



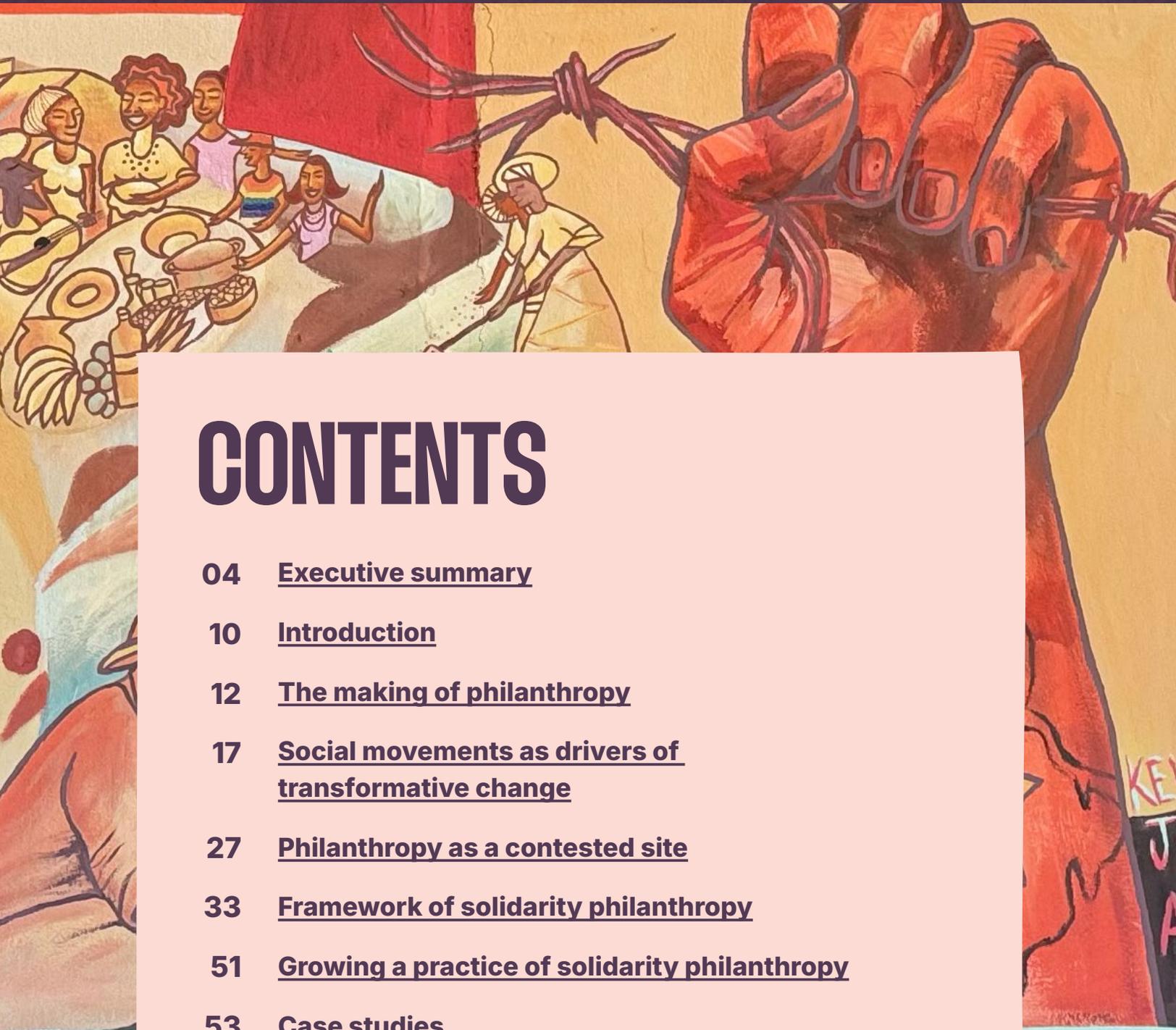
**Grassroots
International**



SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

**Redefining Philanthropy's
Relationship to Social Movements**





CONTENTS

- 04 **Executive summary**
- 10 **Introduction**
- 12 **The making of philanthropy**
- 17 **Social movements as drivers of transformative change**
- 27 **Philanthropy as a contested site**
- 33 **Framework of solidarity philanthropy**
- 51 **Growing a practice of solidarity philanthropy**
- 53 **Case studies**
- 59 **10 key takeaways for practicing solidarity philanthropy**
- 61 **Acknowledgements**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For those working toward social and ecological justice, philanthropy is a key site of contestation. It is deeply flawed and in urgent need of transformation. Now is the time to organize the philanthropic sector into an active community for movement support and a force for resource redistribution. But how do we get there?

How do we change philanthropy from within – by funders, donors, and others in the sector – in tandem with social movements and allies?

We offer this framework of *solidarity philanthropy* as a synthesis of mutual learning through decades of deep relationships with social movements, allies, and our peers in philanthropy. This offering contributes to a growing ecosystem of approaches for shifting philanthropy toward justice, with the intention of sparking further collective dialogue and organizing.

Solidarity philanthropy begins from a recognition of the ways in which philanthropy is implicated in upholding uneven power dynamics. Indeed, philanthropic wealth maintains direct ties to the forms of colonization and exploitation that are at the core of the global extractive economy we live in. We begin with an exploration of “the making of philanthropy,” outlining the ways in which philanthropy both grew out of and feeds into multiple and interconnected systems of oppression.



We then ask: How can those of us within philanthropy disrupt these cycles and contribute to transformative change? This involves approaching philanthropy not as a fixed, monolithic structure, but as a site of contestation, to be humanized and organized. If we understand philanthropy as a space rife with competing tendencies associated with different practices, attitudes, assumptions, and power dynamics, we can situate ourselves within these dynamics and identify our contradictions, growing edges, and leverage points for collective change. Here we identify four competing, and often overlapping, **tendencies within philanthropy: philanthrocapitalist, charity, liberal, and progressive.**

We unpack these four tendencies in order to more deeply interrogate our role in perpetuating the problems and limitations of our philanthropic practices.

In seeking a way forward, there are highly organized and effective social movements whom we can turn to for political clarity, composed of and led by frontline communities, who are paving the way toward transformative change. To understand how we can better align with movements, we explore some of the visions that they are working towards. Grounded in diverse organizing traditions and cosmovisions, these include food sovereignty, ecological/climate justice, feminist economies for the sustainability of life, just transition, and *buen vivir*, among others. At their essence, **these visions focus on bringing people into right relationship with one another and with all living systems. For those of us in philanthropy, our task at hand is to come into right relationship with social movements.** This brings us to a deeper exploration of solidarity philanthropy.

The framework of solidarity philanthropy offered within this publication is based on seven intertwined components, summarized as follows.

Solidarity Philanthropy Framework

Solidarity, Internationalism, and Praxis

We begin with the key elements of solidarity, internationalism, and praxis. Solidarity and internationalism affirm that our fates are inextricably linked within and across borders as we strive to build a better world. Praxis helps us approach our collective work as a living, breathing process based on continual learning and evolution.

Positionality and Alignment with Movements

Next are positionality and alignment with movements. Awareness of our own positionality vis-a-vis systems of power and oppression and alignment with social movements on values, visions, analyses, and theories of change are fundamental to carrying out the work.

Movement Accompaniment and Donor Organizing

Finally, movement accompaniment and donor organizing go hand-in-hand as two main manifestations of what the work of solidarity philanthropy looks like in practice – as further elaborated within.

The framework is followed by a section on growing a practice of solidarity philanthropy, detailing how its implementation takes place across different levels of organizing and building. It starts from within at the personal level, calling us to engage in this work through our political consciousness. Organizations can then provide the space to build community, practice accountability, learn, and take collective action. Finally,

we recognize that these changes on the personal and organizational levels are not enough. The entire philanthropic ecosystem must redefine its purpose, practices, and relationships to transform itself into a powerful movement-support sector.

We close by sharing some key learnings from our efforts to practice solidarity philanthropy thus far.

10 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTICING SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

1. Reckoning with our personal and institutional connection with wealth helps us to fundamentally reorient the work of philanthropy.

Understanding where our money has come from helps us understand where it needs to go. With this awareness and accountability, our financial resources can be a tool of solidarity rather than an obstacle.

2. Funding social movements is one of the most effective ways to move money back to the people.

Social movements do the hard work of organizing those most impacted by systemic injustices into articulated movements. Through funding them, we can directly resource the power-building efforts that are necessary to create deep transformation in systems, structures, and culture toward social, economic, and ecological justice.

3. It is imperative to drastically increase the amount of funding going to Global South social movements.

Given the massive extraction of wealth from the Global South to Global North through colonization, slavery, and other forms of domination, Global North funders have a particular obligation to return stolen wealth to the Global South.

4. Grantmaking must be aligned with movement partners' goals of financial autonomy.

This involves moving away from top-down, donor-driven, conditional funding and onerous reporting requirements, toward long-term general operating or flexible core support and additional funding for movement infrastructure, learning exchanges, emergency response, and other needs as they emerge.

5. Beyond funding, accompanying social movements entails a commitment to deep allyship.

This involves cultivating our own political consciousness through open dialogue with social movements, ongoing political education, self-reflection, collective learning, and action to align with movements toward liberated futures.

6. We must organize others.

Beyond our own giving, we must organize our peers and collaborate with others in the sector to build a broader, more expansive and powerful constituency. To do this, we can find a political home by joining a donor network and connecting with movement support public foundations with active donor engagement programs.

7. It is essential to use our voices and take action.

This is especially the case when movements and broader civil society are targeted and criminalized. Our solidarity is stronger when we support movement partners by publicly advocating for their rights, causes, and protection. In the case of private foundations, speaking up can reduce risks for public foundations and movement partners, amplifying their efforts in a crucial way.

