THE ONLY BLACK WOMAN AT THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PHILANTHROPY DINNER PARTY

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• *Navigating patriarchy, power and racism* •
within social justice spaces

ABSTRACT

How do race and gender play out in relation to the work of social justice actors around the world? How does the race, class and intersectional feminism that I practise on a personal level manifest in my work within social justice philanthropy? This article explores how some social justice organisations and leaders are beginning to navigate inequality within their own corridors of philanthropic power as well as in their interactions with civil society. Expressed in simple terms one may ask: are social justice foundations practising what they preach? As I explore these themes I interrogate practices within social justice organisations at the level of both philanthropy and non-governmental organizations supported by philanthropy. I do so by drawing on recent sexual harassment, bullying and racial discrimination allegations that have been exposed in some of the top human rights organisations within South African civil society. This has led me to question whether the broader social justice sector has done enough to interrogate what our collective values are at the personal and institutional levels within the donor and non-governmental organizational space.

As I explore these themes I hope to draw on the personal and the political based on my career experiences working in corporate legal spaces, in partnership with philanthropy as a grantee and working inside philanthropy as a Program Officer and Director leading a regional office in South Africa. In these roles I have interacted with a range of social justice activists and people working within philanthropy and I am not sure that we have thought deliberately about our social justice values at the personal and institutional level. I do not have all the answers but I am attempting to start an uncomfortable conversation where I hope to disrupt and interrogate our collective assumptions around the core values of social justice work.

1 • Scene 1: The outsider experience
- dinner party in Manhattan New York

Have you ever been the only black woman from South Africa at a dinner party or social gathering in New York where everyone is from the United States at that dinner party? Now imagine that not only are they all American but they are also all white, heterosexual men and women married with children. It can be an alienating outsider experience where people like me struggle to understand the context or the specific jokes; where the tone and accent of the guests keeps tripping me up, making me lean forward uncomfortably as I try to really listen; where I just don't get the innuendo or sarcasm by some of the dinner guests; where I have no idea who the artist is that everyone is talking about; neither have I seen the show on Broadway that everyone has seen. The general ebb and flow of the conversation with its insider New York jokes and commentary leave me confused in terms of when to squirm or applaud as the conversation veers from senators and governors in the State of New York to the upcoming elections. I wait patiently as the only non-American, black woman in the room to have someone ask me something where I can show off my brilliance. After all, I do know about what is happening in South Africa and the current China/Africa talks could get me going, I have views on the Brexit debate and the Brazil election, but alas, the conversation is very focused on America and I am bored of President Trump. So, I remain quiet and nod when I think it is appropriate to nod. I smile politely when someone catches my eye. I swallow water anxiously waiting for dessert to arrive and for the evening to end. I feel inadequate and invisible notwithstanding my life experience. I long to smash something…but I don't.

2 • Scene 2: The insider experience
- dinner party in Brooklyn, New York

Now let's imagine a different dinner table where all the participants are from the global South and only a minority are white and male. Everyone is employed within the social justice philanthropy space spread around the world with a mix of different languages, accents, races, religions, sexual orientation and genders. The dinner becomes a warm, insider experience. I feel like an insider. Why? Well, by virtue of my professional status as a Director employed by a global social justice philanthropy with offices around the world and a headquarters in New York. I am a qualified lawyer with a Masters' degree from a top university in London. I have many years' experience working within the legal profession, the human rights space and the philanthropy space. I have travelled the world and lived in different parts of the world besides South Africa. I have spoken at international conferences and gatherings in many of the countries where the dinner party guests reside. English is my first language. I am well-read and versed in global news and politics. We all have a set of assumed core values and principles that inform our interaction with the world and

that makes me feel like an insider at this table. I love the loud laughter and jokes, I laugh out loud and could stay here all-night trading stories, politics and jokes on the frontlines of social justice. I respect and admire every leader around this table.

I am still the same me but how I show up and interact at these respective dinner parties is very different in terms of my own personal and political baggage. This informs whether I bring out my creative self or my angry silent self. Now let's imagine a hypothetical case where a man in both scenarios is accused of attempting to rape one of the women guests after the dinner party. In both cases, I would respond with rage, believe the woman and support her to demand accountability in terms of the perpetrator, if that was what she wanted – we all would, or would we? Yet, this is not always the case: it is easier to picture the rapist as someone whom we despise – the awful, creepy, racist man lurking in dark alleys and not the dynamic, charismatic social justice leader that everyone loves. This is what rape crisis counsellors have been saying for decades.

