is the danger that it can result in “hyper-pluralism”: where so many sub-groups emerge within a particular movement that it becomes difficult to maintain coherence. This is in many ways the flipside of the core strength of philanthropy in supporting a diverse civil society: since philanthropy is fundamentally based on individual choices about where to give, the spectrum of views supported through philanthropic means on any given issue may be as broad as the spectrum of views across society as a whole, and in some cases this can cause confusion. For instance, in the fight for votes for women (as we shall see in a moment), whilst there was strong philanthropic support in favour of suffrage, there was also strong support on the other side of the argument. In other cases, the proliferation of sub-identity groups within a wider movement as a result of philanthropic support may present problems — particularly if those groups hold differing or mutually-exclusive views or aims, as this can make it harder for the movement as a whole to succeed.

The political scientist Kristin Goss, in her study of feminist movements in the latter half of the 20th century, and poses the key question thus:

“Does philanthropy encourage a robust group-based politics, or quash it? Have foundations contributed to the fragmentation of U.S. society by encouraging identity politics, or have foundations contributed to the unification of the United States by bringing previously marginalized groups into social, political and economic life?”

Hyper-pluralism may become even more of a challenge in the future if efforts to drive social change increasingly adopt ‘leaderless’ or decentralised models, because there is little or no ability to dictate focus or strategic direction. As Jo Freeman argued in her seminal 1972 essay “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”:

“The more unstructured a movement is, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages. This does not mean that its ideas do not spread... But diffusion of ideas does not mean they are implemented; it only means they are talked about. Insofar as they can be applied individually they may be acted on; insofar as they require coordinated political power to be implemented, they will not be.”

A further challenge may be that those who wish to undermine the ability of civil society to speak truth to power are able to exploit this tendency toward hyper-pluralism. The phenomenon of “astroturfing” has already seen many examples of new organisations and online networks emerging which look like expression of grassroots activism, but are in fact controlled by state or corporate interests. The aim of these astroturfing entities is often to create artificial hyper-plurality, giving the false impression that views on an issue are divergent and thereby stifling the efforts of genuine civil society groups to advocate or campaign.

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23 For more on this, see Davies, R. (2019) “When Nobody Knows You’re a Dog: Tech, Civil Society, and the Fight for Authenticity” Digital Impact, 4 April

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4) The History of Philanthropy’s Role in Driving Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Now that we have some idea of the strengths and weaknesses of philanthropy when it comes to driving diversity, equity and inclusion, let us see how these have played out in practice in some notable historical examples of campaigning for social change. (NB: the aim here is not to give any sort of linear account of these campaigns — all of which have complex and fascinating histories of their own — but rather just to highlight specific aspects that illustrate some of the key theoretical points we have been considering).

I) The Anti-Slavery Movement: Long-termism, Bridging Divides & a Range of Tactics

The movement to abolish slavery in the UK is often cited as a paradigm example of successful campaigning that resulted in transformative social change. Efforts to make slavery illegal began in earnest in the late 18th century (although one can identify roots much further back), and ran well into the 19th: buying and selling slaves was barred by law in 1807, but it took until 1833 for ownership of slaves to be made illegal and even then, the process of implementation — including giving compensation to slave owners — ran on into the 1840s.

Fig. 3. The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840, by Benjamin Robert Haydon. Oil on canvas, 1841.

26 See e.g. this timeline of The Slave Trade and Abolition from Historic England: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/time-line/
Philanthropy played an important role in relation to the abolition movement; one that highlights the importance of its ability to take a long-term view, as this was crucial in enabling philanthropic support to stick with the anti-slavery cause and help sustain it and maintain momentum for more than 50 years. Another strength of philanthropy highlighted in this example is the ability to bring people from different walks of life together. Support for the anti-slavery cause came from across society: although the movement did receive support from major donors among the aristocracy and new industrial elites, its lifeblood was a wealth of much smaller subscriptions from average working-class and middle-class supporters. Furthermore, whilst at the top level the campaign was centralised to some degree, the bulk of the activities took place at a local level; coordinated by a distributed network of local groups. At this local level, the cause of anti-slavery had the ability to bring people together across class divided (although one should be careful not to paint too utopian a picture, as class division clearly remained rife in Britain for a long time to come).