8. Public foundations are a key part of movement support infrastructure and need to be supported as such.

Public foundations that serve as movement support intermediaries have established trusted relationships with social movements in our communities and around the world. For those who have not done global grantmaking, or have a global program without an emphasis on social movements, collaboration with intermediary foundations can enhance the effectiveness, reach, and longevity of support.

9. We need to rethink impact and orient towards learning and collaboration.

It is time for us to join a move away from prescriptive, extractive, and overly quantitative metrics. We can embrace a framework that centers mutual learning and collaboration; respects local cultural and political contexts; acknowledges that systemic and historic change takes time; and understands that material outcomes cannot be separated from holistic movement building.

10. Solidarity philanthropy includes divestment from harmful systems and investment in life-affirming ones

It is important to examine the entirety of our wealth, not only the portion going toward grantmaking. Whether institutional foundations that typically have 95% of their resources in endowments or individual donors with significant resources in reserves or other forms of wealth, it is critical to ensure that our investments are aligned with our solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

We are living through an intense period in which authoritarian and militaristic forces are consolidating power across the world, driving systems of death, repression, exploitation and extraction. At the same time, global social movements are leading an increasingly coordinated push for systemic change, centering justice, democracy, self-determination, and defense of the Earth and life itself. Philanthropy is uniquely positioned at the nexus of these opposing dynamics. Having arisen over time out of deeply unjust systems, it consists of competing tendencies seeking both to uphold these systems and to dismantle them.

For those working toward social and ecological justice, philanthropy is a critical site of contestation, deeply flawed and in urgent need of transformation into an active community for movement support and a force for resource redistribution.

Social movements, progressives within the philanthropic sector, and allies agree that there is an urgent need for a new form of philanthropy – one that supports movement-led systemic change, liberation for the people, and right relationship with the Earth and all living systems.¹

But how do we get there? How do we transform philanthropy from within – by funders, donors, and others in the sector – in tandem with social movements and others? We offer this framework of solidarity philanthropy as a synthesis of mutual learnings through decades of deep relationships with social movements, allies, and our peers in philanthropy. This offering contributes to a growing ecosystem of approaches for shifting philanthropy toward justice, with the intention of sparking further collective dialogue and organizing.

Solidarity philanthropy begins from a recognition of the ways in which philanthropy is implicated in upholding uneven power dynamics. It is a sector that reproduces inequitable social relations in ways that are self-serving and self-perpetuating. Indeed, philanthropic wealth maintains direct ties to the forms of colonization and exploitation that are at the core of the global extractive economy we live in.

Anchored in a long-term commitment to accompanying social movements, solidarity philanthropy recognizes the complexity of these interwoven relationships. It is deeply grounded in learnings from social justice movements seeking to repair the damage to people and their environments caused by the concentration of wealth and power. Solidarity philanthropy is a framework that couples the political roots of solidarity with recognition of the harm done by philanthropy. From this starting point, it seeks to stop and reverse wrongdoings by returning wealth to the communities from which it was extracted.

Essential to the framework of solidarity philanthropy is the conviction that the liberation of any person or peoples is bound up with the liberation of all of us. That is, solidarity is understood as a commitment to collective liberation. Social justice movements teach us that putting this vision into action requires trusted relationships with diverse allies – including donors – who share commitment to genuine systemic transformation. These movements operate at scale, from the grassroots to the global levels, working to bring people into right relationship with one another, as well as with the Earth.

In this context, solidarity philanthropy is a way for philanthropy to come into right relationship with these social movements. To accomplish this, solidarity philanthropy organizes donors to accompany social movements in a continuous praxis of shared learning, aligned action, and collective reflection.

The solidarity philanthropy framework that we envision is a comprehensive learning approach to *shifting values and awakening our political consciousness* to inspire continuous action and reflection. We are grateful to participate alongside other donors, funders, and allies in this journey to collective liberation, which calls for a rigorous understanding of the world and our place in it.



"Right relationship" is a term commonly used by the ecological justice movement that refers to an ongoing practice of deepening our relationships with each other and with the web of life of which we are part. According to [Movement Generation](#), striving to be in right relationship with the Earth and one another involves "build[ing] transformational relationships rooted in the love of diversity, trust, respect, humility, and reciprocity."

THE MAKING OF PHILANTHROPY

“All wealth is generated through the labor of the living world and must be returned.

Financial wealth is simply a degraded form of clean air, healthy soil, fresh water, and our collective labor (from the microbes to the humans)”

– Movement Generation: Justice and Ecology Project

Reckoning with the past is a necessary part of understanding the present and building the future. Philanthropy is firmly rooted in the murky blood-stained history of wealth accumulation – and changing this trajectory means grappling with the unjust conditions that have allowed for uneven wealth accumulation and distribution in the first place. This section explores the interrelationship between wealth accumulation, systems of oppression, and philanthropy.

Fundamentally, philanthropy cannot be separated from capitalism, the dominant global political and economic system that extracts wealth from the labor of working people and the commodification of nature, in an unending quest to maximize profit for the few. Capitalism works in tandem with white supremacy, cis-hetero patriarchy, colonialism, extractivism, and other systems of oppression to divide society by constructs such as class, race, and gender, and to fray the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world.

²Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. Univ of California Press.

White supremacy is a system of oppression that upholds a global caste hierarchy based on proximity to a mythical “white ideal.” Central to white supremacy is the construct of race, which was essentially designed to justify racism as a key method of pursuing economic growth through exploitation. Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.” This can be seen in the commodification of human beings through chattel slavery that began with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and that was reinforced by the settler colonial conquest of Indigenous land and territory – the ongoing legacies of which continue to permeate laws, institutions, and culture.

Cis-hetero-patriarchy is a system of oppression that creates and perpetuates sexual and gendered hierarchy in relation to the supremacy of cis-hetero-male behaviors. Cis-hetero patriarchy is a main driver of gender-based violence. It is also attributed with devaluing or rendering invisible the labor – and often the very existence – of women, queer, trans, and non-binary people. This is particularly the case when it comes to care work, food provision, stewardship of nature, and other activities essential to the sustenance of life.

These systems have gone hand-in-hand to justify the enrichment of an

overwhelmingly white and cis-hetero-male minority through the enslavement, genocide, and the ongoing theft of land and labor from peoples intentionally marginalized by the constructs of race, class, and gender. A potent example is colonialism, through which European colonists went to Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas, forcibly enslaving, killing, and/or removing those territories’ Indigenous Peoples in order to exploit land, nature, and labor, and in some cases to form settler colonial nation-states (both historically and in current times, in places such as South Africa, the US, and Palestine).

Even in places where liberation struggles have achieved independence from colonization, colonial legacies continue through ongoing relationships of wealth accumulation through exploitation. Both older and newer forms of colonialism are inextricably linked to extractivism, the forceful practice of removing and/or concentrating control of the ecological resources that sustain life – and that form the basis of all wealth.

Together, the systems described above have interacted over centuries to facilitate the wealth accumulation out of which philanthropy has flowed. A defining moment in the interlinked relationship of philanthropy and systems of oppression was the Industrial Revolution from the 18th through early 20th centuries, giving



**CIS-HETERO
PATRIARCHY**

Control over bodies



**WHITE
SUPREMACY**

Unequal social relations

Structural racism



CAPITALISM

Theft of territory



COLONIALISM

Militarism

Exploitation of labor



EXTRACTIVISM

Destruction of the Earth

**WEALTH
ACCUMULATION**

Philanthropy both grew out of and feeds into multiple and interconnected systems of oppression.



From an ethical and even spiritual perspective, we are left grappling with the position that the philanthropic dollars we manage are not “our money.”

rise to extremes in both poverty and wealth concentration. During this time, philanthropy became an important outlet for the accumulated wealth of megarich industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller and J.P. Morgan – paving the way for the philanthropic sector as we know it today. Modern philanthropy, then, emerged as a means for the rich to both legitimize and justify their wealth through a narrative of charity and generosity, while their business ventures created and exacerbated the very inequalities that the sector is ostensibly dedicated to ending.

As wealth accumulation has grown into the present, so too has the philanthropic sector, with foundations currently holding [upward of \\$1.5 trillion](#).³ In the seminal book *The Revolution Will Not be Funded*, Gilmore describes philanthropic wealth as

“private allocation of stolen social wages,” “twice stolen.” It is a) stolen from labor in the form of profit, through the processes described above, and then b) sheltered from taxation through the “nonprofit industrial complex” in which philanthropy is embedded.

According to the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), \$73.34 billion in tax revenue was lost to the public in 2022 due to personal and corporate charitable deductions. They estimate that if a more holistic accounting were done, the true revenue costs of charity likely add up to *several hundreds of billions of dollars each year*.⁴ It is not only the lost tax revenue that is problematic, but also that the US tax system subsidizes the charitable contributions of rich people [more highly](#) than middle class and poor people. This is one of many ways in which philanthropy is furthering the

³<https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2024-1-29-foundation-assets-reach-a-record>

⁴<https://ips-dc.org/report-true-cost-of-billionaire-philanthropy/>

disproportionate influence of those with wealth in the functioning of society, at direct odds with democracy.⁵

Others have built upon Gilmore's analysis to argue that philanthropic wealth is in fact stolen many times over. As Aaron Tanaka [sums up](#):

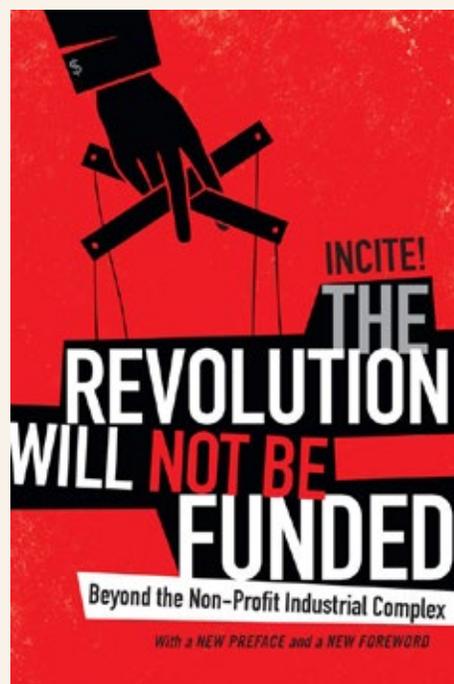
The present value of labor extracted from enslaved Black people is estimated to be \$5.9–14.2 trillion. The value of stolen land from Indigenous Americans is inestimable, as nearly all original wealth creation was capitalized by the “subsidies” secured through genocide and land theft. And the systematic undervaluing of “women’s work” has allowed for the accumulation of extreme wealth by corporations that rely on a labor force sustained with minimal costs to their bottom lines....

