

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

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A PUBLICATION OF



Living & Learning in Fundraising



Brown Bois Building a Sustainable Future
Kim Klein's Biggest Fundraising Mistakes
Fundraising from Our Roots...and more!

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FEATURE



2 My Biggest Mistakes

Kim Klein shares the three biggest mistakes that she has repeatedly made in her 30+ year career in fundraising, providing important lessons for new and seasoned fundraisers alike.

6 Brown Boi Building a Sustainable Future

Dolores Chandler & B. Cole

The Brown Boi Project has its program participants learn fundraising through an innovative, hands-on coaching circle model that develops participants' skills, while raising money for the organization. Read about how it works and what participants get out of it.



On Our Cover

The Brown Boi Project's March 2012 Cohort gathers from around the country for their leadership retreat. The Brown Boi Project is a community of masculine of center womyn, men, two-spirit people,

transmen, and our allies committed to transforming our privilege of masculinity, gender, and race into tools for achieving Racial and Gender Justice.



9 Fundraising from Our Roots: A Skill Share from the Young Women's Empowerment Project

C Angel Torres, Naima Paz, Daphnie Williams, Dominique McKinney, & Shira Hassan

Young Women's Empowerment Project is a membership organization led by young women of color impacted by the sex trade and street economy. Learn how they implement their fundraising philosophy by supporting authentic grassroots leadership and the participation of young people in fundraising.



CPAF's 33rd Anniversary Gala (September 2011). Left to right: John Chiang, Michelle Krusiec, Teddy Zee, Stewart Kwoh, Tim McCallion (Verizon), Debra Suh, Lisa K. Pai (CPAF board president)

12 Translating Training to Culture Change: Two Case Studies

Priscilla Hung & Steve Lew

Ever struggled to apply what you learn at fundraising trainings? Learn from two organizations, Center for the Pacific Asian Family and Self-Help Graphics & Art, that participated in the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color about how they leveraged the training program to build a stronger fundraising team, shift their organizational culture around fundraising, and raise more money.

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Learning Together: Growing Our Movements and Our Fundraising

By Ryan Li Dahlstrom

*"We have to do what I call visionary organizing:
We have to see every crisis as both a danger and an opportunity.
It's a danger because it does so much damage to our lives,
to our institutions, to all that we have expected.
But it's also an opportunity for us to become creative,
for us to become the new kind of people
that are needed at such a huge period of transition..."*

-Grace Lee Boggs

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that it is already fall, and we are in the last quarter of the calendar year. Time seems to be going by so quickly these days. As we're all gearing up for our fall fundraising campaigns, I find myself reflective and inspired after our recent Money for Our Movements conference.

It was through this conference in 2010 that I became more solidly connected to the GIFT community. At this year's conference, just as in 2010, I was amazed by all the brilliant and passionate people coming together to share lessons learned, strategies, and vision for how to sustain our movements. It was a powerful space that provided me with lots of engaging and innovative ways of learning. I was especially appreciative of the People of Color and Fundraising workshop that used Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed tools to engage with common challenges people of color face in fundraising.

At the time of the 2010 conference, I was still living in Minneapolis working for a small youth organization where I often felt isolated from what was happening on the coasts. It was through this conference that I started to feel more connected to a larger learning community of others who might be struggling with similar issues of sustainability and resource development. Accessing more of the GIFT community, discovering the *Journal*, and building relationships with other progressive organizers and fundraisers provided me more of the support and learning community I was seeking.

This issue focuses on innovative ways to learn fundraising. Each article offers personal and organizational stories, successes, and challenges related to learning and teaching fundraising. Kim Klein talks about how we can unlearn our mistakes. Next, Brown Boi Project discusses their model for coaching circles to develop fundraising skills across the organization. Then we hear from the Young Women's Empowerment Project about how they engage their membership in fundraising in a holistic and authentic way. Last, we hear from two alumni of the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color about how they were able to maximize their learning from this training program.

I am honored to be writing to you as the new Editor of the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*, a source of inspiration to me and so many others for over 30 years now. Special thanks to Priscilla Hung for all her work as editor and for her support in this transition to my editorship.

As Editor of the *Journal*, I am looking forward to learning more about what you as a *Journal* reader are looking for in future issues. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me directly with ideas for future *Journal* issues.

Ryan Li



My Biggest Mistakes

By Kim Klein

WHEN I LOOK BACK over the 35 years I have been in fundraising, I have to admit that I have made almost every mistake a person can make. Any mistakes I haven't made are only because I was saved by someone else helping me. I have also seen others make many mistakes, and over the years I have come to believe we often learn more from our mistakes than from our successes. In training people to be consultants, coaches or trainers, I always encourage them to share their mistakes and shortcomings with groups, along with their triumphs. In addition to all we can learn from sharing our mistakes with each other, it is also a good reminder that you don't have to be flawless to be good at your job.

Making the same mistake a second or third time is what really gets to me though. I believe that I should at least be pioneering new mistakes, creating new mistake stories to tell. But again, if I look over my career, I see I have sometimes made the same mistake over and over, and those are the most embarrassing ones.

In this article, I want to look at three mistakes I have made way too many times, in hopes of steering some of you away from them. But first, I want to look at when a mistake actually happens.

My failure to recognize the actual moment when I was making a mistake has been the main reason I have made the same mistakes again and again.

Take a simple example: Driving to a meeting in a rush, I turn right when I should have turned left. Now I am lost. My mistake, however, is not the wrong turn. The cause of the wrong turn is that I forgot the directions because I was in too much of a hurry when I left my office. But that isn't the mistake either. I was trying to finish a number of projects before I left, making me late to leave the office, and then causing me to race out the door without thinking about what I needed to get to my meeting. So the mistake was made much earlier: the day was planned badly. Everything after that was just the result of the real mistake. Ironically, I am now losing way more time being lost than if I had only taken the time to focus on what was required to prepare for the meeting.

