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Roundtable: Does All Human-Rights Funding Use a Human Rights-based Approach?

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The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Oct. 1-3, 2015, Dayton, Ohio

For the archive of the conference, see http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2015/

Roundtable session

Presenters: Matthew Hart; Jason Franklin; Diana Samarasan; Mona Chun; Katy Love

Title: Does All Human-Rights Funding Use a Human Rights-Based Approach?

Abstract: In the U.S., grant strategies and decisions have historically been made by individuals and funders behind closed doors, with little transparency and accountability. Grant seekers, not to mention the public at large, have rarely had insight into how those decisions are made or any influence on the process. What criteria are they using? To whom are they accountable? And how do they make their decisions about what and who they are going to fund?

Replacing traditional hierarchical models of funding, participatory grantmaking applies a human rights-based approach to how funding is determined and who makes the funding decisions. The emphasis is on the practice as well as on the impact of the funds. In this participatory panel presentation, moderated by a staff person from the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG), panelists and audience will explore a range of models for transforming the relationship of social justice actors with funders.

According to the first report on this approach, *Who Decides*, the participatory funding practice comes from grassroots activism. The tradition originated in the 1970s and is based on the value that “decision-making participation of people impacted by the fund’s programs will guarantee that grants are allocated to those most deserving.” Participatory grantmaking upsets traditional notions of money and power. This innovative approach turns the top down model on its head. Through this approach, funders aim to empower those affected by the funding to make decisions about how funds are allocated and for what.

This panel will examine why it is critical — when addressing human rights — to break down traditional funder barriers in favor of participation, transparency, accountability, and collaboration, and will present a continuum for participation as well as mechanisms for how various members represent their communities. In addition, benefits and challenges of this approach will be explored from the funder’s perspective.

Keywords: Participatory grantmaking, Community-led investment, Human-rights based approach to grantmaking and investment process

Biographies:

Diana Samarasan is Founding Executive Director of the [Disability Rights Fund \(DRF\)](#) and the [Disability Rights Advocacy Fund \(DRAF\)](#), a collaboration between donors and the global disability community which supports people with disabilities in the developing world to advocate for equal rights and opportunities. Diana’s work is unique, turning the "charity" model on its head by [involving beneficiary communities in decision-making](#) within the Fund and focusing on sustainable self-advocacy to impact poverty and a vacuum of rights, rather than provision of one-off services. She serves on the Steering Committees of the [International Human Rights Funder’s Group \(IHRFG\)](#) and [Opportunity Collaboration](#) and on the Boards of [Human Rights Education Associates \(HREA\)](#) and the [US International Council on Disability \(USICD\)](#). She has an MPA from Harvard’s Kennedy School, where

she was a Public Service Fellow; she also has an MA in Psychology. She is a member of the participatory grantmaking working group under the International Human Rights Funders Group.

Katy Love leads the Annual Plan Grants program at the Wikimedia Foundation, the organization that supports Wikipedia and the free knowledge movement. The Annual Plan Grants program is an unrestricted, large grant program for organizations working to advance the Wikimedia and free knowledge movement. She has a passion for strategic and high-impact grantmaking, collaborative work, and transparent decision-making. She spent four years at CARE International with the Emergency Capacity Building Project, a collaboration between six of the largest NGOs working to improve humanitarian response. Prior to that, she worked for several years at the Global Fund for Children, managing the Eastern Europe and US grants and capacity building initiatives.

Matthew “Matty” Hart is the founder and principal of the Paris-based Lafayette Practice and the author of *Who Decides*. Hart and The Lafayette Practice (TLP) specialize in advising on philanthropic strategy and management. Previously, Hart served as the National Director for Public Engagement for Solutions for Progress (SfP), a consulting firm that creates innovative new public and private partnerships using technology, research, analysis, and practical applications. Throughout his career, Hart has been a fixture of the regional and national activist community and an integral part of national work to move a progressive agenda. He has been a member of the community funding board of the Bread & Roses Fund, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the Sustainable Business Network, and The Leeway Foundation for Women and the Arts. Hart’s philanthropic leadership is exemplified by his role as the President of the Board of Directors of the Calamus Foundation, where he consults widely with foundations and individual philanthropists to advance LGBT equity and human rights.

Mona Chun (moderator) is Executive Director of the International Human Rights Funders Group (IHRFG), a global network of donors and grantmakers committed to advancing human rights around the world through effective philanthropy. Prior to joining IHRFG, Mona was the founding Executive Director of the Center for Sustainable Human Rights Action, an organization providing capacity-building training to human rights groups and leaders around the world. More recently, Mona was the Director of Outreach and Communication at the Coro New York Leadership Center. Mona has served on the Board of Directors of the New York Chinese Cultural Center and on the Advisory Board of Adilisha, a human rights capacity-building organization in Southern Africa. She has a BA from Hofstra University and a Master of Public Administration degree from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York.

Jason Franklin is the inaugural W.K. Kellogg Community Philanthropy Chair at the Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University. He previously served as executive director of Bolder Giving, which he led through five years of major growth after Melinda Gates credited it an inspiration for the Giving Pledge of the world’s wealthiest individuals. He delivered more than 150 workshops and speeches about philanthropy, generosity and social change and oversaw efforts to inspire and support donors to give including GivingCommunities.org and Give OUT Day, a national day of giving for the LGBTQ community. Franklin received his doctorate in Public Administration from New York University’s Wagner School of Public Service. He held previous positions at the 21st Century School Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation’s Next Generation Leadership Network, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families.