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# Naming Race: One Foundation's Path to a Strategy of Structural Inclusion and Self-Determination

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*Keywords:* Racial justice, organizing, equity, diversity, youth, communities of color, self-determination, board of directors

## Key Points

- Common wisdom tells us that by placing people of color in leadership roles in philanthropy, there will be a greater emphasis on issues of racial equity and attention to solutions that are rooted in the experiences of people of color. While diverse leadership is a critical component of inclusion, attention must also be paid to the dynamics of power inherent in the relationship between a philanthropic institution and the community it seeks to serve. Foundations must put in place practices that address the inherent inequities in our sector if we are to contribute to systemic change.
- The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, a small national foundation with a focus on youth of color, provides an instructive case study of an institution's evolution into a racial-justice organization with a clear structural analysis and grantmaking practices that reflect a commitment to self-determination. In 1973 Jean Fairfax was elected to the Hazen board, the first African-American woman to serve on the board of a national foundation. Practices cultivated because of and since her tenure have contributed to the foundation's support for activities that have led to substantive shifts towards racial equity, particularly for young people of color in low-wealth communities.
- Hazen's internal practices include a commitment to patient, sustained support for grassroots organizations that develop the capacity of young people for sophisticated analysis of their experiences in the context of structural oppression, and to identify issues central to that oppression, build power, and strive to change them. Over two decades of supporting youth organizing, the problem of racially disparate school-discipline policies emerged time and again as common across geography and local systems. Hazen's support for young people's efforts to raise the issue and fight for alternatives have been critical to driving a new interest in more racially just school-discipline policies.

## Introduction

On May 29, 2009, at the Bishop Desmond Tutu Conference Center in New York City, the trustees and staff of the Edward W. Hazen Foundation were contemplating a revised mission statement. The statement, while consistent with the values the foundation's donor had articulated in 1925, when he established the foundation to help young people, also reflected the challenges, opportunities, and experiences of contemporary young people. In January of that year, the country had inaugurated its first African-American president; in many circles, the euphoria that greeted this momentous event was quickly followed by a fear that progress in combating racism in the United States could stall. The risk that the success of one black man in America would imply that the playing field was level for all people of all races seemed great: that affirmative action plans could be discarded as "unnecessary," that the term "postracial America" would be used in the media to describe the present state, rather than a vision for the future.

As a part of the foundation's strategic-planning process, staff and trustees had analyzed data, surveyed and interviewed grantees, and heard directly from young people of color in communities around the country. It was evident that despite the potent symbolism of a black president, young people living in Detroit, South Los Angeles, or the Mississippi Delta still faced substantial obstacles to full participation in the political and economic life of their communities and country. The Hazen Foundation wanted to insure that any revisions to the focus or language it presented to the public was true to that reality and would make plain the foundation's commitment to the ongoing struggle for racial justice. It settled on the following mission statement:

The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, a private foundation established in 1925, is committed to supporting organizing and leadership of young people and communities of color in dismantling structural inequity based on race and class.

The Hazen Foundation, a national foundation with a focus on youth of color, provides an instructive case study of a foundation's evolution into a racial-justice organization whose structural analysis and grantmaking practices embody a commitment to self-determination. During the 1960s and '70s the foundation began intentionally to build a more diverse board and recruited individuals who were committed not only to serving young people and communities of color, but also to transforming the way that the foundation did its work. Practices those individuals developed and institutionalized have led the foundation to support activities that help bend the arc of history toward justice.

### Theoretical Framework: Why Racial Justice and Self-Determination Matter for Philanthropy

Many foundations once understood their work to be charitable giving to alleviate conditions of poverty. Now, in these days of “venture” and “impact” philanthropy, foundations are looking for strategies that effectively break the cycle of poverty. At the same time, there has been a move – across many sectors, not only philanthropy – to strike race from the conversation and instead use poverty as a proxy for race. While economic conditions track closely to race, Hazen recognizes that no strategy will break the cycle of poverty unless it explicitly addresses the racially inequitable underpinnings of our system of laws, policies, and practices.

