“No strings attached:” White Philanthropy, Black Power, and the Politics of Giving

Claire Dunning

Assistant Professor
University of Maryland, School of Public Policy
cdunning@umd.edu

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On March 4th, 1968, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated outside a Memphis motel following a speech in support of local sanitation workers on strike. News of his murder spread quickly, spurring violent clashes in cities such as Trenton, Baltimore, and Chicago between police and African Americans rebelling against longstanding practices of discrimination, and exerting power at a time when they were granted little. For the most part, Boston avoided this outcome. Credit for peace in the city is often attributed to the newly elected

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1 The research for this paper is active and ongoing. Please do not cite or share without permission.

Mayor Kevin White, who convinced performer James Brown and the local television station to broadcast his April 5th concert live to prevent crowds forming downtown at the Boston Garden. Less remembered is that the mayor Brown called a “swingin’ cat” had initially proposed to cancel the event, and it was civil rights leaders in Boston who devised the plan and worked on the ground to maintain calm in a period of intense anger.3

On that night of King’s assassination, a group of black leaders happened to be meeting at a local nonprofit as part of an ongoing effort to regroup and focus activism in the city. They had been inspired as much by Stokely Carmichael’s calls for black power as by Dr. King’s for nonviolence, and in the wake of the assassination recommitted to their efforts. They announced their collective as the Boston Black United Front and took as their motto “Unite or Perish.”4 A list of demands from the United Front, as it became known, followed that put pressure on the Mayor as well as on the wider net of nonprofit and philanthropic institutions in the area. The demands included calls for changes in municipal policy and the re-naming of public schools to honor African American heroes; as well as calls for the immediate transfer of $100 million to the black community with “no strings attached.” Sources of these funds, the demands explained, could come from municipal bonds issued by the City of Boston, or perhaps from Harvard

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University’s endowment. Such seemingly aggressive demands for economic and political power kept the NAACP from co-signing the statement and ensured a quick dismissal by the Mayor who quipped that “social reform rarely benefits from expropriation.”

The United Front’s demands did, however, fall on a few sympathetic ears, notably those of Ralph Hoagland, who had become a young millionaire through the founding and recent sale of the discount Consumer Value Store, known now by its acronym, CVS. Though he lived in a nearly all-white suburb, Hoagland became enamored with the pro-business orientation of black power and its reputation as a radical movement, committing to raise funds for the group under the “no strings attached” principle. In a series of breakfast meetings Hoagland and his allies grew a donor list to over 300 and incorporated their pass-through foundation in May 1968 as the Fund for Urban Negro Development (FUND) whose sole purpose was to channel white suburban wealth to the Boston Black United Front. A willingness among a set of white suburban elites to endorse a black power-inspired effort and to do so with “no strings attached” was for some an expedient and calculated move to appease liberal friends doing the asking and activists doing the demanding; for others it reflected a genuine interest in understanding and improving the lives and outlooks others. Either way, it generated real resources that the United Front distributed to grassroots entities in Boston. In direct—and sometimes uncomfortable—

5 “Implementation Plan,” undated, Box 27, Folder 6, Manuscript SC-1, Boston Black United Front (BBUF), Roxbury Community College Archives & Special Collections (RCC), Boston, MA.

conversations, this philanthropic entity and its one grantee confronted the ways that race and power shaped both the ways money was earned and the charitable ends to which it was donated. Though FUND and the United Front only survived a few years, this historical experiment—what today we might call a “giving circle”—holds valuable insights for both the past and the present.

In recounting the history of FUND and the United Front, this paper advances two lines of argument, though one is more explicit than the other. First, the paper emphasizes politics as first opening and then closing the opportunities for social change embodied in the FUND-United Front partnership. The sense of crisis in 1968 and the actions taken by a broad social movement in Boston gained the attention and wallets of people who lived miles yet worlds away. This roots a radical experiment in black power not in school lunch programs of Oakland but in a philanthropic experiment in Boston. Put more broadly, it is an instance of a social movement generating philanthropic resources and steering, from the bottom-up, the channels of their distribution.7 Yet what United Front activists intended as a vehicle to upend the political and economic system, became a vehicle for FUND, despite words to the contrary, to reinforce the existing order through the novel ways the resources circulated, even as they words spoke to the contrary.8

Separating action from rhetoric, and the structure of the funds from the intentions behind them illuminates the tension and challenges at the heart of foundation-driven change. Historical analysis of this “no strings attached” experiment enables us to see the black power...

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7 [Broader literature on philanthropy and social movements, past and present]
activists’ actual priorities, and how isolated those efforts remained from the mainstream public and private funding of the day.

This line of argument builds from and advances several literatures on the history of black power, philanthropy, and metropolitan politics. Historians have reclaimed black power from the realm of popular memory as the antithesis and downfall of the traditional civil rights movement and have challenged its reduction to the activities and ideas of the Black Panther Party. They have provided portraits that frame black power as a social movement with cultural, intellectual, political, and economic strands on the local, national, and transnational levels. One particularly relevant thread of this work links ideas about and policy support for “black capitalism” to black power and the growth of community-based development. A history of the United Front and FUND, however, demonstrate the ways that philanthropic giving enabled and limited the translation of these ideas into action. Doing so also shifts attention from the large foundations at

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9 The Boston Black United Front is a testament to this important separation between black power as an ideology and the Black Panther Party as one manifestation of it. BBUF embraced black power, but was seen as too accommodating by the local BPP chapter, which kept a skeptical distance from the umbrella organization even as they remained allies in the broader fights in Boston against displacement, police violence, and poverty. Karilyn Crockett, *People Before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for City Making* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018), 39.


the time—Ford Foundation in particular—which has tended to dominate the analyses that do consider the intersection of philanthropy and the black freedom movement. At the local level, however, donors were more willing to take risks and experiment in a grantmaking system with no applications, requirements, or control. That the donors were willing, at least at a superficial level, to do so similarly signals a greater willingness of elite, white suburbanites to take seriously the calls for black power, even as their activities simultaneously confirm the assessments of suburban politics, particularly liberal suburban politics.

Second, the paper seeks to support a broader case for historical inquiry in research on philanthropy. This is not necessarily a call for more research about philanthropy in the past, though it is that. Rather, it is an effort to demonstrate what a historical way of thinking—what a longer time horizon, greater attention to context and contingency, and a willingness to take seriously indirect effects—can offer to a field that often operates in time-limited grant cycles and is increasingly driven by quantitative results. It does so to support, in particular, a call for more attention to and conversation around race and power in philanthropy. One of the most important products of historical thinking comes from African American history in which

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scholars have recognized the labors, ideas, and politics of black people, but just as importantly used those narratives to enhance understandings of race as a concept or category inscribed, repeatedly and in different ways, through policy, institutions, behaviors, and practices. That philanthropy is one such arena in which race has played centrally is neither a surprising statement nor a novel one, but one that bears repeating and still warrants greater acknowledgement in the field and in research.

