



The Lit Review Podcast

English Transcript

Episode Number: 48

Guest/Topic: Joy Messinger on *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE! Women, Transgender, and Gender Non-conforming People of Color Against Violence

Originally Recorded: January 25, 2019

Episode Release Date: February 11, 2019

Episode Length: 50:42

[INTRO STARTS]

[Sound of book pages turning, soft instrumental music]

Monica: You're listening to the Lit Review Podcast.

Page: We're your hosts, Page May and Monica Trinidad.

[Musical hip hop beat playing in background from "Chicago" by David Ellis]

Mariame Kaba voiceover: *"I think it's essential for people to learn together in order to be able to understand what we're up against."*

Protesters Chanting: *"CPD, shut it down! New Jim Crow, shut it down!" [chanting] "I said No Cop Academy, 95 mil for community!"*

Page voiceover: *"We must disrupt, we must disobey, we must agitate, we must escalate, we must break, we must create, we must abolish, we must transform -"*

Young person voiceover: *"I remember, she was shot by my house -"*

Mariame voiceover: *"In sharing our ideas, we're stronger."*

[Music Lyrics] "Welcome to Chicago, this is home for most. This is the home of the wealthy, making cameos. This is the house of the heartless, the home of the cold. Man, my dog gets more

acknowledgement than homeless folks. This is a house, a generation filled in Audy homes..."
[Music Fades]

[INTRO ENDS]

Page May: Hey, everyone. You're listening to the Lit Review podcast, a literary podcast for the movement. And this is episode 49. Today, we're diving into the complicated world of the non-profit industrial complex. What the heck is the non-profit industrial complex?" you might ask. Keep asking and we'll tell you all about it. This is going to be a really great episode, but before we get started, just want to ask, how are you doing today, Monica?

Monica Trinidad: I am good. I am staying inside my house all day today because it is -3, but feels like -23. And so, I'm not going the fuck outside and I'm very thankful for our guest for making it over here to my house today, so thank you. And I'm also really excited about this coffee that I'm drinking right now and it definitely tastes better in this fancy new Lit Review mug we just got in, aye.

Page May: [inaudible 00:01:46].

Monica Trinidad: Page is trying to do ASMR with the coffee mug, but nothing. There was no sound. And so, if you want your own Lit Review mug, too, then you should become a monthly sustainer of our podcast through Patreon. At patreon.com, you can sign up to make monthly donations of a dollar or more and this helps us cover our costs to sustain the podcast. And in return, you will get our endless appreciation and a bunch of other perks, including stickers, invites to live recordings, bookmarks, books, and of course, our one of a kind limited supply coffee mug. You can start your monthly donation by going to patreon.com/thelitreview today.

Page May: Special shout out to Bridget Gallagher and David Harris, two of our current patrons. Thank you so much for helping make this project possible. We really, really appreciate you.

Monica Trinidad: Today, we are talking to a really magical person in Chicago. Our guest is a queer disabled fem organizer who is a huge fan of funding, community-led philanthropy, and spreadsheets. And for those that don't know me very well, I am also a huge fan of spreadsheets, so that's why we get along so well.

Joy Messinger is on the show today and we'll be talking about *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. Full disclosure, Joy and I are actually co-workers at Third Wave Fund, the only activist fund led by and for women of color, intersex, queer, and trans folks under 35 years old in the U.S.. And so, for those that aren't familiar with Third Wave Fund, we actually ensure young women, queer and trans youth of color have the tools and resources that they need to lead powerful movements through monthly rapid response grants and more long-term capacity building grants.

And so Joy, manages Third Wave's rapid response and multi-year grant making programs and supports our grantees and applicants through the grant-seeking process. Before I say more about Joy, because I could rave about Joy all day, welcome to the show, Joy. How are you doing today on this cold-ass -4 day in Chicago?

Joy Messinger: I'm good. I braved the cold to make it over here, the five- or six-block walk through Rogers Park. But I have three layers on top and two layers on bottom, so made it with all my fingers and toes intact.

Monica Trinidad: Yes, thank you. Thank you so much for coming out this way. We start the show off every time the same way. We really want to know who are you, what do you do, and why do you do it?

