

# A Philanthropy for our Times: Reimagining Purpose and Practice in a New Era

*A Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* webinar recorded on  
June 10, 2025.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
**FAMILY PHILANTHROPY**

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Featuring:



**Dimple Abichandani**  
NCFP Fellow, Philanthropic  
Advisor  
Author, *A New Era of  
Philanthropy*



**Nicholas Tedesco**  
National Center for Family  
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## **Transcript of the *Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy* Webinar, A Philanthropy for Our Times: Reimagining Purpose and Practice in a New Era, Recorded on June 10, 2025**

### **Britt Benavidez**

Welcome, everyone. My name is Britt Benavidez, I'm the Senior Manager of Programs at NCFP. I use she/her pronouns. I'm a white and Latina woman with short brown hair, brown glasses, and I'm wearing a button-down lavender shirt today. Thank you for joining us for our monthly Fundamentals of Family Philanthropy webinar. This webinar series provides guidance on the core tenets of effective family philanthropy, from motivations and values to governance, grantmaking, and succession. The series is designed to equip giving families with the latest information on evergreen topics in the donor life cycle through practical takeaways and diverse family stories that illustrate important practices.

Before we begin, let me briefly share about our webinar technology. We're using Zoom's webinar platform and your controls are located along the bottom of your screen. Closed captioning has been enabled and you can turn captions on and off by clicking the caption or CC icon. We want this webinar to be interactive, so please submit questions as they come to you. To ask a question, please use the question box with the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen. When sending in a question, if you wish to remain anonymous, please indicate that by checking the box to submit anonymously. Please remember to use the Q&A for questions so we can keep the chat clear for any technical needs that anyone may have, but we can keep all the questions together in the Q&A.

As a reminder, this webinar is being recorded and a replay will be made available to all attendees. If you experience any technical issues, please try to reconnect at the Zoom link or email me for assistance, I'll put my email in the chat in just a moment. And as always, you're welcome to chat with us on Twitter about today's webinar using the hashtag #ncfpweb.

Today's program is A Philanthropy for our Times: Reimagining Purpose and Practice in a New Era. Whether you're new to philanthropy or seasoned, are a family member or a staff member, we hope you'll leave today's webinar with insights you can apply to your work. Our goals for today's program are that you understand the history of philanthropy, as well as envision the future and what's required of us to achieve it. Learn practical ways to interrogate and reimagine the ways we give, and gain insights for how to work collectively embody change, and shift our practices.

So I'm going to launch a poll now so that we can get a sense of who's in the room with us today. Please let us know what's your role in family philanthropy. We have a couple hundred of you with us today, so we'd love to get to know you a little bit better. We'd love to know if you've been making any recent changes at your organization to meet the needs of your partners and communities. And what do you hope to learn during today's program? This will help us when we get to the Q&A portion. Thank you so much. I see some poll responses coming in. I'll leave this open for few more seconds. All right, thank you so much. Please continue responding to that poll, but let's get into the program.

So now, I'm thrilled to introduce our panelists to you. Joining us today are Nick Tedesco, President and CEO of the National Center for Family Philanthropy, and Dimple Abichandani, an NCFP fellow, author of A New Era of Philanthropy, and philanthropic advisor. Welcome to you both, and Nick, over to you.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Thank you, Britt, and thank you all for joining us, and welcome Dimple, and congratulations on a successful book launch.

**Dimple Abichandani**

Thank you, Nick. Thank you, Britt. I'm so happy to be here with you and so grateful to NCFP for all the support.

**Nick Tedesco**

Well, it's our pleasure and this has been a conversation a long time in the making. Just for some context for our audience members, I first met Dimple about five years ago as I was beginning my tenure with the National Center for Family Philanthropy and I was searching for resources that were speaking to the emerging practices of family philanthropy. And I came across a brilliant article that Dimple had written, A Balancing Test For Foundation Spending, and if you haven't read it, we'd encourage you to do so. And I reached out to Dimple to learn more and to invite her to share her expertise with our audience and she graciously agreed. And that really began a long friendship that has been so fulfilling for me and continues to inspire me.

And a few years after our initial meeting, Dimple mentioned her interest in writing a book that I could not have been more excited to hear, because the world needs to hear from Dimple. And so, I encouraged Dimple to apply to become a fellow for our organization to offer her some spaciousness and fellowship as she authored the book. And to my surprise, she agreed. And it's been one of the greatest gifts of my professional career to bear witness to your brilliance into this process and to be in community with you as you have been authoring this book, Dimple.