The (current) structure of this paper reflect the sources behind it. In a fortuitous and unusual opportunity, this paper pairs archival records from both the grantee and its funder, in this case, the United Front and FUND, respectively. These two caches of papers—meeting minutes, reports, correspondence, incorporation papers, newspaper clippings, and grant documentation—enable close analyses of each group on its own terms, and how they viewed each other and the experimental partnership. The first section introduces the Boston Black United Front and situates the organization and its members in the longer arc of civil rights activism in Boston and broader context of postwar suburbanization and deindustrialization. The second section examines FUND and its members who lived geographically close yet worlds apart in lived experience from the activists profiled in the previous section. Who these members were, how they liked to see themselves, and the political ideologies that explained the gap between the two demonstrate how FUND simultaneously met and fundamentally misunderstood the call in United Front’s demands. The third section takes funder and grantee together, examining the actual manifestation of this philanthropic experiment on a day-to-day (rather, month-to-month) level. How the “no strings attached” principle looked in practice, and the strings that continued to bind the two speak to the wider intersections of race, politics, and philanthropy in play at the time and since. This third section also considers what FUND and the
United Front accomplished in the short and long term, tracing both the direct outcomes of the grantmaking and the indirect legacies in the continued philanthropic activities of FUND members and the political lives of United Front members. Finally, the conclusion reflects upon the limitations and insights from these archival records, finding that the stories we care about are the ones that get preserved.

**Boston and its United Front**

The visible signs of crisis—riots, protests, and abandoned buildings—came later, but rising costs of services and declining tax revenues squeezed municipal budgets in Boston and cities like it in the period following World War II. During the postwar linked processes of deindustrialization, migration, and suburbanization took local shape, altering such basic patterns of where people lived, what they did for work, the quality of services they received, and how the city governed. While those in government offered one set of solutions to save the city during the age of suburbia, those kept out of City Hall fought for access, equality, and an alternate vision of what direction Boston ought to take. The physical and economic transformation of metropolitan Boston fueled organizing by black residents of Boston who, while spared the overt Jim Crow of the South still experienced broad discrimination and led lives in segregation.¹⁵ Challenging these patterns through the courts, in the streets, and with alternate black-led institutions produced a corps of black leadership in the city that, by the late 1960s, increasingly embraced black power’s language of self-determination and community control. The Boston Black United Front

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reflected the years of organizing that preceded it, and helped set the stage for the fight that continued beyond it.

Public and private investments in a new highway circumventing Boston reorganized people and capital throughout the metropolitan region in the postwar period. Federal highway spending enabled the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to enact plans to build a ring road linking what at the time were isolated, unappealing, and relatively empty suburban towns. Upon its completion, however, what The Boston Globe had once dubbed the “Road to Nowhere” now bore the nickname “the golden road” for the wealth that amassed around and near the new highway.16 Many of these firms along Route 128 had relocated from the city, where urban density made physical expansion difficult for firms if not impossible. The construction had also coincided with the rise of government investments in defense-related research and manufacturing during the Cold War that underwrote the rise of a technology and electronics sector in Massachusetts. Technology firms quickly took advantage of large tracts of land in the suburbs and the newly built highway that promised to link housing, credentialed staff, and lab space.17 Suburban towns and their boosters designed complex tax policies and zoning procedures to simultaneously attract industry while maintaining a high standard of living and low

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17 Raytheon, one of MIT’s first contracts, relocated its headquarters from Cambridge to suburban Lexington along Route 128 and became the region’s largest defense contractor and electronics manufacturer. James O’Connell, The Hub’s Metropolis: Greater Boston’s Development from Railroad Suburbs to Smart Growth (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 153.
densities to satisfy a real estate market saturated with buyers, mortgages, and jobs. Though the language employed was race-neutral, these patterns of public investment and the strategies of zoning had the—often intended—effect of creating and maintaining the extreme whiteness of Boston’s suburbs. As was the case nationally, federal mortgage regulations, local zoning policies, and practices of real estate agents shaped public and private housing markets in ways that created white suburbs and black cities. This racial sorting and segregation around Route 128 resulted in a suburban ring home to more than 80% of the metropolitan region’s white population, and the city home to more than 80% of the region’s nonwhite population. A report in the early 1970s renamed the “golden road” the “road to segregation.”

As white Bostonians flocked to the suburbs in the postwar period, African Americans and Puerto Ricans moved to Boston and added to the demographic shifts characteristic of the

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18 United States Commission on Civil Rights, Massachusetts Advisory Committee, Route 128, 39. As Lily Geismer notes, these tax and zoning formulas often became a source of suburban pride. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 26.


21 United States Commission on Civil Rights, Massachusetts Advisory Committee, Route 128, 4.

22 Ibid.
period. Though Boston had a long history of abolition and free African Americans, the black community of the city remained rather small through much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1960 number of African American residents had tripled since 1940 and continued to grow—to over 100,000 by 1965—at the same time that white Bostonians left the city for the Route 128 suburbs. These dual migrations together meant that by 1965, Boston’s black residents had risen to 17% of the total population. Discriminatory labor practices and lack of access to housing loans trapped African American families at the lowest income levels and constrained the neighborhoods in which they could secure or afford housing. Units for rent or purchase that fell within the reach of black families were more often dilapidated, more likely to carry surcharges from insurance companies, and less likely to receive financing. The concentration of black Bostonians in a few neighborhoods proved so extreme that a local social service agency found in 1961 that only 1,500 African Americans in Boston lived outside two neighborhoods of Roxbury and the South End. Further data showed that 80% of black Bostonians lived in 20 of the city’s 156 census tracts. Entrenched political interests in Boston had ensured that city departments, at best, did little to improve the unequal conditions and, at worst, actively contributed to them.

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Though meant to disrupt metropolitan patterns of racial and economic segregation, federally-financed urban renewal programs often did the opposite. Urban redevelopment had existed as a federal program since 1949 and Boston’s planning authority began strategizing as early as 1950 and by the end of the decade, two residential neighborhoods—the West End and New York Streets—had been razed and plans for others mapped out. Discriminatory housing patterns meant that black families most often occupied the worst housing in the city, and became disproportionate targets for the renewal program that became known colloquially around the country as “negro removal.” Protests against displacement did little to stop the federal bulldozer in the 1950s, but by the 1960s grew into a much broader critique against large-scale planning and top-down renewal activities. Demands first for community participation, and then for community control, shaped implementation of federal programs in Boston during the 1960s including urban renewal, the War on Poverty, and Model Cities; inspired boycotts against corporations and protests against public agencies; and informed campaigns to get black leaders elected to the School Committee and City Council. The patterns of victories and

26 The demolition of West End, a primarily immigrant, Italian neighborhood, has been memorialized in popular knowledge as a prime example of the failures of urban redevelopment in works such as Herbert Gans’ Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1962), also Jane Jacobs, Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1961). Though less is remembered about the New York Streets neighborhood that was completely wiped off of Boston maps, it too was a thriving community of immigrants. King, Chain of Change.

disappointments in Boston to gain economic and political power in a city that had granted hardly any to black residents paralleled actions in other cities.

