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# The New Black Philanthropy



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One of the major contributions of today's African immigrants is their philanthropy. The World Bank and other multi-lateral agencies estimate that Africans in the worldwide diaspora **gave at least \$40 billion** to their home countries in 2011 alone. U.S. African immigrants gave an astounding **\$11 billion to Africa** in 2011.

This essay provides a user-friendly introduction to African immigrant giving for the public as well as philanthropy advocates and nonprofit sector professionals devoted to embracing the rich diversity of contemporary America.

The past is prologue when it comes to African diaspora giving. African giving practices are part of the country's founding and all its social movements. Black philanthropy in the United States, as well as Black American culture in general, has always developed within a global context with cultural influences from various parts of Africa as well as the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia and Europe. Many of the values, structures and processes considered part of contemporary Black American and diaspora philanthropy are adapted from African collective giving practices brought during American slavery and now through contemporary immigration.

Most African cultures espouse some version of a philosophy found in the Bantu languages of East and Southern Africa called *Ubuntu*, emphasizing common humanity, interdependence and mutual responsibility for others. Thus, although an exact translation for "philanthropy" does not exist in most indigenous African languages, the concept of love for humanity certainly does, but in a culturally distinctive way.

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There are 10 basic African immigrant giving structures, and endless hybrids of them, operating in America today -- from giving circles with ancient roots to social enterprises and digital philanthropy that build on traditions towards an exciting new future for the Black Philanthropy.

Important challenges face African immigrant givers and policymakers worldwide. One is to encourage giving that not only uplifts families -- even very extended ones -- but also develops entire communities. There are a variety of new initiatives to provide incentives and better oversight of the NGO sector to encourage more giving through local African organizations that impact community development.

Although no U.S. philanthropy studies adequately document African immigrant giving to U.S. causes, there is clear case study evidence that it is occurring as new African communities form U.S.-based professional, mutual aid and community associations. One challenge facing African immigrant domestic and international donors is that the ethic of giving is so strong that they often forgo or are sometimes not even aware of the tax benefits of giving through a charitable organization. African immigrant philanthropists, especially those of average means, can be under great financial pressure as they balance the giving obligations to family and the various social ties of hometowns, associations and alma maters. For America's very philanthropic African immigrant community, finding ways to give sustainably using tax deductions and planned giving is another key challenge.

Seven key principles can help American philanthropy organizations of all backgrounds embrace the diversity of contemporary Black Philanthropy, including better knowledge of black diaspora history and culture; overcoming stereotypes; coalition-building; inclusion of women and youth; as well as diversifying staff and governance.

The African Women's Development Fund USA (AWDF USA) stands ready to be your partner as you chart your journey to fully embrace the diversity of today's Black Philanthropy.

A U.S.-based public charity created by Africa's first Pan-African foundation, AWDF USA raises U.S. awareness and support for African issues with a focus on women. This

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essay was written to commemorate **Black Philanthropy Month**, founded by AWDF USA in 2011, and the 50th Year Anniversary of Martin Luther King's historic March on Washington and "I Have a Dream Speech." Contact us at 408-634-4837 and visit [usawdf.org](http://usawdf.org) for more information.

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