

# Challenging Liberal Foundations: A Critical Examination of Funding Sources for Anti-Racism Activism

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## Abstract

Today in America, tens of thousands of philanthropic foundations finance social change, in the year 2000 alone they distributed \$26.7 billion worth of grants. Scholarly attention has been paid to the role of right-wing foundations in promoting often racist neoliberal politics, but to date few studies have critiqued the role of liberal foundations in funding anti-racism projects. For instance, despite having long associations with both the US's Central Intelligence Agency and the civil rights movement (relationships that were sustained simultaneously throughout the 1960s), the Ford Foundation – a prominent liberal foundation – continues to play a crucial role in funding anti-racism work. For example, in 2001 the Ford Foundation played an important role in funding the United Nations World Conference Against Racism. This paper will provide a much needed overview of the problems associated with liberal foundation funding of progressive anti-racism activities and research. It will then provide a number of recommendations for how anti-racism activists may begin to move away from their (arguably unsustainable) reliance on liberal foundation philanthropy.

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Today in America, tens of thousands of philanthropic foundations finance social change; in the year 2000 alone they distributed \$26.7 billion worth of grants (Roelofs, 2003: 19). Thus given the not insignificant amounts of money being distributed by such foundations, an important question to ask is: how has this funding influenced anti-racism research and the evolution race-related activism more generally? Yet to date few scholars in the field of race relations have attempted to address this simple yet critically important question. Scholarly attention has of course been paid to the role of right-wing foundations in promoting often racist neoliberal politics, but for reasons unknown, the influence of liberal foundations has for the most part been left untouched. This phenomenon is worrying given the small yet growing critical literature on philanthropy (for a recent edited collection, see Faber and McCarthy, 2005).

As might be expected, liberal philanthropists like many other unaccountable and undemocratic bodies regularly downplay the magnitude of their influence on society, successfully disguising the arguably crucial hegemonic function they fulfill for ruling elites. Of course, similar claims from other key powerbrokers – like the mainstream media – are rightfully met with skepticism; but, in the case of liberal foundations the opposite appears to be the case. Consequently researchers (in most fields) have naively accepted the liberal foundations' own benign sounding rhetoric at face value, and have ignored or belittled their influence on democratic processes.

One of the most important books exploring the detrimental influence of liberal foundations on social change was Robert Arnove's edited collection *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism* (1980). Contrary to popular interpretations of the effects of liberal philanthropy, Arnove (1980: 1) observes that liberal foundations like the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Carnegie Corporation "have a corrosive influence on a democratic society" and "represent relatively unregulated and unaccountable concentrations of power and wealth which buy talent, promote causes, and, in effect, establish an agenda of what merits society's attention". Arnove and Pinede (2007: 391) recently updated this critique noting that, while the big three foundations' – that is, Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie – "are considered to be among the most progressive in the sense of being forward looking and reform-minded", they are also "among the most controversial and influential of all the foundations". Indeed, as both Berman (1983) and Saunders (1999) demonstrate, the activities of all three of these foundations have been closely entwined with the work of US foreign policy elites, including most notably the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Despite having long associations with both the CIA and also the civil rights movement (relationships that were sustained simultaneously throughout the 1960s, see Berman, 1983), the big three foundations continue (without criticism, except from the Right that is) to play an important role in funding anti-racism work. Therefore in the light of this information, this paper will provide the first comprehensive (and critical) historical overview of the role of liberal philanthropy in funding both racially based advocacy efforts and anti-racism research. The study will begin by highlighting the role played by liberal foundations in the production of two academic books that are widely recognised as having exerted an influential role on the evolution of the civil rights movement. Then, with a strong focus on the role of the Ford Foundation, the paper will review how liberal philanthropists deradicalised the civil rights movement, and the paper will then go on to provide a brief overview of the range of anti-racism projects that the Ford Foundation has supported to date. Finally, the paper will conclude by offering a number of recommendations for how anti-racism activists may begin to move away from their (arguably unsustainable) reliance on liberal foundation philanthropy.

## Early Race Research and Liberal Philanthropy

“Nearly all our [Negro] scholars are in the grips of the white foundations”  
(Rogers, 1944 cited in Plummer 1996: 228)<sup>1</sup>

Liberal foundation funding for race-issues has a long oft-neglected history, and by the late 1930s the Carnegie Corporation (alone) had diverted “more than \$250 million to institutions concerned with problems of race” (Lagemann, 1987: 442). However, a particularly monumental decision in racially motivated liberal philanthropy arose in the “aftermath of the Harlem riot of 1935, [when the] Carnegie Corporation’s Trustee Newton Baker conceived of the idea of undertaking a broad study of ‘the Negro Problem’ in America” (Singh, 2004: 134). Shortly thereafter, in 1938, the Carnegie Corporation commissioned sociologist Gunnar Myrdal to carry out what turned out to be the landmark study of black-white relations. The end result of this “lavishly funded” project was Myrdal’s seminal book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), a study that Eliaeson (2000: 336) suggests might “well be the most influential book on Afro-Americans and American civilization in the 20th century”.