Joy Messinger: Yeah, so as you already shared, my full-time job is that I am a program officer at Third Wave Fund and I oversee the grant making that we do there to young women of color and young transgender, gender non-conforming, intersex and queer youth of color. I also do, as part of my job, what's called donor organizing within the philanthropic world, which I'll talk about a little bit and how interesting and sometimes strange that can be.

And then outside of my paid work, in addition to just spending a lot of time with my really cute cat, I do a little bit of community organizing and have lived in Chicago for eight years. And done organizing with Asian and migrant justice communities throughout that time in a number of different ways.

Page May: So, again, the book today is *The Revolution will Not Be Funded*, which at the time that it was first released was authored by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. But now, their title is *INCITE! Women, Transgender, and Gender Non-conforming People of Color Against Violence*. Is that correct?

Joy Messinger: Yes.

Page May: Beautiful, so what led you to read this book?

Joy Messinger: There were a number of things that led me to pick the book up. I think it has a really catchy title. The title was the same as the 2004 conference that led to the compilation of the book, which I can go into a full history in a moment. I was also back in my slam poetry spoken word days and so, Sarah Jones had just come out with her poem.

Monica Trinidad: And wait, were you a fan of, wait, you were a fan, fan of slam poetry or you did slam poetry?

Joy Messinger: I did slam poetry.

Page May: What? I did not know that.

Joy Messinger: I don't do it that much anymore. It's a different scene in Chicago. But Sarah Jones had come out with, *Your Revolution Will Not Happen Between My Thighs*. And so, that name plus the earlier callback to Gil Scott-Heron was very catchy to me. In addition to the fact that it's a critical look at philanthropy and funding and how nonprofits have, how all of it has really impacted organizing and social movements. I was thinking about that and as I was reading the book, realized that I had experienced this, just hadn't had the language for it before.

Monica Trinidad: First, before we dive in, can you just define what is the non-profit industrial complex? I feel like a lot of times, I mean, the only time I hear industrial complex is with the prison-industrial complex. And so, the non-profit industrial complex is a very new term for me, so can you just maybe break down what that might mean and then I have a follow-up question for that.

Joy Messinger: Sure. The idea of a system industrial complex started when Dwight Eisenhower was talking about the relationship between the US military, the US government and arms dealers and people who sold stuff for the military. And how that he predicted was going to become a really fraught relationship. And he predicted that correctly, which for folks who know about Dwight Eisenhower's history just in imperialism in the military is interesting, that that concept came from him.

But it speaks to this idea of a system of relationships that in so many ways is meant to produce profit and money rather than to achieve some good goal. And so, we see that in the military industrial complex and the medical industrial complex, the prison industrial complex where because it's so intertwined with capitalism, the purpose becomes to make money rather than for any other pretend goal of rehabilitation or world peace or anything like that. When we move that thinking over to the nonprofit world, we think about this relationship of networks and organizations and also, still the government that is there for a number of reasons.

Number one, to make money and to have money be within a particular system, so that would be within the nonprofit 501(c)(3) system and have money funneling through that. Two, have a way for folks to put wealth into a tax-free shelter, so I'll talk a little bit about foundations and can share a bit about how foundations came to be. But it's a way for folks to both do some good as others may see it, but then also keep their money safe from being taxed and be able to pass it down from generation to generation.

It's about creating a space where folks can have professionalization and build a career and then of course maintenance of the status quo, so that's the relationship with the state. And in the book and it insights other work, they describe it as a set of symbolic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements.

Monica Trinidad: You mentioned 501(c)(3) briefly. Is there a difference between a 501(c)(3) and a non-profit?

Joy Messinger: Kind of, so.

Monica Trinidad: I should know this, I'll probably edit that part out where I don't know what it is.

Joy Messinger: It's actually okay that you don't know because it's really confusing and it's confusing on purpose. These systems and anything it's related to the tax code and anything related to the tax code is confusing on purpose. They are similar in the same way that every square is a rectangle, but not every rectangle is a square. Grassroots groups and community groups in the US and on the lands that is now the US have existed forever. There have always been collectives and networks of people that come together to support each other, to support their communities and to meet their communities needs as well to create change in their community.