Now replace me with my grandmother who is a domestic worker from South Africa - wise beyond her years, an activist and unionist by heart with her booming voice and her thoughts on privilege and power. She has not studied, has no degree or high school certificate. She cleans houses like this fancy one where we are having dinner where she earns a minimum wage. Where do we place her? At neither table. Because power and privilege and an undercurrent of violence pervades the air of the insider table where I feel warm and fuzzy. Exclusionary race and gender politics and a sense of 'othering' pervades both tables; the only difference is that in scenario 1 (the outsider table) it is explicit and in scenario 2 (insider table) it is implicit and the undertone of exclusion and violence is cloaked in progressive politics and discourse. Yet it is still there. Both tables are inherently problematic in terms of their elitist nature and probably displays the extent to which I have been assimilated into a role and comfort zone that is perhaps a classic insider /outsider story of the middle class black woman who is on an upwardly mobile global career trajectory.

3 • The foundational values of social justice philanthropy

South African society has been ravaged by racism and apartheid. Today we are all compelled by our Constitutional mandate to respect the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings and that discrimination is not to be tolerated. I have always worked on a premise that social justice actors within civil society and philanthropy have an even higher duty of care to ensure that we are not only diverse in terms of race and gender but are also practising principles of substantive equality and not tolerating any forms of discrimination or violence within our own institutions. I have always based this higher duty of care on a definition of social justice as a measure for assessing how power, wealth and resources in a society are distributed and used. Thus, social justice is a value which stands in opposition to inequality and unjust discriminatory social structures. In this context social justice philanthropy can be said to incorporate six core themes:[1]

(a) Social justice philanthropy focuses on the root causes of social, economic and political inequality instead of only addressing the symptoms and manifestations of these inequalities.

(b) Social justice philanthropy strives to include the people who are impacted by injustices and inequality as leaders and decision-makers. This means that the process of giving is as important as where the money goes. Asking those who are directly affected by and working on an issue to meaningfully partner and lead is a key part of the process.

(c) Social justice philanthropy aims to make the field of philanthropy accessible and diverse.

(d) Social justice philanthropy is accountable, transparent and responsive in grant-making.

(e) Donors and foundations act as allies to social movements by contributing not only monetary resources but also time, knowledge, skills and access.

(f) Foundations use their assets and investments alongside their grant making money to support their social justice missions.

Those of us who engage in the social justice space, whether we are in philanthropy, non-governmental organisations or social movements, all have an interest in focusing on systemic change in relation to the complex problems of injustice and inequality. This requires creative, innovative solutions that are driven by a clear commitment to advancing and building power within the most marginalised communities. To do so effectively we need to make sure that values of justice and equality are embedded in our internal cultures, hiring practices and leadership structures. These values also need to be embedded in how we do our social justice work with humility and respect for the dignity of our staff, our partners and the communities we serve. For us to truly have an impact on the social justice issues we care so deeply about, our leadership, our workforce and our practice must reflect the diverse demographics of the environments in which we work and the communities which serve. This responsibility is both a *moral obligation* and a *strategic imperative*. It requires us to move from <u>implicit</u> assumptions around the value that diversity, equity and inclusion brings to an <u>explicit</u> strategic focus that requires us to locate diversity, equity and inclusion within a power and privilege paradigm that informs all our work.

But what do we mean when we speak of diversity, equity and inclusion?[2] Many definitions of diversity recognise the intersectional nature of identity and the complex and cumulative ways in which different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, and intersect. The most common definition of **diversity** used in philanthropy refers to the demographic mix of a specific collection of people, considering elements of human difference, including but not limited to race, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and disability status. **Equity** involves the promotion of justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity requires an understanding of the underlying or root causes of disparities within our society. Within the South African context it requires positive redistributive measures in the form of affirmative action. The third concept, **inclusion**, refers to the degree to which

diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes, while a truly "inclusive" group is necessarily diverse, a "diverse" group may not be "inclusive". A succinct way of describing these different concepts is that diversity is a number, equity is an outcome linked to justice and inclusion is a behavior often evidenced through institutional culture.