It was into this context of civil rights activism in Boston and around the country that the new chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee or SNCC, Stokely Carmichael, began to speak and write of black power in 1966, shaping what historian Peniel Joseph has called “a movement for racial solidarity, cultural pride, and self-determination.”

Though often disregarded at the time and since for its supposed radical militancy that contrasted with the more righteous efforts of non-violence promoted by Dr. King and others, black power existed more broadly as a political and economic philosophy. During the tumultuous year of 1967, Carmichael made several trips to Boston, including one in December following a near six-month global tour that included high-profile visits to Havana and Hanoi. He spoke at a gathering at the YMCA in Roxbury, warning of a wave of repression about to crash on the black community. Given the violence of the summer of 1967 and the surveillance and violence against members of the Black Panther Party in California, such fears were not unfounded. In response, Carmichael urged black activists to form a “united front” and to put aside differences in ideology or tactic, and unite. In Boston the integrationist-separatist tension present in other parts of the United States was less pronounced and leaders vowed in an open letter to “establish common ground upon which they can stand together.” After an initial series of meetings in the winter of 1968, interest began to peter out for this new organizational effort. A plea in the local black press urged readers to attend the meetings, but the announcement was printed in a long

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slew of announcements about upcoming actions and events: calls to support a Parents’ Education Committee for Better Schools in Roxbury, an upcoming election for a local War on Poverty group, and a talk about the Vietnam war and its impact on the black community. It takes little imagination to consider the fatigue residents had to build another organizational entity in the city. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., however, seemed to confirm Carmichael’s prescient warnings about the vulnerability of black leaders in a white society and pushed black leaders in Boston to move with more urgency. “This is the time for the Front to assume its responsibilities,” one participant stated.30

Within a week of King’s death, the United Front issued a list of demands that sought nothing less than the full transfer of political and financial power to the black community in Boston. Assertive and radical, these were not requests: “all white owned and white controlled businesses will be closed until further notice, while the transfer of ownership of these businesses to the Black Community is being negotiated.” Others stated that “Every school in the Black Community shall have an all black staff, personnel, principals, teachers and custodians” and that “The Black Community is to have complete control of all publicly financed housing programs.”31 In essence, the Boston Black United Front sought a formal role in governing the black community and in controlling and owning the resources flowing through it. One demand called on Harvard University to transfer 10% of its endowment, an amount estimated at $100 million, to the black community.32 Another wanted the City of Boston to issue a series of

30 As quoted in King, Chain of Change, 103.
31 Statement of Purpose, Box 1, Folder 6, BBUF RCC.
municipal bonds and raise capital for the United Front until either $100 million had been raised or “the economic self-sufficiency of the community dictates the cessation of debt financing.”

The United Front also called for changes in municipal policy: the re-naming of schools in the black community to honor African American heroes; the hiring of black teachers, principals and police officers; that contracts for municipal services and construction go to black-owned businesses; an increase in the hiring of African Americans in city and state agencies.

The financial demands could—and were—easily written off by the entrenched interests, and the city could agree to rename buildings and hire black men and women without upending existing systems. White civic boosters pressured the Mayor to promote more “socially responsible channels” of money and in the days that followed the Mayor committed new public and private resources to African American neighborhoods. This appeasement strategy seemed to miss entirely the core philosophy behind the Boston Black United Front—the new resources were important and perhaps a recognition of the scale of inequality in the city, but fundamentally missed that the delivery mechanisms and empowerment of black people and black organizations to make decisions about those monies was an essential aspect of their protest embodied by the “no-strings attached” demand that aimed to decouple power from funding.

33 The Front presented the demands to Mayor White in April 1968 and asked for the capital as low-interest loans in increments of $5 million. “Implementation Plan,” undated, Box 27, Folder 6, BBUF, RCC.

34 As quoted in Lukas, Common Ground, 41.

Suburban Politics, Wealth, and Philanthropy

While most targets of the Black United Front’s ire disregarded the demands and the people who dared utter them, the pronouncement in the days after King’s assassination did catch the attention of some. Ralph Hoagland, who had become a young millionaire through the founding of the discount Consumer Value Store, or CVS, became interested in the activities of the United Front and committed to raising funds for the group. He, along with millionaire Sheldon Appel, started hosting breakfasts at their homes in the suburbs of Boston, raising money for what became the Fund for Urban Negro Development (FUND). This philanthropic vehicle was designed and incorporated to transfer monies only the United Front, which would then serve as the community vehicle to distribute the resources as they saw necessary and just. Along with the money, FUND members would offer their business knowledge and assistance. Just as the segregated landscape of the Boston region shaped the lives and politics of the members of the United Front, it also shaped the lives and politics of the members of FUND. Their philanthropy and its organizational vehicle served variously as a manifestation, rejection, and reinforcement of mid-century suburban liberalism with its commitment to racial equality and novel approach to achieving it.

The access to elite credentials, networks, housing, and employment denied generations of African Americans had enabled many white men, and their families, to build lives of comfort and prosperity in the Boston suburbs. The wealth accumulated in the suburban Route 128 belt reflected both inherited wealth from old-standing Yankee families and newly built fortunes from success in business. Government support undergirded this affluence in the form of direct assistance in housing or educational loans via the GI-Bill, or more indirectly in the investments
in highway infrastructure, Cold War defense spending, and local tax and zoning policies.\textsuperscript{36} Maps of the donor addresses confirm the suburban base of FUND, and that they tended to live in predominantly white and predominantly wealthy census tracts.\textsuperscript{37} Historians have traced how suburbanization fueled particular forms of political culture and rhetoric in the postwar period, and while most suburban regions tended to trend conservative, Lily Geismer has explored the particular variation of suburban liberalism in the metro Boston region.\textsuperscript{38} These voters, she argues, were forward thinking and progressive in their commitment to racial equality, feminism, and environmental causes, while also preferring individualistic rather than collective strategies of change and unwilling to interrogate how inequalities in the past had shaped the present.\textsuperscript{39} Profiles of FUND’s members reflect these broader trends in the region even as their curiosity about and support for black power set them apart.