The thing that created the 501(c)(3) structure was the passage of the constitutional amendment that instituted an income tax. In the what's known as the Robert Barons era, there was a lot of incoming equality. People who were what was called captains of industry, were making huge, huge, huge amounts of wealth and there wasn't an income tax at that time. And so, people who were poor and working class, very similar to now, were very, very, very poor. There was just a huge gap between those folks, both in income and in wealth. As part of what was then referred to as Progressive Reforms, the 16th Amendment was passed and this instituted a federal income tax.

And so, as I like to say in workshops or other places where I'm doing this demystifying philanthropy education after the income tax came along, then we also had ways for people to figure out how to not pay income taxes. Around the same time as the passage of the income tax, different individuals, namely Andrew Carnegie, Rockefeller family, the Sage family created foundations that their wealth would then be used to pay for the public good of the community, so arts, hospitals, schools. Following that, the US government passed a series of laws that created income tax exemptions for putting money into foundations or giving money to organizations with this 501(c)(3) designation.

What 501(c) refers to is part of the IRS tax code. And so, there's a range of different 501(c) organizations. Unions are their own 501(c) organization. Different athletic groups like AAU, they have their own 501(c). Political action committees or groups that exist to get people elected, which are often known as 501(c)(4), it's just it's a different type. So, 501(c) are groups that in the law are defined as having a charitable purpose or being for the public good.

Page May: Depending on the type of work you want to do, there's certain statuses that you might need and they make it very, very difficult to get those things. And also, it becomes a way that you have the state looking at everything that you're doing.

Joy Messinger: Exactly.

Page May: Which it can be really concerning when we're talking about our organization having young people whose names we don't want on things. We don't want to expose them to the state anymore than they already are. And so this is how, just

like that (c)(3), (c)(4), all those words, like Facebook. I think the Facebook donations things, like Assata's doesn't have one because you need to be a 501(c)(3). But I believe when you make a donation through Facebook, they collect all of that information. And so, again, this idea of it's not really trying to do anything good for the world, the goal is it's making someone money.

Joy Messinger: And nonprofit is just an umbrella term for any group that's not distributing any excess money they have at the end of the year to other people. Huge institutions are nonprofits and it doesn't mean that they're not making money, it just means that they're not redistributing the money that they have left over at the end of the year.

Page May: Can you actually walk us through the book a little bit more? And so, if we haven't mentioned this yet, it's a compilation, so it's a bunch of different authors, short essays. And I'm wondering if you can talk about do you have any favorite authors that are in there? Any favorite essays? What are some of the major themes that come up as you read along?

Joy Messinger: Before I do that, I'll give a little history about the book and about the folks who wrote the book. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence and now, INCITE! Women Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming, People of Color Against Violence was founded in 2000 after a conference that they had at the University of California, Santa Barbara, I believe. I always get Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz mixed up. I'm so sorry, California. I have never lived west of the Mississippi.

And they're a national chapter based organization that has chapters across the country on different cities, different college campuses. And their main purpose is to organize and mobilize against interpersonal and state violence. And a lot of folks who came together at the first conference and to help co-found INCITE! where folks who had worked in domestic violence and sexual assault and community safety. And saw that so many of the solutions that were being proposed were very carceral. They were very dependent on the state, very dependent on punishment by the state, and utilizing prison as a way to decrease violence when really so many of us know that that doesn't keep our community safer and actually doesn't decrease things like domestic violence and sexual assault anyways.

And they also wanted to center the fact that state violence is a form of violence and that domestic violence and sexual violence and other forms of interpersonal violence live within that context. That's a little bit of the background of how INCITE! came to be. This book itself was published in 2007 after INCITE! had two events happen in their organizational history and life. Both of them you can read about in the preface and intro to the book. But one of them was they traveled abroad to India and were meeting with organizers and activists there who are really questioning, "Why are you trying to get money from rich folks in the government? How does that make you feel like you are going to make any change?" If they wanted that change, they would've let it happen already. So, that was one part.

And then the other piece, which is what folks remember the most, if they're familiar with the book, is that INCITE! had received a large grant about \$100,000 from the Ford Foundation and was told that they could allocate that to different programs and different projects that they were working on. And after doing that, about a quarter of the way into the first year of their grant, they were contacted by the Ford Foundation, who rescinded the grant because a board member at the Ford Foundation disagreed with their stance on solidarity with Palestinian liberation activists. And so, they convened a conference in 2004 at the University of California, Santa Barbara called The Revolution Will Not Be Funded. And then the book came out of the conversations that were had at that conference.