From an ethical and even spiritual perspective, we are left grappling with the position that the philanthropic dollars we manage are not “our money.”⁶

Another layer is that philanthropic wealth is “[actively invested](#)” every day into ensuring this same extractive cycle continues.⁷ This can be seen, for instance, in the ways in which philanthropy serves as a vehicle for perpetuating colonial patterns. At a macro level, some [\\$130 billion of aid](#) flows to the global South

annually. However, factoring in the aggregate financial transactions coming to and from the global South – among them investments, trade, tax evasion, special interests – shows a deficit of some \$16.3 trillion since the 1980s benefitting the global North. As part of the extractive economy, for each dollar spent on “aid,” \$24 dollars boomerangs back to investors.⁸

This brings us to the fact that that philanthropy is holding stolen wealth. When we fully come to terms with that, we can begin to see philanthropy from a point of repair, redistribution, and returning wealth. This is a powerful and sorely needed shift for our sector.



⁵<https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2018/12/the-problems-with-philanthropy>

⁶<https://medium.com/justice-funders/solidarity-philanthropy-reparations-democracy-power-9961ef2e1b64>

⁷<https://forgeorganizing.org/article/will-revolution-be-funded/>

⁸<https://www.developmentresearch.eu/?p=512>



SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS DRIVERS OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

When we take as our starting point that we are holding stolen wealth, with a moral imperative to return it to the people, the mandate of philanthropy looks very different. But what does returning wealth to the people look like in practice? In seeking a way forward, there are highly organized and effective social movements whom we can turn to.

These movements are composed of and led by frontline communities directly impacted by intersecting forms of oppression and are leading drivers of transformative change. Collectively, they analyze the root causes of injustice, develop a vision for solutions to address these wrongdoings, and take bold and strategic action to make such visions reality.



Why philanthropy should get behind social movements

The following are some of the reasons why we feel philanthropy should get behind social movements if we truly want to have maximum impact for social and ecological transformation:



Social movements have root cause analysis, making their solutions and visions systemically transformative.

Social movements practice powerful root cause analysis that highlights the historical underpinnings of current crises; traces power to its sources; and identifies how systems of oppression intersect and feed into each other. Their analysis details how the crises at present are the consequence of systems built on exploitation of both people and the natural world. Just as they are clear on how we got ourselves into current crises, they are similarly clear on how we can get out of them, offering visionary yet practical solutions focused on system-wide change (see next point).

Social movements are where resistance and construction co-exist.

Social movements work to fight the bad (what is causing harm) and build the good (what is culturally and materially necessary to sustain life). The construction is driven by diverse but aligned visions of food sovereignty, ecological justice, feminist economies for the sustainability of life, *buen vivir*, and others, as described below.

All over the world, social movements are creating worker cooperatives, communal land holdings, healing centers, restorative justice projects, agroecology farms and schools, community kitchens, mutual aid projects, and more, as alternatives under construction, often resulting from hard fought victories from steadfast resistance.



These projects serve as a bridge to the next system, demonstrating that alternatives are possible and creating spaces for people to have lived experiences of agency, democracy, and freedom. In doing so, they prefigure a taste of post-capitalist formations where life and relationships are free from profit-driven commodification.

Social movements show us we cannot separate people from nature.

From agroecology to land rematriation processes, social movements' visions go beyond economic transformation to holistic restoration of the relationship between people and the Earth. For Indigenous movements, this relationship is especially integral, as conveyed by Berta Cáceres of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH): "In our worldview, we are beings who come from the Earth, from the water, and from corn. The Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers...COPINH validates this commitment to continue protecting our waters, the rivers, our shared resources, and nature in general, as well as our rights as a people."

Through social movements, people facing systemic oppression organize themselves to build collective power to liberate everyone.

Part of what makes social movements so powerful and effective is the fact that they are built from the base by those who are most impacted by intersecting systems of oppression. Recognizing the transformative potential and agency of each person, they unite those who might otherwise feel powerless and dispensable into a force for change capable of transforming the world. As Paulo Freire states, "It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors."



Social movements demonstrate the power of internationalist solidarity.

While locally rooted, social movements are articulated within broader national, regional, and/or global networks. They function from an awareness that we are all inextricably connected, even if we are impacted differently based on our respective locations and identities, and that it is going to take all of us, everywhere, to dismantle existing oppressive systems while building new liberatory ones. From the disproportionate number of lives claimed when “natural” disaster strikes in Haiti, to industrial pollution in the Niger Delta, to ongoing genocide in Palestine, social movements understand injustices not as isolated events, but as interconnected at their roots, and they respond to them as such, through powerful manifestations of internationalist solidarity.

Social movements save lives.

When crisis strikes, social movements are often the first to mobilize their infrastructure and people to save lives through emergency relief grounded in mutual aid and solidarity. As detailed in the report [Response and Resistance: Social Movements, Covid & Converging Crises](#), in the face of government abandonment and inefficacy, social movements across the globe were able to hit the ground running in their pandemic response, saving countless lives. Key factors were that they already knew the lay of the land in their respective communities and had extensive networks built through trust over years of community organizing.⁹

Social movements offer moral and political clarity.

As of this writing, Israel has killed more than 60,000 Palestinians in an ongoing genocide. While politicians are mired in geopolitical and economic calculations, and philanthropy is debating the terminology of genocide and Zionism as people are massacred and starved daily,

⁹https://grassrootsonline.org/learning_hub/covid-report-2022/



Palestinian social movements are telling the truth of what is happening, calling on the world to take action based on justice and moral clarity. Global public opinion is changing because the solidarity movement led by social movements around the world is shifting the tide from justification of the horrific genocide to a growing cry for freedom for Palestinians and just peace in the region.

Social movements embody visions driven by love and life.

The work of social movements is ultimately a labor of love in affirmation of life, as captured in a [video](#) by Brazil’s Landless Workers Movement (MST) on its pandemic response set to the song “Yo Vengo a Ofrecer Mi Corazón” (“I Come to Offer My Heart”).¹⁰ Another powerful example is the [Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School \(IFOS\)](#), bringing together feminist movement leaders from across the globe. IFOS participants have developed a collective analysis and vision for feminist economies centering the sustainability of life in response to the project of death wrought by war, genocide, militarization, and extractivism.¹¹



¹⁰<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRRWck8SNNk>

¹¹See <https://ggjalliance.org/programs/feminist-organizing-schools/>

Social Movement Visions

Social movements are not only leading the way in response and resistance to the greatest crises of our times. They are offering up brilliant and effective frameworks to transform the world, and tirelessly working to put them into practice in the here and now. The following are some snapshots of their visionary political projects.



Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is understood as the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”¹² Originating from the small-scale food producers who provide most of the world’s food while experiencing the brunt of the injustices of the globalized food system, food sovereignty offers a vision not only for an entirely different food system, but for a wholesale break from prevailing paradigms of trade, aid, and development – prioritizing human dignity, planetary health, and a new set of relationships with each other and the Earth. Today, food sovereignty spans urban and rural movements and diverse sectors. It has sparked laws and policies from the local to global levels and countless alternative food system efforts.

¹²<https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>



Ecological/Climate Justice

Social movements are increasingly approaching work on land, territory, water, seeds, and food under the frame of ecological justice: “the state of balance between human communities and healthy ecosystems based on thriving, mutually beneficial relationships and participatory self-governance.”¹³ This broad framing is key to understanding the interconnected struggles that ecological justice encompasses. These span from [environmental justice](#) rooted in community organizing by people of color in the US working to stop environmental racism¹⁴ to [global mobilizations](#) led by Indigenous Peoples as the guardians of the biocultural diversity of our planet, whose lifeways are severely threatened and under direct attack. In the face of climate-induced chaos that is far from “natural,” calls for ecological justice are increasingly melding with calls for climate justice.



Feminist Economies for the Sustainability of Life

Feminist economies for the sustainability of life is a systemic alternative that turns capitalist economics on its head by articulating economies centered on care, reciprocity, mutual aid, and respect for diverse forms of productive and reproductive labor.¹⁶ This vision is advanced by grassroots feminist movements led by women, queer, trans, and non-binary people. It is rooted in the realities of those targeted by the intersecting forces of cis-hetero patriarchy and other systems of oppression, the manifestations of which include gender-based violence, the feminization of poverty, and attacks on reproductive rights. Grassroots feminist movements

¹³<https://movementgeneration.org/ecological-justice/>

¹⁴<https://ejgreenbook.com/resources/appendix-g-the-17-principles-of-environmental-justice/>

¹⁵https://www.climateemergencyinstitute.com/uploads/Peoples_climate_agreement.pdf

¹⁶<https://capiremov.org/en/experience/feministschool-feminist-economy-is-a-proposal-and-strategy-for-movement-building/>

are increasingly drawing links between extractivism, white supremacy, and cis-hetero patriarchy, recognizing multiple territories to defend and protect, from the Earth itself, to collective memory, to our very bodies and the right to bodily autonomy.