Ralph P. Hoagland III grew up in Newton, MA the son of a Harvard alum and owner of a restaurant and drug store.\textsuperscript{40} In 1962, Ralph Hoagland III followed in these footsteps upon graduating from Harvard Business School and in 1963 joined with a pair of brothers, Sidney and Stanley Goldstein to found the Consumer Value Store in Lowell, Massachusetts. The three partners all had backgrounds in sales, and saw an opportunity to sell goods directly to consumers at lower prices—a goal much appreciated in a city like Lowell where manufacturing

\textsuperscript{36} See for example, Jackson, \textit{Crabgrass Frontier} and Cohen, \textit{A Consumers’ Republic}.

\textsuperscript{37} [GIS maps in development]

\textsuperscript{38} As examples: Lassiter, \textit{The Silent Majority}; Cohen, \textit{A Consumers’ Republic}; and McGirr, \textit{Suburban Warriors}.

\textsuperscript{39} Geismer, \textit{Don’t Blame Us}, 1, 9.

\textsuperscript{40} “Ralph P. Hoagland Finally Receives Degree; Began Task 35 Years Ago,” \textit{The Harvard Crimson}, June 11, 1953.
was on the decline in the 1960s. Hoagland successfully defended this low-price model against the Old Spice Corporation which brought suit against the new CVS for selling Old Spice deodorant, for example for 66 cents instead of the suggested price of $1.41 Thanks to these prices and the partners’ business acumen, the company rapidly expanded its store base, which by 1967 included pharmacies in addition to the usual health and beauty products on which it had made a name for itself. In 1969 the sale of CVS to the Melville Corporation made Hoagland a very wealthy man still in his mid-30s.42 The proceeds from CVS provided Hoagland the comfort and confidence with which to shape the next stages of his career.

If Hoagland’s resume from the first stage of his career followed a staid route, what came next was far less so. He had earned the reputation as an “entrepreneurial rock star.” After selling his shares in CVS around the age of 35, he returned to HBS to give a guest lecture, and was remembered by a student the following way: “He drove up on his motorcycle, long hair flowing, scarf coiled around his neck, decked out in black leather. He was the epitome of majestic, the business school equivalent of Mick Jagger—wild, irrepressible, bigger than life as he addressed us students who were in the obligatory uniform at that time: ties and jacket. His eyes were huge and penetrating, and even though I thought he could be dangerous…I couldn’t help but want to get closer to the fire.”43 In addition to FUND, Hoagland set up a shell corporation to invest in and finance several leftist newspapers in Cambridge (subsequently investigated by the U.S.

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42 [Sale dated variously as 1968 and 1969… need to determine when Hoagland cashed out as he had his wealth before launching FUND]

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Senate), purchased Orson Wells cinema in Harvard Square which he owned until a popcorn fire burned it down, helped set up a commune in New Hampshire, and hired a local photographer to capture intimate interactions between him and his wife that then accompanied a poem in a small book titled *His Idea.* All of these investments followed in the years immediately after his sale of CVS. Hoagland was, to be sure, an unusual if not eccentric character.

In launching FUND, Hoagland blended his more radical politics with his business background. As a business school student, Hoagland had done some volunteer work in Roxbury in an effort to make a difference and share the wisdom he had learned at Harvard. What began as a class project grew to a year of planning that eventually resulted in the founding of two linked organizations in Roxbury—one a for-profit real estate development firm and the other a charitable organization for social improvement. Working with a team of other white businessmen, Hoagland raised funds and they purchased a million dollars-worth of property in 1965, about 15% of a low-income, predominantly-black neighborhood, with the premise of rehabilitating and renting the units. They promised that the social investments would come later, and remained vague about the affordability of the real estate they purchased. These were the same black neighborhoods—and activities of white influence and power—that future members of the United Front challenged. Whether Hoagland saw his own culpability in their protestations

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45 The thinking behind these dual efforts would later emerge under the same nonprofit structured as community development corporations. See: Note 11.

or not, he did reinvigorate his commitments to Roxbury, enterprise and business, and the necessity of bridging the suburban-urban divide.

Hoagland did not start FUND alone, and the funding vehicle’s structure purposefully remained decentralized, resembling what today we might call a giving circle. Hoagland’s initial partner—and some say the original impetus behind the organization—was Sheldon Appel, another Newton resident and head of a box-folding company in Boston. From these two men, the network of FUND donors spread through breakfast meetings in which FUND members would invite neighbors or colleagues to learn about FUND and its grantee the United Front, as well as about broader issues of race, politics, and inequality. Joining required a minimum donation of $100 in dues ($1000 at the executive level) and one day a week of business coaching or services if called upon. Some donated at higher levels, and in addition to cash gave stock (including 4 shares of IBM) and physical assets (including a 1965 Chevrolet convertible and a 1970 Porsche). In exchange, members received a regular newsletter, complete with reading recommendations (Johnathan Kozol’s Death at an Early Age and Stokely Carmichael’s Black Power for November 1968, the same month Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey in the Presidential election), dispatches from various breakfast groups around the region, and updates on the requests from and choices by the United Front. As was intended, this grassroots model of mobilization to, as one FUND document put it, “activate the suburban white community”

47 The F.U.N.D., undated, Box 7, Folder 53, Papers of James P. Breeden, Manuscript ML-59 (ML-59), Dartmouth College (DC), Hanover, NH.

48 Letter to United Front Foundation from Fiduciary Truest Company, December 9, 1970, Box 8, Folder: Contributions, BBUF, RCC; Letter to Glenn Merry from Illa Cooper, May 12, 1971, Box 8, Folder: Contributions, BBUF, RCC; Letter to Mellanee Newkirk from Illa Cooper, May 6, 1970, Box 8, Folder: Contributions, BBUF, RCC.

49 FUND Newsletter, November 1, 1968, Box 7, Folder 7, ML-59, DC.
spread through elite networks until the donor list resembled a who’s-who of the Boston upper-class. The donor list, initially kept secret but names did leak to the *Boston Globe*, included leading figures such as Senator Ted Kennedy, Harvard notables George Lodge and Harvey Cox, the President of United Fruit Co., and executives at the area’s top firms, banks, and corporations including Honeywell and Polaroid. Impressive for reaching into the several hundreds, the list fell far short of the goal of 10,000 members by the end of 1968. While some women were listed as donors—either on their own or with husbands—the donor lists that have survived mostly name male donors. Whether these donors gave out of genuine commitment to the cause, as an effort to appease the host of the breakfast meeting or appear more radical or sympathetic than might actually be the case, FUND raised over $300,000 within the first few months of its existence.

Even if not fully embraced by all members, the ideological underpinnings of FUND stand out from the broader strains of suburban liberalism. As its central starting point, FUND materials asserted that black leaders in Boston have “the ability to solve the problems of the Negro ghetto” but that the barrier remained “insufficient resources” with which to do so. This orientation both recognized economic inequality while falling short of acknowledging the

50 The F.U.N.D., undated, Box 7, Folder 53, ML-59, DC.


52 The F.U.N.D., undated, Box 7, Folder 53, ML-59, DC.

53 “Meeting of the Board of Directors,” September 6, 1968, Box 7, Folder 47, ML-59, DC.