The book was first published by a small independent press called South End Press, which published a ton of really important revolutionary radical writing. And it's unfortunately no longer here, so it's also another story of both in the economic collapse that happened shortly after this book was published and in recent years thinking about and reflecting on what is lost when we don't have those independent presses and what does it mean in our current media landscape when things get consolidated and are housed only in corporate entities.

The book was republished in 2017 by Duke University Press, but until then, it was really hard to get the book. Folks were doing it very DIY, like passing around PDFs and things like that. I know a number of folks who have maybe only read a chapter here and there because it was really hard to get access to the book itself unless it was a scanned copy. That's just, yeah, a little bit about how the book came to be and within its own story of revolutionary publishing also will not be funded and let's have a conversation about that, too.

Monica Trinidad: Are there any essays that really stick out to you in this book as very either transformative to you or things you didn't know? And who are some of the writers? Are we familiar with these writers or were they like one time, "Here's a chapter, I'm done," drops mic thing?

Joy Messinger: Yeah, so I will say I wasn't at the conference where INCITE! was founded. I wasn't at the conference where this work came together, so I don't want to call any particular writer a one-hit wonder. Because I'm sure in the world of INCITE! they were not a one-hit wonder, even if they were one-hit wonder for me or for other people reading the book. But I think this is an anthology and it's a collection of essays and every essay is different.

Every essay is written by a different person and the book is broken down into three parts. The rise of the non-profit industrial complex, nonprofits and global organizing and rethinking non-profits reimagining resistance. And I think that it's important that all three of these perspectives were included because the first part gives a lot of theory in history. The second part gives some real world examples of how the nonprofit industrial complex as a system impacted different groups that may or may not have been nonprofit organizations in the 501(c)(3) sense. And then the last section provides some alternatives and ways to reimagine what the future could be.

I think that for someone who is just picking up the book, is just opening the book, you don't necessarily have to read the essays in order. The same with any anthology unless you are being assigned to read it for school, which it's good to know and to hear about academic programs. Having folks read this book, because I think it brings a really important critical lens to work in social service field and just the nonprofit field overall.

I did have a couple essays that I thought were important and that if folks only had time to read a few that I think that they should touch on. From the first section I thought in the shadow of the shadow state was particularly important because it brought up this idea of philanthropic money being twice stolen wealth. It was both money that has been taken from stolen land and stolen labor. But then also, because it's being donated through a foundation that means that someone is not paying taxes. And so, it's money that, again, is taken out of what was supposed to be a big pot of money for a social safety net for all of us.

And I think that the idea of the shadow state being this post 1950, 1960 voluntary sector and that organizations that are on just the outside of that pointing to that, I think is really important. And the idea that this is all happening at the conversions of neo-conservative ideas and neo-liberal ideas and that privatization is really the common factor. So, it's not about whether we're doing bad or doing good, but we're privatizing things instead of having them be there for the greater good in ways that all people have made decisions about.

Page May:

I'm actually thinking of something I read in college that was talking about internationally, the ways that they're a term non-governmental organizations I think comes up a lot more, but that things that used to be. Part of how the US will offer loans through the World Bank, through IMF, like all these international things the US strong arms these other countries. And says, "We'll partner with you on this trade thing or we'll give you a loan through the World Bank, but you have to essentially tear down your social safety net and we'll replace it with us non-governmental organizations.

And so, you have things that used to be a service that were, or just a given to how things were are now only available through these non-profits or non-governmental organizations that are controlled usually by outside people. Have all kinds of weird hierarchies and red tapes and paperwork and just a big mess.

Joy Messinger:

We can see this in places where the US government and the US foreign policy has created local havoc and regional havoc. Haiti, for example, is known as a country that has the most NGOs or non-governmental organizations, which is the language for what non-profits would be referred to in the US, has the most NGOs per capita of any country in the world. And part of that is that Haiti, also, the infrastructure of the government for many reasons, US foreign policy. And intervention being a huge contributing factor, they don't have an infrastructure for the way to get services to people that need them the same way that might exist in another space.