**Dimple Abichandani**

Thank you so much, Nick. If people pick up the book, they will see that the quote that you gave me about the book was the one I decided to put on the front cover of it, because it meant so much. And I feel like this book is what it is because of the community I was in as I wrote it. So, thank you.

**Nick Tedesco**

Thank you, that means a lot. And again, it's been such a gift to us. So I'm excited for us to explore the book, and I think it goes without saying that Dimple has authored something profound. So if you have not purchased the book, we'd encourage you to do so, we'll put a link in the chat.

But Dimple, you've not only written something deeply profound, but you've done so at a time when an invitation to reimagine is much needed. And I can't emphasize that enough. We need to write a new narrative in philanthropy, and that is what you are encouraging us to do in the book. You're in fact establishing a blueprint in a new era of philanthropy. And so, we are going to spend some time talking about that blueprint today. And what really stands out for me is not only that you are contextualizing our practices, but you are inviting us to shed old patterns of being that no longer serve us, and in many ways, your book is a gentle reminder that change is possible.

And I want us all to hold that as we go into this conversation today, that indeed, change is possible. Right? These are the artifacts that we hold onto, as you talk about in the book, and so we can shed these practices and new ones can emerge. So our conversation will bring forward some of the core tenets of the book, but again, this is just an introduction, so we invite you all to read it in full and reflect on how you might shift your practices.

So without further ado, I just want to welcome you again, Dimple, and thank you. And I really want to start with a question on the origins of the book, the inspiration behind the book. So I'd love for us to start with the spark. You spent decades leading in social justice philanthropy, and now you've written this incredible book, *A New Era of Philanthropy*. Was there a moment, an experience, or even a buildup of experiences that made you say this book needs to exist?

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Yeah, so this book started for me in the middle, late 2022, and I'll take us back there. We had just sort of come through the pandemic. Philanthropy had really stepped up in many respects, met the moment. Right? We saw a field-wide move towards trust-based practices. There was a time where that article that you shared on spending policies, I was doing three to four calls a week with foundations that were moving over to a mission aligned approach to decide how to spend. And I think most dramatically in the summer of 2020, we saw really, the first ever deep commitment to racial justice that was articulated in the field, right? Deep and broad, I should say.

And so we had come through that cycle, and for me by the summer of 2022, I started to see the signs of the coming retraction, like the stepping back from these changes. And I think from where we sit today in 2025, we've all seen it, but for me, it just planted in me this question that I couldn't shake about, what actually needs to change? What needs to shift [inaudible 00:10:28] for us to kind of break out of this one step forward, one step back pattern of adopting changes but then having them just be trends, not having them actually be durable? So there was that question. And then the context for that question was that we were in the early years of poly-crisis, right?

So at this point, I think it's been about a good decade since any of us on this call have had the luxury of just having to think about one crisis at a time. Right? We've been living in these times where we've had this overlapping of a climate disaster, climate on crisis, deepening inequality, and attacks on democracy, not just at home, but really globally. So that mismatch for me was the origin of this, the mismatch of stakes that keep rising in the world, and then a sector that honestly has felt, it's felt like purposeless. It's felt like our sector is not quite sure who we are and what we're doing. And I share some stories in the book how there was a time where I thought it was sort of like, oh, I'm just sitting with these questions. And as I started to articulate them, I realized, no, actually, many of us are holding these questions. So that was the core inquiry.

And writing an article, in my experience, is about writing about I have figured something out or I'm learning something, I kind of know something, and then you put it in an article. But for me, the process of writing this book was to actually allow myself to be really chased down by this question, to allow myself to keep following the path, following what I don't know. And that's what took me to this book. So the gift of it was immersing myself in the history, talking with so many brilliant people in the field, including so many of the people that are in this NCFP community, and then synthesizing all of that into this offering.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Really appreciate your reflections on the past five years and the motivation for you to write the book. And one of the things that stands out to me in the book perhaps the most, or one of the many things, is this through line of knowing your story and writing a new story. And really, as you note, holding the questions but holding the understanding. The understanding of the narratives that we tell ourselves, the narratives that the world tells us, that we tell the world, both in word and deed. And so, I want to spend a moment to reflect on the importance of knowing your story and writing a new story.

So I want to read an excerpt from your book and then invite you to reflect on it. You note in practice one, "This chapter explores how our personal stories, institutional stories and collective narratives merge to form an architecture that shapes our practice of philanthropy. As we excavate the multiple stories and narratives we hold and how they have formed us, we can ask, in these high stakes times, what new stories do we need to boldly resource a more just and sustainable future?" I love that framing, and Dimple, I'd love for you to tell us about your story and how it centers family, as well as the stories that we tell ourselves.