54 The F.U.N.D., undated, Box 7, Folder 53, ML-59, DC.
structural or policy-based roots of such uneven wealth and poverty between suburbs and city. Still, FUND documents repeatedly position the organization as “responsive” to the needs of black neighborhoods “in the ways defined by Black Leadership” without “white controls, advice, or helpful hints.” In a rare step for philanthropy, FUND materials acknowledged “No one can know [the needs or priorities] better than the people who have them.” With this unconventional, if not radical orientation for philanthropy, FUND promoted itself to the mighty bastion of liberalism, the Ford Foundation, as a unique experiment not for its hoped-for outcomes, but for its processes and ideological position. The problem, FUND founder Sheldon Appel tried to explain to the Ford staff, was “the failure of suburban citizenry to understand why their racism causes ‘Roxbury’s’ in the first place,” the only for which would be true community control achieved outside the traditional charity mold.” Ford rejected this notion claiming to already be supporting community development in its grantmaking and leadership cultivation.

FUND existed explicitly as a pass-through vehicle to transfer wealth from white suburban donors to black-led entities in the city, but also functioned as consciousness raising space for FUND members to better understand race and their whiteness. Philanthropy tends to reflect the interests and identities of the giver, but so rarely is that identity so centrally structured

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55 Emphasis in original. Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 In a letter reporting on his meeting with the Ford Foundation, Sheldon Appel suggested that that Ford might only be moved with “direct intervention of someone of Sen. Ted’s stature,” an opportunity which, of course, FUND realistically had access to. Letter to Thomas J. White from Shelly Appel, January 21, 1969, Box 7, Folder 45, ML-59, DC.
58 Letter to Stephen Crosby from Melvin A. Mister, January 22, 1969. Box 7, Folder 45, ML-59, DC.
around race. The, at times awkward, self-reflection captured in FUND newsletters and meeting minutes reveals a cohort of suburban liberals willing to name their racial status, at the same time that they remained unwilling to dismantle the institutions that had created that hierarchy of exclusion. FUND minutes, for example, enumerated its purpose as “to establish a ‘white’ Investment Corporation,” but the choice to set off “white” with quotation marks signals both a recognition of their whiteness as articulated by black activists, while also carefully policing their own recorded legacy so as not to appear as fully ascribing to or celebrating that racial marker. This phrase embodied the larger politics of FUND and the ways its members both listened attentively and selectively to the demands of the United Front.

The tensions in the philosophy behind FUND also came through in the the repeated emphasis on business incubation, economic development, and, in particular, skill-development through coaching—even if only when solicited—that reflected a far more traditional approach to change rooted in self-help. While the driving purpose of donating money without attaching stipulations or “strings” out of recognition of the expertise and capability of black leaders signaled an understanding of poverty centered around lack of capital, the repeated offers of coaching and lending of professional skills from the white donors still drew on the dominant theories at the time about the cultural failings of poor African Americans. On the one hand, attention to enterprise and black capitalism aligned closely with the rhetoric of black power and the economic goals of the United Front. FUND members could, thanks to their professional

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60 The linking of black economic power and black political power surrounded a series of efforts in Roxbury to help residents access capital and launch enterprises without relying on white institutions. These efforts, sometimes of which were aided by government or philanthropic grants, included for-profit and nonprofit corporations such as the CIRCLE, Inc, NECDEC, and Unity
success and wealth, see the promise of business, while their whiteness and politics limited their ability to accept that fully investing in a version of black capitalism might require fundamental changes to the political-economic system in the United States and a redistribution of assets and power. FUND reflected, in other words, the politics and policies of expanding opportunity so core to mid-century liberalism that fell short of resetting the structural basis of inequality.

Unwilling to alter the policies behind discriminatory lending, FUND members willingly put up their donations as useful for both philanthropic grants and as investment capital to be managed by white managers able to “lend credibility” and assess business plans from black applicants.61 This white investment corporation would “collect and hold the investment money until the Black Community is ready.”62 The paternalism behind these conversations and FUND documents suggest not necessarily a distrust or disbelief in African American businesses, but rather a singular faith and confidence in the idea that success in business depended on the kinds of networks, knowledge, and skills fostered at places like Harvard Business School, where so many FUND donors had ties.

Upon initial read the ideas and motivations behind FUND risk appearing contradictory. On the one hand, here was an organization with a progressive embrace of black power, willingness to donate “no strings attached,” diagnosis of poverty as an economic problem of capital and investment, acknowledgement of and responsiveness to black leadership in Boston, and vocal critique of white people in suburbia. It was also, on the other hand, a coalition of

61 “Meeting of the Board of Directors,” September 6, 1968, Box 7, Folder 7-47, ML-59, DC.
62 Ibid.
white elites that valued a narrow set of business credentialing, donated relatively minor or modest amounts, retained control over investment funds, and sought privacy from press coverage. While this progressivism and traditionalism may seem at odds, they were, in fact, what enabled the experiment of FUND to exist. Pairing a more radical philanthropic vehicle and process with the more traditional outcome of business development balanced the novel with the familiar. This resonated with at least some suburbanites, who were, on average, too old to join the counter-cultural hippies in the free speech, anti-Vietnam, and women’s movement, and too young to be their parents.

**FUNDing the Revolution**

The alliance that bound FUND and the Boston Black United Front had been rooted in the concept of “no strings attached” funding as a new approach to philanthropy that openly acknowledged the presence of race and its relationship to money and power. Translating such rhetoric into action, however, meant confronting—and at times skirting—the ways that even this version of philanthropy continued to reinforce the very relationships between money, power, and race that they sought to undo. There were, in other words, still strings attached even if they became more indirect or went unstated. This reinforcement, and the recognition thereof, occurred within FUND and the United Front, and in their joint meetings. Once again, the broader political context in which these entities operated shaped the possible outcomes of the funding, constrained the paths in which it could travel, and the visible legacies thereof that remain.

