

Grantwriting Infrastructure for Grassroots Nonprofits: A Case Study and Resource for Attempting to ‘Return Stolen Things’

Zosha Stuckey,
Towson University

In responding to conversations on engaged infrastructure, racial and reparative justice, and transformational WPA leadership, I call for more writing teachers and writing programs to take up grantwriting as a way to create much needed infrastructure for small, struggling grassroots nonprofits (NPOs). I detail G.I.V.E. (Grantwriting in Valued Environments), a community writing project at Towson University in the Baltimore metro area, where students are a primary, if not the main, source of research, grantwriting, and grants tracking for partner organizations via classwork, paid internships, and part-time employment. I problematize and locate this work within the nonprofit industrial complex and discuss the structure and functioning of grassroots organizations and how their particular milieu lends itself to projects like G.I.V.E. The project views equity as way to “return stolen resources” (Marcus and Munoz 2018), acknowledges the legacies of injustice in our communities, places students of color in leadership roles, and prioritizes work with under-resourced organizations that are led by folks from the community itself.

G.I.V.E. (Grantwriting in Valued Environments; www.towson.edu/giveproject) is a university supported engagement project at Towson University in the Baltimore metro area that advances students' professional writing and grantwriting goals by connecting their coursework to the needs of small non-profit organizations (NPOs). We research, write, submit, and track grants for small, community NPOs (less than \$250,000 annual budget), which fulfills needs for both parties: students gain professional skills in grantwriting and increase their cultural competence while small organizations receive assistance with infrastructure and capacity building in ways usually only granted to larger, better funded NPOs. The project views equity as a way to "return stolen resources" (Marcus and Munoz 2018), acknowledges the legacies of injustice in our communities, places students of color in leadership roles, and prioritizes work with under-resourced organizations that are led by folks *from* the community itself.

In their comments on equitable partnerships in "Intentionally Digital, Intentionally Black," Marcus and Munoz (2018) articulate a notion of equity as "a return of stolen things" (20). This, for me, has functioned as an informal but rigorous way to implement and then assess G.I.V.E. Those of us doing community engagement in rhetoric and composition know that we have to prioritize relationships (Cella et al.) in order to work towards "progressive ideals." We know that what Carmen Kynard (2015) terms the "White Turn" desperately needs to be altered. But what do our projects look like when our community engagements attempt to "return the things that were stolen?" And, what does it look like when we intentionally direct our energy towards subverting the "white turn"? Do attempts towards reparative action work? Can we do this work effectively within the "Non Profit Industrial Complex," and how is our work there always implicated in systems of oppression?

By using G.I.V.E. as a case study, I hope to add to the conversations in our field about what constitutes ethical and anti-racist community engagement as well as inspire writing teachers and program administrators to adapt any aspect of the G.I.V.E. model to their own contexts. My work is part of conversations on racial justice (Kynard 2015; Browdy 2017-18; Grobman 2007; Inoue 2019), relationships

(Cella, Goldblatt, Johnson, Parks, Mathieu, and Restaino 2016), engaged infrastructure (House, Myers, and Carter 2016; Jacobi 2016; Grabill 2008) and transformational WPA leadership (Fedukovich and Doe 2018-2019). In what follows, I lay out the context, design, curriculum, impact, and ethical issues of G.I.V.E. and attempt to come to terms with the inherent complicity of anti-racist community engagement that is embedded in the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC).

G.I.V.E - CONTEXT

I was born here in in the City of Baltimore many, many decades ago and somehow, as an academic, find myself back for keeps. As a white, Jewish, queer left-wing progressive, whose family benefitted from white privilege and participated in white flight to the suburbs, I have intentionally reverse-migrated back into the city. I view much of the world—and all of Baltimore—through a racial lens. Part of my racial consciousness grew out of the fact that Baltimore infamously was the place of the “trend-setting” Residential Segregation Ordinance of 1910, which prompted many similar ordinances across the country (Power 1983). Up until 1915, Towson University (T.U.) itself used to be located in the city in what was then a predominantly white neighborhood called Sandtown/Harlem Park (where three of our community partners now reside and where Freddie Gray died in police custody in 2015). Not long after residential segregation was codified into law, the college moved 1.4 miles over the city line to where it is today in the majority white town of Towson. T.U., which employs me and funds and houses G.I.V.E, has long been the Predominantly White Institution (PWI) of north and northeast Baltimore while Morgan State University (M.S.U.), 4.6 miles from T.U., has been the Historically Black University (HBCU) in the same region. The first black students weren’t admitted to T.U. until 1955, a year after *Brown vs. Board’s* mandate, and even today there exists an anti-segregation lawsuit against T.U. and the University of Maryland system brought by M.S.U. and other HBCUs regarding replication of programs.

G.I.V.E. acknowledges these legacies of injustice, actively opposes the present-day practices of segregation, and promotes investment in under-resourced neighborhoods in Baltimore. And even though T.U. continues year to year to increase its diversity, we still are remarkably

more white and more economically advantaged (as a University and as a town) than Baltimore City or the now, almost entirely black, Sandtown/Harlem Park neighborhood. To offer more context to G.I.V.E.'s work and to Baltimore, it can be said that Towson operates in one world while the city of Baltimore—and Sandtown/Harlem Park even more so—operates in another. A limited comparison of 2017 demographics shows racial identity and household income (under 1% not reported).

Town of Towson:

white 74.3%, Black 13%, Latinx 4.4%, 4.9% Asian

Median Household Income \$82,062

Towson University:

Students - white 58%, Black 19%, Latinx 7.7%, Asian 5.9%

Faculty - white 75.6%, Black 2.6%, Latinx 2.3%, Asian 5.2%

Median Household Income \$80,470

Baltimore City:

Black 62.8%, white 31.8%, Latinx 5.5%, Asian 2.8%

Median Household Income \$46,641

Sandtown/Harlem Park:

Black 96.1%, white 1.6%, Latinx 0.3%

Median Household Income \$25,208 (*poverty for 4 is \$25,750)

(Census, collegefactual, bniajfi)

These figures only scratch the surface in terms of disparities.