All three elements are critical if an organisation is to truly embrace a socially just framework. Diversity, inclusion and equity cannot be treated as a numbers game when we complete our diversity data – it must be something deeply rooted in everything we do – it goes to the core of our values base and to the heart of our effectiveness as a sector working for social justice. It also requires us to be clear that we cannot tolerate misogyny, violence, racism, hate speech, xenophobia or homophobia within the corridors of social justice. We need the highest standard as we engage in the battle for social justice where we strive towards a **transformative agenda** linked to change in policies, practices, cultures and strategic choice-making.

4 • Principles and rhetoric colliding with practice

Over the last eight months some of the largest social justice organisations working at the forefront of human rights and dignity in South Africa, funded by social justice foundations like the Ford Foundation, have had to face a series of very public cases of sexual harassment, workplace bullying, unequal pay discrimination based on race and gender and victimisation based on sexual orientation.[3] The first few instances of sexual harassment had a ripple effect and led to numerous other cases coming to the fore. This also happened at global institutions, such as UNAIDS,[4] UN Women and Oxfam where senior staff or consultants have faced allegations of sexual harassment and management has been accused of failing to take appropriate action.

In South Africa what has been stark has been the number of black women speaking out. They have described an environment of sexism and racism that pervades certain sectors within the social justice space, particularly the public interest human rights law sector, publically denouncing, for example, the

> *insidious forms of sexual harassment in our sector and the impossible position that women, particularly black women, find themselves in as a result. We call on our sector to interrogate the "beyond reproach" disposition and to disabuse themselves of the notion that our sector is somehow immune to sexual harassment, racism and other abuses of power. It is these unchecked exercises of power, in the form of white privilege and patriarchy, that result in toxic environment(s)...[5]*

Koketso Moeti, whose words are cited above, has also written a powerful critique of donors[6] that fund large public interest law centres and which refuse to see the power dynamics, racism and sexism within these organisations and only celebrate and collude with leaders in terms of court victories on behalf of marginalised communities.[7] Social justice philanthropy has (correctly in

my view) been interrogated about whether its internal practices and decision making serves to fuel racism and sexism in the sector OR whether we only regard success in terms of court victories irrespective of the toxic patriarchal and racist cultures within organisations.

These debates have led me to consider[8] what this all means on an *institutional* and on a *personal* level as a black woman director of a social justice philanthropic organisation and a trained feminist human rights lawyer that has spent many years in the trenches working within the public interest law space. The Ford Foundation Office for Southern Africa has, as a result of the critique levelled against donors in the region and due to my own personal convictions as a feminist, had to reflect on whether we have been asking the right questions as we monitor grants and do our due diligence, whether we have been too trusting, and whether our "hands-off" trusting approach has caught up with us. Have we simply allowed ourselves to be charmed by leaders of organisations doing excellent work and been so caught up in the project reports that we have missed some critical organisational culture issues that also go to the heart of social justice? Were we sufficiently interested in learning more about the values and ethics inside the organisations we funded or were we making assumptions about those values and focusing on the external change that we wanted to see within marginalised communities?

Today I am more interested in the way my colleagues and our grantee partners articulate their values, specifically in terms of racial justice and gender justice. Women are still not believed and are often victimised *within* our social justice organisations when we had always assumed secondary victimisation happened "out there" in the criminal justice system with police, magistrates and judges. No, it is happening in social justice organisations where an entire sector can vilify a woman who has spoken out against a powerful leader.

As I started to speak to other women leaders in social justice philanthropy it soon became clear that none of us want to be accused of being complicit in cases of racial discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment within the organisations we fund. Yet we are also very aware that in our own roles we are also navigating issues of power, sexism and racism that often leave us feeling conflicted and asking ourselves whether we have any legitimacy to instruct civil society groups how they should behave or deal with sexual harassment or racism if our own institutions have no clear internal policies and practices. Ultimately, the way donor institutions deal with allegations of sexual harassment or racial discrimination speaks to how we navigate our own power – do we end relationships with grantee organizations, terminate our grant agreements, disassociate ourselves from the grantee institution or help the institution navigate the stormy waters? Where do we draw the line? Is there a line and how do we justify our decisions and the way we respond to allegations within partners organisations? Are we equally as willing to challenge racist or sexist norms and cultures in our own philanthropic institutions which may be reinforcing a white, middle-class, ivy-league, progressive, American view of the world as we are in terms of challenging the racist and sexist norms and cultures that we observe within civil society partner organisations within South Africa?