The other attribute of philanthropy that the anti-slavery movement demonstrates is the flexibility (and risk tolerance) to support a wide range of activities, from straightforward traditional activities like parliamentary debates and public petitions to more innovative things like using art, literature and music to further the cause. For example, the celebrate potter Josiah Wedgwood was commissioned to create a design that could be put on pottery objects (medallions, jugs, brooches etc.) and then sold to raise money for the cause.

II) Civil Rights: Early pioneers going against the grain & taking a long-term view

The civil rights movement in the US in the 20th century is another example that brings to light many fascinating aspects of the strengths and weaknesses of philanthropy.
In the early stages, in the first few decades of the 20th century, a number of major individual philanthropists took on issues around civil rights. In doing so, they exemplified some of the benefits of being able to tolerate risks and go against the grain. Madame CJ Walker, for instance was a particularly remarkable figure: at a time when being not only black, but a woman, put her at a huge disadvantage, she nonetheless went on to become a self-made millionaire through her vastly successful haircare product empire and used a lot of this money in projects aimed at economic empowerment for other black women and to fund broader efforts to push for civil rights (e.g. supporting the work of the fledgling NAACP).25

Walker was extremely unusual at the time in coming from the black community and having the means to be a philanthropist, so most of the philanthropy instead took the form of white donors choosing to focus on civil rights issues or on addressing specific injustices aimed at black people. One of the major names of philanthropy, Andrew Carnegie, was relatively progressive on this front26 (although many have noted that this may have stood in rather stark contrast to his attitudes to labour relations and his own business practices.27 Carnegie read the memoir of black civic leader Booker T Washington and was so taken by his story of how he became a “self-made man” against vast odds (which Carnegie no doubt took to mirror his own life story) that he subsequently became a major supporter to the Tuskegee Institute (the first private black university in the US, co-founded by Washington), including building a Carnegie library on the campus.

Slightly less well-known (although often lauded among philanthropy cognoscenti) is Julius Rosenwald.\(^{28}\) He was the CEO of the Sears & Roebuck Company, which became famed for its mail-order catalogues. As a Jewish businessman in Chicago, some of Rosenwald’s philanthropy was aimed at Jewish causes or civic causes in Chicago (including founding the city’s Museum of Science & Industry, which Rosenwald was inspired to do following a visit to the Deutschesmuseum in Munich while on a family holiday to Germany in 1911). However, his philanthropic legacy stems primarily from the work he did to address some of the injustices faced by black Americans at the time. This interest was once again spurred in part by Booker T. Washington, who was introduced to Rosenwald by Paul Sachs (co-founder of Goldman Sachs) and whom Rosenwald went on to support heavily (including sitting on the Board of the Tuskegee Institute for many years). Rosenwald also suggested that his own Jewish heritage made him particularly sensitive to issues of racial injustice, because: “The horrors that are due to race prejudice come home to the Jew more forcefully than to others of the white race, on account of the centuries of persecution which they have suffered and still suffer.”\(^{29}\)

There were two major elements in Rosenwald’s civil rights philanthropy. The first was supporting a massive programme of school building in the Deep South, to address the fact

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\(^{28}\) For a great overview of Rosenwald and his philanthropy, see Aviva Kempner’s 2015 documentary film *Rosenwald*. Alternatively, for a written biography (albeit an uncritical one, as it was written by Rosenwald’s grandson) see Ascoli, P.M. (2006) *Julius Rosenwald: The man who built Sears, Roebuck and advanced the cause of Black education in the American South*. Indiana University Press.

that there was a major shortage of books and buildings within black communities. Rosenwald used his own money and the resources of Sears & Roebuck (which had a mail-order house building business) to fund this programme, which resulted in over 5,000 “Rosenwald Schools” being built. Interestingly, Rosenwald followed a model in which the schools would be built by the communities themselves (in fact, they even had to match fund for them), as he believed that this was vital to ensuring each community had a sense of ownership.  

