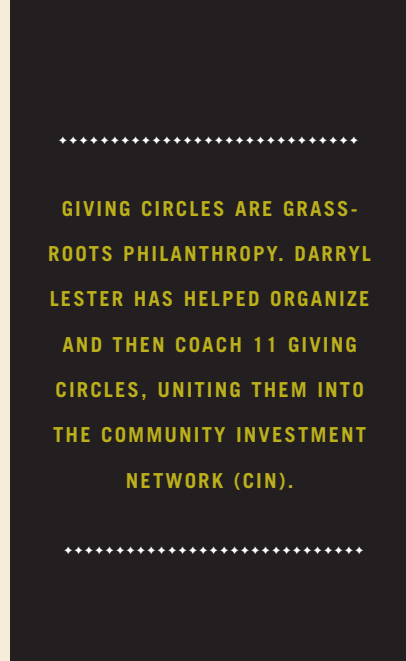


These circles, mostly the progeny of the gentle and gifted Lesters, are raising the consciousness of black philanthropy among whites and fellow blacks. Lester says, “Giving circles are a resurgence of an old tradition of generosity and caring that is making an impact all across the country. They provide an opportunity for individuals to join others through collective charitable giving. There is something exciting about people pooling their resources and making joint decisions on how to give grants to improve life in their community. What does it mean? Opportunity. This is our turn to make a difference.”

Giving circles are helping communities and leveraging their good example to create more giving to local community needs among both blacks and whites—the dream goes on. Lester got the idea of engaging African Americans in giving circles when he was working on the staff of the Triangle Community Foundation as a program director. Seeing institutional philanthropy working so well, attending conferences, and working with donors and grant seekers, he began to realize how seldom “. . . people who looked like me were sought as donors, were part of the action of philanthropy. I also saw how many hurdles seemed to stand between people with mid-level incomes, especially African Americans, and their participation as philanthropists. I decided we needed a different ‘on ramp’ for my generation of African Americans.” Lester left the Foundation and started his own consulting group with his wife, Dionne.

NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILANTHROPISTS

One day, while Tim McIntosh was giving Darryl Lester his haircut, McIntosh expressed curiosity about the work that Lester did at the Triangle Community Foundation. Both men were interested



in philanthropy. Lester was in the process of organizing a giving circle with African-American community members. McIntosh joined. The group called the giving circle Next Generation of African American Philanthropists (NGAAP). Lester and his wife had already started the Zawadi Fund to supply books to college-bound young people.

Over the course of their conversations and having become an active member of NGAAP, McIntosh established his Barber Foundation as a tool to engage the staff and the students of the barber shop in philanthropy, in good works, for the community. Along with barbering, McIntosh was teaching his students that they would be owners of shops someday and would need to be involved in the community. “I am not successful unless the community is successful. It’s never about the money you give,” he would tell them. “It’s about the community and what we can do collectively to make the transforming difference.”

Lester and McIntosh talked together about generosity, helping folks with serious needs and getting them headed in the right direction so they could be part of the community. They decided to

form a giving circle among McIntosh’s clients at his salon and barber shop.

Lester and McIntosh had attended one of the first conferences on African-American philanthropy together in Baton Rouge and met black leaders in the field. Sponsored by the National Center on Black Philanthropy, the conference invited black leaders to consider that philanthropy does not mean “just rich people.” It is not “something you do when you get the big contract, like the sports heroes do.” They also discussed the reality behind the statistics they all knew: there are more black men in prison than in college; the recidivism rate for black men released from prison is 70 percent.

With a grant from the Ford Foundation in 2003, Lester began to investigate how philanthropy could begin to shed its rock-hard association with wealthy whites and become a rewarding opportunity for the African-American community to apply its giftedness to fellow citizens in need.

As Lester worked through his projects on grassroots giving at the Ford Foundation, he developed practical ways to teach the tools of philanthropic giving circles to grassroots community groups. The natural community around the barber shop became a logical starting point for both men to try out their model of an African-American giving circle.

A LEGACY OF TRADITION (A LOT)

Darryl Lester and Tim McIntosh and their group succeeded in organizing the giving circle they called A Legacy of Tradition (A LOT) in 2006. A LOT is all male. Lester says, “In working with them, I’ve come to realize that brothers sometimes don’t feel like they have a conversational outlet. We get together and talk about what it means to be a



The men of A LOT are determined to give back to their communities and to build better futures for all children in Raleigh-Durham.

better father, a better husband, and a better man in the context of giving back. I recognize that some of these brothers might be coming to the table because they are thinking about giving back, but they are also coming because they need support. We need to support each other.”