G.I.V.E. takes the stance that privilege is meant to be shared; this act of sharing takes a lifetime of effort and includes commitment to volunteering, networking, sharing resources, and constant self-reflection. T.U.'s students, mostly middle and working class from diverse racial backgrounds, learn about the university's past and consciously take part in reconciliatory efforts. These efforts look very different for different students; white students, for example, still the majority at T.U., (and even more so in the English Department), are asked to come to terms with Baltimore's legacy. Asao Inoue, in his 2019 CCCC Keynote address, points to a key factor that is core to how G.I.V.E. approaches community engagement in the context of Baltimore:

White bodies perpetuate historical racial injustices...Our hearts are not the problem. In fact, I'm actually saying the opposite, that we cannot change our biases in judging so easily, and that your perspectives that you've cultivated over your lifetime is not the key to making a more just society, classroom, pedagogy, or grading practice. The key is changing the structures, cutting the steel bars, altering the ecology, in which your biases function in your classrooms and communities.

What do those changed structures look like? What do we do with white bodies whose presence "perpetuates racial injustice?"

G.I.V.E. - PROJECT DESIGN & CURRICULUM

G.I.V.E.'s response is two-fold: 1) partner with grassroots organizations by building infrastructure *with* and *for* them that enhances their capacity while also reinforcing the capacity of writing programs and 2) accomplish that work (often "grunt" work) behind the scenes *making sure the partner is the main authority*. This, to me, is at least the beginning of equity and a return of stolen things. The disparities and systemic oppression that embody Baltimore are central to my pedagogy. I operate within a reparative framework influenced by my work with *Intergroup Dialogue* (<https://www.towson.edu/provost/initiatives/diversity/fellow.html>) at T.U. where the focus is on addressing privilege, fostering cross-cultural listening, and building our capacities to act on what we say and believe. I interweave perspectives of equity as a return of what was stolen into discussions with students, and they began to realize that grantwriting can play a part, however small or technical it might be. This work is part of what Carter and Mutnick (2012) term the "political turn" in community writing where we learn to support partners' "efforts to rebuild and retool for a more equitable, just, democratic, and sustainable society" (7).

G.I.V.E. emerged in 2012 when four graduate students in the Master's in Professional Writing program completed PRWR 619 Communication in the Non Profit Sector; they registered for concurrent independent studies which transformed into our first fundraising team. The students planned and ran a fundraising event for a community theatre project at Harlem Park Elementary,

and within a year, a more sustainable grantwriting model emerged. G.I.V.E. attempts to balance the practical aspects of workplace writing with theorizing and reflecting on the social and cultural climate of Baltimore, what NPOs do here, why they do it, and on writing in relation to communities, advocacy, and social justice. Our key partners include an urban after-school program, a “friends” of the state park organization, a restorative justice youth-focused organization, a program that advocates for the families of those murdered in Baltimore, and an urban farming-centered community center. After Trump came to office, the refugee organization we worked with folded, and thus, we are currently seeking a new partner. Three of these organizations have an annual budget under \$100,000, one has a budget of under \$250,000, and one has a budget of close to 1 million (our largest of yet).

The emphasis we place on small, community organizations is a strategic move to attempt to even out the philanthropic playing field where larger, well-funded NPOs hire grantwriters and maintain a steady fundraising stream while small NPOs struggle to find and keep volunteers to write and submit grants. These organizations are grassroots—founded and run by people from the communities they serve—and all but one that we work with is led by a person of color. The majority came to us *never* having written or submitted a grant before. Organizations that have annual revenues of less than \$250,000 are essentially small, out-resourced fish in a very big public sector pond. Time and time again I am astounded at how overworked, underpaid, and wholeheartedly committed this cross section of folks at small NPOs are. We partner with small, understaffed NPOs because we know that we can fulfill a very real need; there is a high level of demand from both the organizations and from students across the disciplines, and the project has a compelling need to expand and be replicated.

At T.U., G.I.V.E. is embedded in the English Department in one undergraduate and one graduate course, plus there are a handful of students that participate via paid internships, part-time employment, independent studies, and some even choose to volunteer. Opportunities for student leadership also abound in this work. Each semester, in addition to a course offered for fifteen to twenty-one students, the four

to six students that participate through internships and part-time student employment are funded by [BTU](#) (Baltimore-Towson United), a new community engagement initiative at T.U., and our Office of Civic Engagement and Leadership. I supervise the internships as service, but soon will be receiving a one-time course reappointment for this project. In order to receive funding, I submitted a proposal to BTU, received the investment funds, and am guaranteed at least three years of funding and support to scale and sustain a long-term project. While it is possible to create a variation of this project with no funding (as I did for four years), I would recommend a truncated version until funding is possible.

In both courses, the undergraduate ENGL 401 Grant and Advocacy Writing and the graduate PRWR 619 Communication in Non-profit Sector, students spend the majority of the semester working on grant projects with other assignments and heuristics interwoven. Guiding questions included on the syllabi offer a panorama:

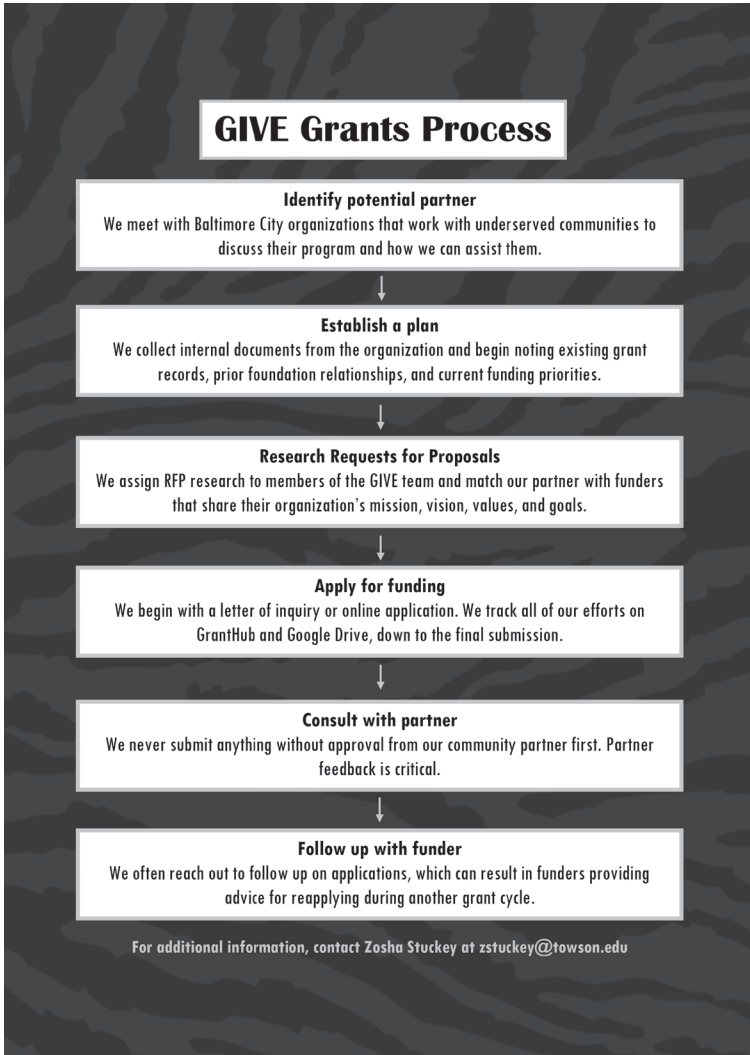
- What is our place in the world of philanthropy? What motivates us?
- How can we become fuller human beings, more actively anti-racist, more engaged citizens, *and* better writers?
- How can we assist without imposing? What is at the essence of writing *for* vs. *with*? How do we write collaboratively and ethically without imposition?
- What is advocacy & social change (in Baltimore & beyond) & how does writing, fundraising, & social media intervene?
- What is a nonprofit? What is the nonprofit industrial complex? How do NPOs grow and succeed? What are limitations of NPOs and the NPIC?
- How does one step into the job of an organizational writer? What is the job market like?

In addition to grant and nonprofit writing projects, G.I.V.E. takes cultural competence seriously; one example is by continuing to hire and partner with 65%+ students and partners of diverse backgrounds. In Appendix 1, I've listed outcomes, assignments, and heuristics for the practical writing aspects as well as for professionalism, advocacy, and cultural competence. In Appendix 2, I've provided a list of

resources for grantwriting courses. Other curricular aspects that are core to this project are Google Drive (GDrive) and GrantHub. While GDrive is free, we have a paid subscription to GrantHub, an online grant management and tracking software. Students in courses gain access to view both GDrive and GrantHub, while student employees and interns can edit in those systems. Since GrantHub allows us to track applications at the *research, in progress, submitted* and *awarded* stages, students see how grants management works across the continuum.

When getting started in the classroom, students work in groups according to which NPO they have chosen to write with, so that micro-community in the classroom is helpful throughout the process. Community partners visit the classroom (as many times as they like in person and virtually too), direct us in terms of research, come in as speakers to share on relevant topics, and conference with students and myself throughout the semester. Nothing is done without the partners' authorization and feedback. Typically, undergraduates work on proposals in pairs, while graduate students often prefer to work alone. After both myself and their peers have reviewed and edited drafts (more often than not I review them multiple times), then begins a recursive writing process of conferences and written feedback from community partner to student to myself and back again. It can be a chaotic process but once students envision the purpose more clearly—to move the written expression of their knowledge forward for a real-life purpose—their buy-in and passion increase tenfold. G.I.V.E.'s process from identifying potential partner organizations to following up with the grant proposal after submission is visualized here (recursivity and feedback from the partner is involved in every stage).

Semester timelines make it impossible to completely acclimate to the yearly grantwriting cycle. Since the nonprofit world doesn't adhere to semester timelines, we often have had gaps during the summer months that sometimes can only be filled through internships. Luckily, summer months aren't typically when grant deadlines occur. Being able to continue the project through the summer also involves faculty workload issues that can be resolved only if there is a project budget available. Robert McEachern's (2001) essay, "Problems in Service Learning and Professional/Technical Writing:



Incorporating the Perspective of Nonprofit Management,” does a good job of listing potential structural and ideological areas inherent to NPOs that can cause problems for students. I have seen all of these problems: the NPO’s hyper-focus on the mission, staff wearing too many hats, the NPO’s atmosphere of scarcity, untrained staff, and over-reliance on volunteers (216–20). Volunteer turnover is high, and when there is money for staff, their turnover rates are high too. I’ve tried to bolster consistency by connecting with more than one staff member at organizations or by taking organizational and staff

stability into consideration when choosing which organizations to work with. On our end, I have also tried to seek out undergraduates who are Sophomores or graduate students who are in the beginning of their studies because it is time consuming to have to retrain and familiarize new student employees and interns every semester.