If we are to truly learn from our mistakes, we must know where they begin and change them at that point, or else we will only address their symptoms. The most transformative social justice organizing is focused on addressing root causes. We know that

figuring out the root cause is not always easy, but it is necessary. Real and lasting change requires identifying the “choice point”—the moment you made a decision which led to a series of bad decisions. When I know I need to plan better, I will choose to take

were a sophisticated and well-respected group. They were in charge of pulling together the list, while I focused on creating an effective package. I overlooked several big problems: they had a donor database that no one knew how to use; they did not have

IF WE ARE TO TRULY LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES, WE MUST KNOW WHERE THEY BEGIN AND CHANGE THEM AT THAT POINT, OR ELSE WE WILL ONLY ADDRESS THEIR SYMPTOMS.

the time to plan. If I think it is just a matter of leaving the office earlier, I may cease to be late for appointments, but still will not really have solved the problem.

First Mistake: Not Listening to My Instincts

The mistake I have made the most often in fundraising is not listening to my instincts and acting accordingly. This mistake has come up in many ways, but I will share just two examples here.

Last year, I was consulting with a fairly large organization that wanted to raise \$50,000 in six weeks for a specific project. I have written widely about these kinds of campaigns, which I love, so I looked forward to running one for this organization. They had three people in their development department, good donor records, and a seemingly enthusiastic board, making it a situation that seemed easier than most. We made the plan, created excellent materials, and launched. All things said and done, the campaign raised maybe \$1,000. It was the worst campaign I had ever managed.

My mistake: I didn't listen to my instincts. The first clue I overlooked was the way the development director talked about the board members. “Entitled dimwits” was a favorite catch-all phrase he used in addition to the derogatory nicknames he had for most individuals on the board. The second clue was that during the three months I worked with them, they went through three development assistants. I met each of them but could never learn why they quit. Another clue: I was tasked with training the board at a board retreat. I was supposed to have two hours, but the meeting ran late, so my training was shortened to one hour, and then finally to 15 minutes. The chair said, “Just give us the cliff notes.” (Later several board members complained that they were not well-briefed by me.) The development director said afterwards, “I knew they wouldn't do anything—we just pretend something is going to happen.”

A second example is a direct mail program I supervised at a large organization determined to send 20,000 pieces as a test to see if direct mail would work with their constituents. They

a mail house; and they had never done a mailing through bulk mail before. They did not have a bulk mail permit and were not registered in any state. They reassured me that this would be a good way to learn all that they needed to know. It certainly was an expensive way: the list they created was terrible, the printer made some mistakes with the package, the mailing was very late, and the overall response rate was about .025% (one-fourth of one percent!). I kicked myself several times about this one: I should have insisted that we not send this size of mailing. I should have insisted they not send anything until all the permits were in place. I should have really examined how they were building their list. Shoulda, woulda, coulda.

In both of these cases, I listened to “reason.” Both organizations were large and well-funded. They were confident in their own abilities, and I was caught up in their confidence. Several times I thought to myself, “I should put my foot down and stop this right now.” In the first case, I did try to talk to the Development Director about how he talked about the board. I told him that his constant belittling of them made me wonder if he really could work with them effectively. But the choice point was when I decided not to confront him with the fact that you can't really have a great working relationship with people you think are stupid and ignorant. I should have known that things are not going to work well when a leader in an organization regularly makes fun of others behind their backs. When I saw this was part of the organizational culture, I should have left right away.

In the second instance, the choice point was when I overlooked the bleak reality of having a database no one knew how to use. My failure to listen to my instincts cost a lot of money, time, and opportunity, and the group is now quite demoralized about their ability to raise money from individuals. My real mistake here was not just not listening to my instincts, but also not talking with a colleague about what was happening, which would have likely reinforced my instincts. It is hard to listen to yourself when you only talk to yourself.

Second Mistake: Taking on Too Much

My second big mistake is one shared by millions of Americans: I take on too much. This problem is not evidence that I am a poor time manager. In fact, I am an excellent time manager. I estimate quite accurately how long things will take, but my mistake is that I

the people asking the questions—is what has most shaped my political and personal life. When it comes to decision-making, feminists believe that decisions should be made by the person or people most affected by an issue (i.e., whether or not to have an abortion should be made by the pregnant woman, not the church

THE SIMPLE FACT IS THAT A 40-HOUR WORK WEEK CAN ONLY INCLUDE 20 PLANNED HOURS .

don't build in any time for all the things that happen in a day that I have no control over. A day with four tasks that will take one to two hours each seems reasonable. I will be able to keep up with e-mail as it comes in, and I'll have time for lunch, maybe even a short walk. I will get home at a reasonable hour and have time for more exercise or calling a friend. So, three tasks later, why is it already 5 pm? And I have already triaged my walk?

The root of my mistake is not realizing that any eight-hour work day is likely to have about four hours of unplanned activities come up. Some of these will be major and recognizable: The financial report I need for the foundation report I have to write includes a serious miscalculation and has to be redone. A friend calls telling me that her mother died, and I take the time to talk to her. But a lot of time is spent in much smaller ways: The computer freezes and has to be rebooted. A colleague emails me asking for the address for a meeting, which reminds me that we haven't ordered food for that meeting. I take care of that, only to find out that someone else has already taken care of it, so I have to cancel the order I just made. I feel irritated by this person until I look at the minutes and see that she took it on, so then I feel irritated with myself. This causes me to eat a donut which makes me tired and less productive.

The simple fact is that a 40-hour work week can only include 20 planned hours. This seriously inhibits the amount of work that can get done in a week, or, if you are like me, means that you often work evenings and weekends. This is the true mistake. I love and enjoy my work, but my work is not my life, and I cease to enjoy it when I can never get away from it.

Third Mistake: Rushing the Process

By far and away, my biggest mistake and the one I have made most frequently is when I have tried to get staff, board or volunteers to make important decisions too quickly. Part of the context here is the fact that feminism—the theory, the movement, the questions,

or the state). If a group of people need to make a decision together, they should take whatever time it takes to talk the issue through and come to consensus.

Because feminism is such a basic principle to me, you might assume that I am in favor of this type of process. I am, in theory. But in practice, I am very impatient, and I especially cannot stand spending a lot of time discussing an idea that is obviously (to me) a good one. I have developed several strategies for moving decisions along. These include, but are not limited to:

- Making fun of and gradually silencing people who are raising questions
- Figuring out ahead of time who is most likely to be opposed and scheduling the meeting when that person cannot come
- Raising my voice slightly and allowing a note of irritation to slip in, giving the impression that we have been over this material several times and people just need to pay better attention
- Challenging the questioners to come up with a better idea

To be sure, I am not in favor of this behavior, and I do not like it in others. The only reason I know I do this is because good friends have taken me aside and pointed it out. This kind of behavior is wrong for two reasons: one, it can border on bullying; and two, if you don't get clear agreement on the front end for an important decision, the decision will not work anyway.