5 • Prioritising a transformative agenda

How do we decide on the strategies and internal policies of our organisations? Who decides what we will focus our attention on is one form of power. How is power distributed within the organisation when important strategic shifts or priorities are decided upon? And to whom are we accountable in relation to these decisions? We know that wielding power can sometimes be conflated with being partisan or with being top-down and dictatorial, but neither is a given. Power can and should be wielded for good, if done in thoughtful ways that acknowledge our institutional and personal privilege and align with the mission and values of social justice. We can design a menu where dignity, equality and justice is at the core of everything that we serve for our guests – where we prioritise and speak out against racist patriarchal practices in all its manifestations.

For example, a year ago the President of Ford Foundation, Darren Walker, an African-American gay man decided that the foundation needed to really interrogate our own practices around diversity, inclusion and equity around the world, including how we handled issues of discrimination and sexual harassment internally and in our grant relationships. Having a leader at the highest level make this a priority was important at an institutional level and allowed us to delve deeper into what our own practices were and what we needed to amend.

In order to live our social justice values, we started a process of introspection and we asked ourselves:

-      Does our board, leadership and staff around the world reflect the communities we serve, not only in terms of their race, ethnicity and gender but also in terms of their experiences of marginalization? Do they all reflect middle-class privilege and power or not?
-      How diverse are our staff in terms of income level, wealth and power including at board level? We also looked at how diverse staff are in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ, disability status and age.
-      Are the foundation staff *culturally competent* and able to exercise *cultural humility*? Here cultural humility encourages us to identify our own biases and to acknowledge that those biases must be recognised, understood and addressed particularly in terms of implicit bias.
-      Do we solicit confidential or anonymous feedback from grantees and how do we correlate this with the experiences of staff inside the Foundation in terms of race and gender transformation goals? Are we soliciting the same information and feedback internally as well as externally to check for consistency in our approaches?
-      How have we handled sexual harassment or discrimination cases in the past – does a culture of silencing survivors permeate our institution? Do we need to amend our internal policies on non-disclosure agreements? Are we taking a survivor-centered approach in cases of sexual harassment?
-      How do we think about personal consensual relationships within the institution?
-      How committed are we as an institution to create a safe working environment free

of discrimination – do we investigate past behaviour when recruiting? To what extent do we need to start caring about personal and private conduct (domestic violence, sexual harassment or racist slurs outside of work hours and in the privacy of their homes/social media accounts)?

These hard questions led to revisions of many of our policies related to discrimination and sexual harassment and opened a debate about the standard we expect of our employees, vendors, contractors and consultants. The changes that were made to our policies reflected that we had listened to what feminist movements around the world were saying about things like a survivor-centered approach, why women are afraid to speak out and the silencing effect of non-disclosure agreements. We also did an extensive survey internally amongst staff to assess how staff felt we were doing in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion. The transparency with which we have shared the results of this large scale survey[9] has been refreshing, because it opened a conversation about the question of belonging – we realised that revised policies and principled leadership, whilst critically important, are not enough to actually shift a culture that creates "insiders" and "outsiders" within a large global institution. Leaders can prioritize or dismiss the importance of these issues and thereby signal the type of culture that is acceptable but this 'messaging' by leadership will not be sufficient – it still needs to be monitored and implemented in a way that holds individuals and institutions accountable. This is something that I have taken on as a black feminist leader when it comes to the office I oversee. My personal perspective drives my institutional agenda. Some civil society organisations however do not prioritise race and gender in their internal policies or discussions because they claim to be too busy fighting the good fight. But there can never be a good fight if toxicity and prejudice pervades the internal corridors where social justice work is done.

Research has shown that organisations, which are diverse at the management level, have employees that act with less prejudice and are more likely to call out bias and discrimination in their workplace interactions.[10] Furthermore, the proportion of people of colour in top management has also been shown to have a positive effect on subsequent hires of women and black people into lower level management positions.[11] Therefore, leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion remains a critical piece of the puzzle and can have a ripple effect.