Another messy curricular component is trying to balance the focus on deliverables with student learning. I often find that anticipation of a “real world product” or “deliverable” can galvanize the recursive composing process. In “We Don’t Need Any More Brochures,” Leon and Sura (2013) argue that an “elevation of deliverables creates two counter-productive situations in service-learning curricula. First, it emphasizes product over equally valued curricular components like inquiry. Second, it severely limits the invention of possible ways students and teachers might engage productively with community partners” (62). While emphasis on the product can certainly derail the flow of inquiry, G.I.V.E does not function like a machine churning out proposals; the reality is that approximately 25% of our drafted proposals are actually submitted. The fact that not all student work becomes a “deliverable” is a required part of the work so that students have room to breathe and even flounder. As Rentz and Mattingly (2005) put it, students are consultants first, change agents second (115). And let’s be honest—consultants stumble behind the scenes all the time. To move beyond the rhetoric of deliverables means that we can celebrate submitted proposals, but that the sweat, thought, collaboration, and learning it took to create the text is also a victory.

This high level of messiness can be frustrating for everyone. Because there are real world constraints (the organization re-focuses its priorities mid-semester, a funder takes down its request for proposals before we submit, communication breaks down with the partner for one reason or another, etc.), students can experience frustrations and disappointments if their project isn’t submitted. A few years back, one of our partners stopped responding to our messages only for us to find out he had experienced a major health issue. Students were crushed out of fear for the partner’s health but also because they had to choose another project that didn’t have real world application. As students come to terms with the idea that their work is a gesture towards returning what was stolen, they invest even more in their

work. Students who have positioned themselves as privileged learn what it means to have access to more resources and social capital (than middle-schoolers in the city, than mothers whose sons have been murdered in Baltimore, etc.) and to share it.

After a visit to the neighborhoods and the organizational spaces where our NPOs reside (viewing themselves in these spaces as an “other”), students see abandoned blocks, decaying schools, industry that has withered, drug users nodding on the corners from heroin use. They also see vibrant communities, hope, love, and unity. In introducing concepts and strategies borrowed from the Intergroup Dialogue courses I teach, cross-cultural listening is key—white students specifically are taught how to have humility as an outsider when listening to people of color and/or when being present in communities and spaces less familiar to them. This translates in G.I.V.E. to all students developing an understanding of what it means to have insider/outsider status and how to navigate relationships, networking, and advocacy in new situations. It also translates to G.I.V.E. as an organization prioritizing listening and unobtrusiveness in situations that necessitate that. Students learn how to be unassuming in communities where they are the outsider; they learn how to listen deeply. And, they learn how to “give back.”

G.I.V.E. - IMPACT & RECIPROCITY

Our most quantifiable success to date is that we have raised over \$229,000 (out of over \$1 million submitted) all going directly to our NPOs. For an organization with annual revenue of under \$250,000, every grant makes a difference no matter how small. One of our first successes was being responsible for the majority of funds received to build an accessible playground in the nearby State Park. We’ve also received grants that fund: youth theater, youth attending a summer camp in West Baltimore, a digital projector for outdoor youth programming, neighborhood clean-ups, urban tree plantings, a dump trailer to haul trash and storm debris, a mobile interpretive van to serve Latinx community members, and general operating funds for an after-school program and a refugee organization.

As part of a “returning of stolen things,” G.I.V.E. also helps to develop infrastructure for organizations. We offer staffing where

staffing is absent, we listen and do what we're told, we meet midnight deadlines, and we become part of the organization's community to the extent that they want us to be included. Sometimes we remain fully behind the scenes as an intentional strategy for dealing with the repercussions of white bodies. G.I.V.E. takes its cues from our partners—in some situations like when we are the only people writing grants for an organization, the relationship is closer and we play a more active part in the culture of the organization. In cases like that, students and myself may attend meetings at the organization, take on longer term volunteer roles there (even as board members), and attend and organize fundraising events. In other cases, we can disappear behind the grant proposal, offer up a final deliverable, and ask what else needs to be done.

As an example of an impact that involved students getting deeper into the organizational community, in 2018 two G.I.V.E. undergraduates ran an eight week writing workshop for middle schoolers at an after school program (one of our partners) with much success. They developed curriculum with the organization's help and now will be starting a fourth semester leading the workshop. The curriculum, spearheaded by students, is now focused on spoken word because that is what the community's constituents wanted. We adapted by partnering with TU's Black Student Union's poetry team; the community partner adores that middle schoolers are mentored by college students who are also poets and black activists.

Sometimes our impact plays out when our community partners learn from us and take over the work we do because they now know how. To me, this is reciprocity at its best. What this looks like: 75% of the organizations G.I.V.E. works with came to us *never* having written or submitted a grant before. Some do not know what a request for proposal is. After having worked closely with us for two years (visiting classes, reading drafts, working one on one with students, combing through our resources, meeting with me), the community partner now feels they themselves can search for requests for proposals, download a grant application, copy and paste from the database of text, and edit, revise, and submit the proposal. In most cases, however, the community partner prefers for us to do it because it frees them up to work on other tasks. Another example can be seen in a partner who

is organizing a neighborhood clean-up and doesn't have a workable system for organizing volunteers. From us, they learn how to use Google Forms (after already learning about Google Drive from us) and Sign Up Genius, free tools that help manage volunteers.

G.I.V.E. specifically develops infrastructure for NPOs by building a platform of "live" resources for our partners. We construct, fill, and maintain a Google Drive (GDrive) for each partner. Student writing becomes part of G.I.V.E and all of G.I.V.E.'s work can become internal documents for the NPOs. Community partners help us create and have control over GDrive. In some cases, GDrive is the NPOs main document storehouse. In their folder, they find internal and external organizational documents. Some items in their Drive include: budgets and financials, proposals (not submitted, submitted, in progress), internal documents (IRS determination letter, letterhead, references, support letters, MOUs, etc.), curriculum and training docs, newsletters, and pics. GrantHub is a newer system for us and we are still trying to figure out how to entice partners to use it. The problem is that all five of our partners' grant information is kept on GrantHub—this means any one organization potentially has to wade through the other organizations' info. Although there is a way to dis-aggregate, our partners don't use GrantHub much, though the reason could be that they trust us and want us to manage grants alone.

