

What Emerging Leaders  
of Color in Philanthropy  
Think about Race.

# The Next Generation Speaks.



Emerging Practitioners  
in Philanthropy

## Executive Summary

This monograph provides a current snapshot of the experiences and perspectives of emerging philanthropic professionals of color on issues of racial equity. Through seven years of People of Color Network programming, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy has heard from more than 125 emerging professionals of color in the field about the experience of being a person of color in philanthropy. This paper represents a compilation of the thoughts of individuals from our seven cohorts gleaned from several focus groups and interviews. It reflects their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities to move racial equity in philanthropy today. The responses also emphasize the importance of creating spaces in philanthropy for people of color and White allies to discuss race and other personal identities relevant to their work.

Key highlights include:

- The complexity of managing the power and privilege associated with working in philanthropy as an emerging leader of color
- A deep desire for mentoring by seasoned leaders of color
- A critical need for peer-to-peer engagement across race for emerging leaders of color
- Acknowledgement of the differences between addressing race with White colleagues and people of color colleagues in the philanthropic sector
- Desire for institutional conversations and commitments to addressing racial equity
- Recommendations for advancing racial equity in philanthropy

## Introduction

Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) develops emerging leaders committed to building a just, equitable, and sustainable society. EPIP exists to ensure that emerging foundation professionals are effective stewards of philanthropic resources and all social entrepreneurs reach their potential as leaders. We promote diverse perspectives and value innovation for meeting societal challenges.

EPIP's People of Color Network (PCN), formerly known as the Professional Development Fund (PDF), focuses specifically on supporting emerging leaders of color interested in philanthropy. The PCN supports current and future grantmakers of color by building their visibility, networks, and knowledge by providing them access to professional development opportunities and placing them within a network of peers.

In 2011, EPIP celebrated its tenth anniversary and the fifth anniversary of its Professional Development Fund. These milestones prompted us to take stock of EPIP's overall efforts to use emerging talent to influence philanthropy and our particular work to create a talent pipeline of leaders of color committed to creating a just, equitable, and sustainable society.

EPIP seeks to share insights from our work offering the field a next-generation and diverse perspective on issues of relevance. We lift-up the voices of emerging leaders and enable intergenerational dialogue.

This paper was conceived and developed in close partnership with a group of EPIP members, leaders and staff. Individuals involved in this paper include: Kalpana Krishnamurthy, Sophia Silao, and EPIP founder, Rusty Stahl. Alfonso Wenker, Kate Seely, and Rahsaan Harris helped with editing. EPIP extends our heartfelt gratitude to each of these individuals—who contributed their invaluable insight, time, and support to this paper.

## Background on the People of Color Network (PCN)

EPIP's PCN program supports and convenes young and emerging professionals of African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino/a, and multiracial descent working or interested in philanthropy across an array of issue-areas and geographic communities. By serving emerging leaders in this cross-cutting manner, PCN helps individuals to break through the isolation they experience due to their role within their institution or foundation's priorities. It creates a talent pipeline for philanthropy and serves a unique niche in the philanthropic sector.

EPIP created PCN with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in 2005 as a competitive travel scholarship and convening program for emerging foundation professionals of color. The program supports the next generation of people of color in philanthropic institutions, while leveraging support for this constituency from employers, conference sponsors and others. Participants include foundation staff focused on program, grants management, development, communications, and more. Participants also hail from affinity groups, regional associations, and other foundation support organizations. Each year, EPIP offers scholarships to individuals who demonstrate both a commitment to effective and responsible philanthropy and social justice. These scholarships provide financial assistance of up to \$1,000 which can be applied towards registration, travel, and/or lodging at a philanthropic conference or training of their choice. PCN helps to build a cadre of leaders of color who are able to foster positive intergenerational dialogue

that embraces diverse perspectives in the field, while building a foundation for enhanced recruitment and retention of people of color in foundations and organized philanthropy.

Since its creation in 2005, 89 individuals have received over \$80,000 dollars in awards. The dollars awarded through EPIP have been matched by employers, leveraging an estimated \$65,000 in additional resources from philanthropic institutions. More than 125 emerging professionals of color have attended the People of Color Network gathering, a retreat for PCN awardees and EPIP members of color. The gathering features intergenerational salons, career support, and EPIP educational curriculum on social justice philanthropy.

In addition to the PCN scholarships, EPIP maintains its Next Generation Scholarship Fund, which makes scholarships available to the wider EPIP membership to enable broad participation in the EPIP National Conference.