John Powell uses the term “targeted universalism” to describe the process of targeting interventions to the specific conditions of distinct groups in order to achieve universal goals (Powell, Heller, & Bundalli, 2011). This framework for policy development posits that the unique situation of each racial or ethnic group – as well as groups defined by gender or gender identity, disability status, or other factors – requires a distinct approach for addressing the circumstances of each.

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Under Powell's framework, the experience of poverty or inequity is specific to an individual or group's situation and context; to succeed, an intervention must address those particular circumstances. The economic status of women provides a useful example. Women's median average earnings in the United States are 67.5 percent that of men. For women of color, the disparities are even greater: 62.5 percent of men's earnings for African-American women and 52.5 percent for Hispanic women (Caiazza, Shaw, & Werschkul, n.d.). Part of the gap can be explained by the employment conditions of women of color still employed as domestic workers, a sector largely denied the protections (e.g., a minimum wage, overtime, sick pay) of the 1935 National

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Labor Relations Act. Historians argue that the law intentionally exempted domestic and agricultural workers as a way of excluding African-Americans while maintaining race-neutral language (Goluboff, 2010; Katznelson, 2006; Perea, 2010). Any successful attempt to fix the gender-based economic gap would need to target the women – once primarily African-American but today increasingly immigrant Latina and Asian Pacific Islander – who work without the protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

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means must ensure that people of color are benefiting from their efforts, or the universal goals will never be met. They, too, must aim for the Applied Research Center’s definition of racial justice: “the creation and proactive enforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and action that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for all” (Applied Research Center, n.d.).

Constituency-driven policy formation, engaging the people affected by a policy in its development, is a crucial way to ensure that public policies benefit people of color. It is a core principle of self-determination. For some foundations, self-determination is a basic democratic precept: The right to determine one’s own future is a moral value, consistent with the American ethos of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” For others, the engagement of a constituency in determining the policies that will affect them is a tactic to ensure that the intervention or public-policy proposal is grounded in the lived experiences of people and that the affected constituency advocates for the proposed policy solution. These foundations see constituency-driven or community-organizing efforts as a means both to spur effective and innovative policies and to develop a motivated body of people armed with the knowledge and power to make sure that new policies are implemented as intended.

Constituency-driven policy formation also prevents what Chris Hayes (2013) describes as the negative consequences of creating policy at a distance from those affected by it. Hayes discusses, for example, the failure of the evacuation plan for New Orleans to take into account the large numbers of people without cars or other resources to get out on their own. As a result, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina more than 14,000 people ended up in the Superdome – the refuge of last resort – and across the city the death toll ran upwards of 1,800 (the true number has never been confirmed). Hayes’ analysis of the financial crisis that threatened the global economy in 2008 also highlights how policies made without regard to the populations most immediately affected by them can boomerang and spread harm far beyond

those populations. Organizations working in communities of color were, in fact, raising the alarm about foreclosures due to predatory lending practices in the 1990s, well before the phenomenon gained attention from the general public, media, or policymakers (Atlas & Dreier, 2013).

As a sector, philanthropy has been criticized for making decisions for people, rather than with them. Such decisions risk the kinds of negative consequences Hayes illuminates. The Hazen Foundation recognizes that engagement with constituencies can be messy and labor intensive – and take longer than a three-year grant or five-year strategic plan. Yet it sees that engagement as critical in achieving its goals. Peter Buffet (2013) recently argued that philanthropy has almost no accountability for how policy is set. Consequently, even with very well-intentioned people in seats of power in philanthropic organizations, the sector’s current emphasis on efficiency and “return on investment” has led to policy initiatives and practices that are far removed from those they are intended to help, and therefore less likely to be relevant and sustainable, and subject to negative, although unintended, consequences (Munk, 2013; Schambra, 2013). Hazen purposely created mechanisms for accountability to the people whose lives its grantmaking aims to improve.

### The Edward W. Hazen Foundation

Since its founding, the Hazen Foundation has been dedicated to the education and development of young people. Its trustees have maintained a steadfast commitment to the donor’s original intent, but have been flexible about its application to contemporary circumstances (Guerrero, 2013). Most recently the foundation has focused on community organizing to improve the equity and quality of public education and to develop the ability of young people to be change agents in their schools and communities.