McIntosh explains that he usually finishes by telling the new recruits to the giving circle a story that is special to him. It’s the one about two doctors standing by the edge of the river when they see a man desperately trying to keep his head above water. As they watch, he stops struggling and begins to sink. Both docs jump in, drag the man out, apply CPR, and get him stabilized. While they pause to rest, they look out and see another man, also in his last struggle, dropping beneath the

surface. They jump in again, pull him out, and get him breathing and then shake their heads trying to...when they see a third man. Same story. The first doc throws himself in the water, stroking hard toward the drowning man. He looks back and sees that he’s doing this rescue alone. He yells, “What are you doing?” The second doc, half way up the hill, responds, “I am going to see why these guys are falling into the river like this, and try to stop it.”

McIntosh wins recruits with his story. His members want to be the second doc.

Founding members of the A LOT giving circle all shared the Renaissance Barber Shop connection and a commitment to work together as black male philanthropists. They are also now close friends. They report that two important factors attract members and keep them

involved: ties of friendship, and a strong desire to connect with their own cultural traditions of giving back. According to Lester, “We all feel a burning desire to get back to our roots. We want to connect our children to values of the past. Like with mutual aid societies. We need to get back to that...to reclaim the extended family. People have a huge sense of urgency. They are tired of materialism. People come for the connectedness with each other—not just for change in community.”

A LOT meets monthly with 10–15 members. Each makes an annual donation of \$350. Lester was able to work with foundations and other philanthropic institutions to leverage the contributions of giving circle members. The Ford Foundation and NC Gives both invested in CIN. Eventually, Lester was able to convince both to match A LOT member gifts 3 to 1 the first year, 2 to 1 the second, and 1 to 1 the third.

Members of the circle all talk about the great tradition of philanthropy in their families. They exchanged stories and developed a set of ideas that they could introduce to their own families so their kids would have stories of philanthropy from older generations and from their own parents. Philanthropy is centuries old in African-American culture. Members wanted to be sure their children and the community’s children knew that fact.

A LOT honors the long, extraordinary history of generosity among African Americans. Comprised of ordinary African-American men, it overturns the stereotypes among whites and blacks about the caring leadership of black men. Its members are collectively engaged and focused on impacting and bridging the societal gaps faced by African-American and Caribbean males in the areas of education, collective giving, and community responsibility.

Giving Circles Extending the Caring

While A LOT is forming the perimeters of its circle, Lester's NGAAP is also engaging African-American men and women into a leadership giving circle. Women like Wendy Blue express real pride in their work together. Blue, an electrical engineer and former executive at the tech-firm Lenovo, is currently a middle school math teacher. She says her circle honors all the people who listened to King's message by extending the caring. She joined in an animated explanation of the grants her circle had made.



Circle members pooled their funds and members nominated local nonprofits with good reputations for strong work in the community. They made site visits, interviewed clients, staff, and board members. They invited proposals and evaluated them. They favored the smaller groups without big staffs who may have lacked sophisticated grant writing skills.

One of NGAAP's first grants was awarded to an organization located in a rural area outside of Durham. None of the people there had ever had city water or sewer despite a state law

mandating the availability of water to rural communities in North Carolina. NGAAP enabled the West End Revitalization Association (WERA) to send representatives to the capitol to make their case, prepare materials explaining the problems caused by lack of sanitation systems, and emphasize that residents knew the state was obligated to provide clean water. NGAAP's gift to WERA created the attention and support it needed to connect this large former sharecropper population to running water. NGAAP did not provide a major gift, but enough to get the job done.

NGAAP also funded Glory to Glory House of Refuge to empower female HIV patients whose lives were complicated by substance abuse and other addictions to live healthier, self-directed lives. Along the same lines, NGAAP also funded Durham Proud, a small nonprofit that works to develop and reward responsible behavior among young people and deter court-referred juveniles from becoming repeat offenders.

Another of the CIN giving circles, WAY OUT, composed mostly of African-American professionals in the human services area, made one of its early grants to the renovation of Hayes Place, a transitional home for women and their children.

The WAY OUT starter gift attracted local department stores and other businesses and craftsmen willing to donate useful services and gifts to make the house a real home. The WAY OUT gift leveraged a transformative outpouring of donations, including furniture, appliances, bedding, and food. The community wanted to be a part of such a good deed. The women who volunteered as staff in the house and their clients lived much better because the whole community committed philanthropy together—community or grassroots philanthropy, initiated by African-American leaders.

