

Fundraiser Bill of Rights—Creating Equitable Partnerships[©]

Amelia Garza Supported by Jennifer T. Holmes

The Fundraiser Bill of Rights is an independent project of the developers Amelia Garza and Jennifer T. Holmes. The document does not reflect the policies, thoughts, or opinions of any organization with which the developers may have employment or voluntary association.

The developers credit the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) for defining philanthropy as the “...voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life.” Given that philanthropy involves voluntary actions, such as using donor’s time, talent, and/or treasure, it is no surprise that AFP has taken the additional step of identifying the rights that donors have when conducting their philanthropic endeavors.

In years past, the fundraiser/donor relationship has often taken a submissive/dominant role. With a growing shift of this binary toward a community-centric fundraising model, it has become even more vital for charitable organizations to examine the fundraiser/donor relationship and further define the fundraiser’s rights as an equitable partner in creating change for the community. The rights of fundraisers consist of the following:

I. Fundraisers have the right to a decision-making role in determining if a donation should be declined if the gift has conditions that contradict the organization’s mission and/or the clients the organization serves.

A fundraiser’s role is to secure funding to fulfill the mission of the organization they serve. Should a donor make restrictions around their gift that contradicts an organization’s commitment to equity or require the organization to compromise the needs of the individuals it serves, the organization and fundraiser have the right to decline the acceptance of the donor’s gift.

II. Fundraisers have a right to a respectful, equitable and transparent professional relationship with the organization they serve and with the donors of the organization.

Whether it be by the organization they serve, the organization’s staff or the donor community, each fundraiser should be treated with the assumption of intellectual and professional competence. According to a recent study, fundraisers of color were found to have the additional responsibility of proving their competence to both donors and their teams. This additional obstacle was particularly troubling for fundraisers of color when creating trusting relationships with donors. The study concluded that fundraisers of color would need another 1-2 conversations with donors before they could start philanthropic discussions. The totality of the

obstacle of proving their intelligence and professionalism was then reflected in metrics. It would often take more work and more conversations for fundraisers of color to get the same results as white fundraisers.

Nonprofit organizations are encouraged to make a clear statement that their fundraising teams are not beholden to donors but are, instead, committed to fulfilling the organization's mission. Subsequently, the organization will support Fundraisers' decisions to refrain from any dialogue or interactions with donors that are clearly outside of their responsibilities to the organization. These interactions include, but are not limited to, conducting personal errands for donors or leveraging the organization's influence to benefit donors.

III. Fundraisers have a right to be included in the continuous audit of an organization's policies and practices to ensure equity and protection.

Charitable organizations should undergo an inclusive review of policies and practices to ensure that fundraisers of color and professionals from other systemically non-dominant cultures are recruited, retained, promoted and have the ability to thrive equitably to their white counterparts. Organizations should also review and reformulate the narratives told about communities of color and create affirming language to describe problems, solutions, and visions for change. Leaders of charitable organizations have a responsibility to their organization's fundraisers not only in evaluating their practices but also in including fundraisers in their evaluations.

Fundraisers of color are often called upon to educate their colleagues, institutions and donors about race, power and privilege while their roles typically hold less positional power and autonomy. By taking on the additional work to create diversity, equity and inclusion values for their institutions, fundraisers of color find themselves in a position of balancing their fundraising goals and workloads with the non-paid work of building the organization's awareness in understanding and addressing racism. It is imperative that charitable organizations that have a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion secure external consultancy on practices to ensure equity and not assume that the work would be better handled by an internal fundraiser of color.

IV. Fundraisers have a right to develop a "response" plan that the institution will support.

Similar to how an organization develops a response plan for emergencies (i.e., fire evacuation, tornado response, active shooter, etc.), each fundraiser has a right to establish how they will respond to a donor should the donor engage in discriminatory or harassing behavior. As such behavior can be presumed to have a higher chance of occurring than an organization needing to respond to an emergency, the organization has a duty—and is accountable—to make sure their fundraisers are supported when they respond to discriminatory and harassing

behaviors. Should the fundraiser's response plan need to be enacted, the fundraiser then has a right not to be reprimanded by their organization.

V. Fundraisers have the right to stop working with a donor based on the donor's behavior toward their gender, sexual orientation, race, ability or any identity-based cause for discrimination.

In developing a response plan, organizations should also validate a fundraiser's option to cease interactions with a donor based on the donor's explicit or implicit discriminatory behavior. Fundraisers should not be forced to decide whether to confront or comply with disrespectful treatment (conscious or unconscious) for the sake of achieving fundraising goals. Should a donor behave in a discriminatory or harassing way, the organization should then step forward in protecting the rights of the fundraiser to cease partnering with the donor based solely on the fundraiser's accounts with or without substantial evidence.