In keeping with the elitist nature of liberal philanthropy – briefly outlined in the introduction – Eliaeson (2000: 336) notes that Carnegie wanted a writer “who was neither to be considered prejudiced nor imperialist”, thus Myrdal identifying as a democratic socialist fitted this position well. Furthermore, Myrdal’s liberal pedigree was already well established as from 1929 to 1930 he had also served as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow; consequently it is fitting that that Beardsley Ruml of the Rockefeller Foundation played a key role in helping to convince Myrdal to take on the Carnegie project (Eliaeson, 2000: 337). Yet despite the noble intentions of the Carnegie project, the end result – that is, Myrdal’s book – was considered by many coloured scholars to have “addressed more the conscience of white liberals than the real issues they themselves were confronting” (Eliaeson, 2000: 338). Indeed, Bernhard J. Stern suggested that while “Myrdal at first took a tough-minded conflict-power approach to the Negro problem [he later] changed it to the ‘softer’ conception in accord with the moral values of the white middle class because of Carnegie Corporation sponsorship” (cited in Robbins, 1996). Cox (1959: 538) also concluded his important critique of Myrdal’s work by suggesting that the book “in many respects may have the effect of a powerful piece of propaganda in favour of the status quo” and “contributes virtually nothing to a clarification of the many existing spurious social

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<sup>1</sup> Plummer (1996: 228) writes that: “Journalist and self-published historian Joel A. Rogers had bemoaned the ingress of philanthropy on black scholarship in his Pittsburgh Courier column as early as 1944. ‘Nearly all our scholars are in the grips of the white foundations and philanthropists, who use them,’ Rogers complained. The purpose was ‘to keep the Negro in his so-called place’ and help ‘discredit, belittle, and create mistrust of the few Negroes who dare to have a soul of their own.’”

theories of race relations". Likewise, Aptheker (1946) rounded off his rebuttal of Myrdals' book by noting that "we find Myrdal's philosophy to be superficial and erroneous, his historiography demonstrably false, his ethics vicious and, therefore, his analysis weak, mystical, and dangerous." These are strong words indeed for a book that went on to have such a powerful influence over the discourse of American civil rights.

Another key book that helped sustain the civil rights movement – and is also widely credited with providing the launching pad for the Ford Foundation funded/driven War on Poverty (Raynor, 1991) – that benefited from the largesse of liberal philanthropy is Michael Harrington's (1962) *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. Again although rarely mentioned in historical accounts relating to the book, liberal foundations were integral to the completion of the book. Indeed, the founding director of the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Republic, the oil executive Richard R. Parten, worked closely with the Fund's president "to establish programs, including... Michael Harrington's project on poverty (published as *The Other America*)".<sup>2</sup> Like Myrdal, Harrington was the perfect black voice-piece for the Ford Foundation: having previously founded the Democratic Socialists of America: furthermore, as Starr (1995) surmised, Harrington "advocated nothing more radical sounding than rallying trade unions, liberal thinkers from the major political parties, black leaders, poor farmers, women's groups, and average Americans, all to combine to defeat poverty".

This brief introduction to the involvement of liberal philanthropy in funding two historically significant race studies is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Instead it merely serves to illustrate that liberal foundations have played an important role in defining the boundaries of race research. Thus the following sections of this paper will go on to illustrate how liberal foundations were able to insinuate themselves into the heart of the civil rights movement, and will also demonstrate how they have continued to maintain a high level of involvement in funding anti-racism projects to the present day.

## **Taming Both the Civil Rights Movement and British Race Studies**

Liberal foundations only started seriously funding progressive activist organisations (like the civil rights movement) in the 1960s: and through a process referred to as strategic philanthropy, liberal foundations were arguably able to successfully moderate civil society by directing the bulk of their funding towards more conservative progressive groups, thus reducing the relative influence of more radical activists through a process either described as channeling or

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<sup>2</sup> In 1962, Richard R. Parten served in the Kennedy administration as official advisor for oil policy for the secretary of the interior (Stewart Udall), see <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/fpa93.html>.

coopting (Arnove, 1980; Barker, In Press; Colwell, 1993; Jenkins, 1998; Fisher, 1983; Roelofs, 2003; Wilson, 1983).<sup>3</sup>

As might be expected, at first liberal foundation support went almost entirely to supporting moderate professional movement organisations like, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and their Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Urban League, while foundations also helped launch President Kennedy's Voter Education Project (Jenkins and Eckert, 1986). In the last case, a strong case can be made that foundation support for the Voter Education Project was arranged by the Kennedy administration who wanted to dissipate black support of sit-in protests while simultaneously obtaining the votes of more African-Americans, a constituency that helped Kennedy win the 1960 election (Jenkins, 1998: 212).<sup>4</sup>

Haines (1988: 82-99) argues that the increasing militancy of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) in the 1960s meant most foundation funding was directed to groups who expressed themselves through more moderate actions. He referred to this as the "radical flank effect" – a process which described the way in which funding increased for nonmilitant or moderate groups (reliant on institutional tactics) as confrontational direct action protests increased (Haines, 1984). However, even in the case of the more radical CORE, Ferguson (2007: 69) argues that both the Ford Foundation and CORE "sought to 'organize the ghetto' by making working-class blacks a decipherable and controllable constituency through schematized topdown expert intervention and the development of indigenous leaders/brokers amenable to both groups' respective visions for the black community." Indeed, Allen (1969: 61) suggested that the Ford Foundation might have been the "most important, though least publicized, organization manipulating the militant black movement." So given the uneven power relations between the CORE and Ford, it is little surprise that even though CORE took the lead "by approaching the Ford Foundation to fund it", at the end of the day it was "Ford Foundation's vision [of organizing that] ultimately prevailed" (Ferguson, 2007: 69). In conclusion, Ferguson (2007: 96) noted that:

"Having found a model to control the black community by containing it according to its pluralist model, the Ford Foundation would use its experience with CORE in Cleveland as a base to complete its vision for African Americans in post-civil rights America."

Indeed, although Ford was clearly active in post-civil rights America (see next), even prior to the rise of the civil rights movement the Ford Foundation had been

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that radical activists were also literally eliminated by the CIA and FBI during this period (Churchill and Van der Wall, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> In addition, liberal foundations also provided support to black capitalist organisations like the Negro Industrial and Economic Union, which in 1968 received \$520,000 from the Ford Foundation (Ford Foundation, 1968: 29).

busy manipulating race relations research not just in America but overseas as well.<sup>5</sup> Clapson (2006) demonstrates that from the 1940s to the early 1970s the Ford Foundation fulfilled a fundamental role in contributing to the urban sociology of race relations in Britain. In this regard it is integral to note that in 1952 the Ford Foundation helped found the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), and remained the Institute's "biggest provider during the 1960s" with its strong support "enable[ing] the IRR to survive into the following decade" (Clapson, 2006: 265).