Page May: What's the impact of all of this? I see there's a chapter in here called the Filth on Philanthropy. I'm wondering if you can speak more to how this nonprofit industrial complex and funding from foundations has impacted the course of our movement, social justice movements.

Joy Messinger: I think anyone who may have had experience with doing community work and then someone comes in with a lot of money and they decide that they want to change things that in the broadest sense, that's the way that we've seen philanthropy operate in this sense. For example, in the book, they talk about how various foundations, they named Ford Foundation and Open Society Foundations and Open Society Initiative as being to they may name Buffet and Gates Foundation, but if not, there are a number of other books that do, as coming in and really applying their own strategies for what they think is right.

For example, taking instead of funding an activist or a movement building or base building strategy, funding electoral strategies. Trying to get folks elected into office and encouraging people to organize within a system that already exists, rather than being critical of that system. By providing individualized leadership development, initiative funding for say 10 executive directors of 10 different organizations rather than funding for an organization to train all of their people up or even people in their community who are not trained up in organizing techniques. Or even just, yeah, the shift from organizing to needing to learn how to be a manager, to raise money, to write budgets, to write reports.

These sorts of things when folks are engaging with foundations and foundation funding, even in the work that I'm doing at Third Wave, which by so many in the funding world is considered more accessible and more radical. We still have those processes in place in a number of ways because we get money from foundations as well, so we're reporting back to those foundations.

Monica Trinidad: How do we actually navigate this as organizers? We need so much money to sustain a lot of the work that we're doing. And sometimes, fundraising is just really exhausting and takes up a lot of our time when we could be better spending it doing political education and strategic organizing. And so, it would be incredible to just get thousands of dollars with the snap of our fingers or more realistically by writing a huge grant proposal. How do we navigate this complexity then as organizers?

Joy Messinger: I really believe in grassroots fundraising as a model. And I know that there are, even within the book, various takes on whether grassroots and individual fundraising from the people in your community and the people around you is the best approach. But there is also a theme of when the money is coming from the people in your community and the people who are doing this work and for whom this work will be benefiting, that it has the broadest level of sustainability. Because it's not folks who could change their mind and then half your budget is gone or 100% of your budget is gone and from the government or from a foundation that's not connected to you.

And it also means that when you're getting money from your communities, you are accountable to those communities and answering back to those communities

rather than answering to people who don't live there, have not had the same experience as you, don't share your identities, that sort of thing, which in many cases is what can happen sometimes with foundation funding, especially if it's a foundation that's not located where you're living. Grassroots fundraising is one technique that I would suggest.

And there is a queer Asian organization in Chicago that I used to be part of. At that time, we didn't take any foundation money because we didn't want to be on the hook for having to complete a certain number of deliverables. We wanted to be able to keep the space for what the community wanted it for, which for that time was a little bit of organizing, a little bit of social togetherness. Mostly coming together over food and community building and education with each other. We did a lot of grassroots fundraising from within our communities, had a lot of events and we had a small budget, but we were also really rooted in the people that we were working with and people felt really connected to the work.

I think that that may have changed a little bit. I'm not in the leadership of that group anymore. But it still is not an organization that necessarily has a lot of paid staff and so, the direction of that hasn't always changed. I know that both of you are in organizations that rely heavily on grassroots fundraising, so I would actually be really interested in hearing your thoughts on grassroots fundraising as a model.

Page May:

Yeah. I mean, it's fascinating to me with Assata's. I deal a lot less with the grant applications and that process, but I see how much work that takes. I mean, it's tremendous. The applying for grants, the interviews you have to do for them. And then once you get the grant from a foundation, it's not over. I mean, there's a lot of reporting you have to keep doing and site visits and people checking in.

But our grassroots fundraising, I don't know the exact percentage that we're at right now. But we really try to have a significant amount of our funding coming from just regular people who know us. Not by, what's the word, heavily curated reports that we're releasing, but rather more just the work that we're doing and the impact that people see in that work or what they judge to be valuable. And so, for us, that means, that's why social media can be really important quite frankly. It's how you are reporting out to the world, "Hey, we're doing this."

And to be quite blunt, most of what we do we don't put on social media. Our day-to-day of what Assata's is doing isn't tweetable. It's not viral. It's a lot of relationship building and just supporting each other. But that's why these moments of protests, what big campaigns are really, really important. Telling that story is important for people to see. Community organizing works. Look at what when you are organized, we can win. And now, we're engaged in the citywide campaign.