When the foundation’s trustees adopted the revised mission statement that explicitly articulated its framework – structural oppression – and its mission – racial justice, it named organizing, including youth organizing, as the primary focus for

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support. Because the change sought is structural, rather than individual, collective action is an appropriate methodology (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006; Fung, 2002; Shirley, 2011).

Hazen’s institutional record indicates an evolution in thinking about race and diversity beginning in the 1970s, when the board of trustees began to focus on ensuring that the organizations it supported were led by people from and representative of the communities being served. It also began to focus on activities that engaged parents and young people in taking a powerful role in the life of their schools and communities (Bass and Howes, 1997). These evolving interests paralleled the increasing diversity of the board itself. Hazen board minutes note that the board’s composition had changed dramatically in the time since just after World War II, “from 12 men drawn mainly from private colleges, to 10 men and five women, one-third of whom represent minorities” (Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 1981). The 2013 Hazen

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board comprises five women and two men; five of the seven trustees are people of color. The foundation's three presidents since 1988 have all been women, two of them women of color.

Philanthropy has begun to pay attention to diversity within its own ranks and that of its grantees. But the increase in diversity within foundations has tended to remain at the staff, rather than leadership, level and its impact on the practice and focus of grantmaking is unclear. A 2009 survey of New York-based foundations found that among respondents, "ethnic and racial diversity is greater at the administrative level (48 percent people of color) and lower at the CEO and board levels (16 and 18 percent respectively)" (McGill, Bryan, & Miller, 2009, p. 32). Further, according to the same survey, just 25 percent to 30 percent of the respondents collect data about the racial and ethnic composition of grantseekers' boards and staff. The survey did not ask whether foundations used the data in their grantmaking decisions, although it did note a positive correlation between racial and ethnic diversity of foundation boards and explicit policies regarding diversity (McGill et al., 2009).

So why did the Hazen Foundation move toward a focus on racial justice? Three themes seem most relevant:

1. **Diversifying Leadership.** People of color in leadership positions at Hazen intentionally moved an agenda to create and sustain an institutional focus on race.
2. **Data Matters.** The practice of collecting and reviewing data in conjunction with explicit policies prioritizing inclusion created a consciousness about issues of race that led to action.
3. **At the Table.** Hazen may have passed the "tipping point" beyond which individual board members of color no longer felt themselves to be tokens or representatives of their race. Instead, they felt able to create a collective consciousness across the leadership on issues of race.

#### *Diversifying Leadership*

When Jean Fairfax, a civil rights lawyer at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, joined the Hazen board in 1973, she was the first African-American woman on the board of a national foundation in the United States. Fairfax was far from the first African-American on Hazen's board; Hazen trustees were already committed to diversity across multiple domains – race and ethnicity, gender, experience, and later, age. But according to Bill Bradley, president of the foundation at that time:

She made waves. We'd get a proposal from an organization dealing with women's issues and she'd say, "How many women are on that board?" If it was an education group that consisted of all white males or females, she'd say, "What about this?" And she insisted that we refuse to fund organizations that were not trying to do something about affirmative action. (Arocha, 1990, p. 32)

For Fairfax, philanthropy was a venue in which to continue her civil rights activism. In addition to her work as a Hazen trustee, she agitated for philanthropic engagement in the black community, "Philanthropy as connectedness to the brothers and sisters who exist at the margins of our society – the oppressed, the angry, the despairing – has been central to the black experience and to black survival." (Fairfax, 1995, p. 20). She also pushed

Hazen to divest from investments in corporations doing business in South Africa under apartheid. Today the foundation maintains social investing standards for its full corpus.

The foundation also had a long-standing practice of a different kind of inclusion: It had long invited grantees to serve on the board. For many years that meant predominantly college presidents, but as grantmaking practices changed, so did grantee composition on the board. In 1965 for example, Dr. James Comer, an African-American psychiatrist and researcher at Yale University, was elected to the board after Hazen had supported his groundbreaking work on improving academic outcomes for low-income children and children of color in the 1960s.

