



The Coming of Hope: A Vision for Philanthropy in the New Year

Excerpts from his New Year letter
By Darren Walker,
President, Ford Foundation

As we begin 2019—a year that already portends to be among the most tumultuous in memory—I certainly welcome “the coming of hope.” After all, at the Ford Foundation we are in the business of hope. Our hopes for our grantees, our communities, and our world inform the work we do each and every day.

At the same time, we must set our hope in relief against the realities of a world that feels on edge and off kilter, more precarious and less predictable. The reason for all of this, in my view, should not come as a surprise: Our political and economic system continues to produce and perpetuate staggering inequalities of all kinds.

Millions of people feel frustrated with, and excluded by, an out-of-balance global economic system they are decreasingly willing to tolerate. In the United States and globally, we see the evidence and urgency mounting: Grassroots movements objecting to fundamental inequalities in our society are mobilizing, calling out for fairness and justice. They are naming causes of our current plight—among them, global capitalism that produces outside wealth for owners and increased insecurity for workers; authoritarian leaders who foment division, discord, and dysfunction; fast-moving technological innovation, with consequences citizens are only now beginning to understand; and the long-standing evils of racism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and patriarchy. And although this is our society’s truth, it—like all truth—is under constant assault as the fidelity of facts, and our faith in them, is undermined.

Make no mistake, the exploitation of our democratic-capitalist system is intentional. Too often, the powerful and privileged who might stem the callousness and corruption seem largely to ignore it, avoid it, minimize it or, worst of all, maximize it for their own gain.

In our politics, leaders openly disdain, demean, and deconstruct vital public institutions designed to serve us and our system of self-government. Implicit in these actions is a disregard for what democratic government can do to promote equality, justice, and human dignity. The result



is predictable. As the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan was known to say, “If you have contempt for government, you will get contemptible government.” We currently have way too much of both.

It’s plain to see, there are real flaws in the systems we have created to govern our politics, our economy, and our social relations—flaws that have yielded the inequalities now pulling at the fabric of society.

The architecture of progress
It bears repeating that the challenges inherent in our democratic-capitalist system did not arrive overnight. Creating a fairer, more just world is no small order. It requires leaders of every sector and discipline, working with new purpose. It requires engaged citizens, effective governments, capitalists who promote shared prosperity, and enduring social movements.

And it requires us. To do our part in this drive for real change, philanthropists and funders of every stripe must invest in the architects and architecture of progress—the individuals, ideas, and institutions that make change happen.

My fundamental, unwavering belief in philanthropy is informed by history and my own personal journey. Philanthropy was crucial in creating the blueprint for social progress in the 20th century that helped nations around the world eradicate disease, that lifted children out of poverty, and that financed the development of thousands of institutions and new capacity that expanded opportunity for billions of people around the globe. Philanthropy helped sustain the civil rights movement in the United States, anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the human rights movement in Latin America during the darkest years of military government.

Placing meaningful resources

in the hands of those closest to the problems, backing their visionary efforts over time, listening and learning at every step of the journey—this is the philanthropy we need today. But to fully and honestly address the problem of inequality and the ways it is embedded in philanthropy, there is even more we must do.

Confronting inequality in the years ahead

Each December, the Merriam-Webster dictionary selects its “word of the year”—a noun that people have looked up more consistently over the course of that year than others, suggesting that it has been particularly relevant to the popular discourse.

In 2018, that word was “justice.” I do not think this is a coincidence.

This past year, we have seen acts of extreme injustice around the world and across our nation—at our farthest borders and inside our most hallowed halls. And we have seen how organizations have fought for justice every step of the way, how philanthropists have incorporated it into their ways of seeing and being.

As our system falters under the inequality it has produced, as society seems increasingly strained by—and susceptible to—ever-widening gaps, those of us who have benefitted from this inequality need to look in the mirror and ask why. Then we should ask how we fix it, with justice as our objective.

In this way, for all of us, the road map for 2019 is clear. Given the progress we’ve made, and the work ahead, we cannot turn back now. We must redouble our efforts and forge forward, boldly, courageously, joyfully. We must dedicate ourselves, anew, to the cause of justice—and “shout,” in the words of the poet, “with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.”

[Click here](#) to read Darren Walker’s entire message

Urban Core Neighborhood Study Gets Update

Twenty years ago, the Joslyn Institute helped to undertake a revitalization of an urban core neighborhood in Omaha, with the **Drake Court Apartments** complex as the inception point. Our efforts were enhanced five years later with our **Envisioning Regional Design** charrettes, in which the Drake Court neighborhood was one area of focus.