Just Transition

Just transition originated in trade union organizing and has been further articulated by diverse movements as “a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.”¹⁷ Just transition maps out how it is necessary to “stop the bad,” which includes extraction (dig, burn, dump), consumerism and colonial mindset, enclosure of wealth and power, and militarism as the foundation of the extractive economy. It also shows us how to “build the good,” through living economies based on regeneration, caring and sacredness, ecological and social wellbeing, and deep democracy. Just transition involves defunding and dismantling the extractive economy via organized divestment efforts, which then feed and grow place-based regenerative economies through redemocratized pools of capital. Some movements have expanded upon just transition to articulate related visions of just recovery and just transformation.¹⁸

¹⁷<https://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/>

¹⁸See, e.g., https://grassrootsonline.org/learning_hub/puerto-rico-report-2020/



Buen Vivir

Buen vivir translates to good living or living well, though neither term fully captures the Indigenous Andean conceptions of *suma qamaña* and *sumak kawsay* from which this vision originates. Buen vivir is a matrix of alternatives to development based on: "(1) a vision of the whole or the Pacha; (2) co-existing in multipolarity; (3) the pursuit of equilibrium; (4) the complementarity of diverse subjects; and (5) decolonization."¹⁹ It starts from an understanding of the whole or the "Pacha," where there is no separation between humans and nature and where time and space are cyclical and nonlinear. Buen vivir proposes that seeking balance within the whole is only possible through complementarity, not competition, challenging paradigms of growth at all costs. It points to the necessity of decolonization to dismantle the systems that do not allow us to see the whole.²⁰



¹⁹See p. 17 of Solón, P. (2017). *Systemic Alternatives: Vivir Bien, Degrowth, Commons, Ecofeminism, Rights of Mother Earth and Deglobalisation*

²⁰Synthesized from <https://systemicalternatives.org/2019/12/15/vivir-bien-eng/>

PHILANTHROPY AS A CONTESTED SITE

As detailed above, there are many compelling reasons for philanthropy to support social movements. But simply including social movements in portfolios of the existing status quo of philanthropy is not enough. We believe that another way is possible. What if philanthropy became a movement support sector that was entirely in service of and accountable to movements? What if philanthropy supported the financial autonomy of social movements and not a set of prescriptive outcomes divorced from political and historical contexts? What if we provided reliable and politically aligned funding and solidarity for the long-term? What if we mobilized enough resources to support the global scale, diversity and depth of the movement building and infrastructure needed to address the magnitude and urgency of today's multiple crises? What if we funded social movements like we wanted them to win?²¹

Achieving the above, however, requires considerable reckoning, organizing, and evolution within philanthropy, along with pressure and support from outside the sector. While social movements have received a degree of recognition and acceptance by philanthropy, too many funders only engage with them out of a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) obligation as opposed to a deeper understanding of how necessary social movements are and how they work. Furthermore, some are funding social movements at the same time that they are providing substantially more funding to projects undermining these very efforts, projects predicated on sustaining capitalism by making it appear kinder, gentler, greener, and/or more equitable.

Philanthropy is a sector that has caused enormous frustration and uncertainty to movements at best, and at worst, has exerted control over, extracted from, and

²¹To paraphrase the words of Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson while co-executive director of the Highlander Center: "fund us like you want us to win."

taken credit from progressive groups while absorbing them into the reformist nonprofit industrial complex. We must break these cycles, or they will continue to do real and lasting harm.

Redefining philanthropy's relationship to social movements involves approaching the sector not as a fixed, monolithic structure, but as a site of contestation, to be humanized and organized.

If we understand philanthropy as a space rife with competing tendencies that are associated with different practices, attitudes, assumptions, and power

dynamics, we can situate ourselves within these dynamics and identify our contradictions, growing edges, and leverage points for collective change.

This section outlines, in broad brushstrokes, four competing and often overlapping types of tendencies in philanthropy: philanthrocapitalist, charity, liberal, and progressive. A disclaimer is that the description of these tendencies involves some necessary generalization of a highly nuanced terrain with many gray areas. The intention is to offer a way for those of us within philanthropy to reflect on our sometimes uninterrogated practices (and the values they may inadvertently advance) and to also identify opportunities, challenges, and gaps in how we operate, as related to our commitment to solidarity.



Tendencies in Philanthropy

Philanthrocapitalist

This tendency promotes donors' financial and political interests through philanthropy and seeks to further align the sector with the for-profit market. It commonly takes the form of corporations or corporate leaders creating philanthropic arms to greenwash their images while profiteering from harmful practices such as war and extraction. It advances corporate agendas such as promoting corporate controlled seeds, chemical inputs, etc. under the guise of "feeding the world" while actually undermining communities' ability to feed themselves. This tendency also relies heavily on market-based mechanisms such as carbon trading, which furthers land grabbing of Indigenous territories in the Global South and pollution of communities of color in the Global North, while greenwashing those activities.

Within this tendency, financial success is an indication of intelligence, hard work, and leadership. CEOs are put forward as the ideal leaders of philanthropic institutions, operating under the strategy of picking and choosing those community groups worthy to implement the philanthropic leaders' visions.

Social movements are positioned as oppositional within this tendency, seen as standing in the way of the interests of philanthropy.





Charity

Charity is often motivated by genuine human concern and compassion. This tendency, however, generally misses the root cause analysis of what led to a particular harm in the first place, as well as lacking a deeper reflection about the power dynamics of giving.

Humanitarian funds, especially after disaster strikes, are often channeled through big international aid agencies – while bypassing local efforts of grassroots first responders who know their communities best. To add insult to injury, disaster zones are routinely seen as assimilation sites for future profit.²²

Within this tendency, philanthropic effort is seen as inevitable, essential, and perpetually needed. And ironically, while the grantmaking is aimed at alleviating suffering, many charity-oriented funders have endowments that are 95% of their wealth, invested into and profiting from the very systems causing the suffering.

Social movements are rendered largely invisible within this tendency, painting a picture of impacted communities needing outside intervention rather than recognizing and starting from their own forms of organization.

Liberal

This tendency acknowledges that there are inequities and injustices, but promotes solutions based on increased opportunity, equal access, representation, and diversity within the current system, without any fundamental changes to the system itself. It can be likened to encouraging people to “move up the ladder” while keeping the hierarchy intact. This perpetuates the illusion that anyone can advance as an individual if they work hard enough, when in fact the existing hierarchy requires a majority of people to remain at the bottom. The

²²For more on this, see *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* and related works by Naomi Klein.



liberal tendency may seek to produce a kinder and gentler capitalism by providing individuals with access to opportunities to “get ahead” and assimilating people into the existing extractive system. Examples include scholarships and other initiatives that make people compete for a limited slice of the pie.

The liberal tendency distinguishes itself from the charity tendency in its focus on reforms versus helping the needy, but these reforms still largely maintain the existing system. This tendency often overly relies on metrics-based measurements of success and extensive reporting requirements.²³ It privileges elite, large, established institutions for giving.

Social movements are seen within this tendency as being one of many actors who should have a seat at the table in philanthropic efforts.

Progressive

The progressive tendency is grounded in systemic analysis and supports grassroots organizing and movement building. It challenges the other tendencies through its focus on shifting power, transforming systems, and organizing philanthropy to be more social movement-oriented and self-aware.

This tendency, however, is not without its gaps and weaknesses. One significant gap is that funding strategies can lack a global perspective and internationalist analysis. This can reinforce a false dichotomy of local/domestic vs. international (prioritizing the former) that stems from insufficient awareness of the historical and current impacts of US interventions around the globe, of the interconnectedness between foreign and domestic policy, and of the existence of effective social movements outside of the US.

²³See <https://guerrillafoundation.org/escaping-the-trap-of-impact-measurement/>



Another potential pitfall can be seen in an overemphasis on mechanisms of grantmaking as a strategy for movement accountability and shifting power. Some truly innovative and important work has been accomplished through employing more participatory and democratic principles to grantmaking. However, while these may yield small shifts in power at the level of grantmaking decisions, they should not be conflated with the systemic shifts in power that social movements are working toward and are best approached as complementary to broader social movement strategies, in dialogue with movements.

A third gap of this tendency has been in its inability to organize itself into more of a powerful force in philanthropy, functioning more as a loosely affiliated constellation of progressive funders as opposed to an organized force able to influence the other tendencies – although there are important efforts aimed at doing so, which have inspired and informed this publication.

Given these and other challenges, those of us who identify as progressives have our work cut out for us. The following framework of solidarity philanthropy aims to contribute to ongoing collective efforts to shift the sector and push the bounds of what is possible.

FRAMEWORK OF SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY



Solidarity, Internationalism, and Praxis

Solidarity and internationalism affirm that our fates are inextricably linked within and across borders as we strive to build a better world. Praxis helps us approach our collective work as a living, breathing process based on continual learning and evolution.



Positionality and Alignment with Movements

Awareness of our own positionality vis-a-vis systems of power and oppression and alignment with social movements on values, visions, analyses, and theories of change are fundamental to carrying out the work.



Movement Accompaniment and Donor Organizing

These go hand-in-hand as two main manifestations of what the work of solidarity philanthropy looks like in practice.

SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

SOLIDARITY

PRAXIS

MOVEMENT ACCOMPANIMENT

MOVEMENT
ALIGNMENT

POSITIONALITY

DONOR ORGANIZING

INTERNATIONALISM

The powerful visions put forth by social movements described above chart out pathways in the long journey of transforming a fundamentally unjust system. Movements pursue this painstaking work backed by a tightly woven network of close allies – and have called on the philanthropic sector to examine its existing and potential role in this set of relationships. It is difficult to overstate the urgency and enormity of this task – one that requires reckoning, healing, imagination, and building. We see solidarity philanthropy as an important vehicle for carrying out this work.

Solidarity philanthropy has seven key parts, which are overlapping and build on each other. It begins with the elements of *solidarity*, *internationalism*, and *praxis*, which are fundamental starting points for our approach. We then introduce movement alignment and positionality as necessary practices in which the work of solidarity philanthropy is rooted. From there, we present *movement accompaniment* and *donor organizing* as the crux of the work of solidarity philanthropy.

Key Elements: Solidarity, Internationalism, and Praxis



Solidarity

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

–Lilla Watson, a Murri (Indigenous Australian) visual artist, activist, and academic.

Solidarity is inherently relational and liberatory. It is an exercise of our humanity and an understanding that we are all profoundly interconnected and dependent upon each other for our collective liberation.

In affirming that an injury to one is an injury to all, solidarity requires us to take a stand when people are under various forms of attack. It calls us to work together to reject all forms of oppression, from everyday



violence, to the establishment of sacrifice zones, to outright genocide. It moves us to act from the deepest level of our humanity in collective struggle – constantly – until each and every one of us is free.

Solidarity also calls us to reckon with our complicity. Many people in the Global North are by default complicit in our governments' wars and occupations because our tax dollars pay for those actions and are complicit in corporate exploitation because we buy from or invest in those corporations. This extends beyond the individual level, and we have already detailed above many of the ways in which philanthropy is complicit in systemic injustices. It is difficult to be completely free from complicity, but we have a responsibility to disengage from it as much as we can, by boycotting, divesting, speaking out, and organizing for change.

Such efforts allow us to move toward solidarity. And when relationships of solidarity become stronger than relationships of profit and domination, we have a chance at building enough power to challenge transnational extractive capital and authoritarian governments.

As reflected in its name, solidarity is a cornerstone of the solidarity philanthropy framework (and the sun in our accompanying graphic) because it is through solidarity that we radically reorient our relationship with social movements from that of grantee/grantor to that of comrades, allies, or co-conspirators in changemaking. Through a focus on solidarity, we recognize ourselves as political subjects, not passively endorsing what social movements are doing, but acting in solidarity with them in pursuit of a shared purpose. Our strategic and primary role is still in mobilizing resources, but this is approached as an extension of our broader solidarity – recognizing both that we are more than our resources *and* that we have an important role to play and responsibility to fulfill through our access to resources. What this can look like in practice is further elaborated upon the sections below on movement accompaniment and donor organizing.



Internationalism

Supporting movements facing systemic global issues must be done in a way that is grounded in *internationalism*, understanding that our fates are inextricably linked within and across borders as we strive to build a better world. Many social movements are themselves concrete expressions of internationalism – seamlessly organizing and shifting their work agendas across local, national, and transnational spaces in response to the needs of their constituencies.

Movements, particularly those in the Global South, understand that the forces mounted against them – from land and water grabbing, to transnational corporations and trade regimes, to rising authoritarianism – are global in nature, and they are approaching them as such, in ways that are powerful, nimble, deep, and wide.

But while social movements are carrying out strategically coordinated work across multiple scales, from the local to the transnational, philanthropy has been slow to catch up, funding in segmented ways that match neither the global nature nor the scope of current crises and the social movement response to them. The internationalist spirit of global movement organizing is captured well by the slogan of La Via Campesina “globalize the struggle, globalize the hope.” Integrating internationalism into our philanthropic practices leads us to ask how we can globalize our solidarity through effective accompaniment across multiple scales and borders. This is especially salient amidst rising right-wing nationalism, through which national self-interest has become weaponized and pitted against any notions of global equity or cooperation. A movement-led internationalist approach is key to confronting this.



Praxis

“Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.”

-Paulo Freire

Constructing internationalist solidarity involves dedicated work that is not achieved overnight, but through collective cycles of struggle and growth. Movements know these cycles as praxis, which is the continuous practice of learning and doing. Specifically, praxis is a process in which groups of people work in solidarity towards a common agenda – taking action together, reflecting on what was learned through the process of action, and continuing to develop their collective path based on those lessons. It is an evolving spiral.

Philanthropy can advance its own form of praxis in relationship with social movements – developing an idea of how we want to act, taking action, learning from that experience, and reflecting on our learnings to inform our future actions. Praxis is highly collective because everyone is accountable for lending their unique contributions to a shared vision. Out of the seven components of solidarity philanthropy, praxis synthesizes all other elements into a constant process of action and reflection, creating space for new strategies and courageous actions, as we continue to learn and evolve, together with movements.

Conditions for Growth: Movement Alignment and Positionality



Movement Alignment

Another component of solidarity philanthropy is movement alignment, which entails donors adapting essential practices to be in right relationship with social movements. Being in alignment with social movements is not about simply endorsing the work they are doing; rather, it involves continually aligning with them on values, theories of change, visions, and political analyses.

Our values shape how we interact with the world around us. If the values of philanthropy are out of sync with those of movements, we cannot authentically work together. There also needs to be synergy between our theories of change. When actors within philanthropy see themselves – and not social movements – as the principal protagonists or knowledge keepers, they stand in the way of grassroots changemaking. Social movements put together powerful theories of change in ways that are linked to their visions and frameworks – including food sovereignty, ecological/climate justice, grassroots feminisms, just transition, and buen vivir, as detailed above. Aligning ourselves with these political projects is not possible without recognizing the protagonism of those who initiated them and continue to advance them.

Shared political analysis & root cause analysis

In a similar vein, shared political analysis is critical to solidarity philanthropy. Part of what makes social movements so impactful is their razor-sharp focus on root cause analysis as a fundamental starting point for the advancement of their work. Indeed, instead of rushing from problem to problem, it is crucial to first examine the root cause of issues that are systemically overlapping or intertwined.



Contextual analysis

Contextual analysis is a method used by movements to understand how various forces shape the present moment. It starts with creating historical timelines of events and then reviewing the balance of power between the actors at play within those events. This encourages us to explore cyclical complexities and identify trends, windows of opportunity, and strategy in the process. Practicing contextual analysis alongside social movements can be an effective way for people in philanthropy to build alignment and a collective agenda together with movements.



Positionality

The other main dimension of solidarity philanthropy is positionality, the awareness of our place and role in relationship to social movements. Positionality involves understanding how one's identities, experiences, and power relations influence their perception of the world and their place in it – including class, race, color, gender, sexuality, geography, nationality, generation, upbringing, and more. Each of us experiences life in a way that is directly shaped by how we are implicated in historical and structural systems of oppression – including how we benefit from them, are harmed by them, and/or are complicit in them.

Some of us may ourselves be on a healing journey from the harms we have experienced from systems of oppression. Some are uncovering the myths we have been taught to believe, and working to uproot them. Some find meaningful connection through the process of relationship building with social movements that are organizing in communities that are also our own, or very similar to those from which we come. Others are awakening new understanding and/or healing damaged relationships. For many of us, our personal stories are complex, perhaps incorporating many of these experiences, and more, at once. In addition to individual self-reflection, personal transformation happens through constant praxis that requires taking action and prioritizing collective work.

We each have control over either upholding or challenging the systems of oppression in which we are bound up.

Where do we stand – personally or organizationally – in relation to the accumulation and distribution of stolen wealth, through interconnected systems of oppression? How do we and future generations disrupt or perpetuate the extractive economy?

Philanthropy can contribute to the struggles of social movements by organizing our own people, institutions, and resources to dismantle systems of oppression that have been reinforced by the sector for far too long. In this way, we can change our relationship to wealth so that it is not an obstacle to our solidarity but transformed into a tool for it.

Positionality thus requires being clear about the difference between a social movement and an organization or individual engaging in movement support. Those of us who are donors, funders, and organizers in philanthropy have critical roles to play in supporting movements – but we must not conflate doing so with actually operating inside those movements. Being in true solidarity involves continually practicing the applied reflection of positionality, to build genuine relationships of trust and struggle.



The Work: Movement Accompaniment and Donor Organizing

Once we clarify, synthesize, and internalize solidarity philanthropy's key components of solidarity, internationalism, praxis, positionality, and movement alignment, we come to its two main areas of ongoing praxis – movement accompaniment and donor organizing.



Movement Accompaniment

Solidarity philanthropy takes place through *movement accompaniment*, which is a commitment to a quality of relationship over time. These relationships are built on the basis of several key principles:

- 1. Shared vision and values:** The practice of aligning with social movements, described above, is a necessary condition for the work of movement accompaniment. This involves shared commitments to deep transformation of systems and structures.
- 2. Walking together for the long haul:** Meaningful collaboration to transform the persistent injustices in the world requires long-term mutual commitment that is reliable through crises and difficult conditions. The extractive economy perpetuates uninterrupted, even when its immediate impacts are out of the spotlight. Our sector is often reactive to shocks and disasters, yet less involved in responding to their root causes or to the constant forms of everyday violence that communities experience. Once we understand that social, economic, and ecological justice requires a deep transformation in systems, structures, and culture, it is clear that these transformations take many years, even decades. As funders, the more our relationships with social movements mirror the timeframe and steadfastness required for this type of work, the more effective we will be in reaching our deeper goals.
- 3. Reciprocity:** In every relationship, each partner has gifts, insights, strengths, and expertise that nourish the other(s). As funders, it is



important to share all we can, with our hearts, minds, and spirits and to attune to the ways that our relationships with social movements impact and transform us from within. This deep learning creates opportunities that can bring us closer to achieving our potential as humanity, connected with the rest of the living world.

