

Philanthropy, Making a Space for Community

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Since 1987, Wenda Weekes Moore has been a member of the Michigan-based W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Board of Trustees. She was elected Chair of the Board in December 2001. Her contributions to her profession, to the field philanthropy, and as a community leader include among others: serving as a Kellogg Foundation delegate to the Beijing NGO Forum on Women; and serving on the boards of directors of the Women's Funding Network, Hispanics in Philanthropy, Minnesota Orchestra and St. Benedict's College. Mrs. Moore has held various positions during her distinguished career including Staff Assistant to Governor Wendell R. Anderson of Minnesota, Director of the Westminster Town Hall Forum, Vice Chair and Chair of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents. Mrs. Moore holds the distinction of being the first woman and African-American to serve in those capacities.

Wenda Weekes Moore lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her husband, Cornell Moore, is an attorney with Dorsey & Whitney LLP in Minneapolis. They are the parents of three children: Lynne, an attorney who lives in Chicago, Illinois, is employed by the Chicago Public Schools; Jonathan, a Minneapolis Public School teacher; and Meredith, a student at Howard University.

I thank the Association of Black Foundation Executives for selecting me as the 2002 Jim Joseph lecturer. I am honored and deeply humbled.

This is an honor because the lecture is named for an individual whom I greatly admire and who epitomizes excellence. Jim Joseph, in philanthropy, in diplomacy and public service, and in higher education, excels and is a pacesetter in leading our community.

This is an honor because of the impressive list of previous recipients. I've looked forward to and attended most of these events. I have admiration and respect for each of the previous winners and remember how their thoughtful comments inspired and energized me.

It is an honor because it is recognition from one of my communities, The Association of Black Foundation Executives. I thank Paul Spivey, the executive board, and the legacy of leadership who have made ABFE an important actor in the world of philanthropy.

The executive committee has been hard at work in evolving the mission and future direction of this organization. I don't want to steal their thunder; it is their story to tell, but their new recommendations are consistent with the remarks I will make this evening. They believe, as do I, that the focus should be on the communities we want to serve. I will come back to this point later.

I also want to thank my families this evening. I said "families" because I have two families present this evening: the Moore family and the Kellogg family. I thank my husband and children for their support and encouragement through the years. I thank my Kellogg family for their good work. The work of the Kellogg Foundation is also being recognized through me this evening and I am happy to share this honor with all of you from Kellogg.

Although I accept this honor in recognition of my work in philanthropy, it is work that has been a privilege for me to do and I have served to the very best of my abilities.

I have titled my comments this evening, "Philanthropy: Making A Space for Community," drawing on a reservoir of experiences as a family member, community volunteer, university regent, and foundation trustee. I believe philanthropy is a means to helping create healthy communities. This evening I will share examples of enhancing philanthropy and improving community.

As Charlene [Edwards, Secretary, Association of Black Foundation Executives] said in the introduction, I was elected to the Kellogg Foundation Board in 1987. W.K. Kellogg established the foundation in 1930. We meet once a month in Battle Creek and I believe this helps keep us committed to community in the same way that he was. Mr. Kellogg's values are reflected in our grantmaking today: giving voice to the underrepresented and underserved in communities, a continuing commitment to equality of opportunity, helping institutions serve the people that they were created to serve, and engaging the institutions while holding them accountable. It is a privilege for me to serve on this Board as these values are closely aligned with my own.

To put it simply, we believe in philanthropy and community at Kellogg. We define philanthropy as "giving time, money, and know-how to improve the common good." Giving freely of oneself, one's time, money, and know-how for one's community and one's fellow human beings is what makes a community something more than a mere collection of people. Our president and CEO, Bill Richardson, says it this way, "We regard philanthropy as a habit of the heart that should be learned early and practiced often."

In today's communities we see examples of formal as well as informal philanthropy. Given the complexity of our challenges, both are valuable resources and must be encouraged. Formal philanthropy includes but is not limited to a set of formal organizations called "foundations" and informal philanthropy has been known by many names. Some of them are: supportive families and friends, giving circles, the Missionary Society, and churches.

This is an exciting time in philanthropy, especially philanthropy in communities of color. Our giving is evolving from the comfortable informal to the more formal philanthropy. In his first lecture in this series, Jim Joseph described this as moving from 'a network of neighbors to a company of strangers.' Our community even has philanthropic super stars such as Bill Cosby, Oprah, and Osceola McCarty who worked for years washing clothes in her Mississippi community and gave \$150,000 for student scholarships to the University of Southern Mississippi. These are formal and visible examples.