To solicit and hold the funds raised, FUND incorporated as a charitable organization early and easily, giving it a legal basis from which to translate ideals into action. Hoagland and
others chartered FUND in May 1968, and received a positive letter from the IRS confirming its charitable status in July of that same year.\footnote{Letter to FUND from IRS, July 30, 1968, Box 7, Folder 45, ML-59, DC.} That letter drew on old tropes from urban renewal and the recently published report from the Kerner Commission in framing FUND’s activities “to combat the increasing neighborhood deterioration” and “lessening neighborhood tension in slum areas.”\footnote{Ibid. See also: Report of the National Commission on Civil Disorders (1968).} Such language obfuscated the support for black power that FUND professed elsewhere, and instead linked riot prevention and poverty reduction through the generosity of white donors as a worthy and legal activity safely within the political mainstream. Respectable activities included mentorship, educating “the general public about the Negro community,” and facilitating communication “between residents of those slums and suburban residents.”\footnote{Letter to FUND from IRS, July 30, 1968, Box 7, Folder 45, ML-59, DC.} That FUND was authorized to make loans and grants to organizations and, critically, individuals “establishing themselves in business…if the applicant is impoverished or distressed” set new precedent in the flexibility afforded charitable foundations and harkened back to language first used by Benjamin Franklin in his establishment of a trust for needy persons.\footnote{Ibid; Crocker Snow Jr., “Whites Give $300,000 to Blacks,” \textit{The Boston Globe}, January 11, 1969.} This justification and approval for loans was confirmed by the IRS three months later.\footnote{Letter to FUND from IRS, September 13, 1968, Box 32, Folder 8, BBUF, RCC.}

The broad ruling that granted FUND flexibility in its distribution of philanthropic resources did not, however, extend to the United Front, whose activities were analyzed by the IRS with far more suspicion, scrutiny, and hostility. The Boston Black United Front Foundation had incorporated as an organization in May of 1968 (an entity technically separate from but tied...
to the Boston Black United Front), but only received recognition as a charitable entity by the IRS in the summer of 1969.\textsuperscript{68} Given the changes to the tax code and the constriction of foundation activities in the Tax Reform Act of 1969, the IRS refrained from ruling on the black entity’s status as a foundation but did provisionally acknowledge the planned activities to, like FUND, relieve the poor, “lessen neighborhood tensions,” and support community development through the issuing of grants or loans.\textsuperscript{69} Two years later, however, the IRS reversed this authorization retroactively, citing “flagrant disregard” for accounting and grant management.\textsuperscript{70} The IRS objected to several of the group’s activities. First, the foundation had granted monies to organizations which did not have tax-exempt status. Second, several of the outstanding loans looked like grants or gifts to private individuals since they lacked repayment plans. And third, the foundation had “discriminated” in giving monies only to black individuals and organizations.\textsuperscript{71} The United Front Foundation challenged the first two accusations, asserting that they were indeed giving grants to nonprofit organizations (even though some were small or new and did not yet have tax-exempt status) and loans to individuals with a clear expectation of repayment. On the third charge, the foundation was clearly guilty—the very purpose of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{68} Unclear when BBUFF applied to IRS. United Front Foundation Incorporation Papers, May 28, 1968, Box 32, Folder 1, BBUF, RCC; Letter to United Front Foundation, Inc. from IRS, undated, Box 32, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Letter IRS to United Front Foundation, undated, Box 32, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC. [Need more context on tax reform here.]
  \item \textsuperscript{70} Letter from Agent Lyndon Colclough to United Front Foundation, May 27, 1971, Box 32, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Letter from the IRS to United Front Foundation, 27 May 1971, Box 30, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC; Letter from Mellanee E. Newkirk to Members, May 11, 1971, Box 24, Folder 1, BBUF, RCC.
\end{itemize}
organization had been to direct monies into the black community of Boston.\footnote{Letter from United Front Foundation to IRS, October 29, 1971, Box 30, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.} The IRS ruled such activities illegal in this instance, and constricted the channels through which money circulated to African American organizations.

Despite bold promises and strong legal standing, the resources for FUND were slow to arrive and slow to difficult replenish. Already in July of 1968—only a few months after FUND’s incorporation, the group admitted trouble raising funds and proposed the switch from a philanthropic vehicle to a for-profit investment model offering loans only.\footnote{United Front Steering Committee Minutes, July 24, 1968, Box 2, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.} Eventually the group raised about $500,00 in the first year and a half.\footnote{FUND financial report, September 30, 1969, Box 8, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.} Before any of it made it into Roxbury, a portion of this money went toward covering office space for FUND in Beacon Hill, a staff member, and the cost of printing the newsletters.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}.} Going into 1970, FUND had trouble not only recruiting new members (of which they had only 21 in 1969) but in retaining the existing ones with a loss of over a hundred from 1968.\footnote{\textit{Ibid}.} This triggered financial limitations and shortfalls between what the United Front expected and needed, and what FUND delivered.\footnote{“FUND Newsletter,” February 7, 1969, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC.} Pleas to members framed the failure of FUND to meet their financial promises as “guilty of the worst crime” not for failing to create change but for having “raised the hopes and aspirations of the Black Community.”\footnote{“FUND Newsletter,” November 8, 1968, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC.} By 1970, FUND was nearly out of funds and those that it did raise went toward paying off a loan taken out by members but given to the United Front to absolve

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Note1} Letter from United Front Foundation to IRS, October 29, 1971, Box 30, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
\bibitem{Note2} United Front Steering Committee Minutes, July 24, 1968, Box 2, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.
\bibitem{Note3} FUND financial report, September 30, 1969, Box 8, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.
\bibitem{Note4} \textit{Ibid}.
\bibitem{Note5} \textit{Ibid}.
\bibitem{Note6} “FUND Newsletter,” February 7, 1969, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC.
\bibitem{Note7} “FUND Newsletter,” November 8, 1968, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC.
\end{thebibliography}
themselves of the financial risk, a choice that took precedence over a request from the United Front for $4,000 to help cover their office rent. Black leaders at the joint meeting responded that “if they do not have the money we do not meet.”

Still, money did flow from FUND to the United Front, and the choices made by the United Front Foundation about where to make grants, and of what amount offer a lens into the priorities community members set. After all, their philanthropy, just as much as that of the white donors, served an expression of their politics and preferences. While a core group of activists liaised with FUND, an elected group of residents served as the board for the United Front Foundation. The United Front created ballots with biographies and photographs of the candidates, and divided the black neighborhoods of the city into districts each with a representative. The elected group issued the first round of grants in relatively small sums, mostly all under $10,000. While not a lot of money, the grassroots entities targeted were rarely the recipients of the incoming government funds from the War on Poverty or from the other major foundation grants to Boston. In contrast, the United Front’s grants supported several black student unions at area high schools and colleges, an alternative “liberation” school, a welfare rights group, and a parent-led busing program that brought black students to better public schools. Not all funds went toward meeting immediate service-delivery and political goals, as board members also voted to purchase a piece of art for the Roxbury based National Center of Afro-American artists. The piece, drybrush and ink on board was by black artist Charles White and titled “Nat Turner Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow” in a clear celebration, in the words of United Front member Rev. James Breeden, “the dignity, power, beauty, and strength of black

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79 Joint Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1970, Box 3, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
80 United Front Foundation, Annual Report, October 19, 1970, Box 24, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
people.” By the end of 1970 the foundation had dispensed almost $230,000 into the community. The foundation also made loans at low- or no-interest to small businesses and individuals. Loans totaling $150,000 over two years supported businesses ranging from local “superettes,” to small restaurants, clothing stores, an independent newspaper, and an auto shop. Other proposals included expanding a “Freedom Foods” grocery, a local radio station, and a day care center. Applications for both grants and loans were rolling and relatively informal, though a written submission and sometimes an interview at the board meeting were standard. In both funding process and funding decisions, the United Front Foundation’s operations deliberately departed from the traditional mold.

