Twitter Thread by Charles Keidan ■■



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@charleskeidan



For anyone in search of true philanthropy, this statement from MacKenzie Scott announcing $4 billion of donations is really worth paying attention to

First, few billionaire make highlight structural injustices. Scott does: 'Economic losses and health outcomes alike have been worse for women, for people of color, and for people living in poverty. Meanwhile, it has substantially increased the wealth of billionaires.'

This makes her a champion of an approach to philanthropy rooted in social, economic and racial justice. She's not alone in that of course but it's still quite unusual in philanthropy circles.

Scott's statement is also striking for its commitment to good funding practice (not what you fund but how you fund). Here she says: 'non-profits...are chronically diverted from their work by fundraising, and by burdensome reporting requirements that donors often place on them'

Her solution: to give $ up front without strings. We 'welcomed them to spend the funding on whatever they believe best serves their efforts. They were told that the entire commitment would be paid upfront and left unrestricted in order to provide them with maximum flexibility.'

And recognition of the heart of philanthropy. There is 'profound encouragement felt each time a person is seen, valued, and trusted by another human being. This kind of encouragement has a special power when it comes from a stranger, and it works its magic on everyone'

Philanthropy's meaning is in the love of humanity so it's poignant that calls to let people know about their funding reduced many non profit leaders to tears and then had the same effect on the giver 'Their stories and tears invariably made me and my teammates cry', notes Scott

(By the way I can relate to that: the day I met @oakfnd Christopher Parker and he offered Alliance magazine the core funding we so needed and deserved, I was reduced to tears - and Parker's equanimity made me blush)

But I digress: how is Scott's approach possible. Here's the rub or at least the faint shadow on this otherwise happy story of philanthropy. It's possible because she 'asked a team of advisors to help me accelerate my 2020 giving'.

In itself that's a sensible thing to do: get smart people to help select the organizations through careful 'data driven' and 'rigorous' research and then - once decided - the giving process can be 'human and soft' and reduce everyone to tears

But we know almost nothing about the team advising on these decisions. The team itself - and the names of each person on the team - is of public interest given that their insights shaped over $4 billion of giving

Scott says she 'asked a team of advisors' to help her which means presumably that she paid a team of advisors to help her. There is obviously a public interest in knowing who they are, how much they are paid and more about how they reached decisions on who to include and exclude

I know that this kind of transparency cuts against the soul of philanthropy and herein lies the tension: about how far philanthropy is ultimately a personal exercise of power and agency in the service of others

Personally I think Scott, on the basis of this latest statement, has used her power with wisdom and compassion and - judging by the tears - has given hope to struggling people and non-profits across the US