Here is an example: I was the executive director of a nonprofit that covered a very specific geographic area. A donor approached me and said he would pay the costs for our organization to expand into two more counties. He would cover the full costs for one year and half the costs for the second two years, as well as help raise the money to keep the project going. He was well-respected and reliable. Our organization had hoped to expand eventually, and these two counties were in the mix of places we were considering for expansion. I brought it to the board and staff, who, to my great surprise, were lukewarm to the proposition. They felt we

had more work than we could do already, and even if we brought on more staff, they would need to be supervised. Some board members thought we should find out if there were other agencies in these two counties who would want to take this on or perhaps partner with us. There were several other objections and doubts put forward that I don't remember because I stopped listening. I could not believe that we might turn down this offer. Where were people's values? Why wouldn't they take a risk? Couldn't they see that, in addition to being mission fulfilling, this would bring in a lot of new donors?

expand. With all that in place, we could only then really consider the donor's offer in a meaningful way.

Conclusion: Avoiding and Learning from Mistakes

How do you avoid these mistakes? How do I avoid them (on the days that I do)? First, I make it a habit to discuss my work with colleagues and friends. I have to be clear about confidentiality, as discussion should not be confused with gossip, but listening to my instinct is much easier when my instinct is given a voice. Second, I am more and more disciplined about my time. Having

I BELIEVE IN PROCESS AND KNOW FROM YEARS OF EXPERIENCE THAT A GROUP OF PEOPLE DISCUSSING SOMETHING WILL ALMOST ALWAYS COME UP WITH A BETTER IDEA THAN I CAN ON MY OWN.

Using a variety of the tactics described above, I wore everyone down until the board and staff agreed to the expansion. The expansion did not go well. The person in charge of hiring staff did so without checking references, and the staff members that were hired had to be fired. The costs were much higher than we had expected, so we had to dip into our reserves. While the donor put in a lot of effort to raise more money, he could not find very many people that shared his enthusiasm and were willing to donate. We had to scale back services to these counties, which made our work there ineffective overall. The staff and board, bless their hearts, never blamed anyone. If they were asked about the mistake, they would cite a number of causes, from bad hires to lack of accurate information about costs.

But those were just symptoms of the mistake. The choice point of the mistake was my disregard of process. When we disregard process, we often set up an either/or scenario. Then we have to argue in favor or against the proposal in question. But most decisions are not that clear cut. When we allow the time for deliberation, a whole new idea may emerge that is even better. If I was to do it all over again, I would bring the idea to the board and staff as just that: an idea. I would even invite the donor into the discussions. We could all then discuss prioritizing these counties over others, timing (we could have waited another year to expand), calculating costs, and so on. The board and staff were not opposed to the idea—they simply wanted to discuss it. We needed to form a small committee, which may have included the donor, to look at all the variables and decide when and how to

built my life around my work for many years, I now pursue a life that includes not only work, but also exercise, gardening, friends, arts and culture, pets, eating, reading, and sometimes just looking around and doing nothing. And of course, when I have more time, I am much less impatient. I believe in process and know from years of experience that a group of people discussing something will almost always come up with a better idea than I can on my own. With these mistakes and all the others that I make, I try to look for the moment when I made a decision that began the mistake. Real and lasting corrections of mistakes require accurate identification of that choice point.

When we learn from our mistakes, they become a form of information—we can transform them into opportunities for growth. In the unpredictability of grassroots fundraising, we must welcome our first mistakes on the job so we can reveal the lessons within. When I make a mistake and actually learn from it, I often learn much more than if I had done it right the first time. I am not afraid of mistakes. I am only afraid of not recognizing them, which, in the end, is far more harmful than the mistakes themselves. ■

Kim Klein is the founder and publisher emerita of the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*. Her classic book, *Fundraising for Social Change*, has recently been updated in a sixth edition, available from josseybass.com. Kim can be reached at kleinandroth.com.



Brown Boi Project youth leaders Nini, Edlinda and Jimmy facilitate at the 2012 national BUTCH Voices conference.

Photo credit: Anthony Dimaano

Brown Bois Building a Sustainable Future

By Dolores Chandler & B. Cole

THE BROWN BOI PROJECT (BBP), founded in 2010, is a leadership development and organizing project that brings together masculine of center women, queer men, trans men, and straight men of color into the same space to transform their privilege around masculinity into tools for racial and gender justice. In our first year, the Brown Boi Project raised \$1,600 in individual donations, but in 2011, we grew that number to more than \$20,000. Our goal for 2012-13 is \$35,000, and eventually we hope to have 45% of our budget come from individual donations. We have built a culture of giving and asking that allows each of us to hone our skills in raising resources to create change.

Anchored by our core leadership retreat that brings together Brown Bois ages 35 and under from around the country, the program fuses economic justice with leadership development. For each of these young leaders, they not only find a community and family, but they also develop valuable life skills through the program. Sessions are filled with deep conversations

about race and gender, but participants also take away skills in personal finance, fundraising, community organizing, self-care, networking, communications, and health.

For each cohort of 16 to 20 leaders, more than 200 apply. Brown Bois are directors of organizations, but they are also working on food justice in kitchens and on farms and aspiring to be police officers, fashion designers, and media moguls. We just celebrated our two-year anniversary and have already had over 100 leaders complete our program. In 2011, we were able to participate in the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color. It was an amazing experience that helped us provide critical fundraising support and training for our board, members and key staff.

Building Social Capital

For Cole, the executive director of BBP, "Social capital is often the critical missing piece that we don't get in school. It leverages the education you've received—whether on the streets or in an

institution—to build the network and resources you need to create change in the world.” Doing this in a culturally relevant way is just as important to BBP. You can be successful by your own community’s standards and have a meaningful impact without having to conform to the white, heterosexual status quo.

One of the single most important tools to build social capital is understanding how to move resources. The barriers to raising money faced by young people of color leading organizations are staggering. A 2008 study by Funders for LGBT Issues showed that 68% of LGBT people of color-led organizations have annual budgets of \$50,000 or less, which underscores why 62% of these organizations also have no paid staff. Expected to do more with less, grassroots fundraising is an optimal strategy to build their organizations.