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Yeah. It's a funny thing, when we think about the practice of philanthropy, we act like it's something that is outside of us that we just kind of can attend a webinar and know how to do philanthropy. And yet, so much of our practice is actually shaped by these stories.

And so, I share in the book how my parents' stories very much have shaped who I am as a funder. And my father was a child when his family became refugees with the partition of India, and he and millions of other people experienced deep trauma, where one day they were living this kind of very average sort of middle class life of comfort and security and safety. And then the next day, they had put all their stuff in a locker and had fled their home in the middle of the night and lived in refugee camps. And that happened to my father as a child, but the rest of his adult life, my father was always terrified of scarcity. It was like this theme. And so, I didn't grow up with scarcity, but when I first started as a program officer, I would actually struggle to give all of it away, and I didn't even realize that I was doing that.

And I remember I had a supervisor once who sat me down and said, "You know you're supposed to spend it all, right? There will be more next year." And so it's like she had this curiosity, "What is it that you're saving it for?" And I said, "Anything could happen." And so it's like there's my family story living in my philanthropic practice.

I think the story that's shaped me much more than that is the story of my mother, who is someone who actually did not experience that type of hardship, grew up financially comfortable, but as an adult had experienced a lot of difficulty. And the way that she always navigated it was to build community and to send her care, those are the two things that are the essence of who my mom is. And so what I grew up understanding about money and resources is that there's always enough if we just hone in and center on the fact that we care for one another and that we're going to do this together. That is how in my family, that's how we put everyone through school. It was like everybody putting in what they had. And that was something that really has shaped how I think about what we do as funders. It's not just writing checks but it is actually centering care, and I share stories in the book about what that looks like.

I'll just share one other story that really taught me about the centrality of resources because I think sometimes when we're in this business for a long time of moving resources, we sometimes downplay how critical resources are to everything else. And I had this very unusual experience of my first year out of law school working for a big law firm, I was a litigation associate. I worked on huge bankruptcy cases, telecom cases. And after a year when I saved enough to pay off my student loans, I went to go work for a legal services provider, where I was helping people who couldn't afford lawyers in some of the most harrowing and difficult things that anyone could go through. Losing their home, losing their job. When I was at the law firm, the whole ethos was that if you can imagine and dream of a resource that you need that will help you win, we will find it. It was our job to come up with, what do we need, because it was our job to win. And we had maybe two to three cases at any given time.

When I went to go and work in the social sector as a legal services lawyer, we had 40 cases at a time, and the ethos was the opposite. It was like, don't even think about what you might need because we most definitely don't have the resources for it. And that assessment of, why would you give a lawyer 40

cases at a time? That actually came from our funders. That was a funder assessment of what is a reasonable, doable caseload, or what is a wise way to spread these resources? And so what I learned in those two years was that resources and how abundant they are, they shape what we can imagine. They in every way, shape what we think is possible and they absolutely shape what our definition of winning is. Right? Are we just going to try to survive or are we actually going to win something for our communities? And so, those, I've spent many more years as a funder than as a lawyer, but that experience of resourcing, of scarcity and of abundance, very much has shaped how I think about our work as funders.

### **Nick Tedesco**

I want us to hold here for a second, because so much of what promotes success in family philanthropy and in philanthropy writ large is indeed, understanding the narrative that we tell ourselves and fundamentally being able to manage to reframe and to think about the mental models that we hold and the mental models that we need to move to. And so I really, again, I want us to spend a moment reflecting on the stories that we tell ourselves, right? I mean, you mentioned scarcity, right? We often tell ourselves as those who are moving resources, we need more information, or a family knows best, or we need to control the resources. Right? These are antiquated messages that anchor our behavior and inhibit our success. And so I'm wondering, are there other messages that stand out for you that we've told ourselves as those who are moving resources?

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Yeah, so one that I'm hearing a lot right now, and I talk about this in the book, is this story where we say, and to be clear, funders of all sizes say this, "Our funding is just a drop in the bucket." Right?

I was literally at the Ford Foundation about to go on stage to do my New York City book launch, and I was talking with a senior director at Ford and we were talking about their funding in this moment and he said some things and he said, "But our funding is just a drop in the bucket." And I just started to laugh, I was like, "Turn to page 63 of my book," because it's such a powerful story and it's one that we have to really look at, because it's one that basically says, "There's no point pushing ourselves, there's no point moving out of our comfort zone. Nothing we do matters anyway. Right? We're just a drop." And if you imagine that mindset, that story across a sector, it helps you understand why we are really struggling right now to meet the moment. Right?

