

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace
International Convening, Cairo, Egypt
February 25, 2009
Christopher Harris
Opening Remarks

Good morning and welcome again to Cairo. Allow me to extend my thanks to so many of you who traveled far to be here with us in this ancient and remarkable city. My name is Christopher Harris and I am a Senior Program Officer on Philanthropy at the Ford Foundation in New York. It has been my great pleasure to chair for the past year and a half the **Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace**—the group that organized this gathering. This group of volunteers first convened in September 2007, has met many times and worked very hard since then to address key issues for our work and to put together the design and content of the next few days.

Before I proceed, I would like to ask members of the Working Group to stand and be recognized.

- Akwasi Aidoo (Trust Africa) (who was called away at the past minute and cannot be with us—“presente”)
- Lisa Jordan (Ford Foundation)
- Avila Kilmurray (Community Foundation for Northern Ireland)
- Barry Knight (CENTRIS, UK)
- Vanita Mukherjee (Ford Foundation, New Delhi)
- Stephen Pittam (Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust)
- Ana Maria Enriquez (Ford Foundation)
- Albert Ruesga (Greater New Orleans Foundation)
- Maya Wiley (Center for Social Inclusion)
- Karen Zelermeier (Fundors for Lesbian and Gay Issues)

I would like to recognize Ford Foundation colleagues Karin Krslovic and Monique Ekmekjian, as well as the staff of the **Interaction Institute for Social Change** (Boston) who have assisted the Working Group in numerous ways and are serving in a staffing role for this convening. We have all spoken with our two community organizers Nancy Cunningham and Juliette Majot.

I would also like to thank publicly my colleagues at the Ford Foundation office here in Cairo who, despite their own very demanding workload, have

been exceedingly gracious with their time, labor and good counsel as we organized this meeting. If they could stand we can show our appreciation.

Before we get underway with the real work together, I have been asked to say a few words about the nature of this meeting, what the Ford Foundation's plans are, and what the larger expectations are about any outcomes of this convening. So let me quickly pose and try to answer five questions:

- Why Ford?
- Why this topic?
- Why us?
- Why this meeting?
- How might we move forward?

1. Why Ford?

The Ford Foundation has a history of supporting **philanthropy as a generic public good**. Philanthropy is the source of funding for civil society groups that cannot or should not rely on the public sector or the private sector for support. This is especially the case for those groups that work to address injustices caused by one or both of those sectors. So Ford has supported work on the enabling legal environment, on research, on training for philanthropy in different parts of the world.

Ford also supports philanthropy for the **instrumental and more explicit purpose** of ensuring resources for social justice and peace. That means working to encourage more foundations to support the difficult work of changing the structural arrangements or deeply embedded practices that cause and maintain injustice, marginalization and violence. It is this purpose that links everyone in this room.

We have employed three strategies at Ford to try to increase the number of foundations and the quality of support for social justice and peace. The first had to do with **expanding the pool of funders**—meaning reaching out to foundations that *could* be funding such work and helping them do so. In some cases it meant helping to start a new foundation where there was a need and demand—especially autonomous foundations in the Global South—to help reduce the dependency (and implicit agenda setting) by institutions in the North (including Ford). There are several such foundations here this morning.

The second strategy was to assist and strengthen select, existing social justice and peace foundations—but emphasize **networks of funds**—because research shows us that having a learning network can make a huge difference. So we have funded key networks of social justice and peace foundations—and those networks are all represented here this morning.

The third strategy has to do with supporting a more rigorous and critical literature about this work—to serve as a guide and resource to interested practitioners as well as to **drive criteria and standards** for what we mean by doing this work. In this effort, so far we have had only minor successes.

There remains at Ford a strong commitment to helping develop a more robust and critical literature about this work and to supporting the development of tools and new platforms for learning about philanthropy for social justice and peace. Of course, Ford will not (nor should not) do such work alone and that is why there are several colleague foundations here who in their own ways will be involved in future work.

So to answer the first question—Why Ford?—the Ford Foundation’s interest in this convening is a combination of prior work, concern with some of the results, the critical need for partners and **how we together can begin to indentify and then build the capacities that we need to have more philanthropy for social justice and peace.**

2. Why this topic?

The role that most philanthropic institutions play around the world—whether local family funds or community foundations in the U.S., corporate foundations in Latin America, European trusts or Islamic *waqfs*—is **support for direct services of some kind**—food, shelter, culture, and sport. Our purpose here is not to criticize such work for it is necessary in many places—our purpose is to push for an increase in the very small percentage of philanthropic resources that are deployed to address the causes of the need for such services and to improve the effectiveness of those funds.