Many of these organizations are providing critical community and direct service support that reaches those on the furthest margins of our movements. They also form the social fabric of a network that creates long-term cultural shifts within communities of color. Their survival is necessary, and the Brown Boi Project invests heavily in their growth to help effect long-term change.

Leading through Resourcing

The first step we use to build these leaders’ capacity to raise resources is to build a culture of self-reliance and success. The very first cohort of BBP was financed entirely by Cole. Although that meant it only had four people in it, she knew that the idea was so new that it would be difficult to get funders and donors to invest. The ethos of our work has become: if we want to see change, we must lead it and resource it. Each of us has the responsibility to make sure that this organization grows and thrives, reaching even more leaders.

During the leadership retreat, all of the Brown Bois receive basic training in grassroots fundraising. These trainings, led by seasoned grassroots fundraising activists, cover the fundamentals of relationship building, the mechanics of an ask, the history of institutional philanthropy, and strategies for connecting to our personal networks to support work that matters to us. For most, this is the first time they have worked on overcoming their anxiety about asking for money. The participants then go through communications training, which reinforces the fundraising training and helps them refine their messaging, effectively articulate the problems that BBP addresses, and connect fundraising to solving those problems.

After the leadership retreat, we offer coaching circles to the Brown Bois to deepen their skills in a particular area, including fundraising and grantwriting. Our pilot coaching circle, the resource circle, is a three-month course conducted virtually that

brings Brown Bois together from multiple cohorts in groups of six to eight. These circles are led by senior trainers in marketing, fundraising, business financials, and journalistic writing. They meet every two weeks as a large group and one-on-one with the senior trainer in the alternate weeks. From prospecting to understanding the landscape of philanthropy, the resource circles gives Brown Bois the tools to better navigate the field. They also cover how to set fundraising goals, create gift range charts, and develop language to make a successful ask.

Our core trainer, Jovida Ross, shares, “In the resource circles, we demystify fundraising and break it into approachable steps. Then we follow up with practical assignments and one-on-one coaching to hone their skills. They get to learn by taking action on real projects, with support and feedback. The process starts at an introductory level, and by the end, they know how to write a grant proposal, contact a foundation representative, and build a network of community advocates and supporters. They’ve practiced the steps needed and they gain confidence so that they can apply the skills to other projects. Long term, Brown Boi leaders will be able to attract the resources they need to bring their projects to life.”

The group spends the first portion of the resource circle working on a collective goal that relates to raising money for BBP, such as a grant proposal. This way they all develop shared language and a common frame for approaching the work. The latter part of the circle is designed to give them space to work on individual projects, such as identifying prospects and developing content they can use to pursue resources—while still learning from each others’ work. The resource circle allows BBP to increase our grantwriting capacity while the participants develop a level of competency that helps them get promoted and take on new jobs within fundraising. Furthermore, the virtual, part-time structure allows us to build our members’ capacity on a timeline and frame that works with their lives.

Brown Boi Teresa M. from Arizona shares, “The coaching circle was truly able to honor the experiential knowledge that I have, while expanding my knowledge on what fundraising and grantwriting can really be. The coaching circle gave me room to process some of the issues I have, and am working through, around the pressure of needing to give something to get people to give, and general issues surrounding conversations around money. In addition to the room to process, I was given tools to really move forward and hold conversations about fundraising and partnerships as political actions.”

“I learned the skills it takes to write a grant and the appropriate way to approach funders,” shared Megan B., one of our Brown Bois from Los Angeles. “It is not easy for me to discuss money, but this gave me the language and confidence to do so. I appreciated

the fact that the circle consisted of folks working on several different community projects. This coaching circle has given me a framework to take back to my core partners and has grounded me in understanding nonprofit fundraising. I feel one step closer to building a sustainable community and getting funding for my projects.”

A great example of the impact our coaching circles can have is the path of our first development and communications coordinator, Dolores Chandler. Before becoming a Brown Boi, Dolores had never written a grant proposal or made a major donor ask over \$100. In the resource circle, Dolores wrote her first successful grant proposal and discovered that she had a gift. Now Dolores runs our single largest fundraiser of the year, the Brown Boi Affair, and works on development prospecting, bringing in \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually. Dolores also provides one-on-one coaching to Brown Bois who are planning to apply for resources to support their local and regional gender justice community work.

Says Dolores, “The leadership training provided me with the tools and skills necessary for success, not only in my activism, but also in my personal well-being. After expressing interest in further developing my fundraising skills during the leadership retreat, I was given the opportunity to participate in a grantwriting circle and receive communications and fundraising training. It is often argued that success is as much about access to resources and opportunities as it about raw talent and intelligence. BBP works to build our leadership and economic self-sufficiency and in my case, it has succeeded in that goal. I am proud to be a Brown Boi, and I am committed to taking advantage of every opportunity BBP gives me so that I can continue to succeed.”

30 Days of Brown Boi

All of this training comes in handy when we launch our end-of-year campaign in November called 30 Days of Brown Boi. Each Brown Boi sets a goal of raising at least \$100 (but many set their goals higher) by December 31st. Last year was our first year running the 30 Days of Brown Boi, but we were still able to raise \$10,000 with just 30% of the Brown Bois participating. This year we hope to have 50% participation and have set a goal of raising \$15,000 total. Using a group fundraising page, each Brown Boi sets up an individual page to share with their family, friends, and community. The trainings on fundraising we offer during our leadership retreats serve as an anchor for the Bois during the 30 days. But it is really the success they have in tapping their networks that changes the way they see fundraising. Weekly updates provide a chance for coaching, support, troubleshooting, and recognizing accomplishments.

This campaign is our biggest opportunity to ask our entire

community to support BBP. We use Facebook, Twitter, and weekly email newsletters to ask all of our supporters to give. A fun and engaging part of the 30 Days of Brown Boi is that we feature a different Brown Boi or BBP All Star on our social media streams every day. All Stars are core mentors, volunteers, coaches, and contractors that make all of our work possible during the year. By telling these stories, we help supporters see what a deep investment their donation will be in our entire community.

