ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: (RE)DEFINING BLACK WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY: NEW NARRATIVES OF "VOLUNTARY ACTION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD" AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Throughout American history and across cultural formations, Black women have played a pivotal yet underrecognized role in advancing the uplift of both their race and gender. Despite their longstanding leadership, creativity, and innovation, the deeper meaning and mission of Black women's philanthropic work remain insufficiently examined in scholarly theory and practice. This dissertation addresses that gap by offering a qualitative, historical-to-contemporary analysis of the narratives, practices, and lived experiences of Black women who have strategically (re)defined giving, defined here in its broadest sense as "philanthropy" (from the ancient Greek *philanthrōpia*, meaning "love of humanity"), and understood as the collective sharing of time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties for and by Black communities in the United States.

Employing an interdisciplinary and intersectional framework that bridges American Studies and Philanthropic Studies, this project traces a genealogical arc of Black women's philanthropic thought from the nineteenth century to the present. Using narrative vignettes, archival research, and cultural-historical analysis, the study centers four key sites: Maria Stewart's early public addresses in 1831, Harriet Jacobs' Civil War–era advocacy and humanitarian labor, Mary Church

Terrell's leadership in the founding of the National Association of Colored Women (1896–1918), and contemporary philanthropic leader Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D. Together, these profiles reveal how Black women's giving practices have consistently disrupted, challenged, and expanded traditional and often exclusionary definitions of philanthropy.

Methodologically, the project draws on intersectional historiography, Black feminist standpoint epistemology, narrative inquiry, and archival research to illuminate how Black women mobilize resources, build institutions, create networks, and craft narratives of collective uplift. These vignettes highlight the centrality of creative, community-based, intergenerational, and culturally informed strategic giving, including mutual aid, advocacy, storytelling, institutional leadership, and cultural preservation, as core components of Black women's philanthropic praxis.

The dissertation's central claim is that Black women are pioneers of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP), a culturally grounded and community-centered model of giving that draws upon social networks, cultural assets, intergenerational knowledge, and creative strategies to advance social and political transformation. Mapping the progression of Black women's philanthropic thought and action across nearly two centuries, this project reframes giving as a critical cultural analytic embedded in Black women's ongoing efforts toward collective well-being and systemic change.

Ultimately, this study expands the canon of American and Philanthropic Studies by centering Black women's voices, leadership, and strategies for empowerment. It calls for a re-evaluation of philanthropy's boundaries and possibilities, and it demonstrates how Black women's practices continue to shape, and crucially, reimagine the future of giving in the United States.

(RE)DEFINING BLACK WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY: NEW NARRATIVES OF "VOLUNTARY ACTION FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD" AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Preface

My formal introduction to philanthropy began not in a lecture hall, but behind the front desk of a community foundation in my hometown of Providence, Rhode Island. Just out of high school, I decided to remain close to home to support my family, and that choice led me to a receptionist role at The Rhode Island Foundation.[1] Its formation—like the Carnegie (c. 1905), Rockefeller (c. 1913), and Ford (c. 1936) foundations—emerged during a transformative period of U.S. social reform, spanning the Progressive Era to the New Deal, and drew from a formal philanthropic model rooted in industrial wealth and institutionalized giving, largely orchestrated by wealthy white men. At first, I worked at a distance from that legacy, but through the generosity of mentors and colleagues, many of them Black women from across the region and the country, I was drawn more deeply into the field.

Over nearly a decade, I grew into a substantive role in programming and grantmaking. Toward the end of my tenure, I was asked to support the development of an initiative for Black philanthropy, the first of its kind in the state, which sought to create an endowed fund shaped and sustained by the Black community itself. I witnessed firsthand the ways Black women led that charge. Sororities, religious congregations, civic groups, and individual givers all participated, often in concert with their spouses, communities, and kinship networks, each playing a vital role. Later, the establishment of the Black Philanthropy Bannister Fund, bolstered by a transformative $2.2 million gift from the Bannister House nursing home, co-founded by Christiana Carteaux Bannister (1819–1903), a nineteenth-century free Black activist, businesswoman, and emergent haircare mogul, served as a vivid reminder that Black women's philanthropic labor, past and

[1] The Rhode Island Foundation was established in 1916 and is among the oldest community foundations in the United States, modeled after the Cleveland Foundation (c. 1914). See Rhode Island Foundation, "Our History," accessed June 26, 2026, https://rifoundation.org/about/our-history.

present, had always been there.[2] And yet, even then, I noticed something unsettling. While Black women were central to the work, as organizers, funders, and cultural stewards, they were rarely described as philanthropists, and rarely claimed that title for themselves. That silence and omission stayed with me.

Years later, when I returned to formal study, first at Smith College and presently at the University of Maryland College Park, I carried those questions with me. Through an array of coursework across disciplines and under the guidance of Black feminist scholars and historians such as Paula Giddings, Riché J. D. Barnes, A'Lelia Bundles, Elsa Barkley Brown, Shirley Logan, Sharon Harley, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Patricia Hill Collins, Psyche Williams-Forson, and many others, I began to find language, frameworks, and archival tools to name what I had long observed. With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, I pursued an undergraduate research project on the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), a lineage I revisit in fuller form in this project. What has remained consistent throughout is this fundamental truth: Black women give. They intentionally give across time and space, in pursuit of collective uplift and in loving affirmation of Black life. They always have. But they are not always counted, and their motivations, strategies, and moral frameworks are not often recognized on their own terms.

This dissertation is a direct response to that absence. It is grounded in the belief that Black women's giving deserves to be studied not as an aside, but as a generative framework for how we might reimagine philanthropy itself, not merely as a financial transaction, but as a cultural and moral tradition, a lineage rooted in survival, care, and transformation. In the pages that follow, I do not offer a singular definition of Black women's philanthropy. Instead, I trace

[2] Jane Lancaster, "'I Would Have Made Out Very Poorly Had It Not Been for Her': The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister, Hair Doctress and Philanthropist," *Rhode Island History* 59, no. 4 (November 2001): 108–14, https://www.rihs.org/assetts/files/publications/2001_Nov.pdf; see also Rhode Island Foundation, "Black Philanthropy Bannister Fund Grants," accessed June 19, 2026, https://rifoundation.org/grant/black-philanthropy-bannister-fund-grants.

the expansive ways Black women have given, and continue to give, strategically, creatively, and collectively, in service of racial justice, social change, and communal uplift.

Dedication

This project is a return of the gift to the ancestors in my life and in the collective community of the African Diaspora, and to the myriad Black women who have reminded us that our lives matter and that we hold wealth in abundance to sustain and uplift us.

Dedicated with love and reverence to my philanthropic foremothers—my late maternal grandmother, Hattie Preaster Gomes, who raised me, and my aunt, Armeather Preaster Gibbs, who lovingly nurtured me into adulthood. I had hoped to finish this dissertation while you were here to share in its celebration, but I know that it stands as an enduring reflection of you. May it echo through time and inspire others to praise the ancestors and continue this work with gratitude and pride for Black women's legacies of giving.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation reflects the hands, hearts, and histories that have sustained me. I am profoundly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Psyche Williams-Forson, whose intellectual rigor and deep care have shaped this project at every turn, and to Dr. Bonnie Thornton Dill, whose groundbreaking leadership and scholarship have been a guiding light. I also thank my committee for their generous readings, accountability, and faith in the work.

To the women whose lives, archives, and narratives anchor this study, past and present, thank you for modeling philanthropy as care, culture, courage, and community. Specifically, to A'Lelia Bundles, for her meticulously and lovingly researched biographies of Madam C. J. Walker and A'Lelia Walker, who first introduced me to the term "philanthropy" through her writings on Madam Walker and Black womanhood*,* showing me that throughout history Black women have always been philanthropists and givers. To my primary research participant, Dr. Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, I owe an incredible debt of gratitude for your care, generosity, and "other-mothering" leadership in redefining giving and demonstrating the power of Black collective uplift throughout the African Diaspora. Through Black Philanthropy Month, Women Invested to Save Earth Fund (WISE), and your many creative and philanthropic endeavors, you have laid a visionary foundation for the work, past, present, and future. Your generosity made this project possible.

At the University of Maryland College Park, I am grateful to the Breaking the M.O.L.D. community, colleagues in the College of Arts & Humanities, American Studies, History, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and Public Policy via The Do Good Institute—under the visionary leadership of Dr. Robert T. Grimm, Jr.—and countless colleagues and friends across campus, who made this daily work possible through their encouragement, flexibility, and shared

commitment to collective giving.

In Kansas City, Missouri, my gratitude runs deep for local givers and anchoring institutions—namely, the Black Archives of Mid-America, Kansas City Defender (B-REAL Academy), Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, and Sisters' Circle of Greater Kansas City—along with the many cultural workers, artists, organizers, and elders who remind me why this project matters.

To my family, with special love to my mother, Jennie "Janie" Preaster, thank you for your abiding love. You have taught me the true meaning of giving, as both your caretaker and daughter, and your presence has sustained both of us through the transition of our loved ones—namely, my grandmother, Hattie Preaster Gomes (your mother), and my aunts, Hattie "Peaches" Jones and Armeather Gibbs (your sisters). All are deeply missed but never forgotten. Their lives and legacies of giving echo through this project.

To my friends and family—especially Richard J. Bell, Nuala Cabral, Shawn A. Christian, Antonio DaSilva, Muna Dempsey, Ditra Edwards, Joy Edwards, Ghadeer Garcia, Tonya Guinn, Edward Jones, Patricia "Pat" Macdonald, Koren Martin, Melanie Miller, Ravi K. Perry, Dawn R. Rattan, Byron Risdon, Kaee Ross, Teletia Taylor, and Marjorie "Marj" Williams—who showed up with loving affirmations, care packages, meals, edits, laughter, and late-night and long-distance pep talks: you carried me. I also acknowledge my care teams at the University Health System of Missouri and the University of Kansas Cancer Center for enabling me to continue this work through treatment and recovery.

Finally, to the readers and future scholars and practitioners who will take these ideas further: may this work honor the communities that made it possible and, in some small way,

contribute to the enduring tradition of Community Cultural Philanthropy pioneered by Black women in the U.S. and across the globe.

Table of Contents

Preface ii

Dedication v

Acknowledgments vi

Table of Contents ix

List of Tables x

List of Abbreviations xi

Chapter 1: Introduction: Unseen Generosity, Unmeasured Power:
(Re)Defining Black Women's Philanthropy 1

Chapter 2: Reframing the Givers: A Conceptual Framework for
Understanding Black Women's Philanthropy 34

Chapter 3: Naming the Archive: A Methodological Lens for
Studying Black Women's Giving 78

Chapter 4: Scripted Generosity: The Philanthropic Work Hidden in
Black Women's Historical Writing 106

Chapter 5: "Love in Action": Contemporary Black Women and the
Making of New Narratives of Philanthropy 150

Coda: Charting the Future of Black Women's Philanthropic Thought:
Black Women's Giving in the Twenty-First Century and Beyond 174

Appendix: Selected Black Women-Founded and Led Philanthropic
Organizations and Initiatives 183

Bibliography 187

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Cultural Logics of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) ……. 75

Table 2.2 Philanthropic Tenets of CCP…… 76

Table 2.3 CCP Logic Model: Cultural Logics and Philanthropic Tenets in Practice …….. 77

Table 3.1 CCP Logic and Tenet Alignment Across Philanthropic Profiles ……103

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
BPM	Black Philanthropy Month
CCP	Community Cultural Philanthropy (Framework)
CCW	Community Cultural Wealth
CPCS	Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society (New York University)
NACW	National Association of Colored Women
PAWPNet	Pan-African Women's Philanthropy Network
WISE	The Women Invested to Save Earth Fund
YBGB	Young Black & Giving Back Institute

Chapter 1: Introduction: Unseen Generosity, Unmeasured Power: (Re)Defining Black Women's Philanthropy

Black women's giving (i.e., philanthropy, rooted in the Ancient Greek *philanthrōpía*, meaning "love of humanity") has long shaped American history, culture, and civil society, even when their contributions have been obscured, unnamed, or relegated to the margins of dominant philanthropic narratives. Across generations, Black women have enacted systems of care, mutual aid, cultural stewardship, educational advocacy, and political organizing that challenge narrow, wealth-centered definitions of philanthropy. Their practices—grounded in lived experience and community obligation—demonstrate that philanthropy is not simply a matter of discretionary monetary giving but a moral, cultural, and strategic tradition of "voluntary action for the public good" enacted as a moral response to human need.[3]

These traditions are visible across time. Nineteenth-century poet, lecturer, abolitionist, and clubwoman Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's 1878 observation that "Black women are not backward in promoting charities for their own race and sex" captures both the visibility and invisibility of Black women's giving.[4] Harper wove political advocacy, education, and cultural production into a philanthropic praxis that mobilized resources for racial and gender uplift in the nineteenth century. Her words echo across the twentieth century in the legacy of Mother Clara Hale, who opened her Harlem, New York, home to infants and children affected by poverty, addiction, and neglect. Hale's maternal care, shaped by her own experiences as a widow and single mother, became a community institution long before formal recognition acknowledged it. And in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Oseola McCarty, a washerwoman who donated the bulk of her life savings (approximately $150,000) to fund scholarships at the University of Southern

[3] Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 6–7, 28.

[4] Frances E. W. Harper, "Colored Women of America," *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions* 12 (January 15, 1878): 7–10.

Mississippi, unsettled entrenched assumptions about who "counts" as a philanthropist and what philanthropic capacity looks like.

These women represent only a small portion of the long philanthropic arc of Black women's lives, but their stories illuminate the everyday, culturally grounded, improvisational, and strategic forms of giving that have shaped Black communities for centuries. Their actions embody what scholars of Black feminist thought describe as standpoint epistemology—a way of knowing shaped by lived experience at the intersections of race, gender, and class—and what intersectionality theorists identify as the simultaneous navigation of multiple systems of power that create both vulnerability and possibility.[5] Through these lenses, the philanthropic work of Black women emerges not as peripheral but as foundational to American civil society. Such work builds upon traditions of racial uplift, mutual aid, and community-building that precede and often exceed institutional philanthropy.[6]

Situating Race, Gender, Class, and Power

In this dissertation, I approach race, gender, class, and power as interlocking and mutually constitutive categories of analysis rather than discrete variables. Grounded in Black feminist epistemology and intersectionality, I read these categories as dynamic social formations shaped by lived experience and structural conditions. While I introduce these analytic terms here, a fuller discussion of how they operate in relation to culture, community, and philanthropic

[5] See Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection," *Race, Sex & Class* 1, no. 1 (1993): 25–46; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

[6] See Emmett D. Carson, *A Hand Up: Black Philanthropy and Self-Help in America* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 1993).

practice—and how they inform the conceptual framework and methodology guiding this study—appears in chapters two and three.[7]

These examples also demonstrate a critical reality: Black women's philanthropic practices are often hidden in plain sight. They are expressed through caregiving, educational leadership, organizing, writing, institution-building, mutual aid, artistic creation, and spiritual work. They appear in clubwomen's campaigns for suffrage and anti-lynching legislation, the establishment of schools and homes for the aged, the preservation of cultural memory, the cultivation of community leadership, and the everyday acts of care that hold Black communities together. Such work is rarely recognized as 'philanthropy' in dominant historical or institutional accounts, yet it constitutes one of the most enduring and impactful forms of communal investment in American life.

As mentioned in the Preface, my introduction to philanthropy—in thought and practice—began long before formal study, shaped first by my early work in a community foundation and, more importantly, by the daily examples of the Black women who raised and surrounded me. My grandmother, mother, aunts, cousins, mentors, colleagues, friends, and the many "other mothers" who formed my extended community modeled what giving looked like in real time: caregiving, resource-pooling, advocacy, cultural stewardship, and the ongoing work of sustaining and protecting Black life. Across race, gender, class, power, and place, these women demonstrated that philanthropy was never solely about money; it is, and has always been, an

[7] See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, eds., *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Marybeth Gasman et al., *Race, Gender, and Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

intersectional, culturally grounded tradition of collective responsibility and creative action.[8] Their lived examples formed the foundation of my practical and intellectual journey into this field and revealed a truth that guides this study: Black women have always given, and their expansive, community-centered traditions of care and uplift are central to understanding the meaning and mission of philanthropy—past and present—in the United States and across the African Diaspora.

Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine how Black women define, practice, and theorize philanthropy on their own terms, and to illuminate the historical and contemporary traditions that shape their giving beyond monetary capital. While dominant philanthropic narratives have been shaped by institutionalized, wealth-centered models, Black women's giving emerges from long-standing cultural values and practices that foreground communal care, racial uplift, and collective well-being. This study seeks to document, interpret, and elevate these traditions as vital forms of American history, culture, and philanthropic formations. By situating Black women's giving in its historical and cultural contexts, this study contributes to broader conversations about race, gender, class, and power, and the moral imagination of "voluntary action for the public good."[9]

The Value of American Studies and Philanthropic Studies

The field of philanthropic theory and practice has evolved in many ways to the exclusion of people of color, particularly Black women, and there is a general under-examination of the role of philanthropy within cultural studies. By adopting interdisciplinary methodological and theoretical frameworks that bring American Studies and Philanthropic Studies into conversation,

[8] For fuller discussions of how race, gender, class, power, and place are defined and mobilized throughout this study, see Chapters 2 and 3, which further develop these analytic categories within the conceptual framework and methodological approach.

[9] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 27–28.

this project aims to privilege the often-marginalized voices and lived experiences of Black women and to promote a more critical discourse on philanthropy that challenges race, gender, and class norms across both fields. Accordingly, this project is grounded in American Studies as its primary intellectual home, not simply because of its interdisciplinarity, but because American Studies provides the conceptual flexibility and critical orientation necessary to examine philanthropy as a cultural, historical, and moral practice embedded in U.S. life. American Studies' sustained attention to narrative, power, identity, and nation formation allows me to situate Black women's cultures of giving within broader questions of belonging, citizenship, and collective responsibility. At the same time, Philanthropic Studies offers a vital analytic lens for understanding how moral imagination is enacted—how beliefs about what is right, just, and necessary become material practices of care, redistribution, and community survival. As Philanthropic Studies scholars Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody contend, philanthropy is best understood as the "social history of the moral imagination," a framing that aligns closely with American Studies' concern with how values are produced, contested, and institutionalized over time.[10]

Bringing these fields into conversation is not an either/or proposition, nor does this project position one discipline as subordinate to the other. Rather, American Studies and Philanthropic Studies function here as mutually illuminating frameworks: one often attuned to power, contradiction, and national mythmaking, and the other to aspiration, moral striving, and visions of collective possibility. This approach echoes African American literary scholar Mary Helen Washington's call to interrogate what becomes visible when African American Studies is

[10] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132–133.

placed at the center of American Studies inquiry.[11] A similar question animates this project: what emerges when philanthropy is taken seriously as a cultural force within American Studies, and when American Studies' critical tools are brought to bear on philanthropic narratives that have too often been narrow, elite, or ahistorical? Centering Black women's lived experiences of giving—across informal and formal spaces—reveals philanthropy not as a neutral or benevolent domain, but as a contested site where moral imagination, power, and possibility converge.

This topic is significant because of the dearth of research on Black philanthropy, particularly Black women's giving practices. This topic was chosen both for that reason and because of my prior experience working in the field of philanthropy (c. 2000 to 2010), which, at the time, was just beginning to engage in a multicultural service agenda (including naming and defining "identity-based philanthropy") that put historically underrepresented groups at the forefront.[12] During this time, I witnessed the very real and substantial contributions of Black women in the formal, institutionalized realms of philanthropy (as donors, fundraisers, nonprofit leaders, senior foundation staff, etc.) and in their everyday lives. However, I did not see them, or myself, fully represented and/or named as "philanthropists" in the extensive canons of literature on American history and culture, or in the field research informing contemporary philanthropic theories and standards of practice.

Yet, despite its narrow definition, the face of philanthropy is changing. Specialized areas of research and practice are continually evolving. Within formal and informal philanthropic networks, new discourses and direct actions are emerging aimed at (re)defining philanthropy for

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[11] Mary Helen Washington, "Disturbing the Peace: What Happens to American Studies If You Put African American Studies at the Center?" Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 29, 1997, *American Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1998): 1–23.

[12] See W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Cultures of Giving: Energizing Philanthropy for and by Communities of Color* (Battle Creek, MI: W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2012), 1–112; and Heather T. Joslyn, "'A Man's World': Big Charities Overwhelmingly Run by White Males, a *Chronicle* Survey Finds," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, September 17, 2009, https://philanthropy.com/article/A-Mans-World/174579.

and by diverse communities.[13] In the case of Black philanthropy, Black women are often at the center of these (re)defining movements to name and reclaim "Black cultures of giving."[14] Unfortunately, their efforts are often overlooked. Consequently, I argue that the strategic work of Black women in (re)defining Black philanthropy represents an ideological and practical shift in the field that warrants further study.

This study is further significant for the following reasons: 1) The meaning and mission of Black women's philanthropic work has not been fully examined nor clearly articulated in scholarly theory and practice; 2) Examining historical and contemporary narratives of Black women's philanthropy promotes a critical discourse that challenges race, gender, and class norms and moves our understanding of philanthropy beyond its limited definition (e.g., elite, white, male, and institutional); 3) Such critical discourse elevates Black women as effective socio-political change agents via their giving and exposes a rich philanthropic tradition for and by Black communities; and 4) It moves the examination of African American and women's history and culture beyond a "deficit view" and emphasizes the strategic and self-actualizing nature of Black women's philanthropy, independent of mainstream (i.e., elite, white, male, institutional) patronage and power.[15]

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[13] See D5 Coalition, *State of the Work Report* (2016), http://www.d5coalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/D5-SOTW-2016-Final-web-pages.pdf; D5 Coalition, "I Am a Philanthropist: Diverse Voices in Giving," YouTube video, 2011, https://youtu.be/t8LFgpeZV2s?si=LsxHBUa0X2BvjapO; and "Gates Foundation Awards $2.1 Million to Women's Philanthropy Institute," *Philanthropy News Digest*, December 27, 2015, http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/gates-foundation-awards-2.1-million-to-women-s-philanthropy-institute.

[14] Black Philanthropy Month (BPM), founded in 2011 by Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland, is a contemporary example of Black cultures of giving that celebrates and advances philanthropic traditions across the African Diaspora; Copeland's work is examined in detail in Chapter 5. For a fuller discussion of how culture is defined and mobilized analytically in this study, see Chapters 2 and 3.

[15] The term "deficit view" is used here following Tara J. Yosso's critique of research approaches that portray communities of color as culturally deficient rather than recognizing the "array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged." See Tara J. Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91, esp. 69.

In light of the long yet underacknowledged history of Black women's giving, and the dominance of philanthropic narratives that privilege elite, white, and institutional traditions, this study begins by asking what becomes possible when Black women's everyday giving practices are read as philanthropy. What happens when their cultural logics, moral traditions, and vernacular practices—time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties—are centered rather than marginalized? These preliminary questions emerged as I confronted the persistent exclusion of Black women from prevailing definitions of philanthropy and sought to understand how their traditions unsettle, expand, and challenge dominant assumptions about who counts as a philanthropist and what counts as philanthropic work.

To interrogate this broader phenomenon, the study takes up four (4) central research questions that guided the initial stages of this study:[16]

1. How is American philanthropy commonly defined, past and present, in ways that excluded Black women?
2. How do notions of "voluntary action" and "philanthropic work" incorporate cultural values and traditions specific to Black women's histories and lived experiences?
3. What key themes, terms, and organizing principles best reflect Black women's philanthropic thought and action, as defined and enacted by Black women themselves?
4. More broadly, what can we learn and apply about Black women's giving to inform research and practice in the fields of Philanthropic and American Cultural Studies?

These questions are important as they center a critique of dominant assumptions about the meaning and mission of American philanthropy, and position Black women's contributions more squarely at the center of this discourse.[17] Additionally, considering these questions within the broader context of Black women's histories and lived experiences necessitates an

[16] These four questions guided the initial phase of inquiry. In Chapter 2, I refine them through the Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) framework, generating a second set of guiding questions that more precisely address the cultural logics, values, and practices shaping Black women's philanthropic traditions.

[17] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 27–61.

intersectional practice of engaging a multiplicity of cultural values and traditions. These traditions, deeply informed by race, gender, class, and communal uplift, offer a more inclusive and justice-centered framing of philanthropy, past and present, for the common good.

This intersectional and contextualized framing has, in turn, generated a set of guiding inquiries that run throughout this project—what becomes visible, legible, or possible when Black women's giving is recognized as philanthropy; how our definitions must shift to account for the cultural logics sustaining Black communities across time; and how my emerging framework of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP), introduced in the next chapter, provides language for interpreting these practices. Together, these questions and frames establish the analytic foundation for the study and lead directly into the working definition of philanthropy that follows. Ultimately, the aim of this inquiry—in line with the purpose of the study—is to see Black women's myriad philanthropic contributions recognized and understood as integral to the development of American history, culture, and civil society; and, within the growing field of Philanthropic Studies, to see Black women's philanthropy taken up as a critical framework through which to engage more in-depth research on diverse giving practices and identity formations within and beyond the United States.

Defining Philanthropy

To ground this study, a working definition of philanthropy—one that clarifies the lens through which Black women's giving can be read, interpreted, and understood—is necessary. The term "philanthropy" has multiple meanings, many of which in a contemporary framework are overshadowed by the predominant definition of institutionalized giving, via large monetary donations, for the "common good" or betterment of those in need.[18] However, if we embrace a

[18] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy,* 35–36.

broader interpretation of philanthropy, as a culturally-based tradition of "voluntary action for the public good," and further, as "moral action in response to a human problematic," then a more inclusive picture of philanthropy can be achieved—one that makes room for the voices, narratives and collective actions of Black women who strategically pioneered a beneficent tradition of self-help and community uplift for their race and gender.[19]

I adopt Payton and Moody's definition in *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission* as a starting point because it moves away from narrow, wealth-centric conceptions of philanthropy and acknowledges philanthropy as both ideas and action.[20] Additionally, I take up contemporary framings within the Black philanthropic tradition, where philanthropy is described through vernacular practices of giving—time, talent, treasure, testimony, and, more recently, ties or relational connections—which capture the social and cultural relationships sustaining communal life.[21] This vernacular framework offers an accessible way to understand philanthropy beyond money and reflects the lived experiences, moral values, and relational commitments that shape Black women's giving in particular. Black philanthropy emerges from culturally grounded systems of care and mutual responsibility rather than discretionary wealth.[22] Collectively, these insights provide a concise working definition for this study: philanthropy as a constellation of values and actions—time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties—through which Black women support, nurture, and uplift their communities.

It is important to note that throughout this study, I use the terms "giving" and "philanthropy" interchangeably to signal a deliberate shift in how Black women's practices are

[19] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy,* 35–36.

[20] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy,* 35–36.

[21] Erica Hunt and David Maurrasse, *Time, Talent and Treasure: A Study of Black Philanthropy* (New York: Twenty-First Century Foundation, 2004), 1–31.

[22] Emmett D. Carson, *A Hand Up: Black Philanthropy and Self-Help in America* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Press, 1993).

read and understood.[23] What mainstream philanthropy often belatedly names, Black women have enacted instinctively through everyday acts of care, cultural labor, strategic resource sharing, and freedom work that have long sustained our communities. “Giving” captures the expansive vernacular, relational, and lived practices that emerge from Black women’s social worlds, while “philanthropy” marks their strategic, historical, intellectual, and political significance. Both carry equal weight and importance in this study. By pairing these terms, I highlight how Black women’s traditions and expressions of care constitute a philanthropic lineage in their own right—one built not on elite capital but on cultural knowledge, collective obligation, and the persistent work of community survival and uplift. This grounding, discursive premise shapes the analytic frame of this study and lays the foundation for my conceptual framework introduced in the next chapter.

History shows that African American (herein referred to as “Black”) women have continuously worked for the uplift of their race and gender.[24] However, the meaning and mission of their philanthropic work have not been fully examined nor clearly articulated in scholarly theory and practice within and beyond American Studies and Philanthropic Studies, as the primary disciplinary fields of this project. Yet despite the dearth of research on Black women’s

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[23] As Valaida Fullwood observes in *Giving Back: A Tribute to Generations of African American Philanthropists*, "giving" functions as a familiar vernacular expression of philanthropy within Black communities. Fullwood argues that African Americans have long used the language of giving to describe everyday practices of care, mutual support, and communal responsibility, even when such activities were not recognized as philanthropy within mainstream discourse. See Valaida Fullwood, *Giving Back: A Tribute to Generations of African American Philanthropists* (Charlotte, NC: Foundation for the Carolinas, 2011).