In the mid-1990s the board began discussions regarding another component of diversity – age. Trustees investigated the possibility of bringing a young person onto the board, although there was some wavering over the definition of “young.” (deLone in a June 17, 2013 interview with the author.) Ultimately the board decided to recruit a youth organizer from among the grantees, and Dan HoSang was elected to the board in 2001. When he joined the board, HoSang entered a group he described (in a July 23, 2013 interview with the author) as “very professional, quite senior, in many cases a generation removed from the grantees themselves.” He recalled the board discussing race as descriptive of the population “most directly affected by the issues that grantees were organizing around,” but not interrogating “the concept of race, the structures, the very nature of the issues that the groups organize around, not ‘how is race operating,’ but we would ask, ‘who is affected?’” HoSang consistently pushed the trustees to develop a shared analysis that ultimately led to the structural approach in effect today.

#### *Data Matters*

During the 1970s, in response to trustee questions about the diversity of prospective grantees’ staff and boards, Hazen began systematically collecting demographic data as a part of the application process – and began using the data to inform grant-

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making decisions. Board minutes record grants deferred or even denied because of questions regarding board composition, or approved with the directions to staff to inquire about an applying organization’s affirmative plans for addressing a lack of representation in the staff or leadership. Commenting on the lack of representation by people of color at a convening on higher education in 1979, Bradley wrote to the board,

Except for the interests of women, therefore, the concerns of minorities in higher education were not directly represented. For me this was an indication that minority representation must continue to be an explicit issue for the Hazen Foundation staff whenever we are considering an application. Prejudice based on neglect or forgetfulness is no less deleterious for its seeming innocence. (Bradley, 1979, p. 13)

Even today, Hazen’s attention to hard data on who “runs” grantee organizations appears unusual among foundations. As noted above, only about one-quarter of New York-based foundations keep data on board diversity and less than one-third on the racial and ethnic makeup of staff of grantee organizations. But insuring the direct engagement of those affected by a problem in its resolution can lead to innovative and effective solutions. In some cases, communities raise problems that policymakers may not even be aware of, such as

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the impact of punitive school-discipline practices on students of color (Mediratta, 2012). They may build power and public will to change a problem that, while known, did not have the political backing to change, such as banking practices that left communities without access to capital and, through organizing, led to the Community Reinvestment Act, requiring financial institutions to put resources back into communities (Cincotta, 1994; Littrell & Brooks, 2010). They are also able to analyze problems that are acknowledged by grassroots communities, policymakers, and organizations controlled by elites outside of these communities, and come up with solutions markedly different in design and impact.

Consider the problem of hard-to-staff schools. Staffing has been a persistent problem of under-resourced school systems, particularly in rural and urban areas, where teachers face far greater challenges than they would in affluent suburban districts where pay and working conditions are better. In urban districts, more than one-third of new teachers leave their schools after three years and nearly half leave after five (Hallett, 2011). In 1989 a Princeton undergraduate wrote a paper positing a corps of “the best and the brightest” university graduates serving two years as teach-

ers in difficult-to-staff schools – a sort of teachers’ Peace Corps. In 1990 the first class of 500 Teach for America (TFA) corps members were dispersed throughout the country and since then the program has attracted attention, funding, and a high-powered board of corporate leaders.

At the same time in Chicago, the Illinois Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now – known since 2008 as Action Now – was trying to help the district recruit and retain teachers in their predominantly African-American neighborhoods. Similarly, Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago was developing Nueva Generación in its Latino immigrant community to prepare community members as bilingual teachers, a much-needed resource for neighborhood schools. Both Action Now and LSNA are community organizations with broad memberships and deep roots in their neighborhoods, and boards and staffs drawn directly from the community. Together, working with partners in academia and policy, they developed the Illinois Grow Your Own Teacher Education Initiative (GYO) to “recruit and develop a pipeline of community-based teachers who come from the community in which they will one day teach” (Hunt, Gardner, Hood, & Haller, 2011, p. iv). These teachers have a strong connection to the community, they understand the experience of the children that they teach, and they understand that their personal success is tied to the progress of their communities.