And so my offering around that is, you might be a drop but what if you're actually part of a bigger wave? What if we're not just sitting here in a bucket but we're actually in this ocean and we are in times of change and transformation? And it's not a powerless thing, actually, when we link up all of our drops, we have something quite powerful.

### **Nick Tedesco**

And each and every one of us can be a pebble, right? We can be a pebble that begins a ripple that is significant. Right? So we talked a bit about the messages that we tell ourselves and that society has told us, and really understanding that narrative and rewriting a new story as a tool.

I want to now move to another tool, which is understanding history. So in order to change the way that we practice philanthropy, we first have to understand the historical context. And I am really curious for you to bring forward what you feel the readers need to understand about the old era of philanthropy, and why it's so essential to look squarely at that history before we move forward.

### **Dimple Abichandani**



Yeah. Well, so this is one of the surprises for me of writing this book and the gift of it, is that actually when I set out to write the book, was not planning to spend much time on the history. My plan was to really look at people who are doing incredible work today.

And I had this sort of chance encounter with Andrew Carnegie when I was on vacation in Pacific Grove, California, this sweet little seaside town. And I had stepped away from my family to go work on the book for a few hours in the library, it's a public library. And I was sort of wrapping up my writing session and I was putting away my stuff and I looked up and on the wall in front of me was this framed portrait of Andrew Carnegie. And at the time I thought, oh, that's funny, he wrote about philanthropy, I'm writing about philanthropy, and I didn't think much of it. But I don't know what possessed me, but I took a selfie next to it. I was like, oh, how funny, this little philanthropy nerdy moment.

And then I got home and I was looking at my photos and my eye just kept going back to that picture and I started thinking how odd, it's 2024 and this public library and this small town has this framed portrait up. What is that about? And so it started this whole journey where I learned so much about the library's... Different topic, but we can nerd out about it. I mean, really, I feel like it's now something I can answer trivia questions about. And I think most significantly, as I started to learn about his libraries and his giving, I realized I had never read *The Gospel of Wealth*. And I hadn't read it because I didn't see myself as the audience for it. I sort of saw it as kind of a person of wealth writing to other people of wealth. But also, honestly, I thought I knew what it said. I thought, that's that essay that somebody wrote that is basically telling people that if they have wealth, that they have a responsibility to give. But after learning about Andrew and his libraries, I picked up *The Gospel of Wealth*.

And so I want to share some of what I found because it's so relevant to our practice today. So Andrew Carnegie was in his time, one of the richest people that had ever lived. And he was alive in what we now know as know of as the Gilded Age, right? So Mark Twain coined that term, Gilded Age, to refer to actual gilding, which is covering things over with a thin sheet of gold. And he called that age that because he said it's basically we're making something look shiny and gold-like, but actually it's kind of hollow and corrupt underneath. And so he belonged to that time, he started the steel industry, super, super wealthy. And he starts off *The Gospel of Wealth* with basically describing this new economic order. And right off the bat, he's very aware of and clear-eyed about the fact that it's actually been very difficult for most people. This was a time where a few people had all the resources and most people were struggling. And Carnegie begins *The Gospel of Wealth* with an acknowledgement of that.

And then he goes on to basically call it, say, "This economic order, even though I know it's very difficult, it's the law of civilizations." And so right there in kind of our founding document for modern philanthropy is this kind of enshrining of a form of extreme capitalism. Right? A deep, deep inequality. So he lets, he lists out what's difficult about it, how most people are struggling, and then he does this thing where he says, "I know it's hard," and I'm paraphrasing, "But don't worry because I've got this great idea, philanthropy." Right? And he says, "With philanthropy, we are going to take care of you." Right?

So the paternalism that has really lived in this sector and for many years has been enshrined in our process, in our practice, that really comes back, that comes from *The Gospel of Wealth*. We're going to take care of you. We are going to do better things with this money than you would have done had it come to you in small sums. And that is a quote, "Small sums being wages." So again, this enshrining of a structural type of inequality, a justifying of inequality with a promise of generosity later. Right? The most important thing I think that I took away from this time with Andrew Carnegie was that he was very clear about the purpose of philanthropy. So in *The Gospel of Wealth*, he says, "What we're going to do is we're going to do a little bit of good. With this money, we're going to do a little bit of good, but we're

not going to disturb the systems." I think he says it would be criminal, I think that's the exact word. We'd be criminal to try to change systems to go to the root cause of people suffering. Right?