However, this is not something that happens automatically or immediately. Changes to policies, increased diversity and setting the tone around sexual harassment and any form of discrimination is indeed critical in terms of setting a values statement by the leadership. Yet a simple policy shift and a few black leaders within a large organisation does not shift deeply embedded racist or patriarchal attitudes overnight and we, at Ford Foundation, have also experienced this. We know that the work we need to do internally within our organization and externally with grantee partners transcends the policy shifts and leaders that we have. The next frontier requires us to move from progressive policies (on paper) to a practice that does not deny that discrimination

and prejudice can and does exist within social justice organisations. I have argued elsewhere[12] that many of us who join the social sector hold it in high regard, even above reproach. So, when our heroes disappoint and end up exploiting and harming us, we quietly pretend it never happened, we go into denial mode and we keep silent. This is like keeping quiet about abuse within the family for fear of bringing shame. Or perhaps, more perilously, we are in denial about the existence of violence and abuse within our "sacred" social justice spaces. For now, the costs of speaking out are just too high when women risk being disbelieved and vilified by society. In this regard, we need to applaud the brave women that do speak out and challenge patriarchy and racism internally and externally within social justice spaces because a culture of silence encourages a culture of impunity. Women can only start to harness collective power when they have voice and are safe to speak out.

6 • Power & voice

We have all been at a dinner party where one person dominates the conversation, interrupting, mansplaining, being abrasive, racist, sexist and arrogant. He may try to grope or hug the women at the dinner party a bit longer than is strictly necessary and he assumes control of the conversation and attempts to steer it in the direction he prefers while shouting down other views. He is a poor listener and eventually people shift away from him, in body language and in conversation. Most of the guests at the dinner table can eventually succeed in silencing him by simply ignoring him and taking charge of the table as the majority. Such a *coup* is facilitated by an alignment of values and a general contempt for the one person at the table. This has the potential to catalyse everyone into an organising moment where they collectively take power back and the evening is saved.

But this is rendered much harder when this man is the host and the owner of the house: the person with all the resources and the power to hire or fire you or give you that million-dollar grant. Individuals are then less willing to attempt to take back power and may simply elect to endure the evening and the abusive conduct because they need the job and/or the grant.

Indeed, this dynamic plays out within social justice organisations and in philanthropy where a leader either silences and alienates black women or patronises them leading to their resignation or sudden departure where they are made to feel as if they were just unable to cope, were incompetent or not a 'cultural fit' for the institution of philanthropy or social justice. Therefore, we must be clear that the fact that a foundation has a board and staff who are black or indigenous, women, LGBTQ and/or have a disability is not enough because it may not shift values and culture in terms of an established long-standing organisational culture shaped by white, male, heteronormative values. This embedded, seemingly invisible culture and privilege may continue to inform how an organisation decides what is "normal," "good," "effective" or "risky"[13] and set up who gets rewarded as being worthy employees and who gets ignored or rendered invisible.

7 • Culture matters: who pours the tea and who is rendered invisible?

As a young lawyer newly qualified and entering a large corporate legal environment where I was one of a handful of black lawyers I was struck by how white clients in South Africa automatically assumed I was there to take notes and always assumed that the white males in the room were the real lawyers. This was in 1999 in South Africa and in those early days as a candidate attorney I grappled with the notion of invisibility, rage and vulnerability every day. I recall one encounter vividly: A senior white advocate during a pre-trial consultation ordered tea and coffee from his receptionist. A black woman dressed in uniform entered the room with a tray and left it on the table for the six white, male guests. She exited the room and the advocate turned to me as I tried to keep up with my note-taking. Then this advocate did the unthinkable; he nodded his head at the tea making an upward eye gesture at me as if to say: "get to it, pour us the tea." I was mortified, he didn't say a word, just jerked his head in the direction of tea tray. I had a dilemma: if I stopped taking notes I would incur the wrath of my boss after the meeting and if I did not get up to pour the tea I would incur the wrath of the senior advocate. So, what did I do? As a straight-out-of-university, in my first job in a very white law firm and as the only black person in the room I said nothing, avoided eye contact with the senior advocate and kept taking minutes – seething inside. Eventually the senior advocate boomed at me "*Nikki could you pour the tea its getting cold.*" I started to perform the task of manually pouring tea for each male, my hands shaking and inner rage tormenting me. No matter my law degree and my status as a lawyer in the room, I was the most junior black woman in the room and centuries of serving white men by my ancestors still permeated the room demanding that I pour the tea, remain silent, take notes and be seen and not be heard. No one asked for my opinion, my thoughts, my perspective. I had a seat at the table working on a very important case before the Supreme Court but I was also very invisible and no-one who worked on that case would remember my name or my views because I was the silent woman pouring tea and taking pages and pages of notes. For months afterward, I replayed the incident in my head and imagined how I could have responded differently in terms of eloquent rage where I would call out his racism and sexism. But on that day, many lifetimes ago, I had absolutely no confidence to voice them in this strange room with people who did not look like me, sound like me or have any of my life experience. I did not have the tools to navigate white spaces and white privilege and I really wanted to be "good" and not be labelled as a "trouble-maker", so I did not speak up.