While not the standard strings tying funder to grantee, FUND still exerted influence over the United Front. In other words, the strings had loosened but not been untied. FUND members frequently asked the United Front about their grants and loans, reasoning that such details helped with fundraising and satisfied the curiosity of donors. Information on the United

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81 Ibid. Quotation from Bay State Banner article 17 April 1969 quoted in FUND Newsletter April 25, 1969, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC.

82 United Front Foundation & Steering Committee Meeting, June 2, 1969, Box 3, Folder 1, BBUF, RCC; United Front Steering Committee Meeting, 9 June 1969, Box 3, Folder 1, BBUF, RCC.

83 United Front Foundation, Annual Report, 19 October 1970, Box 24, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC. After board members found their loan recipients had “either failed or are limping along,” the United Front Foundation reconsidered its strategy and started to make loans to larger cooperative businesses. United Front Foundation, “Why the Structure of the United Front Foundation, Inc. Should be Changed,” undated, Box 24, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC; “United Front Foundation” undated, Box 24, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC; United Front Foundation, “For Release: Changes in Foundation Investment Policy,” undated, Box 24, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.

84 United Front Foundation & Steering Committee Meeting Minutes, December 1, 1969. Box 2, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.

85 FUND, Meeting Minutes, September 23, 1969, Box 7, Folder 5, BBUF, RCC.
Front Foundation’s decisions and the activities of its grantees frequently appeared in FUND newsletters and minutes, reflecting regular communication and funneling of information that FUND members felt entitled to. Representatives from the United Front frequently attended meetings with FUND’s executive board, made presentations at the breakfast solicitation meetings, and conducted “sensitivity” trainings for suburban donors.\(^{86}\) For these informal yet time consuming engagements, black activist Chuck Turner was counseled by FUND leaders to not frighten the audience while in a fundraising capacity.\(^{87}\) Requests that Turner moderate his politics, tone, or pursuits in front of a white audience were the precise forms of power and disrespect the United Front actively resisted and the basis of an allegation that FUND practiced a form of “neo-colonialism.”\(^{88}\) FUND’s demands, even if informal and voluntary, still represented an exertion of power of funder over grantee.

The repeated requests for information about black power and the United Front’s activities in Roxbury revealed how much of the emphasis of FUND’s activity and motivations was really about satisfying the curiosity and interests of the white donors. The careful attention given by FUND to its own donors and the mobilization of white suburbanites was perceived as ‘the more difficult task’ and therefore the central task.\(^{89}\) The move to establish an office and hire a full time administrator both formalized FUND as more than a pass-through and detracted

\(^{86}\) Press Conference Agenda, Box 2, Folder 7, BBUF, RCC.

\(^{87}\) United Front Steering Committee Minutes, January 26, 1970, Box 3, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.

\(^{88}\) United Front Meeting on Investment Company Minutes, May 13, 1968, Box 2, Folder 1, BBUF, RCC.

\(^{89}\) Letter from Illa Cooper to G. Brenton Creelman, September 22, 1970, Box 25, Folder 5, BBUF, RCC.
materially from the resources transferred to the United Front.90 FUND materials spoke of the “exciting experience” of working with the United Front and of seminar sessions as “a kind of experience that was valuable and significant, even when it was personally disturbing.”91 The organization promoted these cross-racial dialogues as a chance for white donors to pose questions of black Bostonians in what was promoted as a productive setting but may have crossed the line into voyeurism. Donors lost interest in FUND when they did not get opportunities for coaching black entrepreneurs, and FUND leaders considered organizing a weekend in Roxbury for donors in a form of cross-cultural exchange a few mere miles from where they lived.92 Such extreme—and insulting—measures continued to put the needs and interests of white people over the needs of the black community, even as the one was meant to serve the other. FUND leaders measured their success not by change that occurred in Roxbury, but by their own organizational success. They prided themselves—undeservedly at times—for proving “itself a remarkable grassroots organization,” and following a successful annual meeting, thanked the United Front’s speaker, Rev. Breeden, for his “very effective” presentation that “served some very useful purposes,” namely the pledging of new donations and “revitalization of The FUND.”93 By 1972 FUND when closed its doors the organization had been mostly defunct for some time. A eulogizing letter to donors reflected on an organization “which has

90 Memo from Roland S. Larsen to FUND, October 23, 1968, Box 7 Folder 45, ML-59, DC.
92 FUND, Meeting Minutes, September 23, 1969, Box 7, Folder 5, BBUF, RCC.
93 “The Fund Newsletter,” April 9, 1969, Box 7, Folder 49, ML-59, DC; Letter from Illa Cooper to James Breeden, January 2, 1969, Box 7, Folder 45, ML-59, DC.
meant so much to us all.”

By the early 1970s, the momentum and urgency that had captured Hoagland and others attention in 1968 had passed. Their privilege afforded them the ability to salute themselves and move on.

This slow decline of FUND and its inability to keep the attention of donors paralleled a growing resistance on the part of United Front activists who had already begun to devise newer funding mechanisms even further separated from the white gaze and from dependency on white resources. At a community event celebrating Black Solidarity Day in 1970, activist Mel King urged those assembled to end the “dependency on outside resources” and to recognize that any political change would need to be financed from within the black community. There was, he argued, no other way to truly establish community control when “he who pays the fiddler calls the tune—there is no such thing as ‘no strings attached.’” He proposed a number of mechanisms, including self-taxation, community sales tax, legalizing betting, and the creation of a United Black Appeal. This last idea gained momentum from a number of black organizations who pledged to pool their foundation support and withdrew from the United Fund (a precursor to the United Way) on the premise that black organizations demonstrated a higher need and received a disproportionately low percent of funds raised through the popular workplace giving program. Instead, the United Black Appeal would cut out the middle-men of FUND or the United Fund and generate resources for and within the black community. Upon the closing of

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94 “Letter to All FUND Supporters, Past and Present,” June 9, 1972, Box 7, Folder 4, BBUF, RCC.