But while women spoke eagerly of the dramatic change their gifts had enabled, the men had personal stories that would make King deeply proud of



GIVING CIRCLES ARE HELPING COMMUNITIES AND
LEVERAGING THEIR GOOD EXAMPLE TO CREATE MORE GIVING
TO LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS AMONG BOTH BLACKS AND
WHITES—THE DREAM GOES ON.

the energy he still triggers, some 40 years after his assassination. King would hear the passion of Lester and McIntosh.

McIntosh is a college-educated business man in Durham, NC. He speaks with youthful energy and commitment that are set off by the slightly graying hair at his temples. He explains that he has owned beauty salons and barber shops. He now owns the Renaissance Barber Shop (where he met Darryl Lester) and the Park West Barber School, where he teaches an 11-month curriculum in barbering that prepares students to sit for the state license exam. McIntosh is also developing a school for those who want accreditation as teachers of barbering.

His is a trade that demands professional training, a state exam, and in some cases, an interview with the members of the NC Barber Board for candidates to obtain a license. The state of North Carolina requires 1,528 hours of barber school. If a student has a felony record, the student must appear before the NC Barber Board. McIntosh had served admirably on the Barber Board, so his advice to the men he trains is a great advantage to them in getting licenses that help them reenter society successfully.

McIntosh has also developed a growth strategy for franchising his Renaissance Barber Shops and his Park West Barber Schools statewide. Entrepreneur par excellence.

One day, McIntosh heard an NPR radio program about how many black men develop high blood pressure and suffer serious cardiac problems and early death as a result. Statistics say 35 percent of African-American men have hypertension. He saw himself in the picture of change. As an activity of his Barber Foundation, he went to the town health department and sought to set up a blood pressure screening site at his Park West Barber School. With the help of another of his clients, Emilia Frederick, a professor in the Department of Nursing at North Carolina Central University, he negotiated with the University Nursing School to send volunteer student nurses to bring literature and administer the tests. McIntosh launched an ad for free haircuts for any man who had his blood pressure measured! The event took place on a Saturday. There were 60 screenings. Sixty percent of those screened had high blood pressure. Now, men support each other in getting and taking the medication that will help keep them healthy. Entrepreneurial philanthropy in any man's book. It was a great event for the students of the Park West Barber

School and the nursing students of North Carolina Central University to participate in making a difference in the community.

Another example of McIntosh's personal grassroots philanthropy was in 1995 when his mother sent him an article from her Maryland newspaper about a prison that had opened a barber training school to give soon-to-be released men the chance to learn a good trade. McIntosh saw another great opportunity to make a difference in North Carolina. McIntosh sent the article to the NC Department of Corrections and had a series of discussions with Nicole Sullivan and her staff of the Office of Research and Planning of the NC Department of Corrections to see about following Maryland's example.

While awaiting approval and state grant money, McIntosh heard about a man who had a year left in his sentence and badly wanted to be a barber. After investigating, McIntosh learned the department had a job training program that would allow Fontain Covington to attend McIntosh's Park West Barber School. The grant money paid for his tuition. The details had to be worked out logistically in terms of transportation, responsibility, scope of training, and local prison facility participation. Ultimately, everything but full

transportation funding could be arranged. Transportation would cost \$14 per day. The state only had enough funds to pay \$7 per day. McIntosh recognized a dream was about to be deferred. Not on his watch.

McIntosh decided he would personally assure transportation to and from the prison so Covington could complete the course of study. McIntosh drove to the prison every morning for 11 months to pick Covington up at 5:30 and get back in time to open the school and start classes with his students. He delivered Covington back to the prison each day as well, counting on one of his instructors for rides from time to time. Personal

philanthropy works: time, treasure, and talent—for real.

Covington completed his barber training and passed his license exam. McIntosh went with him to his interview with the NC Barber Board. Covington secured his license and immediately went back to his hometown of Greensboro, NC, and began working in a local barber shop.

After 15 years in prison, Covington got his chance to reenter society differently this time. He has been out over a year and is doing well. The state of North Carolina and McIntosh’s fellow taxpayers also got a gift from Tim McIntosh: over \$30,000 per year for every year Covington stays home and barbers. The state earned about a 400 percent return on its investment in the transitional program for Covington—a gift to taxpayers from the community philanthropy of Tim McIntosh.

Since the success of Covington, the Department of Corrections has partnered with Central Carolina Community College to begin a barber school program. Meanwhile, McIntosh’s Barber Foundation and Park West Barber School provide some of the needed funding

and occasionally some of the members of A LOT support any special needs that the work-release prisoners have as they finish their training and prepare to resume life. All A LOT members know the recidivism rate for black men. They all see themselves as part of the solution, as philanthropists.