So I think about the sector that we work in today, I think about what he offered, what he put into motion is a philanthropy that says we're going to preserve the systems, but kind of cover them over, we're going to guild them. So in my book, I call this a gilded philanthropy, so it's a philanthropy that is looking at systems that don't work for most people, and it's kind of covering them up with a little bit of gold, right? And who benefits from that? It's the people, the small number of people who tend to benefit from those systems.

But I feel like that purpose of philanthropy is still alive today, and it's alive in things like the on average payout of the philanthropic sector, which is still at around 5%, right? So if you think about it, we put 5% of our resources, all of which are really earmarked for the public good. All these resources are charitable resources. We take 5% of them and we put them towards social change, and then 95% of them are literally invested in the status quo. That's gilded philanthropy. That's a philanthropy that is preserving the systems that shape who has access to power and wealth, and that's the legacy.

And so the important thing about knowing that history is going back to the question that was haunting me that resulted in this book, that philanthropy is never going to meet this moment, right? Because if you think about all of the big crises that we're all facing, inequality, democracy, climate, these are all crises that at their heart are about how power is distributed in our society and how wealth is distributed. And so a philanthropy, that philanthropy that sees its purpose essentially as preservation, is not going to meet that moment.

And so what the book is, the central argument of the book is that the philanthropy for our times is a philanthropy that has this purpose of transformation that we are, that see it as our role to transform the systems to do exactly what Carnegie said we can't do. Right? And then the practices, the 10 practices are about how we actually do our day-to-day work in philanthropy, but with this new purpose us.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Yeah, what you just mentioned is so fundamental, and again, I just want to invite a pause so we can all digest it. Right? What we have inherited shapes how we show up, and we have inherited a gilded age of philanthropy and a set of gilded practices of centering the donor, of holding onto control, and a number of other practices that are very much shaping how we all move resources. And so the invitation here is to understand the contextual history behind the practices that are in the current moment that we all embrace, and to reimagine our practice based on what we now know is needed and is more effective.

And so I actually want us to spend a moment to look at this shift from gilded a philanthropy to what you're calling a new era of philanthropy, and I am inviting the team to pull up a chart that will bring forward some of the core concepts in the book of this transition. And Dimple, I'd love for you to share a little bit about the shift here.

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Yeah, yeah. So gilded philanthropy is a story about an individual's great generosity. It's a philanthropy that says that we can afford to live in equitable systems that generate harm because philanthropy will tend to those harms. Right? So The Gospel of Wealth, Carnegie saying, "Trust us, we'll take care of you." The new era, this is a collective story and it's about the transformation that we can accomplish together, and it's about who we can be when we reach across class and race in solidarity to build a better future for all of us.



This philanthropy's, what is philanthropy's relationship to structures of power? Gilded philanthropy, it covers harms that are caused by unjust systems and it leaves in place who has wealth and power. The new era, we invest in systemic change and shifting power and transforming structures, and we are prioritizing people over profit.

What's at the heart of this philanthropy? With gilded philanthropy, it's about the donor. Right? The donor's at the heart, the person, the institution with the wealth, that is what we center in this philanthropy. And with the new era, we're actually centering the dreams, the freedom dreams of communities. That's the heart of this philanthropy.

I'm going to maybe instead of reading the whole thing, I'll just go to the last one, just because I know we're a little bit short on time. The, what changes piece is really important. So with gilded philanthropy, there are definitely positive impacts, I want to be clear about that. It's not that nothing changes, but the fundamental structures do not shift with gilded philanthropy. With the new era, transformation becomes possible not only of the systems, but of ourselves as well. And that's kind of a theme throughout the book, is that the kind of change that we're trying to do isn't just outside the doors of our institutions, that we also are transformed in the process.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Thank you for reviewing the chart, and again, I'd encourage everyone to take a look at this in full.

I want to transition to this concept of artifacts, which very much extends this conversation of the historical context and what we're holding on to. You talk a lot about in the book the concept of artifacts and again, what we are indeed clinging to in terms of past practice and how do we lean into a reimagining? And one of the artifacts that you talk about in the book is governance. And again, I want to read an excerpt from the book here and invite your reflections.