[24] The terms "Black" and “African American” are used interchangeably throughout this study. While recognizing the limitations of this approach, I follow Stuart Hall’s understanding of Black identity as a politically and culturally constructed category with multiple meanings and usages. Additionally, Black is capitalized throughout to reflect its cultural and political significance. See Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 443.

For foundational discussions of Black women’s philanthropic traditions and traditions of racial uplift, see Darlene Clark Hine, “We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women,” in *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power*, ed. Kathleen D. McCarthy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 70–93; and Iris Carlton-LaNey et al., “Sitting With the Sick: African American Women's Philanthropy,” *Affilia* 16, no. 4 (2001): 447–66.

giving, historical and contemporary narratives chronicling their work for the common good bear witness to a rich and longstanding philanthropic tradition that persists today.[25] These narratives make visible a continuum of voluntary action, cultural leadership, and community-based care that has shaped Black life across generations, even when such work has not been named as philanthropy in dominant academic or institutional contexts.

Across the historical and contemporary profiles or "vignettes" examined in this study, several recurring elements or characteristics of Black women's giving emerge: advocacy and activism; educational leadership and institution building; cultural production and narrative care; mutual aid, social welfare, and self-help traditions; and the relational labor that sustains community ties. These characteristics, grounded in cultural identity and lived experience, form the foundation for the conceptual framework that I developed in this dissertation. Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP*)*, introduced in the next chapter, offers a way to organize, interpret, and theorize these elements as an interconnected tradition of cultural, communal, and strategic giving.

Consequently, this project: *(Re)Defining Black Women in Philanthropy: New Narratives of "Voluntary Action for the Public Good" at the Intersections of Race, Gender, and Class in the United States* takes up an intersectional framework, rooted in Black feminist epistemology, to examine the influence of identity and difference on cultures of giving for/by Black women in the United States. Through historical and contemporary qualitative analyses, I explore how Black women's unique positionality at the intersections of race, gender, and class formations in the U.S. produces new ways of seeing and (re)defining the meaning and mission of philanthropy from the so-called 'margins', with Black women's voices and contributions at the center.

[25] In this study, "narratives" refer to oral, written, and visual stories that reflect and shape broader understandings of race, gender, and philanthropy in public discourse. For a fuller discussion of the role of narratives in (re)defining philanthropy, see the section on theoretical frameworks in Chapter 2.

Accordingly, I have situated my research under the Department of American Studies' core theme of "cultural constructions of identity and difference," in an effort to explore how philanthropic thought and action can shed new light on the constructions of Black womanhood in relation to the ever-changing landscapes of American history, culture, and civil society. Specifically, this study examines how and why the development of a common understanding of philanthropy often neglects Black women's voices and lived experiences (past and present), and, in turn, how Black women strategically (re)define the meaning and mission of philanthropy for themselves and their communities.

This study begins with a socio-historical examination of the development of American philanthropy—including race, gender, and class formations—and concludes with a contemporary biographical and institutional profile of a single Black female community leader and practitioner who reflects an evolution in giving that is consolidating and (re)defining conceptions of American philanthropy today. A full breakdown of the historical and contemporary profiles will follow in the ensuing section.

Historical and Contemporary Profiles: A Genealogical Approach

To address the above-mentioned questions and framing, I present four "vignettes"—not exhaustive biographical or institutional profiles—of Black women whose lives exemplify the tenets of strategic community-cultural giving, including time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties across space and time. Focusing on discrete moments, rather than full life histories, allows for a more intimate view of Black women's strategic giving, bringing the inner workings of their choices, constraints, and innovations into sharper relief. This vignette approach invites readers into specific historical and contemporary scenes, enabling analysis of Black women's philanthropic labor in greater depth and nuance without losing sight of the broader genealogical

arc. These individuals and organizations include:

A. Maria W. Stewart (1803–1879), one of the first American women to speak publicly on political issues, whose speeches and writings were influenced by the radical abolitionist David Walker, and who addressed Black women as “daughters of Africa” in strategic and rhetorically suasive appeals for moral reform, educational investment, and collective uplift;

B. Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897), nineteenth-century abolitionist and writer, whose autobiographical and epistolary testimony functioned as both political intervention and philanthropic act, using narrative persuasion to mobilize white allies and secure resources for Black widows, orphans, and refugees in the post-Civil War period. Her strategic use of narrative care and moral suasion helped lay the groundwork for organized collective uplift.

C. Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954), educator, writer, activist, and inaugural president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), whose leadership helped define the organization’s philanthropic mission. This profile examines both Terrell’s personal advocacy and fundraising for Black institutions and the NACW’s early self-help and collective-giving initiatives as foundational practices that established a tradition of Black women’s organized philanthropic work.

D. Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, PhD. (1962–present), is a scholar-activist and founder of Black Philanthropy Month (BPM) and The Women Invested to Save Earth Fund (WISE), whose work reframes Black philanthropy as a global, intersectional, and Pan-African movement for racial uplift, collective action, and social transformation.

These women have been discussed widely in academic and cultural contexts—literature,

history, women's studies, cultural studies, media, communication, and more. Here, I bring them into conversation as philanthropic thinkers and doers. I do not seek to retell their life stories in full. Rather, I examine how their work constitutes an oeuvre of philanthropic labor that advances Black community life across generations. Their actions, rooted in value systems of care, justice, and cultural survival, represent the full spectrum of what I argue constitutes Black women's Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) in action—a concept that merges theory and practice and will be explained further in Chapter 2.

As mentioned, this study begins with a socio-historical examination of the development of Black philanthropy—including race, gender, and class formations—and concludes with a contemporary biographical and institutional profile that reflects the ongoing evolution of Black women's giving. Across four (4) historical and contemporary profiles—Maria Stewart (1831), Harriet Jacobs (1867), Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) (1896), and Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland (2025)[26]—the project traces a genealogical arc that highlights continuity and transformation in Black women's philanthropic practices. By tracing this historical-to-contemporary arc, the study illustrates how Black women's cultural logics, moral traditions, and community-based practices endure, adapt, and reshape the meaning and mission of American philanthropy across time.

My principal conclusion is that Black women's giving constitutes a distinctive philanthropic tradition grounded in cultural identity, lived experience, and community responsibility rather than in discretionary wealth. Their philanthropic work emerges from cultural logics of care, justice, and survival; draws on intergenerational systems of knowledge; and operates through time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties, as explained through the CCP

[26] The dates associated with each profile here identify the focal period examined in the vignette rather than the full span of each woman's philanthropic work.

framework that follows in Chapter 2. These traditions have shaped, and continue to shape, the development of American civil society, yet remain insufficiently acknowledged in philanthropic studies and cultural history.

The contributions of this dissertation are trifold: 1) To advance my argument, grounded in historical and contemporary literature, that Black women's practices constitute a coherent and culturally specific philanthropic tradition; 2) To highlight specific historical and contemporary practitioners whose work exemplifies how Black women act as philanthropic agents of communal change, cultural production, and racial uplift across time; and 3) To provide a framework for identifying—naming, claiming, and celebrating—Black women's significant contributions in a way that both maps a progression of Black philanthropic thought and opens up new spaces to engage giving as a critical cultural analytic (in theory and practice) across American Studies and Philanthropic Studies.

This introduction situates my study within a broader body of scholarship on philanthropy, civil society, race, gender, and Black women's work. Building on the conceptual and historical foundations outlined in this introduction, I turn to the literature to trace how philanthropy has been defined, historicized, and contested, and to identify where Black women's giving has been acknowledged, obscured, or left unnamed.

Of particular interest to this study are three (3) focus areas: 1) defining philanthropy—the ways that philanthropy has been traditionally defined and consequently able to eclipse the voices and contributions of Black women's philanthropic work; 2) gender and philanthropy—how using gender as a center of analysis unveils relations of power within the realm of philanthropy; and 3) race and philanthropy—similarly, considering race but specifically the Black philanthropic tradition. Interwoven, these strands illuminate both the gaps and possibilities that inform my

reframing of Black women's philanthropy and provide the intellectual groundwork for the conceptual framework and methodological approach developed in the chapters that follow.

How the Literature Defines Philanthropy

In *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*, Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody offer a preliminary definition of philanthropy as "moral action in response to human problems," based on the pragmatic philosophy of "meliorism," and they conclude that philanthropy is in essence "voluntary action for the public good."[27] They further explain that philanthropy, situated within various cultures and traditions, is essential to the survival of democratic societies and is often invoked in formal contemporary contexts to shape strategies and policies to address social and political problems. Payton and Moody argue that Americans, in particular, turn to philanthropy to advance their individual and collective visions of the public good.[28]

Critics may argue that "voluntary action for the public good" is an oversimplified definition of philanthropy. However, this definition is useful precisely because it moves away from fixed and stereotypical meanings and adopts a broader, more philosophical approach rooted in personal beliefs, moral imperatives, and a wide range of cultural value systems. Payton and Moody make a compelling case for understanding philanthropy as a multiplicity of thoughts and actions that "achieve some vision of the public good."[29] Their definition is broad by design, framing philanthropy as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of actions and ideas. In

[27] Although I introduce a working definition of philanthropy in the opening of this dissertation, Payton and Moody provide a fuller account of its cultural, moral, and civic dimensions. They define philanthropy as "voluntary action for the public good" and situate it within the philosophical tradition of meliorism, the belief that the world can be improved through directed human effort. See Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 1–12, 26.

[28] For an influential discussion of gift exchange, reciprocity, and communal obligation that informs later understandings of philanthropy, see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925; repr., New York: Norton, 1967).

[29] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 27–28.

this case, "voluntary action" speaks to the acts of giving and service that reflect investments of both time and money, and what signifies said investments as philanthropic is their underlying purpose of serving the public good.[30]

This definition needs specificity, but it offers a useful starting point for a more critical analysis of philanthropy as Black women define it. Where Payton and Moody's definition falls short is in its inclusion of race and gender as critical analytics. The unique moral and cultural dimension of philanthropic thought and action provides an opportunity to interrogate and expand this framework through the voices and lived experiences of Black women themselves, and how they define and enact philanthropy for themselves. In this way, the project diverges from conventional approaches that rely on white male theorists to explain identity and difference, instead turning to a Black feminist episteme to help tease out the unique standpoints and values embedded in the defining cultures of giving for/by Black women themselves.

In relation to the linguistic characteristics of philanthropy, people use various words and labels to define their philanthropic activities (e.g., altruism, charity, volunteerism, nonprofit service, beneficence, generosity, giving, Greek: *agape*, Hebrew: *tzedakah*, etc.). Drawing on British philosopher W. B. Gallie, Payton and Moody characterize philanthropy as an "essentially contested concept" and further argue that the term can be "bent and distorted by attempts to contain it within the diversity of human phenomena that resists generalizations and categorizations."[31] Consequently, it is essential to acknowledge the evolution of philanthropy's meaning and mission over time and across various socio-political contexts. For example, in the U.S., philanthropy has become closely associated with giving to and through public institutions, and almost inextricably linked to sectoral terminologies such as nonprofit, voluntary sector,

[30] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 28.

[31] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 29.

non-governmental (NGO), third sector, and civil society, which are all framed by an even more descriptive set of governmental rules and regulation.[32] Ultimately, to understand the terminological debates and discursive evolution of philanthropy, it is vital to keep in mind that these terms are socially constructed, complex, and context-bound.

Social historians have written extensively on the history and traditions of American philanthropy to varying degrees of inclusiveness. Some favor an Anglo-historical narrative of American philanthropic thought and action, espousing the early democratic and civic ideals of America's "founding fathers" and European philosophers (e.g., Jefferson, Winthrop, de Tocqueville, etc.), but largely to the exclusion of the diverse voices and experiences that shape the American philanthropic tradition.[33] More contemporary scholars and practitioners of philanthropy, however, are filling the gaps and adopting a more inclusive approach to this work.[34]

In "Four Traditions of Philanthropy," Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely present a useful framework for understanding the characteristics and historic progression of American philanthropy.[35] They explain that central to the history of philanthropy in the U.S. is a "vision of human connectedness," and they lay out three distinct philanthropic traditions or movements: 1) relief; 2) improvement; and 3) social reform, along with a fourth emergent tradition, 4) civic engagement, which, they argue, is shaping the contemporary philanthropic landscape.[36] The

[32] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 29–32. See especially their discussion of the IRS's taxonomy of nonprofit organizations on p. 32.

[33] See Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988; originally published 1960); and Robert H. Bremner, *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

[34] See Robert T. Grimm Jr., *Notable American Philanthropists: Biographies of Giving and Volunteering* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[35] Elizabeth Lynn and Susan Wisely, "Four Traditions of Philanthropy," in *The Civically Engaged Reader: A Diverse Collection of Short Provocative Readings on Civic Activity*, eds. Adam Davis and Elizabeth Lynn (Chicago: Great Books Foundation, 2006), 210–17.

[36] Lynn and Wisely, "Four Traditions of Philanthropy," 211–12.

fourth tradition of civic engagement brings us to the contemporary moment, which I believe is most relevant to this study. Lynn and Wisely note that as social and economic problems persist, foundations and other philanthropic organizations are increasingly investing time and resources in building partnerships, strengthening relationships, and engaging conversations among citizens in order to build more "reflective and resourceful communities."[37] Lynn and Wisely's work encourages me to locate and contextualize Black women's philanthropy within the wider context of American history and the development of civil society. It also promotes "new ways of seeing" that call for the inclusion of voices and narratives that might not otherwise be heard because they do not fit into dominant discourses on American philanthropy.[38]

Gender and Philanthropy

The emergence of diverse, interdisciplinary scholarship on this history of philanthropy, particularly on women's contributions to civil society, offers new avenues of inquiry for my research, which focuses on race, gender, and class relations in philanthropy. In *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society (1700–1865)*, Kathleen McCarthy explores the relationship among volunteer associations, burgeoning Jacksonian ideals of a participatory democracy, and market revolutions, as closely linked forces in the formation of the United States from the eighteenth century to the Civil War.[39] McCarthy essentially defines civil society as democracy itself, and she contends, "it is not possible to understand the meaning of American

[37] Lynn and Wisely, "Four Traditions of Philanthropy," 215–17.

[38] See bibliography for additional scholarship spanning the 1990s through the 2010s that echoes Lynn and Wisely's call for greater diversity and inclusion in philanthropic research and practice across race, gender, and class. Representative examples include Carson (1993), McCarthy (1990–2003), Conley (2000), Grimm (2002), Kaminski (2002), Hunt and colleagues (2003, 2004), Drezner (2005), Krishnamurthy (2005), Gasman and colleagues (2005, 2011), Frumkin (2006), the Foundation Center (2008), the Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University (2009), Walther (2011), and the Council on Foundations (2012).

[39] See Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society, 1700–1865* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For additional context on the history of American philanthropy and democracy in the twentieth century, see Olivier Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

democracy without understanding civil society. Nor is it possible to understand civil society without understanding the role of nonprofit organizations and the philanthropy—broadly defined to include giving *and* volunteerism—that sustains them."[40]

McCarthy further notes that because giving and volunteerism were broadly based, taken together they provide a useful lens for studying one of the major ways in which white women, free Blacks, and white elite men collectively built institutions and participated in public policymaking, thereby providing a yardstick for measuring fluctuating levels of public influence over time. Although McCarthy does not distinguish Black women's philanthropic activities from those of free Blacks more broadly, her analysis remains instructive. She contends that the twentieth-century tendency to equate philanthropy with the coupling of "lavish generosity with lavish wealth," exemplified by figures such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, George Soros, and Bill Gates, would have puzzled most nineteenth-century Americans, particularly in the decades before the Civil War.[41] For them, the term encompassed a broad range of giving, including both time and money, often carried out by individuals of limited means. Rather than being exclusive to wealthy elites, McCarthy argues that philanthropy was the "practice and prerogative of the many."[42]

Inclusive scholarship has also pushed the discourse on women and philanthropy more progressively forward in terms of examining the unique and differential ways in which women (across race, class, and even geographic boundaries) engage in voluntary action for the public good.[43] *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* specifically examines the

[40] McCarthy, *American Creed*, 1-4.

[41] McCarthy, *American Creed,* 1.

[42] McCarthy, *American Creed,* 1.

[43] See also Kathleen D. McCarthy, ed., *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Kathleen D. McCarthy, "Women, Politics, Philanthropy: Some Historical Origins of the Welfare State," in *The Liberal Persuasion: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and the Challenge of the American Past*, ed. John Patrick Diggins (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Kathleen D. McCarthy, "The

impact of race and class in shaping women's responses to emerging issues and opportunities to advance the public good. McCarthy notes, "women's giving and volunteerism has played a central, albeit unheralded role in women's history, providing access to power outside of the masculine realms of government and commerce."[44] To make the case for the longstanding value and power of women's philanthropy, she compiles a diverse collection of narratives on the history of women's voluntary associations in the U.S., Latin American women's philanthropy, and women's philanthropy outside of the U.S. (e.g., Russia, Colonial Mexico, and France). Additionally, *Lady Bountiful Revisited* highlights the work of pioneering scholars like historian Darlene Clark Hine, whose essay on the philanthropic work of Black clubwomen stands as one of the few scholarly historiographical works examining Black women's philanthropic contributions in the United States.[45]

In reference to the intersections of women, philanthropy, and power, McCarthy makes a critical claim, noting that "women have traditionally used these activities [philanthropic movements] to wield power in societies intent upon rendering them powerless."[46] She further argues that unlike men, who "often enjoyed a host of political, commercial, and social options in their pursuit of meaningful careers, women most often turned to nonprofit institutions and reform associations as their primary points of access to public roles," ultimately "forging parallel power structures to those of men" and "creating a growing array of opportunities for their sisters and

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History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits," *Third Sector Review* 4, no. 2 (1998): 7–22; and Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[44] Kathleen D. McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere," in *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy, and Power*, ed. Kathleen D. McCarthy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 1.

[45] Darlene Clark Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women," in *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power*, ed. Kathleen D. McCarthy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 70–93.

[46] McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures," 1.

themselves."[47] McCarthy's work is thus valuable for its focus on a diverse array of women's philanthropic contributions and on the relative agency and power enacted through such work for and by Black women within and beyond U.S. borders.

Recent literature reviews of empirical research on women and philanthropy, sponsored by the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy: Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University (2009, 2012), reveal that women have always been philanthropic, giving generously of their time, talent, and treasure to improve the community.[48] In the 2012 sponsored study, *Women and Philanthropy: A Literature Review*, the authors, Debra J. Mesch and Andrea Pactor, make several recommendations for future inquiry that bear on this dissertation project. Specifically, they call for more research on women's philanthropy as it relates to issues of race, religion, culture, and life cycl*e*, noting the paucity of work in these areas.[49] Clearly, there is a need to fill these gaps, both in terms of highlighting existing scholarship, historical and contemporary, and devising new mixed-methodological approaches (qualitative and quantitative) to more critically examine the intersection of race, gender, and philanthropy.

Black Philanthropic Traditions

A comprehensive literature review on African American philanthropy, published by the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society (CPCS) at the City University of New York, contextualizes cultures of giving and traditions of philanthropic work for and by Blacks in the United States.[50] The CPCS review highlights the significant contributions of Black people within

[47] McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures," 1.

[48] Debra J. Mesch and Andrea Pactor, *Women and Philanthropy: A Literature Review* (Indianapolis: Women's Philanthropy Institute, Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indiana University, 2012), 1–17. See also Debra J. Mesch, *Women and Philanthropy: A Literature Review* (Indianapolis: Women's Philanthropy Institute, Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2009), 1–14.

[49] Mesch and Pactor, *Women and Philanthropy: A Literature Review* (2012), 9.

[50] Felinda Mottino and Eugene Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," in *Pathways for Change: Philanthropy Among African American, Asian American, and Latino Donors in the New York Metropolitan*

the historical and contemporary philanthropic landscape. However, as expected, there is limited specific mention of Black women's philanthropic work. Interestingly, though, CPCS provides good insights into the historical vernacular of giving. This review indicates that literature predating the twentieth century often did not use the term "philanthropy." CPCS therefore recommends that researchers look for and recognize terms such as "self-help," "betterment," and "helping out" to refer to early American philanthropy.[51]

Additionally, an expanded definition of philanthropic work within the Black community is presented—one that measures giving not simply in terms of gifts of cash but a broad range of voluntary actions that extend beyond financial support (e.g., gifts of time, talent, testimony, and ties).[52] Also, CPCS echoes the historical record of Black women's clubs and community uplift work, noting that organizing occurred primarily through self-established groups and associations such as Black churches, anti-slavery societies, educational institutions, mutual aid societies, fraternal and sororal orders, civil rights groups, as well as private enterprises.[53] Notably, the Black women's club movement was born out of this internally organized mode of self-help and beneficence.[54]

According to CPCS, to understand the unique nature and culture of Black philanthropy, one needs to expand the common conceptual framework and go "beyond conventional foci" that views philanthropy as orchestrated by wealthy elites, who make large cash donations with "detached professionalism" through institutional giving.[55] Such assumptions favor

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Region (New York: Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2005). Hereafter cited as CPCS.

[51] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 10.

[52] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 10.

[53] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS 4, 10.

[54] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 7.

[55] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 2.

"Anglo-historical tradition" to the exclusion of "other" or "marginalized groups" and do not take into account the expanded and multi-layered meaning and mission of philanthropic work for and by Blacks, particularly women, that was/is centered around familial bonds and communal supports that are permeable and inclusive in nature.[56]

The CPCS review also notes "self-help" and "benevolence" as two definitive terms associated with Black philanthropy. In historical and contemporary literature on the subject, the terms are used interchangeably and are deeply "rooted in the experience of oppression and resulted in racial uplift" for Black Americans.[57] According to CPCS, this idea, which they defined as "self-help philanthropy," focuses on "cooperative giving*"* in response to the needs of the individual, family, and immediate community. This type of giving exists between peer groups and involves what Payton and Moody refer to as "serial reciprocity," or the ongoing process of receiving and repaying good deeds in kind.[58]

Scholar and practitioner Emmett D. Carson's writings on the history and evolution of Black philanthropy have foregrounded much of the existing canon of literature on the subject. Carson's pioneering work examining the Black philanthropic tradition in *A Hand Up: Black Philanthropy and Self Help in America* notes how Black philanthropic organizations evolved in response to diverse social, economic, and political needs with three (3) "overlapping strains" or "traditions" emerging throughout American history.[59] Proceeding Lynn and Wisely's approach in "Four Traditions of Philanthropy," Carson defines these three strains as: "1) humanitarian aid, to

[56] According to CPCS, African American philanthropy is derived from a notion of family as an inclusive and permeable institution where giving and serving family, neighbors and needy strangers are seen as general obligations. See Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," 2–7.

[57] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 1–10.

[58] Payton and Moody cite economist Kenneth Budlong's principle of "serial reciprocity," which states that we "repay good deeds done for us by doing good deeds for others, for third parties rather than for those who helped us." See Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 107.

[59] Emmett D. Carson, *A Hand Up: Black Philanthropy and Self-Help in America* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Press, 1993), 2.

ameliorate individual and community hardship when government or personal resources are absent or inadequate; 2) self-help, with particular emphasis on the establishment of Black schools and colleges, as well as commercial enterprises such as banks, and insurance companies formed to benefit the community; and 3) social change, from the abolition of slavery, to the elimination of all legal, educational, and economic barriers to racial equality."[60] Carson also notes that while Black philanthropy owes much of its character to the "distinctive conditions of Black America," it is part of the broader "philanthropic mainstream of American society," and thus shares common features with this tradition.[61] He also locates the early roots of Black philanthropy within the Black churches and other faith-based associations.[62] While my research does not deeply investigate religion (i.e., the "Black church"), awareness of the role of religion and faith, particularly how religious values and practices shape Black women's definitions of and engagement with philanthropy, is important to consider.[63]

As it relates to Black women's philanthropic contributions over time and in particular ways, Carson cites the work of Black women's clubs during the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth centuries as a defining movement shaping the Black philanthropic tradition. He mentions the establishment of long-standing institutions like the NACW in Washington, DC (1896), and nods to Boston's Afric-American Female Intelligence Society (1832) as one of the first mutual aid, self-help oriented, organizations established for and by Black women, prior to Emancipation.[64]

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[60] Carson, *A Hand Up*, 2.

[61] Carson, *A Hand Up*, 3. Here Carson notes that the emphasis on "volunteerism" within wider American society influenced the development of Black philanthropy.

[62] Carson. *A Hand Up*, 7–10.

[63] Noah L. Drezner, "The Black Church and Millennial Philanthropy: Influences on College Student Prosocial Behavior at a Church-Affiliated Black College," *Christian Higher Education* 12, no. 5 (2013): 363–82.

[64] Drezner, "The Black Church and Millennial Philanthropy," 363–82. Mutual aid is used here to describe collective practices of resource sharing and support, especially prevalent among African American communities facing systemic barriers. See also Nina Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work: Theorizing the Community as a Site of Production," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 47, no. 4 (2020): 343–62.

Black women throughout the tumultuous history of the early settlement and formation of the United States advocated for the freedom and uplift of their race and sex individually and collectively through informal community networks and formal institutions. Historian Paula Giddings highlights this fact in her pioneering text, *When and Where I Enter: Black Women on Race and Sex in America*, noting that during and after the Civil War, Black women pooled incomes and distributed resources to support individuals and entire communities (including Black veterans, elders, children, families, and migrants), noting that they were "instrumental in building a number of needed community institutions."[65]

Additionally, Black women's giving transcended socio-economic strata, as women of various stations and abilities gave back for the collective good.[66] In the post-Reconstruction period, newly emancipated and educated Black women organized and institutionalized their philanthropic efforts, founding schools, orphanages, settlement houses, literary societies, church and civic organizations, and national associations to address the myriad issues affecting their race and sex (e.g., lynching, political and economic disenfranchisement, sexual abuse and exploitation, and education inequality).[67]

Ironically, however, historians and others chronicling the myriad contributions of Black women, past and present, often stop short of calling their work 'philanthropy,' or naming them as 'philanthropists.' Giddings, for example, does not directly use the term 'philanthropy' in her

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[65] See Paula J. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Perennial, 2001; first published 1984 by William Morrow), accessed June 26, 2026, https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/when-and-where-i-enter-_-the-impact-of-b-paula-giddings.pdf. Subsequent citations refer to this digital edition.

[66] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 68–69. Giddings cites Harper's account of a "Mrs. Madison, who, although living in a humble and unpretending home, had succeeded in setting up a home for aged coloured [sic] women." Giddings also notes the "lesser-known contributions" of the venerable Harriet Tubman, who devoted her time and resources to support similar projects. Toward the end of Tubman's life, Giddings reports that she opened a "charity home" for the elderly in Auburn, New York, where she later died.

[67] See Sharon Harley and the Black Women and Work Collective, eds., *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1-10.

account of Black women's social and political contributions in *When and Where I Enter*.[68] However, her text is a valuable resource and model for reading between the lines to discover the often-untold narratives of Black women's giving and socio-political activism at the intersections of race, gender, and class formations in the United States.

In the pioneering essay, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women," historian Darlene Clarke Hine reflects on the myriad contributions of Black clubwomen.[69] She contends that while giving amongst Black female leaders of women's clubs and organizations was not comparable to white male philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie, Julius Rosenwald, and John D. Rockefeller, their targeted investments of time and personal resources were just as valuable.[70] Juxtapose Giddings' work with Hine's more recent and pointed essay on the philanthropy of Black clubwomen, and one can see a progression in the discourse that speaks to the importance of this subject, as well as the need for further investigation.

Alongside these works, the interconnected, historical scholarship and writings of A'Lelia Bundles and Tyrone McKinley Freeman offer a more explicit philanthropic reading of Black women's lives. Bundles' biographical and archival recovery of Madam C.J. Walker's life in *Self Made.*[71] Bundles' stewardship of the Walker archives has provided rich primary material and interpretive framing that Freeman later extends in his award-winning biography of Walker's philanthropy and the attendant movement-building work of Black women in the nineteenth century in *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving: Black Women's Philanthropy During Jim*

[68] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter.*

[69] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[70] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[71] See A'Lelia Bundles, *Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C. J. Walker* (originally published as *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C. J. Walker*; New York: Scribner, 2020).

Crow.[72] Together, their work exemplifies how Black women's entrepreneurial, educational, and community-building efforts can and should be read as philanthropy, and how archival and historiographic labor are themselves philanthropic in their preservation of Black women's legacies.[73]

These key historical references highlight gaps and opportunities in how narratives are read for evidence of Black women's philanthropic work as both individual identity characteristics and markers of collective action for the public good. While it is clear that Black women's cultures of giving existed and thrived, the historical record remains largely obscure. Consequently, there is value in mining the past and probing the present for new and broader meanings of Black women's philanthropic contributions.