Brown Boi Affair

Our signature event is the Brown Boi Affair, held each Spring in the Bay Area. Featuring a supper quiz and game show, the event also includes a silent auction, a live musical or dance performance, and a dance party at the end. Popular in the UK, supper quiz events pit teams against each other in trivia areas like world history, music, literature, and pop culture. With free childcare and a zero waste policy, the event also puts our principles into practice, while celebrating the achievements of the last year.

Each team of seven to eight people sets up a team page with a minimum goal of \$700, and individual members can create their own pages to ask their community to support them. In addition, organizational allies and corporate sponsors join our host committee by giving \$250 to \$5,000. In 2011, our first Brown Boi Affair raised \$10,000, half of which was by the teams, and this year we are shooting for \$15,000.

The evening is made all the more special with classy touches such as an upscale meal with passed hors d'oeuvres and drinks; decorations, flowers, and table designs to create the right aesthetic; and of course, a great DJ to set the mood. All of the vendors we use are part of the BBP community.

Conclusion

Our approach to fundraising is to build a culture where each of us has lots of room to practice, tools to help us increase our effectiveness, and space to learn, fail, and learn some more. All of the Bois receive basic fundraising training and have the opportunity to master these core skills. We see this as just the beginning of building a sustainable future for our community and movement. ■

Dolores Chandler is a queer butch dandy, performance artist, and immigrant of African and Greek descent. She currently lives in Austin, Texas, was a Brown Boi in 2011, and is the Brown Boi Project's first Development and Communications Coordinator. Cole holds an MSc from the London School of Economics and has worked as a community facilitator, strategist, and consultant for the last ten years. She launched the Brown Boi Project in 2010.



Fundraising from Our Roots

A Skill Share from the Young Women's Empowerment Project

By C Angel Torres, Naima Paz, Daphnie Williams, Dominique McKinney, & Shira Hassan

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECT (YWEP) is a membership-based social justice project led by and for girls, transgender girls, and young women of color ages 12 to 23 who trade sex for money, drugs and survival needs. Our mission is to offer safe, respectful, free-of-judgment spaces for those impacted by the sex trade and street economy—spaces that recognize their hopes, dreams and desires. With the goal of creating long-term social change through politicizing our communities and building our movement, YWEP uses the interlocking strategies of harm reduction, transformative justice, leadership development and popular education to motivate and support our base. We were founded in 2002 in Chicago by a collective of feminists and harm reductionists who had life experience in the sex trade and street

economy. Our work empowers young people to be leaders in the conversations that affect their lives.

YWEP has five main program areas: Outreach, Leadership Development, Popular Education Workshops, Research, and Social Justice. Each interconnected program area is directed by a youth staffer who is a current member of our organization. Our peer outreach workers reach over 500 girls per year, and our popular education workshops reached 582 young people and 1,700 adults through conferences, workshops and trainings during 2011. We are also the country's only youth-run syringe exchange program (that we know of), which reaches another 200 young people annually to distribute safer hormone and drug use supplies.

YWEP is totally youth-run. This means our staff comes from

our membership and is entirely between the ages of 12 and 25. YWEP defines our membership as any girl or transgender girl who is currently or formerly involved in the sex trade and/or street economy, is under 23, and attends at least one membership meeting per year. We do workshops all over Chicago and the country. Youth Activist Krew and Girls In Charge, two of our core leadership groups, work to deepen their political education and make decisions for our project—including building our base, hiring staff, and creating our campaigns. Young people are also a big part of our fundraising work, which we will talk more about in this article after discussing how YWEP is run.

Our Values

YWEP's values run deep in our work every day. From self-care and harm reduction to popular education and empowerment theory, our model is based on the idea that we are the experts in our own lives. Young people in the sex trade are taught that we don't know what is best for us: A doctor knows what is best for our bodies, a social worker knows what is best for our emotional health, a judge knows what is best for our lives. At YWEP, we strive to create spaces where we are in charge. We don't tell youth what to do and we don't give advice. We create as many opportunities as possible for young people to be in leadership positions; adults do not do all the important work or make all the important decisions.

We bring social justice into our work by acknowledging and supporting resistance. We value the rebellion of youth impacted by the system. We encourage youth to look closely at the way racism, classism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia play out and affect us in the sex trade and street economy. We understand that the sex trade is not about what one person does, but about a system of forces that all work together to oppress youth; women; people of color; lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender people; and others. One way that we incorporate social justice into our daily lives at YWEP is through building community. We do this by helping youth find connections with each other, by looking closely at how we might play out sexism (like by calling girls "hoes") and by creating a respectful, free of judgment space where we can get information about how to change the world.

Our Leadership Development

The highest level on our leadership ladder is co-executive director. The first young person to move all the way up the ladder and become the co-executive director is Dominique McKinney. She became the co-director in January 2009 and is currently in charge of running our site, campaign and programs.

New members come in through our weekly meetings, where they receive stipends to learn about social movements, get political education, and build resilience and sisterhood. Ongoing members can receive training to become outreach workers, serving as a knowledgeable resource to our constituency. From there, they can apply for internship opportunities, and some move into salaried staff positions. It is at this point that young people start learning the basics of fundraising.

How We Teach Grassroots Fundraising

We believe that young people's involvement in fundraising is a part of how we can learn to make empowered decisions about money and resources in our personal and political lives. A young person at YWEP is exposed to some of the basics of fundraising from the first time they walk through our door because we actively talk and think about how to survive. In many ways, every street-based young person has figured out how to use grassroots fundraising methods simply through figuring out how to eat, sleep, shower and find resources to make it through one more day.

We start by using popular education to mine our collective knowledge and begin translating what we know about our individual survival into how we can work together to support our movement's survival. For example, if we know how to hustle by asking for spare change, then we know how to make a pitch to individual donors. If we know how to throw a party to raise money for rent, then we know how to throw a fundraiser. If we know how to barter and trade goods for resources, then we understand the basics of earned income strategies.

YWEP believes that teaching fundraising is not just about how to get cash through our doors, but is about holistically teaching money management for nonprofits as well as personal budgeting for members. Young people are a part of every aspect of how we raise and manage funds. Staff are responsible for creating their own budgets for their programs, and our administrative coordinator, Daphnie Williams, who began at YWEP when she was 18 years old, is responsible for collecting all paperwork and receipts and managing our individual donor database. We host trainings and offer one-on-one sessions throughout the year facilitated by adult allies in our project to teach important skills like budgeting, managing cash flow, and talking to individual donors.