We in this room are a part of this evolution and new energy in philanthropy as we take places of leadership in foundations making policies and decisions that determine who and what will be funded. We are also participating in record numbers in our personal giving and we're stretching out beyond our churches and schools. Just as importantly, we're giving the most precious of gifts -- our time -- as we volunteer in record numbers. We must always remember that philanthropy is much more than the dollars. Even on the formal side, our power to define issues, to leverage public and private action, and to be a neutral convener is sometimes overlooked.

We need to embrace philanthropy in all its forms because our communities need it all and more.

I remember when my family moved from informal to more formal giving. My brothers and sisters and I were not ready for the leap, but my parents helped us to see the logic and the compassion in the move. I was 11 or 12 when my parents announced to us with pride that they would be establishing a scholarship at Howard University's Medical School. I still remember how disappointed we were that this was the "big announcement." We didn't get it. We lived in Los Angeles not Washington, D.C. At that time, we'd never seen Howard University.

We understood giving to family, giving to church, and giving to those in need in our community. We knew how hard Dad worked and it just didn't seem right for his hard-earned money to go to people we didn't know and people who really didn't seem 'needy.' My parents explained that even working his way through college and medical school, my Dad couldn't have succeeded without the support of scholarships established by people who didn't know him. Our life style was a result of their generosity and it seemed only fair to them that they return the gift. It was a powerful lesson and an example of helping to build a caring community by participating in both informal and formal philanthropy.

It was also a reminder to me that you can never forget who you are or whose you are. Each of us is from a family; we're someone's daughter or son. Our families are different, but we all grew up somewhere -- our community. It's important not to forget what we learned as someone's child, in school, in girl scouting, on the athletic field, or wherever. Those experiences make us unique individuals. As we take places of leadership in foundations, making policies and decisions that determine who and what will be funded, it's critical that we not become detached from who we are and whose we are.

I'm reminded of the story of Esther from the Bible. Forgive me as I paraphrase: The king had divorced his wife and had called for suitable candidates within the kingdom. Esther's uncle realized the potential

power of the position and presented Esther. The king fell in love with her and Esther became queen. Sure enough, the time came when Esther's people needed her to speak for them. When asked to do that by her uncle, she was initially reluctant. After all, custom required that one had to be called before the king; she would have to risk everything in order to go against that kingly edit.

Her uncle reminded her not to forget who she was and whose she was. If she didn't speak on behalf of her people, no one would present their side. Perhaps she was queen for this very reason. Esther did speak and she saved her people.

ABFE hasn't forgotten who it is or whose it is, and I am enthusiastic about its direction. The proposed new mission of this organization focuses on promoting effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities in an effort to increase philanthropy within and towards the Black community. The goals of the organization will be discussed in detail at the business meeting tomorrow. However, I am excited because those goals will be to:

- Reflect the full diversity of our communities in the staff, trustees and donors of philanthropic institutions
- Enable more effective and strategic responses to the needs of Black communities
- Empower Black communities and
- Work in partnership with other philanthropic organizations to address issues of concern within all disenfranchised communities.

Building caring and strong communities requires many strategies and advocates. ABFE will be one of those critical advocates from within the philanthropic community. This is very consistent with my theme of using philanthropy to "make a space for community."

I'd like to mention three issues that, from my experience, should be taken into consideration as we develop strategies to build community. These are: honest assessment and boldness, listening to community, and communicating across communities.

First, our work must begin with an honest assessment. For example, it is reality that all children do not have an equal chance to succeed. Two of the most powerful forces undermining their ability to succeed are race and poverty. Both of these forces are magnified when we factor in gender. I could cite the statistics but everyone here understands with their heart and mind that this is the reality. Although some do not accept the impact of race and poverty, we must continue to commit to honestly assessing and telling the story of these needs. And then we must act boldly to confront these forces. This is not a time to shrink from the challenges these forces present.

When we think of the early titans of philanthropy or the philanthropic giants of today, they are individuals who have at least one thing in common -- boldness. They amassed their fortunes because they weren't afraid to take risks. They did not accept the world handed to them as the way the world would always be.

I believe we can be no less bold today in our work. This is not the time to be afraid or timid because the challenges are formidable. Now is the time to take both personal and institutional risks. Success, tempered by an occasional failure, is better in my view than a steady diet of 'play it safe,' mediocre gains. We don't want to become so enraptured by a focus on measurable but incremental outcomes that we lose sight of our lofty goals.