You write in the book, "Philanthropic governance is an issue that deserves more care, candor, and attention. Effective philanthropic governance transforms assets from being 'My money,' to being resources held in the public trust. Whether philanthropy will be able to transform itself to meet this moment of crisis and opportunity will depend in large part on whether we can evolve the governance of our institutions. At its best, governance upholds and reflects our deepest-held values. Its proximate, responsive and a collective endeavor at its worst, and too often in our sector, it's extractive, slow-moving, disconnected, and working with conflicted interests. At its worst, governance can be an artifact, at its best, it centers community and shifts power." And Dimple, I want you to talk to us a little bit about how shifting power makes our governance more effective and some steps families can take to do that.

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Yeah, I mean, this, the chapter on governance was the one that was my favorite to write and the one that I kind of went most deeply into. And you know this Nick, because I shared many early drafts with you. Because it's something that I think I found in my interviews with folks that it's an area that we as a sector have deep hopelessness, we think that that can't change. And yet, both when I was working on the book and now in my advising practice, when I work with foundation boards, what I hear is that people have a sense that something's not quite right about the existing governance norms and approaches. When you have people who are the decision makers solely because of their proximity to wealth, not proximity to the issues that the foundation works on, it's something that can be limiting. Right? And I think what I have found is people know that, and yet we really need to flesh out a picture of, what else might we be? How could this look like?

And so in the book, I share stories of what begins to happen when we evolve who governs. Right? What happens when we share power with community, not just through longer grant periods, but through

actual voice in where this capital moves to? And I think that that is something that I credit you all at NCFP. I think that that is some place that we are making progress in the sector. When I think about when it was 10 years ago that I began my stint as an executive director of a family foundation, and at that time it was a norm for family foundations to only be governed by family members and descendants of family members. Right? And I think that that's something that we are seeing evolve, but we don't always see the giving up of or the sharing of power that goes with it.

So I share a really powerful story in the book that's from the UK of a family foundation. Oh, I think it's, yeah, I think it's family foundation that brought in outside community members. And when they first went to these community members and asked them to join their board, these community members said, "No." And they were like, "We don't want to just make your website look pretty. We don't want to have symbolic power. We don't want to be rubber stamping decisions that you all have already made." They said, "We would only be interested if you really are giving us a chance to lead, if you really will follow our direction." Right? And so this foundation ended up saying yes to that, and there was a whole transformation that happened with this institution that it wouldn't be obvious if you didn't know the story, but at the root of it was these governance shifts.

I mean, another piece that I've been working with organizations on coming out of this is just simply the kind of, what is the work of governance? The slow moving nature of governance, where for a foundation to make a decision might take a year because the decision makers meet twice a year or maybe three times a year. There's a real need, I mean, we live in times that are fast moving and fast changing. And institutions, part of meeting the moment is making sure that your governance approaches and your decision making structures move at the pace of our reality. Right? And so if you have a situation where your foundation can't be responsive except every six months, then you're going to get that artifact feeling. You're going to get that sense of, wait, what is this fax machine, right? And so I think we are in a time where with care and attention to governance and with resources for people who understand that it's not working and want to lean in, I think we can start seeing the evolutions that we need.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Two more questions before we open it up for the audience Q&A. One question is, as we think about the shifts that we are inviting everyone to make in terms of practice, again, I'd encourage everyone to look at the book, it's deeply practical. What are some of the practices that you'd like to elevate in addition to shifting your governance? What are some of the ones that you'd like to highlight right now for the audience?

### **Dimple Abichandani**

I'll share the one that I end on. It's chapter 10, and it's about moving from a philanthropy that's sort of rooted in individualism, to a philanthropy that sees its mission in a collective way. And in that chapter, I offer a whole range of opportunities that exist for us to move into more collective configurations. And I think that this is something that NCFP does, right? What you do is you create a space where people can come together and not have to figure things out on their own, but actually build on each other's learning in a way that accelerates evolution and accelerates the transformations that we need.

I also think that that is the way that we move beyond the limitations of our own institutions. Right? Our institutions might be held hostage by donor intent, and it might be a donor that's long gone, and nobody really knows what that donor might do, were they alive today? Right? But when we move out of those structures into more collective structures, which often are more democratic, so collaborative giving, moving into collaborative funds. I ran a collaborative fund for many years and I always felt like we were able to do grantmaking that was more responsive, bolder, more creative, and most importantly, really

much more aligned with community, because we weren't grappling with donor intent as the dominant structure.

So I think that this is a moment where we're seeing all across our society that there's very little that can be accomplished for any institution to go it alone. Think about those law firms that all made those terrible settlements, not just giving up their own freedom, but really giving up our democracy. And then think about the law firms that banded together, the university is the same. And I think that there's a similar move happening right now in philanthropy, and I can't underscore enough how important it is for us to move in that way right now.