## Social Justice Philanthropy and Racial Equity

Core to EPIP's mission is the advancement of effective social justice philanthropy. As a professional training ground for the next generation, EPIP engages its members to advance philanthropy with meaningful social impact. Under the broad umbrella concept of "social justice philanthropy," EPIP believes that some of the most effective approaches to promoting long-lasting, structural change are strategies that simultaneously enable and increase the engagement and opportunity of those who are politically, socially or economically marginalized.

In this context, special attention must be paid to matters of racial equity. Like many of our colleagues in the sector, EPIP believes that philanthropy must reflect the changing racial and ethnic diversity of today's world. However, EPIP also fundamentally believes that strategic investment in the places where disparities in outcomes for different racial groups are the deepest will result in long term structural change that benefits everyone.

Additionally, EPIP members themselves have identified the need for programming that raises issues of race and engages young professionals in skill-building, engaged dialogue, and strategy on moving racial equity in the broader philanthropic sector. Therefore, EPIP's approach is two-fold: enable dialogue and skill-building on race within EPIP programs broadly; and support emerging practitioners of color specifically through the PCN program.

## A Note on Terminology

The PCN program defines emerging practitioners as those for whom one or more of the following is true: they belong to Generation X (born between 1968-1979) or the Millennial/Y Generation (born between 1980-2000); have served five years or less in philanthropic or grantmaking roles; and/or work in a non-senior level position in the field. EPIP defines people of color as individuals who self-identify as African American, Asian American, Latina/o, Multiracial/Biracial, Native American, or Pacific Islander.

## Methodology

The input for this paper comes from a series of focus groups, one-on-one interviews, surveys, and evaluation of the People of Color Network program. Some names and institutional details have been changed in the report to ensure participant anonymity.

## Key Findings

### Being Young and Of Color in Philanthropy Today

Young people of color in the foundation community are highly aware of the power and privilege of their position and often experience conflict around the power and privilege associated with philanthropy. Says one young professional of color, “I feel empowered. I feel privileged that I work at a foundation. I like that I’m young in this position and going to a lot of meetings where I’m one of the few.”

However, like more seasoned leaders in the field have articulated in reports and papers chronicling the experience of people of color in philanthropy, young people of color often feel torn: “There have been days where I have said I can’t do this anymore, but I feel like friends in the field tell me that if I wasn’t at the foundation there would be someone else in my place that doesn’t [get racial equity] work.”

When asked to describe in three words what it feels like to be an emerging person of color working in philanthropy today, PCN participant responses fell into the following categories:

- Philanthropy careers are an opportunity for personal growth: empowering, enriching, inspiring, opportunity
- An awareness of access to power that comes from working in philanthropy: Humbling, educational, privileged, opportune, a type of privilege, tremendous responsibility
- Traveling between two worlds: bridge builder, translator, code switcher, expectations that we can deliver, torch bearer
- Working in philanthropy can come at a personal cost: vulnerable, conflicted, self-doubt, isolating, confusing, challenging, lonely, tokenism, damaging, causes me to question myself

Emerging leaders of color also approach the field differently than many seasoned leaders because they embrace their multiple personal identities. This is an important characteristic that informs their work. It makes them empathic to various causes. Said one participant: “Our worlds are more intersectional, we have a freedom to have multiple identities that older leaders of color in philanthropy didn’t have.” Another participant added, “As a young person of color in the field, I place emphasis on issues of race—and we need to be talking about sexuality, class, etc.”

PDF participants share that their experiences regarding race have been informed by the victories of the civil rights movement and other movements expanding the rights of people of color—including attending more integrated schools, living in more integrated neighborhoods, having friends across racial lines, being biracial and/or multi-racial, and benefitting from academic explorations of race and ethnic studies in college and graduate school.

Despite coming of age in a post-Civil Rights Movement era, emerging leaders of color in philanthropy are uniquely aware that our culture has not evolved as fast as our laws have. In fact, young professionals of color involved in EPIP have consistently articulated a focused need for philanthropy to address root causes of structural inequity by lifting up conversations about race and racial equity. Within PCN, the session on racial equity grantmaking has grown and now takes nearly three-quarters of the agenda for the retreat. From evaluating their individual institutions, to exploring funding trends in philanthropy, to peer coaching on making the case for stronger institutional commitments around racial equity, to visiting organizations in communities dealing with these issues, PCN participants have asked EPIP to continue developing it’s the racial equity curriculum.