Clapson (2006: 272) observes that the Ford Foundation's activities might be viewed as the "philanthropic expression of the 'enlightened capitalism'", as he added that "[i]t adopted an approach that sustained the status quo between ethnic groups through research for policies to ameliorate social problems." By 1974, however, Ford money had stopped pouring into the IRR; mainly it seems because Marxists within the Institute rebelled against the "involvement of large capitalist concerns in the Institute's Research". Indeed in 1974, the IRR's librarian A. Sivanandan, published a pamphlet titled *Race and Resistance: The IRR Story*, which critiqued the Institute's links to capitalist elites like the Ford Foundation, and accused the Foundation of "wanting to pacify blacks both in Britain and abroad as part of corporate strategy of neo-colonial control and exploitation" (Clapson, 2006: 272).

Yet despite his familiarity with the Ford Foundation's work in the UK, Clapson (2006: 272) belittles the importance of their influence on coopting race studies as part "as an extension of American hegemony" and erroneously highlights their support for Left and Liberal reformers in Britain (e.g. Ruth Glass and the Centre for Urban Studies), as evidence that this could not be the case. Supporting liberals is of course the staple of liberal foundations, but the support they provide for the odd radical is also consistent with their cooptive practices, as not only do such actions help shield their work from critical enquiry, but they also provide a handy means by which liberal philanthropoids might keep abreast of current advances in radical theory.

Having reiterated the important role the Ford Foundation played in the history of civil rights activism and research, the following section of this paper will now investigate how America liberal foundations act as a "leading force in shaping racial liberalism in the United States" (Ferguson, 2007: 96).

## **Funding Anti-Racism Advocacy and Research**

"[In] the year 2000 alone, the [Ford] foundation's Peace and Social Justice program made some \$80 million in grants for human rights worldwide, including \$26 million for minority rights and racial justice." (Ford Foundation, 2000: 50)

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<sup>5</sup> At the same time the Ford Foundation was also supporting eugenic-inspired population control research (Barker, In Press) whose "main thrust... was directed at the developing world" (Harkavy, 1995: 5).

“[T]he Ford Foundation is undeniably one of African American Studies’ earliest, biggest, and most enthusiastic financial supporters”. (Noliwe, 2006: 28)

The major role played by Ford Foundation monies in funding race-related studies was highlighted many decades ago by Sutton and Smock (1976: 68) who showed that that between 1954 and 1974 the Foundation provided around \$20 million to US-based African studies. They also determined that during this same period funding on African research beyond US African studies programs amounted to around \$164 million (Sutton and Smock, 1976: 71). Of course, race-related liberal philanthropy is by no means limited to the Ford Foundation’s activities, but for brevity this part of the paper will simply examine the integral role the Ford Foundation has played in shaping the evolution of various race related advocacy and research initiatives in the US. (For an extended discussion of the Ford Foundation’s support for international research programs, see Berman, 1983.)

## **The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1909 and is oldest and largest civil rights organisation in the United States. A key part of the NAACP’s litigation work is undertaken by their related NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which was formed in 1940 under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall to provide legal assistance to poor African Americans. As previously observed, during the civil rights movement the Ford Foundation was an important funder of the NAACP’s work, and even in the late 1960s Wasby (1995: 93) noted that the “NAACP’s litigation activities could hardly have continued without the Ford Foundation’s \$4.35 million grant to the Special Contribution Fund in the decade starting in 1967, much of which, including grants for northern school litigation, went to the NAACP’s Legal Department.” So given the strong connections between the Ford Foundation and the NAACP it is fitting that Thurgood Marshall’s son, Thurgood Marshall Jr., should have been recently appointed as a trustee of the Ford Foundation: furthermore, it is ironic given the high incarceration rate of African-Americans in the US’s colossal prison system (Parenti, 1999) that Thurgood Marshall Jr. should also be a director of the largest prison corporation in the US, the Corrections Corporation of America (for a critique of this corporation see Bates, 1999).

Given Marshall Jr.’s strange corporate ties is also worth pointing out that Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who is a director of the NAACP’s Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and the W.E.B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University, is also a trustee of the neconservative nonprofit stronghold Freedom House (Barahona, 2007). Furthermore, in 1999, Gates also co-edited

the encyclopedia *Encarta Africana* with Kwame Anthony Appiah (who is a director of the Sabre Foundation).<sup>6</sup>

Three other particularly interesting (current) NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund directors are Vernon Eulion Jordan, Jr. (who is a former Rockefeller Foundation trustee), Karen Hastie Williams (who is a director of the Fannie Mae Foundation, and is former member of the Trilateral Commission), and Andrew Jackson Young, Jr. (who a former civil rights leader, is a former trustee of Freedom House, and owns a public relations firm, GoodWorks International, which represents clients like Wal-Mart, see Dixon, 2006). Other noteworthy emeritus directors of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund include Marian Wright Edelman and John Hope Franklin (who both serve on the board of counselors of the Institute for Democratic Renewal, see later), and Michael I. Sovern (who is a director of Atlantic Philanthropies, and is the director of Comcast Corporation – the largest cable company in the United States). Such NAACP-corporate overlaps should hardly be surprising because as Roelofs (2006) observes:

*“The NAACP has always had strong connections with major corporations. The civil rights movement of the 1960s prompted new close links between activist organizations and business. The Urban Coalition was formed, and thereafter, corporate philanthropy became more focused on defusing systemic threats. Its goal was to challenge segregation and discrimination while discouraging the more radical suggestions of that era’s activists...Today, Lockheed, GE [General Electric], and Boeing are important funders of the NAACP.”*

## **The United Negro College Fund**

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) was founded in 1944 by Frederick D. Patterson, and according to Gasman (2004: 74) owing to Patterson's close relations with the Rockefeller-sponsored General Education Board (GEB) he was “able to convince John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to publicly endorse the UNCF”. Gasman (2004: 74) also adds that although Patterson envisaged the UNCF obtaining most of its support from the general public the “majority of its support comes from foundations, wealthy individuals, and corporations.” Consequently, in line with their funding base it is not surprising that “[t]hroughout its early years-between 1944 and 1954 – the UNCF directed most of its publicity toward wealthy white donors, and wealthy white business people delivered the fund’s mission and messages” (Gasman, 2004: 75). Furthermore, Gasman (2004: 75) also observes that “[m]ost of the[ir] early publicity had a conservative tone” and she cites John D. Rockefeller Jr. as noting that the UNCF was “the most promising,

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<sup>6</sup> Professor Appiah is the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University, and in 1996 he published *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* with Amy Gutmann (who incidentally is a trustee of the Carnegie Corporation).



non-controversial approach to the solution of the whole perplexing problem of race-relations.”

Today UNCF boasts that it has distributed over \$2.5 billion, and is “nation’s largest and most successful minority higher education assistance organization”. Crucially, UNCF still obtains massive support from liberal philanthropists, and in 1999 they received over \$1 billion from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is also perhaps strange that in 2000 UNCF received \$1 million from the world’s leading military contractor, Lockheed Martin Corp. (Standifer, 2000), while the recently retired chairman of Lockheed Martin, Vance D. Coffman, has also served on the board of directors of UNCF. Furthermore, UNCF’s current president and chief executive officer, Michael L. Lomax, maintains good elite connections as he is a trustee of the Carter Center, and was appointed by President George W. Bush to the President’s Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Finally, the late Christopher F. Edley Sr. – who incidentally was a former Ford Foundation program officer – served as the president of the UNCF from 1973 to 1990: his son, Christopher Edley Jr., continues to work with liberal foundations on race related issues as in 1996 he cofounded the Civil Rights Project (see next).

## **The Civil Rights Project**

Founded in 1996, the Civil Rights Project was founded at Harvard University as a “multidisciplinary research-and-policy think tank and consensus-building clearinghouse” which was intended to “provide needed intellectual capital to academics, policy makers and civil rights advocates.”<sup>7</sup> The Project’s two founding co-directors were Christopher Edley Jr. (who from 1999 to 2005 served on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, is currently a trustee of the Russell Sage Foundation and the Century Foundation, and “was one of the Clinton administration’s leading legal and policy strategists on the issue of affirmative action”), and Gary Orfield (who is linked to the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, see next).<sup>8</sup>

In addition to receiving funding from the Ford Foundation, the Civil Rights Project is also supported by many other liberal foundations like the Carnegie Corporation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation to name just a few. More interestingly though is the financial support the Project obtains from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil rights organisation that was founded in 1971 by Morris Dees, Joe Levin, and Julian Bond. Bond, the SPLC’s founding president (although presently serving as just a

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<sup>7</sup> In 2007 the Project moved to UCLA.

<sup>8</sup> In 1996 Christopher Edley Jr. published the book *Not All Black and White: Affirmative Action, Race and American Values*. In 2007, former RAND Corporation researcher (1980-85) Patricia Gandara became the Civil Rights Project’s new co-director, working alongside Orfield. Gandara’s most recent publication is *Over the Ivy Walls: The educational mobility of low-income Chicanos* (1995).

board member), helped form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (later becoming their communications director) and he has been the chairman of the NAACP since 1998. Dees' also has an interesting background as in 1972 he was the finance director for Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern campaign, a position in which he "raised over \$24 million from 600,000 small donors, the first time a presidential campaign had been financed with small gifts by mail".

Dees went on to use his financial wizardry to good effect at the SPLC, because as Silverstein (2000) points out in his critique of Dees' background, the "Center earned \$44 million last year alone – \$27 million from fund-raising and \$17 million from stocks and other investments – but spent only \$13 million on civil rights program, making it one of the most profitable charities in the country." Controversially though, Silverstein (2000) goes on to note that as well as providing "legal services for victims of civil rights abuses" the SPLC also spies "on private citizens who belong to 'hate groups,' shar[es] its files with law-enforcement agencies, and su[es] the most prominent of these groups for crimes committed independently by their members—a practice that, however seemingly justified, should give civil libertarians pause." Moreover he adds that:

*"What the Center's other work for justice does not include is anything that might be considered controversial by donors. [Indeed i]n 1986, the Center's entire legal staff quit in protest of Dees's refusal to address issues—such as homelessness, voter registration, and affirmative action—that they considered far more pertinent to poor minorities, if far less marketable to affluent benefactors, than fighting the KKK."*

Thus it is interesting to note that journalist Jeffrey Blankfort (2006) has charged that SPLC acts as a Zionist front group: indeed, the SPLC most recent 'anti-semitic' target has been Professor Kevin MacDonald, who published the book *The Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (1998).<sup>9</sup> This Israeli-link perhaps helps explain why in 1994, SPLC's chair, James McElroy, was awarded the (Zionist) Anti-Defamation League's National Civil Rights Achievement Award.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For more details on how Zionists utilise this smear tactic, see Mearsheimer and Walt (2007: 188-196).