The second major element of Rosenwald’s work on civil rights was making a series of unrestricted small “fellowship” grants through his limited-life foundation (the Rosenwald Fund) to a wide range of black artists, scholars and civic leaders between 1928 and 1948. Many of the recipients of these fellowships went on to be famous black cultural leaders and icons, such as the poet Maya Angelou, the writer W. E. DuBois and the singer Marian Anderson. By offering support at crucial junctures to allow these fellowship recipients to afford necessary study and travel, or simply to cover the cost of living so that they could carry on with their work, the Rosenwald Fund played an important catalytic role in developing a generation of future black leaders. Once again, perhaps, demonstrating the value of being able to take a longer term view when it comes to driving social change.

These early philanthropists all took risks of some sort and their support for civil rights required them to do against the status quo (at least in the Deep South, where racial segregation was enshrined in law). However, some have argued that the efforts of white donors like Carnegie and Rosenwald, while admirable, still prioritised charity over justice and therefore did little to address the fundamental structural issues that caused racial inequality. If philanthropy was to play a bigger role in driving the cause of civil rights forward, this is an imbalance that needed to be addressed and some funders sought to do precisely that.

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31 Rosenwald’s views on the necessity for limiting the lifespan of philanthropy foundations (which are interesting and forcefully argued) can be found in his essay “Principles of Public Giving”, reproduced in a variety of places including O’Connell, B., 1983. America’s voluntary spirit: A book of readings. Foundation Center.
33 Morey, M. (2017) "Julius Rosenwald was Not a Hero", HistPhil, 30 June
III) Civil Rights: Institutions, Movements & Funding Radical Change

As the 20th century wore on, the story of philanthropy and civil rights became increasingly one of the interplay between institutional funders and movements. This brought with it new opportunities for scale, impact and radicalism; but it also brought new challenges.

Building on the earlier legacy of Andrew Carnegie, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was one of the main funders of a seminal research report commissioned from the Swedish Nobel Laureate economist Gunnar Myrdal (titled “An American Dilemma”). This set out in meticulous detail the stark reality of racial inequality in the US (particularly in the education system) and was hugely influential in paving the way for the eventual Brown vs Board of Education court case which is such a crucial milestone in the history of the civil rights movement. This once again shows the importance of philanthropy’s role in funding longer-term activities like research that can help to create the necessary environment for political and social change to occur.

Another intriguing institution was the Stern Family Fund. This was founded by Edith Stern, who was the daughter of Julius Rosenwald and inherited many of his ideas about philanthropy. She married Edgar Stern and established a family foundation, but despite the fact that almost all the assets put into it were actually hers, when it came to decisions about grantmaking she was forced at first to bow to the patriarchal norms of the time and take a back seat to her husband. As a southerner (albeit a liberal one), Edgar Stern was happy to support charity aimed at African Americans but remained in favour of segregation, or at least did not wish to challenge it openly, so at first the Fund shed away from supporting civil rights efforts. Luckily for the history of civil rights philanthropy, he died first; and when he did Edith Stern was able to take control of the Fund.
and turn it in a much more radical direction, funding things like voter education and registration programmes.

Another notable example in the history of philanthropic institutions funding movements to further the cause of civil rights is the Fund for American Progress (often known as the Garland Fund). This was established in 1921 by Charles Garland, using money he inherited from his Wall St banker father. At first, Garland was actually going to refuse the money, saying that he did not want to accept the rewards from “a system which starves thousands while hundreds are stuffed” and which “leaves a sick woman helpless and offers its services to a healthy man.” In the end, however, he was convinced to accept the money and put it to good uses through philanthropy, with a view to funding radical efforts that could result in genuine structural change.

The Garland Fund was incredibly progressive for its time by pretty much any measure (to be honest, its aims still look fairly cutting-edge even today!) However, one fascinating and important caveat is that despite this, the Fund may have inadvertently played a role in skewing the priorities of some of its grantees, by sheer virtue of its size and the imbalance of power between institutional funders and much smaller social movement organisations. The political scientist Megan Ming Francis has traced the relationship between the Garland Fund and one of its major grantees, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) using records from board meetings of the latter. She identifies a process of “movement capture” occurring, in which the NAACP gradually shifted away from its original core focus on combatting lynching and racial violence towards a new focus on education (which was much more in line with the Garland
This echoes earlier questions raised by the historian of social movements J Craig Jenkins: “Does patronage fuel the movements, providing greater resources and political access? Or does it wither their grassroots, channelling efforts into less militant, conservative actions?”