And what's beautiful to see is people fund that. We're able to put out a call and raise enough money to send 30 young people down to the Highlander, which was a tremendous expense and it was covered completely. It was actually, there might have been, I think there was one rapid response grant we got.

Joy Messinger: It's interesting. And I don't know if I've ever told you this, Page, but one of the things that I learned from you actually that's impacted my analysis as a grant maker was in the ways that you talk about Assata's work and the work that you had previously done with, We Charge Genocide and other groups fighting against criminalization. The term that you had used was the slow spade work of community and how that work is not always sexy. It can't always be photographed, but it happens and it needs to happen in order for those photographable viral moments to happen. And like I said, it's really impacted my analysis as a grant maker and knowing what it actually means to fund community organizing and not just moments, single moments of direct action.

Monica Trinidad: You said so many things I would have said around just the grassroots fundraising piece. And I think the only thing that I would add is that for the People Artists Collective, we literally created a coloring book that documented grassroots efforts in Chicago to then not only to archive and document our histories, but also to fundraise. And that coloring book literally sustains us all year long, every year, every time we make a new one.

I don't think we're doing one this year or for this past year, but I think something that we just now are recently tapping into is grant writing. And we're thankful to get two amazing grants from the Crossroads Fund here in Chicago. But actually through my work at Third Wave Fund, I've learned so much from Nicole. Nicole does so much amazing like donor organizing. And just witnessing and watching that process of like, "Oh, not only is it important to get money from our community to sustain this work, but it's also important to build relationships with them and thank them."

Sending thank you cards at the end of the year is something that we do now. And just naming that working class people and low income folks and women of color, black women are always sustaining and doing donor organizing and activism and we don't see it. That we only think of rich white people that are sustaining our movements, but it's not. It's like people like Tarana Burke, who are literally taking money out of her pocket to photocopy things when MeToo was not heard of at all except for in her community.

And so, I think about that a lot. I think about how, yes, we need the grant sometimes because it's super helpful. But also, yes, absolutely, grassroots fundraising is what we really need to be focusing on and what really actually does sustain a lot of the work that we see across the country, across the world.

Joy Messinger: Monica, so I think that to bring it back to the book, one of the things that made me think of was in the essay, *Are The Cops In Our Heads and Hearts?* One of the things that Paula Rojas talks about in that book is a role for workers in an NGO or even within a volunteer collective can be doing some of that service work, some of that administrative work and then not be participating as voters or decision-makers. And then, I also think about just that not everyone in movement work is an organizer or that organizing can look so many ways.

And so, those are also the things that you're naming tasks that are part of grassroots fundraising, of relationship building and writing thank you cards.

Those are also the pieces that people can take part in. And the ways that we can bring people into the work, even if they're not comfortable with phone banking or door knocking or doing a direct action or even asking people for money. That there is a place for all of us and that there are so many things that people can do and bring to the work.

And then the other thing that it made me think of as you were talking about how, yes, people of color and women and immigrants and all these folks have been doing this work forever, is that, yeah, philanthropy did not start with Andrew Carnegie. Philanthropy existed in the indigenous communities that we took land from all over the world. And that networks of care and mutual aid have existed forever for sick people, disabled people, people who are moving to new places, people who are being oppressed by governments or societies. That there's always been this collectivist tradition of 'We have to take care of each other' or 'we are all that we have. We are the best that we have.'

And one thing that I had missed from the book, and maybe, I missed it because it was part of my own experience coming up as a young queer baby dyke was this idea of in the early '80s, folks who were HIV positive. That's how folks were taking care of each other back before the government was admitting that AIDS and HIV were a thing, back before there were lots of drugs, back before Medicaid was paying for people's prescriptions. Folks were getting together and having spaghetti parties and passing a hat around. And that tradition, those sorts of traditions are not necessarily recognized as philanthropy, but they're actually the most important community philanthropy that we have.

Page May: That's absolutely correct. And so, I know not all non-profits are part of the philanthropic field, but as someone who works at a foundation, have you seen the philanthropic sector specifically shift either in positive or negative ways since this book has been released? Have things changed? Haven't changed?