<sup>10</sup> "In 1993, the District of Attorney of San Francisco released 700 pages of documents implicating the Anti-Defamation League, an organization that claims to be a defender of civil rights, in a vast spying operation directed against American citizens who were opposed to Israel's policies in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza and to the apartheid policies of the government of South Africa and passing on information to both governments." (Blankfort et al., 2002)

## ***The Poverty and Race Research Action Council***

The Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC) is a Ford-funded civil rights policy organisation that was established in 1989 “by major civil rights and anti-poverty groups... to help connect social scientists with advocates working on race and poverty issues, and to promote a research-based advocacy strategy on issues of structural racial inequality.” To date, PRRAC’s work has been supported by a gamut of liberal foundations which include the Ford, Rockefeller, Kellogg, and Levi Strauss Foundations, as well as George Soros’ Open Society Institute. Furthermore, prior to joining PRRAC in 2003 their executive director, Philip Tegeler, served as the legal director of the Connecticut American Civil Liberties Union for six years – an organisation that has received strong ongoing support from the Ford Foundation.

One particularly noteworthy Ford-connected member of PRRAC’s board of directors is Mike Miller, who formerly served as an advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr., and is presently the director of the Project on Inequality and Poverty at the Commonwealth Institute – a “public policy research center doing critical studies in the fields of international security, inequality and poverty”. The latter Institute is interesting because their Project on Defense Alternatives has an advisory board that includes numerous military advisors, a notable one being the Brookings Institution’s Michael E. O’Hanlon, who in 2005 was the signatory of a letter from the Project for the New American Century. Another interesting person linked to the Ford Foundation at PRRAC is Gary Orfield, who serves on their social science advisory board, and is a cofounder and director of Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project.

## **The Institute for Democratic Renewal**

The Institute for Democratic Renewal (IDR) is another Ford-funded initiative that works to strengthen movements for racial and social justice that was founded in 1998 at Claremont Graduate University as an initiative of the Levi-Strauss Corporation; other funders of this project include the Carnegie Corporation, and the C. S. Mott Foundation. Noteworthy members of IDR’s board of counselors include Lynn Walker Huntley (who formerly served as the director of the rights and social justice program at the Ford Foundation, and is the president of the Southern Education Foundation, see next), Marian Wright Edelman and John Hope Franklin (who are both director emeriti of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Stewart Kwoh (who is a director of the Fannie Mae Foundation, serves on the Ford Foundation’s Leadership for a Changing World National Selection Committee, and is the president of Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California), Sherry Magill (who is the president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, and is a trustee of the Southern Education Foundation), and Lori Villarosa (who founded Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (see later), and is a former program officer for the C. S. Mott Foundation).

## The Southern Education Foundation

The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) was formed in America in 1867, and their stated mission is to “improve educational excellence and equity in the South”. Their president, Lynn Walker Huntley, in addition to being associated with both the Ford Foundation and the Institute for Democratic Renewal, also serves on Human Rights Watch’s U.S. advisory committee, on the advisory board for the Southern Initiative for George Soros’ Open Society Institute, and serves as a director of CARE USA (for more critical information on these organisations see Barker, 2007). SEF’s chair, Emmett Carson was “the first manager of the Ford Foundation’s worldwide grantmaking program on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector”, and is a former president of the Council of Foundations. Furthermore, SEF’s secretary Judith A. Winston, was the deputy director of the Women’s Legal Defense Fund (in Washington), and serves on the boards of directors of Partners for Democratic Change, and is a former member of the board of PRRAC.

In 1995, SEF launched the Comparative Human Relations Initiative (CHRI), which they describe as “a unique collaboration among people and institutions in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States for exchanging information, ideas, and strategies to overcome discrimination and inequality”.<sup>11</sup> Although a full list of the foundations and groups funding SEF are not available (online), the CHRI’s funders include the Ford Foundation, the C. S. Mott Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Coca Cola Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Since 1996, CHRI has worked in collaboration with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) – a group that is an integral democracy manipulator linked to the work of the notorious National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and which received a massive \$1.165 million from the Ford Foundation in 1996 (Hearn, 2000: 827).

To help guide the work of the Comparative Human Relations Initiative an International Working and Advisory Group (IWAG) was created that is “comprised of distinguished men and women from the three nations.” Again it is not surprising that advisory board reads like a who’s who of liberal philanthropy, and includes Lynn Walker Huntley, Peter D. Bell (who is president of CARE International, and worked for the Ford Foundation for 12 years, see Barker, 2007), Wilmot G. James (who is the former executive director of Idasa, and is a trustee of the Ford Foundation), Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro (who serves on the international advisory council of the NED-funded Center of Legal and Social Studies), Khehla Shubane (who is a director of the George Soros’ Open Society Foundation of South Africa), and Franklin A. Thomas (who was the president of the Ford Foundation from 1979 to 1996).<sup>12</sup> In addition, IWAG lists a number of

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<sup>11</sup> In 2001 at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, SA, SEF releases *Beyond Racism*, a unique comparative anthology on Brazil, South Africa, and the United States offering insight and analysis about lessons learned in SEF’s Comparative Human Relations Initiative.

<sup>12</sup> In 1991, the president of the Ford Foundation, Franklin A. Thomas, received nonedible apples as Brotherhood Week awards from the Association for a Better New York and 100 Black Men –

other people who have helped their work, and one of the most notable of these individuals is John A. Powell (see next).

Given the Ford Foundation's evident interest in Brazil, it is fitting that Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999: 46) highlighted the "driving role played by the major American philanthropic and research foundations in the diffusion of US racial doxa within the Brazilian academic field at the level of both representations and practices." Furthermore it seems a little more than coincidental that in 1997 the Ford-funded elite planning group, the Council on Foreign Relations (see Shoup and Minter, 1977), organised a conference titled *The Meanings and Construction of Race in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States*. This conference was directed by Nelson Rockefeller, David Rockefeller, and Kenneth R. Maxwell (who is the director of Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, is a member of the executive committee of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, and was formerly a program director at the Tinker Foundation).<sup>13</sup> Notable attendees of the conference included Lynn Walker Huntley, Khela Shubane, Anthony Marx (who was a consultant to the CHRI, and has even received a fellowship from the NED's sister organisation the US Institute for Peace), the late Elliot Skinner (who in the 1960s served as the US ambassador to Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso, and "chaired the early Ford Foundation program for grants to young African Americans for study in Africa"), and Manning Marable (see later).