We've developed even more infrastructure for organizations by creating (writing the description), advertising, and helping to fill internship positions (from universities in the region, but especially from T.U.) at our partner organizations. This funneling from G.I.V.E. to internships and, sometimes, to paid positions benefits our partners in that they now have access to interns, and they then have a hiring pool from which they directly pull. This mechanism has worked a few times so far; as an example, one G.I.V.E. student interned for the partner, was hired first part-time, then full-time, and finally became a devoted mentee of the Executive Director of the NPO. The relationships I have with the staff at our organizations are bolstered by the investment students make in the communities. G.I.V.E. is dotting the philanthropic landscape with motivated, culturally competent writers and advocates committed to a lifetime of giving

back. While hiccups appear at every turn, the impact is palpable, and we feel part of a return in community investment.

REFLECTION & ETHICS

After many years adjusting and finetuning, there's still so much to learn and improve. It takes continual self-education on how to be anti-racist to figure out how to teach grantwriting through a lens of social and racial justice. It takes making mistakes. A host of scholars (Adler-Kassner 1999; Cushman 2002; Deans 2000; Rentz and Mattingly 2005; Herzberg 1994; Huckin 1997) have emphasized how important it is to consider and reconsider how community engaged projects are chock full of ethical risks that, if not attended to, can damage or exploit communities. Understanding how NPOs and the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) function within the context of university outreach can increase transparency and fairness and decrease likelihood of injury or breach of privilege. For G.I.V.E., this has to do with the possibility that equity or a "return of stolen things" might never be fully achieved when it is not only run by white folks like myself but also when it is within the structure of the NPIC. Working within the NPIC is inherently problematic even when the goals are equity and social justice.

In the introduction to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex*, Andrea Smith (2008) explains that the NPIC "controls and manages dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus, functioning as a shadow state constituted by a network of institutions that do much of what government agencies are supposed to do with tax money in the area of education and social services" (8-9; also see Rodriquez 2008). The point of a "complex" is that it is an amalgamation of entities—not just a one and done collaboration, but an organization of institutions that build infrastructure together for the long haul to reach common goals, often with some sort of sacrifice of original intent or design. This describes *us*. We aim to be fully collaborative, anti-racist across the board, and non-condescending as employees in the "Ivory Tower," but our intentions are often not enough.

The small NPO, once it is granted the 501(c)3 IRS designation, knowingly (but not desirably) gives up some sovereignty; in fact, many small, struggling NPOs are already acclimated to this grievous

reality of some semblance of compromise by the time they partner with a university. Because most of our partner organizations have three or fewer paid employees and rely mostly on volunteers, they rely on collaborations across the sectors to build infrastructure and to sustain themselves. But by becoming state-sanctioned, the small NPO can become a mechanism that mitigates rather than creates radical social change. And our participation adds to a managing of dissent. Even as both our partners and ourselves at universities visualize new structures, the day-to-day work we do then seems to maintain the status quo. As our partner organizations grow, other partnering and circumferential organizations—including universities (Johns Hopkins and T.U. included) and even corporations—support, house, fund, regulate, determine, and govern the NPO. One example of this is how there is often a buy-in price to sit on a board of directors of an NPO, which translates into many bankers or elite professionals sitting on boards that steer the organization.

I have seen example after example of small grassroots organizations accepting “help” and resources from universities or corporations more because they need it and less because they want it. Grassroots organizations often prefer to be independent of large institutional oversight, and view the relationship on a paternalistic continuum due to historical legacies. This is an even stickier reality when black-led organizations begin to work with universities that are predominantly white institutions. Regardless of intention, the predominantly white institution often manifests a “white savior complex” where collaboration is practiced more as an arrogant kind of “help.”

In the classroom, I am acutely aware of this same tendency where I myself manifest the “white savior complex” and where G.I.V.E. does as well. I attempt to make the tendency transparent by discussing with students the differences between charity and social justice: charity can maintain an ameliorative and slightly condescending rhetoric while social justice focuses on obtaining rights, equal participating, self-empowerment, and an equitable distribution of resource. Another issue arises when students are re-traumatized by pedagogy focused on urban injustice, systemic violence against people of color, women, and poor people, and on generational oppression. Because we are engulfed in a racist system, even anti-racist teaching falters and fails.

I often insert rest, rejuvenation, and play into my pedagogy when I notice that content has run too deep. I utilize hands-on learning (e.g. the “marshmallow challenge,” a popular online heuristic, to practice collaboration with peers), we’ve taken walks in the woodland area on campus, and I’ve incorporated self-care activities when needed.

Anti-racist teaching is complicated—apparent successes can often be shortcomings. It is a boon, for example, that G.I.V.E. students have been hired as grant and proposal writers, managers, and administrators by Johns Hopkins, The Maryland Food Bank (grants manager raises \$7.3 million a year), Parks and People Foundation, development departments at colleges, local businesses, and local Foundations. Another exciting outcome is how, as I write this, one of G.I.V.E.’s former students is potentially hiring another one of G.I.V.E.’s students who just graduated. In the Baltimore/Washington region, NPOs employ one out of every ten workers which equates to nearly 650,000 workers in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. In the region, the nonprofit sector is the second largest industry employer, behind only the retail industry (“Key Findings”).

Job placement, however, also means that students are employed at many of the dominant institutions in the city which grassroots activists constantly criticize for their lack of ethical oversight and for their continued profiteering off of low-income, mostly African American neighborhoods. In this sense, reciprocity only goes so far. There is more to the critique of the NPIC (see *Incite!*), but as it is, our partners do tell us (via mid and end-of-semester evaluations) and the students report consistently and emphatically that we have made such positive impact on them. It does help to continually investigate how G.I.V.E. is a mechanism of the state and owning class apparatus—not to mention the racist system we are embedded in—where privilege, self-interest, surveillance, and self-promotion are embedded.

