

## ***How To Create More Social Justice With Your Philanthropy*** ***Occasional Note / March 25, 2008***

With the successful launch of [www.JustPhilanthropy.org](http://www.JustPhilanthropy.org) and distribution of its [Op-Ed: “Philanthropy Must Address Structural Inequities.”](#) Effective Communities LLC is fielding questions. **One frequently asked question is, “I love the website, but I’m not sure what to do next. Do we really have to change everything we do?”**

“No,” says Dr. Steven E. Mayer, project leader. “A total organizational makeover is probably not required. But persistence is. Starting where you are and moving forward from there is the natural and sensible thing to do.”

### **What you *can* do, starting where you are:**

**Review the big picture:** When you look at the [inventory of gaps](#) and disparities in how different racial and ethnic groups fare, you will be amazed to discover how uneven the playing fields have become. When our public systems, commercial markets, and even philanthropic organizations favor one racial or ethnic group over others, whether intentional or not, the prospect of real success is restricted.

**Decide to address one of the disparities affecting your foundation’s mission.** If your foundation or nonprofit could decide, on the basis of a review of the facts, to develop a specific goal of reducing disparities in one of the areas in which you are already engaged, and then [prepare your organization](#) to follow through, you are taking big steps on one of the pathways to progress that we recommend.

**Think systemically and strategically.** The challenge is to focus philanthropic resources on closing the gaps and reducing the casualties. Read our version of the parable, “[Saving the Babies](#),” and then ask yourselves, “What’s upstream in the rivers *we* care about? What’s broken? Which unwritten rules or unquestioned practices still cause unlevel playing fields?”

**Explore opportunities and options for moving forward.** Take a look at the [pathways to progress](#) on the website, see where you are and where you can move forward in ways that can close gaps and level playing fields. Helping your own organization *and others* make progress on these pathways is what spells success.

- [Preparing](#): Gear your organization’s efforts to achieve greater effectiveness in its mission along with success in reducing disparities.
- [Talking](#): Search for the high road – learn how to talk about challenging issues without flaming the room.

- [Solutions](#): Move promising solutions from idea to successful implementation.
- [Leadership](#): Strengthen relationships based on trust inside *and* outside the organization, strengthen and broaden networks, and surface leadership that can bridge divides.
- [Philanthropy](#): Gather philanthropic assets – time, talent, and treasure – and focus them on the chosen goal.
- [Fixing](#): Put these all together to fix a particular broken part of our society’s systems and markets to achieve better balance.

Disparities, mostly remnants from the past, are everywhere. No one has a good view of the whole elephant. In our discovery work, we have seen much good work, but of a very local nature. No one can do the work alone, so [JustPhilanthropy.org](#) gives a roadmap for parlaying the assets *of all* to produce better outcomes *for all*. Putting several efforts together strategically stands to move the needle.

The website is the result of fieldwork undertaken by [Effective Communities](#) and funded by the Ford Foundation. While the site focuses on the divide between African Americans and White Americans, its authors readily acknowledge divides between other ethnic, economic, and circumstantial groupings as well.

**You could help us** by including all or part of this little announcement below in your next newsletter, or on your website as a “resource.” **Thank you!**

Announcement: Effective Communities has launched a website, [www.JustPhilanthropy.org](#) to help philanthropy move closer to social justice and racial equity. The site carries a practical and optimistic tone, insisting that progress is possible. It includes key pathways and promising practices for philanthropic investment, benchmarks, links to practitioner organizations, resource articles, and tools.

Effective Communities is available to present its findings at informal gatherings and formal conferences, and to assist organizations ready to explore possible next steps through a safe and structured process. For more information, or to arrange a presentation of study findings, visit [www.JustPhilanthropy.org](#) or write to [StevenEMayer@msn.com](mailto:StevenEMayer@msn.com)

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