(Re)Defining Philanthropy: The Moral Imagination

To better understand the philanthropic work of Black women, it is necessary to establish a definition of the term that is situated within the historical and cultural contexts of their thoughts, actions, and lived experiences. Here, I return to *Understanding Philanthropy* to consider the multicultural dimensions of philanthropic theory and practice, and its potential applications to my research. Payton and Moody help me to appreciate that a critical element in understanding philanthropy from different cultural perspectives is an appreciation of "the social history of the moral imagination."[74]

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[72] See Tyrone McKinley Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving: Black Women's Philanthropy During Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020). A'Lelia Bundles wrote the foreword to this volume and collaborated closely with Freeman through her stewardship of the Madam C. J. Walker Family Archives. See also *Madam C. J. Walker Family Archives*, Madam Walker Legacy Center, accessed June 26, 2026, https://madamwalkerfamilyarchives.org.

[73] Tyrone McKinley Freeman and Kim Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy: Philanthropic Archival Layering as a Critical Historical Approach for Researching Voluntary Action in Marginalized Communities," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organization*s 33, no. 6 (2022): 1114–21.

[74] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132.

The *moral imagination* is a term borrowed from anthropologist Clifford Geertz who used it to refer to the "imperfect process of 'translating' other cultures, other people and other times."[75] By applying this concept of "historical and cultural translation" via the moral imagination to their definition of philanthropy, Payton and Moody show how it can be used to "describe the development of a philanthropic tradition."[76] They further contend that social actors use the moral imagination to act philanthropically for what they deem to be just causes, concluding that "philanthropy is the social history of the moral imagination."[77] Additionally, Payton and Moody explain that notions of what is good and just differ within and without cultures and societies requiring an expanded definition of philanthropy that encompasses the unique moral and cultural values of the individuals who engage it.[78]

Thus, *Understanding Philanthropy* offers a humanistic overview of philanthropy that provides a critical lens for analyzing the diverse cultural values, traditions, and lived experiences that encompass Black women's philanthropic work. Payton and Moody make it clear that in anthropology, the moral imagination aids our understanding of other people's lives, and in philanthropy, the moral imagination helps us to understand how and why people respond creatively to human needs for the public good.[79] In my analysis of Black women's philanthropy, there is a need to do both—to understand their philanthropic work within socio-historical contexts as an interplay of personal histories, values, beliefs, and customs—to thoughtfully articulate how Black women utilize their moral imaginative processes to respond creatively for the uplift of their race and gender today.

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[75] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132. See also Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[76] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132.

[77] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132–33.

[78] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132–33.

[79] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 132–33.

Together, the literature reviewed above establishes both the foundations and the limitations of existing scholarship on philanthropy, race, gender, and Black women's cultural work. It also underscores the need for a more expansive interpretive framework—one capable of naming, theorizing, and honoring the practices that have long sustained Black communities but remain structurally underexamined. With this context in place, the following chapter outlines how the dissertation proceeds, tracing the historical, cultural, and methodological arc through which CCP emerges as the central analytic lens of this study.

Chapter Outline

The chapters that follow build on this foundation to develop a conceptual framework, a methodological approach, and a set of historical and contemporary vignettes that, together, reframe Black women's philanthropic work.

Chapter 2 introduces my conceptual framework of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP), situating it within Black feminist thought, critical race theory, and philanthropic scholarship. It outlines CCP as a way of seeing Black women's giving as both theory and praxis and clarifies the analytic categories—race, gender, class, power, culture, and community—that structure the framework and guide interpretation throughout the study.

Chapter 3 details the study's methodology, including historiographical and archival approaches, narrative and vignette-based analysis, and my positionality as a Black woman scholar-practitioner working within and alongside philanthropic institutions. It also introduces analytic categories as methodological lenses, explains the data sources and case-selection commitments that guide the project, and demonstrates how CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets function as interpretive tools.

In Chapter 4, I discuss three historical vignettes—Maria W. Stewart, Harriet Jacobs, and

Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)—to trace a genealogical arc of Black women's philanthropic thought and action across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These cases illuminate how CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets appear in distinct historical moments while remaining grounded in a shared ethic of communal care, resistance, cultural stewardship, and collective self-determination.

Chapter 5 brings the genealogy into the twenty-first century. It opens with a contemporary profile of Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D., examining her leadership in Black Philanthropy Month, The WISE Fund, and global diasporic organizing, and demonstrating how CCP takes shape in a digital, transnational, and institutionally engaged context. Copeland's work is analyzed as a contemporary embodiment of CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets.

The study closes with a coda that offers another look at Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) as an emergent analytic framework. It highlights CCP's contributions to American Studies and Philanthropic Studies, noting that the framework is not intended to be prescriptive but offers a culturally grounded lens for interpreting Black women's giving. The coda also gestures toward future directions for research and practice in Black women's philanthropy and identifies opportunities to extend CCP across scholarly and community contexts.

Black women's giving is situated within a long arc of cultural practice, intellectual labor, and community care, illuminating patterns that are too often obscured in dominant philanthropic narratives. As the vignettes that follow reveal, Black women have long enacted forms of worldmaking grounded in moral imagination, cultural survival, and collective responsibility. The next chapter turns to the conceptual framework that emerges from these traditions: Community

Cultural Philanthropy (CCP). Rooted in Black feminist epistemology, CCP offers language for understanding the meanings, motivations, and creative strategies embedded in Black women's giving. It provides the analytic scaffolding through which the chapters that follow may be read, inviting deeper attention to the textures, logics, and cultural practices that constitute Black women's philanthropic lives. In moving from introduction to framework, this study more fully steps into its purpose: to honor, name, and articulate the expansive traditions of giving that Black women have always carried.

Chapter 2: Reframing the Givers: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Black Women's Philanthropy

The work of defining, naming, and interpreting Black women's giving requires a conceptual framework capacious enough to hold the textured realities of their lived experiences, cultural values, and communal practices. The question that animates this chapter for me—what counts as philanthropy, and how do we know it when we see it in the context of Black women's lives?—is both theoretical and practical. It is also a question shaped by what I have encountered repeatedly in the archive, through narrative, and in scholarly conversation: the consistent presence of Black women's labor for the collective good, paired with the persistent absence of language to describe this labor as philanthropic.

Alongside this guiding question, I also find myself asking: What do we actually mean when we say "Black women's giving?" When we encounter figures like Maria W. Stewart—the first American woman to speak publicly on political issues, whose speeches urged Black uplift, moral reform, and collective responsibility—how do we read her work as philanthropic? Are all her actions philanthropic? Do all speeches, letters, or communal labors automatically "count" as giving? These are not abstract concerns. They reflect the interpretive challenges any reader might face when engaging a tradition that has rarely been named, let alone theorized, within philanthropic studies. I raise these questions not to collapse every act of resistance or advocacy into philanthropy, but to acknowledge the complexity of interpreting Black women's contributions. I have wrestled with these tensions myself, and part of my aim in introducing CCP is to offer readers a framework that makes this work more accessible—one that helps us identify the moments when Black women's cultural labor, organizing, care work, and institutional leadership cohere as forms of voluntary action for the collective good.

In this chapter, I offer a conceptual foundation for understanding these practices on their

own terms. A conceptual framework is not necessary because Black women's giving lacks coherence—quite the opposite. It is necessary because existing philanthropic theories lack the cultural and epistemological breadth to fully perceive the strategies, traditions, and moral logics that Black women have long enacted. My goal here is not to impose a rigid definition of philanthropy, nor to collapse all acts of care into a philanthropic category. Instead, I propose a flexible interpretive lens—one grounded in Black feminist epistemology and cultural practice—that helps us identify when and how particular actions and traditions function as philanthropy. This approach recognizes that philanthropic behavior is contextual, variable, and deeply rooted in the histories, identities, and value systems that shape Black women's lives.[80]

To build this framework, I begin with Tara J. Yosso's "Community Cultural Wealth" model, which identifies the cultural assets communities of color mobilize to resist, survive, and thrive within systems of inequality.[81] While Yosso's framework is not explicitly philanthropic, I read it as foundational because it illuminates the forms of cultural knowledge—narrative, familial, resistant, social, navigational, and aspirational—that Black women regularly draw upon in their giving. These forms of cultural wealth map closely onto the ways Black women share resources, enact reciprocal care, sustain cultural memory, and invest in future generations. In my view, Yosso's work provides an essential conceptual anchor for understanding the cultural roots of Black women's philanthropy.

Building from this lineage, I introduce Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) as an

[80] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[81] See Tara J. Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," Race Ethnicity and Education 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91. Yosso conceptualizes "Community Cultural Wealth" as a Critical Race Theory (CRT) challenge to traditional Bourdieusian interpretations of social and cultural capital in education research on communities of color. She moves away from deficit-based views of communities of color as sites of cultural poverty and disadvantage and instead focuses on "the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (69). For a visual model and explanatory infographic, see Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin–Madison, "Community Cultural Wealth," accessed June 26, 2026, https://ccwt.wisc.edu/community-cultural-wealth/.

original conceptual framework that names, interprets, and theorizes Black women's giving in its full complexity. CCP identifies moments, practices, and traditions in which Black women's actions—whether through organizing, mentoring, institution-building, creative work, advocacy, or intergenerational care—constitute voluntary action for the collective good. CCP helps make such actions legible as philanthropic without reducing them to wealth, institutional affiliation, or elite norms.[82] It honors the fact that Black women themselves, through their testimonies, choices, and consistent labor on behalf of their communities, are the theorists of their own philanthropic traditions.

Finally, I frame CCP as a living, evolving conceptual tool. It is grounded in a long intellectual lineage—Black feminist thought, intersectionality, community cultural wealth, and the Black philanthropic tradition—yet it remains open to adaptation.[83] As I offer it here, CCP is not a closed system but an invitation: a framework through which scholars, practitioners, and community members—especially those from marginalized groups whose giving has historically been overlooked—can name, evaluate, and extend their own cultural traditions of voluntary action for the public good.

Building on these theoretical foundations, it is necessary to clarify the analytic categories that guide this study. Because CCP is grounded in an understanding of how Black women interpret, enact, and define giving within specific historical and cultural contexts, this framework depends on clear definitions of the terms that shape its conceptual terrain. In particular, race, gender, class, power, culture, and community operate as mutually informing categories of analysis that help illuminate how Black women's philanthropy is practiced, narrated, and

[82] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*; and Bundles, *Self Made*.

[83] See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; Carson, *A Hand Up*; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving.*

understood. Defining these categories at the outset allows us to move beyond deficit framings and toward an appreciation of Black women's agency, creativity, and self-definition in their philanthropic lives.

Race is understood in this study as a socially constructed system of meaning that organizes people through perceived difference and shapes access to power, resources, and opportunity.[84] Understanding race as a social construction rather than a biological reality, I approach it as a set of lived, structural, and representational conditions historically produced and continually reinterpreted through discourse.[85] For Black women, race is a central context through which philanthropic commitments emerge, often reflecting collective strategies for survival, protection, and uplift.[86] Within the CCP framework, race is not simply an identity label; it is a condition that shapes the purpose and urgency of giving as a cultural practice rooted in shared history, resilience, and communal responsibility.[87]

Gender is understood as a system of social norms, expectations, and performances shaped through cultural and historical processes.[88] Rather than fixed categories of womanhood or femininity, gender is constituted through lived practices that reflect both constraint and agency. For Black women, gendered expectations often shape how their labor is perceived—care work, organizing, spiritual leadership, and community support are frequently rendered invisible or naturalized rather than recognized as civic or philanthropic labor.[89] In the context of CCP, gender becomes a lens through which Black women's creative strategies of care, leadership, and

[84] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

[85] Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, ed. Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

[86] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[87] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought.*

[88] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990; repr., 1999); and Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

[89] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

influence come into view, highlighting how they transform gendered expectations into powerful forms of community-building and resource sharing.[90]

Class is approached as both a material and relational formation.[91] It reflects access to economic resources but also encompasses social networks, educational opportunities, and the ability to navigate institutional spaces. For Black women, class often intersects with race and gender in complex ways, shaping access to formal philanthropic institutions while also fueling commitments to redistribute resources through informal networks.[92] CCP recognizes class as a dynamic factor that influences how Black women mobilize cultural and social capital, mentor others, create pathways of access, and extend forms of support that are not always captured in dominant philanthropic narratives.

Power is understood here as relational and circulating rather than top-down or individually possessed. Drawing on Foucault's insights into the relational nature of power and on Black feminist theorists who emphasize agency within interlocking systems, this study approaches power as generated through everyday practices, cultural meaning-making, and collective action.[93] For Black women, philanthropic practices often function as strategies for claiming agency, shaping communal narratives, and creating life-affirming conditions within their communities. CCP emphasizes how Black women mobilize and redistribute power through cultural labor, storytelling, leadership, and resource sharing, revealing philanthropy as a site of both agency and self-determination.

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[90] See Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

[91] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Bonnie Thornton Dill and Maxine Baca Zinn, "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996): 321–31.

[92] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; see also Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, eds., *Women of Color in U.S. Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

[93] See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1980); Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Dill and Zinn, "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism."

Culture is defined as the shared meanings, practices, and expressive traditions through which communities understand themselves and their obligations to one another.[94] Drawing on Bernice Johnson Reagon's framing of Black women as "cultural workers," culture functions as a dynamic and adaptive force shaped by historical conditions, including experiences of displacement and enslavement.[95] Culture is both a set of practices and a process through which identity, memory, and community are created and sustained. Within CCP, culture anchors the meanings and practices of giving, shaping how Black women define philanthropy in ways that center care, communal survival, and collective life.

Community is approached as both a relational and cultural formation.[96] More than a geographic space, community reflects networks of belonging, shared experience, and collective identity. For Black women, community often functions as the site where care, knowledge, and support circulate. Community is also where philanthropic labor becomes visible, whether through mutual aid, advocacy, organizing, storytelling, or ritual practice.[97] Within CCP, community serves as both the context and the beneficiary of philanthropic action, highlighting the deep ties between cultural meaning, shared responsibility, and the ongoing work of sustaining Black life.

This chapter proceeds by tracing the conceptual foundations of CCP. I begin with the analytic categories and epistemic commitments that guide this study, then turn to Community Cultural Wealth as the first significant theoretical grounding for CCP. From there, I outline the conceptual and cultural logics that inform CCP and culminate in a full articulation of the nine

[94] See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*.

[95] Bernice Johnson Reagon, "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers," *Feminist Studies* 12, no. 1 (1986): 77–90.

[96] See Nina Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work: Theorizing the Community as a Site of Production," *The Review of Black Political Economy* 47, no. 4 (2020): 343–62.

[97] Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work."

tenets that define it as a framework.

Community Cultural Wealth as Theoretical Grounding

Community Cultural Wealth offers a powerful counter-narrative to deficit-based frameworks that have historically pathologized communities of color. Rather than frame marginalized communities in terms of what they lack, Yosso identifies the forms of cultural capital they possess, cultivate, and transmit—assets that sustain families and communities across time.[98] Her model includes six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. Together, these forms illustrate how communities of color access, mobilize, and regenerate resources rooted not in material wealth but in cultural knowledge, kin networks, creative strategies, and collective resilience.[99]

Yosso's work is instructive because it provides an essential foundation for understanding the cultural and relational practices that underpin Black women's giving. CCW reframes wealth not as something owned, accumulated, or distributed solely by individuals or institutions, but as embedded in the community itself—a reservoir of experience, memory, knowledge, values, and shared commitments that is continually renewed.[100] This reframing is crucial for a study of Black women's philanthropy, where giving often takes the form of care work, spiritual and creative labor, cultural preservation, institutional building, and intergenerational mentorship—forms that have not traditionally been recognized as philanthropic within mainstream discourse.[101]

In my reading, CCW offers an interpretive lens that brings Black women's labor into focus by naming the cultural and communal resources that support their giving. For example,

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[98] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," 69–91.

[99] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," 69–91. For a visual model and explanatory infographic, see Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin–Madison, "Community Cultural Wealth," accessed June 26, 2026, https://ccwt.wisc.edu/community-cultural-wealth/.

[100] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," 69–91.

[101] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; and Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

Yosso's familial capital speaks directly to the intergenerational care systems that Black women maintain—systems that transmit values, survival strategies, and collective memory across generations. Her concept of navigational capital resonates deeply with Black women's ability to maneuver within or against institutions that were never designed to include them. And resistant capital illuminates the political dimension of Black women's philanthropic labor, which often takes shape through advocacy, organizing, and strategic actions to protect and advance their communities.

While CCW was not created as a philanthropic framework, I read it as foundational to understanding the cultural logics underpinning Black women's giving. It provides the conceptual structure to recognize how cultural wealth operates as a form of collective resource-sharing, often more impactful than the financial capital emphasized in dominant philanthropic models. CCW thus serves as a bridge between Black feminist epistemology—which insists on the validity of lived experience as knowledge—and a culturally grounded understanding of philanthropy rooted in communal practice.[102]

Yet, despite its power, CCW alone does not fully address the interpretive challenges of identifying and theorizing Black women's philanthropic labor. It does not name philanthropy directly, nor does it provide a vocabulary for distinguishing when cultural practices move into the terrain of "voluntary action for the collective good."[103] It gives us the cultural assets; what it does not yet give us is a way to understand how those assets are mobilized as philanthropic strategy, action, and tradition, rooted in moral, cultural, and communal logics that guide Black women's giving—a structure I take up in fuller form later in this chapter.

This is the gap that CCP fills. Building upon Yosso's contributions, CCP extends the

[102] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

[103] See Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 26.

notion of cultural wealth into the philanthropic domain, identifying the patterns, tenets, and cultural logics through which Black women enact giving as a moral, culturally grounded, and community-directed practice. Where CCW identifies the assets Black communities hold, CCP identifies how Black women use those assets to fuel collective uplift, survival, care, and social change. In this way, CCW becomes the conceptual foundation upon which CCP rests—the theoretical soil from which the roots of CCP emerge.

Toward an Interpretive Framework of Community Cultural Philanthropy

The shift from establishing the theoretical grounding of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to developing the interpretive lens that animates CCP is not only analytical; it also reflects my own wrestling with the core problem that brought me to this project. Over the course of my research and lived experience, I have returned again and again to a deceptively simple question that refuses to leave me: How do we know Black women's philanthropy when we see it?

This question has followed me across archives, community meetings, oral histories, institutional rooms, and my own memory. It is not always obvious where philanthropy begins or how to name it, especially when Black women's giving emerges through everyday acts of care, cultural labor, and collective survival that rarely align with dominant definitions of philanthropy. I have asked myself these questions as I read historical documents, listened to Black women describe their work, and revisited moments from my own philanthropic practice. I also anticipate the challenges and questions that naturally arise when philanthropy is reframed through Black women's lived experiences. CCP emerges in response to those complexities.

Theoretically, our common understandings of philanthropy have been shaped by white, elite, institutional traditions that obscure the everyday giving practices of marginalized

communities. In practice, the forms of care, advocacy, community-building, and resource-sharing through which Black women sustain collective life rarely register within conventional philanthropic frameworks. CCP creates space to interpret these practices on their own terms. It offers a way to read philanthropic intent through the cultural logics that have informed Black women's giving for generations and provides the conceptual clarity needed to recognize what might otherwise remain unnamed.

To build this interpretive framework, I draw on several intersecting intellectual traditions:

- Black feminist epistemology and standpoint theory, which center lived experience, situated knowledge, and relational ethics as critical sites of analysis.[104]
- Intersectionality, which illuminates how race, gender, class, and power shape both the conditions under which Black women give and the meanings their giving takes on.[105]
- Narrative theory, which treats stories, testimonies, life histories, and narrative performances as essential sites of knowledge that make philanthropic values legible.[106]
- Historiography and archival recovery, which illuminate what is preserved, omitted, or must be read between the lines to uncover Black women's philanthropic practices.[107]

CCP functions as an interpretive bridge connecting cultural values to philanthropic intent and linking lived realities to theoretical insight. It provides a way to read Black women's giving as both a historical throughline and a contemporary practice. This framework does not prescribe fixed criteria or claim universality. Instead, it offers a flexible and evolving mode of interpretation that honors the complexity of Black women's cultural traditions while making their

[104] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

[105] See Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

[106] See Jewel Amoah, "Narrative: 'The Road to Black Feminist Theory,'" *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 12, no. 1 (2013): 84–102.

[107] See Bundles, *On Her Own Ground*; Carson, *A Hand Up*; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*; and Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1114–21.

philanthropic labor visible, nameable, and analytically coherent.

Toward an Applied Framework of Community Cultural Philanthropy

At the heart of this project lies a necessary reorientation: to listen, to witness, and to reframe what counts as philanthropy by attending to how Black women live it. Rather than taking for granted the dominant definitions of philanthropy, which center on wealth, institutional charity, and capital surplus, this project begins with the premise that giving is expansive, cultural, and deeply contextual. In the lives of Black women, philanthropy often manifests not through financial wealth but through collective practices of care, organizing, cultural preservation, and intergenerational knowledge transfer as forms of collective wealth.

By centering the lived experience and narratives of Black women, this project introduces a critical lens for rethinking what philanthropy is, what it has been, and what it can become. Black women's philanthropy, as examined here, is defined through both historical context and cultural meanings. It is expressed not only in traditional charitable giving but also through the consistent investment of time, talent, treasure, testimony, ties, and cultural resources for the collective good. These practices are anchored in longstanding communal values and respond directly to the systemic exclusions that have historically limited Black people's access to wealth, formal institutions, and dominant philanthropic narratives. As Payton and Moody remind us, "philanthropy starts with our value systems and what we deem to be important," and for Black women, those values have often translated into voluntary acts of service, care, advocacy, and resistance that deserve recognition as philanthropic work.[108]

This project proposes Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) as a new analytic to describe and interpret the unique ways that Black women give. CCP expands and reframes existing definitions of giving through a framework grounded in Black feminist thought,

[108] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 6.

intersectionality, and the lived realities of Black women as givers, organizers, and culture-bearers.[109] With the foundational scholarship of Black philanthropy practitioners such as Emmett D. Carson and Tyrone McKinley Freeman as guideposts, I argue for a broader conception of Black giving as strategic, community-centered, and historically rooted.[110] This project builds on these works by focusing specifically on Black women who have made their philanthropic work visible across space and time through perspectives, narratives, and strategies of giving that are both material and immaterial. A detailed articulation of the CCP framework appears in the chapters that follow, with further elaboration provided in the methodology sections of this dissertation.

CCP is not intended as a traditional social-science evaluative tool, but as an interdisciplinary analytic framework that bridges American Studies and Philanthropic Studies. While philanthropic practice often relies on empirical frameworks like logic models to trace impact, I repurpose that form through an American Studies lens—using it not for measurement, but for interpretation. CCP foregrounds narrative, historiography, race, gender, culture, and power as the primary sites of analysis, while adapting the visual clarity of philanthropic logic models to make Black women's giving legible across historical and contemporary contexts. In this sense, CCP reflects philanthropy's definition as both ideas and action: the cultural logics capture the meaning-making traditions that shape Black women's philanthropic thought, and the tenets trace how those ideas appear in practice within their lived experiences, texts, and institutions. Rather than substituting empirical social-science analysis, CCP offers a narrative-centered, culturally grounded praxis that allows American Studies and Philanthropic Studies to speak to one another. Its purpose is to make visible a genealogy of Black women's

[109] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; and Reagon, "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers."

[110] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

giving that has been historically overlooked and to provide a coherent interpretive method for identifying that philanthropy when we see it.

In the sections that follow, I move from clarifying what CCP is, including its conceptual foundations and interpretive commitments, to demonstrating what CCP do*es* as an analytic and methodological tool. I outline the cultural logics that structure CCP, the nine tenets that operationalize it, and the methodological approach through which CCP functions at the intersections of theory and practice or praxis. Together, these elements offer a grounded, culturally specific, and justice-centered way of understanding Black women's philanthropic traditions past, present, and emergent.

Cultural Context and Conditions: Reading Before Interpretation

CCP begins with a necessary grounding in cultural contexts and socio-political conditions. It is not enough to identify what Black women do or to name practices as philanthropic after the fact. CCP asks us to first consider the conditions under which those actions take shape and become legible as philanthropy. This includes attention to historical constraint, cultural meaning, relational dynamics, and material realities that shape both the necessity and the form of giving. In this sense, CCP functions as an interpretive framework that requires us to read context and conditions before we read action.

In this study, context is understood as a set of overlapping conditions that shape why and how Black women define, enact, and sustain their giving over time. These include histories of exclusion from formal philanthropic institutions, cultural traditions of care and collective responsibility, and the everyday realities of navigating racialized, gendered, and classed structures of power and control. By naming these conditions explicitly, CCP makes visible how practices often dismissed as informal, small-scale, or incidental are, in fact, strategic, relational,

and deeply rooted forms of philanthropic action.

This grounding also requires attention to positionality, particularly the ways Black women navigate and leverage class and power within constrained systems. Black women's philanthropy does not occur outside of hierarchy, but within and against it. As Zinn and Dill observe, women of color who hold relative access to resources, education, or institutional visibility often mobilize that position not to separate themselves from others, but to extend opportunity, redistribute resources, and create pathways for those with less access.[111] In this way, class is not simply a marker of status but a relational tool that shapes how giving circulates within and across communities.

Together, these contextual conditions provide the necessary foundation for interpreting CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets. They orient the reader to the environments in which Black women's giving emerges and ensure that what follows is not read in abstraction, but as historically situated, culturally grounded, and relationally enacted practice.

Cultural Logics and Philanthropic Tenets of CCP

CCP takes shape as a layered interpretive framework encompassing three (3) interconnected dimensions: 1) cultural context and conditions, 2) the cultural logics that ground Black women's interpretations of giving, and 3) the philanthropic tenets that express those logics in practice. As established in the preceding section, context provides the necessary grounding for philanthropic meaning to become legible. Building from this foundation, the logics reflect how Black women come to know, recognize, and evaluate philanthropic action, while the tenets reflect how they enact philanthropy across historical and contemporary contexts. Together, these three dimensions form the conceptual architecture of CCP as both an analytic and interpretive

[111] See Zinn and Dill, *Women of Color in U.S. Society*; and Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work," 343–62.

framework.

The cultural logics and philanthropic tenets that follow emerge from the convergence of multiple intellectual traditions in Black Studies, Philanthropic Studies, applied Critical Race Theory, and Black feminist epistemology. Although CCP is an original analytic framework, its structure is grounded in recurrent patterns identified across two centuries of Black women's giving, as well as in established scholarship on Black self-help, mutual aid, and community uplift. The four cultural logics and nine philanthropic tenets presented below reflect the epistemic orientations and recurring practices that appear most consistently in the archival, historical, and contemporary materials examined in this study.

What follows outlines these components in detail before turning to the CCP logic model (see Table 2.3), which illustrates how context, logics, and tenets function together in practice. Tables outlining the CCP logics, tenets, and logic model appear at the end of Chapter 2 (see Tables 2.1 to 2.3), with an integrative table aligning these components across the four philanthropic profiles presented at the end of Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1).

Cultural Logics of CCP

This section builds from the contextual conditions outlined above, moving from interpretive grounding to the cultural logics that shape how Black women understand and enact philanthropy. The logics articulated here are distilled from the literature on Black feminist epistemology, community cultural wealth, and Black philanthropic traditions, as well as from the lived realities and narratives of Black women themselves.[112] These four logics function as the conceptual spine of CCP. They shape how Black women interpret what giving means, why it matters, and how it should be practiced.

[112] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; Carson, *A Hand Up*; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

1. Moral Logic of Collective Uplift

The moral logic reflects Black women's deep commitments to racial uplift, community advancement, and ethical care. Giving is understood as a moral responsibility rooted in shared destiny: one cannot thrive unless the collective thrives. This logic is rooted in Black feminist moral philosophy and long-standing traditions of racial advocacy, social justice, and communal accountability.[113] It emphasizes giving as a purposeful ethical response to structural harm and as a proactive investment in community survival.

2. Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories

This logic recognizes the cultural knowledge Black women inherit from family, community, and the African Diaspora. These include traditions of resistance, creative survival, spiritual grounding, and artistic expression. As Yosso's framework illustrates, communities possess cultural wealth encoded through memory, story, ritual, and collective praxis.[114] Philanthropic action draws on these reservoirs, making giving not only an economic act but a cultural one.

3. Communal Traditions of Care and Survival

Black women's philanthropy emerges from centuries-old systems of mutual aid, reciprocal support, and community care networks created in response to exclusion from formal institutions. Mutual aid societies, church auxiliaries, club movements, and extended kin networks exemplify how care and survival are anchored in community-based systems.[115] This logic affirms the relational and collective dimensions of philanthropy as lived by Black women.

4. Strategies of Self-Determination

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[113] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Frances E. W. Harper, "Colored Women of America," *Englishwoman's Review of Social and Industrial Questions* 12 (January 15, 1878): 7–10.

[114] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"

[115] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; and Carson, *A Hand Up*.