Young people also have opportunities to practice fundraising on both small and large scales. For example, every year members practice earned income by taking leadership in selling something we create together. In the past we have screen-printed our own T-shirts, sweatshirts and underwear; created our own hip hop album; made many zines, posters and other street art; and even

made our own herbs and aromatherapy scents to sell. The young people at YWEP take these items with us when we travel to conferences and other events so we can raise money to help offset the cost of our travel.

Our Fundraising Philosophies

Over the years, we have come up with a few guiding principles to help us stay true to our beliefs. Because YWEP uses consensus to make decisions, these rules were agreed on by our membership, staff, adult allies and board of directors.

1. **Young people need to be involved in all levels of fundraising.** Young people work on grants, manage data collection for their programs, maintain the individual donor database, help get new donors and funders through the door, and participate in budgeting, fundraisers, and all money management. We do this because we believe that young people can and should be the leaders at YWEP, and we do not want to see them tokenized. We also think that these skills can be transferred back into our daily lives and be useful to us personally.
2. **We do not use our personal stories to raise money.** In fact we do not use anyone's life story or even fictional stories. Even though every training on fundraising we have ever been to has told us we "have to" do this to be good at getting money, we have decided that the stories of young people of color, especially young women and queer young people, are already exploited enough. We believe that our activism, art, and role in the wider movement for liberation should be the story that we tell, and that should be valued.
3. **If we can't agree on it then we do not take it.** This means we do not take money from "pimps." For example, the Playboy Foundation has offered us money in the past. Many of us wanted to take the money, but others felt like this would be using money that has harmed people in our constituency. Because we could not reach consensus, we did not take the money from this particular foundation.
4. **We take no city, state, federal or corporate money.** These groups want information about our lives and membership that we do not want to give out. We also feel like these groups work in opposition to our larger goals of liberation and empowerment of our constituency.

Lessons Learned from Our Fundraising

1. **All Mistakes are Secret Successes.** For years we lost money every time we did large benefit events for YWEP. Even though tons of people would come to show support,

we never figured out how to translate that into cash. We would get sad afterwards until we realized that these events were successful at building community even if they didn't build income. We changed the focus from "fundraising" to "friend-raising" and created events to thank our donors and reach out to new ones. Another example is that we often don't make much money by selling posters or T-shirts. When we evaluated this, we realized that our products always sold out, which meant that our media messages were really spreading. Now we look at all our earned income strategies as media messaging tools.

2. **Administrative Work is Activism.** The kind of work that YWEP does is only possible when individual donors support us. Having individual donors is hard work and means lots of paperwork and tracking. If we do not learn to be good administrators as young people, we will not be learning to support our activism for the long haul. We know that the administrative work is the backbone of our activist body.
3. **Know Your Role in Fundraising.** At YWEP, we let everyone find their favorite way to fundraise and do not force youth to do things they don't feel comfortable with. Even though we all have been trained in everything from making a donor ask to making a pitch at a friend-raiser, many of us only like to do certain things. We found that by letting people do what they like, they have more fun, feel more confident, prepare better, and do it more effectively. If there is one task that no one wants to do, we either step up and try it or we ask an adult ally to do it instead.
4. **Always Say Thank You.** We have learned the hard way (by losing donors sometimes) that if we do not say thank you, people feel like their gift did not matter to us. We try to always give people something in return like a poster or button. We also try to give out handmade gifts or cards. This year, our staff and members are going to make personal phone calls to let people know how much their support means to us.

Empowerment from Our Roots

Being empowered means being active in the decisions we make about our own lives. We believe that young people's involvement in fundraising is a part of how we can learn to make empowered decisions about money and resources in our personal and political lives. Fundraising from our roots strengthens our organization, our members as individuals, and our movement. ■

This article was written by the youth leadership of YWEP with the support of an adult ally. Visit youarepriceless.org to learn more about our work.

Translating Training to Culture Change: Two Case Studies

By Priscilla Hung & Steve Lew

MANY GROUPS HAVE THOUGHT that lack of training was what prevented them from being successful at fundraising, only to be disappointed when things didn't change after attending a training. We are all familiar with being inspired and motivated at a training, only to come back to the office and find that the changes we hope to make feel daunting and complex.

Training can be very useful, but translating training into shifting an organization's fundraising culture takes an ongoing commitment of time and leadership beyond the actual training session. To help us learn more about how organizations use training successfully, we interviewed two participants in the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color, a California-based program coordinated jointly by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and GIFT.

The Fundraising Academy conducts an application process accepting a cohort of 20 groups, who, over a six to eight-month period, receive group training, individual coaching, and cutting-edge written materials. The idea is to provide a comprehensive program to inspire organizational fundraising culture change. Now in its ninth year, we are eager to share some lessons learned from the over 130 groups we have worked with.

“Learning My Role as a Fundraising Leader”

The Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) started in 1978, becoming the first multilingual 24-hour hotline in the nation assisting Asian and Pacific Islander (API) survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Soon thereafter, they expanded to provide both emergency and transitional shelter—again, the first multilingual program in the nation to specifically serve the API community. In 2005, they continued to grow by ramping up their community education and violence prevention services.

After almost ten years at the helm, Executive Director Debra Suh went on a sabbatical awarded by the Durfee Foundation. She came back re-energized with a stronger focus on fundraising and the gift of more time, since her day-to-day

activities were distributed to other staff during her leave. In 2009, like many nonprofit leaders, Debra was trying to figure out how to respond to the economic recession and keep her organization thriving. “We are heavily government-funded and probably always will be,” explains Debra, “but we’ve always wanted to diversify. The urgency caused by the economic recession and upcoming cuts in government funding was a big motivator.”

Picking the Right Program

The call for applications to the first Los Angeles cohort of the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color was timely given the backdrop of funding cuts. Debra says it specifically appealed to her because the commitment was spread out over time. “I’ve been to a lot of trainings, and I already had a lot of experience. I saw the all-day trainings as strategic thinking time outside the office. And I knew that since it was a long-term commitment, my organization would have a greater chance of breaking bad habits.”