Joy Messinger: A few things have changed. A lot of things haven't. And to be fair, I have been employed in the philanthropic field for only the past three and a half years and have been part of raising money from foundations only for maybe the past, I don't know, less than a decade. And so, I definitely don't have a long-term view in the sense that it doesn't go back decades. But what we did see after this book was published was that stock market crash in 2007, that 2007 to 2009 pretty much. And what happened from that is that foundations really pulled back on their giving.

A private foundation, usually the ones that are named after families or corporations are really recognizable ones. They make their money from having a really large savings account called an endowment that makes a ton of interest every year. And in order to not have to pay taxes on the income that they're making from that interest, they have to spend at least 5% on either grant making or their administrative expenses or both. Some years foundations will give out more than the 5% and some years they will give out the 5%, and then some years, they may give out a little bit less than the 5%.

I forget which year it was, but there was a national committee for a responsive philanthropy report where the average that folks were giving out was just under 5%, which means there were definitely foundations that we're giving out less than that legally required 5% threshold. And that was something that folks saw during the crash of 2007, 2008, because so much of how interest you can make on this big savings account that you have on your endowment is dictated by the stock market. And other things that I don't fully understand, even in my general understanding of economics and finances, I just don't fully understand the stock market.

That's one trend that we saw is that people really pulled back on giving to radical strategies, giving to new and innovative things, wanting to take risk. And a lot of it was people being afraid that they weren't going to have as much money or they wanted to save it for down the road. Even the idea of only giving out 5% is such that it's so based in scarcity that there won't be enough left for who. Because in the world we're living in, conditions are catastrophic in so many ways. It's like, "Who are you waiting for? What are you waiting for?" When both the money that you have and the conditions under which you got that money actually contribute to a shorter life expectancy for the earth. That's one trend I think about.

Another trend that I think about in terms of what has changed is that there's a little bit more attention now to racial justice work, to reproductive justice work, to trans-led organizing to all of these communities who haven't received philanthropic funding in the past funding from foundations, but it's taken a really long time to get there. It's taken a lot of labor and conversations and a lot of education from often those same people who are being impacted by not getting that money and added cost to their emotional health and wellbeing.

And it's in comparison to how much money is given out in a year. It's still so, so small. Social justice philanthropy, in general, makes up us a very small part of philanthropy. The most money that's given by foundations is given to hospitals, museums, and education. Colleges are also registered as 501(c)(3)s, so any money that's given to pay a professor from a foundation that counts as a 501(c)(3)s donation. Any money that's given to a hospital that's not a for-profit hospital, the same thing. And now, that we have charter schools that are not run by governments, but are run by nonprofits, those are also (c)(3) organizations, too. There's just so many ways that organizations have (c)(3) status that we might not think that they do. Anyways, that was a digression.

Most things, I would say there are a number of things that haven't changed, even as foundations have expanded the types of issues that they're giving to. They may still not be giving money in a way where people can address the root causes of why those issues exist. Before when I had mentioned that one way that people see foundations as interfering with social movements is when they want money for organizing and base building and then they get money for electoral strategies. That's a thing that we see and a thing that we have continued to see.

We see it in just one very mainstream example is in the Women's March. We saw the Women's March as this very decentralized call on social media for people to gather that then became a nonprofit, that then became a call for people to go to

the polls and vote. And not to say that voting is not important, not to have an opinion on it either way, but just that it has moved from a mass movement call to an organization that has staff and that has a tax status. To a very specific way that people's energy is being directed towards a system that already exists.

Page May:

I really appreciate this conversation. I think it's reminding me how terrifying it is that level of influence and control people with money try to insert onto our movements through the fund, providing a funding source, but it comes with strings, of course. And I'm thinking about the Panthers and how I remember learning, "Oh, it was expensive to do what they were doing." And they had to figure out creative ways to get funding.

And so, that this has been something like how we create resources or how we secure resources has been under threat for a very long time and we have to study that. And I think the Panthers are a great example of creative solutions that are all in the spirit of self-defense. Not just in a physical altercation, but just in thinking about what do our communities need to defend themselves. And they use this language around networks of care and mutual aid and that's an indigenous concept. And so, that history is there, those practices are there, but it's so critical that organizers read this book and study that history, so that we can protect ourselves.