## A Deep Desire for Mentoring

Across the board, one of the most beloved EPIP professional development activities at PCN gatherings and elsewhere, is the semi-formal intergenerational seminars that feature senior foundation executives and trustees. In the context of PCN gatherings, these “salons” serve as a way for seasoned leaders of color to share their experiences, to talk frankly and openly about being a person of color in the field, and to make connections with emerging practitioners from an array of philanthropic institutions.

It is most often through the salons that PCN participants hear their experience echoed and validated, “The PCN salon helped put my experience in perspective, reaffirm some of the issues I’ve grappled with and remind me that change does not happen overnight, and the importance of patience and alliance building.”

During salons, PCN participants often learn about the mentoring relationships that have sustained seasoned leaders and come to realize how important these cross-generational relationships can be in supporting leaders for the long haul. As one participant said only half jokingly in an interview for this publication, “Can we use this paper to make a direct call for intergenerational support?”

Emerging people of color recognize the groundbreaking role that seasoned leaders of color have played in creating a trajectory and career path on which they now walk—and they feel that the field has changed in recent years:

“Seasoned leaders of color talk about access to philanthropy, they were the first ones in the room. They were the trailblazers, and at the same time philanthropy has changed over the past thirty years. They created a pathway, but it has also changed and is more professionalized for our generation.”

One PCN participant shared: “[Seasoned leaders of color] were fighting for rights and access. It called for a different kind of focus, a narrow and targeted journey that lasted for years. [Our generation] benefitted from that. But now, we are fighting for rights for more people [on multiple fronts] — which makes it different.”

Seasoned leaders who have participated in Professional Development Fund gathering Salons and their affiliations at the time, include:

- **Lani Shaw**, General Service Fund
- **Ana Olivera**, New York Women’s Foundation
- **Morris Price**, Gill Foundation
- **Alvin Starks**, Open Society Institute
- **Linetta Gilbert**, Ford Foundation
- **Patrick Corvington**, Annie E. Casey Foundation
- **Cheryl Dorsey**, Echoing Green Foundation
- **Tina Gridiron Smith**, Lumina Foundation for Education
- **Kevin Ryan**, New York Foundation
- **Gara LaMarche**, Senior Fellow at the NYU Wagner School
- **James Canales**, The James Irvine Foundation
- **Daniel Lee**, The Levi Strauss Foundation
- **Susan Batten**, ABFE
- **Peggy Saika**, AAPIP
- **Carly Hare**, NAP

## Supporting Spaces for Emerging Leaders of Color

One of the unique elements about EPIP's PCN program is its commitment to supporting and gathering emerging leaders of African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino/a, and multiracial descent working in philanthropy across a wide array of issue-areas and in different geographic communities. By bringing together emerging leaders in this cross-cutting manner, the People of Color Network helps individuals to break through multiple silos and serves a unique niche in the philanthropic sector.

PCN participants cite the program as critical to retention of young professionals of color in the field: "The institutions in which we work are not set up to encourage our leadership, voice, growth, and development. It's not clear how to move ahead in philanthropy and opportunities to network with other people of color are essential to people's sanity and ability to stay in the sector."

"Programs like PCN helped reaffirm a lot of things I questioned and doubted. I had all these doubts—is it me? Or is it my institution? Being here helps to know it's not just me, there are a lot of issues inherent in the field, and how we can best strategize and address things with the tools and resources we have," articulated one young professional of color.

## The Experience Across Race

It is these same experiences that lead to different perspectives on working with White colleagues—either seasoned veterans or young White colleagues. For some young professionals of color, these relationships offer critical support; for others, they are the spaces most fraught with tension.

"White colleagues have permission to lead and move the conversations forward in a very different ways than I do as a person of color. Thank goodness they have taken up leadership [on racial equity]," said one PCN participant. Young professionals of color recognize and appreciate the critical role that White colleagues play in advancing conversations about racial equity in philanthropy. The fear of being the "young angry person of color" raising issues of race can lead individuals to silence themselves to avoid being labeled as a "troublemaker" or as someone who only cares about one issue.

"There's less translation with White colleagues who are in our age group, we've grown up more integrated. But interestingly, I have a greater frustration with White peers, because I have higher expectations of them." Other participants echoed this sentiment: "We do hold our White peers to a higher standard. And my White peers are more okay with relinquishing power, and that has been the hardest part of working with seasoned White colleagues."

At the same time, relationships with White colleagues can also be a source of frustration. As one PCN participant explained, "A lot of White colleagues want to share their own triumphs about race, and they want to know what my personal experience is. They want to personalize conversations around race, and that prevents them from seeing the institutional."