Finally it is worth recalling that although rarely mentioned the Ford Foundation played an integral role in undermining any significant democratic gains in South Africa's transition from apartheid. The Foundation appears to have first become involved in coordinating South Africa's 'democratic' transition in 1978 when the Rockefeller Foundation brought together a *Study Commission on US Policy*

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an award that is given annually to two people for improving race relations. This is particularly interesting because two years earlier, in May 1989, after spending three years and a massive \$3 million the Ford Foundation released a report called *The Common Good: Social Welfare and the American Future*. The report set out to critically examine the US's social welfare system, given that "in 40 years there will be an aging population supported by a work force that is more black and brown in its composition. It was to take account of the deterioration in the school system and the pressures created by immigration, the changing American family, racial tensions and violence" (Franklin cited in Teltsch, 1989). As might be expected with a Ford-supported project, although some commentators were concerned that the report was going to suggest that there was something fundamentally wrong with the social welfare system, Robert Ball, the former United States Commissioner of Social Security, noted that the report simply concluded that "what we have is fundamentally sound and what is needed is improvements" (Teltsch, 1989).

<sup>13</sup> The Tinker Foundation was established in 1959 to address environmental policy, economic policy or governance issues by distributing grants to organisations concerned with the affairs of Spain, Portugal, Ibero-America and Antarctica. Critically, the Tinker Foundation provides funding to a number of key 'democracy promoting' organisations including Freedom House, and Partners for Democratic Change. In addition, they have provided support to various groups that have also received NED aid, including the Venezuelan NGO Consorcio Desarrollo y Justicia, the Peruvian NGO Agenda: PERU, and two Argentine NGOs, the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth, and the Civil Association for Equality and Justice. For further details see Barker (2007a).

*Toward Southern Africa* which was chaired by the Ford Foundation's president, Franklin A. Thomas. In fact, after the 1976 Soweto uprising, the international community (that is, first and foremost foundations and international development agencies), became increasingly interested in South Africa. Indeed, Roelofs (2003: 497) notes that liberal foundations played an important role for Western elites by "disconnect[ing] the socialist and anti-apartheid goals of the African National Congress." Moyo (2005: 4) also documents how rather unsurprisingly "American Foundations sought to influence the struggle and thus the shape of a future democracy in a liberal rather than socialist direction." On this point Moyo (2005: 149) cites a former South African Ford Foundation program officer, who observed that:

*"Philanthropy is pushing the agenda of capital. The political implications of this are that as long as the agenda is perceived to be anti-the interests of capital, then that agenda would not be supported by philanthropy... Donors arrive at priorities through deliberate choices whose impact is to channel the interests and the activities of NGOs into areas where funding is available."*

As both Bond (2000) and Pilger (2006) have amply (and regretfully) illustrated there has been no transition to democracy in South Africa (that is, to the type of democracy that the majority of people want); rather instead there was a transition to a harsh neoliberal form of 'democracy' which only served to intensify inequities for the majority of South Africans.

## **The African American Forum on Race and Regionalism**

In 2002, another Ford initiative known as the African American Forum on Race and Regionalism (AAFRR) was founded. This Forum aims to enable the Ford Foundation, and its co-chairs (Angela Blackwell, John Powell, and Robert Bullard) and their Secretariat (Deeohn Ferris) to "work collaboratively through the Forum to help broaden, strengthen and promote the involvement of African Americans and African American organisations in policy development, decisions and place-based projects."

AAFRR's first co-chair, Angela Blackwell, is a former senior vice president for the Rockefeller Foundation, and in 2002 she coauthored a book with Manuel Pastor (whose work receives strong support from liberal philanthropists) and Stewart Kwoh (see earlier) titled *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America*. Similarly, the background of AAFRR's two other co-chairs John Powell and Robert Bullard is also informative with regards to their links to liberal foundations.

Powell is a famous race relations scholar who has recently coauthored a book with Manuel Pastor and Michael Omi titled *Structural Racism in a Diverse Society* (forthcoming). Furthermore, like the many other race relations scholars Powell

maintains intimate relations with various liberal philanthropists, and has served as a consultant for the Ford Foundations Africa program in 1994, and has also given recent talks to both the Ford Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Formerly Powell served as the national legal director of the Ford-supported American Civil Liberties Union, he also founded the Institute on Race and Poverty, and he presently serves as the executive director of the Ford-supported Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University. Finally, Powell also serves on the advisory boards of both the Center for Social Inclusion, and the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, and on the editorial advisory board for *Souls*.

The last AAFRR cochair, is the radical environmental justice advocate, Robert Bullard, who wrote the seminal *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (1990). Since 1990, Bullard has written another twelve books concerning the US environmental justice movement (including one published by the radical publisher South End Press), and he is currently “working on a Ford Foundation-funded study of how government actions have endangered the health and welfare of African Americans over the past seven decades” (Dicum, 2006). Bullard’s Ford-link is controversial to say the least because numerous recent studies have documented how limited support from major liberal foundations have meant that those groups in the more radical environmental justice movement have received barely enough money to survive (see Brulle and Jenkins, 2005).