4. **Transparency:** Open, honest communication is essential to how we build and work together.
5. **Movement autonomy:** It is paramount to recognize the power that we hold as funders. In order to have authentic collaboration, our grantmaking, philanthropic organizing, and social action must respect the political and financial autonomy of social movements.
6. **Trust:** When rooted in the principles and practices above, there is a direct connection between the degree of mutual trust in a relationship and the possibilities of what that relationship can create. This extends beyond contractual obligations to include confidence in one another, and solidarity in its deepest sense.

These principles can then inform all aspects of our relationships with social movements, from how we do our grantmaking to how we approach broader social action and resource mobilization strategies.

Grantmaking

Movement accompaniment entails a number of practices to ensure that our grantmaking better reflects our social justice values. Among others, these include:

- **Supporting intersectional approaches** and movement building work for solutions that address root causes of the conditions we face, not just focusing on single issues;

- 
- **Providing flexible core funding** to support what social movements identify that they need most – including operations, capacity, political formation, and other work that funders are sometimes not willing to support;
 - **Understanding the realities of the many demands that movements face**, simplifying application and reporting procedures as much as possible, and supporting groups through the grant application and reporting process as needed and helpful;
 - **Seeking feedback from social movements** about our grantmaking strategies;
 - **Practicing language justice**, so that we can communicate with social movements in the language of their hearts;
 - **Listening to how social movements articulate their needs and analysis, and being responsive to these** as they emerge in order to meet shifting contexts and to evolve in our own understanding as social movements also evolve.

In addition to the need for flexible, long-term core support, some of the areas that social movements have called our attention to over the years include:

- **Grassroots feminisms and racial justice:** For both mixed gender organizations and those more focused on women, queer, trans, and non-binary people, the work to support grassroots feminist movements is too often underresourced. Likewise, movements led by Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color are frequently marginalized and under attack. In order to accompany social movements toward systemic change, it is essential for our grantmaking to prioritize resourcing grassroots feminisms and racial justice, including defense of Black lives and Indigenous sovereignty.

- 
- **Human rights defense and movement protection:** Social movements face consistent repression and human rights violations, many of which originate from Global North governments or corporations. Movement accompaniment means working both within and across our organizations to find ways to resource the work of human rights defense and collective community protection, especially in times of increasing authoritarianism.
 - **Disaster response and community-led just recovery:** Increased frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters are being faced by communities around the world, particularly across the Global South, and many of these same communities are also facing militarized violence at unprecedented levels. In these intense contexts, social movements often serve as first responders, as they are the ones with the expertise needed for the most effective response. As funders, our accompaniment of movements can include ensuring that they have the financial resources needed to do this life-saving work.
 - **Learning exchanges:** One of the most important ways that social movements develop their own capacity – on specific skills, political analysis, organizing campaigns, and implementation of solutions – is by learning from one another. By supporting these initiatives with grantmaking resources, from bilateral exchanges to broader regional, translocal, or continental gatherings, funders can accompany movements as they get stronger together.
 - **Movement infrastructure:** In addition to regular core support for ongoing operations, social movements have been identifying needs for infrastructure to strengthen their work for the long-term. This can include physical infrastructure such as land and tools to spread the practice of agroecology; buildings for community meetings, offices, and convenings; community-controlled renewable energy; and more. It can also include other types of infrastructure, such as



systems to support the practice of language justice (a necessity for building internationalism), secure communications platforms, and infrastructure for global convenings to connect across movements.

- **Collective care and healing justice:** In the face of extremely difficult circumstances, social movement members and their communities often experience a great deal of pain and even trauma. As part of our movement accompaniment, funders can be intentional about checking in with partners on their wellbeing, while also finding ways to support social movement work around collective care and healing justice. Many organizations may not bring up the need for support for this work, even though it is so essential to movement sustainability, unless we explicitly ask and invite these conversations.

Social Action

Bringing our whole selves to the service of a common agenda accomplishes much more than simple financial transactions directed to single initiatives. As donors, moving money in principled ways must be a core strategy for our movement support – and at the same time, the relationships are about more than money. Movement accompaniment, from the donor perspective, recognizes funding as one expression of solidarity among a multitude of others.

Social action is a key part of our movement accompaniment. It comes from the understanding of the responsibility we hold as political subjects – not as individuals, but collectively, within our organizations and across the sector. Engaging in social action allows us to apply our hearts, hands, and voices as part of the broader efforts to work toward the transformations that are so necessary. This requires humility, understanding our positionality and the appropriate roles for us to play, in order to avoid causing harm. That said, especially at this point in



history, sitting on the sidelines as injustices persist is not an option. It is a time to act with courage, showing up collectively for human rights defenders and their communities when they are smeared, marginalized, and criminalized. Taking a stand and raising our voices are critical to challenge the government and corporate actors carrying out violations of human rights and the destruction of the Earth.

Social action can take different forms, from strategic communications, to campaigns for policy changes, to divestment efforts, to participation in broader alliances, coalitions, and networks. Key is acting collectively, in a way that is aligned with and accountable to the social movements we accompany, while staying true to our missions.

Resource Mobilization Strategy

Social movements increasingly see resource mobilization as part of their political work and are partnering with trusted donors, especially movement support public foundations with long-term relationships, to do that work. It is important to be careful not to put unnecessary work and demands on movement partners related to our own work to organize within philanthropy, as described in the section below. That said, when social movements have or wish to develop a strategy to work with others in philanthropy as well, it can be an opportunity for funders to share our experiences, support that work, and collaborate toward shared goals. A growing part of movement accompaniment includes work with social movements to demystify philanthropy and develop strategies for resource mobilization, donor organizing, and challenging philanthropy to become more movement-accountable.



Donor Organizing

Mobilizing resources for movements is more than a fundraising project. While we need to raise funds, our long-term strategy has to be donor organizing if we want to build powerful, reliable, sustained movement support. Just as movements are continually expanding their bases to strengthen their collective work and escalate their demands and alternatives, philanthropy needs a similar organizing approach. By choosing organizing, beyond fundraising, donor identities shift from being primarily wealth holders, to becoming trusted partners to movements, as an aligned and organized political ally constituency. As such, donors play a strategic role to mobilize resources in solidarity with movements.

In order to organize donors for the long-term at a scale that can challenge and change the sector, we need to **build community and power** at the same time.

Social justice minded donors often mistakenly think of power simply as a privilege that should be given up. But there is a way of building and using power in service of movements. In donor organizing, the power we are building is:

- not power over movements, but is a powerful base within philanthropy that can challenge the sector for accountability and change toward being more movement-centered
- a stronger collective capacity to move more funding than the paltry amount that is currently moved to social movements, especially Global South movements
- the power of truth-telling, witnessing, and moral clarity
- the power found in our protagonism as donor-activists, donor organizers, and philanthropic leaders who have the responsibility, creativity, and commitment to develop successful strategies to mobilize resources to fund movements at a scale that is needed



Given this different kind of power building, it is perhaps too simplistic to say that all that donors need to do is to give over the funds and cede power to movements. And even after “spending down,” we can ask what is next? Giving up control, redistributing personal wealth, and spending down endowments are all crucial and bold actions. And they are just the beginning. The praxis of solidarity philanthropy calls us to continue to grow our collective power to move many more resources to movements; organize many more donors to join us; and commit to long-term partnership based on solidarity.

Just as importantly, we cannot build power without building community. The community we are building includes political homes for donors that are spaces for political education, mutual support, and collective action based on the principles of solidarity philanthropy.

In building this unique movement-support donor community, donor organizers can adapt elements and methodologies from social movements and donor organizing groups including those listed below, among others, as described more fully in the (forthcoming) Solidarity Philanthropy Toolkit:

- **Political formation through contextual and conjunctural analysis:** to build alignment and nourish solidarity, conscientization/ consciousness raising, and mutual learning with social movements
- **Mistica:** a critical tool that includes art, spirituality, and creativity to create a sense of collectivity and inclusivity
- **Collective work:** prioritizing collaboration and co-creation over working in silos
- **Sense of belonging:** resulting from a shared identity and purpose, in a community felt as political home



- **Dialogue of ways of knowing (*diálogo de saberes*):** a methodology that facilitates deep listening and understanding of other perspectives, and building deeper connections through mutual learning
- **Protagonism:** understanding our sense of agency to initiate and control our own actions, and belief in our ability to effect change
- **Money Story:** understanding and articulating how we are shaped by and can shape our relationship to money, to move toward a stance of mutual liberation²⁴
- **Solidarity Story:** understanding and articulating how our political consciousness and actions are evolving to form a relationship of solidarity with social movements for mutual liberation

As a seasoned donor organizer summed up the importance of donor organizing at this time:



In a world of devastating inequality, authoritarianism, and climate crisis, transformative donor organizing has a vital purpose. It frees up maximum resources, relationships, and leadership capacity from the owning class for liberatory struggle. At the same time, it supports wealthy people to find dignity, purpose, and joy in joining the fight to bring a new world into being.”²⁵

²⁴Based on a methodology developed by Resource Generation (<https://resourcegeneration.org/category/stories/money-stories/>)

²⁵Isaac Lev Szmonko, Organizing Director, Solidaire Network, from *Transformative Donor Organizing: The Developing Theory and Practice*, 2025

GROWING A PRACTICE OF SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

Implementing solidarity philanthropy takes place across multiple levels of organizing and building – including the personal, organizational, and sectoral.

The Personal Level

We begin at the personal level. Putting solidarity philanthropy into practice at this level requires us to cultivate our political consciousness, find our protagonism, and make a commitment.

