

Inclusiveness

Considerations and solutions for meaningful and sincere outreach

By Jacklyn P. Boice

When discussing the many individuals in the fundraising profession, "valuing diversity" can mean different things to different people. First of all, what does the term "diversity" encompass? In our organizations and our development work, are we perhaps focusing on who is diverse—or different from us in some way—rather than embracing inclusiveness at all levels? *Advancing Philanthropy* welcomes any suggestions or comments you would like to share regarding inclusiveness and diversity in the nonprofit sector. Please email ap@afpnet.org.

First Steps

A fundraiser since 1996, Midé Akrewusi, head of high-value appeals at Scope, the largest disability charity in the United Kingdom (www.scope.org.uk), recalls being the only black person he knew who was involved in the fundraising profession. "I knew there had to be many more black people in fundraising, but I was disappointed that the established charities in the UK were not actively recruiting professional black fundraisers."

Over the next few years he gradually began to know other black fundraisers, and in 2004 six of them established the Black Fundraisers Network (BFN). Its success has been remarkable. "We now we have a membership of 500 people who are fundraising or interested in becoming fundraisers."

Why did they feel the need to create a separate organization? "We want more black people to feel supported in their careers as fundraisers," Akrewusi says. "Our mission is to ensure black fundraisers have access to appropriate and professional support and that black nonprofit organizations have access to professional fundraising expertise."

Filling a Need

The United Kingdom has a population of 60 million people, with approximately 1 million from Africa and the Caribbean, Akrewusi explains. "There are 200,000 charities in the UK, of which 9,000 are black charities. A survey produced some years ago showed the shocking fact that more

than 95 percent of black charities had a major problem in accessing and receiving funding from governmental and nongovernmental sources. Black charities were setting up on a Monday but closing down by Friday because of a shortage of funding.

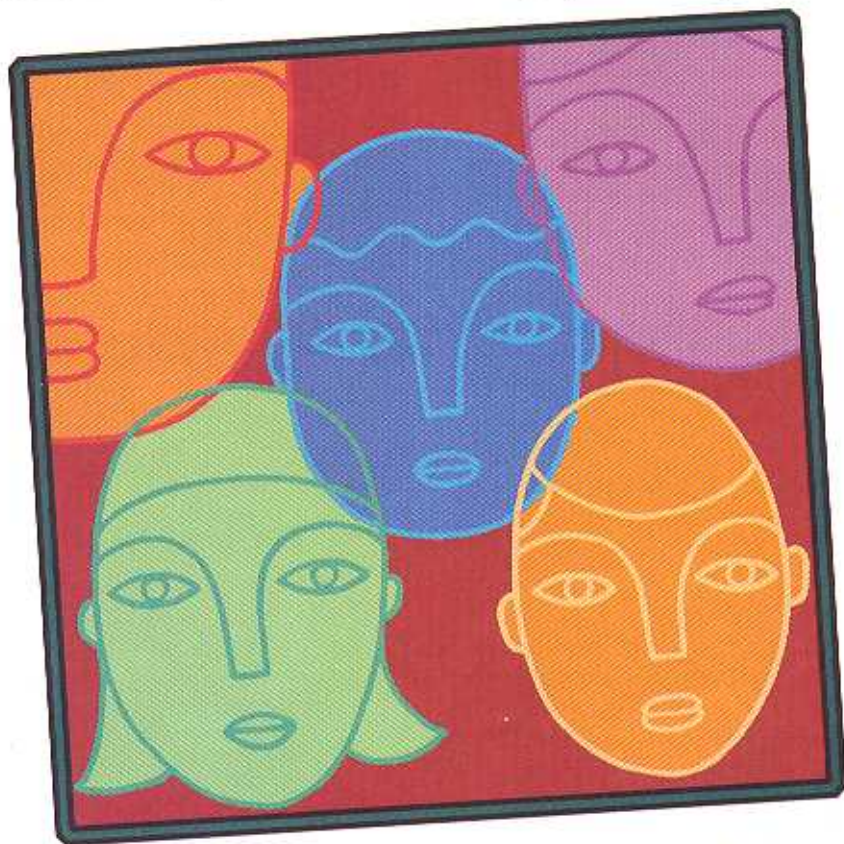
"At the same time, parts of our community are in the midst of a crisis. This year alone, 28 black people have died as a result of black-against-black gun and knife crimes. Some victims are as young as 15. Black people live in the poorest and most polluted communi-

ties in the country, our children are four times more likely to be excluded from school, and diabetes, cancer and HIV are disproportionately higher amongst us than the white population."

The solution is not easy, and Akrewusi hopes that the BFN is just the first step in filling a huge need for implementing change.

"The way we see it, the more black fundraisers there are operating within our nonprofits, the better chance there is of securing funding to solve our social issues. BFN aims to increase the knowledge of funding sources and processes and support black charities with their funding."

In addition to creating greater awareness of black philanthropy and fundraising, the BFN provides a forum for fundraisers to meet, share experiences, learn and be mentored. "We want black fundraisers to appreciate that, although they may feel isolated in their roles, there is a network of 500 other people whom they can count on



for support on a personal and professional basis,” Akerewusi says.

The Black Fundraisers Network also seeks to work in partnership with other organizations in the sector. It has established successful partnerships with organizations in London, including the Institute of Fundraising (www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk); Charity People, one of the UK’s leading recruitment agencies for the nonprofit sector (www.charitypeople.co.uk); Scope; and the Fundraising Academy (www.fundraisingacademy.com). This year, the BFN expanded its reach internationally and began working with the National Center for Black Philanthropy in Washington, D.C. (www.ncfbp.net).