## **The Center for Social Inclusion**

The Center for Social Inclusion (CSI) was founded by Maya Wiley (who is a former board member of John Powell’s Institute on Race and Poverty) and Jocelyn Sargent to work to dismantle structural racism. The Center’s two founders met while working on race and poverty issues at George Soros’ Open Society Institute, and CSI’s work obtains the “generous support” of the Open Society Institute and the Ford Foundation. As mentioned earlier, John Powell, serves on CSI’s advisory board, but another notable CSI advisor is Richard Healey, who is the president of the Grassroots Policy Project – a project whose board of directors includes Anne Bartley, who incidentally is a vice chair of the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

## **The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity**

The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) was established in 2003 and is a “multiyear project intended to increase the amount and effectiveness of resources aimed at combating institutional and structural racism in communities through capacity building, education, and convening of grantmakers and grantseekers.” To date, PRE’s coordinating work has been funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, as well as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Annie E. Casey Foundation. PRE’s director, Lori Villarosa, was formerly a

program officer with the C. S. Mott Foundation, and she currently serves on board of counselors for the Institute for Democratic Renewal, on the Program Committee of the Association of Black Foundation Executives, on the Racial Equity Committee of the National Network of Grantmakers, and she is also a member of Hispanics in Philanthropy. PRE's advisory board is home to many Ford-linked individuals which include John Powell, Jacqueline Berrien (who is an associate director-counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund), Kumi Naidoo (who is the secretary general and chief executive officer of the Ford-funded CIVICUS), and Makani Themba-Nixon (who is a director of Africa Action).

Makani Themba-Nixon's affiliation to Africa Action is particularly noteworthy because this group was established in 1953 and it is the "oldest organization in the U.S. working on African affairs": according to their website their "mission is to change U.S. Africa relations to promote political, economic and social justice in Africa." Until late 2007, the executive director of Africa Action was Nii Akuetteh, and it is important to note that she was also the founding executive director of George Soros' Open Society Initiative for West Africa. Akuetteh's replacement at Africa Action is Gerald LeMelle, who formerly served as the Deputy Executive Director for Advocacy at Amnesty International USA, and prior to this was the director of African Affairs with the Phelps-Stokes Fund. LeMelle is also a member of the Ford-funded elite planning group the Council on Foreign Relations.

Ford-related members of Africa Action's board of directors include their chair Mark Toney (who was the executive director of the Ford-funded Center for Third World Organizing), Howard F. Jeter (who was the former US Ambassador to Nigeria, is a director of the NED/Ford-funded Africare, a former Ford Foundation doctoral fellow, and is a former executive vice president of GoodWorks International, see earlier), Ayesha Imam (who is the current chair of the Africa Democracy Forum – which is host to a number of NED-funded groups), and Inca Mohamed (who is the executive director of the Management Assistance Group, and prior to this was a program officer at the Ford Foundation).

## **Other Miscellaneous Projects**

Although there are far too many Ford-funded projects to list in this brief overview of their work, some other initiatives that demonstrate the diversity of the Foundation's interests include: Harvard University's Pluralism Project which was founded in 1991 to "document the contours" of the US's multi-religious society, although in 2000 they started examining other multi-religious societies as well; the Advancement Project, a "policy, communications and legal action group" that was formed in 1998 that "addresses a bedrock racial justice issue: expanding the



active electorate”;<sup>14</sup> the UN-sponsored world conference against racism in South Africa, which obtained more than \$10 million from the Ford Foundation (Marable, 2002/2003; for further details on the Foundation’s involvement in this conference see Barker, Forthcoming); ERASE Racism which was launched in 2001 to lead “public policy advocacy campaigns... to promote racial equity in housing, public school education and healthcare”; the W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures at Harvard University, a lecture series which was “established in 1981 with funding from the Ford Foundation”; and the University of California’s Center for Black Studies AfroGEEKS conference.

## **[Non]Controversial Ford-Funded Media Projects**

In 1988 the Ford Foundation launched a “media program to support projects using film, video, and radio to explore public policy issues.” Funding for this media program was initially quite modest, but in 2005, the Ford Foundation distributed just under \$38 million of grants for media projects (\$2 million of which was designated for international media programs). With regard to racism related media projects, in 1991 the Ford media program gave a \$200,000 grant to Blackside Productions to produce a film about Malcolm X. The irony of the Ford Foundation funding such a project appears to have been lost on most media commentators, because as noted earlier, the Ford Foundation’s selective funding of the civil rights movement played a key role in undermining public support of Malcolm X (Haines, 1984; Jenkins and Eckert, 1986).<sup>15</sup> Yet despite the controversial nature of this documentary’s funding, the film was released in 1994 as *Malcolm X: Make it Plain*, with no public examination of the Ford Foundation sponsorship of the film – a film that Manning Marable notes “is the best film resource currently available on the subject” (Per Comm. 2007).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The chair of the board of the Advancement Project, Gerald Torres, has served on the advisory board of the Open Society Institute, is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and “was honored with the 2004 Legal Service Award from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) for his work to advance the legal rights of Latinos.” Lloyd and Montague (1970: 15) note: “In Texas, Ford invested \$2.2 million to establish the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, generally known as MALD. Patterned after the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, MALD was intended by Ford to be South-west-wide, and perhaps national in scope. In New Mexico at least, MALD has been conspicuously absent from the more controversial issues.”

<sup>15</sup> Similarly in 1993 the Ford Foundation provided \$1.5 million to a group to produced a public television series called *America’s War on Poverty*, which “document[ed] the programs initiated by the federal government in the 1960s to assist disadvantaged groups.” Again, there is an obvious conflict of interest here, as the Foundation itself was the primary architect of the government’s War on Poverty (Raynor, 1991). In the same year, the Foundation also supplied \$0.7 million to another group to produce a “documentary film series titled *Chicano! A History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, and another group with \$0.5 million to make “a television series documenting the contemporary women’s movement.” As in the Malcolm X case, it is ironic that the Ford Foundation also played a crucial role in undermining the radicalising tendencies of both the Chicano and Women’s movements (Jenkins, 1998, pp. 214-5; Proietto, 1991): but again there is no critical commentary of these documentaries with regards to their controversial funding.