Instead of saying philanthropy for “social justice and peace,” let me try to name our end game—what we all want.

Our **ultimate concern** in our *respective contexts* (stressed as important in the interviews) is the:

- **eventual enjoyment of peace and physical security;**
- **economic and environmental justice;**
- **equal political participation and protection under law;**
- **equitable access to the design and use of all public services;**
- **cultural self-determination and respect for our multiple identities—all this supported by an accountable state and based on the fundamental values of fairness, rights and sustainability.**

That is our focus—whether the terms “social justice” and “peace” are helpful in your setting or not—is unimportant. What is important is having substantially more foundation resources directed to those ends and deployed effectively.

Our **intermediate concern** is directing more philanthropic resources to support efforts to attain those ends. And we know that there are structural arrangements and hidden practices in each of our contexts that cause and maintain injustice which must be identified, analyzed and people mobilized with appropriate skills and resources to change them. Foundations need to support more such work. That usually goes beyond service delivery.

And our **immediate concern** is **how do we best construct and support an infrastructure whose purpose is to help philanthropy (and all of us) do such work and do it well?**

That is why we are here.

This is not a “conference” where “experts” talk. Nor is this a “training session” about how to raise money or have good Board governance. **This is a convening of peers who are working in our own ways toward these larger ends.** We have a few days to get to know each other and discuss tough, complex issues in a relatively safe space and **begin working together in new ways.**

In all honesty, this convening emerged out of **frustration** of spending many hours in meetings with other foundations who *expressed* a desire to work on issues of injustice or peace—but only to find that they were not interested in the more difficult and sometimes controversial efforts to look at structural arrangements or the favored versus marginalized groups in communities.

Also, many of us have encountered similar frustration in trying to find the kind of support that we need—research from university centers on social justice and peace, centers on practice that teach how to mobilize resources or work with boards to these ends, training and seminars that show how to construct grantmaking programs that deal with structural injustice or how to fund work that supports justice and reconciliation in formerly violent communities. Disappointingly, there are virtually no such centers that either understand what we need or who are willing to do the work.

3. Why us?

One only has to glance at the list of participants to feel at the same time both a profound excitement and a deep humility. Excitement because there is much impressive work represented, and humility because of the nature of the various struggles that require such work. The Working Group wrestled with the difficult task of determining who should be invited to this meeting. We employed a variety of criteria but the fundamental threshold was a commitment to social justice and peace—one shared value is, as the American writer Maya Angelou reminds us, “*From the tender whispers to the painful screams, we hear the same voices.*” And then our work in philanthropy attempts to end the reasons for those voices—whispers or screams.

The *Washington Post* (the major newspaper in that city) used to have a radio advertisement that always ended, “The *Washington Post*—if you don’t get it; you don’t get it.” You get it. And you represent important institutions, networks and kinds of work,

Key institutions that have or can have an influence on the larger field include foundations like: Atlantic Philanthropies, the Gates, Tides and King Baudouin foundations, the Joseph Roundtree Charitable Trust, the Fondazione Venezia and the Sabanci Vakif, among others—and they are here.

The **networks**—

International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy (IISP) which was launched in 2005 to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of local foundations in the Global South & East, diminish their dependence on

funding from the North and increase resource flows for work on social justice is represented here.

Foundations for Peace for the unique and critically important work on peace and reconciliation that they do in their respective societies—that very few others will take on. They find great value in providing support to each other, given the difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions in which they work. They are here.

The **International Network of Women's Funds** (in the Global South and East) has become a formidable actress on the global stage of philanthropy and their experience and accomplishments, especially on the topics of building constituencies and mobilizing resources, offer the rest of us extremely important lessons—and challenge the dominant conception—of mobilizing resources. They are here.

There are other networks represented here—those that focus on human rights, on sexual, racial, caste or cultural identity. We saw Barry's network mapping. We have also invited key activists and important supporting organizations—across a variety of purposes. There are other key resources (e.g., GrantCraft) and networks (e.g., Women's Funding Network) not formally represented, but who have members present.

We have 100 people, but we could have easily invited 200 or more. This is a core, but by no means an exclusive group. We all have important allies who easily could have been included here—but for want of space. The point is that **we** are here and **we** share a commitment to social justice and peace, but **we** also share a sense of frustration and even anger at the state of affairs in organized philanthropy—given the needs. We also have a responsibility—given the assets that we represent. In this room we collectively represent over \$52 billion. If we remove Gates, Ford and Atlantic there is still \$10 billion in philanthropic resources here.