Safe, walkable streets, bike paths, green spaces, a lively mix of retail and residential structures, affordable housing, walkability, bikeability, a district energy system, wi-fi access, public policy initiatives and incentives, and other factors were determined to be critical to the future sustainable development of the neighborhood.

The Joslyn Institute’s methodology for planning, design and measurement—**Sustainometrics**®—was employed throughout the charrettes. These characteristics above were decided upon as some of the necessary metric indicators in order for the neighborhood to grow in a healthy, holistic, sustainable way.

During the past few months, JISC has undertaken a reexamination of that urban core neighborhood to determine how it has/has not grown and changed

in the ensuing years, and how closely it has hewed to the Sustainometrics® indicators. At the behest of one of our original partners in the revitalization effort, **Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA)**, we have interviewed developers, city planners, residents, social service providers, neighborhood associations, and community leaders and development groups.

The once-blighted neighborhood that had been a center of City and civic disinvestment, relatively high crime and antisocial behavior is slowly becoming a safer, stronger area with a growing sense of identity, our study has found.

Developers, with an eye toward avoiding cultural displacement, have undertaken a number of rehabilitation projects on some of the more promising multi-family housing complexes in the area, attracting young working people to the neighborhood. This grassroots approach has provided the strongest impetus toward a safer, more vital and vibrant neighborhood.

This study is ongoing. We will publish our full report on our website in the near future, and will let you know here when that happens.

Seed Share & Seed Starting Clinic

WHEN: Saturday, January 26,
Noon–2 pm

WHERE: Nebraska Extension in Douglas-Sarpy Counties, 8015 W. Center, Omaha

Nebraska Extension in Douglas-Sarpy Counties and Cooper Farm Urban Agriculture Education Center will host an afternoon of seed sharing. Bring seeds to share and find great seeds for your garden. At 1:15 pm there will be hands-on instruction for getting the most out of your seeds starting this year. [Join this event on Facebook.](#)

Growing Gardeners Workshop: Building Raised Beds

WHEN: Monday, February 4,
6–8 pm

WHERE: The Big Garden, 5602 Read St., Omaha

Join **City Sprouts** and **The Big Garden** for a Growing Gardeners Workshop with facilitators Kay Wilwerding and Aaron French. Learn how to build your very own wooden garden bed with the necessary lumber-sourcing necessary tools, and how to set and fill your raised bed. Raised beds are an especially great option in areas with polluted soil. Email info@omahasprouts.org or call 402-504-1910 to register. [Join this event on Facebook.](#)

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Informational Seminar

WHEN: Thursday, February 7,
9–4 pm

WHERE: Ramada Midtown, 2503 S. Locust Street, Grand Island

The 24th Annual Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Informational Seminar is a one-day seminar. This is an annual opportunity for landowners, agricultural producers, natural resource professionals, and other interested individuals to learn about conservation issues, research, and habitat programs in the Rainwater Basin region.

Register online at www.rwbjv.org. Further information is available from Niki Messmer at niki.messmer@rwbjv.org or call 308-382-8112.

Environmental Trust Annual Report Now Available

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is celebrating its 25th anniversary. The 2018 Nebraska Environmental Trust Annual Report is currently available. [Click here](#) to view the 2018 Annual Report.

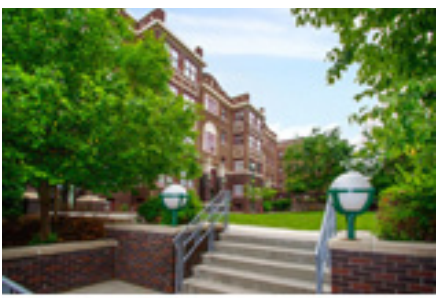
Earth Day Celebrations Scheduled

So far, three area organizations have announced their Earth Day events. Mark your calendars!

April 13, 2019—Omaha Earth Day, Elmwood Park, 11 am–6 pm

April 27, 2019—Lincoln Earth Day, Union Plaza, 10 am–3 pm

April 28, 2019—Green Bellevue’s Sarpy County Earth Day, BPS Lied Activity Center, 12–4 pm



Need to change your contact information?

Let us know. 402.991.8747 jci@sustainabledesign.org