The logic of self-determination reflects Black women's resourcefulness, strategic creativity, and agency in the face of racial, gendered, and economic constraints. From Maria Stewart's political sermons to the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)'s declaration "Lifting as We Climb," self-determination has shaped Black women's approaches to building institutions, advocating for justice, and crafting new futures.[116] This logic affirms philanthropy as a strategy of autonomy, resistance, and self-definition. These logics are not mutually exclusive. They interweave to form a dynamic interpretive system that allows Black women to define philanthropy on their own terms and to enact it in ways that meet communal needs. When analyzed in context, these logics reveal how Black women's philanthropic actions emerge as culturally grounded responses to historically specific conditions rather than abstract or universal forms of giving.

Why Four Logics of CCP?

CCP includes four cultural logics—moral uplift, cultural values, communal traditions, and self-determination—because these represent the recurring epistemic orientations that shape Black women's interpretations of philanthropy across two centuries. These logics are intentionally limited in number to preserve conceptual clarity. Each reflects a coherent worldview grounded in Black feminist epistemology, intersectionality, and community cultural wealth.[117] Additionally, maintaining four logics allows for an elegant distinction: logics describe why Black women give and the epistemic traditions that shape meaning-making. Together, these logics operate as the interpretive layer of CCP, mediating between contextual conditions and the

[116] See Maria W. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart: (Widow of the Late James W. Stewart) Now Matron of the Freedman's Hospital, and Presented in 1832 to the First African Baptist Church and Society of Boston, Mass.* (Washington, DC: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1879); Randolph Boehm, *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895–1992* (1994); Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; and Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[117] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; and Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"

enacted practices captured in the philanthropic tenets.

Philanthropic Tenets of CCP

Building from these logics, and grounded in the contextual conditions from which they emerge, CCP identifies nine philanthropic tenets that serve as analytic markers for recognizing, naming, and interpreting Black women's giving across time. These tenets mirror the structure of Yosso's community cultural wealth model but are explicitly grounded in Black women's philanthropic histories, cultural practices, and narrative traditions.

Each tenet is both descriptive (what Black women do) and interpretive (how to read the philanthropic significance of their actions):

1. Cultural Stewardship: Practices that preserve, transmit, and protect cultural identity, memory, and heritage. This includes educational activism, historical recovery, artistic expression, and cultural leadership.
2. Narrative Testimony and Memory Work: The use of life writing, storytelling, oral history, and narrative advocacy to cultivate understanding, mobilize resources, and shape public discourse. This tenet is often expressed through autobiographical writing, speeches, letters, public testimony, and communal storytelling traditions.
3. Collective Resource Sharing: Pooling financial and non-financial resources to meet community needs, often through informal networks. This includes fundraising, mutual aid, collective saving, and redistributive practices.
4. Mutual Aid and Reciprocal Care: Forms of care rooted in interdependence, community protection, and shared responsibility. Examples include child-rearing collectives, food provision, housing assistance, and crisis response.
5. Intergenerational Knowledge and Wealth Transfer: Transmission of cultural wisdom, life

skills, community knowledge, networks, and material assets across generations. This includes caregiving, mentoring, educational support, and legacy-building.[118]

6. Leadership and Institution Building: Formation of organizations, schools, civic institutions, clubs, and community infrastructures that sustain communal life.
7. Resistance and Advocacy: Philanthropic action that confronts injustice and expands protections for Black communities. This includes abolitionist work, voting rights advocacy, policy influence, and public testimony.
8. Creative and Spiritual Praxis: Artistic, spiritual, or expressive forms of giving that cultivate healing, solidarity, and community belonging. This includes hymnody, poetry, ritual practice, and aesthetic activism.
9. Translocal and Transnational Solidarity: Forms of giving that connect Black women's communities across cities, regions, and global diasporic spaces. This includes Pan-African activism, digital organizing, global philanthropy, and diasporic exchange.

As a whole, these tenets represent the observable expressions of CCP in practice, translating culturally grounded logics into enacted forms of giving that respond to specific historical and social conditions.

Why Nine Tenets of CCP?

Collectively, these tenets help operationalize CCP. They provide a coherent analytic for interpreting philanthropic behavior across historical documents, letters, speeches, archival records, contemporary profiles, and institutional practices. These nine (9) tenets reflect the practices that appear most consistently in the historical record, including but not limited to

[118] "Intergenerational Knowledge and Wealth Transfer" requires brief clarification because it is both a cultural value and an enacted practice. Knowledge is foundational to Black communities as heritage, memory, and continuity, and thus appears throughout the four cultural logics. However, CCP locates intergenerational knowledge within the philanthropic tenets because it becomes most visible through observable actions—teaching, mentoring, storytelling, caregiving, and the material transfer of resources. In CCP, logics articulate epistemic orientations, while tenets identify the practices through which these values are enacted.

archival materials, writings, speeches, and oral histories examined in this project. They also align with foundational scholarship on Black giving. In *A Hand Up: Black Philanthropy and Self-Help in America*, Emmett D. Carson identifies three "defining forces"—humanitarian aid, self-help, and social change—as major throughlines of Black philanthropic activity.[119] My nine tenets extend and specify these categories from an intersectional and gendered perspective, capturing the breadth of cultural, spiritual, narrative, material, and institutional practices Black women have enacted across generations.

The tenets emerged inductively through repeated patterns identified in the genealogical profiles—Stewart, Jacobs, Terrell/NACW, and Copeland—as well as through extensive engagement with primary sources and secondary scholarship. While these nine categories represent a coherent framework, CCP remains a generative model. Additional tenets may emerge with future research, and others may be condensed or adapted based on context. As the enacted dimension of CCP, these tenets make it possible to trace how contextual conditions and cultural logics are translated into sustained philanthropic practice across time.

By bringing these components together within the conceptual framework, I offer the following CCP Logic Model as a preliminary illustration of how these logics and tenets operate in practice. This does not constitute the full methodological approach of this study; rather, it provides the interpretive bridge that connects CCP's theoretical foundations to the methodological tools outlined in Chapter 3.

CCP Logic Model: From Cultural Logics to Philanthropic Practice

Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) functions not only as an interpretive and genealogical framework but also as a strategic cultural design model—a fluid, adaptive "cultural

[119] Carson, *A Hand Up*, 2.

logic model" that makes visible the processes through which Black women create, sustain, and transmit community impact. Logic models, traditionally associated with program evaluation, organizational planning, and systems design, provide a structured framework for tracing how inputs lead to activities, outputs, and long-term outcomes.[120]

I borrow this structure, without its prescriptive rigidity, to illuminate the cultural, relational, and moral infrastructures that underlie Black women's philanthropic labor. CCP thus becomes both a method of interpretation and a road map for recognizing philanthropic meaning-making across time. Its flexibility reflects the lived realities of Black women's strategic, context-responsive approaches to community uplift.[121]

This chapter thus translates CCP from a conceptual lens into a methodological tool by developing a logic model that traces how Black women's philanthropic meaning-making becomes visible in practice. My starting point is simple: CCP operates because Black women's philanthropic labor draws on deep cultural reservoirs, grounded in four (4) moral, cultural, communal, and self-determining logics.[122] This process is always situated within specific historical, cultural, and material conditions, which shape how these logics are activated and how philanthropic practices take form. These logics constitute the model's foundational *inputs.* They describe how Black women come to know, interpret, and evaluate what giving means, and how they mobilize philanthropic action in ways that reflect collective memory, cultural continuity,

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[120] On the origins and evolution of logic models in evaluation research, see Edward A. Suchman, *Evaluative Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1967); Claude Bennett, "Up the Hierarchy," *Journal of Extension* 14, no. 2 (1976); and Joseph S. Wholey, *Evaluation: Promise and Performance* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 1979). Their widespread adoption in nonprofit and philanthropic sectors was accelerated by United Way of America, *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach* (Alexandria, VA: United Way, 1996), and W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *Logic Model Development Guide* (Battle Creek, MI: W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2001).

[121] I intend for the CCP framework to function as a road map and analytic tool, but one that remains flexible, iterative, and adaptable to lived conditions—reflecting the strategic, context-responsive work Black women undertake to build community impact.

[122] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; and Carson, *A Hand Up*.

intergenerational knowledge, and community-grounded values. These inherited epistemic orientations guide the strategies Black women use to sustain communal life, whether through resource redistribution, education, advocacy, or spiritual care.

From these cultural logics emerge the aforementioned nine (9) philanthropic tenets of CCP, which function as the model's central activities (i.e., the embodied, enacted, and observable practices) through which philanthropic meaning becomes legible. These tenets operationalize CCP by revealing how Black women direct time, labor, cultural capital, creativity, and material resources toward collective well-being. They allow us to locate philanthropy in places where the historical record has not always used the term explicitly—in mutual aid systems, narrative testimony, cultural stewardship, institution-building, resistance work, care networks, and creative or spiritual praxis.[123] The tenets encompass forms of giving that have long been practiced but rarely named as philanthropy, thereby correcting definitional exclusions that have shaped dominant philanthropic discourse.

These activities generate the outputs and outcomes of the CCP logic model. Outputs include the tangible and intangible expressions of philanthropic action (e.g., fundraising efforts, educational initiatives, communal care systems, advocacy campaigns, and cultural production). Outcomes reflect the enduring effects of these practices: collective uplift, community resilience, cultural preservation, political empowerment, and strengthened intergenerational continuity. Ultimately, CCP gestures toward long-term community impact, defined as the preservation and affirmation of Black life, the cultivation of communal and cultural wealth, and the generational transmission of identity, belonging, and shared purpose.

At its core, CCP reveals philanthropy as a coherent, culturally grounded tradition of

[123] See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1114–21.

love-in-action, echoing Copeland's diasporic definition of philanthropy as "love of humanity in action," itself indebted to bell hooks' insistence that love must be understood as a practiced, disciplined, and communal verb.[124] CCP reframes Black women's everyday acts of care, advocacy, and cultural continuity as strategic and ritualized forms of community life-building rather than episodic charity. It illuminates how Black women transform cultural values into collective action, converting moral imagination into sustained communal impact.

Finally, the outputs and outcomes of the CCP logic model are vividly evident when read through their respective contextual conditions, in the historical and contemporary profiles that anchor this project. In Maria W. Stewart's early nineteenth-century speeches demanding education and civic participation; in Harriet Jacobs' post–Civil War letters, activism, and intimate care practices; in Mary Church Terrell's leadership in the National Association of Colored Women (NACW); and in Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland's twenty-first-century institution-building across philanthropic, global development, and environmental justice ecosystems, we can trace how CCP's cultural logics and tenets generate durable philanthropic traditions that are relational, political, creative, and future-oriented.[125]

Exemplar Profiles: Cultural Logics and Philanthropic Tenets in Action

The following profiles demonstrate how Community Cultural Philanthropy operates across historical and contemporary contexts. Rather than serving as illustrative examples, these cases function as analytic sites through which the interaction of contextual conditions, cultural logics, and philanthropic tenets becomes legible. Each begins with brief contextual grounding,

[124] See bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: William Morrow, 2001); and Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, interview by author, May 6, 2025. Copeland draws on hooks' conception of love as an ethical practice and extends that tradition through her articulation of Black giving as "love of humanity in action."

[125] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*; Alison M. Parker, *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell*; Randolph Boehm, *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895–1992*; *The HistoryMakers*, "Jacqueline Copeland Biography"; and Copeland, interview by author, May 6, 2025.

followed by narrative alignment with the CCP framework.

Here, I introduce a small set of examples that offer a snapshot of how this framework shows up in practice. These are not meant to stand alone or to serve as comprehensive accounts, but to ground the framework in lived experience and to signal the broader arc of the study. They move between everyday, grassroots expressions of giving and more formal, organized iterations, showing how these practices take shape, shift, and extend across different moments and conditions.

Christiana Carteaux Bannister (1819–1902): Entrepreneurship, Cultural Labor and Resource Allocation

I opened this dissertation by reflecting on my encounter with Christiana Carteaux Bannister (see Preface), and I return to her here with intention. Our lives intersect across place, memory, and meaning, and in that return, her story emerges as an exemplar of the transhistorical dimensions of Black women's philanthropy. It reminds us that history is not merely past but present, alive in the relationships, practices, and traditions that continue to shape communal life. In this sense, history is not only prologue; it is an ongoing inheritance, continuously unfolding across generations.

Bannister, a nineteenth-century entrepreneur, activist, and "Hair Doctress," built her livelihood across Boston, Massachusetts, and later Providence, Rhode Island. Born in North Kingston, Rhode Island, she appeared in the Boston Directory as a milliner in 1846 and later as a hairdresser with her own salon by 1853.[126] In Boston, she owned and operated multiple salons, including locations on Washington Street and Winter Street, advertising her services in *The Liberator* as a "Hair Doctress" who "stands second to none in Hair-Dressing and Champooing

[126] See Lancaster, "The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister"; see also *Epochs of Fashion*, "Christiana Carteaux Bannister: Hairdresser, Entrepreneur, Abolitionist," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.epochs-of-fashion.com/fashion-icons-in-history/christina-carteaux-bannister/.

[sic].”[127] These early ventures reflect the grassroots foundation of her work. Bannister did not begin with wealth or institutional backing. She built an enterprise through her own labor, cultivating a clientele that allowed her to sustain herself while also engaging the needs of her community.

In Boston, Bannister married Edward Mitchell Bannister, then a struggling artist, and played a critical role in supporting his career. Her economic stability and social networks helped create the conditions for his artistic practice to flourish, even as their shared spaces became sites of cultural exchange and political engagement. Together, they moved within abolitionist and artistic circles, where Bannister used her resources, relationships, and labor to support efforts for racial uplift and social reform.[128]

That context matters. Bannister’s entrepreneurial work unfolded within a nineteenth-century landscape marked by racial and gender exclusion, limited access to formal financial institutions, and the absence of reliable systems of care for Black women workers. In Boston, Massachusetts, she and Edward Mitchell Bannister were active in abolitionist and artistic communities, and their partnership was both marital and strategic. Christiana’s economic success supported Edward’s emergence as an artist, while their shared networks connected them to abolitionist circles, Black cultural life, and public efforts for racial justice. Her salons functioned as meeting places, fundraising sites, and social spaces where resources and relationships could be mobilized toward the cause of freedom and collective uplift.[129]

Read through CCP, Bannister’s life reflects several cultural logics at once. Her entrepreneurship demonstrates strategies of self-determination, as she built economic

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[127] West End Museum, “Christiana Carteaux Bannister and Edward Mitchell Bannister,” accessed June 19, 2026, https://thewestendmuseum.org/history/era/west-boston/christiana-carteaux-bannister-and-edward-mitchell-bannister.

[128] Lancaster, “The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister,” 108–14.

[129] Lancaster, “The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister,” 108–14.

independence and used her labor to create access where formal systems denied it. Her abolitionist work and support for Black soldiers, widows, artists, and community institutions reflect the moral logic of collective uplift. Her salons and support for Black artistic life reflect cultural values rooted in shared histories, in which beauty, art, memory, and political struggle were not separate spheres. Her later care work reflects communal traditions of care and survival, especially for Black women whose labor sustained households and communities but who were often left without protection in old age.

These logics are enacted through the philanthropic tenets of CCP. Bannister's work reflects cultural stewardship in her support of Black art and intellectual life; collective resource sharing through her salons, fundraising, and abolitionist efforts; and mutual aid and reciprocal care in the establishment of a home for aging Black women workers. Her support for the Home for Aged Colored Women (later known as Bannister House) in Providence, Rhode Island, reflects leadership and institution building, while its later transformation into a philanthropic asset reflects intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer.[130] Bannister's advocacy for abolition, relief work, and support for widows and families of Black soldiers further illustrates resistance and social change as a core dimension of Black women's philanthropic practice.

Prior to the advent of the welfare state and in the absence of formal systems of care, Bannister invested in an institution designed to support aging Black women, particularly those who had labored as domestic workers and service providers without access to long-term security. As Lancaster demonstrates, Bannister's own later reliance on this institution reflects the precarious conditions Black women faced in old age and underscores the importance of community-based systems of care.[131] That Bannister herself later received care there highlights

[130] Lancaster, "The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister," 115–19.

[131] Lancaster, "The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister," 103.

the reciprocal nature of Black women's giving, where the boundaries between giver and recipient remain fluid, relational, and often shaped by structural inequities.[132]

For me, Bannister House is not only an archival example. It is part of my own lived experience and geography. I grew up on the South Side of Providence, in close proximity to the community where Bannister House stood as a visible and trusted resource. Family members received care there. I remember it as a place embedded in the everyday life of Black and brown working-class communities. Years later, through my professional work connected to The Rhode Island Foundation's inaugural Black Philanthropy Fund, I encountered Bannister's legacy again in another form.

In 2016, $2.2 million in proceeds from Bannister House were transferred to the Black Philanthropy Initiative at The Rhode Island Foundation, and the fund was renamed the Black Philanthropy Bannister Fund.[133] However, this substantial gift did not begin the work. It extended it. In this sense, the eventual transfer represents a full-circle moment, in which a historic Black woman's investment helps realize, in material terms, a contemporary vision for collective Black philanthropy. This transition was guided by an advisory council connected to the Black Philanthropy Initiative, including Black leaders and Black women, whose stewardship helped ensure continuity of purpose and accountability to the communities Bannister originally sought to serve.

The Rhode Island Foundation describes the fund as continuing the work of Bannister House by supporting economic empowerment, structural equity, youth development, mentoring,

[132] Lancaster, "The Life and Work of Christiana Bannister," 118–19.

[133] The Rhode Island Foundation, "Black Philanthropy Bannister Fund Grants," accessed June 19, 2026, https://rifoundation.org/grant/black-philanthropy-bannister-fund-grants.

and the preservation of Black history and culture.[134] In CCP terms, this is intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer made visible through institutional continuity. Bannister's life makes clear what CCP names. Her work shows how Black women have long converted labor into access, access into care, care into institutions, and institutions into future resources. Most importantly, it reveals that Black women have sustained philanthropic ecosystems across time through intentional, relational, and cumulative investments in community well-being.

Harriet Tubman (~1822–1913): Boarding Houses and Home for the Aged

Famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman's philanthropic practice extended far beyond her well-known role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.[135] While she is widely recognized as a freedom fighter, less attention has been paid to how her everyday acts of care, resource sharing, and community support functioned as forms of philanthropy, often hidden in plain sight. In 1859, Tubman purchased a 7-acre parcel of farmland from Senator William H. Seward in Auburn, New York and began operating it as a boarding house, a practice she continued after the Civil War, providing shelter, care, and stability for her family members, formerly enslaved individuals, and others in need.[136] This philanthropic work unfolded in the immediate aftermath of emancipation, when formal systems of care for Black communities were largely absent. Tubman's use of her personal residence as a site of refuge reflects a cultural logic grounded in survival, collective responsibility, and an expansive understanding of community and kinship networks.

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[134] See "New $2.5M R.I. Foundation Fund Serves R.I.'s African-American Community," *Providence Business News*, 2017, accessed June 19, 2026, https://pbn.com/new-25m-rif-fund-serves-ris-african-american-community119281/.

[135] See Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn, NY: W. J. Moses, 1869); see also Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, "About Harriet Tubman," accessed June 19, 2026, https://harriettubmanbyway.org/harriet-tubman/.

[136] See National Park Service, "Harriet Tubman Home," *Harriet Tubman National Historical Park*, accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/places/harriettubmanhome.htm; see also Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*.

Tubman's boarding practices extended beyond Auburn. In the 1850s, she rented a boarding house in St. Catharines, Ontario, within the "Colored Village" near Salem Chapel, where she organized, fundraised, and built relationships within abolitionist networks.[137] Later, in Boston, she was closely associated with the Harriet Tubman House, a residence established in 1904 to provide safe lodging for Black women migrants, and later as a residence for Black women excluded from the city's college dormitories and respectable rooming houses, where she served as Honorary President.[138] Across these sites, her work demonstrates a sustained commitment to creating spaces of refuge and community support across shifting geographies and socio-political conditions.

Over time, these practices extended and took even more formal shape. In 1896, at the age of 74, Tubman purchased a 25-acre parcel of land adjacent to her Auburn home, envisioning a permanent care institution.[139] In 1908, the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Indigent Negroes was opened, but due to financial constraints, Tubman deeded the property to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.) Church with the agreement that they would operate it. The home operated from 1908 to the 1920s, providing long-term care for elderly, poor, and disabled individuals, including Tubman from 1911 until her death in 1913.[140]

In a pattern that mirrors Christiana Bannister's life, Tubman spent her final years as a resident in the very home she helped establish before her death in 1913, underscoring the

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[137] See St. Catharines Museum & Welland Canal Centre, "Harriet Tubman," accessed June 19, 2026, https://stcatharinesmuseumblog.com/tag/harriet-tubman/.

[138] See Boston Women's Heritage Trail, "Harriet Tubman Rooming House Site," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.bwht.org/explore/harriet-tubman-rooming-house-site/; Harriet Tubman House, "Harriet Tubman House," accessed June 19, 2026, https://tubmanboston.org/; see also Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*.

[139] See National Park Service, "Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged & Indigent Negroes," *Harriet Tubman National Historical Park*, accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/places/tubmanagedhome.htm; see also National Park Service, "Harriet Tubman Home," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/places/harriettubmanhome.htm.

[140] See National Park Service, "Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged & Indigent Negroes" and "Harriet Tubman Home."

reciprocal nature of her work, where the boundaries between benefactor and beneficiary remained fluid.[141] This dynamic reflects a broader pattern in the history of Black women's giving, in which acts of care and resource sharing were both self-sacrificing and strategic, extending beyond immediate needs while also accounting for future vulnerability. In this sense, Black women often became the recipients of their own philanthropy, as the structures they built to sustain others also provided for their own care. For Tubman, this transition from informal boarding to institutional care reflects a strategic use of land, labor, religious networks, and community support to sustain long-term care in the absence of formal systems.

Situated within the post-emancipation period marked by racial exclusion, economic precarity, and the absence of formal care systems, Tubman's work reflects the moral logic of collective uplift alongside communal traditions of care and survival, grounded in an expansive understanding of kinship and shared responsibility. Through the lens of CCP, her life makes visible how cultural logics and philanthropic tenets are enacted in practice, as everyday acts of giving evolve into more sustained and institutional forms of care. These logics take shape through collective resource sharing, mutual aid and reciprocal care, intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer, and leadership and institution building, as she mobilizes land, labor, personal income, religious networks, and community ties to sustain both informal and institutional structures of care.

The Black Panther Party: Community Survival Programs and Uncommon Generosity

The Black Panther Party's community survival programs offer a clear example of CCP operating at a collective scale. Beginning in the late 1960s, the Party developed a range of

[141] The Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Negroes operated from 1908 until the early 1920s. According to the National Park Service, Tubman spent her final years as a resident of the institution and lived in John Brown Hall, which served as both the infirmary and the main dormitory, until her death in 1913; see National Park Service, "Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged & Indigent Negroes," accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/places/tubmanagedhome.htm.

initiatives, including free breakfast programs for children, community health clinics, liberation schools, clothing drives, and mutual aid efforts. These programs were not ancillary to the Party's mission; they were central to it, grounded in a cultural logic that understood care, nourishment, health, and education as necessary conditions for survival and political self-determination.[142]

Within CCP, these programs emerge directly from conditions of structural exclusion, state violence, and institutional neglect. The Party mobilized available resources, including food, volunteer labor, community spaces, and political networks, to meet immediate needs while also advancing a broader vision of collective dignity and autonomy. Much of this work, particularly the day-to-day implementation of these programs, was carried out by women within the Party, whose labor sustained both the operational and relational dimensions of this work. In this way, the programs reflect not only political strategy but the everyday enactment of care as a form of community-centered giving.

This example also illuminates how philanthropy is defined and recognized. Drawing on my participant observation from the U.S. National Archives panel discussion "Revolutionary Movements Then and Now: Black Power and Black Lives Matter" (October 19, 2016), I asked panelists to reflect on how they understood philanthropy beyond traditional definitions centered on formal giving institutions.[143] In response, Ericka Brown-Abram, a former member of the Black Panther Party and daughter of Elaine Brown, former chairwoman, described how the Party did not rely on formal philanthropic systems, which often excluded or refused to fund their work.

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[142] For an overview of the Black Panther Party's community survival programs, see Black Panther Party Alumni Legacy Network, "Programs," accessed June 19, 2026, https://bppaln.org/programs.

[143] For commentary on the philanthropic dimensions of this work, see U.S. National Archives, "Revolutionary Movements Then and Now: Black Power and Black Lives Matter," YouTube video, streamed October 19, 2016, moderated by A'Lelia Bundles and featuring Ericka Brown-Abram, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UL7sAj4ML4, accessed June 19, 2026. See Brown-Abram's discussion of the Black Panther Party's community survival programs and their relationship to philanthropic practice at 1:29:29–1:43:15.

Instead, they relied on community-based contributions. She recalled that donations sometimes came from unexpected sources, including proceeds from local events such as the Players Ball in Oakland, where money would be given without question and immediately put to use to support community programs.[144]

This account offers a critical reframing of philanthropy. Rather than centering legitimacy on the source or formality of giving, the emphasis is placed on use, impact, and alignment with community need. What might be dismissed or rendered invisible within mainstream philanthropic frameworks becomes, through CCP, a clear example of resource redistribution, mutual aid, and community accountability. It also highlights how Black women within the movement recognized and mobilized resources in strategic, practical ways, often working across lines of respectability and social hierarchy to sustain community life.

Situated within this context, the Party's programs reflect communal traditions of care and survival and strategies of self-determination, grounded in a moral logic of collective uplift. These logics are enacted through collective resource sharing, mutual aid and reciprocal care, intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer, leadership and institution building, and resistance and advocacy, with material support paired with political education and community accountability. Through CCP, the Black Panther Party's community survival programs make visible how giving operates simultaneously as care work and as a resistant strategy for social and political transformation.

Fearless Fund (2019–Present): Venture Capital, Advocacy and Resource Mobilization

Founded in 2019, Fearless Fund represents a contemporary iteration of CCP operating within and against the constraints of modern financial, political, and legal systems. As a venture

[144] U.S. National Archives, "Revolutionary Movements Then and Now: Black Power and Black Lives Matter," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UL7sAj4ML4, accessed June 19, 2026; see Brown-Abram's discussion at 1:29:29–1:43:15.

capital fund dedicated to investing in Black women entrepreneurs, the organization addresses longstanding racial and gender disparities in access to capital.[145] It builds on a long and rich legacy of Black women's social entrepreneurialism, where private enterprise and personal income generation are leveraged to support community needs and the collective good. In this sense, Fearless Fund extends a lineage visible in earlier figures such as Christiana Bannister, Harriet Tubman, and the Black Panther Party. Its work reflects a cultural logic centered on equity, repair, and the redistribution of resources within a system that has historically excluded Black women from investment networks.

Targeted legal challenges to Fearless Fund's race-conscious grantmaking practices underscore the evolving tensions surrounding philanthropy, law, and power.[146] In 2023, the organization became the target of a legal challenge alleging that its Strivers Grant Program unlawfully excluded non-Black applicants. After a series of court rulings and a settlement agreement, Fearless Fund permanently closed the program in 2024, highlighting the increasingly contested terrain surrounding race-conscious philanthropy and investment.[147] These developments highlight the limits of traditional philanthropic frameworks and raise clear questions about who is permitted to give, to whom, and under what conditions, with Black women at the center. The response from the philanthropic community, including an amicus brief supported by a collective of major funders across the country, reflects the broader implications of this case for the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors and the future of race-conscious giving.[148]

[145] See Fearless Fund, "About," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.fearless.fund/.

[146] See Kevin Marek, "The Day Philanthropy Died: What Happened with Fearless Fund Ruling," *Philanthropy Women*, August 7, 2024, accessed June 19, 2026, https://philanthropywomen.org/activism/philanthropy-died-what-happened-with-fearless-fund-ruling/.

[147] See Jonathan Franklin, "A Venture Capital Grant Program for Black Women Officially Ends After Court Ruling," NPR, September 11, 2024, accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.npr.org/2024/09/11/nx-s1-5108729/fearless-fund-atlanta-grant-program-shut-down-lawsuit.

[148] See Council on Foundations, "Fearless Foundation Amicus Brief," June 2024, accessed June 19, 2026, https://cof.org/page/fearless-foundation-amicus-brief.

Within CCP, Fearless Fund exemplifies how Black women continue to innovate in their approaches to giving while navigating structural barriers. It demonstrates the ongoing negotiation between intention and constraint, and the ways in which contemporary philanthropic practice remains shaped by broader political and legal contexts.