CONCLUSION: RETURNING STOLEN THINGS

As much as I’d like to say G.I.V.E. succeeds in “returning stolen things,” I can only profess to handing over databases, narratives, information, research, time, and hopefully—in the spirit of grantwriting—money. Most important to the larger picture here is

the structure of support G.I.V.E. offers and how, I hope, it alters an approach to engagement. This project has taught me that we would benefit from more discussion in our field of how understaffed, under-resourced, and just generally strained small, community nonprofits are. While it is easy to critique how society, including the university, neglects to fully support community work, we rarely consider how our work is similarly limited in offering access to and dispensation of resources barring those we offer semester by semester through student involvement.

Rather, to return stolen things, our resources could be, at minimum, split in two between our program and the community programs we partner with. G.I.V.E. itself isn't there yet. And, while that might be a pipe dream of reparations, I believe we *can* do more; we can help strengthen, grow, and sustain our partner organizations themselves and begin to give back what has been stolen by offering infrastructure in ways similar to what G.I.V.E. offers. There still is no doubt that we must center student interests, voices, and right to fair labor. Without students, we cease to be. But another part of that reality is that thousands of small, community and grassroots nonprofit organizations have even fewer resources and less access to power than we do, and often even less than our students do.

I want to point to other scholar-teachers who have created grantwriting engagement projects like Courtney Stevens at Willamette, Charles Etheridge at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, and Kenna Barrett who was at University of Rhode Island. But it is Veronica House (2015), director of outreach at CU-Boulder's PWR program (mind you, Boulder has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to outreach, and not all of us are fortunate to be financially backed) that explains how their programming works to "bring in" as much as they "reach out." She explains that "community partners were interested in the idea of co-teaching and described the work as a form of educational outreach. Some of them expressed interest in helping the instructor determine readings, assignments, and days that they might visit the class to share their expertise through guest lectures or discussions" (66). It is the "bringing in" that I am interested in.

In essence, outreach projects can do more than conduct “business as usual”—to do more than “produce deliverables” (Leon and Sura 2013) for small, community nonprofits, but instead to take calculated, strategic risks that embed our intellectual work within under-resourced, over-extended grassroots organizations and, alternatively, open up space for nonprofits to exploit and inhabit writing programs and the university. That is, we can do more than “reach out.” We can aggregate and strategically institutionalize the work that is both ours and theirs. And this all takes trust—trust of our institutions and trust of us by the organizations we wish to help grow and sustain.

Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher (1996) remind us that our engagement and outreach work has yet to truly “transform” the university (274). But it can, and I believe this is one way how that might happen. G.I.V.E. shows us that a community project’s (an NPOs) benefit can be just as important as student learning and that one priority does not have to preclude the other. With proven efficacy and some financial backing, it’s time for another “microevolution” similar to the one Linda Adler-Kassner (1997) identified over twenty years ago. House, Myers and Carter (2016) ask for an “evolution of the university” which will be incited by infrastructure changes (2). But this this evolution has to include institutionalization and infrastructure building not just of our internal programming but also of *the community organizations themselves*.

I honestly never thought I’d be here—in a position where University Marketing and Strategic Partnerships want to meet with me. I’ve found myself asking: is it even a good idea to wholesale this little corner of the universe? Turning my work over to the institution—institutionalizing it—wasn’t what I planned for, but I have found that this is the fate of some of us lucky or skilled enough to get tenure in an institution that has recognized the value of outreach and engagement. Even more dangerous is the idea of communities, especially communities of color, being controlled by universities and by white-led projects, so we have to stand down, be unobtrusive, listen, and practice allyhood. In *Tactics of Hope*, Mathieu (2005) uses the term “Strategic Institutionalization” to remind us that, as we institutionalize outreach programs, we must also stay committed to our values (see Campus Compact and CCCC Statement on

Community-Engaged Projects) and must calculate and recalculate the risks (95-98).

As a deft way to navigate the paradoxes and inequalities of attempting to “do public good” in the City of Baltimore—or in any place—G.I.V.E. is still and always will be complicit. This work is aligned with our field’s collective aspirations of contributing to the public good (CCCC Statement on Community Engaged Projects) and also to Asao Inoue’s (2019) reminder about language that has broad applications for community engagement: “White people can perpetuate White supremacy by being present....the presence of their [our] White bodies perpetuates historical racial injustices.” A reparative, anti-racist framework that asks us to build infrastructure *for* community nonprofits can work. White people especially have to be aware of the ways in which black-led organizations in Baltimore and elsewhere desire to be free of white influence. G.I.V.E is about taking cultural cues, sometimes disappearing out of the room, doing hard work behind the scenes and not getting or asking for credit. It’s about a lifetime of hard work. And, yes, equity is worth it.