As described above, we start by asking ourselves: What is my story, and how does that inform my role? By being acutely self-aware of our place on the global map of systems of oppression and clarifying our values and analysis, we can begin to transform ourselves. Cultivating a political consciousness is different from emotional or intellectual learning, though it includes these. It acknowledges that we are political subjects, and through collective work we can shape the world around us. For those of us in philanthropy, this protagonism can be realized through donor organizing. And finally, the commitment we make to this work is deeply personal, where we are not only accountable to movements, but to ourselves.

The Organizational Level

The organizational level is where we build community and power and exercise collective praxis. It is where identity and alignment are collectively developed and expressed; where relationships are held and nourished; where shared values and analysis are formed; and where we can foster accountability as we work toward common goals. Work at this level creates the conditions for political education translated into action. And importantly, we move money and build solidarity through organizations.

Different types of organizations play different roles in philanthropy. These include private foundations, donor and funder networks, philanthropy serving organizations, public foundations, and others. For philanthropy at the global level, movement support public foundations play a unique role, including in helping to address significant barriers to moving funds to social movements globally. Nonprofit laws and regulations, such as cumbersome equivalency determination or expenditure responsibility requirements, can make it difficult for private

foundations to fund groups in the Global South.²⁶ In general, philanthropy as a sector has insufficient mechanisms to support movements outside of US 501c3 structures. But while public foundations stand out as a key vehicle to overcome these barriers, they are constantly overstretched in their fundraising and receive a fraction of US philanthropic dollars.²⁷

The Sectoral Level

At the sectoral level, solidarity philanthropy seeks a wholesale shift, through which philanthropy redefines itself and re-emerges as a movement-support sector. The sectoral level is critical because even if we are doing all the right things as individual donors or organizations, it will take a sector-wide strategy to seriously challenge the status quo of philanthropy dominated by philanthrocapitalist, charity, and liberal tendencies. Strategy at this level requires

deep collaborations, and an ecosystem of organizations and individual donors playing diverse roles – grantmaking, political education, base-building, technical support, training, convening, pooling funds, and more.

Among our tasks as we strive to transform our sector is to create a strong culture and mechanisms of accountability to movements. Funders who are defunding grassroots groups for their political stances or promoting false solutions face little to no accountability at present. Another task is to make long-term funding commitments the norm. Increasingly more funders are doing multi-year grants of 2-3 years, but why not institutionalize 10-year commitments, as some have done, or commit to long-term partnerships that even span decades? Long-term support and spending down endowments and donor advised funds may become the norm some day, if solidarity funders set the standard and organize others to join.



²⁴<https://www.peakgrantmaking.org/insights/equivalency-determination-vs-expenditure-responsibility-which-works-for-you/>
²⁷The combination of these factors has resulted in less than 4% of the US philanthropic dollars going to international work, and a miniscule fraction of that going to social movements.

CASE STUDY 1

Advancing the Global Food Sovereignty Movement

Over the past three decades, social movements and allies have built critical momentum toward food sovereignty in a global effort to transform the food system, and the dominant capitalist system more broadly. For progressive funders who have accompanied this growing movement over the years, political support has been no less essential than financial support. This has involved challenging a philanthropic landscape dominated by paradigms of food security and food aid and seeped in the myth that hunger

is a matter of production versus a matter of justice. That is, grappling with the hard reality that philanthropy has been part of the problem in perpetuating hunger and other injustices of the food system, and working to reverse this. Accompaniment has also involved allied funders serving as bridges between social movements and philanthropy, including translating a concept unfamiliar to many.

Part of the early work of solidarity philanthropy vis-à-vis the food sovereignty



movement entailed raising awareness on food sovereignty through dissemination of materials accessible to various audiences and organizing educational sessions in funder forums as well as movement spaces in the US new to food sovereignty. Where possible, this involved inviting global movement leaders into these venues to share their stories and exchange with participants directly. As the food sovereignty movement evolved and expanded, funders were also challenged to support activities happening across multiple scales, from local to global.

A critical moment in global organizing for food sovereignty was the 2007 Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty, led by the social movement members of the International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty and allies. This gathering brought together 500+ movement representatives in Mali to expand food sovereignty beyond its original peasant base to include feminist, Indigenous, environmental, and urban movements, among others. Together, they developed a unified definition and framework for food sovereignty, along with action plans by region, as part of a multiyear strategy to advance food sovereignty globally.²⁸

Although food sovereignty was largely unknown in mainstream philanthropy at this time, a few funders who accompanied movements closely knew the historic significance of this convening and supported it. Along with providing funding for the

forum's logistics and the ability of movements to participate in it, the funders involved were also tasked with supporting the outputs of the forum in order to advance food sovereignty efforts on the ground. One example was the founding of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, involving several progressive funders alongside grassroots movements, to foster movement building in the US as a critical part of strengthening the global movement. This was done in tandem with the formation of similar alliances in other regions.

Nyéléni was not a single event but a process that has continued to grow over two decades. As this publication is launched in September 2025, the Third Nyéléni Forum will just have just taken place in Sri Lanka. Reflecting the maturity of the movement itself and its inroads into philanthropy, social movements have engaged funders through a comprehensive process to coordinate the next steps for food sovereignty in the next 25 years. This includes the organization of the Nyéléni Funder Circle with close allies in philanthropy; a consultation with funders and donors feeding into the forum; and participation by donors and funders in the actual forum – with solidarity philanthropy seen as an essential part of a pathway towards the financial autonomy of social movements. Just as the Nyéléni process is ongoing, the funders involved approach their engagement as part of an ongoing commitment to stay in praxis with social movements for the advancement of food sovereignty over the long haul.

²⁸See Declaration of Nyéléni and Synthesis report at <https://nyeleni.org/en/final-docs/>.

CASE STUDY 2

Organizing Philanthropy in Solidarity with Palestine

In a moment of unfathomable human suffering through live-streamed genocide, met with the unparalleled steadfastness and commitment to liberation of the Palestinian people, many eyes across the globe are fixed on Palestine. For funders who have been responding to the genocide, it has been clear that our funding needs to be combined with broader solidarity efforts.

In countries whose governments are complicit in Israeli aggression against Palestine – particularly the US government as the top funder of Israel’s military – the very act of standing up for Palestine can render individuals and organizations subject to backlash. Some funders are unfortunately on the perpetrating end of these trends, through defunding grantees involved in Palestinian solidarity. Others have been on the receiving end, subject to smear campaigns and “lawfare” attacks aimed at shuttering their operations, along with increasing barriers to grantmaking.

In fall of 2023, as Israel began intensifying

its aggression against the Palestinians of Gaza into a fast-motion genocide, many funders who had been part of previous efforts to denounce attacks on Palestinian civil society came together with others to draft a Philanthropy Open Letter for Humanity and Justice.

Key to the drafting of this letter was alignment with movements on root causes. This enabled the organizers to frame the discussion with a historical perspective while drafting language based on shared values that would invite a broader base of people into this work.

Together, we called for 1) an immediate ceasefire; 2) safe, unimpeded aid; 3) stopping US and EU funding of weapons for Israel; and 4) adherence to international law. One sticking point in the process was around the demand to stop US and European funding and weapons for the Israeli military, which some felt was harder to endorse than demands for ceasefire or upholding international law. This necessitated tough conversations

on our positionality and our complicity in aggression against Palestine through the actions of our governments. Through a process of dialogue, we were able to preserve unity and integrity around the demands.

This [letter](#) has served as a vital organizing tool in the philanthropic community, garnering more than 1,300 institutional and individual signatures, and counting.²⁹

Within the current repressive political environment, taking collective action has been a key strategy. This approach has made it more possible for individual funders to find a place within Palestine solidarity work, both for those who have a long history of this work and those newer to it who were moved to act. Funders who had previously not engaged on Palestine expressed that they felt encouraged to sign on after seeing the other signatories, speaking to the strategy of building safety and power through numbers. Individual donor organizing also played a key role, with outreach via donor networks leading to more than 800 individual donors signing on.

For many, the sign-on letter served as an entry point into further solidarity work. We engaged together in political education, through webinars and other

learning opportunities. Participants heard directly from Palestinian groups as part of developing our collective analysis and understanding. There were many moving examples of donor organizing by faith-based groups and diverse communities engaging in processes of reflection, community building, and fundraising toward deeper and sustained solidarity.

The work around the ceasefire sign-on letter has fed into numerous other ongoing initiatives, including active emergency fundraising and grantmaking by public foundations and efforts such as Funding Freedom and Funders for Palestine, both critical spaces for continued donor organizing, political education, and funder accountability.

All of this work together has demonstrated a significant increase in ongoing action in solidarity with Palestine from within philanthropy at a critical moment. Still, philanthropy has a long way to go to transform from a force of complicity to a force of solidarity. It will be important to stand up collectively to backlash, while also creating a stronger culture of accountability within the sector. Through the praxis of solidarity philanthropy, we learn and relearn the lesson that one of our close family members articulated so clearly: as we work for a free Palestine, Palestine will free us.

²⁹<https://funders4ceasefire.org>

CASE STUDY 3

Learning from and with Movements to Advance Grassroots Feminisms

Grassroots feminist organizing is an area of significant growth and evolution by social movements, and by the allied funders who have been learning from and with them. Movements articulate grassroots feminisms as worldviews and political practices rooted in the realities of women, queer, trans, and non-binary people who have been harmed by the intersecting forces of patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. They intentionally express feminisms in the plural to embrace a multiplicity of approaches, including Black and Indigenous feminisms, transfeminism, and others.