In many foundations, frank conversations about race just aren't happening. "The discussion about race is uncomfortable even amongst my own peers," reflects one PCN award recipient. "Because I'm the only Black person, it still feels like I'm pushing my own agenda." Without some level of comfort discussing issues of race in general, moving to conversations about advancing racial equity remains deeply challenging.

## Individual and Institutional Commitments

Emerging professionals of color in the field note that conversations about racial equity seem driven by the individual commitments of staff, not because the philanthropic sector or individual foundations inherently recognize racial disparities exist. Said one PCN participant: “The philanthropic sector does not broadly acknowledge that racial disparities exist in nearly every issue area. And there is no collective acknowledgement that philanthropy has a responsibility to address these disparities as part of the work.”

PCN participants talk about the need to “code switch” within their foundations, shifting language used by grantees to make racial equity work more palatable internally with other staff or boards of directors. While this is a common experience for many program staff, emerging people of color feel less prepared to successfully navigate these foundation dynamics fruitfully. As one PCN participant stated, “I’m not clear about how to code switch fluently.”

Other emerging professionals note that an individualized commitment often doesn’t last beyond a program officer’s tenure at a particular foundation. “All of us have seen how a portfolio can change because of a committed program officer. One program officer can shift a whole portfolio to support more racial equity work, but when they leave, it’s like ‘Poof!’ The work disappears because the commitment was never institutional.”

## Grantmaking Process and Racial Equity

In looking for models of how to institutionalize commitments to racial equity, many emerging grantmakers go directly to the core work of grantmaking—from analyzing portfolios of current grants to evaluating their internal process for grantseeking and grantmaking.

Conversations about grantmaking can be particularly dissonant because of the differences between internal and external expectations. As one young professional stated, “The only time we talk about racial equity is [in the context of] how the organizations we support address those issues—how grantees are trying to reduce racial disparities. But we don’t talk about racial equity as part of our institution.”

For the small portion of grantmaking institutions that collect racial and ethnic data as part of their application process, program staff find that little is done with the information. Very few institutions analyze or track the data over time, or provide feedback to potential grantees if the information gathered does not reflect the kind of diversity the foundation would like to see. Information gathered through diversity charts seems to go into a vacuum, where it is neither used explicitly nor analyzed completely in most philanthropic institutions.

For institutions that do study the results, the picture may be one the foundation is not prepared to handle. As articulated by one young professional of color, “We brought in a consultant to do an analysis of our grants to people of color led groups. But once they’d analyzed and given us back our data, the program team spent a lot of time questioning their methodology and results. It’s like we couldn’t absorb where we really are at.”



Because so few philanthropic institutions explicitly articulate a commitment to racial equity, emerging professionals are hungry for tools that can advance their internal conversations. Tools that PCN participants have found especially useful include:

- Catalytic Change Report (Philanthropic Initiative on Racial Equity and Applied Research Center)
- The Guide to Grantmaking with a Racial Equity Lens (GrantCraft and PRE)
- The Race Matters Toolkit (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- Frameworks & Approaches, Understanding Racial Inequities in Policies, Programs & Grantmaking by Funders for LGBTQ Issues
- Effective and Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities (ABFE)

After seeing some of these tools prior to a PCN gathering, one participant wrote: “After reading the racial equity resources [EPIP] sent ahead of time, I looked at racial data on our grantees and I can see a pattern and will bring this back to work.”

Special thanks to **The California Endowment** for its support of the 2013 PCN gathering.

EPIP created a curriculum on racial disparities in health outcomes through this generous grant support. PCN participants visited a community health clinic in San Francisco at Bayview Hunters Point to explore the effect of race on health.

Learn more and join the discussion. Visit our website at [epip.org](http://epip.org).

## Recommendations for Philanthropy on Racial Equity

During PCN gatherings and conference calls, participants often explore strategies to move towards more meaningful racial equity work within the sector. Actions for individuals and organizations interested in deepening their commitment to racial equity were culled from these conversations:

- **Assess current work and thinking on racial equity.** The majority of PCN participants articulate that their foundation does not have a shared analysis about racial equity work as it applies to key program areas/priorities or philanthropy in general. A critical first step is to build a common understanding within the foundation about the current state of affairs. New tools like the Racial Justice Assessment tool produced by the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) and Applied Research Center (ARC) can support foundations in taking these first analytic steps.
- **Invest in inter-generational learning.** Institutions ought to invest time, money, and human capital in deepening relationships among and across professionals of color, as well as White allies, in an authentic and meaningful way. By increasing learning opportunities between emerging and established leaders, foundations can promote positive mentorship and foster broader analysis on effective leadership.
- **Continue to build cross-ethnic/ intersectional understanding.** Support for bridge-building of peers across ethnic and multi-racial lines is essential for stronger understanding and connections in grantmaking and inter-racial relationships. These opportunities for ‘breaking boundaries’ should also happen along gender, sexuality and class lines.
- **Invest in leadership development.** Effective leaders are not born with their skills. Most hone their craft through years of mentorship, peer-to-peer learning, and both practical and/or scholarly exposure. Consider increasing funds for the professional development of emerging staff to allow them to attend conferences, funder briefings or trainings. Encourage staff to get involved in affinity groups and professional support networks to foster a positive approach to relationship-building and information sharing.
- **Secure leadership buy-in.** Buy-in has to come from the top. Young people of color are clear about the dynamics of leadership within philanthropy—and that senior level management and the president or CEO need to be on board with racial equity work in order to advance institutional change. “Having a program officer move racial equity work covertly is still great, but an institutional commitment to this work will help show other foundations it can be done,” explained one PCN participant.
- **Go to the board.** Where possible, emerging leaders of color recommend having clear and explicit conversations within the board room—or at least engaging the board in the conversation in some way. One PCN participant noted, “A lot of folks would say the first step is to diversify the staff, but I don’t think that works because of the danger of hiring people of color as window dressing without giving them real power to change anything. Foundations need to recruit a quorum of people of color onto boards of directors in order to really shift power.”
- **Understand that change will be needed.** Conversations about racial equity can remain theoretical or become exceptionally personalized to explore people’s feelings and experiences. Structuring such conversations so that they lead to positive, productive and concrete action at the organizational level is important. As one PCN participant noted, “Foundations need to accept that after having conversations about racial equity, something will need to change in the foundation. It’s not just a dialogue, something needs to shift. It’s a fatal mistake to say that we’re just going to learn together, but not change anything. The shift has to involve the core of what we do—which is grantmaking,” said one PCN participant.

## People of Color Network Scholarship Recipients (2005-2013)

Nadia Alvarado  
Dionna Anderson  
Saulo Araujo  
Nora Bashir  
Jessica Baylor  
Ramla Bile  
Manikka Bowman  
Cynthia Brothers  
Hehershe Busuego  
Kimberlin Butler  
Melissa Carino  
Vanessa Giovanna Cedeno  
Yee Won Chong  
Sarah Chun  
Alexandra DeValle  
Pilar Diaz  
Kevin Faria  
Andrea Forsht  
Shiho Fuyuki  
Natasha Gore  
Brennan Gould  
Danyelle Granger  
Nigel Greaves  
Neel Hajra  
Kendace Hall  
Jasmine Hall Ratliff  
Rebecca Harris  
Trista Harris  
Bonney Hartley  
Tam Ho  
Melissa Howell  
Naomi Jackson  
ShehnazJagpal  
Bruce Jjang

Anthony Jewett  
Brenda Jin  
Mijo Lee  
Vanessa Llana  
Scott Lu  
Mario Lugay  
Neha Mahajan  
Brinda Maira  
Lorraine Marasigan  
Tiffany McClain  
Greg McCoy  
Taina McField-Murphy  
Rodney McKenzie, Jr.  
Shinika McKiever  
Neeraj Mehta  
Bettina Mok  
Dwanda Moore  
Yvonne Moore  
Taj Moteelall  
Estevan Munoz-Howard  
Lucas Orwig  
Vanessa Oshiro  
Andrea Porter  
Miranda Porter  
Leila Polintan  
Marissa Aurora Quiroz  
Elizabeth Ramirez  
Marie-Frances Rivera  
Andrea Rogers  
Carmen Rojas  
Cerrice Sanders  
Maritza Schafer  
Marriana Schaffer  
Annah Sidigu

Sophia Silao  
Sunaina Sondhi  
Katherine Souchet-Moura  
Allison Sparks  
Sylvia Spivey  
Monique Steele  
Josaphine Stevenson  
Tamara Tai  
Terri Thao  
Christine Tran  
Charles Ugalde  
Lita Ugarte  
Pilar Valdes  
Paola Vallejo  
Dion Ward  
Megan Watkins  
Lyord Watson, Jr.  
Alfonso Wenker  
Corri Wofford  
Cynthia Wong  
Angela Wong  
Linda Yang  
Katherine Zavala