REFERENCES

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, et al. 1997. "Service-Learning and Composition at the Crossroads." In *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition*: Washington, D.C. American Association for Higher Education, edited by Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters, 1-17.
- Barrett, Kenna. 2013. "Where Professional Writing Meets Social Change: the Grant Proposal as a Site of Hospitality." *Composition Studies* 41, no. 1: 70-83.
- Bringle, Robert and Julie Hatcher. 1996. "Implementing Service Learning In Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 2: 221-239.
- . 2000. "Institutionalization of Service Learning in Higher Education." *The Journal of Higher Education* 71: 273-290.
- Browdy, Ronisha. 2017-2018. "Strong, Black, and Woman: Black Women's Perspectives on Naming and Claiming Their Strength as Everyday Rhetorical Practices." *Reflections*, (Winter): 7-36.
- Campus Compact*. <https://compact.org>. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019.
- Carter, Shannon, and Deborah Mutnick. 2012. "Writing Democracy: Notes on a Federal Writers' Project for the 21st Century." *Community Literacy Journal*, 7, no. 1: 1-14.
- CCCC statement on Community Engaged Projects. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/community-engaged>
- Cella, Laura, and Eli Goldblatt, Karen Johnson, Paula Mathieu, Steve Parks, and Jessica Restaino. 2016. "The Powerful Potential of Relationships and Community Writing." *Community Literacy Journal*, 11, no. 1: 41-53.
- Census Quick Facts, Baltimore. Accessed July 15, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/baltimorecitymaryland,US/PST045218>
- Census Quick Facts, Towson. Accessed July 15, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/towsoncdpmaryland/INC110217>
- Cushman, Ellen. 2002. "Sustainable Service Learning Programs." *College Composition and Communication*, 54, no. 1: 40-65.
- Deans, Thomas. 2000. *Writing Partnerships: Service Learning in Composition*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Foundation Center. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/keyfacts2014/pdfs/Key_Facts_on_US_Foundations_2014.pdf
- Fedukovich, Casie and Sue Doe. 2018-2019. "Beyond Management: The Potential for Writing Program Leadership During Turbulent Times." *Reflections*, 18, no. 2: 87-113.
- G.I.V.E. Grantwriting in Valued Environments. www.towson.edu/giveproject. Accessed Oct. 1, 2019.
- Grabill, Jeff. 2008. "Infrastructure Outreach and the Engaged Writing Program." In *Going Public: The WPA as Advocate for Engagement*, edited by Shirley K. Rose and Irwin Weiser, 15-28. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Grant Space - fiscal sponsorship. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <https://grantspace.org/resources/knowledge-base/fiscal-sponsorship/>
- Grobman, Laurie, Elizabeth Kemmerer, and Meghan Zebertavage. 2007. "Counternarratives: Community Writing and Anti-Racist Rhetoric." *Reflections*, 17, no. 2: 43-68.
- Herzberg, Bruce. 1994. "Community Service and Critical Teaching." *College Composition and Communication*, 45, no. 3: 307-319.
- House, Veronica. 2015. "Community Engagement in Writing Program Design and Administration." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 39, no. 1: 54-71.
- House, Veronica, Seth Myers, and Shannon Carter. 2016. "Introduction: Envisioning Engaged Infrastructures for Community Writing." *Community Literacy Journal*, 11, no. 1: 1-9.
- Huckin, Thomas. 1997. "Technical Writing and Community Service." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 11, no. 1: 49-59.
- Incite! Women of Color. 2008. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex*. Boston: South End Press.
- Inoue, Asao. 2019. "They Only Need It Because We Keep Teaching It." CCCC Keynote Address, Pittsburgh.
- Jacobi, Tobi. 2016. "Against Infrastructure: Curating Community Literacy in a Jail Writing Program." *Community Literacy Journal*, 11, no. 1: 64-75.
- "Key findings from MD Nonprofits (2016)". *Maryland Nonprofits*. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <https://marylandnonprofits.org/Nonprofit-Resources/Nonprofit-Research/Nonprofits-by-the-Numbers>
- Kivel, Paul. 2008. "Social Service or Social Change?" In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex*,

- edited by Incite! Women of Color, 129-150. Boston: South End Press.
- Kynard, Carmen. 2019. "The White Turn in Composition Studies." Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <http://carmenkynard.org/the-white-turn/>
- Leon, Kendall and Thomas Sura. 2013. "We Don't Need Any More Brochures": Rethinking Deliverables in Service-Learning Curricula." *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 36, no. 2: 59-74.
- Marcus, Cecily and Trevor Munoz. 2018. "Intentionally Black, Intentionally Digital." Pre-conference workshop white-paper. The University of Maryland African American History, Culture, and Digital Humanities Initiative. Umbra Search and the Future of Black Digital Platforms. Accessed March 1, 2019. <https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:21919/>
- Maryland Nonprofits. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <https://marylandnonprofits.org/Nonprofit-Resources/Nonprofit-Research/Nonprofits-by-the-Numbers>
- Mathieu, Paula. 2005. *Tactics of Hope*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Press.
- McEachern, Robert. 2001. "Problems in Service Learning and Professional/Technical Writing: Incorporating the Perspective of Nonprofit Management." *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 10, no. 2: 211-223.
- Power, Garrett. 1983. "Apartheid, Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910-13." *Maryland Law Review*, 42, no. 2: 289-329.
- Rentz, Kathryn, and Ashley Mattingly. 2005. "Selling Peace in a Time of War: The Rhetorical and Ethical Challenges of a Graduate-Level Service-Learning Course." *Reflections* 4, no. 2: 103-122.
- Rodriguez, Dylan. 2008. "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex." In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex*, edited by Incite! Women of Color, 21-40. Boston: South End Press.
- Sandtown/Harlem Park Vital Signs. Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance. Accessed July 15, 2019. https://bniajfi.org/community/Sandtown-Winchester_Harlem%20Park/
- Schuessler, Jennifer. 2019. "Your Ancestors Were Slaves. Who Owns the Photos of Them?" *The New York Times*, March 22. Accessed March 22, 2019.

- Smith, Andrea. 2008. "The NGOization of the Palestine Liberation Movement." In *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex*, edited by Incite! Women of Color, 165-184. Boston: South End Press.
- Stevens, Courtney. 2014. "The Community Grantwriting Project: A Flexible Service-Learning Model for Writing-Intensive Courses." *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 18, no. 2: 261-280.
- Sura, Thomas. 2015. "Making Space for SL in First-Year Composition." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 38, no. 2: 113-12.
- Towson University Demographics. Accessed Jan. 15, 2019. <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/towson-university/student-life/diversity/chart-ethnic-diversity.html>

NOTES

- 1 Please contact me at zstuckey@towson.edu for syllabi or if you are interested in hosting a workshop at your institution that will help you replicate this project.
- 2 This work can't be done without our partner organizations who share their life's work with us. Also, a special thanks to Towson University and BTU for supporting and funding us and to *Reflections* editors and reviewers for their rigor and kindness. And to students who are the foundation: Sharon A., Denelle J., Mindy W., and Greg L.

