

NY Coalition for New Philanthropy Works to Empower Ethnic Donors

By Houkje Ross

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“When it comes to minority donors, giving is usually very direct and personal,” said Jessica Chao, former Vice President of the Wallace Readers Digest Funds, now an ethnic philanthropy consultant working for the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers (NYRAG).

Often Asian Americans and Latinos send money back to the old country to extended families. African Americans often give to churches, extended families, or sororities and fraternities, said Chao. “This type of non-institutional giving comes from a strong sense of personal identity and obligation among ethnic communities. Many times these individuals don’t consider giving money in terms of ‘philanthropy.’ Rather, it is just considered a part of what you do as a member of a community,” said Chao.

Increasing the Impact of Minority Donors

With funding from the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, a national organization based in Washington, D.C., NYRAG created a coalition of five non-profit organizations that are working to increase the effectiveness and impact of individual and collective philanthropic resources. Funding for the three-year project began in 2000—when NYRAG conducted market research to learn the needs of minority groups.

The resulting Coalition for New Philanthropy is unique because it focuses on creating permanent resources in and for three minority groups—African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. “We are striving to honor the traditional ways these ethnic groups have given in the past, while at the same time, encouraging other ways of giving,” said Chao.

This is important because as the personal wealth of many minority groups continues to rise, the ability to give also increases. “At some point, it is no longer effective for minorities to give on a personal level when dealing with systemic issues like eradicating poverty, promoting social justice activities or improving education—which are high on the list of issues that many ethnic groups fund,” noted Chao. “It is much more satisfying for donors when they know that their funding really had an impact,” said Chao.

The Coalition will aim to promote, educate and offer information about sustained, strategic philanthropy to donors within the targeted minority communities. A speakers bureau will be created to offer presentations on community issues, philanthropy, volunteerism

and the non-profit sector as they relate to specific community non-profits and ethnic associations.

The Coalition also plans to hold 13 training sessions over a three-year period for financial and legal advisors. Advisors will be trained on how to incorporate philanthropic issues within their financial, tax, investment and estate planning services as they relate to donors with culturally specific social and community interests. Other strategies to be implemented by the coalition include:

- Developing reports and briefings on findings about philanthropic practices and interests among donors of color;
- Distributing relevant information through, educational and promotional materials, conferences, web sites and media;
- Establishing private consultations for individual donors, families or donor groups to support their efforts to become strategic philanthropic investors in their communities.

The five collaborating organizations that make up the Coalition include the Asian American Federation of New York; the Center for the Study of Philanthropy of the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York; the Hispanic Federation; the Twenty-First Century Foundation; and NYRAG.

The Coalition is one of 13 recipients of a *New Ventures in Philanthropy* grant from the Forum. “*New Ventures in Philanthropy*’s main goal is to increase philanthropic giving in the U.S.,” said Albert Ruesga, director of *New Ventures*. “Minority communities have a rich tradition of giving—through churches, support for disaster relief efforts and direct giving to family members. *New Ventures* is one way we can increase our support for these communities that have historically been very generous,” added Ruesga.

Other *New Venture* grantee projects include: the Ohio Grantmakers Forum initiative, which is working to introduce and pass legislation that would provide new tax incentives for philanthropic giving, and the South Florida Promotion of Philanthropy Initiative. The South Florida project released a study entitled *The Corporate Giving of Hispanic-Owned Companies in Miami-Dade County*. The study compares the nature of local Hispanic giving to national corporate models, and discusses the local non-profits that Hispanic corporations support.

To learn more about *New Ventures in Philanthropy*, contact Albert Ruesga at (202) 467-0298. To contact NYRAG, call (212) 714 0699. ❖



The Council of Foundations (COF) has a publication entitled *Cultures of Caring*, which outlines how minority communities have traditionally engaged in philanthropic efforts.

To obtain a copy of the publication, contact COF at (202) 466-6512. The 1999 publication can also be downloaded from COF’s website at <http://www.cof.org/Content/General/Display.cfm?contentID=235> ❖