95 Emphasis in original. Statement by Mel King, New Urban League, Black Solidarity Day, May 19, 1970, Box 1, Folder 8, BBUF, RCC.
FUND, donors to that effort were encouraged to give to the new entity, though it is unclear whether any did.96

The brief coming together and then the parting of ways between FUND and the United Front reinforce the difficulties of removing the strings from philanthropic resources even, if not especially, from well-intentioned donors. For what were strings to some, was power to others. Perhaps the minutiae of grant applications and management had been removed and replaced with a clear one-way transfer of money from a white funding entity to a black re-funding entity, but the power relationship that accompanied that money—its origins, its donation, its purchase of narratives—remained wholly in tact. Recognizing this, however, is not the same as calling FUND and the United Front Foundation a failure. To consider this experiment of the late 1960s a complete failure is to adopt a narrow definition of impact. The persistence of inequality and the support of grassroots organizations in Roxbury were not mutually exclusive outcomes. To say as such would be to deny the hard work of those working day-in and day-out to improve the lives of their children, families, and neighborhoods. United Front Foundation board member John Young, had called their work “one of the most significant developments to occur in the history of Boston’s black community.”97 Mel King credited the United Front in Boston for its celebration of black culture, and inspiring black Bostonians to celebrate Kwanza and Black Solidarity Day. Chuck Turner, who was among the foremost leaders of the United Front, called it “a nesting place for projects” where members of the community could come together, unite,

96 “Letter to All FUND Supporters, Past and Present,” June 9, 1972, Box 7, Folder 4, BBUF, RCC.

97 BBUF, Press Release, 16 July 1968, Box 28, Folder 2, BBUF, RCC.
and partner. The response to the United Front's demand and the resources provided were both integral to these achievements and not.

Conclusion

Perhaps nothing embodies the legacies of FUND and the United Front more than in the way their histories have been preserved. Historians are trained to think about which voices have been preserved in the archives, and which are harder to find. We are trained to “read against the grain” and look for presence when the initial read might suggest absence. Typically, and for reasons that are straightforward, the dominant voices are those with power. They are typically male, white, wealthy, and credentialed; they are the important people whose activities have been tracked and whose status is deemed worthy of preserving in the archives. Indeed, even before the moment of archiving such privilege is ensconced in the access to literacy and the materials with which to write, and in the shelter with which to protect and collect over time. An entire generations of historians in the 1970s pushed the profession to interrogate evidence in new ways, and historical training in the twenty-first century remains in indebted to this revolution in method and analysis. The archival evidence behind the research presented here, however, breaks this mold in surprising and telling ways. It is the black voices of the United Front and United Front Foundation whose are the loudest, and members of FUND whose are much harder to discern.

The United Front’s papers have been processed and archived at the Roxbury Community College, itself a product of the United Front’s activism. It is one of a small handful

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98 As quoted in Mel King, *Chain of Change*, 110.
of manuscript collections of an archive that has no dedicated space and instead differentiates from the tables otherwise occupied with community college students with a small tent-card set out only when a researcher arrives. Even this is a triumph. For, as Karilyn Crocket describes, the United Front’s documents sat for years in an old train station exposed to moisture and mildew before Byron Rushing, an activist turned State Representative, literally saved them from a wrecking ball tearing down the building in which they were housed. From there, the materials sat in storage in Cambridge for ten years before the Lenny Durant, the United Front’s office manager, moved them to his house and organized and sorted the materials in his spare time. He then donated them to Roxbury Community College in 1999.\textsuperscript{99} The rich collection contains debates over who and how to fund, as well as the grant applications to the United Front. Some of these were funded and others rejected, and together allow insight into the needs and visions of black Bostonians and the constraints in which they pursued them.

The other set of materials from which this account draws were similarly donated from someone active in the United Front, though the papers ended up in a very different location. Reverend James Breeden had been actively involved in the United Front and its foundation through his position as an Executive Director of the Commission on Church and Race for the Massachusetts Council of Churches. Born in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College, he became ordained by the Episcopal Church and received a masters and then doctorate degree in education from Harvard. In the time between degrees, Breeden had been arrested in Jackson Mississippi while trying to desegregate a local bus terminal. A black man with both elite and civil rights credentials, Breeden became a key interlocutor between FUND and the Front. He later

\textsuperscript{99} Crockett’s insight into the preservation and the materials and the journey they made is extraordinary. Crockett, \textit{People Before Highways}, 78.
became a dean at Dartmouth College, and he donated his papers to the college in 1985. The papers span most of his career, and include a few file folders of minutes and correspondence he had preserved on FUND.\textsuperscript{100} The archive in which they are are housed resides in a stunning building in rural New Hampshire nearly a total opposite of the Roxbury Community College yet represent a path no less extraordinary in preservation.

Thus it is from collections saved and maintained by black Bostonians that this account is drawn and from which I was able to reconstruct the voices of donors to FUND. Both collections had material from the philanthropic side that enabled this research to examine both funder and grantee—a rare opportunity and an important one.\textsuperscript{101} And while luck and good fortune were essential to my access to these materials, so too were choices made by those involved. As far as I have been able to find, no member of FUND has made the same attempt to preserve the history of their philanthropic experiment, despite the standing on which to do so. Whether out of concern for privacy, an absent minded toss of materials into recycling, or a dismissal of a short-lived effort, donors to FUND seem not to have put as much stock preserving what for many of them was a casual, fun, perhaps thrilling thing tried once and not repeated.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} “The Papers of James P. Breeden at Dartmouth College” (ML-59), Finding Aid, Dartmouth College. https://ead.dartmouth.edu/html/ml59.html

\textsuperscript{101} See HistPhil’s series on foundation archives: https://histphil.org/category/archives-and-knowledge-management/

After all, the political moment that had fueled FUND’s establishment and early activities faded for donors in ways it never did for the black community. Only a few years after FUND folded a victory in the courts for civil rights activism in Boston prompted the infamous and violence-laded establishment of busing to desegregate the public schools. Black activists relied on their same networks that led to the United Front to mount the initial legal challenge and to protect the children whose school buses were targeted with rocks and racial epithets. Members of the United Front successfully blocked a federal highway from running through their community and spent the next several decades working to populate the cleared land with institutions (such as the Roxbury Community College) selected and led by, and of use to members of the black community.103 Black activists ran for office—State Representative, City Council, and Mayor—with both victories and losses. For these men and women, the urgency, injustice, and demand for community control never faded from 1968 as the goals were not yet, in full, achieved. Even as black organizations and the people involved in them made progress, the strings of race, philanthropy, and power remained knotted.

Are these knots entirely the fault of the white suburbanites or a reason to dismiss their genuine, if flawed, efforts to use philanthropy to confront the issues of race, power and inequality? Certainly not. FUND could not alone have undone the racialized structures or systems undergirding their wealth and the poverty in Roxbury that were rooted in deeper history and extended far beyond the Route 128 beltway. And their donations did make a difference in furthering—in both material and political ways—the black power agenda of the late 1960s. The willingness, tepid and uncomfortable at times to be sure, to discuss whiteness and the white

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103 Crockett, *People Before Highways*. 
community pushed suburban liberalism further to the left even as it failed to interrogate the perpetuation of racial and economic privileges in their giving. These achievements and disappointments are worth holding together, as is understanding the relationship between the two, as we continue to operate in the world that shaped and was shaped by FUND and its one grantee.