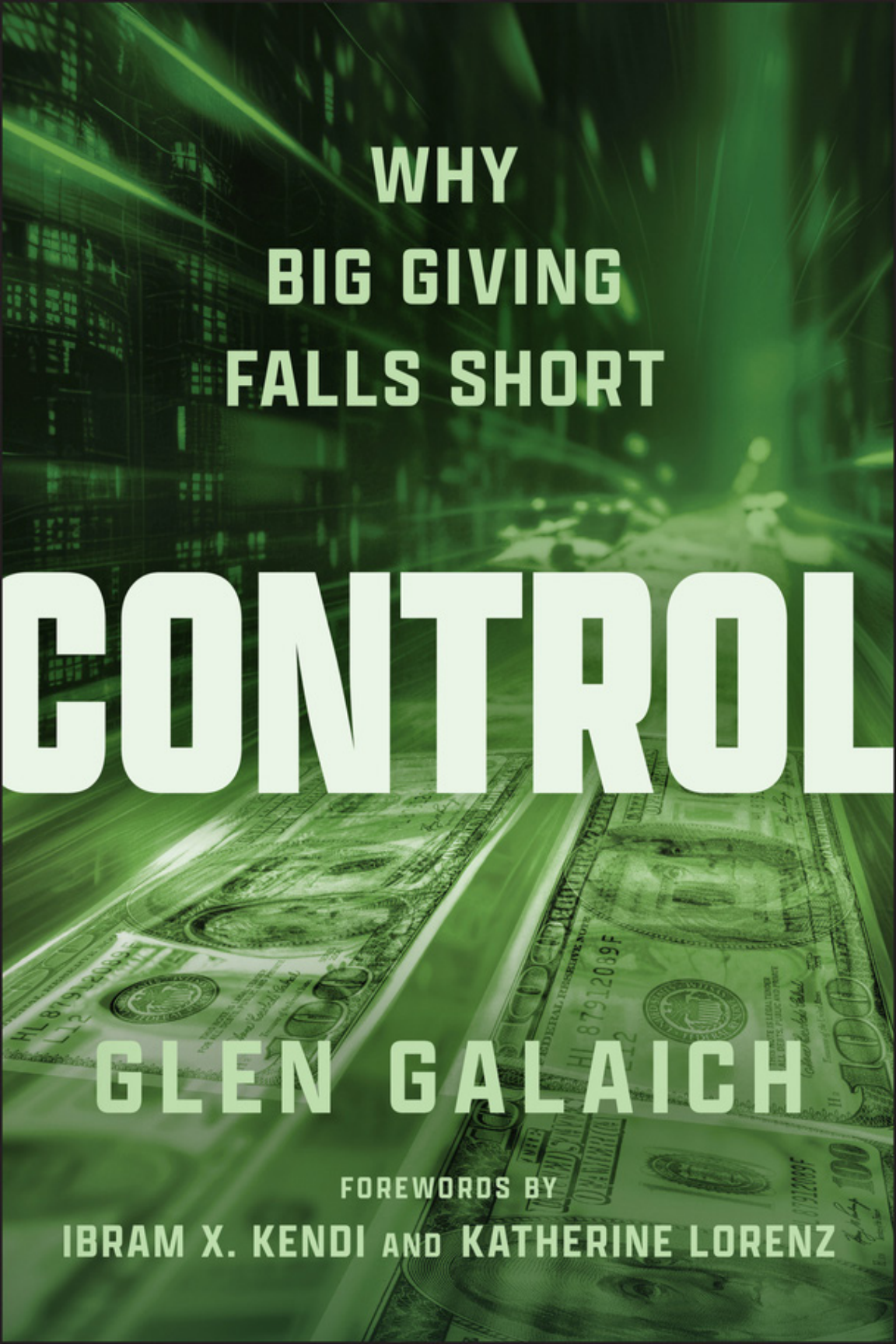




**WHY
BIG GIVING
FALLS SHORT**

CONTROL

GLEN GALAICH

FOREWORDS BY
IBRAM X. KENDI AND KATHERINE LORENZ

Praise for *CONTROL*

“*CONTROL* is a clear-eyed examination of systemic problems in the philanthropic sector that prevent nonprofit organizations from achieving systemic change. Its message is clear: Sustained support, paired with trust, is the formula that produces the best chance of success for donors and nonprofits alike.”

—**TREVOR POTTER**, former Chairman of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), Founder & President of the nonprofit Campaign Legal Center

“This book deftly dissects the root causes and pervasive harms of donor centrism. It’s a wake-up call in times that need our fullest attention.”

