



Barbara Hostetter's Remarks for Phil Buchanan's Book Launch – April 23, 2019

Thank you, Kate, for your kind introduction. Thank you to the Boston Foundation for convening us on this special occasion. Thank you all for being here. And, thank you, Phil for asking me to help kick off this celebratory evening with you and Jim. I am deeply flattered to do so.

You have been a friend and trusted colleague to us at the Barr Foundation as we have been on our own philanthropic journey. And, I want to recognize the outsized impact and enormous commitment that you have had on behalf of the nonprofit sector. My husband, Amos, and I have had the benefit of your wisdom and counsel as so many of us in this field have had in our ongoing efforts to grow, learn, and get better.

It was a pleasure to read your book. And, I will say to everyone here that Phil's book will engage and guide the newest and most creative-minded philanthropist as well as the most seasoned philanthropist, who cannot be reminded often enough of the importance of the values that ground our work.

At the Barr Foundation, one of our core values is to invest in leaders. In reading your book I was grateful, Phil, that you start by grounding the reader in the stories of nonprofit leaders. People like Tiffany Cooper Gueye, who spent over a decade at Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), most of those as CEO, and whom we've had the pleasure of getting to know through the Barr Fellowship.

Phil reminds us that leading nonprofit organizations is an incredibly complex job. And the caliber of leadership, commitment, and creativity that nonprofit leaders exhibit day after day, year after year is truly remarkable and inspirational.

And, it is a reminder that, in philanthropy, our primary job is to figure out how to support them to be as effective as they can be, and – through them and their organizations – to improve lives, and to make the world better.

Phil asked me to share a few reflections about what we have learned along our own journey at the Barr Foundation these past twenty-plus years. And, although I am loathe to talk about myself on this celebratory occasion that is really about you, Phil, thank you for asking.

It was roughly 30 years ago as we began to anticipate the sale of my husband's company in the not too distant future and my husband, Amos and I splitting responsibilities with him managing the investment portfolio and with me creating the programmatic portfolio at a new foundation. It was daunting work. I began to lose sleep and sweat bullets. And, Amos would famously reassure me time and time again that

I shouldn't worry because it isn't rocket science. Well, true enough, it is not rocket science. But it turns out that it is not easy. In fact, it is very difficult – especially if you want to do it well.

A few things that have been helpful for us on our way:

Taking the time to get clear about goals – which is a recurring theme in Phil's book.

It is also not easy to do. But so very important.

At the same time, how do you set and hold fast to a set of goals, while retaining an ability to listen, to learn, and to adapt when the world around you changes, when the needs change, and when new opportunities emerge?

As Phil sort of “outs” us in his book, the Barr Foundation began as an anonymous philanthropy. When we entered this space, Amos and I knew we didn't have all the answers, and that we were not the smartest people in the room. We saw our best role as remaining behind the scenes, quietly supporting and investing in the leaders doing the real work.

But the field around us shifted. We learned how important transparency and openness are – and how helpful it was to grant seekers, and our other partners to understand our goals and priorities. And, we learned how essential transparency is for building trust and credibility where we work and, on the issues, we care about most.

As the Foundation's work accrued and matured with achievements that we could be proud of, we also learned that this gave us a platform. We could use not only our dollars. We could use our voice to shine a spotlight on the leaders we support and to elevate important issues.

A final lesson I'll share is the importance of asking for, listening hard, and responding to feedback.

When Amos and I were starting the Barr Foundation, from the earliest strategic planning moments we felt strongly about the kind of Partner we hoped Barr would be. We wanted the nonprofit leaders who we worked with to have stellar experiences. We wanted the relationships and exchanges whether they were awarded a grant or not – to be constructive, positive, respectful and valuable. We wanted the Barr Foundation to be grounded in humility.

But how can you hold an institution accountable to that kind of intention? No less a living institution that is in a constant state of change and growth. We started the Barr Foundation in 1997 with a few consultants, no staff, and \$300 million in assets. Today, we have 35 full-time members of our staff managing \$90 million in annual grantmaking, and \$1.9 billion in assets.

This is one of the reasons we have so valued the opportunity to partner with Phil at The Center for Effective Philanthropy and – now, at four different intervals – to have conducted a Grantee Perception Report. This is a brilliant, data-driven tool to solicit candid feedback from grantees on what it's like to

work with us, and how we can improve. This peer learning on how we can better fulfill our mission has been some of our richest and our most humbling learning to date.

So, with a great token of gratitude to Phil and to the learning past, present and future, let me turn the floor over to our author of honor, Phil Buchanan, in conversation with Jim Canales, my fellow trustee and the President of the Barr Foundation.