Much has been written about Teach for America and whether or not the corps members are effective teachers. It is clear that they are not reflective of the population they teach; nearly two-thirds are white, a disconnect that TFA itself acknowledges (Teach for America, n.d.). Grow Your Own teacher candidates, by contrast, are approximately 85 percent black and Latino and more than 95 percent of the candidates have worked in schools or the community as parent volunteers (Hunt et al., 2011). Further, unlike GYO, in which candidates make a minimum five-year commitment to teach in a hard-to-staff school, TFA members are unlikely to stay in teaching: Fewer than 15 percent continued teaching in the school to which they



were assigned for more than four years (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011).

Research has shown that student achievement lags as a result of teacher turnover; that students throughout a school with high turnover rates are affected, not just those in a new teacher's classroom; and that the effects are exacerbated in low-performing schools (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). So, if we want to address the disruptive churn of teachers through a school and the inability to create a culture among teaching staff that knows and respects one another, the student population, and the community, the parents that imagined GYO seem to have come up with a solution with the potential to generate a skilled teaching staff for the long term.

TFA reports a 2012 budget of \$244 million, much of it from large national foundations. GYO has struggled to engage institutional philanthropy; its organizational budget hovers around half a million dollars. In line with its commitment to constituency-driven policy formation, Hazen was a supporter of LSNA and Action Now in the years when they were beginning to research and analyze the conditions in their children's schools and was one of GYO's first and few private funders.

#### *At the Table*

In 1990 the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* cited the Hazen Foundation for its diversity, with one-third of its 10-member board people of color and a female, African-American president (Arocha, 1990). Today nearly three-quarters of Hazen's board are people of color; the figure is 16 percent among all U.S. foundations (D5 Coalition, 2013). Social science research notes the dangers of tokenization – placing people in visible positions because of their identity without ascribing true value to inclusion (Brown, n.d.; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Kivel, 2011; Rutledge, 1994). While it is true that some of the earliest people of color to serve as trustees on Hazen's board were recruited in an affirmative effort to diversify the institution, the record makes clear that the force of their vision and the commitment of the full board to authentic participation easily overcame the danger of tokenization.

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Manuel Guerrero, the founding chair of the Chicano Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, a Hazen trustee from 1979 to 1989, and chair of Hazen's board from 1986 to 1989, notes:

The trustees, all impressive in their own right, also were like-minded about serving all people. Those conversations [about race] were not difficult. It is hard for me to speak on behalf of the white trustees who were serving, but there didn't seem to me to be embarrassment or reluctance to speak. I always appreciated that they were willing to take on the tough questions. (Guerrero, 2013)

An understanding of the difference between diversity as window dressing and true inclusion also led the foundation to an overt focus on self-determination, not simply representation, in its funding. In 1986, for instance, Hazen considered a grant to a community foundation to develop a fund to support families in the maquiladoras along the U.S.-Mexico border, but declined to support the project because there were no Latino trustees on the foundation's board, no plans to change that, and no process for engaging the intended benefi-

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ciaries of the funding in determining its distribution (Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 1986).

As the ratio of trustees of color at Hazen grew, at least approximately one-third but increasing to more than 70 percent today, the emphasis on acknowledging race and ethnicity as critical considerations in the foundation's activities continued as a steady theme of the work even through periods when public interest in questions of equality, equity, and diversity waned.

#### **Hazen Foundation Funding and Programs**

Hazen's grant programs support community organizations engaged in organizing for education justice and organizing youth on a range of issues, including education, immigration, juvenile justice, and LGBT rights. In addition to direct financial support, Hazen created a capacity-building initiative to increase the effectiveness of grantees' racial-justice analysis, internal training, and organizing campaigns. The foundation also actively and intentionally engages with peer foundations and the broader philanthropic sector to increase support for the fields of education and youth organizing and for grantmaking that explicitly addresses race.