Today's work on grassroots feminisms builds upon decades of organizing around gender justice, women's rights, and sexual diversity. An example of this history can be seen in the organizing of the global peasant movement La Via Campesina (LVC) and its groundbreaking Global Campaign to End Violence Against Women, launched in 2011. The campaign highlighted both interpersonal and structural violence against women, including in the lack of access to land, and later gave rise

to the articulation of "popular peasant feminism." Most recently, the movement's praxis has advanced further, through LVC's Diversities Articulation and a "men against patriarchy" space. This work has been profoundly influenced by LVC's allyship with the global feminist movement World March of Women, whose focus on food sovereignty as a key action area for feminist organizing has similarly been shaped by LVC. The evolution of both movements, together with many others, has also spurred the funders accompanying them to evolve in our own understandings and practices.

In 2018, faced with the rise of right-wing authoritarian projects across the globe, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), World March of Women, Indigenous Environmental Network, and Grassroots International launched the Strengthening Grassroots Feminist Movements Collaboration. The collaboration provided sustained grantmaking to, exchanges between, and strategizing among grassroots feminist movements at local and international levels. It aimed to uplift

grassroots feminisms as vibrant projects for life and an antidote to global projects of death and destruction.

One major result of this work is the Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School (IFOS). Anchored by GGJ, as part of the World March of Women, the IFOS brings together grassroots feminist organizers from more than 40 countries. It has served as a vital space for collective dialogue, debate, and articulation, including advancing the framework of “feminist economies for the sustainability of life” described above under Social Movement Visions. The IFOS continues to grow and expand, with participants adapting its curricula³⁰ to their own contexts, organizing schools locally, nationally, and regionally.

A related effort connected to the IFOS was the Feminist Organizing School for Funders. Organized by GGJ in collaboration with EDGE Funders Alliance and a special advisory committee of funders, the school taught funders about and helped them align with the feminist analysis of movements, as well as helping to mobilize funding for the IFOS to grow. This initiative came from a recognition that we as funders needed to do some more collective study – learning alongside and from both US and international movements. It also provided a space for funders to share with one another. For

instance, many learned from longtime feminist funders about the importance of collective care as a critical part of social and ecological justice work, which must be prioritized as such in our funding.

Both IFOS and the Feminist Organizing School for Funders also strengthened collective understandings of militarism as an extreme form of patriarchal violence. It clarified how important it is to support resistance to such violence from a grassroots feminist politic. Grassroots feminist funders exemplified this clarity by being among the first to step up in the Funders4Ceasefire sign-on letter described in the previous pages.

With the alarming rise in patriarchal and white supremacist authoritarianism, it is clear how much we need the leadership and vision of grassroots feminist movements. Quite simply, they are the antidote to the context we face. The above described efforts have given both movements and funders alike critical tools for our path forward. For those of us working in philanthropy, we have the responsibility and opportunity to transform ourselves and to resource these social movements, so that we can meet this historical moment with increased courage together.

³⁰<https://ggjalliance.org/ifosguidebook/>

10 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PRACTICING SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY

1. Reckoning with our personal and institutional connection with wealth helps us to fundamentally reorient the work of philanthropy.

Understanding where our money has come from helps us understand where it needs to go. With this awareness and accountability, our financial resources can be a tool of solidarity rather than an obstacle.

2. Funding social movements is one of the most effective ways to move money back to the people.

Social movements do the hard work of organizing those most impacted by systemic injustices into articulated movements. Through funding them, we can directly resource the power-building efforts that are necessary to create deep transformation in systems, structures, and culture toward social, economic, and ecological justice.

3. It is imperative to drastically increase the amount of funding going to Global South social movements.

Given the massive extraction of wealth from the Global South to Global North through colonization, slavery, and other forms of domination, Global North funders have a particular obligation to return stolen wealth to the Global South.

4. Grantmaking must be aligned with movement partners' goals of financial autonomy.

This involves moving away from top-down, donor-driven, conditional funding and onerous reporting requirements, toward long-term general operating or flexible core support and additional funding for movement infrastructure, learning exchanges, emergency response, and other needs as they emerge.

5. Beyond funding, accompanying social movements entails a commitment to deep allyship.

This involves cultivating our own political consciousness through open dialogue with social movements, ongoing political education, self-reflection, collective learning, and action to align with movements toward liberated futures.

6. We must organize others.

Beyond our own giving, we must organize our peers and collaborate with others in the sector to build a broader, more expansive and powerful constituency. To do this, we can find a political home by joining a donor network and connecting with movement support public foundations with active donor engagement programs.

7. It is essential to use our voices and take action.

This is especially the case when movements and broader civil society are targeted and criminalized. Our solidarity is stronger when we support movement partners by publicly advocating for their rights, causes, and protection. In the case of private foundations, speaking up can reduce risks for public foundations and movement partners, amplifying their efforts in a crucial way.

8. Public foundations are a key part of movement support infrastructure and need to be supported as such.

Public foundations that serve as movement support intermediaries have established trusted relationships with social movements in our communities and around the world. For those who have not done global grantmaking, or have a global program without an emphasis on social movements, collaboration with intermediary foundations can enhance the effectiveness, reach, and longevity of support.

9. We need to rethink impact and orient towards learning and collaboration.

It is time for us to join a move away from prescriptive, extractive, and overly quantitative metrics. We can embrace a framework that centers mutual learning and collaboration; respects local cultural and political contexts; acknowledges that systemic and historic change takes time; and understands that material outcomes cannot be separated from holistic movement building.

10. Solidarity philanthropy includes divestment from harmful systems and investment in life-affirming ones

It is important to examine the entirety of our wealth, not only the portion going toward grantmaking. Whether institutional foundations that typically have 95% of their resources in endowments or individual donors with significant resources in reserves or other forms of wealth, it is critical to ensure that our investments are aligned with our solidarity.

Look for our Solidarity Philanthropy Toolkit early 2026

It will include tools and resources to help you put these takeaways into action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of articulating this solidarity philanthropy framework has taken place over several years, and has involved many people who cooperated together across sectors and geographies to help refine it. We are deeply grateful to so many movement partners, allies, and donors who have taught us so much about solidarity and philanthropy. You inspire us each day, and you have moved us to weave these learnings into the articulation of this framework.

At the heart of all this work are our movement partners in Brazil, Haiti, Mesoamerica, Palestine, Puerto Rico, West Africa, and in the US/Turtle Island, as well as our global partners. We cherish the relationships of trust and partnership, within which we learn so much about movement building, courage and love. We are grateful to strategize with several movement-building alliances and organizations within the grassroots organizing sector, in the US and internationally, on a joint strategy for funder education and organizing. Special shout out to global social movements who are developing your own process around Financial Autonomy. Together, you have shown us what power with love can make possible. You have welcomed us as not just funders, but also strategic allies, in a process of mutual solidarity toward our shared goals. Your analysis around the challenges we face deepens our sense of purpose, and your

articulations of vision nourish our praxis in the discipline of hope. We are honored to continue collaborating on this journey.

A special thanks to Resource Generation, Solidaire Network, Solidaire Action, and Women Donors Network for their close partnership, insights, and leadership in collaborating for a stronger progressive sector in philanthropy. We are grateful to be walking a path together with and learning from you and several other key allies in the philanthropic sector who have offered important tools to support donor organizing and funder engagement toward social and ecological justice. Among these tools and the philanthropic orgs who developed them are:

[Feminist Funding Principles](#)

by Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

[Resources on Funding Climate Justice Work Internationally](#)

by CLIMA Fund

[The Giving Project Model](#)

by Giving Project Network

[Human Rights Grantmaking Principles](#)

by Human Rights Funders Network, Ariadne, and Gender Funders CoLab

[Resonance Framework](#)

by Justice Funders

[Participatory Grantmaking Basics](#)

by Participatory Grantmakers

[Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens](#)
by Philanthropic Initiative on Racial Equity

[Four Pathways](#)
by Regenerative Economies Organizing (REO)
Collaborative

[Social Justice Philanthropy Principles](#) and
other [resources](#) on transformative donor
organizing
by Resource Generation

Transformative Donor Organizing: The
Developing Theory and Practice
by Isaac Lev Szmonko, published by Solidaire
and Organize the Rich, 2025

[6 Trust-Based Practices at a Glance](#)
by Trust-Based Philanthropy

[FUNDER OR CENSOR? How Politically
Conditioned Funding Harms Civil Society in
Palestine](#)
by Visualizing Palestine

In addition to the organizations described above, we are also deeply grateful to our philanthropic allies in coalitions and groups who have shared and taught us so much, through collective work and responsibility, including: Block and Build Funder Coalition, each of our partner funds that are in the CLIMA Fund, Donors of Color Network, EDGE Funders, Environmental Grantmakers Association, Funding Freedom, Funders for Palestine, In Our Name, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Rabbis for Ceasefire, among many others.

Central to our process of articulation of this framework are the members of Grassroots International's Donor and Funder Organizing

Committee, those who were part of our inaugural Solidarity Philanthropy Praxis Cohort retreat, and so many individuals and organizations that we cannot even begin to name. We are profoundly grateful to each and every one of you.

We thank the hundreds of long-term donors – some dating back decades – and funders who have supported us for years and constantly help us to grow, learn, and accompany social movements together.

We thank our own Staff and Board, past and current, who embody the praxis of solidarity philanthropy every day.

We are deeply grateful to Tamarack Cooperative for going above and beyond in the beautiful design of this publication, and for helping us refine the framework in the process. And we are grateful to the many other consultants who lent their brilliance to this process.

And finally, we extend our gratitude to everyone who is engaging with this framework, reading, reflecting, and putting the framework and tools to work in your own efforts. We look forward to learning from your experiences and growing together in our common practice.

In solidarity and gratitude,
Grassroots International

ACCOMPANYING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE



**Grassroots
International**

grassrootsinternational.org