“Nonprofits do a great deal of valuable work, but I think we could have far greater impact on communities and in



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our fundraising if we pursued more opportunities to work in partnership with other organizations,” Akerewusi says. “I believe the black nonprofit sector has a lot to offer the mainstream and I would like to see more partnerships between the two. This will improve our chances to raise funds and improve the lives of people we seek to support.”

These efforts also involve working with black philanthropists to fund community projects.

Untapped Resources

“One of the first presentations I gave following the public launch [of BFN] in 2005 focused on major donors in the black community,” Akerewusi recalls. “For many black fundraisers in the audience, it was the first time they had ever considered fellow black people in a

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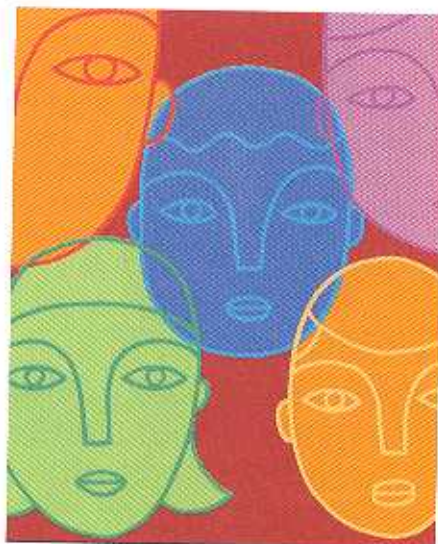
resources realized

Inclusiveness

position to make significant donations to their charities. It was also the first time they had appreciated that the UK is home to many black multimillionaires and successful black businesses.”

According to the *Index of Global Philanthropy* (www.global-prosperity.org), the United Kingdom is the second most philanthropic nation in the world, after the United States, Akerewusi explains. “In 2006, individuals in the UK donated £8.9 billion [more than US\$18 billion at today’s rate of exchange] of their own wealth to charities. We have fantastic examples of how people have given generously to effect dramatic social change. We know already that the Jewish and Asian communities have a fantastic track record for philanthropy in the UK. However, black philanthropy is yet to be recognized here. In the UK, there is a misconception that black people are simply passive recipients of aid and charity, rather than dynamic donors and benefactors. In many ways, I suspect (per proportion of wealth) black people are perhaps the most philanthropic group in the country. Black people give in many different ways—conventionally (giving directly to charities) and unconventionally (supporting families and friends in Africa and the Caribbean). A recent report by the Department of International Development showed that £2.3 billion [approximately US\$4.65 billion at today’s rate of exchange] is remitted to foreign countries each year (with anywhere between one-fourth and one-third of this amount being remitted by black people) from the UK’s immigrant communities. Yet this figure is not included in our £8.9 billion calculation for national philanthropy.”

At the same time, research in the United Kingdom and in the United States suggests that donors are becoming more diverse, Akerewusi points out. “Philanthropy is not—and never has been—the reserve of white people. Philanthropy is a universal language, and as more wealth shifts into the hands of diverse groups, fundraising will need to change and adapt its ability to attract this new wealth.”



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Looking Ahead

According to Akerewusi, the BFN has been successful because it meets a need that has gone unmet for a long time. “As more black people get involved with fundraising, they have actively sought support networks, and BFN in one way or another has tried to meet some of their needs,” he says. “Our association with the Institute of Fundraising has also helped raise awareness about the network, as has the fact that our network meetings have been presented by very high-profile people in the black community, such as Manny Amadi, a corporate social responsibility expert, and Tim Campbell, winner of the *Apprentice UK* in 2005.”

The BFN has never sought government funding, Akerewusi explains. “We receive sponsorship support from Scope and from Charity People. Our committee is made up of volunteers, so we get to set our own agenda and have the freedom and flexibility to address issues that are specifically pertinent to the UK’s black community. Having said

that, I’m really proud of the fact that we have a diverse membership base consisting of black, white and Asian people and young people who are considering fundraising as a career path.”

Nevertheless Akerewusi would like to see the organization support many more people and be even more successful.

“I would like BFN to accomplish two simple yet important objectives,” he explains. “First, I hope one day that BFN will be set up as a formal body with premises and staff on hand to support many more people. Second, I also would like BFN to take the lead in the UK in learning more about black philanthropy by researching and engaging black philanthropists in a dialogue so we can learn how they might play a more significant role in supporting issues that affect our community.”

Holding down a full-time role as a professional fundraiser at Scope, volunteering his time to chair BFN and fulfilling his family commitments can be challenging at times, Akerewusi admits. “I was at work a few days ago when a new BFN member called me, seeking advice for a forthcoming job interview. I was working on a complex funding opportunity. I asked to postpone the conversation until 9 p.m. when I knew I would be home from work, rested sufficiently from the challenges of the day and would have seen my children off to bed. I then had an hour-long conversation with this member and found out that she was going for an interview for her first fundraising role. I provided some hints and tips and, quite frankly, forgot about the call altogether after that point. About a month later, this same member called me at work to let me know that she was calling me on her first day at her new job to thank me for the advice and support I had given. I was really proud that BFN could make such a difference in her life. Situations like that go a long way to making the challenges worthwhile.”

Read more about Midé Akerewusi in the next issue of *Kaleidoscope*.