

Ethnic Philanthropy & the Younger Generation

I recently worked with an Arab-American organization in New York City, and had the opportunity to learn about philanthropy in the Arab-American community. Arab Americans don't have a community-based history of philanthropy, I was told; many prefer not to give outside the family, to people they don't know. For family members, they'll do anything, but they don't feel the obligation to give to support strangers.

In fact, informal traditions of giving exist within every ethnic community. They just don't call it philanthropy, and they don't always play by the "rules" of the American nonprofit sector by designating their donations for 501(c)(3) organizations. Many umbrella groups have spent considerable time, energy and money working to convince minority communities that their history of giving – to churches and mosques, to family members, to projects back in their homelands – is philanthropy, and is part of rich traditions that are connected to the American tradition of supporting nonprofits. The goal, of course, is to make a case for increased giving.

Convincing members of some ethnic communities to become donors is a high-stakes game for fundraisers, especially those working for ethnic-focused nonprofits. A significant portion the \$41 trillion transfer of wealth identified by John F. Havens and Paul G. Schervish of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College will happen within minority communities. And The Coalition for New Philanthropy's 2004 study of a small sample of African American, Latino and Asian American donors, [*Pathways for Change: Philanthropy Among African American, Asian American, and Latino Donors in the New York Metropolitan Region*](#), found that ethnic donors give a significant percentage of their donations to organizations that serve their own ethnic communities. If they give to mainstream organizations, it is often to f

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