At the same time, the public response from CEO Arian Simone, including media engagement and policy advocacy, signals a strategic evolution in Black women's giving.[149] The pressures associated with this work, including leadership transitions, litigation, and heightened public scrutiny, also underscore the personal and structural stakes involved in advancing equity-focused initiatives.[150] Subsequent developments further reveal both the promise and precarity of efforts designed to support historically marginalized entrepreneurs. Although co-founder and COO Ayana Parsons resigned amid the litigation surrounding the Fearless Fund's Strivers Grant Program, Simone remained to navigate the legal challenges and eventual settlement.[151] Following the closure of the original grant program, she relaunched the organization as the Fearless Global Initiative, expanding its work internationally, including into Ghana.[152] Rather than signaling retreat, this transition illustrates the adaptability and resilience of Black women-led philanthropic and investment efforts operating within rapidly shifting and often hostile political, legal, and economic landscapes.

Read through CCP, these developments reveal how Black women's philanthropic practices adapt to changing political, legal, and economic conditions while remaining grounded

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[149] See Sharelle B. McNair, "Fearless Fund CEO Arian Simone Pushes President Biden to Ignite Executive Action on DEI Following Appeals Court Decision," *Black Enterprise*, June 10, 2024, accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.blackenterprise.com/arian-simone-wants-executive-order-for-dei/.

[150] See Julie Bort and Dominic-Madori Davis, "Fearless Fund's Founder Has Resigned, and It's a Sad Reflection on the VC World for Black Women," *TechCrunch*, June 25, 2024, accessed June 19, 2026, https://techcrunch.com/2024/06/25/fearless-fund-founder-resigned-vc-venture-capital-startups-black-women/.

[151] Bort and Davis, "Fearless Fund's Founder Has Resigned."

[152] See Fearless Fund, "Africa," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.fearless.fund/africa/.

in community needs and collective well-being. The legal challenge to Fearless Fund and its subsequent evolution illustrate not only the vulnerability of equity-focused initiatives, but also the capacity of Black women leaders to reimagine, reorganize, and redirect resources in response to constraint. The transition from Fearless Fund to the Fearless Global Initiative demonstrates the flexibility, resilience, and future orientation that CCP identifies as central features of Black women's philanthropic practice.

In this moment, Fearless Fund makes visible how Black women operate at the intersection of economic, political, and social contestation, mobilizing capital, networks, and public voice in service of their communities. Situated within a contemporary context of racialized capital markets and legal constraint, Fearless Fund reflects strategies of self-determination and a moral logic of collective uplift oriented toward equity and repair. These logics are enacted through collective resource sharing, leadership and institution building, and resistance and advocacy, as financial capital, institutional networks, and public influence are mobilized to address systemic inequities. Its evolution beyond the United States, including the launch of Fearless Global Initiative programs in Africa, further reflects a translocal and transnational dimension of this work, extending access to capital, mentorship, and support for entrepreneurs across the African Diaspora.[153]

Together, these examples show how CCP is applied to the historical and contemporary profiles of the women whose work anchors this study: their philanthropic actions become legible when read through a culturally grounded logic model that centers Black women's ways of knowing, doing, caring, and remembering. The CCP logic model, then, is not a static grid; it is a living interpretive frame. It reveals how Black women's philanthropic practices, whether articulated in an 1831 address, a post–Civil War letter, clubwomen's institution-building, or a

[153] See Fearless Fund, "Africa," accessed June 19, 2026, https://www.fearless.fund/africa/.

global nonprofit, emerge from cultural logics, move through identifiable tenets, and generate outcomes that sustain Black communities across generations. These examples also point beyond this chapter to contemporary expressions of CCP, including the work of Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D., Black Philanthropy Month, and The WISE Fund, which are taken up more fully in Chapter 5, as well as a broader set of organizations and giving circles detailed in the dissertation appendix and revisited in the coda.

Having outlined the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets that structure CCP, this section serves as a bridge from CCP as a conceptual framework to CCP as a methodological practice—establishing the analytic scaffolding and illustrating the logics that shape meaning and the tenets through which philanthropic intentions become visible in action. With this foundation in place, I now turn toward the politics of historiography, archives, narratives, and the interpretive conditions that shape how Black women's giving has been remembered, recorded, preserved, and rendered legible in the historical record.

Historiographic Intervention: Rewriting Histories of Black Women's Giving

Equally important to examining the lives and labors of these women is the question of how they are written into history, and by whom. This project not only centers Black women as agents of their own philanthropic meaning-making, but also interrogates the canon and archive through which their giving has been remembered, misremembered, or omitted altogether. I attend closely to the historiographic choices that shape public understanding: how certain aspects of Black women's lives are highlighted or minimized, how their philanthropic contributions are framed or erased, and how these narrative decisions influence collective definitions of what counts as philanthropy.[154]

[154] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; McCarthy, ed., *Lady Bountiful Revisited*.

This includes attention to the strategic archival work undertaken by A'Lelia Bundles, whose stewardship of the *Madam C. J. Walker Family Archives* has helped name and claim Walker as a philanthropist and secure her recognition in national philanthropic memory, inspiring award-winning scholarship and public history projects.[155] By treating both the women themselves and the stories told about them as objects of study, I trace the epistemological tensions between what Black women say and do in the name of community uplift and how their giving is often reshaped, softened, or erased in dominant discourses.[156]

Listening deeply to their words, values, and strategies, and reading between the lines of the historical record, allows for a fuller rendering of Black women's philanthropic thought and action. This approach builds upon Tyrone McKinley Freeman and Kim Williams-Pulfer's concept of "philanthropic archival layering," which highlights how meaning accrues across documents, silences, organizational records, and narrative traces.[157] I return to this concept in my methodology chapter, outlining how CCP draws on narrative, historiography, and archival interpretation to read across fragmented histories and culturally grounded traditions.

In reframing the archive as a living site of memory, erasure, and recovery, this project expands the lens through which philanthropic studies, generally and specifically Black philanthropy, have understood the meaning and mission of giving. Building on works by Robert

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[155] See *Madam C. J. Walker Family Archives*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://madamcjwalker.com/madam-walker-archives/. This digital archive provides publicly accessible historical materials related to the life, business, and philanthropy of Madam C. J. Walker. See also Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

[156] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," for a discussion of the philanthropic work and historical leadership of Black women; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, for a Black feminist analysis of knowledge production and the intersections of race, gender, and class; and Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," for the analytic framework of intersectionality.

[157] I approach this historiographic intervention not only as an act of critical inquiry but also as a form of restorative care. My aim is to examine the ways Black women's philanthropic labor has been remembered, omitted, or mischaracterized across historical and scholarly narratives—and, where necessary, to correct the record. I consider this work of recovery, reclamation, and reframing to be itself a kind of philanthropic practice: a giving back of voice, presence, and interpretive space to those whose contributions have too often been marginalized or selectively told. See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1114–21.

Payton and Michael Moody, who define philanthropy as a moral imaginative process rooted in lived experience, and extending insights from Emmett Carson and Tyrone McKinley Freeman, who demonstrate that Black philanthropy is inherently communal, strategic, and historically grounded, I position Black women not as peripheral participants in American philanthropy but as its architects, theorists, and agents.[158]

In sum, this project asks us to read differently, to listen deeply, and to understand philanthropy not as a rarefied act of wealth but as an everyday practice of care, cultural labor, resistance, and legacy. In doing so, it reframes Black women not simply as beneficiaries of philanthropic structures but as central producers of philanthropic meaning, past, present, and future. Having established the theoretical scaffolding of CCP, I now refine the study's guiding questions to align explicitly with this model, clarifying how CCP shapes not only the analytic approach but also the methodological choices guiding this dissertation.

The questions that first animated this project were intentionally broad. At the outset, I sought to understand how American philanthropy is commonly defined, how notions of "voluntary action" and "philanthropic work" incorporate cultural values specific to Black women's histories and lived experiences, what themes and organizing principles best characterize Black women's giving, and what these insights might contribute to Philanthropic Studies and American Studies as fields. These four questions provided the initial scaffolding for inquiry, grounding the project in longstanding debates about definition, meaning, and omission in the study of philanthropy.

Research Questions II: Refining the Guiding Questions Through CCP

Yet, as the project deepened, it became clear that broad questions alone could not

[158] See Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*; Carson, *A Hand Up*; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

adequately guide a study rooted in Black women's lived experiences, cultural values, and historical practices. Developing the CCP framework required a sharper analytic lens—one that could move beyond documenting what Black women have done to understanding how and why their philanthropic labor takes the forms it does, and how these forms shape the wider philanthropic landscape. As CCP took shape, the questions themselves had to be refined so that the analytic work remained aligned with the cultural logics, tenets, and interpretive commitments articulated in the preceding sections.

Thus, the initial four questions evolved into three (3) guiding inquiries that more precisely reflect the conceptual goals of CCP:

1. How have Black women historically engaged in voluntary action for the public good, and how have their contributions been documented, obscured, or erased in prevailing narratives of American philanthropy?

This question acknowledges both historical presence and historiographic absence. It draws on scholars whose work documents Black women's centrality to community uplift, even when the archive has failed to name their work as "philanthropy."[159] This inquiry guides the dissertation's historical chapters and animates its attention to narrative, memory, and archival practice across time.

2. What cultural values, moral logics, and strategic practices inform Black women's philanthropy, and how can the Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) framework help us name and analyze these traditions?

This second question is the heart of CCP. It asks not simply what Black women do, but why—what cultural values, histories, and ethical commitments shape their giving. It draws on

[159] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; McCarthy, ed., *Lady Bountiful Revisited*; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

scholars whose work situates Black women's philanthropy within broader traditions of community cultural wealth, Black feminist thought, intersectionality, and relational care.[160] This inquiry informs the conceptual framework and analytic strategies applied across each vignette.

3. How might centering Black women's philanthropic thought and action reshape contemporary understandings of philanthropy in American Studies and Philanthropic Studies, and what possibilities does this open for future scholarship and practice?

This final question turns outward. It asks what becomes possible when Black women's philanthropic traditions are not marginal illustrations but central analytic categories. Drawing from Perkins, Washington, Scott and Rodriguez-Leach, Bofu-Tawamba et al., and others, this question opens the door to methodological innovation, disciplinary critique, and new avenues for theory-building in both philanthropy and cultural studies.[161]

Together, these three questions structure the theoretical, historical, and methodological choices made in this dissertation. They guide the selection of archival materials, shape the narrative analysis in each vignette, clarify how CCP operates as both theory and method, and anchor the interpretive commitments that run through the chapters that follow. In this way, the reframed questions serve not only as inquiry but as orientation—aligning the study's purpose, analytic stance, and methodological approach within a coherent, culturally grounded, Black feminist framework.

This chapter has established CCP as a conceptual framework for understanding Black

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[160] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; Carson, *A Hand Up*; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work"; Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*; and Cynthia Eyakuze, "Through the Philanthropic Lens," in *Where Is the Money for Black Feminist Movements?*, 12–43 (Black Feminist Fund, 2023), accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.fundblackfeminists.org.

[161] See Linda M. Perkins, "Race, Gender, Philanthropy and the Politics of Knowledge," *History of Education Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2020): 228–45; Washington, "Disturbing the Peace"; Courtney Patrice Scott and Nicole Rodriguez Leach, "Philanthropy as Whiteness: Toward Racially Just Philanthropic Practices," *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 43, no. 3 (2024): 516–30; Ndana Bofu-Tawamba et al., *The Uprising of Women in Philanthropy* (Routledge, 2025).

women's giving within its historical, cultural, and epistemological contexts. By outlining the cultural logics, philanthropic tenets, and a preliminary logic model that structures CCP, the chapter has demonstrated how this framework offers a grounded approach to interpreting the forms, meanings, and strategies of Black women's philanthropic practice. Rather than claiming full explanatory power, CCP is presented here as a flexible and evolving analytic that helps illuminate patterns that dominant philanthropic narratives have often overlooked.

With this conceptual scaffolding in place, I now turn to the methodological approaches that bring CCP into practice. Chapter 3 outlines the interpretive commitments, analytic categories, tools, and epistemological orientations that guide the study, including approaches to narrative, archive, historiography, and Black feminist standpoint epistemology. Together, these methods provide a means to trace how Black women's philanthropic labor appears in historical records, life writings, organizational texts, and contemporary accounts, and to carefully attend to the voices, silences, and cultural meanings that shape their giving.

Table 2.1 Cultural Logics of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP)

These cultural logics provide the values-based grounding for how Black women understand and interpret acts of giving. They reflect the idea that philanthropy is both thought and action and serve as the conceptual roots for the CCP tenets. Adapted from the structure of Tara J. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth model (2005), these logics function as guiding patterns rather than fixed rules for interpreting the ideas that often shape Black women's approaches to giving.[162]

#	CULTURAL LOGIC	SUBTITLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	**Moral Logic**	of Collective Uplift	Frames giving as an ethical responsibility grounded in shared destiny. Emphasizes collective thriving, racial uplift, moral accountability, and community care as core reasons for philanthropic action.
2.	**Cultural Values**	Rooted in Shared Histories	Draws on inherited cultural knowledge, memory, ritual, artistic expression, and spiritual traditions. Understands giving as a cultural act shaped by the histories and worldviews of the African Diaspora.
3.	**Communal Traditions**	of Care and Survival	Emerges from longstanding systems of mutual aid, reciprocal care, faith-based work, and community protection. Treats philanthropy as a relational, community-anchored responsibility essential for survival.
4.	**Self-Determination**	Strategies	Reflects Black women's agency, strategic creativity, and pursuit of autonomy. Links philanthropy to institution-building, advocacy, political action, and the right to define one's community and future.

[162] Source: Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?" See also Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin–Madison, "Community Cultural Wealth," accessed August 24, 2026, https://ccwt.wisc.edu/community-cultural-wealth/.

Table 2.2 Philanthropic Tenets of Community Cultural Philanthropy

These tenets reflect the core practices through which Black women enact philanthropic meaning-making. They translate the cultural logics of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP*)* into relational and community-building action and, drawing on the structure of Tara J. Yosso's *Community Cultural Wealth* model (2005), serve as guiding patterns, rather than fixed categories, that help shape understandings of Black women's giving.[163]

#	TENET	DESCRIPTION	#	TENET	DESCRIPTION
1.	**Cultural Stewardship**	Preserving and transmitting cultural identity, memory, history, and heritage through education, creative work, and community leadership.	**6.**	**Leadership & Institution Building**	Creating and sustaining structures such as clubs, schools, advocacy groups, and community organizations that anchor collective life.
2.	**Narrative Testimony & Memory Work**	Using storytelling, life writing, speeches, letters, and oral histories to mobilize resources, shape public understanding, and honor lived experience.	**7.**	**Resistance & Advocacy**	Challenging injustice, expanding rights, influencing policy, and protecting communities through activism, organizing, and public voice.
3.	**Collective Resource Sharing**	Pooling money, time, skills, networks, and materials to meet community needs through mutual aid, collective saving, fundraising, and redistribution.	**8.**	**Creative & Spiritual Praxis**	Using art, music, ritual, spiritual grounding, and cultural expression as acts of care, healing, solidarity, and community connection.
4.	**Mutual Aid & Reciprocal Care**	Providing direct support through shared caregiving, protection, crisis response, and sustaining everyday needs within interdependent community networks.	**9.**	**Translocal & Transnational Solidarity**	Building networks and shared movements across neighborhoods, cities, nations, and the wider African diaspora through collaboration and global engagement.
5.	**Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer**	Passing down cultural wisdom, life lessons, mentoring, networks, and material assets to strengthen families, communities, and future generations.	**KEY OUTCOMES:** *Collective uplift* and sustained *community impact*. The enactment of these tenets produces both uplift and resilience, which together form the foundation for sustainable community impact.		

[163] Source: Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?" See also Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin–Madison, "Community Cultural Wealth," accessed August 24, 2026, https://ccwt.wisc.edu/community-cultural-wealth/.

Table 2.3 CCP Logic Model: Cultural Logics and Philanthropic Tenets in Practice

This logic model shows how CCP's cultural logics (inputs) give rise to philanthropic practices represented by the nine tenets (activities), which produce observable expressions of giving (outputs) and long-term community impact (outcomes). Adapted from the structure of Tara J. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth model (2005), it serves as an interpretive guide rather than a rigid or formal evaluative tool.[164]

LOGIC MODEL COMPONENT	CCP ELEMENTS	DESCRIPTION
INPUTS	**Cultural Logics of CCP** • Moral Logic (Collective Uplift) • Cultural Values (Shared Histories) • Communal Traditions (Care & Survival) • Self-Determination (Strategies)	The values, worldviews, and epistemic orientations that shape how Black women understand and interpret acts of giving. These logics ground philanthropic meaning-making and inform why and how action unfolds.
ACTIVITIES	**Philanthropic Tenets of CCP** • Cultural Stewardship • Narrative Testimony & Memory Work • Collective Resource Sharing • Mutual Aid & Reciprocal Care • Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer • Leadership & Institution Building • Resistance & Advocacy • Creative & Spiritual Praxis • Translocal & Transnational Solidarity	The relational, cultural, spiritual, material, and political practices through which CCP's cultural logics become visible. These activities represent Black women's philanthropic enactments across historical and contemporary contexts.
OUTPUTS	Expressions of Philanthropic Practice (Examples vary across profiles and contexts)	Immediate, observable actions such as letters, speeches, organizing campaigns, education initiatives, mutual aid efforts, fundraising strategies, cultural production, ritual acts, and institution-building. These expressions show CCP "in motion."
OUTCOMES	Short- and Long-Term Community Impact	Strengthened families and communities; expanded access to education, safety, and resources; preserved cultural memory; increased political participation; transformative narratives; institutional innovation; and generational continuity of care, leadership, and collective uplift.

[164] Source: Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?" See also Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin–Madison, "Community Cultural Wealth," accessed August 24, 2026, https://ccwt.wisc.edu/community-cultural-wealth/.

Chapter 3: Naming the Archive: A Methodological Lens for Studying Black Women's Giving

The methodological approach in this dissertation is grounded directly in the conceptual and theoretical commitments outlined in the preceding chapter. Chapter 2 clarified what CCP is—its grounding in cultural logics, Black feminist epistemology, and community cultural wealth—and the task of Chapter 3 is to detail how CCP operates in practice: how to read it, hear it, interpret it, and trace its presence across time. This requires methods capable of holding the textured realities of Black women's giving and the lived experiences that structure their philanthropic traditions. From the start, I have wrestled with a set of deceptively simple questions: What counts as philanthropy in the lives of Black women? How do we recognize it when we see it? And what interpretive practices make their giving legible—not only to researchers, but to history itself?

These questions anchor the methodological choices I make here and reflect my scholarly and personal journey. As mentioned in the Introduction, my earliest understanding of philanthropy came not from textbooks but from the everyday practices of Black women in my family and community. Later, my professional experiences in the philanthropic sector revealed the limits of the field's definitions and its persistent exclusion of cultural, communal, and relational forms of giving. These experiences shape how I approach this research: with attentiveness, humility, and a deep reverence for the epistemic authority of Black women.

To study Black women's philanthropy, one must bring together methods capable of capturing its expressive, relational, and culturally grounded dimensions. This chapter, therefore, draws on Black feminist epistemology, interpretive humanistic inquiry, historiography and archival interpretation, narrative analysis, and vignette methodology. Each method aligns with the CCP framework, and together they form an integrated methodological architecture attuned to

both the expressive depth and strategic clarity of Black women's giving.

The chapter unfolds as follows. I begin with Black feminist epistemology and standpoint as methodological foundations, followed by interpretive humanistic inquiry. I then turn to historiography and the politics of the archive, examining how Black women have been written into—and out of—philanthropic history. From there, I outline narrative analysis and the use of vignettes as central methodological tools. The chapter then introduces two additional methodological components: analytic categories as methodological lenses and the data sources and case-selection commitments that guide this project. Finally, I show how these approaches come together through CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets, concluding with a summary of the methodological approach that leads into Chapter 4.

Collectively, these approaches create a methodology attuned to both the expressive depth and strategic clarity of Black women's giving. They allow me to move from intention to interpretation, from cultural logics to philanthropic tenets, and from narrative fragments to coherent analytic insights. In the pages that follow, I show how these methods bring CCP to life—revealing the philanthropic labor of Black women not as marginal or exceptional, but as central to the making of American civil society.

Black Feminist Epistemology and Standpoint as Method

A Black feminist methodological approach begins with one foundational premise: Black women know what they know because of how they live, and that knowledge has theoretical weight.[165] This standpoint epistemology treats Black women not as subjects to be studied but as intellectual and cultural producers whose lived experiences generate frameworks, values, and strategies that shape their giving. Black women's philanthropy is therefore not simply a set of actions; it is a form of knowledge production rooted in struggle, survival, community-building,

[165] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought.*

and self-determination.

Patricia Hill Collins describes Black feminist epistemology as grounded in lived experience, dialogue, ethics of care, and a collective approach to knowledge.[166] These principles are methodological in the deepest sense. They require a researcher to listen differently—to understand that narrative, testimony, memory, and even silence are theorizing practices. They also demand reflexivity: a recognition that my own identity as a Black woman scholar-practitioner shapes what I see, how I interpret it, and what I consider meaningful.

This reflexive standpoint aligns directly with CCP's cultural logics. For example, the moral logic of giving—rooted in shared responsibility, ethical care, and communal uplift—shapes how Black women enact philanthropy. Similarly, cultural values grounded in shared histories, collective traditions, and diasporic memory shape how giving is defined and activated. Standpoint epistemology, therefore, becomes not just an ethical stance but an analytic tool for reading philanthropic meaning through the lens of those who produce it.

Standpoint also informs my methodological decisions in three key ways. First, it positions Black women's narratives—whether autobiographical writing, speeches, letters, interviews, or contemporary reflections—as authoritative data. Second, it guides my interpretive process by centering relational accountability: how I read, represent, and honor the women whose work anchors this study. Third, it underscores the importance of reading across silences and omissions, especially in archives where Black women's voices appear fragmentarily or are mediated through white editors, institutions, or publics.

This approach does not presume that all Black women share the same experiences or interpretive frameworks. Instead, it emphasizes that Black women occupy a shared structural location shaped by the intersections of race, gender, class, and power, and that this location

[166] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 208.

informs how they theorize and practice giving.[167] Their philanthropic work is therefore inseparable from their lived realities—and must be studied as such. These epistemological commitments also ground the analytic categories introduced in Chapter 2, which structure how race, gender, class, power, culture, and community shape the interpretive lens of this study.

Because Black women's philanthropy is relational, expressive, and often culturally coded, it cannot be captured solely through institutional records or quantitative metrics. Instead, an interpretive humanistic approach allows me to explore the meanings embedded in actions, narratives, and cultural practices.[168] This methodological stance aligns with both CCP and the broader traditions of qualitative inquiry that center on meaning-making over measurement.

Interpretive inquiry treats texts—archival documents, published writings, oral histories, speeches, organizational records, narrative fragments—as *expressions of intention*, belief, and value. It seeks not only to document what happened but to understand why it mattered, how it was experienced, and what moral, cultural, or communal logics guided it. This approach is especially important in studying Black women's giving, which has historically been expressed in vernacular forms: mutual aid, collective organizing, kinship networks, time-based giving, strategic resource sharing, and cultural labor. These practices rarely appear in donor databases or philanthropic reports, yet they constitute some of the most transformative forms of voluntary action within Black communities.[169]

Interpretive humanistic inquiry also allows for a deliberate focus on context. For

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[167] See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

[168] See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967). See also Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1114–21.

[169] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Bundles, *Self Made*; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

example, the philanthropic work of Maria Stewart cannot be understood without attending to the racialized exclusion of Black women from public speech in the 1830s; Harriet Jacobs' postwar relief efforts cannot be separated from her own experiences of enslavement, sexual violence, and fugitive survival; and Mary Church Terrell's fundraising for NACW must be situated within the racial-sexual politics of the 1890s and early 1900s. Interpretation requires contextualization, and contextualization is a humanistic act.

Finally, interpretive inquiry affirms that meaning is co-constructed. My readings of Black women's philanthropic labor are interpretations—carefully grounded, reflexive, and culturally informed, but interpretations nonetheless. By foregrounding this interpretive stance, I acknowledge both the authority of Black women as theorists of their own experience and my responsibility as a researcher to read ethically, reflexively, and relationally.

My positionality as a Black woman, scholar-practitioner, and inheritor of the traditions under study shapes the methodological commitments of this dissertation. I come to this work as an "outsider-within," not only through academic training but also through my lived experience in philanthropy, community organizing, and exposure to Black women's intergenerational networks of care.[170] These experiences inform what I notice, what I question, and what I interpret as meaningful.

Scholars such as Psyche A. Williams-Forson further illuminate the complexities of occupying an "outsider-within" position. In her article "Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in African-American and Ghanaian Households," and extended further in *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food & Power*, Williams-Forson reflects on how everyday acts—such as "other women cooking for my

[170] For a discussion of "outsider-within," see Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (1986): S14–S32.

husband"—become sites where Black women's labor, identity, and adequacy are publicly interpreted and policed.[171] Her analysis demonstrates how class, profession, and nontraditional domestic arrangements can unsettle community expectations of Black womanhood. I recognize aspects of my own location in her account.[172] As a scholar-practitioner working within and alongside Black women's philanthropic networks, I move among academic, civic, and community contexts where expectations around giving, care, and leadership shape how my participation is read. Acknowledging these dynamics clarifies that my insights emerge not only from scholarly training but also from lived engagement in the philanthropic ecosystems I study.

This positionality does not compromise rigor; rather, it heightens it. Following Pillow and Fine, et al., I adopt a stance of "uncomfortable reflexivity," one that refuses easy certainty, interrogates my interpretive assumptions, and acknowledges the power dynamics inherent in writing about Black women whose lives and legacies are at stake.[173] I continually ask myself: What am I bringing to this analysis? What am I projecting? What am I missing? Whose voice is centered, and whose is mediated?

Ethical interpretation requires transparency. Consequently, I attempt to make explicit throughout the dissertation how I encounter sources, read them, and make analytic choices that shape my arguments, through clear citational practice, archival layering, contextualization, and ongoing reflexive practice.

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[171] See Psyche A. Williams-Forson, "Other Women Cooked for My Husband: Negotiating Gender, Food, and Identities in African-American and Ghanaian Households," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, no. 1 (2005): 27–46. See also Psyche A. Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[172] See Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs,* 129.

[173] See Wanda S. Pillow, "Dangerous Reflexivity: Rigor, Responsibility and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research," in *The Routledge Doctoral Student's Companion: Getting to Grips with Research in Education and the Social Sciences*, ed. Pat Thomson and Melanie Walker (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), 270–82; and Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Susan Weseen, and Loonmun Wong, "For Whom? Qualitative Research, Representations, and Social Responsibilities," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 107–31.

Reflexivity also aligns with CCP's cultural logics, particularly the logic of self-determination. Black women's philanthropic practices often emerge from the demand to define themselves for themselves—to claim narrative and political space on their own terms. In honoring this ethos, I treat the women in this study not simply as historical figures or data points but as co-theorists whose insights and strategies guide the analytic process.

To understand Black women's philanthropy, one must confront a historiographical paradox: Black women have always given—strategically, collectively, and at significant personal cost—yet the historical record has rarely recognized their contributions as philanthropy. This erasure is not merely an oversight; it is a reflection of the racialized and gendered logics that structured the production, preservation, and interpretation of historical documents. As Paula Giddings' scholarship reveals, Black women's labor, leadership, and community-building efforts have often been visible in practice but overlooked in dominant historical narratives.[174]

The historiography of American philanthropy reinforces this pattern. Traditional accounts center on elite white men whose financial gifts shaped public institutions and charitable infrastructures. Meanwhile, the voluntary action, mutual aid networks, cultural labor, and collective organizing of Black women rarely appear in philanthropic historiography, except in passing or as background. As Tyrone McKinley Freeman illustrates in his biography of Madam C. J. Walker, American philanthropy has been shaped by race and gender since its inception.[175]

Because philanthropy has been defined through wealth, institutional giving, and donor visibility, Black women's work, rooted in communal values, relational ethics, resistance, and

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[174] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter,* Preface; for a review of Giddings' scholarship and perspectives on the publication of *When and Where I Enter,* see also Jacqueline Trescott, "Paula Giddings, Scribe of Her Sisters: Giving Black Women Their Due in History," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1985, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1985/02/28/paula-giddings-scribe-of-her-sisters/c5c3768e-4471-4c16-beb7-4b538960475a/.

[175] See Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

collective survival, has often been misclassified as "activism," "service, or "uplift," rather than recognized as philanthropy. Historiography, therefore, becomes an essential methodological tool for this project: not simply a review of what happened, but an interrogation of how histories are constructed, whose narratives are preserved, and whose philanthropic labor is named or unnamed.