Hazen's funding has helped to develop the field of education organizing from a few dozen disparate groups organizing low-income parents to demand improvements in low-performing schools to several hundred community organizations getting at the heart of education reform: quality teaching and learning that results in equitable student outcomes. Their efforts are proving effective in

addressing some of the critical issues that typically plague schools serving high concentrations of students of color and also to ensure continued community ownership of these most fundamental public institutions:

The wide scope of participation in community organizing broadens the agenda for public education reform. Many parents and community leaders resist the reduction of education to academic achievement, at least as measured by test scores. They want their schools to produce citizens and future leaders capable of creating healthier communities and a more vibrant democracy. (Warren, 2011, p. 157)

Initially focusing on emerging organizations and, over time, supporting different youth-organizing models and approaches, Hazen has been instrumental also in connecting youth organizers and young leaders across the country by supporting structures that convene them and facilitate alliances. It has maintained a dual focus on individual developmental outcomes for those engaged in organizing alongside social changes that affect the broader community of young people. As a result, there are now clusters of highly effective young leaders and organizers engaged in school and community decision-making throughout the country who continue their efforts as young adults working for social and racial justice:

Young people are developing the capacity to critically analyze their world through political and popular education methods and learning to conduct research, analyze social structures, and propose policy solutions. This process develops in young people an understanding of how things came to be (history) and a way to analyze how power in society is organized. (Ginwright & James, 2002, p. 38)

During the late 1980s under the leadership of Sharon King, Hazen's first woman president and first president of color, the foundation began to make grants to organizations "with their feet in the community" (Barbara Taveras in a July 24, 2013 interview with the author) – such as the Chicano Education Project in Denver, Citizens Policy Center in California, and the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression – for work that engaged parents in school policy and advoca-

cy efforts. These grants differed significantly from previous programs supported by Hazen in their aim to create vehicles for collective analysis and action to drive systemic change. Similarly, grants were made to organizations like Community Training and Assistance Center in Cambridge, Mass., and the Highlander Center in Tennessee in the 1980s and early 1990s. These grants sought to engage middle and high school students in leadership programs using the methods and tools of organizing for social change. Among the earliest of these grants was one that supported training for students to monitor the court-ordered desegregation program in Los Angeles schools.

Hazen is committed to long-term support for grassroots organizations that develop the capacity of adults and young people to generate sophisticated analyses of their experiences living in a society shaped by structural oppressions and to identify issues central to that oppression, build power, and strive to change them:

Effective democratic publics consist of citizens who feel the actions of government on them, understand the relationship of politics to these effects, discuss the connections between these ends and means, and in turn are connected through democratic arrangements to a state that respected their discussions.

(Fung, 2002, p. 67)

Hazen is focused on collective action because the change desired is structural, not solely individual – although individuals involved in the work often undergo personal transformations as they experience agency and dispel the sense of alienation and powerlessness often associated with life in politically and economically weak communities. Patient, sustained support for the long, hard work of building a constituency that has been able to analyze its experiences through multiple lenses – scientific, political, and social – and the social cohesion and legitimacy to wield power effectively has surfaced issues and developed policy solutions. Among those are an opportunity for undocumented students to access postsecondary education and achieve citizenship, or the DREAM Act (Cohen, 2012); the impact on LGBT youth of color in police proceedings, or “stop and frisk”

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policies (Morgan, 2013); the potential for developing teachers from among community residents in hard-to-staff schools (Warren, 2011); and the disparate imposition of punitive school-discipline practices that drive young people of color out of school (Mediratta, 2012).

Hazen’s commitment to self-determination and the creation of indigenous capacity in the service of racial justice is exemplified in its board practices – as noted, the board has long included grantees as trustees. It also regularly meets with a range of grantees. In 1989, for the first time, the foundation convened all grantees for a daylong meeting with its staff and trustees. It was the first opportunity for extended interaction among them and forced trustees to confront their assumptions about the nature of the work being supported and the sophistication of grantee organizations’ analysis. (Sharon King in a July 23, 2014 interview with the author.) Since then grantees have been regular speakers at board meetings, hosted trustees for site visits, and provided information and ongoing critique of specific strategies and processes.