—**PIA INFANTE**, Founder & Co-Executive Director of the Trust Based Philanthropy Project

“Of the many volumes written about how to make philanthropy more effective, none are as provocative as *CONTROL*. Glen Galaich has deployed the sharp end of a power tool called self-reflection, with the raw courage required to break new ground. In so doing, he has drilled down deep into the national philanthropic psyche and found that the place we each need to look most intently is in the mirror.”

—**BILLY SHORE**, Founder & Executive Chair of the nonprofit Share Our Strength

“Galaich’s book is the most honest, refreshing, and inspiring book I have read to date regarding the philanthropic industrial complex. The reason is that it is not yet another analysis of all the problems and casting blame on the wealthy, but instead offers context and concrete SOLUTIONS. Moving from donor control to comprehensive community engagement is not a pipe dream. We know it works. The proven examples he offers can accelerate positive results for everyone working to improve outcomes for all people and our planet.”

—**RENEE KAPLAN**, CEO, Forward Global

“Galaich offers a unique window into mega-millionaire philanthropy through his experience of working with one. With unusual candor and insight, the story sheds light on a crucial question facing philanthropy today: How can it overcome the forces that make ‘control’ the norm and rather engage communities so that they have the power to shape their own future? There’s much to learn from Galaich’s journey.”

—**JEFF BRADACH**, Co-founder and former Managing Partner of the global philanthropic consultancy The Bridgespan Group

“My father, Larry Stupski, possessed a remarkable genius for operations and an unwavering commitment to systemic change—principles that shaped both his leadership and his vision for the Stupski Foundation. With *CONTROL*, Glen Galaich carries this legacy forward with humility, strategic foresight, and a relentless focus on continuous improvement, all deeply rooted in the Larry Stupski ethos. His work honors not just my father’s vision but also his enduring belief in the power of thoughtful leadership to create lasting change.”

—**MAIDA LYNN**, philanthropist, board member
of the Stupski Foundation

“Riveting and rigorous, *CONTROL* takes readers on a revealing ride through philanthropy’s paradoxes—how our instinct to control often constrains progress on the very issues we seek to address. I found myself reflecting on my own leadership, at turns fascinated, frustrated, and fired up. A powerful and necessary read for anyone who believes philanthropy can do better.”

—**JAMIE ALLISON**, Executive Director,
Walter and Elise Haas Fund

“There is a growing discontent within philanthropy and an awareness that the system we inherited from the past may not be serving our needs today. *CONTROL* taps into this powerfully and daringly. We can’t keep doing things the same way and expecting a different result.”

—**PAUL SHOEMAKER**, author of *Can’t NOT Do: The Compelling Social Drive that Changes Our World* and founder
of Social Venture Partners International

“Share power and control. Engage community perspectives. Listen to those who are most affected by your decisions. Glen Galaich provides compelling and timely advice for donors who care about our collective future.”

—**NICK TEDESCO**, President & CEO, National
Center for Family Philanthropy

CONTROL

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WILEY

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is Available:

ISBN 9781394352425 (Cloth)

ISBN 9781394352449 (ePDF)

ISBN 9781394352432 (ePub)

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Images: © Cagkan/stock.adobe.com,

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For Joyce Stupski, the original fake rule breaker

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THE MINDSET OF TRUST: A FOREWORD BY IBRAM X. KENDI

As a historian, it is my job to work with sources to compile a historical record. Sources transport historians back to the past to be a witness, to recall, to tell the present and the future what happened. I trust the research process of finding reliable sources, of scrutinizing information from sources, of piecing together the history.

There are sources I find the most reliable and relatable. They display the clarity to be self-reflective and the courage to be self-critical. I prefer researching and sourcing and writing and most of all reading societal and personal moments of profound change. Like this book.

Glen Galaich has changed in profound ways as a philanthropist. He has been reflective of his profound changes, as you'll see in these pages. He opens this book at a moment of his life when he believed donors could best progress humanity through "consolidated control" over their "charitable dollars." That ended up being the starting point of his self-reflective and self-critical journey to relinquish excessive control of philanthropic gifts and engage in "a more ethical community-engaged philanthropy." Galaich continuously dips into his own chronology of changes to pose a critical challenge to philanthropy. He writes with grace, with humility, with empathy. He seems to recognize that wherever his peers may be on their own journey of overcoming what he calls the "Mindset of Control," he has been there. He says he is still striving to stay away from there.