Following Black feminist historians, I treat historiography as an interpretive practice. This means attending to the choices scholars and institutions make in writing history: which figures are elevated or minimized, which forms of giving are recognized as legitimate, and which are omitted altogether. These interpretive choices directly influence how philanthropy is imagined, legislated, and taught. By examining historiography through a Black feminist lens, I seek to expose the racialized and gendered structures that shape philanthropic meaning and to reclaim Black women's philanthropic thought and action as central to American history—not peripheral.

The archive is both a resource and a site of tension in researching Black women's giving. On one hand, archives hold invaluable materials—letters, speeches, diaries, meeting minutes, photographs, organizational documents—that illuminate Black women's philanthropic lives. On the other hand, these archives are incomplete, fragmented, and filtered through institutions that were never designed to preserve Black women's voices or cultural contributions. This methodological challenge requires what Tyrone McKinley Freeman and Kim Williams-Pulfer call "philanthropic archival layering"—a process of reading across disparate records, sources, and narrative forms to reconstruct a fuller account of philanthropic meaning.[176] Archival layering acknowledges that:

- Black women's philanthropic work is rarely concentrated in a single archival

[176] See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1116–19.

collection.

- Their stories are dispersed across multiple institutions, personal papers, church records, and community documents.
- Many of their contributions were mediated by others—white editors, male colleagues, philanthropic gatekeepers—and therefore must be read critically.
- Silence is itself a historical artifact that requires interpretation.

By engaging archival layering, I read against fragmentation: piecing together philanthropic meaning from the interplay of what is said, what is unsaid, and what must be inferred. For example, Harriet Jacobs' philanthropic labor is not archived as "philanthropy." Instead, it appears in scattered correspondence, postwar relief reports, letters seeking aid for refugees, and testimonies of her work with Black women and children in the freedmen's community. Through archival layering, these fragments collectively reveal a sustained philanthropic practice rooted in care, advocacy, and moral suasion.

A similar approach is needed for Mary Church Terrell, whose speeches, diaries, and NACW organizational papers outline a philanthropic tradition grounded in institution-building, racial uplift, and collective advocacy.[177] Archival layering allows me to assemble these materials into a coherent narrative that reflects Terrell's philanthropic vision rather than the limited framing found in traditional philanthropic histories.

Finally, archival layering acknowledges the labor of those—such as A'Lelia Bundles, archivists, librarians, and community historians—who have worked to preserve Black women's histories despite structural barriers.[178] Their stewardship shapes what is possible in my study and underscores the communal nature of archival practice.

In addition to layering, this study employs "reading against the grain," a methodology

[177] See Beverly T. Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982).

[178] See A'Lelia Bundles, "About," *A'Lelia Bundles*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://aleliabundles.com/about.

used by feminist scholars to interpret documents that were not created with Black women in mind or that reinforce racial and gender subordination.[179] This method involves:

- interrogating silences in the archive
- questioning the categories through which information is organized
- analyzing omissions as meaning-laden
- attending to the intentions behind archival creation
- and reading documents with a critical, culturally informed lens

In this way, reading against the grain is not simply a strategy; it is a form of epistemic resistance. It refuses to take the archive at face value and instead asks how power shaped what survived, how it was described, and how Black women's agency may be obscured.

For example, Maria Stewart's public addresses were often framed in newspapers as moral admonitions rather than philanthropic appeals. Reading against the grain requires asking: What work were her speeches doing? What values did they advance? How did her public exhortations mobilize moral action and community uplift? When interpreted through CCP, Stewart's rhetoric becomes legible as philanthropic labor, rooted in *testimony*, *advocacy*, and *spiritual care*.

Similarly, the letters of Harriet Jacobs (often brief, formulaic, or mediated through white correspondents) appear at first glance to be administrative or logistical; but when read through a CCP lens, they reveal a sophisticated use of narrative persuasion, resource mobilization, and *intercessory care* that operated as a philanthropic mechanism during and after the Civil War. Thus, reading against the grain becomes a methodological bridge between the archive and CCP:

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[179] My approach draws on Jamie Barlowe Kayes' call to "read against the grain"—to interrogate dominant narratives not only for what they say but also for what they omit. In this study, I extend Kayes' feminist critical method to philanthropic inquiry by reading historical texts, biographies, institutional documents, and contemporary media for erasures, silences, and misrecognitions of Black women's giving. I look for traces of care, advocacy, resistance, and communal investment that traditional philanthropic frameworks have overlooked.

See Jamie Barlowe Kayes, "Reading against the Grain: The Powers and Limits of Feminist Criticism of American Narratives," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 130–40, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30225240. See also Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1114–21.

a way of recognizing philanthropic meaning in places where dominant frameworks have rendered it invisible.

Narrative is central to Black feminist ways of knowing and to this project's methodological approach. Black women have long used storytelling—autobiographical writing, testimony, letters, speeches, oral histories, poetry—as a tool for survival, dignity, political power, and communal care. Narrative is theory; narrative is evidence; narrative is a form of philanthropic action in its own right.

Following scholars such as Jewel Amoah, I treat narrative as a mode of knowledge production that reveals the cultural, moral, and communal logics at the heart of CCP. Through narrative, Black women articulate the four CCP logics:[180]

1. Moral Logic of Collective Uplift
2. Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories
3. Communal Traditions of Care and Survival
4. Strategies of Self-Determination

These logics, in turn, become visible through the nine CCP tenets, which emerge repeatedly across the stories, documents, and rhetorical forms that constitute this study's data:

1. Cultural Stewardship
2. Narrative Testimony and Memory Work
3. Collective Resource Sharing
4. Mutual Aid and Reciprocal Care
5. Intergenerational Knowledge and Wealth Transfer
6. Leadership and Institution Building
7. Resistance and Advocacy
8. Creative and Spiritual Praxis
9. Translocal and Transnational Solidarity

[180] See Jewel Amoah, "Narrative: 'The Road to Black Feminist Theory,'" *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 12, no. 1 (2013): 84–102.

Narrative also enables me to interpret how Black women theorize their own giving. They name what matters to them; they describe the challenges they face; they articulate the values and intentions behind their actions. Their narratives therefore serve as both data and theory—lived theory—that grounds the CCP framework in real lives rather than abstractions. Through narrative, the core CCP logics of cultural value, collective uplift, communal care, intergenerational transfer, and self-determination become legible in practice.

Finally, narrative as a method aligns directly with CCP's nine philanthropic tenets: cultural stewardship; narrative testimony and memory work; collective resource sharing; mutual aid and reciprocal care; intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer; leadership and institution building; resistance and advocacy; creative and spiritual praxis; and translocal and transnational solidarity. These tenets are expressed both narratively—through the stories Black women tell, the testimony they offer, the values they articulate—and materially—through their organizing, institution-building, resource-mobilizing, and everyday acts of care. For this reason, narrative analysis is indispensable to this study. It is the methodological bridge that reveals how Black women's philanthropic meaning-making emerges, circulates, and persists across time. Additionally, because narrative analysis reveals philanthropic meaning through lived expression, it also provides the foundation for the vignette-based methodology engaged in the next section.

A key methodological tool in this study is the use of vignettes, discrete narrative scenes that illuminate moments of philanthropic action without attempting to capture an entire life story. Vignettes allow for depth without overwhelming scope, and they highlight specific cultural, moral, or communal logics at play in particular historical moments. Here, I use the term "vignette" to describe a tightly focused, close-up moment drawn from the historical record (e.g., Maria Stewart's 1831 public address or Harriet Jacobs' 1867 letter to Ednah Dow Cheney) that

offers a small but revealing window into Black women's lived experiences, thought, and philanthropic action. Rather than treating vignettes as hypothetical scenarios—as they are often used in qualitative, social-scientific research—I draw on the broader understanding of vignettes as selective portrayals of reality that make visible the textures and social dynamics often overlooked in larger biographical or historical narratives.[181] This approach aligns with a Black feminist methodological tradition that centers Black women's own epistemologies and experiences, where even brief, discrete moments become meaningful sites for interpreting care, community obligation, resistance, and giving.[182]

Vignettes, as I employ them, are grounded in narrative inquiry, case study traditions, and Black feminist approaches to biography that prioritize depth, relationality, and context over linear chronology.[183] This is also an approach that honors the fragmentary nature of many archival records: sometimes all we have are moments (e.g., letters, speeches, testimonies, photographs, organizational minutes) that, if read carefully and in context, reveal profound philanthropic meaning.

In this study, as mentioned, I employ four vignettes:

- Maria W. Stewart
- Harriet Jacobs
- Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)
- Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland

These vignettes are not biographies. They are "interpretive scenes" that allow me to trace

[181] See Ashley Nichol Patterson et al., "Black Feminist Thought as Methodology: Examining Intergenerational Lived Experiences of Black Women," *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 5, no. 3 (2016): 55–76.

[182] For discussions of archival methodology that center marginalized voices through layered reading practices, see Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," especially their discussion of philanthropic archival layering. See also Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," for an example of how Black women's interpersonal correspondence, organizational records, and social networks can be read as sites of philanthropic thought, practice, and historical interpretation.

[183] See Patterson et al., "Black Feminist Thought as Methodology"; Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1116–19; and Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

philanthropic logics and tenets across time, space, and various contexts.[184] Each vignette highlights different philanthropic strategies reflecting the interplay of cultural logics and philanthropic tenets (e.g., Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories, Strategies of Self-Determination, Narrative Testimony and Memory Work, and Leadership and Institution Building), and together the four vignettes form a genealogical arc of CCP. Notably, the use of vignettes aligns with Black feminist methodology by resisting the impulse to flatten or overgeneralize Black women's lives. Instead, they help me as a researcher honor nuance, complexity, contradiction, and individuality while still making visible the broader cultural patterns that define Black women's giving.[185]

Methodological Commitments and Research Design

The analytic categories outlined in Chapter 2—race, gender, class, power, culture, and community—serve not only as conceptual foundations for this study but also as methodological lenses that guide my interpretation, analysis, and narration of Black women's philanthropic labor. Each category illuminates a different dimension of how Black women express care, build institutions, cultivate networks, and imagine futures. Understanding these categories as lived, relational, and historically contingent allows me to read Black women's giving in ways that honor its complexity and cultural specificity.

Race operates as a structural and experiential context shaping how Black women navigate, define, and practice philanthropy. Rather than treating race as a static descriptor, I follow scholars who frame race as a dynamic social formation produced through discourse, representation, and lived experience.[186] This lens is essential for understanding how Black

[184] See Christine Barter and Emma Renold, "The Use of Vignettes in Qualitative Research," *Social Research Update*, no. 25 (Summer 1999).

[185] See Patterson et al., "Black Feminist Thought as Methodology," 65.

[186] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 39–42; and Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 77–90.

women's giving often emerges from collective strategies of protection, survival, and uplift.

Gender functions as a methodological guide for interpreting how Black women's labor—especially care work, advocacy, and cultural stewardship—is often naturalized or rendered invisible in dominant philanthropic narratives. Drawing on Butler's understanding of gender as performative and socially constructed and Collins' Black feminist analyses of gendered labor, this study reads Black women's everyday practices as philanthropic action often unrecognized within formal frameworks.[187]

Class operates as both a material and a relational force. It shapes access to resources, networks, and decision-making spaces, but it also informs how Black women mobilize cultural, social, and resistant capital within their communities.[188] Methodologically, this lens allows me to examine how philanthropic meaning appears outside of institutional giving, often through informal support systems, mentorship, mutual aid, and community organizing.

Power is read as relational rather than hierarchical. Following Foucault's framing of power as circulating through everyday practices and Black feminist theorists who emphasize agency within interlocking systems, this study interprets Black women's giving as both shaped by structural constraints and generative of new forms of cultural, moral, and communal authority.[189]

Finally, culture and community serve as grounding categories for CCP. Culture is understood as the shared meanings, expressive traditions, and ritual practices through which Black women understand their obligations to one another.[190] Community is approached as a

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[187] See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 25–33; and Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 45–51.

[188] See Zinn and Dill, eds., *Women of Color in U.S. Society*; and Dill and Zinn, "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism."

[189] See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 92–102; see also Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; and Dill and Zinn, "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism."

[190] See Reagon, "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers," 77–90.

relational formation rooted in collective identity, belonging, and shared purpose.[191] Methodologically, these lenses guide my interpretation of how philanthropic meaning emerges through narrative, memory, cultural production, ritual practice, and collective action.

Together, these analytic categories structure my approach to the archival record, narrative testimony, and contemporary accounts. They help me identify the cultural logics, affective registers, and everyday practices through which Black women define philanthropy for themselves and their communities. They also allow me to read across historical and contemporary contexts to trace the genealogical continuities that shape Black women's giving across time.

My approach to data selection emerges from a Sankofa-sensibility: a commitment to looking back to understand the present. The term "Sankofa" comes from the Twi language of the Akan people of present-day Ghana and translates as "to return and fetch it." As a methodological metaphor, Sankofa reflects the Akan proverb: *Se wo were fi na wo san kofa a yenkyi*—"It is not taboo to go back for what you have forgotten."[192] Through this lens, the archival recovery and genealogical tracing in this study are not afterthoughts but epistemic acts of retrieval that honor the past as a source of wisdom, identity, and communal purpose.

My entry point into this genealogy was both personal and archival. As a young professional working in community philanthropy, I first encountered A'Lelia Bundles' biography of Madam C. J. Walker, in which Bundles explicitly identified Walker as a philanthropist.[193] Hearing a Black woman described in this way shifted my understanding of both philanthropy and Black women's historical agency. Years later, during my undergraduate studies at Smith College,

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[191] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," 77–81.
[192] See Christel N. Temple, "The Emergence of Sankofa Practice in the United States: A Modern History," *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 127–44.
[193] See Bundles, *Self Made*.

I held Harriet Jacobs' holograph in the Sophia Smith Collection. Seeing her handwriting—its clarity, precision, and deliberate rhetorical appeal—made visible the strategic, donor-engaging work she performed long before such practices had formal names in philanthropic studies.[194] I return to Harriet Jacobs in Chapter 4, where I situate this archival encounter within a broader analysis of her philanthropic thought and practice. These experiences grounded my conviction that Black women's giving has always been intentional, strategic, and theoretically rich, even when unrecognized by mainstream philanthropic discourse.

From this foundation, my case selection follows a deliberate genealogical arc rather than a linear timeline. I begin with Maria Stewart, whose 1831–1833 addresses represent the earliest published articulations of Black women's moral, political, and communal obligations. Stewart is not simply a historical figure; she is an epistemic origin point whose sermons reveal early cultural logics of duty, stewardship, and communal uplift.[195]

From Stewart, I turn to Harriet Jacobs, whose epistolary and narrative strategies demonstrate how Black women mobilized testimony, persuasion, literacy, and relational networks as tools of care and resource cultivation. Jacobs' letters and appeals make visible the philanthropic dimensions of her labor, dimensions that emerge clearly when read through Black feminist methodology and intersectional analysis.[196]

The next case, Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), represents the institutionalization of Black women's philanthropic commitments. Terrell's leadership and the NACW's "Lifting as We Climb" ethos reveal the movement from

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[194] See Harriet Jacobs, letter to Ednah Dow Cheney, April 25, 1867, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

[195] See Maria W. Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (1879); Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 23–29; and Marilyn Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[196] See Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 283–89; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1249–52; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought.*

individual acts of care to organized, systematic forms of collective giving.[197] This moment shows how Black women created structures of support (e.g., schools, homes, advocacy networks) and formalized the cultural logics of community care.

Across these historical cases, a pattern emerged: Black women consistently theorized and articulated their giving long before philanthropic studies recognized them. Their narratives, speeches, organizing strategies, and cultural work constitute intellectual traditions that continue into the present.[198] Recognizing this, I originally planned to include multiple contemporary cases: A'Lelia Bundles, Valaida Fullwood, Ebonie Johnson-Cooper, and Tracey Webb.[199] Each of these women contributes to the contemporary genealogy of Black giving. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and significant life circumstances required a methodological consolidation. Rather than dispersing my analytic energy across four profiles, I deliberately chose to focus on one contemporary figure whose work is genealogically connected to all the others: Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D. Copeland's leadership in establishing Black Philanthropy Month (c. 2011), her global framing of Black giving, and her collaborations with Bundles, Fullwood, Johnson-Cooper, and Webb made her the most coherent site for extending this genealogy into the twenty-first century.[200]

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[197] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 90–107; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71–75.
[198] See Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*, 13–18.

[199] For additional biographical information and context on the contemporary Black philanthropic leaders referenced here, see A'Lelia Bundles, "About," *ALeliaBundles.com*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://aleliabundles.com/about/; Valaida Fullwood, "Bio," *Valaida.com*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://valaida.com/bio/; Ebonie Johnson-Cooper, "Faculty/Staff Profile," *University of Maryland School of Public Policy*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://spp.umd.edu/our-community/faculty-staff/ebonie-johnson-cooper; and Tracey Webb, "A Giving Circle's Journey: The Black Benefactors," *Resource Generation*, June 17, 2014, accessed June 26, 2026, https://resourcegeneration.org/a-giving-circles-journey-the-black-benefactors/.

[200] For additional information on Dr. Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland and the establishment of Black Philanthropy Month, including its history and the roles of early collaborators such as Valaida Fullwood and Tracey Webb, see "The History of Black Philanthropy Month," *BackBlack Movement (BCKBLK)*, accessed July 17, 2026, https://backblackmovement.org/blackphilanthropymonth/history.

As of 2025, Black Philanthropy Month (BPM) is organized and led by the BackBlack Movement (BCKBLK) following an organizational transition in leadership. See also Stacy Jackson, "New Leadership Emerges As Black Philanthropy Month Founder Dr. Jacqueline Copeland Steps Down: Dr. Copeland Is Passing the Reins to BackBlack

I also situate myself within this genealogy. My decade of professional work in identity-based and community philanthropy, together with nearly a decade of graduate study, shaped both my research questions and my interpretive stance. I have witnessed firsthand how Black women create, sustain, and reimagine philanthropic ecosystems. My lived experience is not separate from this project—it is part of the continuum of Black women's cultural labor and knowledge production. As our foremothers did for us, I understand this dissertation as a record that may help future scholars trace the evolving practices of Black women's giving.

My case selection is therefore shaped by three commitments: a Sankofa-based approach to historiography; a Black feminist methodology that centers lived experience, standpoint, and intersectionality; and a belief that the women I study intentionally wrote themselves into history.[201] Their speeches, letters, organizational records, published work, and digital activism form the data that make their philanthropic lives legible. My task is not simply to analyze these materials but to read with care, cultural context, and love—to trace the philanthropic meaning embedded in Black women's giving, organizing, and imagining of freedom across generations. In practice, this approach also relies on qualitative triangulation. By drawing on multiple forms of evidence—archival documents, published biographies, organizational records, digital materials, and my own professional experience in the philanthropic field—I am able to trace recurring themes, logics, and practices across genres, historical contexts, and interpretive vantage points. This triangulation strengthens the analytic coherence of the study and allows philanthropic meaning to emerge through patterns that reappear and resonate across time.

Founder Floyd Jones to Move Black Philanthropy Month into Its New Era," *Black Enterprise*, December 5, 2024, accessed July 17, 2026, https://www.blackenterprise.com/black-philanthropy-month-founder/.

[201] *Sankofa* is a Ghanaian Akan principle meaning "to return and retrieve," widely used in African diasporic scholarship to describe approaches that recover historical knowledge to inform present and future action. See Christel Temple, "The Emergence of Sankofa Practice in the United States: A Modern History," *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 127–44. See also Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Dill and Zinn, "Theorizing Difference from Multicultural Feminism."

With these analytic lenses and case-selection commitments in place, I now turn to a summary of the methodological foundations that guide my interpretation and analysis of Black women's philanthropic lives. The next section outlines the guiding frameworks and analytic commitments that shape my approach, illustrating how Black feminist epistemology, interpretive humanistic inquiry, and the conceptual framework of CCP come together to structure the methodological design of this study.

The methodological choices shaping this study emerge from the same commitments that animate CCP: a belief that Black women's lived experience produces theory, that their words and practices constitute knowledge, and that careful attention to their historical and contemporary expressions of giving can reveal philanthropic meaning where the archive has not thought to look. My task, then, is not simply to analyze "data," but to cultivate the interpretive practices necessary to read Black women's philanthropic labor on its own terms—in their letters, speeches, organizational records, autobiographical testimony, and the communal practices that have structured Black life for generations.[202]

These commitments bring together the interpretive frameworks outlined earlier in the chapter and clarify how they operate collectively in this study. I approach this work through a humanistic and interpretive lens, anchored in Black feminist epistemology, standpoint theory, and a commitment to narrative as both a method and a mode of knowing. Black feminist scholarship teaches us that lived experience is not merely illustrative; it is theoretical.[203] This means that Black women's articulations of care, advocacy, cultural preservation, and

[202] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy"; and Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible." As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, these works collectively inform the epistemological and methodological foundations of CCP and its interpretive framework for reading Black women's knowledge, community cultural resources, philanthropic practice, and everyday lived experience within and beyond the archive.

[203] See Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1988): 67–79; see also Patricia Hill Collins, "Some Group Matters: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought," in *Fighting Words: Black Women in the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 201–28.

community-building are not only acts of survival but also acts of meaning-making. They generate concepts, values, and social visions that reveal how philanthropy operates in everyday life. My role is to listen closely and read generously, to trace the logics that undergird their giving, and to illuminate how these logics manifest as philanthropic practice across time.

Narrative, for that reason, sits at the methodological center of this study. I rely on narrative not only because the historical subjects I examine wrote, spoke, and organized through story, but also because narrative offers one of the most powerful mechanisms for understanding how Black women name themselves, define their roles, and transmit values within their communities. Narrative analysis allows me to examine the rhetorical, affective, and moral dimensions of their philanthropic work—how Maria Stewart crafted political sermons to call forth a collective Black womanhood, how Harriet Jacobs deployed testimonial persuasion to mobilize resources for vulnerable Black communities, how Mary Church Terrell framed the NACW's mission as both educational uplift and organized giving, and how Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland narrates Black giving as a global, pan-African movement of social transformation.

Yet narrative alone does not tell the whole story. Because so much of Black women's philanthropic labor has been obscured by historical neglect or diminished by the narrowness of formal philanthropic definitions, I turn to historiography and archival interpretation as complementary methods. This work requires attention to who is writing history, what is preserved, what is lost, and whose voices are amplified or diminished in the telling. As feminist methodologists remind us, the archive is neither neutral nor complete; it reflects the biases, silences, and interpretive constraints of its time.[204] For Black women—whose labor has often

[204] See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Together, these works demonstrate that archives are historically produced

been misrecognized, misattributed, or rendered invisible—this means that recovering philanthropic meaning demands reading with the archive and against its grain.

Freeman and Williams-Pulfer's concept of "philanthropic archival layering" provides an important methodological guide for this study.[205] Their framing makes it clear that to understand the philanthropic dimensions of a figure like Madam C. J. Walker, one must consider not only what the archival record says, but also how it has been built, tended, and interpreted over time.[206] Their work demonstrates that Black women's philanthropic purpose often emerges through a composite reading of archival materials (e.g., letters, financial documents, public speeches, organizational minutes, community recollections) interpreted through the labor of Black feminist-oriented archivists and historians. Following this insight, I read the lives of Stewart, Jacobs, Terrell, and Copeland as layered histories—sites where philanthropic meaning becomes visible only when one attends to context, community memory, and interpretive gaps.

CCP Logics and Tenets as Analytic Method

This methodological posture also aligns with the four (4) cultural logics articulated in Chapter 2, each of which informs how Black women come to understand their philanthropic obligations and opportunities. These logics guide not only the interpretation of Black women's giving but also the methodological stance I take as a researcher: one rooted in ethical care, communal accountability, and respect for the cultural knowledge embedded in the everyday lives of Black women.[207] The nine (9) philanthropic tenets that flow from these logics become

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rather than neutral repositories of evidence and require critical engagement with archival silences, omissions, and structures of power. For an example of this interpretive approach to recovering Black women's philanthropic thought and practice, which serves as a recurring example throughout this study, see Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women."

[205] See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy," 1116.

[206] See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, *"*Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy,*"* 1119–20.

[207] See Amoah, "Narrative: 'The Road to Black Feminist Theory,'" and Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

interpretive markers guiding my reading of historical texts and contemporary accounts. Each tenet offers a lens through which to identify philanthropic meaning in the archival record, even when the language of "philanthropy" is absent.

To embed this methodological framework into this study's structure, I use vignette-based profiling to organize the historical and contemporary chapters. Vignettes allow me to work with discrete moments—a speech, a letter, an organizational conflict, a founding declaration—rather than full biographies. This approach is intentional. It reflects my interest not in recounting entire life histories, but in narrowing the focus to key episodes where philanthropic purpose is most visible and narratively potent. Vignettes also allow for an intimate, focused analysis that preserves the specificity of each woman's context while enabling a comparative reading across time. Through these moments, patterns emerge: the reliance on testimony as a political strategy, the fusion of cultural memory with collective care, the use of literacy and education as tools of resistance, the mobilization of networks in moments of crisis, and the persistent insistence that Black communities are worthy of investment and protection.

These vignettes function as both method and data. They anchor this study's empirical foundation and serve as the primary evidence through which I illustrate the operation of CCP.[208] Stewart's call to the "daughters of Africa,"[209] Jacobs' epistolary appeals, Terrell and the NACW's clubwomen campaigns, and Copeland's global framing of Black giving all reveal, in distinctive and culturally specific ways, the strategic philanthropic labor of Black women. Each vignette is chosen because it reveals something essential about CCP's logics and tenets—what philanthropy

[208] Here, I use "empirical" to refer to the primary materials that constitute the evidence for this study, including historical texts, archival materials, and contemporary narratives. I do not use the term to suggest quantitative measurement or causal evaluation. Rather, the vignettes function as both method and data: as an interpretive form through which these materials are organized and analyzed, and as a body of evidence illustrating the operation of CCP.

[209] See Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: The Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build," in Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 30.

looks like when defined not by wealth but by cultural agency, communal responsibility, and an unwavering commitment to Black survival and flourishing. A summary matrix demonstrating how CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets function across the four vignette profiles appears at the end of this chapter (see Table 3.1).

Finally, I am explicit in how this project defines "giving." Not every act of generosity constitutes philanthropy within this framework. Instead, philanthropy, as operationalized here, appears when there is deliberate investment in community uplift; intentional use of cultural or material resources; and attention to sustainability, continuity, or generational impact. This definition is flexible by design, but not loose. It is grounded in historical patterns of Black women's giving and in contemporary scholarly debates about race, gender, and philanthropic practice.[210] It honors the breadth of Black women's contributions without flattening or romanticizing them, and it offers a structured, culturally grounded way to identify philanthropic purpose that traditional frameworks might overlook, including activism, teaching, organizing, mothering, artistry, and other creative strategies for collective care and survival.

Summary of Methodological Approach

Collectively, these methodological commitments—narrative inquiry, historiographic analysis, archival layering, vignette-based profiling, qualitative triangulation, and the CCP logics and tenets—form the backbone of this study. Together, they allow me to bring theory and lived experience into conversation, connecting past and present, cultural meaning and philanthropic action. Most importantly, they enable me to read Black women's giving with the care, complexity, and depth it deserves, honoring their strategies of survival, creativity, and communal care as forms of philanthropic knowledge-making.

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[210] See Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*; Carson, *A Hand Up*; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

Having established the methodological architecture of this study, I now turn to the women whose lives and labor animate it. These profiles enact the very approaches outlined here—reading across archival layers, listening for narrative testimony, tracing cultural meaning, and identifying philanthropic purpose where it has historically been overlooked. Through their stories, I illustrate how CCP operates in action: how philanthropic meaning becomes legible through cultural practice, and how Black women continue to shape the moral imagination of Black communities and the broader nation. The following chapter enacts this methodology by turning to the historical record to trace a genealogy of Black women's philanthropic practice and to demonstrate how CCP operates over time.