The organization is responsible for providing guidance and support for helping the fundraiser navigate discriminating and harassing encounters. It is highly recommended that organizations provide clear statements for fundraisers to use with donors during such situations, as well as clear guidelines for how the organization will support fundraisers in their decision to end a relationship with a donor due to their behavior.

Moving Forward in Shifting the Fundraising Rights Narrative

The rights of fundraisers have, until now, been considered a subsequent and an assumed concept. It is time to disrupt the notion that acquiescing to the donor is an unquestionable priority. As the philanthropy industry moves away from its traditional and donor-serving framework toward a community-centric approach, it is imperative for charitable organizations to take steps in evaluating their organization's policies, procedures, and values. The Fundraiser Bill of Rights (FBOR) aims to keep organizations accountable and in favor of serving the community above serving their donors while keeping in mind the many obstacles fundraisers of color face within a donor-centered philanthropic approach.

Although the FBOR pertains to fundraisers in general, its approach to a more equitable and community-serving model is conducted through an interdisciplinary lens inclusive of fundraisers of color, fundraisers of differing abilities, and nonbinary fundraisers. In remaining accountable, organizations should work toward disrupting the status quo that creates ostracism of fundraisers of color, tokenism and unrealistic expectations to balance assimilation. Organizations have a responsibility to their staff and the communities they serve to continue working towards an equitable and just structure. As this work continues, additions can and should be made to the Fundraiser Bill of Rights to help ensure the continuation of progress towards an equitable, inclusive, and diverse philanthropic industry.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Common Terminology and Definitions

Culture of Power –The “culture of power” represents a set of values, beliefs, and ways of acting and being that, for sociopolitical reasons, unfairly and unevenly elevate groups of people—mostly white, upper and middle class, male and heterosexual—to positions where they have more control over money, people, and societal values than their non-culture-of-power peers. The separation of people through these arbitrary markers results in a tiered society where set rules and ideological standpoints result in barriers for those not part of the culture of power. These barriers are a product of human invention, yet because they are legitimized by a caste-oriented society are often accepted as normal.

Explicit and Implicit Racism – Explicit racism includes any speech or behaviors that demonstrate a conscious acknowledgment of racist attitudes and beliefs. By contrast, implicit racism includes unconscious biases, expectations, or tendencies that exist within an individual, regardless of ill-will or any self-aware prejudices.

Institutionalized Racism – The systematic distribution of resources, power and opportunity in our society to the benefit of people who are white and the exclusion of people of color.

Model Minority (Tokenism) – Tokenism is the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, especially by recruiting people from underrepresented groups to give the appearance of racial or sexual equality within a workforce. The effort of including a token employee in a workforce is usually intended to create the impression of social inclusiveness and diversity (racial, religious, sexual, etc.) to deflect accusations of discrimination.

BIPOC – Black Indigenous People of Color

Intersectionality – According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

Resources

[*How To Keep Women of Color from Leaving the Fundraising Profession*](#) by Kishana Palmer

[*Money Power and Race the Lived Experiences of People of Color*](#) by Cause Effective
moneypowerrace@causeeffective.org

How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown

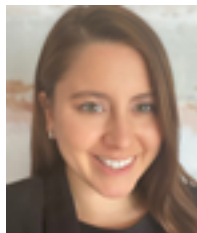
Critical Race Theory by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic

Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana

Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective by Janic Acoose, Lisa Brooks, Tol Foster, LeAnne Howe, Daniel Heath Justice, Phillip Carroll Morgan, Kimberly Roppolo, Cheryl Suzack, Christopher B. Teuton, Sean Teuton, Robert Warrior, and Craig S. Womack. Edited by Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justic, and Christopher B. Teuton

Transformation Now! Toward a Post-Oppositional Politics of Change by Dr. AnaLouise Keating

This article is an independent project of the authors, Jennifer Holmes and Amelia Garza. The document is not reflective of the policies, thoughts or opinions of any organization with whom the authors may have employment or voluntary association. This document is also copyrighted by the authors.



Amelia Garza currently serves as associate director of major gifts at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. She is currently a Baumhart Scholar at Loyola's MBA program, has a master's degree from Texas Woman's University in women's studies; and a bachelor's degree from Augustana College in pre-occupational therapy, psychology, women and gender studies. You can reach her at amelialgarza@gmail.com or find her on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/amelialgarza/>.



Jennifer T. Holmes currently serves as assistant director of corporate and foundation relations at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. She has a master's degree from University of Detroit Mercy in liberal studies and a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University in history. You can reach her at jenniferholmes1999@yahoo.com or find her on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/1jenniferholmes/>.