<sup>16</sup> Email Correspondence. January 13, 2007.

In email correspondence with Marable on the subject of Ford Funding of anti-racism work I pointed out that: “The real problem is that if we want to move towards some form of participatory democracy it is unlikely to be funded by undemocratic liberal foundations who divert most of their funding to groups that maintain the status quo.” In response to this and other criticisms Marable said:

“Ford is still more complicated than you suggest. A number of Marxists and left intellectuals have been employed there as program officers since the 1990s, so many of their Third World projects have been good and progressive. Your overall critique, however, is absolutely correct.”<sup>17</sup>

Paradoxically, given Marable’s evident concurrence with my general critique, it is ironic that a few months after our correspondence it was announced that Columbia University’s Center for Contemporary Black History (CCBH) – a Center founded by Marable in 2002 – had accepted a \$91,219 grant from the Ford Foundation to work with the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia to develop a “prototype [teaching] module for the period covering the modern Civil Rights and Black Power Movements (1954–1975).” The CCBH is the research unit of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, which was founded by Marable in 1993, and is currently running three initiatives, the Malcolm X Project, the Africana Criminal Justice Project, and *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*.

Looking more closely at the work of the latter project, the quarterly academic journal, *Souls* (which was launched in 1999, and is edited by Marable), it is apparent that Marable has a number of other indirect Ford-links. These come through *Souls* editorial working group which includes Dana-Ain Davis (who is the consulting executive director of the Adco Foundation, and serves on the board of the New York Foundation, a foundation which in the past has included Helene L. Kaplan – the current chair of the Carnegie Corporation – on their board of directors), and Black Power researcher Peniel E. Joseph and Dorian T. Warren (both of whom have been the recipients of Ford Foundation fellowships).<sup>18</sup> Two notable Ford-connected members of *Souls* editorial advisory board are John Powell and Anthony Marx (see earlier).

Finally, it is interesting to observe that Marable is a member of New York Jobs with Justice, a group which describes itself as a “permanent coalition of community, labor, religious and student organisations working to build power for poor and working class people” in New York. Other liberal philanthropy-linked members of this coalition include Derrick A. Bell, Jr. (whose influential book *Race, Racism and American Law* (1973) was published with Ford Foundation aid, while he himself has served as Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense

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<sup>17</sup> Email Correspondence. January 18, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> In 2006 Joseph published two books, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, and the edited volume *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*.

Fund), Gara LaMarche (who is the vice president and director of US programs for the Open Society Institute), William Lynch, Jr. (who is a director of the Advancement Project), Ruth Messinger (who is the president of American Jewish World Service – an international development agency, and a director of InterAction), and Rabbi Jennie Rosenn (who is a program director for the Nathan Cummings Foundation).

## Conclusions

Counter to popular misunderstandings of their work, rather than promoting progressive and more participatory forms of democracy, liberal philanthropy actually serves the opposite purpose by helping preserve gross inequalities, thereby legitimising the status quo (Brown, 1979; Guilhot, 2007; Lundverg, 1969; Roelofs, 2007). It should not be surprising that Arnove and Pinede (2007: 393) note that although the Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford foundations' "claim to attack the root causes of the ills of humanity, they essentially engage in ameliorative practices to maintain social and economic systems that generate the very inequalities and injustices they wish to correct." Indeed they conclude that although the past few decades these foundations have adopted a "more progressive, if not radical, rhetoric and approaches to community building" that gives a "voice to those who have been disadvantaged by the workings of an increasingly global capitalist economy, they remain ultimately elitist and technocratic institutions" (Arnove and Pinede, 2007: 422).

The inherent contradiction of anti-racism activists and researchers receiving significant support from liberal elites becomes clearer when it is understood that the two most influential liberal foundations, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundations, first created and continue to provide substantial financial aid to elite planning groups like the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission (Shoup and Minter, 1977; Sklar, 1980). As INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (2007) dryly observe in their book titled *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, the one revolution that capitalists will not bankroll will be the revolution at home, that is, here in our Western democracies.

In stark contrast to the democratic rhetoric of the philanthropic activities of liberal foundations, much evidence contradicts their democratic credentials (for an excellent review, see Roelofs, 2003). No doubt all philanthropists are attempting to strengthen a democracy of sorts, but the root problem (or issue at stake) lies in differing definitions of democracy. Progressive grassroots anti-racism activists tend to call for more substantial or participatory forms of democratic governance, while liberal foundations tend to be more interested in promoting procedural democracy or polyarchy (Dahl, 1971).

Unfortunately, given the insidious activities and far-reaching influence of liberal foundations' – as demonstrated in this article – the "very existence of many social justice organizations has often come to rest more on the effectiveness of

professional (and amateur) grant writers than on skilled-much less 'radical' – political educators and organizers” (Rodriguez, 2007: 27). So now more than ever, it is vital that progressive citizens committed to racial equality (and more often than not more participatory forms of democracy) work to develop alternate funding mechanisms for sustaining anti-racism activism and research that can breach the limitations imposed by liberal foundations. Indeed as Guilloud and Cordery (2007: 111) point out, “[d]eveloping a real community-based economic system that redistributes wealth and allows all people to gain access to what they need is essential to complete our vision of a liberated world. Grassroots fundraising strategies are a step in that direction.” Anti-racism researchers and activists need to work alongside community activists to address the vexing issue of liberal philanthropy, because if this issue is not addressed now it will no doubt continue to have dire consequences for the future of progressive activism – and democracy more generally.

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