Much of the fundraising capacity-building usually offered to nonprofits is transactional, often being narrowly focused, one-

Why a “Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color”?

We believe that organizations led by people of color and based in communities of color are more likely to improve their fundraising when they participate in capacity-building programs that address the connections between race, culture and philanthropy, including:

- the realities of who has money and who doesn't;
- assumptions around who gives money and who doesn't;
- power dynamics in talking about and asking for money; and
- fundraising strategies that draw on legacies and existing practices of giving in communities of color.

Addressing these realities, coupled with a firm belief in the wisdom and ability of communities of color to give and raise money, can provide an inspiring and relevant fundraising program that goes beyond sharing information and building skills. We are also proud that, over time, we have grown our pool of trainers and coaches so that they are all people of color.

Fundraising Academy participants receive:

- eight day-long group trainings with peer learning;
- evening training for board members;
- 15 hours of individualized coaching;
- two books, one on grassroots fundraising and one on nonprofit sustainability;
- year-long subscription to the *Journal*; and
- a long-term investment in their growth and development.

time events. Reasons for this include the common desire for quick fixes, funder interest and capacity, and widespread misinformation about what successful nonprofit fundraising looks like. Aside from “Fundraising 101” type programs, most other trainings, in Debra’s words, “try to hook you in with the next new thing that you can’t or don’t know how to really apply.”

Another concern about capacity-building programs that often does not get discussed is the approach of the trainers themselves. While CPAF, an organization based in the API community with an all API board and staff, was not necessarily looking for a program exclusively for communities of color and led by people of color, they did find that who delivers the training and how can make a big difference on how the information is received. “We attended a highly-regarded fundraising training that had essentially the same message and information as the Academy, but some of my board members shut down because they found some of the trainers’ comments offensive,” confides Debra. Other participants in the Academy echo similar thoughts, feeling that learning spaces are most effective when different cultural values are considered, people feel respected, and the information shared by the trainers resonates with the participants’ experiences.

The Importance of the Fundraising Plan

Similar to many other nonprofit organizations, CPAF was strong at grantwriting and enjoyed coordinating events, even if the events didn’t raise much money. Individual donor cultivation was the weakest and most confusing area. Prior to investing in long-term training, Debra describes her style of donor fundraising as “scattered.” She explains, “It’s hard for me to leave money on the table and say no to opportunities. Our staff and board are very

creative, and we were always trying the newest idea. We would be all over the place.”

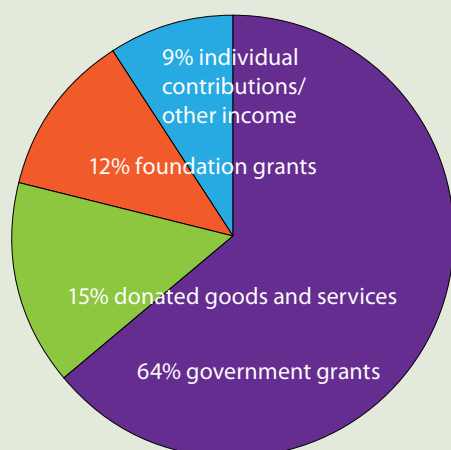
When asked for the most valuable outcome from her time spent in the Academy, Debra is quick to respond: “The fundraising plan. We could’ve paid a consultant to create our plan, but it makes all the difference to do it yourself. I learned how to do it so that I can sustain it year after year and tailor it to our needs.” The plan helped her understand the need to build on existing fundraising activities rather than start something new every year, as well as the consequences of spreading their resources thin. Now, when a new fundraising idea is brought to her, she asks how it fits into the fundraising plan. If it doesn’t fit, she no longer commits staff resources to it. “It was an amazing transformation for me personally,” says Debra.

Several components of the Fundraising Academy helped her implement and sustain this change, which could be easily replicated by other capacity-building programs. The training time helped her understand why and how to organize her organization’s fundraising efforts. A clear and simple template was provided for them to work from. “Homework” between training sessions motivated her to put the plan down on paper. Peer learning helped her get new ideas and avoid pitfalls. Coaches were instructed to not create the plan for participants, but instead to help them set realistic goals that would not set up the organization to fail. CPAF also had access to follow-up coaching, which they used to facilitate a board and staff retreat to incorporate their new approach to fundraising throughout the organization.

This process has helped Debra see the connections between strategic organizational planning, strategic fundraising, and strategic leadership. “Like strategic planning, the strength of an organization

Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF) At-a-Glance

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$2.3 MILLION



CPAF exists to end family violence and violence against women in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Their mission is to build healthy and safe communities by addressing root causes and immediate needs, while meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of API women and their families. They run a multilingual hotline, emergency and transitional shelters, children’s programs, and classes on topics such as non-violent parenting and child care, dating violence, and rape prevention. Last year alone, they provided services to over 2,000 women and children in Los Angeles, CA.

Annual gala: \$97,000
 Major donor campaign: \$30,000
 Direct mail campaign: \$5,000
 House parties: \$11,000

People power: 11 board members, 29 staff members, and 128 volunteers

is when you can point everyone in the same direction—fundraising included,” she says.

Sustaining Change

In addition to having a more focused approach to their donor fundraising, CPAF has continued to experience other benefits over the few years since the Academy: (1) a board of directors that is more strategic in and supportive of donor fundraising; (2) the launch of their first major donor campaign; and (3) greater diversification of revenue. To help implement these changes, they hired a Development Manager, a new position for CPAF.

They decided to focus on three main strategies for the board—the annual event, a major gift campaign, and their own giving. “We’ve been talking about doing a major donor campaign for a decade, but the Academy was the first time we were given all the tools in a clear way,” says Debra. One notable success is that the board decided to hold its first major donor campaign. In fact, the board was so excited to launch this campaign, Debra had to actually ask them to allow her to contact some prospective donors because they wanted to do all of the asks themselves.

Whereas government grants used to make up over 75% of CPAF’s overall revenue, that percentage is now down—not due to loss of funds (in fact, their budget has grown since 2009), but because income in other areas is up. Debra proudly states that board giving has increased, and the organization has more donors and has been able to raise more money from them. She also notes an increase in foundation grants received, which she partly attributes to being more visible in the community.