Table 3.1 CCP Logic and Tenet Alignment Across Philanthropic Profiles

This matrix illustrates how the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets of Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP) appear across the four historical and contemporary profiles of this study. Each woman activates CCP differently, yet all draw from shared cultural logics—moral vision, cultural values, communal care, and self-determination—and enact philanthropic practice through the nine (9) recurring tenets to sustain Black communities across generations.[211]

PROFILE	**CULTURAL LOGICS** *(Activated)*	PHILANTROPIC TENETS *(Enacted)*
Maria W. Stewart (1831)	✓ **Moral Logic of Collective Uplift** *(racial self-determination; ethical duty to uplift the race)* ✓ **Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories** *(biblical literacy, Black Jeremiad tradition)* ✓ **Communal Traditions of Care & Survival** *(collective responsibility for education)* ✓ **Strategies of Self-Determination** *(call to "sue for your rights and privileges")*	✓ **Cultural Stewardship** *(education as liberation; preservation of communal knowledge)* ✓ **Narrative Testimony & Memory Work** *(public oratory as moral suasion)* ✓ **Collective Resource Sharing** *(call to raise funds for a school)* ✓ **Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer** *(call to build institutions for future generations)* ✓ **Leadership & Institution Building** *(blueprint for Black women's civic and educational leadership)* ✓ **Resistance & Advocacy** *(direct critique of racial and gendered oppression)*
Harriet Jacobs (1867)	✓ **Moral Logic of Collective Uplift** *(protection and care for freedpeople)* ✓ **Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories** *(memory of enslavement as moral testimony)* ✓ **Communal Traditions of Care & Survival** *(kinship networks; women's advocacy)*	✓ **Cultural Stewardship** *(preservation of memory as a tool for liberation)* ✓ **Narrative Testimony & Memory Work** *(epistolary testimony as fundraising and advocacy)* ✓ **Collective Resource Sharing** *(mobilizing Northern donors through testimony)*

[211] See Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?," for a full articulation of the Community Cultural Wealth model that inspired this framework. For a visual representation, see "Cultural Wealth Model," Portland State University, accessed June 26, 2026, https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/56/2020/09/INSERT-4-Cultural-Wealth-Model.pdf.

PROFILE	CULTURAL LOGICS *(Activated)*	PHILANTROPIC TENETS *(Enacted)*
	✓ **Strategies of Self-Determination** *(mobilizing resources for educational and material relief)*	✓ **Mutual Aid & Reciprocal Care** *(direct support for freedwomen and children)* ✓ **Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer** *(education, safety, moral guidance for youth)* ✓ **Creative & Spiritual Praxis** (symbolic offering of the "fragrance of freedom")
Mary Church Terrell & NACW (1896)	✓ **Moral Logic of Collective Uplift** *(NACW motto: "Lifting as We Climb")* ✓ **Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories** *(club movement, racial respectability, cultural leadership)* ✓ **Communal Traditions of Care & Survival** *(homes, schools, training centers)* ✓ **Strategies of Self-Determination** *(national organizing; political advocacy)*	✓ **Cultural Stewardship** *(defense of Black womanhood; preservation of racial dignity)* ✓ **Narrative Testimony & Memory Work** *(public speeches, civic womanhood rhetoric)* ✓ **Collective Resource Sharing** *(fundraising, dues, support funds)* ✓ **Mutual Aid & Reciprocal Care** *(support for working mothers, girls, and families)* ✓ **Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer** *(public education; NACW training programs; sustaining educational access and community resources)* ✓ **Leadership & Institution Building** *(homes, schools, NACW infrastructures)* ✓ **Resistance & Advocacy** *(public rebuttal to John W. Jacks' letter; political organizing)* ✓ **Translocal & Transnational Solidarity** *(multi-state coalitions; national movement building)*
Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland (2025)	✓ **Moral Logic of Collective Uplift** *(global Black solidarity; environmental and gender justice)*	✓ **Cultural Stewardship** *(diasporic cultural renewal through creative expression)*

PROFILE	CULTURAL LOGICS *(Activated)*	PHILANTROPIC TENETS *(Enacted)*
	✓ **Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories** *(diasporic identity; creative expression)* ✓ **Communal Traditions of Care & Survival** *(eco-stewardship; women-centered leadership)* ✓ **Strategies of Self-Determination** *(institution building across nonprofit, global development, and philanthropy sectors)*	✓ **Narrative Testimony & Memory Work** *(public storytelling; musical performance; global platforms)* ✓ **Collective Resource Sharing** *(mobilizing global funding for environmental justice)* ✓ **Mutual Aid & Reciprocal Care** *(care-centered praxis; reciprocal support for scholars, practitioners & caregivers)* ✓ **Intergenerational Knowledge & Wealth Transfer** *(passing knowledge, frameworks, and material support across generations)* ✓ **Leadership & Institution Building** *(PAWPNet; The WISE Fund; BPM; sustainability initiatives)* ✓ **Resistance & Advocacy** *(race and gender justice, climate advocacy, diasporic equity)* ✓ **Creative & Spiritual Praxis** *(music, art, storytelling as philanthropy)* ✓ ***Translocal & Transnational Solidarity*** *(Black Philanthropy Month; global networks)*

Chapter 4: Scripted Generosity: The Philanthropic Work Hidden in Black Women's Historical Writing

Black women have long stood at the center of communal care, resistance, cultural preservation, and collective uplift in the United States. Their rhetorical, spiritual, material, political, and intellectual labor has shaped the moral imagination of Black communities and the broader nation, even as dominant narratives have rarely recognized these practices as philanthropy.[212] Building upon the conceptual grounding and methodological commitments established in earlier chapters, this chapter turns to the historical "love of humanity in action"—a term resonant with both bell hooks' ethic of love and Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland's contemporary framing of global Black giving—embodied by three women whose work illuminates the depth, breadth, and continuity of CCP across nearly a century.[213]

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate how philanthropic meaning is made through specific acts of speech, testimony, institution-building, and cultural strategy. To do this, I adopt a genealogical mapping approach, not as a linear chronology but as a curated series of interpretive vignettes that highlight strategic moments of philanthropic thought and practice. By returning to speeches, letters, autobiographical testimony, organizational archives, and contemporary interviews, I trace how Black women mobilized cultural values, moral logics, and strategic practices in response to the racial, economic, political, and gendered conditions of their eras. Each vignette captures acts of meaning-making—a speech chosen, a letter penned, an organization founded, a movement built—revealing philanthropy not as a matter of financial capacity but as a culturally grounded practice of care, power, resistance, and communal responsibility.

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[212] See Carson, *A Hand Up*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

[213] See hooks, *All About Love*; and Copeland, interview by author, May 6, 2025.

Rather than offering exhaustive biographies, these vignette profiles function as sites of philanthropic evidence, demonstrating how Black women have historically defined, enacted, and theorized "voluntary action for the public good" in ways that remain underexamined in the scholarly record. Here, I present a curated series of vignettes—close readings of moments when Black women mobilized cultural values, moral logics, and strategic practices to serve the collective good. Each vignette is read through CCP's cultural logics, philanthropic tenets, and preliminary logic model framework, allowing these seemingly disparate moments to be understood as part of a connected and evolving genealogy of Black women's giving.

Across nearly a century, the women examined in this chapter form a strategic continuum in Black women's philanthropic praxis, each building upon the cultural logics, moral imperatives, and structural insights of the one before her. What emerges is not three isolated historical moments, but a genealogy of Black women's philanthropic innovation that evolves in form while remaining grounded in shared commitments to collective uplift, cultural stewardship, and moral imagination.

These women speak to each other across time. Maria W. Stewart's early nineteenth-century insistence on racial self-determination and public moral leadership resonates in Harriet Jacobs' Civil War–era strategies of testimonial care and advocacy for freedpeople. Jacobs' reclamation of narrative authority and protection of Black children anticipates the institution-building work of Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), who transformed everyday forms of Black women's care work into a vanguard of national organizational power. In turn, Terrell's activism and vision of civic womanhood and collective responsibility find contemporary expression in Copeland's global model of Afro-diasporic cultural strategy and digital resource mobilization.

As a whole, these women constitute a living archive of Black women's philanthropic meaning-making—an inheritance of moral logics, cultural values, communal traditions, and strategies of self-determination that echo across generations. Their work enacts CCP's tenets in profoundly different yet deeply interconnected ways. Each responds to the crises of her moment, and each expands the philanthropic imagination available to those who follow.

Enter Philanthropic Foremothers: Stewart, Jacobs, Terrell/NACW, and Copeland

The brief introductions that follow, highlighting the "philanthropic foremothers" who frame this study, establish the genealogical arc, and prepare the ground for the fuller vignettes ahead.

1. Maria W. Stewart (1831–1833): The First Public Blueprint

Maria Stewart inaugurates this genealogy with an 1831 address that offered the first public blueprint for Black women's philanthropic thought. Her call to the "daughters of Africa" to raise a fund, build a school, pursue literacy, and claim public voice marks the earliest recorded articulation by a Black woman of endowed education as liberation, collective resource pooling as a strategy, testimony as philanthropic action, and self-help as political praxis.[214] These elements reflect core philanthropic tenets, including narrative testimony and memory work, collective resource sharing, cultural stewardship, and leadership through institution-building. Stewart's address planted the seed for a philanthropic agenda grounded in cultural knowledge, moral logic, and communal responsibility, forming the earliest expression of what this study calls Community Cultural Philanthropy. Her intervention provides the foundation from which Harriet Jacobs will

[214] See Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 30, 37–38. A digital facsimile of Stewart's later collection, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (Washington, DC: Enterprise Publishing Company, 1879), is available through Internet Archive, accessed June 26, 2026, https://archive.org/details/meditationsfromp00stew/page/24/mode/2up.

extend this tradition, shifting the work of public exhortation into more intimate forms of narrative care and testimony-driven uplift.

2. Harriet Jacobs (1861–1867): Philanthropy as Testimony, Care, and Postwar Mobilization

Harriet Jacobs extends Stewart's blueprint into the post–Civil War era by shifting the mode of philanthropic action from public oratory to intimate epistolary testimony. In her 1867 letter to Ednah Dow Cheney, Jacobs uses narrative as moral persuasion, linking personal experience to collective need and transforming testimony into a tool for mobilizing material resources.[215] Her aesthetic and material offering of pressed flowers, described as holding "the fragrance of freedom," performs cultural stewardship by preserving memory and symbolizing liberation through beauty, care, and embodied storytelling. Jacobs' letter demonstrates how Black women's philanthropic strategies often operate in intimate relational spaces that formal philanthropy fails to name, including letter writing, care work, kinship networks, and women's advocacy.[216] She translates Stewart's call for endowed education, collective resource pooling, and moral uplift into a micro-level practice of narrative-driven fundraising, social care, educational advocacy, and community preservation. Jacobs becomes the inheritor of Stewart's moral logic, extending early philanthropic ideals into lived practices of survival, restoration, and postwar rebuilding.

3. Mary Church Terrell and the NACW (1896–1918): Organized, Institutionalized Philanthropy

[215] See Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney, April 25, 1867, in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, edited by Jean Fagan Yellin, Joseph M. Thomas, Kate Culkin, and Scott Korb, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2:711–14.

[216] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. For a comparative example, see Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 70–93. Hine's account of Nannie Helen Burroughs' correspondence with Jane Ednah Hunter shows how Black women's philanthropy often unfolded through intimate exchanges of support and resources. Although the relationship differs across lines of race and class, Jacobs' letter to Cheney reflects a similar relational practice in which care work, encouragement, and shared struggle operate as quiet yet powerful forms of strategic giving.

Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) represent the institutional realization of the philanthropic foundations articulated by Stewart and extended by Jacobs. The catalyst for their organizing was a public attack by Missouri Free Press Association president John W. Jacks, whose defamatory claims prompted Black clubwomen to unite nationally in defense of Black womanhood and community leadership. Through the NACW, Terrell helps operationalize key philanthropic strategies that echo Stewart's 1831 call, including fundraising and endowment work, institution-building through homes, schools, training centers, and reform associations, the cultivation of public voice through speeches and political advocacy, and the ethic of collective self-help expressed in the motto "Lifting as We Climb."[217] Terrell emerges as the educated, institutional leader who navigates racial violence, gendered constraint, and class politics to transform Stewart's moral imagination into structured organizational power.[218] Under her leadership, Black women's philanthropy became a national movement grounded in cultural stewardship, resource pooling, narrative testimony, and social justice advocacy, laying the groundwork for the global, intersectional models that followed in the contemporary period, with Copeland.

4. Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland (1962–present): Global, Intersectional, Community Cultural Philanthropy

Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland closes this genealogy by extending Stewart's diasporic call to the daughters of Africa into a global, twenty-first-century context. Her work reflects a full-circle return to Stewart's original blueprint. Through Black Philanthropy Month, she advances diasporic identity, global coalition-building, and a shared philanthropic agenda

[217] National Association of Colored Women, *The Official Records of the National Association of Colored Women* (Washington, DC: Press of R. L. Pendleton, 1904).

[218] Beverly T. Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982): 20–33.

across the African Diaspora.[219] Through The WISE Fund, Copeland centers environmental and gender justice and amplifies global leadership of Black women.[220] Through her cultural production in music and art, she treats narrative itself as philanthropy, using creative expression as a vehicle for community healing, resource mobilization, and shared cultural memory. And through her combined use of institutional strategy and personal cultural practice, she models a hybrid philanthropic praxis that is both structural and intimate.

Copeland embodies the post–civil rights inheritor of this lineage, carrying forward Stewart's moral imagination, Jacobs' commitment to testimony and narrative persuasion, and Terrell's strategic institution-building. She translates these traditions into a contemporary model of CCP grounded in Black love, global solidarity, and cultural futurity. Copeland is included here to signal her place within the broader genealogical arc; however, her full discussion is reserved for Chapter 5, where I treat her work as the contemporary synthesis of CCP.

Together, these cases reveal a genealogy that stretches from early free Black communities to contemporary global movements; a lineage of Black women's giving that is textured, creative, strategic, and profoundly communal. They also prepare the ground for the close readings that follow, where CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets help illuminate the deep patterns embedded in each woman's words, actions, and institutional legacies. It is here, in 1831, with Maria W. Stewart's pioneering call to the "daughters of Africa," that this lineage begins.[221]

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[219] The HistoryMakers, "Jacqueline Copeland Biography"; and BackBlack Movement, "The History of Black Philanthropy Month."

[220] The WISE Fund, "About the WISE Fund," accessed June 26, 2026, https://thewisefund.org.

[221] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 30.

Defining Black Women's Early Philanthropic Rhetoric and Action

Maria W. Stewart: Foremother of Black Women's Philanthropic Rhetoric and Activism

Maria W. Stewart (1803–1879) was a pioneering Black abolitionist, writer, and educator whose brief but historic public speaking career made her the first American woman to lecture to a mixed-gender, mixed-race audience on political matters. Born free in Connecticut and later active in Boston's Black community, Stewart's activism emerged in the wake of personal loss and the rising abolitionist tide shaped by figures like David Walker (1829–1830).[222] Across her essays and speeches, she advanced a radical vision of Black women's moral authority, educational uplift, and collective self-help.[223] Stewart's 1831 address, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build," offers one of the earliest recorded articulations of the philanthropic worldview that this study theorizes as CCP.[224]

Maria W. Stewart enters the historical record not quietly, but with a bold, declarative call to moral reckoning and communal responsibility. Standing before a mixed audience in Boston in the early 1830s, she offered more than a speech. She offered a philosophical blueprint for Black women's collective future.[225] Through her appeals to unity, education, spiritual duty, and racial self-determination, Stewart articulated the earliest publicly recorded expression of CCP. Her rhetoric fused moral exhortation with political advocacy, building upon cultural values deeply

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[222] For a biographical profile and discussion of Stewart's activism and influence by David Walker, see Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 1–29. See also David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (Boston: Revised and Published by David Walker, 1830), electronic edition, Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001, accessed June 26, 2026, https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/walker/walker.html.

[223] See Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart.*

[224] See Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 28–42. Unless otherwise noted, citations to Stewart's writings in this section refer to Richardson's edited collection, whose historical introduction, editorial annotations, and contextual framing provide the basis for this close reading. For the original text, see Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*, 24–35, digital facsimile, Internet Archive, accessed June 26, 2026, https://archive.org/details/meditationsfromp00stew/page/24/mode/2up.

[225] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, Introduction 28–42.

rooted in Black communal life. She used the narrative authority of her own testimony to argue that the uplift of Black women was never an individual aspiration, but a communal mandate shaped by shared histories, obligations, and hopes, what I theorize as CCP's moral logic, cultural values, communal traditions, and self-determination.

Stewart's philanthropic vision emerges through the CCP cultural logics. Her moral logic is unmistakable in her insistence that Black women carry a divinely inspired duty to cultivate their intellect, strengthen their communities, and pursue justice for their race and sex. Her appeals to cultural values—drawn from biblical allusion, the Black Jeremiad tradition, and the sacred pursuit of scriptural literacy—frame education as a cultural inheritance and a tool for collective survival. Stewart's language of "union, knowledge and love" evokes the communal traditions that sustained Black life in the face of profound adversity.[226] Her bold directive for women to "sue for your rights and privileges" reflects the logic of self-determination, a clear articulation of Black women's right to define themselves, advocate for their communities, and claim public leadership.[227]

These logics become visible through distinct philanthropic tenets. Stewart's address functions as narrative testimony and memory work (Tenet 2), a personal witness offered for the sake of communal transformation. Her call to "raise a fund" reveals an early model of collective resource sharing (Tenet 3) that anticipates later modes of endowed philanthropy and institution-building. Her emphasis on education as both a sacred calling and a political necessity signals intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer (Tenet 5), a defining practice of Black women's philanthropy across two centuries. Stewart's oratory models leadership and institution building (Tenet 6) before such practices were formally named within the club movement. Her

[226] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 38.

[227] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 38.

critique of national power structures signals resistance and advocacy (Tenet 7). And her invocation of Africa, diasporic consciousness, and global injustice foreshadows later modes of translocal and transnational solidarity (Tenet 9).

In this way, Stewart offers not only a political address but also a philanthropic worldview—an early template for how Black women use narrative, spirituality, and moral suasion to cultivate communal uplift and strategic resistance. Her rhetoric prefigures the institution-building work of the National Association of Colored Women and anticipates the global philanthropic strategies later embodied by Copeland. Stewart's essays and speeches thus stand as the first public articulation of Black women's philanthropic imagination, one rooted in moral conviction, communal responsibility, cultural continuity, and a fierce belief in the transformative power of education, narrative, and collective action. What follows is a close reading of Stewart's 1831 essay, tracing how her rhetorical choices, moral assertions, and political appeals illuminate CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets in action. Through a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis, I show where and how her speech performs the earliest contours of Black women's philanthropic thought.

By engaging in a critical and contextual analysis of Maria W. Stewart's pioneering essay, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build," I aim to illustrate how and why Stewart's rhetoric can be read as an early expression of Black women's philanthropic thought and practice.[228] Here, I read Stewart's rhetoric through the CCP framework, highlighting how her appeals to faith, unity, knowledge, and communal obligation exemplify the early cultural logics and philanthropic tenets of Black women's giving. This early political narrative is a fitting starting point as Stewart, according to historian Paula Giddings, "articulated the precepts upon which the activism [and philanthropy] of Black

[228] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 28–44.

women would be based."[229] Stewart couched her rhetoric in the Victorian ethic of true womanhood but espoused decidedly feminist ideals, urging Black women to build businesses, sue for their rights and privileges, and know the reasons they cannot attain them.[230]

Stewart made history with her words, becoming the first known American-born Black woman to speak publicly before a "promiscuous audience" (i.e., men and women) and to publish her writings on politics, Black female empowerment, moral and religious piety, education, and economic self-sufficiency.[231] In what follows, I examine how Stewart's first published essay employs sophisticated rhetorical strategies to promote an activist philanthropic discourse. I also draw selectively on Kenneth Burke's concept of terministic screens to show how Stewart's use of religious and moral language functions as a persuasive filter through which she advances philanthropic, proto-feminist, and revolutionary claims that she might not otherwise have been able to express publicly.[232]

Additionally, this vignette will begin to engage the concept of Black women as "activist-philanthropists"—social investors working strategically within their spheres of influence to promote generational wealth and group uplift through community leadership and socio-political activism—who challenged race, class, and gender norms through their work.[233] Building on the conceptual groundwork laid in Chapter 2, I treat Stewart's essay as an early case of CCP in action, where cultural values, moral imagination, and strategic self-help converge in a

[229] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 50.

[230] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 50–52.

[231] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 50–52; see also Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, i–xx.

[232] Kenneth Burke defines *terministic screens* as the symbolic vocabularies through which people perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to reality. Because language is never neutral, it simultaneously reflects, selects, and deflects aspects of reality. See Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 43–62.

[233] Sociologist Ira Silver describes *activist philanthropy* as a model that challenges conventional philanthropic norms and organizational hierarchies by incorporating donors, grassroots organizers, and grant recipients into all aspects of philanthropic work. See Ira Silver, "Buying an Activist Identity: Reproducing Class through Social Movement Philanthropy," *Sociological Perspectives* 41, no. 2 (1998): 306–7.

single public address.

As outlined in Chapter 1, I understand philanthropy as "voluntary action for the public good grounded in moral imagination," [234] and I adopt an expansive view of Black philanthropy that includes self-help, serial reciprocity, and collective resource pooling as core practices.[235] In this vignette, I apply that definitional lens to Stewart's writing to show how her appeals to education, institution-building, and racial uplift anticipate the later philanthropic traditions of Black clubwomen and twentieth-century organizers.

By promoting individual and collective self-help and beneficence, women like Maria W. Stewart helped establish an early framework for Black women's philanthropy. Stewart, in particular, as we shall see through an analysis of her discourse, challenged the constructs of race, gender, and class, and in doing so, laid a foundation for other Black women—extending from the mid-nineteenth century to the present—to advocate for social and political change and community uplift for her race and gender. In the essay, *"*We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women," historian Darlene Clarke Hine asserts that while giving amongst Black female leaders of women's clubs and other organizations during the turn of the twentieth century was not comparable to white male philanthropists, such as Carnegie, Rosenwald and Rockefeller, their targeted investments of time and personal resources were just as valuable.[236]

In antebellum America, particularly in the northeast and parts of the Midwest, burgeoning communities of free, educated, and mobile Black women began publicly organizing and institutionalizing their philanthropic efforts, founding literary societies, beneficent associations,

[234] Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 27, 132–33.

[235] Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 3–11; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71–73.

[236] Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71.

boarding houses, private schools, and enterprises to address the myriad of issues affecting their race and gender.[237] Following the Civil War and post-Reconstruction era, into the twentieth century, Black clubwomen increased their public presence and began to tackle pressing public issues related to political and economic disenfranchisement, sexual abuse and exploitation of Black women and girls, and educational inequality.[238] Hine notes:

> The schools and colleges they [Black women] founded, the old folks' homes, orphanages, and sanitariums, settlement houses, and clinics built to ameliorate the disorder of emancipation followed by the trauma of Southern violence, migration, and urbanization, became monuments representing Black women's racial uplift and philanthropic work.[239]

Similar to Stewart's generation, much of Black clubwomen's work was founded on Victorian ideals of religious piety, moral virtue, and 'true womanhood'. However, Black women defied mainstream notions of race, class, and gender to support the cause of racial uplift and female empowerment, with far-reaching impact. The writings of Maria W. Stewart are significant in this regard, as they arguably set a precedent for Black women's future philanthropic rhetoric and activism. What follows is a close reading of her 1831 essay, which demonstrates CCP in action.

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[237] Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible."

[238] See also Sharon Harley, ed., *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1–10, which similarly situates the Black women's club movement within broader traditions of labor, civic engagement, and community uplift.

[239] Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 73.

"How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles? Until union, knowledge and love begin to flow among us." — Maria W. Stewart (1831)

In Maria W. Stewart's groundbreaking essay and public address, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build,"[240] printed originally as a twelve-page pamphlet and published by William Lloyd Garrison in *The Liberator* in 1831, Stewart crafts a brilliant defense of women's rights, constructing a spirited series of arguments citing feminist precedents drawn from the biblical, classical, and historical sources.[241] Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins notes in the introduction to her groundbreaking text, *Black Feminist Thought*, that Stewart was one of the first U.S. Black feminists to champion the utility of women's relationships with one another in fostering a community of Black women's activism and self-determination.[242] This emphasis on self-determination fits well within the model of self-help philanthropy, defined as cooperative giving in response to the needs of the individual, family, and immediate community.[243] Notions of unified self-help, the promotion of knowledge through education, and love of humanity/sisterhood were central themes and moral imperatives that drove Stewart's philanthropic discourse and activism. Read through CCP, these themes illuminate Stewart's reliance on moral logic, communal traditions, and self-determination as foundations for Black women's philanthropic action.

In reference to the rhetorical strategies employed by Stewart, it is worth foregrounding this analysis with a brief discussion of Kenneth Burke's concept of terministic screens to

[240] See Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, Maria W. Stewart, 28–44. For a digital facsimile of this publication, see Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart, 24–35, digital facsimile, Internet Archive, accessed June 26, 2026, https://archive.org/details/meditationsfromp00stew/page/24/mode/2up. Although Richardson classifies "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality" as an essay, I refer to it throughout this chapter as both an essay and a public address to reflect Stewart's publication of the text and its subsequent public delivery between 1831 and 1833.

[241] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, xiii–xvii.

[242] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 2.

[243] See Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 3.

examine how Stewart skillfully employed this strategy to advance her argument. *In Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature and Method*, Burke describes the persuasive power of language to both define and describe, noting that language, as an aspect of symbolic action, can be both scientific (language as definition) and dramatistic (language as action).[244] Burke notes that in whatever capacity language is employed (scientific or dramatistic), its purpose is to persuade or direct intention.[245] Consequently, terministic screens can be understood as symbolic rhetorical devices designed to direct an audience's attention to a specific viewpoint, or, conversely, to deflect attention from an opposing viewpoint.[246] As such, terministic screens can be seen as useful discursive filters for advancing arguments that might not otherwise be accepted. Stewart's use of religious and moral language thus becomes a strategic philanthropic tool, framing Black women's pursuit of education and collective uplift as both divinely sanctioned and culturally necessary.

When considering Maria Stewart's invocation of religion and morality in the title and throughout her essay, one cannot help but appreciate her deliberate use of terministic screens grounded in these domains to support her argument. While Stewart was a devout Christian, couching her potentially inflammatory rhetoric in the Victorian ethic of true womanhood and the Black Jeremiad tradition undoubtedly tempered her arguments to be more readily received by the women and men of her era.[247] Richardson notes:

> Stewart attempted a balance between the protective claims of passivity to divine will which early female preachers used to deflect denominational censure, and the active role she urged her sisters to take with her in assuming responsibility for

[244] Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 44–45.

[245] Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 45.

[246] Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, 45.

[247] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 16. See also Mottino and Miller, "African American Philanthropy Literature Review," CPCS, 4.

their lives and their communities.[248]

Additionally, Stewart used scripture to reinforce her revolutionary ideals. Richardson states further, "In it [the Bible] Stewart found justification for what secular authorities might well have considered inciting to riot."[249]

In addition to being discursively savvy, Stewart's essay is multifocal, addressing multiple audiences—women and men, black and white alike. However, she targets women, particularly Black women, and challenges them to rise up and claim their public positions as agents of God in the cause of moral reform and educational uplift for themselves and their children.[250] Self-help philanthropy is evident in Stewart's promotion of knowledge through education, a major theme in her writing that spoke directly to the issues of her day. Richardson notes:

> Her emphasis on Black women's formal education was not rooted solely in images of feminine cultural refinement; it was a matter of political urgency. For Stewart, the pursuit of literacy was a sacred quest at that period when laws passed in the South made it a crime to teach slaves to read and write. Hers is the earliest recorded call to black women to take up what would later become one of the great traditions in their social and political [and philanthropic] history, their pioneering work as teachers and founders of schools, and innovators in many areas black education.[251]

Additionally, Stewart recommends that Black women endow their education, stating that they should "raise a fund ourselves; and at end of one year and a half, we might be able to lay a corner stone for the building of a High School, that the higher branches of knowledge might be enjoyed by us [. . .]."[252] Stewart's strategy of pooling and investing income for institutional development mirrors contemporary modes of endowed philanthropy, which was remarkably

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[248] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 19.

[249] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 17–18.

[250] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 20.

[251] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 20.

[252] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewar*t, 37.

forward and progressive for her time. Her call to Black women to rise up and invest their resources to establish institutions points to her desire to effect systemic change and community uplift through philanthropic work. Here, CCP's tenets of collective resource sharing, leadership and institution building, and intergenerational knowledge transfer are clearly present, even if the language of "philanthropy" is not yet applied to her work.

Stewart's rhetoric is imbued with an ethos of strategic activism through the promotion of philanthropic ideals, and she engages her audience from a distinct and credible vantage point as a woman who endured multiple forms of oppression and was ordained by God to fight for change. The opening lines of Stewart's essay are telling in this regard as she lays out her subject position as an orphan and widow, and cites the specific dates of her religious conversion and faith in Christ.[253] These testaments establish credibility with her audience, who were likely morally and religiously conservative. Stewart reinforces her statement by contending that she had devoted her life and would gladly sacrifice it for the cause of God and her brethren.[254] Such sacrificial claims by Stewart, grounded in love for God, family, and extended kin, are inherently philanthropic.

Further in the essay, Stewart makes a decidedly political statement indicting the great mighty men of America [read white, propertied males] for their role in the enslavement and oppression of the "sable-skinned Africans," and she preaches a gospel of divine retribution at the hands of God for their failing to extend charity at home.[255] Here, Stewart's moral, religious, and philanthropic imperatives are apparent, and she makes no attempt to hide her discontent. The remainder of the essay interrogates America as a colonial empire, for its oppressive

[253] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 28–29.