Understanding the concept of movement capture is particularly pertinent at this moment in time. There is an increasing focus on a new breed of digitally-enabled social movements (The Movement for Black Lives, Extinction Rebellion, #MeToo etc) and some institutional funders are looking for ways to support them. Understanding the possible unintended consequences of the power dynamics between funders and movements, and the ways in which the former, even when well-intentioned, can inadvertently skew the priorities and operations of the latter, is therefore hugely important.

IV) Votes for Women: Learning civic skills & the dangers of hyperpluralism

The example of the fight for universal suffrage is particularly interesting, as philanthropy here played a variety of roles - which both helped and hindered the movement.

Firstly, it is important to highlight the importance of philanthropy in bringing women into public life; helping them to develop many skills in campaigning and civic engagement that provided important groundwork for the eventual fight for the vote. In the 19th century,


This issue is touched on in Davies (2019) Networking Opportunities: rediscovering decentralisation in philanthropy, CAF Giving Thought discussion paper

Registered Charity number 268369
the role of women was almost entirely combined to the ‘domestic sphere’—looking after the family and the household—and the ‘public sphere’ of politics, public speaking and debate was seen very much as the preserve of men. Charity, of a fairly narrow kind that focussed on family issues and issues of Christian morality, was almost the only thing that allowed women (particularly in the middle classes) to engage in meaningful activity beyond the confines of their own home. It thereby acted as a bridge between the domestic and the public spheres. As historian Frank Prochaska explains:

“Thought to be predisposed to religion and benevolence and given an education centred on home and family, women were well placed to take advantage of the possibilities in any extension of familial values to the community beyond the home. At home they had a recognized status and were able to carry out their domestic charities relatively free from formal constraints. From their domestic citadel, they made ever-wider forays into society as the front-line defenders of family life... What may be described as an explosion of societies run by women took place in the nineteenth century, institutional expressions of a vital female culture with financial resources. These charities not only brought issues such as child welfare and moral reform to the fore, but were to have a profound effect upon women’s lives and expectations.”

At first, the causes this new breed of female philanthropists were engaging with were generally nothing to do with women’s rights. However, as a result of their charitable forays many women were inspired to take up the cause of their own freedom. Not only had many of them learned specific skills in things like organising, campaigning and public speaking that they would bring to the campaign for suffrage; but more broadly the perception of

women’s capabilities had been shifted through their engagement in philanthropy and social activism. This applied to women themselves, and also to wider society. As Prochaska explains:

“In the early nineteenth century it was virtually unheard of for a woman to make a public speech.... Things had changed dramatically by the early C20th; a woman no longer handed over her manuscript to be read aloud by a man; she no longer blushed at the prospect of mounting a platform. When suffragettes chained themselves to the railings outside the Houses of Parliament, public speaking did not seem such an affront to humanity... Such changes had come about only gradually, touched off by women determined to get their message across and willing to test convention by addressing charity meetings, social science congresses, and trade union gatherings.”

As well as paving the way, philanthropy also played an important role in supporting the suffrage movement once it did become established. Many women, both wealthy and of modest means, contributed donations toward the cause. However, we must be wary of looking back with the benefit of hindsight and assuming either that universal suffrage was inevitable or that philanthropy was always on the “right side” of the debate; because neither is true. There was also a strong “anti-suffrage” movement: to the extent that by 1914 the National League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage had 42,000 paid-up members and thousands more non-paying supporters. Its members had collected over half a million signatures for petitions against votes for women and its leaders were confidently demanding a national...
referendum on the issue.  

This anti-suffrage movement enjoyed a significant amount of philanthropic support of its own. This was not merely from disgruntled men (as one might expect) - there was also a dedicated Women’s Anti-Suffrage league. And among the supporters of anti-suffrage were some of the major female philanthropists of the 19th century such as Octavia Hill and Angela Burdett Coutts. Philanthropy was in fact an important part of the arguments against suffrage, because (according to Prochaska) “many benevolent women simply did not wish believed could be better spent on philanthropic work.” Many of them also felt that whilst women should have a role in the public sphere, this was better achieved through charitable endeavours than through engaging in the murky world of politics.

The lesson here is that because philanthropy is made up of the choices of large numbers of individuals, its role when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion can be as complex and unpredictable as individuals themselves are.