Debra has advice for other organizational leaders who want to diversify their funding: “Commit to it. Stay focused. Don’t procrastinate.”

“Rooting Our Fundraising in Our Community”

Evonne Gallardo came to Self Help Graphics & Art with a background in raising money for arts organizations. She had mostly worked at nonprofits that had robust corporate support and already had a base of individual supporters who were established as philanthropists, gave large gifts, and were mostly white. She found a different world at Self Help Graphics when she started as development director in 2001.

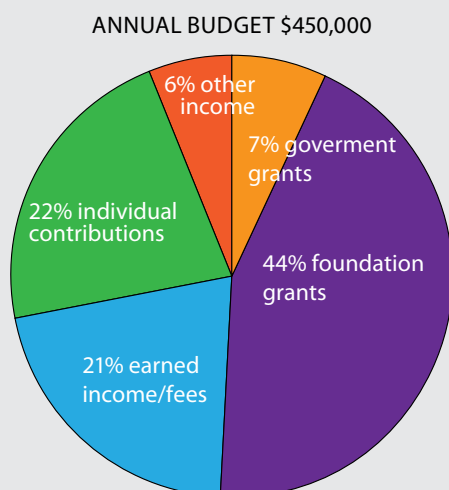
The traditional fundraising expertise she came with didn’t immediately connect. Donors to her previous organization largely gave out of charitable and philanthropic interests. Donors to Self Help Graphics gave because they had received a service or opportunity, bought something, or attended an event. Evonne found it to be much more entrepreneurial, with a lot of give and take with the community of local artists in East Los Angeles.

When she returned in 2009 as executive director, Evonne sought to incorporate both what she learned in her previous fundraising work as well as the assets and traditions brought by Self Help Graphic’s Latino community. Encouraged by President Obama’s grassroots-fueled campaign in 2008, she started by approaching their volunteers to make small gifts to the organization.

Bringing Together Two Approaches

To help bolster her goal of integrating traditional fundraising with

Self Help Graphics & Art At-a-Glance



Incorporated in 1973, Self Help Graphics & Art is the leading non-profit visual arts center serving Los Angeles and its majority Latino community. Self Help Graphics develops and nurtures Latino artists in printmaking, especially young and emerging artists. They also advance Latino art broadly through programming, exhibitions and outreach to diverse audiences in East Los Angeles and beyond, reaching 8,000 people per year.

Budget: \$450,000

Annual dinner: \$60,000

Direct mail campaign: \$5,000

House parties: \$6,000

Earned income: \$7,500

People Power: 13 board members, 3 staff members, and 30 volunteers

what she was learning from the Latino community, Evonne sought out training. She didn't find a fit with much of what was presented at Association for Fundraising Professionals meetings, thinking, "This is not going to work in our community, or we tried that and it didn't work."

She liked the smaller, multicultural setting offered by the Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color. The conversations she had with her peers at the Academy inspired her to dig deeper and think bigger and more creatively in her strategies. She also appreciated that the monthly trainings were dynamic and energetic, with several hands-on exercises and interactive discussions, rather than a static classroom approach. The Academy was particularly relevant to grassroots social justice organizations in a way that traditional fundraising trainings were not.

Conocimiento

Evonne quickly realized that the grassroots approach she wanted to use at Self Help Graphics was rooted in *conocimiento*—the desire to get to know you and for you to get to know me in order to move forward together. She knew that their programming, events, and fundraising appeals had to reflect the community in an authentic way that is only possible when you truly get to know each other.

Evonne describes why this shift in focus was necessary: "There's a difference between the Mexican Museums you can visit in different cities around the country and Self Help Graphics. Going to places like The Mexican Museum in San Francisco or the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago is like going to a fine restaurant. Going to Self Help Graphics is like being in your grandmother's kitchen."

Getting the Board on Board

A key step to bringing *conocimiento* to their fundraising was getting their organizational leaders on board. Since this approach is very much rooted in personal interaction, she needed her board members—who are also community leaders—to understand why this kind of fundraising is critical for Self Help Graphics in order for them to be willing to ask their personal contacts and networks for gifts.

One feature of the Fundraising Academy is an evening training specifically designed for board members to attend so they can be more in sync with what their staff is learning. People are encouraged to bring board members or staff as guests to the day-long training, but these evening trainings are usually more convenient. Four of Self Help Graphics's board members attended, and the head of the board fundraising committee reported back to the full board at their following meeting.

As a result, board members were able to articulate for themselves the importance of donor development, the importance of the board taking a leadership role in this work, and the various ways that they could participate in the fundraising process. Having a safe space for board members to learn, plus having the information presented by fellow board members, made it much less scary for them to get involved, reports Evonne.

This has produced tangible results for Self Help Graphics and has helped shift the board culture of fundraising. Prior to the Fundraising Academy, board members mostly focused their attention on grants. Now they pay much more attention to the individual contributions line in the budget, and have become more invested in donor development. Their level of participation has significantly increased, with 90% of the board making their own gifts as well as participating in fundraising activities, such as hosting house gatherings and inviting their friends to attend and donate.

This shift in focus for the board has also translated into an increase in Self Help Graphics' earned income. Board members now often help with the sales of art prints, which account for a majority of their earned income. As board involvement in fundraising has increased, so has their involvement in other revenue sources.

Building on Strengths

When Evonne applied to the Academy, she knew that Self Help Graphics had several weaknesses in their fundraising program. But she also knew that they brought many strengths, including a strong commitment to their mission and a legacy of community involvement and support.

This assessment helped her set clear goals for what she wanted out of the Academy that built on the organization's strengths. Ultimately, she wanted to launch a successful individual giving program, through which they would learn more personal, deep, and innovative ways of connecting with their constituency in order for community members to financially invest in the organization.

Her advice to other groups in a similar situation is to get clarity about what they want from training, how those goals connect to the culture of the organization, and what that will help them accomplish. ■

Priscilla Hung is a program director at Community Partners and the former executive director of GIFT. Steve Lew is senior project director at CompassPoint Nonprofit Services. The Fundraising Academy for Communities of Color is a joint program of GIFT and CompassPoint, with Community Partners serving as the local partner for the Los Angeles, CA program.

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- Spend 5-7 minutes letting us know how we can best support your work
- Be entered in a drawing for a free two-year subscription to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*!

We look forward to hearing from you!