Money is a form of power that's absolutely used to control us. I'm like making intense eye contact right now. All right. So, anyways, yeah. Thank you, my brain. We're going to quickly share, at the end of last year, we drew names from the Lit Review supporters and for our end of year book, raffle. And Joy, you've been supporting us since the beginning. Thank you very much. And it was your name that we pulled out. Yay.

Joy Messinger:

I'm so excited because the books I got were actually ones I wanted to read. And yeah, I've been super excited to support y'all. From the beginning, I remember the Facebook post where you all were trying to come up with a name and someone suggested the Lit Review and everyone was just like, "What? That's incredible." Yeah.

Page May:

Yeah. We're trying to our next season, we really hope to have young act organizers as our guests. And we want to make sure that they get some compensation and we want to really improve the editing and sound quality, so that this becomes a resource that lasts long into the future. And to compensate. This is a lot of time and the equipment you use isn't cheap, so anyways, all these things, they help a lot.

But we're also excited to just share books. And so, you'll have *Making All Black Lives Matter* by Chicago's own Barbara Ransby, and *How to Read a Protest: The Art of Organizing and Resistance* by L.A. Kauffman, who was a guest in our first season. Yay. Thanks so much.

Joy Messinger:

Thank you. And in the spirit of just my love and devotion to grassroots fundraising, I would encourage everyone to check out the Patreon page.

Monica Trinidad: Why not?

Joy Messinger: And I'm proud to be a Patreon supporter.

Page May: It can be a dollar a month, y'all. It's like buying me a beer, two beers, two beers. It depends on where we go. I do like my craft, though. I'm a little bougie with the beer. But yeah, I'll have you close this out though and as always, thank you so much for your time and sharing all of your insights and would love to hear a favorite passage to close this out.

Joy Messinger: I'm going to read a passage from Radical Social Change, which is the opening essay in Part 3 of the book, Rethinking Non-Profits, Reimagining Resistance. And I chose this passage because it speaks to what I had mentioned earlier, the importance of investing in the long-term work, not just what can go viral, not just what can look pretty in a report or even can be reported on in a report. There's so much work that is done in communities that it's hard to write or even sometimes talk about if you're not experiencing.

The struggle for revolutionary change in this country has been derailed, not only due to institutionalization of social justice movements, but also because of our inability to quiet our egos. Individual leaders and organizations are constantly playing the fame game. Reinventing the wheel, and promoting their own names instead of focusing on what is truly needed to bring about change. Sometimes, what is needed is not so sexy. Sometimes, the most radical thing we can do is to follow the lead of others. Social change is only radical if it promotes struggle and growth at every level for the society at large in our intimate and everyday relationships and internally within ourselves.

It's interesting to note the central role of horizontal consensus-based shared leadership and all the emerging revolutionary movements in Latin America. They are expanding the concept of what we traditionally think of as "political work." There, the process of working for change in social justice is intimately tied to how people live their daily lives. This is what I think many of us at Sister to Sister Cherish about the collective work that we're trying to do. Even while understanding and acknowledging the many contradictions and challenges, it is thorough and integral and it challenges us to try to model our vision for a different world. So often, we are confronted by the lack of integrity and hypocrisy of those who do not practice what they preach.

We are so trapped into hierarchical corporate nonprofit models that we are unable to structure ourselves differently even when our missions advocate empowerment and self-determination for oppressed communities. When we begin to have the courage to imagine alternatives to the molds we find ourselves in, then we begin to practice what we preach. Our commitment becomes much more about the process we use to engage with our communities than about the work, my outcome, what I'm able to produce. And this is truly radical.

Page May: Thanks so much for listening to another episode of The Lit Review, a podcast where we interview people we love and respect about books for the movement.

Monica Trinidad: We are your co-hosts, Monica Trinidad.

Page May: And Page May.

Monica Trinidad: Two, Chicago based organizers.

Page May: Special shout out to The Lit Review's very own sponsor, the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership out of Kalamazoo College.

Monica Trinidad: Keep your eyes and ears open for another episode next Monday, same time, same place.

Page May: Want to hear about a specific book? Email us at thelitreviewchicago@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.

Monica Trinidad: And if you like this episode, give it a shout-out on Twitter or Instagram. Our handle is @litreviewchi. Keep reading.

Page May: Keep reading.