4. Why this meeting?

Let me be as clear as possible. I see three interrelated reasons for this convening. The **first reason** for this gathering is to bring like-minded, but sometimes isolated people together who are committed to using philanthropic resources for social justice and peace **to become aware that**

we are part of something larger—and to encourage the development of personal and professional connections. *To build a movement.*

As I mentioned earlier, we all share some frustrations. Despite the strengths of the individual and several networks of foundations present and their impressive accomplishments,

- none operate at the scale that we would wish,
- none have the menu of skills and knowledge that we seek,
- none represent the size and power of the social movements for which we strive

So that leads us to the next two reasons for this convening. The **second reason** is to explore together some key issues that represent gaps or weakness in the practice of our work—not to solve them here, but to have honest, critical and rigorous conversations about the current state of that work. Focused conversations allow us to get to know each other better; begin to see our differences as well as our similarities, identify useful resources that may not be universally accessible, and **to bring to the surface topics that groups of us may want to tackle in greater depth and seriousness after we depart.**

For example, I know that Ana Criquillion of the Central American Women's Fund is frustrated by her inability to spend more time and energy on understanding social impact analysis (so does Luc Tayart de Borms but he may not call it that). I know that Albert Ruesga of the Greater New Orleans Foundation is passionate about communication strategies—and how few of us understand how important they are (so does Bisi Adeleye of the African Women's Development Fund, but they haven't had a chance to talk about it). I know that Eliezer Ya'ari (sadly not here because his visa was refused) is anxious to have deeper and serious conversations about how this work should address the global financial crisis—(so does Drummond Pike from Tides, but they don't know that yet about each other). They do now.

We have tried to design this convening so that you have time (if constrained), relevant activities and opportunity to find one another. We have also designed the agenda based on some key topics that we believe are lacking. So we will use as organizers of our time:

- An analysis of state of the field,
- A conversation about what philanthropy for social justice and peace means to you,

- How to think about structural transformation versus helping an individual
- How does one develop grantmaking strategies to address larger structural injustice?
- How do we assess the social impact that we wish to achieve—when what we want is social justice and peace?
- How do we engage constituencies and each other to build a larger movement and construct a supportive infrastructure?

That last item is the basis of the **third reason** to hold this gathering. If this work is to move forward in the way that **we** want, to focus on the issues that **we** identify as critical, and to maintain an integrity and quality that **we** demand—then **we** must do it. What emerges from the multiple frustrations are two learnings—one, that philanthropy for social justice and peace is an “emerging field” with serious knowledge shortcomings and we should think about the next **decade** of its development—a ten-year time frame, and second, that the only way forward that is reliable and ensures that we get what we need—is that we do it ourselves. In other words, new work must be demand-driven and led by small groups of people who are sitting in this room. Not everybody here will take on a task, but if Ana wants to see substantial work on social impact analysis with tools and training available in ten years, then she will have to find a half dozen committed colleagues who are willing to work together to devise what the key next steps are—and take them.

The Ford Foundation will not take those steps nor will the Working Group. Ana and her colleagues must choose to do that work for it to move forward. We and others can help, but they must drive the efforts.

My Vision

The image that I want to leave with you is that of a field—whose parts are becoming more self-aware and that has the possibility, if the work is done right—to become something far more powerful in the future than our individual networks. Imagine in ten to twenty years a real infrastructure for philanthropy that supports social justice and peace.

There would be a **virtual Center on Social Impact Analysis** that links the Institute for Development Studies in the UK, *Shatil* in Israel with the *Universidad Centro Americano* and Addis Ababa, Sabanci, Jawaharlal

Nehru and McGill universities. Together they provide tools, publications and regional training opportunities.

In ten years there is a network of **centers on resource mobilization for social justice** including ones in Los Angeles and Jackson Mississippi for the U.S. (with links to the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT) and the Foundation Center); one in Cartagena, Colombia for Latin America; in Nairobi and Dakar for Africa; in Beirut for the Levant; in Mumbai and Jakarta for South and East Asia, among others.

In ten years there will be an **International Center on the Practice of Grantmaking for Social Transformation** based jointly in Accra, Brussels, Mexico City and Mubai (with the King Baudouin and Dalit Foundations, and the African Women’s Development Fund on their Boards) where practitioners can find a growing body of literature in several languages on-line, and training across an increasingly large curriculum that can be used by the Gerhart Center here in Cairo as well as the Council on Foundations, the European Foundation Centre, the Arab Foundations Forum and the Asia Pacific Philanthropic Consortium.

