

FUNdraising Good Times: African American men find a new way to give back

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
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Part one of a two part series

Readers of our column know we are supporters and promoters of women's philanthropy including women's foundations and giving circles. Mel likes to joke, "what about men's philanthropy?" Now we have an answer: the Ujima Legacy Fund – an African American male giving circle. Knowing that men don't want to be outdone by women, and that women want to support men, we bring you this interview with Reginald Gordon, one of the fund's founders. In addition to supporting and growing African American men's philanthropy Gordon is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Eastern Virginia Region of the American Red Cross.

Let's start at the beginning. We asked Gordon about the events that led up to creation of the fund. "The Ujima Legacy Fund grew out of a series of conversations that we had in a barbershop," he began. "A group of African American men decided to hold monthly conversations in a downtown barbershop a few years ago. The evening conversations attracted a cross section of men, from construction workers to college professors. We promoted the conversations by word of mouth. It felt like a Million Man March experience. We explored myriad topics that impacted the black community in Richmond, including the lack of black men involved in local philanthropy. A few of us decided to take action on the idea of getting more African American men involved in philanthropy. We kept on working on this idea after the cessation of the monthly barbershop conversations. We did research on black male philanthropy and decided that we needed to form an African American male giving circle. We named it the Ujima Legacy Fund. Ujima, the third day of Kwanzaa, means collective work and responsibility."

While fundraising can be challenging, organizing how a fund operates can be even more complex. We asked Gordon to share how the fund operates. "We decided to keep the management of the Ujima Legacy Fund as simple as possible. The fund is open to any African American man who wishes to join. In order to become a member of the Ujima Legacy Fund, the man must contribute \$1,100. Each member gets one vote, when it is time to select the grantee," Gordon began. "The Ujima Legacy Fund has a partnership with the Community Foundation of Richmond for administration of the fund. The men of Ujima decided on the types of programs and agencies that would be appropriate for our funding. We agreed that we wanted to target our funds toward agencies that had credible educational programs designed to serve young adults. Prospective grantees apply for the Ujima Legacy Fund through the Community Foundation website (www.tcfrichmond.org)."

Next week: *grant making, and how to start your own fund.*

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Learn more at www.bit.ly/UjimaLegacyFund .

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