Fig 19. Octavia Hill, portrait by John Singer Sargent, 1898

Fig 18 Angela Burdett-Coutts, Vanity Fair, 1883

V) LGBTQ Rights: Pragmatism vs idealism/Legitimacy via mainstream funding

The history of the struggle for LGBTQ rights clearly demonstrates the classic tension within any movement seeking change, between those who advocate a pragmatic, gradual approach and those who believe in a more idealistic, radical one. The focus of the movement in the UK


in the first half of the 20th century was to secure the decriminalisation of homosexuality so that gay and lesbian people were not forced to live secretly, in constant fear of arrest.\textsuperscript{41} Following the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957, which recommended that “homosexual behaviour in private between two consenting adults should no longer be an offence”, the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) and its linked charity, The Albany Trust, were formed in 1958 with the aim of influencing government to implement the report’s recommendations.\textsuperscript{42} They counted a number of establishment figures among their leaders, and as such perhaps understandably erred towards the pragmatic end of the spectrum seeking to work within the existing system to drive change to the law. This was achieved in 1967 with the passing of the Sexual Offences Act. However many within the LGBT community were disappointed that the legislation did not go as far as they had hoped, and were critical of HLRS and the Albany Trust for what they perceived to be a failure to push for more radical change. Some even accused the organisations of pushing the government to water down the legislation, and branded founder Anthony Grey an “Uncle Tom”.\textsuperscript{43}

Following on from the Stonewall uprising in New York in 1969, the LGBT rights movement in the UK took a more militant turn as those who demanded radical action came to the fore. The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) formed in the US in 1969 and a UK chapter was then set up in 1970, centred on the London School of Economics.\textsuperscript{44} The GLF only existed for about 4 years before internal divisions saw it splinter, but in that time it engaged in a series of high-profile direct action protests and also organised the UK’s first ever Pride march (in London in 1972). Its approach and many of its tactics

\textsuperscript{41} For an overview of this history, see Dryden, S. “A Short History of LGBT Rights in the UK”, British Library, or the timeline of “Key dates for lesbian, gay, bi and trans equality” created by Stonewall.
\textsuperscript{42} https://www.stonewall.org.uk/history
\textsuperscript{44} Brook, P. (2017) “This is what Britain’s Gay Liberation Front movement looked like in the 1970s” Timeline, 16 Aug
set a template for other radical LGBT groups that followed it in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Outraged—whose co-founder Peter Tatchell became a prominent figure, but whose adoption of ‘forced outings’ of homosexual public figures proved highly controversial.\(^{45}\)

The tension between moderates and radicals, as in so many movements, swung back and forth over time as new rights opened up for the LGBT community and new challenges also emerged. The introduction of “Section 28” legislation by the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in 1988—which banned local authorities from “promoting homosexuality” or “promoting the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”—galvanised the LGBT rights movement in the 1990s in opposition to what was seen as highly regressive attempt to demonise homosexuality once more.\(^{46}\) This led to the creation of new organisations, such as the charity Stonewall, which has been an important voice in the ongoing fight for LGBT rights ever since.\(^{47}\) Section 28 was repealed in 2003, and there were other wins too: such as Age of Consent equality (introduced in 2001 in England, Wales and Scotland, and 2009 in Northern Ireland), and—most notably—the legalisation of first same-sex civil partnerships in 2004 and then same-sex marriages in 2013.

Apart from highlighting the tension between pragmatism and radicalism that almost social change movements have to deal with, the fight for LGBT rights also highlights

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\(^{46}\) LGBT History Month (2018) “Section 28”.

\(^{47}\) https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/stonewalls-history
another interesting point about the role of philanthropy when it comes to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion: the fact that the value of philanthropic support can be just as much about the nature of the funder as it is about the money. If philanthropic support comes from within a minority community (or from niche funders) then it is obviously helpful in its own right, and in reinforcing a sense of solidarity or shared identity. If, however, the same money comes from a mainstream source it can bring with it further implications of legitimacy or ‘mainstream acceptance’ that may have their own value.