### **Nick Tedesco**

We're all a part of, of a system, many systems, we're interconnected and we're stronger together. So, thank you for that invitation to think about how we are indeed connected.

As we close and move to audience Q&A, I want to ask you to speak directly to the funders, the family trustees, the foundation leaders, really, anyone who's listening now and to the recording, who feels the weight of this moment, the complexities of where we are, and also the possibilities within it. And if you could leave them with one invitation, one call to action as they step into this new era of philanthropy, what would it be?

### **Dimple Abichandani**

So my offering would be to understand that the new era that I described, it's really in its infancy. It's like a bunch of seedlings that we have planted and they're starting to sprout. But the new era, it's not a default, it's not going to come to us. And in this moment right now, I think that we are all being called to make a choice about how we want to show up. And so I think it's important to know that if we fall back on our defaults, we will be falling back on a gilded philanthropy. And 140 years of gilded philanthropy, of propping up systems, of inequities, that's brought us to this moment. And so it really is a moment for us to choose something different, to choose the path of transformation and to choose to allow ourselves to be transformed in that process.

I think that we didn't talk about this, but a piece of the book that's been really resonating with people is that this approach to philanthropy, it's far more joyful. Right? This approach to philanthropy is one that is about relationship and belonging, and about the future in which all of our kids thrive. And so I think that people are really hungry for that. And yes, it's emergent, but we also have plenty of leaders who have been pointing the way. And so I think it's a moment if you are one of the funders that has been planting those seeds, my message to you is keep going. This is the philanthropy that we need right now. And if you're someone that has not been, but if you really look at what you've been doing and you have that feeling inside something's not quite right, join us in trying something new. Yeah.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Wise words and a perfect transition for us to invite some of the voices of our community partners. And I see some familiar names, hello to our community partners, and maybe we'll bring forward a couple of these questions.

Why don't we start with a mutual friend of ours, Afi Tengue. Hey, Afi. Afi asks, "How would you suggest philanthropy get in lockstep with the movements that build true and sustainable power with the people most depressed by our systems and institutions?"

### **Dimple Abichandani**

I love that question. In the book, I talk about our work at Solidaire Network, so I've been on the board there for a long time and I'm a member. And our framework for understanding how we do philanthropy is that we [inaudible 00:51:03]-

**Nick Tedesco**

Oh. Dimple, might've lost you for a second.

**Britt Benavidez**

I'll work with Dimple and see if we can get her back on. She said there were storms coming through her area. So just a moment, everyone.

**Nick Tedesco**

Yeah, just stand by, everyone, and submit more of your questions.

I did see, while we're waiting for Dimple to come back on a question around how we can raise questions as philanthropic advisors to family foundation clients to get them thinking about these issues. And so maybe I can speak to that as we're working with Dimple to come back on here. Jan, great question. Thank you so much. I think using some of the frameworks put forward in the book are a great way to put language to some of these discussion topics. I think asking your clients what has shaped their approach to philanthropy, some of their inspirations. How and when they learned about the practice of giving and what that means. And then ask, is it serving, and what might you want to revisit? And so thinking about that and just holding that without judgment.

So Dimple's back, thank you.

**Dimple Abichandani**

I am back. I don't know what happened, I'm so sorry.

**Nick Tedesco**

No problem.

**Dimple Abichandani**

Can you hear me okay?

**Nick Tedesco**

I can, yeah, yeah. [inaudible 00:52:42].

**Dimple Abichandani**

Did any of my answer about accompaniment come through?

**Nick Tedesco**

It just started, so you might want to just, yeah.

**Dimple Abichandani**

Okay. So just this idea of accompaniment that you are walking alongside your social movement partner and your role is to tend to what they need, but the idea is that we are walking towards a shared future.

That's a really different way of thinking about philanthropy than many of our institutions, which sort of see social movements as, oh, they're trying to fix such and such issue, but we don't see ourselves in that future.

**Nick Tedesco**

I think that's great. We've got a number of other questions. Andrew asks, "In such polarized times, how do you build relationships and trust between community members and philanthropists who share a passion for supporting a specific cause but have vast disagreements in other areas?"

**Dimple Abichandani**

I mean, I think that where we build connection is on our values, and I think that I encourage both funders and grant seekers to actually lean in much more in their dialogue and conversation with each other into values and what's this shared future that we are trying to build, and less on the specific narrow issues. Because I think our over-focus on issues leads to both this challenge that you're outlining of like, well, what if we don't see the policy the same way? But also, grantees are often having to squeeze themselves into our issue boxes and we kind of miss the bigger picture. And so if we share values and if we share broad goals for the future, then we should be able to be in deep, meaningful partnership.