Today I bring the above history and context into meetings and will judge people harshly if I notice the white male dominating a conversation, alongside the silent black staff member – I do call this out and probably display all my implicit bias in my decision making at the end of the day. I also tend to fall in love with strong black women who

articulate their needs and argue about systemic change and then I try to find ways to support and fund their work. I am not neutral – I have an intersectional[14] feminist lens and I bring it with me to work every day alongside my historical baggage which informs my very path and commitment to social justice. I also call out white privilege within my institution and in spaces where I see it because I can and because I know I will be heard due to my relative power in the organisation, so I am much more willing to "make trouble" and be the unpopular woman with *that chip on her shoulder*.

I am therefore a lot more curious about the culture within the Ford Foundation and the ones that we have funding relationships with – do they have cultures of silence and fear or is it an environment where debate, disagreement and safe spaces are nurtured and encouraged by the leadership? Who is included in strategic and operational management discussions? What is the make-up of the management team leading the organisation?

Over the last few months many sexually harassed black women activists in South Africa have spoken about the ways in which institutional and structural racism and sexism in South Africa continues to victimise women within organisations fighting for social justice. They spoke with equal amounts of rage, despair and vulnerability about how everyone, both within the organisation and the wider sector knowing about the sexual harassment taking place by the senior staff but that no-one was doing anything about it beyond a network of women who took it upon themselves to warn new recruits and younger women to stay away from the perpetrator.[15] They also reference cultures within prominent movements where sexualised consensual relationships as well as *quid pro* quo sexual harassment occurs at the very highest levels. However, when women complain they are labelled problematic; not dedicated to the cause and out to destroy the movement and its male leaders.

The unspoken rule that black women should not speak about abuse or violence by their colleagues fighting the same battle alongside them remains real in the social justice space. Although they are beginning to speak out consistently and bravely they are not heard or believed which tells me that we have a very long way to go. Notions that we should be protecting our male brothers from the racist criminal justice system whilst they harass or violate us need to be interrogated. It does not mean that we condone a racist criminal justice system that profiles, targets and criminalises black men and women for being black; we can and must address the racist criminal justice system and abuse of power as it plays out in the context of black men AND we can also hold our black men and comrades accountable for their actions of violence against women. We live in a punitive culture in which black male misconduct is dramatised and sexualised by the very institutions that are responsible for justice, just as black female victimhood is exaggerated and instrumentalised over black women's power and agency. Our analysis of racist sexism and sexist racism must be therefore be nuanced enough to understand that it has disadvantaged black women as well as black men and that these disadvantages have different contours and different material implications.

8 • Should we be helping rich organizations become more brown...or brown organizations become richer?

A recent Grantcraft Guide on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion[16] points out that during one interview a nonprofit leader noted dryly that he had observed increased interest in "*helping rich organizations become more brown,*" but posed the provocative question about why foundations were not also helping "*brown organizations become more rich.*" Historical inequality favours certain kinds of organisations, helping them become stronger and more effective. In turn, foundation strategies become linked to a set of high-performing organisations that may not be particularly diverse. Put differently, the known universe is what informs grantmaking strategies. Therefore, we must ask: are our institutional approaches grounded in making rich well established blue-chip organisations (otherwise known as the usual suspects) more brown and black or are we finding and strengthening black and brown-led organisations? This is a critical question in terms of two very different approaches to funding race and gender transformation in terms of not only replacing a white leader with a black leader but also transforming culture and interrogating institutional history, privilege and power alongside mission and values.