To further illustrate his point, McIntosh explains that he noticed a wide, curved street crossing with no stop light or pedestrian waiting light or button. It had always been dangerous. He became even more concerned when he saw the greater danger to the seniors in the assisted-living facility that was located on one of the corners. The older people could not always get to the opposite side of the large street fast enough to avoid the cars racing up the hill. There were no warnings about the pedestrian traffic. A serious accident seemed likely.

McIntosh called the people in City Hall responsible for traffic and transportation. They sent the folks out to perform the necessary studies on the intersection. And in about three months, the city installed four crosswalk lights and buttons on that busy intersection. Action before accident. The time he

**ALL A LOT MEMBERS
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BELOW: MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NETWORK WANT THE NEXT GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN ITS LEGACY AND BECOME A PART OF SHAPING IT WHILE THEY ARE STILL GROWING UP. PAGE 7: THE LESTERS ENVISION A MORE EQUITABLE WORLD FOR THEIR DAUGHTER, DANIELLE, AND ALL CHILDREN.

The Community Investment Network develops giving circles among people of color, sustains existing giving circles through strategic donor education, and provides a platform for dialogue among people engaged in grassroots generosity.





spent to address a problem was McIntosh's gift to fellow citizens and their families. Personal philanthropy, engaged citizenship.

Paying It Forward

As the group around the Lesters and McIntosh spoke, many gave credit to their families for teaching philanthropy. One remembered his great grandfather who rejected the name "philanthropist." He said he never earned very much but he did give \$500 to the building of the first community hospital back in the early 1920s. Another remembered that his parents had taken in, raised, and educated several cousins whose parents had lost their way. Still another recalled her parents driving 200 miles to pick up a niece who had been abused and give her a secure and permanent home with their children. Others remembered grandparents' stories of their sharecropper parents giving money to the church to help families in crisis rebuild the churches when they were burned down. The more they all learned about philanthropy by practicing it through their giving circles, the more they realized what a strength it has always been in the African-American community.

Their memories make an important point not validated by the lack of recognition most communities offer African Americans as donors, as gift prospects, as trustees of community foundations. Their lives show the vital assets these young black professionals create in the community around them. Their character stands as a tribute to the great tradition of American philanthropy. They ARE philanthropists. They are the adults King envisioned when justice rolls down like mighty waters. They are the gifts he paid forward to our twenty-first century. This generation of African Americans does know King in its own unique way. Now, America needs to know this generation.

*Written by Dr. Claire Gaudiani,
Clinical Professor, George H. Heyman
Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising,
New York University*

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NETWORK
MEMBERS**

**NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN PHILANTHROPISTS
(NGAAP)**
Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina

BIRMINGHAM CHANGE FUND (BCF)
Birmingham, Alabama

**NEW MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS
GIVING CIRCLE**
Christiansburg, Virginia

ZAWADI
New Orleans, Louisiana

**NEW GENERATION OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN PHILANTHROPISTS
CHARLOTTE (NGAAP-Charlotte)**
Charlotte, North Carolina

A LEGACY OF TRADITION (A LOT)
Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina

HERITAGE QUILTERS
Warrenton, North Carolina

THE SANKOFA FUND OF SW PA
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

WAY OUT GIVING CIRCLE
Raleigh, North Carolina

20/20 SISTERS OF VISION
Durham, North Carolina

CIRCLE OF JOY
Atlanta, Georgia



◆◆ THIS SERIES HIGHLIGHTS THE FORD FOUNDATION'S STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS IN HELPING PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS WORK TOGETHER TO EXTEND THEIR TIME, TALENT, AND RESOURCES FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY. THIS INSTALLMENT ILLUSTRATES THE IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NETWORK IN LINKING GRASSROOTS GIVING AND THE PHILANTHROPIC SECTOR TO OFFER EDUCATION, HEALING, INSPIRATION, AND A PATH TO SUCCESSFUL FUTURES FOR PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES OF POVERTY. THESE COLLABORATIVE GIVING CIRCLES CAN SERVE AS A MODEL FOR OTHER COMMUNITIES NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT NETWORK, PLEASE CONTACT WWW.THECOMMUNITYINVESTMENT.ORG. To learn more about this and other community investment strategies designed to help communities marshal the resources to help themselves and build equity where inequity has existed, please visit Strategic Network for Community Philanthropy at www.sncp.us. ◆◆