Galaich is determined to lock arms with his peers to shape the "new phase of American giving," as he calls it. I believe I can speak for many grantees when I say this new phase of giving will yield a new era of

impact. Put it this way: the less control philanthropy exercises over gifts, the more flexibility for grantees. The more flexibility, the more we sustain our organizations. The more sustainability, the more risks. The more risks, the more innovation. The more innovation, the more impact. The more impact, the more progress.

Admittedly, the more risks, the more failure. But as we all know, failure is the best teacher. Those of us who are open to her sincere lessons, learn tremendously from failure. We emerge from this classroom more clear-eyed about how to set our organizations on the road to innovation, impact, and progress.

Now, it is unorthodox what Galaich is challenging himself and his peers to do. Giving out money and giving up control is counterintuitive in a society where money means control; where the moneyed have long controlled the political economy of nations, of institutions, of homes; where the moneyed tell themselves that “those who hold the most resources in society know best,” to quote Galaich, and those who hold the least resources and privileges know the least and can’t be trusted.

I can relate. When Galaich first shared his idea for this book with me, it was 2023. The summer of 2020, and all those lofty commitments to supporting racial justice, seemed like three decades ago. For three years, the work of antiracist intellectuals like me had been sneered at as “CRT” and then “wokeism” and then “DEI.” Instead of Americans recognizing racism as the problem, those seeking to study and combat racism were increasingly framed as the problem. Our infant programs and projects were criticized because they hadn’t taken off—weren’t soaring with impact—like criticizing a pilot for a plane not taking off without sufficient runway and fuel. We were relentlessly tagged as grifters, reproducing old racist ideas. All this calculated propaganda conveyed that we were not to be trusted, especially with funding. Private conversations and news stories swirled—except when we were cleared of wrongdoing—back when I first learned about the writing of *Control*.

I immediately recognized the criticality of Galaich’s argument. Playing out before my eyes: a devastating effect of the “Mindset of Control.” Antiracist organizations and the communities we serve needed more trust amid this racist backlash. Received less. Needed more flexibility to respond to the backlash. Received less. Needed much more funding to sustain our organizations. Received far less. Facing severe

budgetary challenges, leaders were forced to make hard decisions and navigate private and public vilification for shutting down, trimming down, or restructuring organizations. A movement with such promise in 2020 had been devastated.

And so, I encouraged Galaich on this book idea. I told him that the exorbitant level of control donors wield is one of the most important socioeconomic matters of our time. The financial capacity of movements for equity and justice, for human rights, for inclusive democracy, should no longer hang on the whims of donors—on whether a cause is trending up or down like a stock. More investment trendy up. Less investment trendy down.

Instead of giving according to trends, what if donors gave according to needs? Instead of exorbitant control, what if donors exhibited exorbitant trust?

I have been fortunate. I didn't lose hope in the magnificent possibility that echoes from this book. Because the major funders of the research center I directed were unfazed. The propaganda didn't steal their trust or inflame their control. Philanthropists like Galaich. They remained highly supportive and excited when I decided to venture to a supportive academic home for my work—Howard University—to found the Howard Institute for Advanced Study.

We need donors and grantees building partnerships based in mutual respect and trust, fully engaged with each other and impacted communities. In short, we need philanthropists. Not just abandoning the accumulative interests of holders of vast wealth. Not just redistributing resources. Not just advancing the interests of everyday people. But adopting *their* philanthropic praxis.

What Galaich is challenging himself and his peers to do is routinely done each day by everyday people who don't have much money, who learn of a problem and want to help, who trust that those navigating and studying the problems know how best to solve them. People who give \$100 to friends and relatives who express a need. People who give \$10 to the local nonprofit. People who give \$1 to beggars on public streets. People who give without feeling they need to follow their hard-earned money.

People who give with love. People who love with trust.

Historians must trust too. Because it is risky retelling a past moment through the fallible eyes of others, or through our own fallible interpretations.

Our sources could be wrong. Our research could have missed sources. When information conflicts, we could have leaned on the wrong information. Our assumptions informing our interpretations could be wrong.

But getting elements of the storytelling wrong is the beginning not the end. Every piece of published history is a draft. We are constantly revising ourselves and each other—revising history—getting the wrong right. Without trusting our research and revisionary process, we as historians would be like painters without paint, ministers without religions, philanthropists without love of humanity.