In terms of LGBT rights, we can see this playing out. At first, support came almost entirely from organisations from within the LGBT community. We have already seen that in the UK the Albany Trust played a key role in funding the work of the Homosexual Law Reform Society from 1958 onwards. Two decades later, the US saw the emergence of the first two dedicated lesbian and gay foundations in the world: the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice - originally the Astraea Foundation, founded in 1977; and Horizons Foundation - originally the Golden Gate Business Association Foundation, founded in 1980 by a group of gay local business owners, due to dissatisfaction with their local United Way’s failure to distribute enough to LGBT causes in an area with a sizeable gay community.48

At this point, most funding came from within the community; via these kinds of funders (although an interesting early example of funding from outside was the Playboy magnate Hugh Hefner, who supported a number of LGBT causes in the 1970s, albeit only with small amounts). The emergence of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, however, led to well-known mainstream funders such as the Geffen Foundation, Ben & Jerry’s and Levis getting involved. Although some of these funders stuck to funding treatment for AIDS as a medical condition, others broadened out into supporting broader calls for gay rights too; bringing a new level of mainstream legitimacy to the cause.

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VI) Disability Rights: Charity vs. justice

Our final example is that of the disability rights movement, which perhaps more clearly than any other highlights the potential tension between charity and justice and the dangers of philanthropic paternalism. Historically, philanthropy and charity had always been concerned about disability, but had seen it almost exclusively as a problem to be ‘cured’ or ‘treated’ rather than a social issue; and viewed people with disabilities as ‘victims’ in need of help, rather than legitimate claimant to their rights on the grounds of justice. However this began to change in the middle of the 20th century. Following the two World Wars, many servicemen had returned home with injuries that had led to them becoming disabled and increasingly felt woefully let down by the state when it came to recognising their needs and rights. In 1951, for example, a group of 800 members of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen’s Association took part in a ‘silent reproach’ to the Prime Minister’s residence at 10 Downing Street.

In the 1950s a new “social model” of disability then began to emerge, which focused on ensuring that disabled people were able to lead independent lives outside of institutions, and that they had equal rights as citizens. Over subsequent decades this led to a whole new wave of protests by disabled rights activists, calling for things

Fig 24. British Limbless Ex-Servicemen’s Association March to 10 Downing Street, 1951

Fig 25. Block Telethon protest outside London Weekend Television studio

49 Historic England, “Disability Since 1945”
50 Historic England, “Back to the Community - Disability Equality, Rights and Inclusion”
like access to public transport or proper recognition for mental health conditions. They also had the paternalism of traditional charity attitudes to disability in their sights: 1992 saw the “Block Telethon” group organise a wave of protests against ITV’s “Telethon” appeal, which had up until that point raised money for disabled causes in a way that many disabled people felt was patronising and demeaning, and portrayed them as little more than helpless victims.

Some disability rights groups adopted the slogan “Nothing About Us Without Us”. This pithily highlights an important truth when it comes to philanthropic efforts to support diversity, equity and inclusion: that minority groups should not be seen as objects of charity—about whom decisions can be taken by benevolent philanthropic funders—but rather must be supported to determine for themselves what their needs and priorities are and how best to meet them.

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51 Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People (2010) A Brief History Of Disabled People’s Self-Organisation

52 National Disability Arts Collection & Archive, “On the Block Telethon Protest”.
5) Conclusion

There is evidently a rich history of philanthropic support for social movements tackling issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. Furthermore, philanthropy & voluntary action have themselves played an important role by giving marginalised people and communities a voice and a means to have greater agency over the issues affecting them.

However, there are also challenges & potential pitfalls; because philanthropy can bring unintended consequences. We need to understand, therefore, how philanthropy interacts with social movement and to be clear about both its strengths and potential weaknesses. It is particularly important that we grapple with these questions right now because issues of diversity and equality being felt more keenly than ever, but at the same time philanthropy is facing a growing amount of criticism and has been subjected to a range of fairly deep recent critiques – many of which reflect the issues outlined in this paper.

The point is that we can’t simply assume that philanthropy is seen as an inherently good thing. Whether or not it is depends on the specific context in which the philanthropy takes place and the way in which it is done. Understanding the criticisms and how we might avoid or answer them will give us a much better chance of ensuring that whatever form of philanthropy we do pursue is genuinely in the interests of marginalised communities and is seen by them and by wider society as a force for good.

If you have any thoughts or feedback on this discussion paper, or would like more information, please contact the author:

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