**Nick Tedesco**

That's so great. Marshall asks a really fundamental question that I want you to tackle here. "What might funders learn through listening to the community, especially community members who on a regular basis wrestle with the concepts of abundance versus scarcity, as well as understanding how to do as much as you can with what you have, regardless of how much that might be? What can they teach us?" So Dimple, what can community teach us?

**Dimple Abichandani**

I mean, they can teach us everything. And that's such a beautiful question, you just said it. I think the reason that I have an entire chapter that focuses on abundance versus scarcity is that I was really sitting with how the most scarcity thinking I have ever experienced has been in the context of philanthropy, which is bizarre. We are this sector that's sitting on almost \$2 trillion, and yet the thing we most often say is that there's not enough. And then I think about what I've seen in my family, what I've seen in community, there's always enough, and we come up with all these resourceful ways to just make it happen. Right? So I love your question and I think you answered it yourself. What we can learn from community is how we care for one another, how we make the most of what we have, how we do this together.

**Nick Tedesco**

Yes. We have time for one last question, and I'm going to call in the voice of one of our former board members, a dear friend of all of ours, and a fellow Fellow, Kelly Nowlin. Kelly said, "Loved this discussion. I think she echoes all of our sentiments. Dimple, you continue to be a guiding light in this field. I'm curious what you're observing around emerging leaders in family philanthropy. I see so many who are most ready to move beyond gilded philanthropy, but often the larger family collective, the board, isn't. What is your message to younger generations who give hope to this work?"

**Dimple Abichandani**

I feel very hopeful about the younger generation, and I think it's the responsibility of all of us, of all generations to really make space for their leadership, and to really uplift their leadership. Because it is also the case that, and I write about this in the book, that we've in some ways the diversifying of leadership in the sector, it's been a mixed experiment. We've had many talented people come and go too quickly. And so I think that we need to not just assume that the younger generation will come in and take it all, just sort of take the reins, but that we have to actually create the space to support their leadership.

What I'm hearing from them, and I hear this a lot in my book tour, is clarity about the stakes right now and urgency. And so I think that those two things are gifts, and I think we just have to create the space to lead.

### **Nick Tedesco**

Yeah. Dimple, I am going to turn this over to Britt, but before I do, I just want to extend deep, deep gratitude. I cannot thank you enough for joining us on your book tour and sharing your wisdom and sharing an invitation for us to understand the history that's led us here and encourage us to rewrite our story and to think about what a new era in philanthropy means for us, because it's needed, because it's fundamentally what we need to do to see meaningful results for us and for generations that come. So thank you for your wisdom, your partnership, your friendship, and I'll turn it over to Britt.

### **Dimple Abichandani**

Thank you, Nick. This was fantastic.

### **Britt Benavidez**

Thank you, thank you both. I'm feeling inspired. And Dimple, just thank you for sharing your brilliance and your practical guidance with all of us. Nick, thank you for being in conversation, and thank you both for bringing the book to life. We knew this would be an introduction and we could continue for another hour, but we covered a lot. So I'd love to hear from you all. We launched a poll, love to get your feedback, and here if you have any lingering questions or takeaways that we will try and answer in future programs. We just have a few really quick announcements. I know we're almost to the top of the hour, so just a few things as we wrap up here.

As you may know, we recently released our Trends in Family Philanthropy 2025 report. It is released every five years, so it tracks the leading trends in the field, includes data on asset sizes, payout rates, grantmaking, family dynamics, and much more. You can download the full report on our website.

We have our upcoming webinar series, next month we'll start off with a three-part series called Evolving Your Family Philanthropy, so we hope that you'll continue joining us the second Tuesday of every month, and our full Fundamentals series can be found on our website. In addition to our webinars and other programs, we're pleased to offer a range of peer networks for those interested in connecting to family philanthropy colleagues with similar objectives, challenges and shared experiences. You can find out more about all our peer networks on our website and email us for more information.

Thank you again everyone for joining us. A reminder that the webinar recording and related resources, including the articles that Dimple has written, as well as the book, will be shared out by the end of the week, so we'll make sure that you all get those resources. Thank you for your time, your engagement, your questions. Thank you again, Dimple, for being here with us. It was a treat and a pleasure, and we look forward to future programming. So, we hope that you all join us again on July 8th for our next webinar. Take care, have a great day.



**Dimple Abichandani**

Thank you.

**Nick Tedesco**

Thanks, everyone.