Ultimately, it is important that we embed a race, gender and class analysis within the grantmaking practice of staff at all levels of an organisation as an essential precursor to meaningful change both internally and externally. To overcome implicit bias teams should be encouraged to think deliberately about individual personal bias and set in place appropriate 'checks and balances' on the power of the programme officer or director to allow space for collective decision-making and a system of accountability and transparency to the civil society sector. However, this can only work in spaces of diverse ideas and opinions and where people feel safe to disagree with those in power without facing consequences in terms of job security or grant security.

To what extent are we comfortable to have the hard conversation in terms of naming aspects of white privilege and power that are present in our own institutional culture or within the culture of the grantee partners we support? It is critical to create safe spaces that allow us to interrogate whether our organisations unconsciously use characteristics of white privilege/supremacy as norms and standards that in turn make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards in the workplace or in the groups that we choose to fund.

For example, many of philanthropic organisations say they want to be multicultural and embrace diversity but then only allow diverse people and cultures to come in **if** they adapt or conform to already existing institutional cultural norms to become insiders. This is often apparent by the phrases you will hear such as: "will she be a fit for us?" or the following phrases will be heard in the context of the successful black African woman: "she is very eloquent" and "not a troublemaker getting on well with everyone and making lots of friends – integrating into the culture." For those black African women who enter the social justice

workplace and leave shortly thereafter one often hears phrases such as: "she was out of her depth", "did not know her own limitations", "she had a chip on her shoulder about race and was too angry/too assertive/too bossy" or "she was just so quiet never contributing and saying anything in meetings" or "she could not take initiative, needed too much hand-holding and couldn't integrate into the team." When speaking to black women who leave we will almost always tell you, if you really listen, that we felt like an outsider in a room where no-one had a race or gender analysis but everyone accused us of making everything about race and gender. We will tell you that we were expected to assimilate and not critique and were never made to feel welcome on our own cultural terms or asked our opinion. The most common thing we will tell you, if you will hear us, is that we were left alone, ignored, rendered invisible and not mentored or guided by anyone. Being able to interrogate what success looks like and what standard we set for people is important particularly when we use 'coded' and vague language to define success often shrouded in our own implicit bias or institutional racism around the ability of black women to perform. We must identify, debate and name these cultural norms and performance standards within our organisations as a first step to making room for developing a truly diverse, multi-cultural organization where dignity and respect permeates everything we do.

9 • Conclusion: Recalibrating

In a world where the politics of division, polarization, right-wing populism, sexism and racism are the order of the day it is easy for a workplace (yes, even a social justice workplace) to start to resemble the exclusionary practices within broader society. This can only be countered if there is an explicit commitment to interrogating the politics of who we are and what we do. We need to explicitly address and interrogate values, ethics and cultures within our institutions.

Foundations that are serious about addressing issues of discrimination and diversity, equity and inclusion need to start from a place of self-reflection and deep introspection about its own practice and bias. We need to examine how we work, who we work with, what we work on in terms of the issues we prioritise and we will need to interrogate the organisational profile and culture beyond the numerical data around diversity. We require a much deeper analysis of socio-political and cultural histories of structural racism and sexism and a contextual understanding of the levels of complicity by our own social justice institutions. The journey toward a greater transformed social justice sector is not linear, it is messy and deviating course many times over. There is no established timeline but we do know that it does not happen overnight or even over a few years by adopting quick-fix solutions, such as, sexual harassment policies or a few diversity-related grants. It requires deep learning and introspection at all levels of institutions and between philanthropy and civil society actors.

We all need to admit that we do not have all the answers and are in fact implicated in the slow progress we are seeing in relation to the fight for racial and gender justice. We can start by making a commitment to: getting comfortable with being very uncomfortable;

having hard, honest conversations about the implicit and explicit cultural values and bias we bring into social justice philanthropy and civil society. We can keep checking ourselves in terms of whom we are rendering invisible or an outsider within our own safe spaces and most importantly, we can interrogate what "safe" looks and feels like using an intersectional race, class and gender feminist lens.

NOTES

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