

June 25, 2008

Dear Friends,

After three years worth of advocacy from courageous community leaders, a new era in philanthropy was ushered in this week. For the first time in history, 10 large foundations have agreed to collaborate on making substantial investments in minority non-profit organizations and minority leadership in California. They have also pledged to look at their own diversity practices in the process.

Their opening statement is telling:

“As leaders in the philanthropic community, we recognize that California’s future depends on all of its communities enjoying meaningful opportunities to improve their quality of life. And, as one of the most diverse states in the nation, our future depends significantly on the success of the communities of color that together comprise a majority of our population.”

This is an important recognition. This commitment is not about affirmative action or racial quotas, or simply about diversity. This commitment is about doing what is right for California and the nation. When more foundations and corporations wake up to this reality, more opportunities will be made available to ensure that all groups get to participate in the American Dream.

[Summary of Commitment \(click to read Press Release\)](#)

Ten of the state’s largest foundations in California made a public commitment to:

- The lack of capacity of many minority-led organizations and other grassroots community-based organizations to compete for funding from large foundations.
- The need for additional investment in capacity building and leadership development targeted at such organizations and leaders of color; and
- The lack of access to larger foundations by many minority-led and other grassroots community-based nonprofits.

Yes, many of you might be rightly asking “where are the details?” We agree, the details are vague but the promise and commitment from the 10 foundations is strong. We will work diligently to ensure that this historic partnership is not “for” communities of color but rather “with” communities of color. This is an important distinction that will either lead to the success or failure of this important campaign.

What to Do in a Post A.B. 624 World?

What is next? Clearly, our first priority will be to share our resources to make the commitment a success. In the near future we will release our recommendations and suggestions to the 10 foundations. In the process we will engage many of you in the community to receive adequate feedback and information for a comprehensive plan. Second, this commitment is being made by only 10 foundations. Yes, they are big and relevant foundations but it would be irresponsible for us to overlook the thousands of other foundations that have yet to “step up to the plate.” We will continue to make efforts to engage other foundations to join similar win-win partnerships. Third, community groups and leaders throughout the country are asking Greenlining for assistance in carrying out similar campaigns to produce effective partnerships between foundations and underrepresented groups. We stay committed to working with these leaders so that they can hopefully “out-do”

us in California. Finally, we still believe that Congress and the new president should make diversity in philanthropy a key issue during the first 100 days of the new administration.

Thanks!

Sincere thanks to the Greenlining Coalition, our board of directors, and allies in the community who supported our efforts through the years, many in the face of pressure from funders and important stakeholders. We applaud and are proud of our California Legislative Tri-Caucus leaders for taking on this issue. In particular we would like to thank Assemblymembers Coto, Dymally, Ridley-Thomas, Lieu, and Senator Oropeza for their visionary roles in continuing to make California a leader. In particular, we would like to send a big thanks to Assemblymember Coto and his staff for their tireless work and for taking the “punches” and “cheap shots” from right wing conservatives who are afraid to acknowledge and promote the great diversity of our state.

It is only because of the strong support we had in the community that we have achieved this breakthrough. Thanks!

In the meantime, we hope that many of you will send your suggestions on how to make this historic pledge a success. Suggestions, recommendations and feedback can be sent to [orsona@greenlining.org](mailto:orsona@greenlining.org).

Sincerely,

Greenlining Institute Staff