To love humanity, philanthropists must trust humanity. To trust humanity, philanthropists must release control over what they give to humanity. Accept the fact that the philanthropist is not the “central figure in our story of social progress,” as Galaich maintains. Just like the historian is not the central figure in the past story. The sources are. The sources of information. The sources of grants and gifts.

— **Ibram X. Kendi**, Scholar, historian, and author of
The New York Times bestsellers *How to Be an Anti-Racist*
and *Stamped from the Beginning*

FOREWORD BY KATHERINE LORENZ

I first met Glen Galaich more than a decade ago, when we were both working for The Philanthropy Workshop. From the beginning, I admired his sharp analysis, his curiosity, and his deep commitment to making philanthropy more effective. Glen has always had a learning mindset—willing to admit when he was wrong, not set in his ways, always listening. That courage, and his willingness to interrogate both the sector and himself, is what makes him the right person to write this book.

Philanthropy is an ever-evolving field. On the one hand, the United States is extraordinarily generous. We give more, both in absolute dollars and as a percentage of GDP, than any other country in the world. Giving is woven into our culture, a norm passed down through generations. Other societies often look to us and learn from our philanthropic practices. Yet while generosity is a wonderful first step, it is not enough. Giving money away is easy; creating lasting social impact is hard. What we need in this next chapter of philanthropy is not just generosity, but generosity paired with humility, learning, and the courage to do things differently.

This shift is especially urgent as we face the largest intergenerational wealth transfer in history. Many younger philanthropists are already questioning the traditional foundation model their parents and grandparents built. They're asking why community voices aren't at the decision-making table, why the foundation's perpetuity matters more than urgency, and why "best practices" often preserve donor control rather than maximize impact. They intuitively understand what Glen articulates in this book: that clinging to control ultimately undermines outcomes. These next-generation

donors don't just want to give differently—they want to fundamentally reimagine the power dynamics of philanthropy. As they should.

It is now expected that the ultra-wealthy should be philanthropic. The Giving Pledge has helped reinforce that expectation. The United States also has the most developed nonprofit and philanthropic sector in the world. Donors have access to more information than ever before about how to create systemic change, how to measure impact, and how to build robust organizations. And yet, the culture and policies of philanthropy too often pull us back toward old habits—placing donors at the center, rather than the missions and communities we seek to serve.

That is what *Control* shines a spotlight on. Glen names, clearly and starkly, the ways in which donors—often unknowingly—put themselves at the center of their giving. For decades, this has been the cultural norm, the policy norm, even considered “best practice.” Much of what Glen writes rings true. And much of what he prescribes in *Control* is in stark contrast to how the field has long operated.

Glen's recommendations are bold, forward-thinking, and rooted in learning from past mistakes. They point us in the direction the sector must move, even though cultural and policy shifts inevitably lag.

Of course, philanthropy is never as simple or binary as control versus trust. The work lives in tension and nuance. Many philanthropists do learn these lessons over time, improving with experience. But too many do not. The challenge before us is how to make these practices the norm, not the exception.

When Glen and I taught together at The Philanthropy Workshop (now called Forward Global), we used *Giving Done Right* as one of our handbooks. As Glen points out, a decade later, the same authors admitted they had gotten much of it wrong and revised their own conclusions. That is the nature of philanthropy. We are always learning and unlearning. Trying something new, learning from it, and evolving as necessary. What seems like best practice today may need to be rethought tomorrow. This book represents lessons from Glen's journey and from the broader evolution of the field. It is brave and pushes us in the right direction. Future philanthropists will learn from these ideas, put them into practice, and then update and correct them. That is how the field evolves, and that is as it ought to be.

Too often, however, donor education is treated as optional. I believe it is essential. Just as we would never expect someone to run a business without training or experience, we should not expect people to steward philanthropic capital without preparation.

In my years working with donors, I've seen how structured education transforms practice. Donors become less defensive, more open to feedback, more thoughtful about power, more willing to trust grantees. They become humbler as they see firsthand how hard it is to make social change—and as they realize they don't have all the answers. Unfortunately, those who commit to this kind of learning remain the minority. If we are to truly shift philanthropy, we must normalize the idea that giving well is a discipline—one that requires time, humility, and energy. The first step is committing the funds; the second is committing to giving them away effectively, pulling ourselves from the center and placing the mission at the heart of the work.

That is the cultural shift Glen's book advances. He pushes us to question assumptions, to release control, and to understand that, once we give money away, it is no longer ours. Effective philanthropy requires centering the voices of those closest to the problems, dedicating ourselves to learning, and grappling with the systemic incentives—including those embedded in our tax code—that often undermine impact. Real change will require both personal humility and structural reform.