### **Emergence of School Discipline as a Racial-Justice Issue**

In December 2012, I watched a young African-American man from Chicago testify before the

*As one youth member of Inner City Struggle (ICS) in East Los Angeles said, “There are four tracks in our school: college track, and we're not on that; military track; low-wage-work track; and penitentiary track” (Student leader J.L., personal communication, 2005).*

Senate Judiciary Committee on “Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline.” Edward Ward told of his experiences as an honor student at Orr Academy High School, where, despite his own success, he witnessed many of his friends being repeatedly suspended from school and ultimately giving up and not coming back. The numbers confirm Ward’s perception: Orr’s graduation rate in 2008 was 27.7 percent and its annual dropout rate was three times the district average; the percentage of student misconduct handled by the school that resulted in suspensions was 66.7 percent, compared to a district average of 39.3 percent (Ward, 2012).

Ward told the committee:

Because I believed I needed to take part in improving my school, I got involved with Blocks Together and joined their effort to introduce and implement restorative justice practices in Chicago Public Schools as an alternative to suspensions and expulsions. ... Through our organized pressure we were able to get some disciplinary incidents in our school referred from the dean for discipline to the restorative-justice-based peer jury. I served as a restorative-justice facilitator at my school and helped train other students to be restorative justice facilitators as well. (U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2012)

It was thrilling to hear Ward’s eloquence and to know that he spoke for young people and parents

all across the country who have been organizing for decades, raising the issue, building power, and demanding to be heard. For the Hazen Foundation’s grantees, it was a victory in their struggle for justice.

One Hazen grantee, Southern Echo, was among the first to focus organizing on this issue, calling it in the late 1990s a “schoolhouse to jailhouse track.” Having identified the racial dimensions of these policies, other Hazen grantees also took on the challenge of changing them. As one youth member of Inner City Struggle (ICS) in East Los Angeles said, “There are four tracks in our school: college track, and we're not on that; military track; low-wage-work track; and penitentiary track” (Student leader J.L., personal communication, 2005). Understanding how these issues are intertwined, ICS has challenged these existing, if unofficial, tracks. ICS brought to public attention the unequal access to college-preparatory classes in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) schools, a related symptom of adults’ low expectations of black and brown students, and helped lead a successful campaign to make college prep classes the default curriculum for all students in the LAUSD in 2005.

Community Asset Development Re-Defining Education (CADRE), a parent-organizing group in South Los Angeles, was in the forefront of identifying and naming the issue: It stated clearly that students of color were not “dropping” out of school, they were being pushed out by deliberate policies with a disparate impact on students of color. African-American students made up 24 percent of the school population, yet they made up 44 percent of the students who were suspended. Their rate of suspension was almost twice as high as their rate of enrollment in the district (Community Asset Development Re-Defining Education, 2010).

Across the country – in Los Angeles; Philadelphia; Denver; New York City; Mississippi; Chicago; Miami; Wichita, Kan.; and Oakland, Calif. – students and parents were identifying the negative consequences of “zero tolerance” policies and the disproportionate harsh punishment of students of

color as early as the 1990's. They have succeeded in pushing new measures that in the LAUSD, for example, have reduced suspensions by 25 percent and citations and fines for black students by 50 percent (Freeman, Kim & Rawson, 2013); in Denver, out-of-school suspensions were reduced across the district and by as much as 58 percent in one high school.

Today the issue as framed by these communities has caught the attention of state legislatures, the White House, the U.S. Senate, the Justice Department, and the Department of Education, as evidenced by the hearing at which Edward Ward testified. In a speech to the American Bar Association on Aug. 12, 2013, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder said,

We'll continue to work with allies ... to confront the "school to prison pipeline" and those zero-tolerance school-discipline policies that do not promote safety and that transform too many education institutions from doorways of opportunity into gateways to the criminal justice system. A minor school disciplinary offense should put a student in the principal's office and not a police precinct. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013)

The language and recommendations of policy-makers draw directly from those created by the young people and their adult allies who have been working to correct this injustice:

A 10-year effort of grassroots organizing was instrumental in creating a policy window for federal action on the school-to-prison pipeline. That organizing effectively framed the issue, uncovered and legitimated workable policy alternatives, and built political context of demand and support for action. Federal staff members readily acknowledge the impact of advocates' efforts on their sense of urgency on these issues. (Mediratta, 2012, p. 223)

Mediratta further notes the critical role that Hazen and other foundations played through the provision of long-term, sustained support for grassroots organizations surfacing the issue and pushing for change. Without this support, providing the resources to communities to determine for

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themselves their most critical challenges and build the power to confront them, it is unlikely that the school-to-prison pipeline and the problem of overly punitive school-discipline policies pushing students out of school would be getting the attention of policymakers today.

### Some Lessons

The leadership at the Edward W. Hazen Foundation took specific, intentional actions over several decades, implementing ideas that were innovative at the time and remain unusual in the philanthropic sector today. Doing so reshaped the foundation into a racial-justice organization. Foundations seeking to develop internal and external practices to drive a racial-justice agenda can consider the following lessons from Hazen's experience.

Hazen's leadership took pains to bring all members of the board along through discussion and exposure to new ideas. As a group, the board and staff undertook activities – meetings, site visits, readings, briefings – that helped to develop a common language and understanding of racial justice, diversity, and oppression.

For Hazen, pursuit of a racial-justice agenda has been an evolving, dynamic process that reflects leadership and personnel changes, shifts in the environment in which we operate, expansion of our understanding of the dynamics of oppression, and frequent re-examination of the foundation's progress. Whether just beginning to pay attention to issues of inclusion or pushing a deeper commitment to self-determination, foundations need ongoing self-examination of their attitudes and practices in order to avoid complacency.

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*Hazen's experience teaches never to assume that everyone understands or agrees with an interpretation or analysis: These assumptions can lead to confusion and contention.*

Hazen has learned that racial justice will not be achieved by checking boxes. But paying attention to quantifiable metrics can provide a useful tool for measuring change. For Hazen it has been important to be explicit about the purposes of diversification and representation, to identify and articulate the values that underlie the institution's efforts. Making the purpose of the data collection clear has meant that the information is an integral part of the foundation's evaluation and decision-making.

While for the most part Hazen's leaders moved forward in a linear fashion, they have sometimes paused to surface tensions, particularly about the dynamics of power. It has been helpful to examine the culture of the foundation in a way that avoids personalizing disagreements or obstacles to progress. Hazen's experience teaches never to assume that everyone understands or agrees with an interpretation or analysis: These assumptions can lead to confusion and contention.

Bringing trustees into contact with grantees and bringing grantees onto the board has proven to be an effective way of being responsive to the foundation's constituency, but it can test the power inherent in the grantor-grantee relationship. For Hazen, a key lesson has been to be clear about roles and not to tokenize grantees; to be willing to follow, not just lead; and to let the constituency frame and define the issues that are most important to them while extending the access that foundations possess to the grantee community.

### Conclusion

The Edward W. Hazen Foundation believes that in order to bring about sustained policy change that actually interrupts the dynamics of structural oppression, we need to name race as a root cause of disparities. It is not an accident that the lowest-performing schools, the communities with the greatest burden of environmental degradation, the families with the least access to economic opportunity are so often in communities of color. Our grantees and their constituencies know this as well. If given the opportunity to develop an analysis of the conditions in their communities, they understand that it is insufficient to create a program or service that will allow some number of them to escape negative circumstances. Instead, they look to build on the knowledge, social capital, and capacity in their communities to bring about sustained, structural change that will improve circumstances for themselves, their families, and their communities. And they are not afraid to name race.

Led by a board that has been deeply committed to developing powerful leadership in communities of color, Hazen has spent decades investing in the people whose lives are most affected by issues such as education, community violence, juvenile justice, immigration, and environmental justice. The diverse leadership of the foundation developed an analysis of policy issues that recognizes the pernicious effects of structural racism, understands that change is difficult and complicated, and is committed to ensuring that change is led by those whose lives will be most affected by it.

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