One of my first site visits, accompanying a Kellogg program officer, illustrated the importance of combining honest assessment with boldness, both on the part of the grantmaker and the grantee. The grant had been made to a small order of nuns working in rural Alabama. Loundes County to be exact, several miles from Montgomery, Alabama. The grant funded the cost of drilling a well and building the pipeline that brought water to the families. I had envisioned water coming in through a kitchen faucet. When I visited the community, I found that in fact our grant had enabled the families to drill the well and to have clean water, but the pipeline came to the end of the lane because the homes didn't have indoor plumbing.

The community was grateful and satisfied that when they turned the spigot at the end of the lane they got clean water. They had honestly assessed their situation and put forward what, for them, was a bold proposal. Some might think the grant to the women was risky. But, how do you define risky? If we measure impact on community, this grant made a difference in people's health and in their lives. I learned during that visit what it meant to be bold, but I also learned that just knowing the statistics is not enough. One must have an intimate feel for community.

The second issue that we need to think about is how to listen to and trust community. The visit to Loundes County was only one of many experiences that have taught me that grantmakers aren't the only ones with good ideas. We, in formal philanthropy, need to be strategic in our thinking and approach but not inflexible. If we become so sure of our strategy that we don't have room for the ideas of others, we may simply have become too rigid. It's something we continually work on at Kellogg -- finding and keeping a balance.

Our founder felt strongly that he wanted his money to 'help people to help themselves'. We, who currently serve as trustees and staff, must continue to take our donor's intent seriously. If we really believe in people helping themselves, then we must respect our applicants and grantees, be open to their ideas, and remember that the answers won't all come from us.

Our chairman emeritus, Russ Mawby, says, "Giving the money is the easy part. Working to bring about change is the real work". At the end of the day, when we've completed our evaluation and the last report is written, the communities live with the legacy of our grantmaking. The truth is if formal philanthropy quit tomorrow, people wouldn't stop improving their communities. We need to be humble about the part we play.

The third issue I'd like to discuss is the importance of communicating and working across communities. In many communities today, people of color have turned against each other in non-productive and wasteful ways.

It seems one of the major challenges today is to understand, respect, and celebrate our connectedness. If September 11 taught us anything, it taught us that we are all in this together. Perhaps philanthropy can be a model. Our affinity groups can proactively address issues of collaboration as we focus on growing strong communities.

In the past year, I was elected to the boards of Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Women's Funding Network. Both are partner organizations with ABFE in the Joint Affinity Group network. Hispanics in Philanthropy President Diana Campoamor and the executive committee wanted to encourage more understanding and awareness of the common agenda of these affinity groups. Representatives from these groups were invited as guests and panelists to the recent retreat. One day of dialogue developed into at least one collaborative initiative: the formation of a women's fund at the Puerto Rican Community

Foundation with the joint support of Hispanics in Philanthropy and the Women's Funding Network. I am certain there will be other opportunities for collaboration.

Ten years ago, the way we measured success for communities of color in philanthropy was by the percentage of dollars going to our communities and the number of people on boards of majority institutions. While these are still significant yardsticks of success, the new and exciting opportunity before us is to intentionally build assets donated by givers of color, for grantees of color, that are managed by grantmakers of color. This will tremendously enrich philanthropy in the years to come and change the dynamic of giving by and for communities of color.

I appreciate the opportunity to share these thoughts with you this evening. I hope you will remember the story of Esther. It's one of my favorite Bible stories because it gives clear direction: remember who you are and whose you are.

This evening let us rededicate our work and ourselves as we make a space for community. Our goals are to confront with boldness the formidable issues that undermine our communities. We must also listen and respect our community partners as we join with them in developing solutions. The focus is on the community; that's the end. Foundations' executives, trustees, and our organizations are merely a means to that end.

As I close, let me again thank you for this wonderful honor. I am truly humbled to receive recognition for doing what I was taught to do. My parents practiced what they preached. I grew up watching them exhibit moral values of love and compassion, of respect and responsibility, of human dignity, and standing up for what is right. We were also taught not to define people by their circumstances because we are all so much more than our circumstances. My husband and I share these values and we've worked hard to demonstrate them in our lives as a way of passing them on to our children.

I thank you for sharing these values and for your humility as you work to "help people to help themselves". It is a privilege to be a part of philanthropy. I have a friend who says it so beautifully:

*I am where I want to be,
With the people I want to be with,
Doing the work I believe in.*

I will only add, it doesn't get better than that!

Thank you.