Glen's arguments are clear and provocative. Some readers may feel uncomfortable. That is good. Discomfort is part of growth. I encourage readers—especially those who steward significant wealth—to resist defensiveness and instead approach this book with openness. Use it as a mirror. Ask yourself hard questions. Reflect on where you may still be clinging to control and where you might instead lean into trust.

Ultimately, philanthropy is about partnership. Donors, grantees, and communities must lock arms in pursuit of shared goals. This book illuminates a path toward a philanthropy that is more ethical, more community-engaged, and more impactful. It is not the final word, nor should it be. It is an invitation *to evolve*.

So, as you turn the page, I invite you to read not just with your mind but with your heart. Allow yourself to be challenged. Allow yourself to

feel the tension between control and trust, between clarity and complexity. Let that tension guide you toward a deeper practice. If we can pair our generosity with humility, and our giving with learning, philanthropy can indeed be a powerful force for change.

— **Katherine Lorenz**, philanthropist, nonprofit
cofounder, and President of the Cynthia and
George Mitchell Foundation

THE AUTHOR’S PREFACE (AND DISCLAIMER)

I believe in the promise of American Big Giving. Nothing in these pages that follow should extinguish your hope for this work, to which I have dedicated my professional life. Much of this book, however, is a critique of current Big Giving practices and the dominant mindset that permeates them. I offer this critique in the spirit of improvement and the conviction that our sector can play a substantial role in reducing human suffering and promoting healing.

My primary motivation is that together we can make Big Giving more effective. While you will see numerous examples of the people and practices that put up barriers to social change, you will also meet people who have defied the dominant culture and common practices within American private foundations. Their efforts have been illuminating and show promise for a better world.

Much of what I share in this book comes from experiences and privileges I had while working with the now deceased co-founder of the Stupski Foundation, Joyce Stupski. I have great respect for Joyce. And I recognize that she—like so many others—practiced in some ways a form of Big Giving spawned from what I call in these pages the Mindset of Control. While she bravely challenged some of its norms and practices, she also followed others. I explore both sides of her philanthropy in this book.

So, when I set out to write *Control*, I was conscious that I could be perceived as “biting the hand that feeds me.” This is something you open yourself up to as an author calling out troubling aspects of a system. Especially a system of which you are a part and that has provided you with a career. The truth is, I am deeply grateful to the Big Giving world and especially to Joyce. I think of her often and miss her. In fact, I believe

if Joyce were alive today and I had the courage to conduct more honest conversations with her, she would support most—possibly all—of what I advocate for in these pages. I take the responsibility for not giving her more credit when she was alive. The same belief holds for Larry Stupski, the foundation's other co-founder and board chair. I never had the pleasure of meeting Larry as he passed before I joined the foundation, but those who knew him best—including his family and good friends—have told me he would have been delighted at the foundation's current practices, community engagement, and impact.

I'm also aware that as the CEO of a spend down foundation whose founders are now deceased, I'm in a unique position to speak hard truths and share insider stories of my own and others—especially on behalf of those working in foundations or at nonprofits who do not feel safe enough to speak out. Fear in the foundation sector is real and palpable. I have done my best to share experiences without putting my sources in jeopardy.

The stories here are real or an amalgamation of real stories. Names, genders, places, industries, and other identifying information at times have been changed to protect privacy. Unless I specifically state that a person in a story is an amalgamation (of which there are only three), all the stories are true and real.

Yet any attempt by others to portray this book as opportunistic or in a hit-and-run light is inaccurate; Big Giving has been my professional life's work and I plan to continue in this field, helping us all toward improvement.

So—although I had all-too-human fears and reservations about writing this book—I am compelled to present this publication to the world because *the moment demands it*.

The awareness that things could work differently, the discontent, the sense that we need to do more with the opportunity Big Giving presents has been bubbling up to the surface. The unease grows about the overwhelming control over society by an elite class. I see it. I hear it. I participate in it. And I experience it. It's shared with me by others across the country constantly.

At the same time, the past handful of years couldn't have made the needs of the communities we serve starker. More urgent.

We have entered a new phase of American Big Giving—somewhat by choice, somewhat by force. I offer this book to help our giving sector step up to the moment.