APPENDIX 1: OUTCOMES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND HEURISTICS

Outcomes related to grant & nonprofit writing:

- Learn to research and find grant proposals for nonprofits.
- Learn to write grant proposals for nonprofits.
- Learn to track grants for nonprofits.
- Learn other genres of communication in nonprofits and for profits such as social media management, donor appeals, newsletters, bi-laws, annual reports etc.

Assignments & heuristics related to grant & nonprofit writing:

- Quick & Dirty Inventory of an NPO. Students become mini-experts in the organization they will be writing a grant with.
- Finding the Perfect Request for Proposal (RFP), RFP Compendium.
- Standard Format Grant Proposal (draft and final).
- Real World Grant Proposal draft and final). This is an adaptation of their second or third version of the long-form proposal they already composed.

Outcomes related to professionalism, advocacy, and cultural competence:

- Interact and build relationships with professionals from outside the university.
- Understand and practice cultural competence.
- Create content that impacts the world in a positive way for the “public good.”
- Practice becoming facilitators of language and advocates for constituents that aren’t able to always speak up or write for themselves.
- Consider careers in the philanthropic sector and how to develop a lifelong interest in advocacy.
- Obtain internships, enter graduate school and land dream jobs.

Assignments & heuristics related to professionalism, advocacy, and cultural competence:

- Visiting the city and the partner organizations with self-reflection.

- Cultural Autobiography. Reflection on family background, identity, life experience with difference, racial and cultural memory.
- Writing the “other.” Students learn narrative theory and problematize writing *with* and *for* and *as* someone. This is then transferred to writing “for” an organization, a role students struggle with.
- Cultural competence self-assessment, social identity wheel, white fragility & privilege readings and discussions, privilege checklists, listening exercises.

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF RESOURCES FOR GRANTWRITING COURSES

Content Readings:

1. Deep, Akash and Peter Frumkin. “The Foundation Payout Puzzle.” Working Paper – The Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard School of Government, June 2001.
2. Drucker, Peter. “What Businesses Can Learn from Non-Profits.” Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/1989/07/what-business-can-learn-from-nonprofits>
3. Fanon, Franz. “On Violence.” *The Wretched of the Earth*. 1961.
4. Kivel, Paul. “Social Service or Social Change?” *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. *Incite! Women of Color against Violence*. Boston: South End Press, 2008.
5. Singer, Peter. “Famine, Affluence & Morality.” <http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972---.htm>
6. “20 Ways Majority-white Nonprofits Can Build Authentic Partnerships with Organizations Led by Communities of Color” by @NonprofitAF - <https://nonprofitaf.com/2018/08/20-ways-majority-white-nonprofits-can-build-authentic-partnerships-with-organizations-led-by-communities-of-color/>
7. “How White Non Profits Benefit from Black Grief” by Shahem Mclaurin in *Huff Post*
8. On Lobbying <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/us/nra-finances-executives-board-members.html>

For RFP & NPO Research (find sites specific to your region):

9. *Winning Grants Step by Step* by Mimi Carlson and Tori O'Neal-McElrath.
10. *Mobile for Good* by Heather Mansfield, 2014.
11. Governor’s Grants Office (Foundation, State, Federal) <https://grants.maryland.gov/Pages/home-page.aspx>
12. Philanthropy News Digest <http://www.philanthropynewsdigest.org/> - RFP list
13. Maryland Philanthropy (used to be ABAG or Assoc. of Balto Area Grantmakers) - RFP list <https://www.>

marylandphilanthropy.org

14. Non Profit 990's and more <http://www.guidestar.org/>
15. Search for funders by zip or state and for 990s: <http://foundationcenter.org/> (there is a free quick guide or we may have a password)
16. Maryland Non Profits – Searchable info on MD Non Profits in general and in particular <http://www.marylandnonprofits.org/>
17. General Operating Support Action Guide http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/library/uploads/2016/01/GEO_General-Operating-Support-Action-Guide_Executive_Summary.pdf
18. Smart Criteria for writing outcomes (a starting point) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria
19. Urban Institute Center on NPOs <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/center-nonprofits-and-philanthropy/what-we-do/data-and-current-research-initiatives>
20. Kellogs Logic Model Development Guide <https://www.bttop.org/sites/default/files/public/W.K.%20Kellogg%20LogicModel.pdf>
21. Training - Gov.'s grant conference <https://grants.maryland.gov/Pages/Training.aspx>
22. Everything you need to know about Non-Profits on Idealist.org <http://www.idealist.org/info/Nonprofits>
23. Network for Good. “7 Steps to Creating Your Best NonProfit Marketing Plan Ever” <http://www.fundraising123.org/files/training/7%20Steps%20to%20Creating%20Your%20Best%20Nonprofit%20Marketing%20Plan%20Ever.pdf>
24. Overview of NP sector composition <https://trust.guidestar.org/what-does-the-nonprofit-sector-really-look-like>
25. 2019 State of Grantseeking <https://resources.fountant.com/grantseeker-resources/2019-state-of-grantseeking-report>
26. Grantwriting profession <https://www.writermag.com/get-published/freelance-writing/break-grant-writing/>

Zosha Stuckey is an Associate Professor at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland working in the areas of rhetorical theory and history, rhetoric & science, community engagement, professional and non profit writing, and social justice. Her book, *A Rhetoric of Remnants: Idiots, Half-Wits, and Other State-Sponsored Inventions* from SUNY Press can be found [here](#). She helped to create the [Diversity Faculty Fellows Program](#) at Towson and is an active member and facilitator of [Intergroup Dialogue](#). She can be contacted at zstuckey@towson.edu and you can read more of her work at <https://towson.academia.edu/ZoshaStuckey>.

© 2020, Zosha Stuckey. This article is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY\)](#). For more information, please visit creativecommons.org.