



<http://www.grassrootsfundraising.org>

GIFT's Political Framework

GIFT is deeply grounded in social justice values. We see grassroots fundraising as an essential strategy when working against all forms of oppression, and toward justice and liberation of all people. Fundraising is political, and is a form of organizing and movement-building. As an organization working for social justice, we try to be intentional about where our funding comes from and take into account how the way we generate resources impacts our work. Our intention is to inspire through example and to provide training for other organizations that are part of social justice movements so that they, too, can implement and strengthen their own grassroots fundraising strategies that are grounded in social justice values.

We believe that grassroots fundraising has a central role in helping us think critically about how different forms of oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, nationality, age, wealth and power intersect and sustain each other and have historically created the inequalities that we still face today. We see oppression as structural and systemic in that it is through different institutions, norms, beliefs, expectations, stereotypes and misconceptions that some people are marginalized while others are in power and possess privilege. The power of giving, however, belongs to everyone regardless of our identities and location. In order to build sustainable strategies for social change and a broad base of support, we need to work towards building greater participation from individuals, for both financial and political reasons. We are a people of color-led multiracial organization and we work in partnership with white allies who stand with us against all forms of oppression, including white supremacy.

Here is GIFT's vision for social justice-focused, grassroots fundraising. We understand that different organizations and configurations are faced with a myriad of challenges, including financial dependency on foundations, an economy that continues to widen the divide between the rich and the poor, and increased demands on private donations to support public services. We acknowledge that there are different stages towards self-determination and independence and that the process of gaining the support of individuals is an ongoing one. We empathize with organizations that are facing challenges and we recognize that we have our

own. As an organization, we are in the ongoing process of building a stronger base of donors that will guarantee our sustainability.

We offer this as our vision for social justice grassroots fundraising and what we ourselves strive for:

1. Social justice organizations are owned by the communities they serve.

The financial support of an organization or movement is a key indicator of an organization's relevance to its stated constituency. This means that the community, including the individuals in that community, provides significant support to the organization in the form of monetary and other contributions. The community supports the organization's program and budget. In turn, the organization is accountable to the community and serves the community's needs. Ownership also means that people of color and low-income people have roles in the paid and unpaid leadership of the organization, including financial management and fundraising.

2. Social justice organizations break down stereotypes about who can give and who can't, and ask everyone in their community to become donors.

Financial contributions to organizations are made by people of ALL income levels, races, classes, ages, ethnic groups, education levels, backgrounds, sexualities and genders. A variety of people donate to support issues they care about, and we all have a role to play in providing resources towards social change. Donors and gifts of all levels should be valued for both their financial impact, as well as the political power of having large numbers of people showing their support for an organization.

3. People of color committed to social justice values and with an understanding of structural oppression are in leadership positions in fundraising.

We believe that those who control the money in an organization, including the processes of raising it, ultimately have more power in the organization. People of color are grossly under-represented as fundraisers, even among social justice organizations. In order to achieve true racial and social justice, people of color invested in an analysis of power and privilege, need to be as involved in fundraising as they are in other key areas of an organization's work. An analysis of power and privilege for GIFT means that internalized and external oppression and marginalization concentrate resources, opportunity, and decision-making in communities with the most privilege based on race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, nationality, age and access while disenfranchising those with the least.

4. Social justice organizations have self-determination and are accountable to the communities they come from, regardless of their funding sources.

Most money given to nonprofits comes from individuals, not from foundations and

corporations. We understand that foundation grants can provide helpful infusions of money, but we believe that foundation grants are not essential to accomplishing social justice work and should not be overly-relied upon. Organizations should be able to make their own decisions and do the work they choose without being afraid of losing foundation money. Private foundations are generally not accountable to the communities they fund and do not always understand the needs of such communities, often rewarding organizations that are politically moderate and in some cases pressuring organizations to become politically moderate. Corporate giving is motivated by publicity and actions that will generate more profits for the corporation, not community needs. We believe that support from individual donors sustain and are fundamental for an organization's survival.

5. Fundraising, program, and organizing are interconnected and interdependent.

When all aspects of an organization are integrated and fundraising and programmatic work are connected and inform each other, organizations are much stronger in all areas of their work. This also means that fundraising is considered a shared responsibility between all staff, board, members, and volunteers.

6. A culture of sustainability is prioritized within social justice organizations.

Fundraiser turnover, burnout and isolation are common in social justice organizations. Fundraisers often bear significant responsibility with little authority or involvement in other areas of the organization, and, at best, are stigmatized as doing the work no one else wants to do, or, at worst, doing the work that is considered antithetical to social justice. In order for leaders of color and social justice leaders to remain in grassroots fundraising and thrive, organizations must prioritize care and sustainability, show appreciation for fundraisers, and strive to provide a life-work balance.