In ten years four universities in different countries have endowed chairs in **Structural Injustice and Its Transformation** and are providing a new literature available to foundation practitioners. Their work includes, among others, critical studies about indigenous peoples and the appropriate role of philanthropy.

In ten years there is a **Joint Center on Philanthropy for Peace and Reconciliation** based in Belfast, Johannesburg, Jerusalem and Colombo that fosters dialogues, relevant scholarship and training of practitioners. They offer national and regional associations of grantmakers well-researched case studies and practitioner faculty to educate mainstream foundations in this work.

In ten years the current **Working Group** will have evolved to a twenty person advisory/steering committee that supports connections through internet, virtual reality and occasional regional meetings. They have planned and designed a “Cairo plus 10” meeting with 250 participants from around the globe for February 2019. Nat Williams and Betty Murungi would be co-chairs at that time.

In other words in ten years there is a **field** of philanthropy for social justice and peace with an **accepted body of knowledge and practice**, and a **supporting infrastructure**. There will also be a collection of fifty foundations globally that fund the infrastructure because they understand the nature of the investment and the powerful social impact that it provides both directly in communities by improved practice and by engaging increasingly more foundations. They are convinced of this argument by the joint research of Ana Maria Enriquez, Lenka Setkova and Dina Sherif who developed a case paper and supporting analysis that shows the return on investment in social justice and peace work.

That is the hope and the challenge. That is **our** hope and one that **only we** together can build.

5. How might we do this?

Obviously I have slid into the fifth question—how might we move forward? What, if anything, will come **depends on the people present**. Let's say that Ana Criquillon does organize a group that meets via telephone and internet, has shared their ideas widely and encouraged rigorous critique, and after 18 months has a solid and critical idea for a gathering of some of the world's best analysts on social impact analysis—and its relevance for work on philanthropy for social justice and peace. Modest funding is needed for the next step. Ford or one of the other larger foundations here might well support that effort and one that follows. In fact, several funders have signaled their willingness to consider requests for such help, of course within their regular institutional policies. (E.g., Ford does not fund in Uzbekistan). Atlantic Philanthropies, the King Baudouin, Tides, McConnell, and Ford foundations, among others can be approached where there is an intersection of priorities to support some new work of quality.

Over time several similar efforts might take root and grow to more complex and substantive projects. Perhaps there is a pilot effort to establish a network of scholars on social impact analysis for foundations. Some of the larger foundations present (or absent) might support such work. Perhaps several U.S. participants work over the next two years with meetings, planning and outreach to lay the groundwork for a small center on structural racism and effective foundation approaches related to it. Again, over time, that small center might grow—with funding by several foundations—to

provide analysis, tools and training for foundation staff on funding work related to structural racism.

Regionally, I could imagine that TrustAfrica and the African Women's Development Fund decide with their colleagues to hold a regional meeting of African participants one or two years after this meeting to follow up and consider new work in Africa. There could easily be such a meeting in the U.S. jointly sponsored by Ford, Atlantic, Kellogg, Tides and Gates, hosted by the Greater New Orleans or the Hill Snowden foundations. Joseph Rowntree, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, Fondazione Venezia and King Baudouin foundations might use the EFC as a platform to move parts of this agenda ahead. The International Network of Women's Funds might well take the lead on a joint substantive venture with the Sabanci Vakif. The Arab Foundations Forum may support a planning effort to identify their priorities across these topics. The Dalit Foundation might well partner with the National Foundation for India and the India Foundation for the Arts and others for a regional meeting.

This will **not** be a large, centralized jointly-funded initiative led by the big international foundations. This is an **invitation** to consider new work. It is an **opportunity** to find like-minded colleagues and move needed work forward.

It will be in these ways that we—*we*—can move this work forward and establish what can become the groundwork for a larger movement within philanthropy, and an infrastructure that supports the funding of social justice and peace by locale, by region and globally. **We have the potential to give birth to something new.**

Seamus Heaney, the famous Irish poet (Nobel 1995) wrote *The Cure at Troy* in which he has the chorus say,

Human beings suffer,
They torture one another,
The get hurt and get hard.
No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.

The innocent in jails

Beat on their bars together.
A hunger-striker's father
Stands in the graveyard dumb.
The police widow in veils
Faints at the funeral home.

History says, *Don't hope*
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing;
The utter, self-revealing
Double-take of feeling.
If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.

This is our chance to work and create lightning—to give birth to something
new. *Thank you.*