— **Glen Galaich**, PhD., August 29, 2025

INTRODUCTION

A Repeatedly Missed Opportunity

I was exhausted. Physically and mentally. I had not slept in 48 hours, and my feet were burning from days of standing on hard marble floors. And I wasn't alone. As I walked through a set of large doors exiting the McCaw Auditorium in the Arrillaga Center at Stanford University, I looked out into the beautifully designed lobby that served as a meeting area and saw what appeared to be dozens of bone-tired zombies sprawled out on its sofas and easy chairs.

The “zombies” were not alone either. Seated next to each of them on the sofas or posted up on the footstools of the plush easy chairs were what looked like energized, animated zealots determined to wake the zombies into action.

“How much do you know about my organization?” I heard one zealot say with an unnatural degree of enthusiasm.

Another was gesticulating her arms wildly, while saying, “—and the Bush Administration doesn't care! They just want to show strength. After 9/11, that is all that matters.” The zombie-like man sitting next to her was staring exhaustedly off into the distance. He had been through pitches like this one while seated in nearly every room of the building.

Wherever this zombie or another went, a zealot would find them.

As I stared at the scene, someone walked out from behind me and was immediately greeted by another who was incoming, hand outstretched.

“Hi—are you Jeannie?”

“Yes.”

“Hello, I am Marsha Banks from Let Our Children Live. We met about four years ago at the World Economic Forum when I was working for Global Youth.”

“Sure,” replied Jeannie, seemingly not recalling. “Of course. How are you?”

“I’m great,” the charity director said, and then quickly continued with unbridled eagerness. “Do you have a minute to join me at the sofa over there? I would love to share with you some background on my new organization.”

“Actually, Marsha,” Jeannie said, “I am headed to the ladies’ room and then I was going to go back to my table to listen to the next panel.”

“I understand,” Marsha replied. “Can we speak later? Given your vast experience with the work of organizations like mine, I would so appreciate an opportunity to get your advice. Will you be here after the panel session ends?”

Jeannie started to edge away toward the restrooms ever so slightly. But Marsha, bless her heart, persisted. “Are you available later?”

“I’ll be here,” Jeannie mumbled, as though on autopilot.

“Great!” Marsha exclaimed. “I will track you down.” She giggled, uncomfortably.

As Jeannie pulled away from Marsha and walked toward the ladies’ room, she said something under her breath. I think it was, “I’m sure you will.”

I could not help but feel compassion for both. I was new to this world of Big Giving. But within months, I would become a part of it, ensconced in it, and unable to see it and all the hard roles we play in it with clear eyes anymore.

Scenes like this were playing out during the final break in programming on the second day of a philanthropy conference I had helped launch. I had been afforded a front-row seat in the lounges, hallways, courtyards, and everywhere around the Arrillaga Center to witness the perennial dance of the big donor and the fundraiser.

All my late nights at the office, poor sleep due to stress, and an unquantifiable amount of coffee and phone calls encouraging people to

show up had culminated in the first Global Philanthropy Forum in 2002. The gathering was designed to educate and inspire the wealthy to give globally. The event would be lauded as a great success—a landmark in big philanthropy. It would be talked about on the West Coast for the next decade, and the Forum would grow into an institution that thrives today.

When I first took the job as project manager in 2001, our team of four had hoped we could get fifty donors to attend. That was common for philanthropy conferences back then. Instead, 250+ showed. It was a veritable Who's Who of big money, big influence, and Big Giving. I, along with the founders, staff, advisors, and many volunteers, had pulled off what at the time was unprecedented. We had brought together many “old money” individuals and family members of the East and West Coasts with some of the “new money” tech entrepreneurs and venture capitalists of Silicon Valley interested in humanitarianism. Most of these people already governed a private charitable foundation or a donor-advised fund (DAF).

And where there is a gathering of established philanthropists and like-minded new wealth creators, determined nonprofit executive directors and fundraisers will find it.

They found our conference. So, after two straight days of being subjected to horror stories from the front lines of America's invasion of Afghanistan, desperate pleas for support of a vast array of causes, piles of proposals, and animated funding pitches, the attending big donors had become zombies of sorts. They were exhausted and inured from the day's content and from so many funding requests. Meanwhile, the executive directors and fundraisers in attendance fought through their own frustrations and fatigue, and they whirled about like zealots. Because this could be a nonprofit leader's one chance to convince a multimillionaire or billionaire to make a six- or seven-figure grant to their resource-deprived but dedicated organization.

The scene was both bold and a little bizarre—a heady mix of power, posturing, and possibility.

As I took it in for the first time, even in my tired state I could not help but feel that something important was happening here. I was hopeful. I was enticed by the idea that Big Giving could yield innovative