[254] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 29.

[255] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart,* 39.

dealings with peoples of African descent, which is decidedly bold and a clear alignment with the CCP tenet of translocal and transnational solidarity.

Stewart's final activist exhortation is for her audience to arm themselves with weapons of prayer, place their trust in God, and pursue a virtuous path.[256] She admits that she will likely be perceived as a threat and unpopular for her statements, but she stands by her words with abiding faith that God will deliver the righteous. Stewart states: "For I am fully persuaded that he will bring me off a conqueror, yea, more than conqueror, through him who hath loved me and given himself for me."[257] Stewart's willingness to risk social condemnation for the sake of communal uplift underscores her philanthropic thought as sacrificial, values-driven labor, rooted in spiritual conviction and communal obligation.

Stewart's rhetoric was indeed revolutionary and prophetic for its time. Sparked by the racial turmoil and violence of her era and fueled by an abiding faith that conditions could be improved through collective effort, Stewart set out on an oratory crusade to address the most pressing issues of her time, with particular attention to fostering and preserving unity, knowledge, and love within the Black community, especially among Black women. Richardson notes that Stewart took up a life of public political activism at a time when it was considered highly inappropriate for a woman to put herself forward in such a way. She defined herself through an appeal to biblical precedent and "ultimately claimed full entitlement to speak and to act by way of what she called 'spiritual interrogation.'"[258] Through her moral and religious views and her promotion of philanthropic activism, Stewart laid a solid foundation on which future Black female philanthropic activists could build.

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[256] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 41.

[257] Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 41.

[258] Richardson, ed., *Maria W. Stewart*, 19.

Ultimately, examining Black women's early philanthropic rhetoric and activism is essential to understanding the meaning and mission of Black women's philanthropic work within a historic and contemporary frame. Such analyses promote a critical discourse that challenges race, gender, and class norms and moves our understanding of philanthropy beyond its limited definition (i.e., white, elite, male, and institutional); and it also emphasizes the strategic and self-actualizing nature of Black women's philanthropy—independent of white patronage and power. Additionally, such critical inquiry elevates Black women as effective socio-political change agents through their philanthropic work—exposing a rich philanthropic tradition for/by Black women that expands our knowledge and understanding of the American cultural, economic, and political formations in which Black women play a pivotal role.

In CCP terms, Stewart's address can be read as the prototype of a Black woman's philanthropic manifesto: a speech that gathers moral logic, cultural memory, communal traditions, and strategies of self-determination into a shared blueprint for collective action.

"Fragrance of Freedom": Defining Black Women's Early Philanthropic Rhetoric and Action:
Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897): Philanthropy as Testimony, Care, and Postwar Mobilization

Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897) was a nineteenth-century abolitionist, educator, relief worker, and the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, one of the most important autobiographical narratives of American slavery.[259] Born enslaved in Edenton, North Carolina, Jacobs endured years of sexual coercion, surveillance, and confinement before securing freedom for herself and her two children. During and after the Civil War, she turned her attention to relief work, education, and advocacy for freedpeople, channeling her personal experience into letters,

[259] See Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Boston: Published for the Author, 1861). Unless otherwise noted, references to *Incidents* throughout this chapter refer to the critical edition edited by Jean Fagan Yellin, which provides the scholarly text, editorial notes, and pagination used in this study.

For additional editorial context, see Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, ed. Nell Irvin Painter (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); and for a comprehensive biography of Harriet Jacobs, see Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life.* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004).

petitions, and on-the-ground aid for Black refugees in the war-torn South. Her 1867 correspondence with American writer, reformer, and noted philanthropist Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney—including the now-iconic "fragrance of freedom" letter—reveals her strategic use of intimate narrative as philanthropic intervention, mobilizing resources for schools, widows, orphans, and the newly emancipated.[260] Within this genealogy of Black women's giving, Jacobs stands as the inheritor of Stewart's moral logic and narrative persuasion, translating public exhortation into a deeply embodied practice of care, testimony, and community-rooted uplift.

Nearly three decades after Maria Stewart delivered her public call for Black women's moral awakening and collective action, Harriet Jacobs extends that philanthropic imagination into the epistolary realm, transforming the written letter into a vehicle for communal care, moral testimony, and strategic resource mobilization. Writing in 1867, two years after the end of the Civil War, from her grandmother's home in Edenton, North Carolina, Jacobs observed firsthand the devastation facing newly freed Black families—hunger, displacement, illness, and the near-total absence of governmental aid.[261] Her letters to Ednah Dow Cheney, a Boston abolitionist, noted philanthropist, and secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, function simultaneously as eyewitness documentation and as moral appeal, painted with vivid sensory detail: the overcrowded rooms, starving children, widowed mothers, and the fragile but powerful "fragrance of freedom" that lingered among those determined to build new lives from the wreckage of bondage.[262]

Jacobs writes not simply to describe conditions but to compel response. Through

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[260] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. A digital edition of *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, including volumes 1 and 2, is available for borrowing through the Internet Archive, accessed June 26, 2026, https://archive.org/details/harrietjacobsfam0000jaco.

[261] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

[262] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

carefully constructed testimony, she invites Cheney—and, by extension, Northern readers—into intimate proximity with the suffering and courage of freed-people, as if placing the reader directly beside her in the schoolroom, the refugee camp, or the makeshift quarters where she ministered to women and children. This relational positioning is philanthropic in its own right. It transforms personal story into communal obligation, ethical witnessing, and resource activation across geographic distance.[263]

Jacobs' work activates the cultural logics of CCP in distinct ways. Her moral logic emerges through her insistence that freedom carries an ethical mandate to care for the most vulnerable. Her cultural values and testimony are expressed through the narrative authority she built in Incidents and extended into her wartime and postwar correspondence. Her attention to communal traditions (especially the care of widows, orphans, and displaced families) draws from longstanding Black women's practices of other-mothering and mutual aid. And her commitment to self-determination is evident in her work to establish schools and relief programs alongside her daughter, Louisa.

These logics surface in specific philanthropic tenets. Jacobs' letters are themselves narrative testimony and memory work (Tenet 2), offered to ensure the suffering and needs of freedpeople were neither unseen nor unanswered. Her appeals for clothing, books, and funds exemplify collective resource sharing (Tenet 3). Her vision of literacy as liberation, embodied in founding schools for children and adults, enacts intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer (Tenet 5). Through coordinating relief networks and establishing educational spaces, she models leadership and institution building (Tenet 6). Her critique of federal neglect and her insistence on structural intervention reveal resistance and advocacy (Tenet 7). And her correspondence with Northern allies—Cheney foremost among them—demonstrates a form of translocal solidarity

[263] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

(Tenet 9) that bridges geography in service of collective uplift and survival.

Through these interwoven practices, Jacobs transforms the intimate scale of the letter into a platform for public purpose. Her 1867 correspondence became both a political document and a philanthropic act—continuing the work begun by Stewart and anticipating the more formalized organizational strategies later embodied by Terrell, the NACW, and Copeland. Jacobs' "fragrance of freedom" becomes a metaphor for the moral imagination at the heart of CCP: fragile, sensory, relational, and insistently collective. What follows is a close reading of Jacobs' 1867 letter to Ednah Dow Cheney, tracing how her descriptive choices, narrative appeals, and strategic petitions reveal CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets in action.

HarrietJacobs (1867): "A Fragrance of Freedom": Strategic Activism and Philanthropy in Writing

> "[M]y love to Miss Daisy [Cheney's daughter]. I send her some Jasmine blossoms. [T]ell her they bear the fragrance of freedom." — Harriet Jacobs (1867)[264]

Harriet Jacobs' life story is truly compelling. When asked why historian and biographer Jean Fagan Yellin chose to research and chronicle Jacobs' life, she stated the following:

> She [Jacobs] is the only woman I know who was held in slavery, who was a fugitive both in the South and the North, an antislavery activist who wrote, published her life story and then, during the Civil War, went south to work with the black refugees behind the Union lines and report what she saw to the northern press. [. . .] Jacobs managed to author her own book and to get it published before Emancipation [c. 1865], and then during the war she used her celebrity to publish reports from the South and gain support for her relief mission.[265]

Many are familiar with her now classic narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,

[264] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. See also a publicly accessible transcription of the letter in Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), "Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney (1867)," *Africans in America*, Part 4, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2925t.html.

[265] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, xv.

for its gripping portrayal of Jacobs' life in servitude, her experience as a fugitive slave in hiding for seven years in the crawl space above her grandmother's house, and her daring escape to freedom.[266] However, few consider her life beyond emancipation. Until recently, little had been written on the scope and breadth of her community activism, and more specifically, her philanthropic work. Yellin's biography of Jacobs, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, and her corresponding edited volumes of manuscripts, *The Jacobs Family Papers*, offer a clearer window into the life, times, and benevolence of Harriet Jacobs as a free woman.[267] This wealth of information on Jacobs' life opens new avenues of inquiry into her activism and philanthropic work. What is also clear is that her giving embodied the CCP framework through the moral logic of collective uplift and communal traditions of care and survival, revealing a philanthropic ethic rooted in testimony, protection, and collective survival.

Examining Jacobs' philanthropy through her writings is critical to understanding how she lived, and more specifically, why she gave back to others.[268] Jacobs was educated, socially and politically conscious, and she knew the power and value of her voice. She also cared deeply for her community, with a particular interest in supporting the elderly and children. Jacobs used her writings, including many personal letters to friends and generous Northern benefactors, to support her relief work in Alexandria, Savannah, and Washington, D.C.[269] Given her compassion for and interest in helping others, I contend that Jacobs was an activist and philanthropist who used her writings as a strategic, discursive tool to further the cause of racial

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[266] See Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

[267] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* and *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

[268] Yellin notes that Jacobs died sick and poor. Earlier in her career, Jacobs and her daughter, Louisa, "created schools, hospitals and institutions for the freed people," and Jacobs spent much of her time fundraising, even contributing proceeds from the sale of her narrative to support her relief work. However, Yellin notes that in her later years, Jacobs "exemplified the condition of her people in the last decade of the nineteenth century" and "became the object of the philanthropy of others." See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 212–13; 256–57.

[269] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 162–174.

uplift in the wake of the social and political upheaval that marked the latter half of the nineteenth century. Read through CCP, Jacobs' letter demonstrates how intimate testimony functions as "voluntary action for the public good," mobilizing material aid through moral appeal.[270]

Interestingly, Yellin mentions Harriet Jacobs' myriad accomplishments, including her "relief work" and outreach to Northern "sponsors" and "philanthropists" like Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney.[271] However, she stops short of calling Jacobs a philanthropist in her own right. This profile begins the process of articulating the ways in which Harriet Jacobs gave throughout her life, starting with an examination of her letter to Ednah D. L. Cheney on April 25, 1867.[272] What follows is a semi-annotated analysis of Jacobs' letter incorporating historical contexts based on Yellin's biography, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life,* and transcribed manuscripts from *The Jacobs Family Papers*.[273] Here, CCP makes legible what conventional philanthropy often overlooks: Jacobs' epistolary appeals operate as a strategic, culturally grounded philanthropic practice.

Special attention was given to analyzing how Jacobs acted strategically and philanthropically to raise awareness of the condition of free men and women in Edenton, North Carolina, and to cultivate support for her relief work. This is followed by a brief analysis of the

[270] See Payton and Moody, *Understanding Philanthropy*, 6–7.

[271] Ednah Dow Littledale Cheney (1824–1904) was a Boston philanthropist, writer, and abolitionist who served as secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (1867–1875), including as secretary of the Committee on Aid for Colored Regiments and the Teachers' Committee. Cheney was also vice president of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association and the New England Women's Club, as well as secretary of the New England Hospital for Women and Children (1862). She became acquainted with Harriet Jacobs through her relief work in Alexandria, Virginia, and Savannah, Georgia. See *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, xxii; see also "E. D. L. Cheney," *New England Hospital for Women and Children Records*, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, accessed July 6, 2026, https://findingaids.smith.edu/repositories/2/resources/955.

[272] See Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney, April 25, 1867, New England Hospital for Women and Children Records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00339, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton, Massachusetts. Unless otherwise indicated, references to Jacobs' 1867 letter to Ednah Dow Cheney follow the published transcription in *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

[273] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* and *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*.

significance of Jacobs' autobiographical writing to her activism and philanthropy.

> Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney Edenton [North Carolina] April 25th [1867][274]
>
> Dear Mrs Cheeny [sic]
>
> I felt I would like to write you a line from my old home. I am sitting under the old roof. twelve feet from the spot where I suffered all the crushing weight of slavery. thank God, the bitter cup is drained of its last dreg. There is no more need of hiding places to conceal slave Mothers. yet it was little to purchase the blessings of freedom. I could have worn this poor life out there to save my Children from the misery and degradation of Slavery. I had long thought I had no attachment to my old home. As I often sit here and think of those I loved of their hard struggle in life—their unfaltering love and devotion toward myself [. . .] [end page 1][275]

Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897) composed the above-noted letter to Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney (1824–1904) at a pivotal time in her life and in U.S. history. She was approximately 54 years old when she wrote this letter. She lived openly as a free woman for 15 years after her employer, Cornelia Grinnell Willis, purchased her freedom in 1852.[276] Jacobs survived the Civil War (1865), witnessed the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) and the Civil Rights Act (1866), and remained hopeful in the promise of Reconstruction (1865–1877), namely the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau and other mutual aid societies to support newly emancipated slaves and refugees.[277] She writes from within CCP's four cultural logics: the moral

[274] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. Excerpts from Jacobs's letter are reproduced here in block format following the published transcription, including original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. The preceding discussion and interpretive analysis draw on Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life* and *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*. The transcription has been verified against the original holograph: Harriet Jacobs, "Letter to Ednah Dow Cheney," April 25, 1867, Sophia Smith Collection (Smith College Special Collections), accessed July 6, 2026, https://findingaids.smith.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/143856.

[275] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. Unless otherwise indicated, editorial conventions follow Yellin's published transcription. Bracketed material identifies editorial insertions supplied for clarity; ellipses indicate omissions from reproduced excerpts; and *[sic]* is used sparingly to preserve significant features of the original text without silently correcting them. See *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

[276] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 117–22, 210–15. These sections cover Cornelia Grinnell Willis purchasing Jacobs's freedom in 1852 and her subsequent years living as a free woman.

[277] See Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14. While Jacobs' narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), concludes before the end of the Civil War, her postwar relief work during Reconstruction, including her engagement with the Freedmen's Bureau, is extensively documented by Yellin.

logic of collective uplift, cultural values rooted in shared histories, communal traditions of care and survival, and strategies of self-determination, framing her letter as collective advocacy.

Alone in her grandmother's home, Jacobs reflects on the "crushing weight of slavery" and thanks God that she and her children do not have to bear its "misery and segregation." In keeping with her philanthropic nature, her thoughts extend beyond herself to those she loved and to the community of free men and women struggling to subsist in Edenton. Jacobs' emotional state is understandable given her connection to Edenton and the challenging social and political climate that she encounters upon her return. She reports to Cheney on these conditions and the status of Edenton's free black citizens in the following pages of her letter:

> [. . .] and Children. I love to sit here and think of them. they have made the few sunny spots in that dark life sacred to me. I cannot tell you how I feel in this place. the change is so great I can hardly take it all in I was born here and amid all these new born blessings. the old dark cloud comes over me. and I find it hard to have faith in rebels. the past winter was very severe for this region of Country it caused much suffering— and the freedmen with but few exceptions were cheated out of their crop of cotton. their contract masters ship↑p↓ed it for them. and when they ask for a settlement. they are answered I am daily expecting the returns. these men have gone to work cheerfully. planted another crop without [end page 2]
>
> ***
>
> [. . .] the returns to live on until their present crop is made. Many of the large plantations of the once wealthy Planter. is worked under the control of Colored Men. the Owners let their Plantations to the freed men in prefference to the poor whites— They believe the Negro determined to make money. and they will get the largest portion of it. last years experience I think will be a proffitable lesson many will learn to act for themselves Negro suffrage is making a stir in this place. the rebels are striving to make these ↑people↓ feel they are their true friends. and they must not be led astray by the Yankees. the freedmen ask if Abraham Lincoln led them astray. that his friends is their friends his enemies their enemies. I have spent much of my time [end page 3].[278]

This rootedness in place activates the CCP tenets of memory work and intergenerational

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For a comprehensive overview of Jacobs' life during these years, readers should consult both Yellin's editorial introduction and the chronological timeline located at the back of the volume. See also Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*.

[278] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

continuity, grounding her philanthropic vision in ancestral presence. Additionally, Jacobs' detailed description of the community and her close witness to her surroundings enact the CCP's tenets of collective resource sharing and advocacy, using testimony to protect and uplift her community.

The racial inequity and oppression experienced by free blacks in Edenton were not an anomaly. Following the Civil War, the South and parts of the North saw the enactment of Black Codes and increased violence against newly freed blacks.[279] Jacobs notes that free colored men had inherited large plantations of once wealthy white planters, but they were being cheated out of compensation with false promises, thus rendering their socio-economic condition akin to slavery at the hands of whites. Jacobs expresses hope in the "stir" of Negro suffrage, but follows with accounts of the lamentations of free blacks questioning if Abraham Lincoln led them astray with his promise of freedom.[280] Through CCP's moral logic, Jacobs interprets these injustices not only as social conditions but as ethical mandates requiring organized response and collective action.

In Edenton, Jacobs finds that despite the initial hopes of Emancipation and the onset of Reconstruction, the condition of free blacks was all but equal or free. She follows with commentary on her relief efforts and hints at the need for assistance to educate displaced Black children:

> [. . .] on the Plantations distributing seed and trying to teach the women to make

[279] Black Codes were a series of repressive laws that limited the freedom of African Americans. These codes included the prohibition of interracial marriage, arbitrary demands for proof of employment, the enforcement of repressive labor contracts by whites upon Black farmers, and, more generally, the systematic denial of the civil rights and legal protections promised to freed people in the wake of emancipation. The Ku Klux Klan formed in Tennessee in 1866, in part in response to white citizens' fear of Black freedom and mobility and their determination to enforce Black Codes and maintain white supremacy. See Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, eds., *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242–43.

[280] Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) recognized voting rights for free propertied males, including Black men by default, but excluded *all* women and anyone deemed a "non-citizen." Black men who attempted to exercise their vote often faced extreme violence and intimidation. Jacobs' letter was written just before the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, but her reference to suffrage alludes to rumor of its passage. See Kelley and Lewis, *To Make Our World Anew*, 245–48.

> Yankee gardens. they plant everything to mature in the summer. like their corn and cotton fields. I have hunted up all the old people. done what I could for them. I love to work for these old people. many of them I have known from Childhood there is one School in Edenton well attended. on some of the Plantations there is from 15 to 25 Children that cannot attend School. the distance is so far. some of the freedmen are very anxious to establish Plantation schools. as soon as the more advanced Schools. can send out teachers. many of the freedmen are willing and will sustain their teachers. at ↑present↓ there is a great [end page 4] [281]

Here, through CCP's moral logic, Jacobs interprets these injustices not only as social conditions but as ethical mandates requiring organized response and collective action. Her words are deliberate and telling. Jacobs is undoubtedly aware of Mrs. Cheney's generosity, having called on her for assistance in the past, and their personal communication speaks to a long and sustained friendship that will continue until Jacobs' death in 1897.[282] This detailed account illustrates her strategic cultivation of support for her cause. Jacobs likely knew that Cheney was an active member of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS), serving on its teachers committee, whose mission was to provide educational and material support for the advancement of newly emancipated Black Americans.[283]

Maintaining communication with a generous and well‑connected private benefactor like Cheney was critical to Jacobs' work, and her mention of Edenton's freedmen's willingness to sustain these teachers suggests an indirect request for Cheney's support. In addition to this strategic appeal, her hands-on relief work illustrates the CCP tenets of mutual aid, knowledge transfer, and community-based capacity building. And her explicit naming of these pressing issues reflects a move toward institution-building, collective mobilization, and

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[281] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

[282] See *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:819–24.

[283] Founded in 1862 as the Boston Educational Commission for Freedmen, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS) provided teachers, educational resources, and material assistance to support the advancement of newly emancipated Black Americans during and after the Civil War. See Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black Americans: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001), 446–47.

early formations of translocal solidarity (i.e., cross-regional philanthropic networking).

Indeed, Jacobs was no stranger to fundraising and education reform. Yellin notes she had a long history of engaging in education‐related work, and she and her daughter, Louisa (a teacher), founded several relief and educational institutions—the most notable being the Jacobs School at Alexandria, VA, in 1864.[284] However, following the end of the Civil War and Emancipation, many white donors and anti‐slavery societies, in the U.S. and abroad, (assuming the cause of freedom had been won) disbanded and/or cut back their giving.[285] Jacobs, however, was not easily dissuaded.

In 1868, Jacobs traveled to Europe to petition the National Freedmen's Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland to fund her proposal to build a Freedmen's and Orphan Asylum in Savannah.[286] In a "last gasp of organized philanthropy," she also ran a petition in the British *Anti-Slavery Reporter* urging readers to make a "generous response."[287] The NFAU answered her call and voted to send "one hundred pounds sterling [. . .] for use in the benevolent objects of Harriet Jacobs, and especially in the erection of a proposed asylum in Savannah, Georgia, for the destitute colored widows and orphans."[288] Jacobs had accomplished her mission, but this would not be her last philanthropic effort. She continued to raise and allocate funds to support various causes throughout her life.

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[284] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 176–79. Yellin recounts how Harriet Jacobs and her daughter, Louisa, organized Northern philanthropic support to purchase and establish the Jacobs School in Alexandria, Virginia, securing Black ownership and governance of the institution. Their efforts echoed Maria W. Stewart's 1831 call to the "Daughters of Africa" to invest in Black education by building and sustaining schools that would cultivate learning, self-determination, and collective uplift. See also Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," in Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart*, 37.

[285] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 214–15.

[286] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 215–16.

[287] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 217.

[288] Sadly, plans for the Savannah Freedmen's and Orphan Asylum were placed on hold indefinitely following news of an outbreak of Klan violence and a "general unsettled state of affairs" in the South. See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 217.

In 1865, following news of Lincoln's promise of Emancipation (and in reference to her ongoing relief work) Jacobs stated, "if ever I craved more than one pair of hands & [sic] money it is now not for myself, my friend but to assist those that are so much worse than myself [. . .] a just God is settling the account."[289] Her reflections weave together her moral imagination with a philanthropic ethic grounded in justice, spiritual resilience, and communal protection. Further, Jacobs' philanthropic and religious ethos, as well as her desire for freedom and justice, are evident in the last page of her letter to Cheney. She reports on black church settlement and the strained racial dynamics created by slavery and the war:

> [. . .] revival in the Colored Churches the whites say the niggers sung and prayed until they got their freedom. and they are not satisfied. now they are singing and praying for judjment. the white members of the Baptist Church invited the colored members to their Church. to help them sing and pray. I assure you they have done it with a will. I never saw such a state of excitment. the Churches have been open night and day. these people have time to think of their souls. now they are not compeled to think for the Negro. My love to Miss Daisy. I send her some Jassamine blossoms tell her they bear the fragrance of freedom.
>
> Yours Truly,
>
> H Jacobs
> [end page 5][290]

Just two years after emancipation, we can see, through Jacobs' detailed account, the real conditions of free blacks. Her personal struggle with the memory of her experience in slavery is also evident. Both provide a sobering context in which to examine the impact of slavery, racism, and war in the U.S. during the late nineteenth century. Deeper than that, however, Jacobs' personal appeal to Cheney offers a glimpse into her philanthropic mindset, expressed through her persistent desire to give back and help ameliorate the hardships endured by her people.

Jacobs' decision to enclose a Jasmine blossom for Cheney's daughter, Margaret [Miss

[289] Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*, 162.
[290] Jacobs to Cheney, April 25, 1867, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 2:711–14.

Daisy], is fitting. I believe it represents the essence of her personhood and symbolizes the freedom she has worked so hard to secure. Through this brief analysis of Harriet Jacobs' letter to Ednah Dow Cheney, we can see her sense of self in relation to her social condition. Her holograph, as a whole, illustrates the CCP's tenets of creative and spiritual praxis and cultural stewardship, culminating in the jasmine blossoms as a symbolic offering of freedom.

Ultimately, Jacobs' decision to publish her narrative came at a time when formerly enslaved Blacks (particularly women) were reluctant to share their stories. However, her activism and philanthropy lie in her willingness to do so while giving back to further the cause of freedom and racial uplift. Jacobs' letter thus stands as a bridge between Stewart's moral exhortation and Terrell's institutional activism, linking generations through CCP's enduring philanthropic inheritance.

Making the Connection: Jacobs to Terrell/NACW

Harriet Jacobs' 1867 letter to Ednah Dow Cheney stands as a testament to the power of intimate narrative as a form of philanthropic intervention. Through her witness of suffering and survival in Edenton, she transforms personal memory into moral persuasion, mobilizing Northern resources for the collective good. Her appeals for support, her detailed account of freedpeople's needs, and her symbolic offering of jasmine blossoms together perform a deeply relational practice of CCP—one grounded in care, memory, education, and the sacred work of sustaining Black life after catastrophe. In Jacobs' hands, the letter becomes an instrument of testimony-driven relief, extending Stewart's nineteenth-century moral exhortation into a postwar strategy of resource gathering, communal advocacy, and intergenerational protection. Her epistolary philanthropy thus marks a pivotal point in this genealogy: a shift from public oratory to intimate correspondence, from exhortation to logistical action, and from envisioning freedom

to administering care within it.

Defining Black Women's Early Philanthropic Rhetoric and Action: Mary Church Terrell and National Association of Colored Women (NACW)

Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) was an educator, orator, suffragist, civil rights activist, and one of the most influential figures in the Black women's club movement. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, to formerly enslaved parents who became successful business owners, Terrell emerged from an increasingly visible Black middle class whose educational attainment, civic engagement, and financial mobility reshaped national debates over race, gender, and American democracy.[291] A graduate of Oberlin College—earning both a B.A. in 1884 and M.A. in 1888 (as one of the first Black women to do so)—she studied languages in Europe, becoming fluent in French, German, and Italian, and returned to the United States prepared to enter public life as a teacher, lecturer, organizer, and advocate.[292]

Terrell's rise to national prominence followed a defamatory public attack on Black womanhood that disparaged Black women's character and intellect while denigrating the civil rights and anti-lynching advocacy of leaders such as Ida B. Wells.[293] In response, Black clubwomen across the country united to defend themselves and establish a national platform for race and gender uplift.[294] Their efforts culminated in the founding of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), and Terrell was elected its first president, becoming the face of a coordinated national movement of Black women's organized philanthropy, mutual aid, and

[291] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 19–26 and Alison M. Parker, *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 1–18 and 27.
[292] See Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 1–4.

[293] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 84–89; see also Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 60–61.

[294] See also Floris Barnett Cash, *African American Women and Social Action: The Clubwomen and Volunteerism from Jim Crow to the New Deal, 1896–1936* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 42.

political action.[295]

Under Terrell's leadership, the NACW operationalized the motto "Lifting as We Climb," transforming Black women's longstanding traditions of community care into a national program of philanthropic institution-building.[296] Members of the NACW raised funds to preserve historic landmarks, built settlement houses and training schools, organized reform homes for girls, and established community-centered networks of care and advocacy for widows, orphans, migrants, and the urban poor.[297] Through these efforts, Terrell and the NACW formalized what Maria Stewart had articulated rhetorically in 1831 and what Harriet Jacobs enacted through her strategic testimony and postwar relief work: a collective philanthropic vision rooted in moral responsibility, racial uplift, and strategic action for the public good.

Across her life, Terrell combined club leadership with broader activism. She became the first Black woman appointed to the District of Columbia's public school board (serving from 1895 to 1906); delivered addresses in multiple languages at the 1904 International Congress of Women in Berlin; advocated fiercely for women's suffrage; helped found the NAACP in 1909; and in her later years became a central figure in desegregation efforts in Washington, D.C., including the litigation and economic boycotts that helped end segregated dining in the nation's capital.[298] The creation of the "Mary Church Terrell Fund to End Segregation in the Nation's Capital" further exemplifies her philanthropic leadership, merging political activism with

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[295] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 89; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 61–65. See also Beverly T. Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (1982): 20–33.

[296] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 90–98; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 64–69. See also Elizabeth Lindsay Davis, *Lifting as They Climb* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996).

[297] See Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women," and Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 56–77.

[298] Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 49–51, 148, 269–88.

resource mobilization to support civil rights causes well into the twentieth century.[299]

Together, Terrell and the NACW represent the institutional flowering of Black women's philanthropic traditions at the turn of the century—a transition from local, intimate practices of mutual care to large-scale, organizational strategy and public advocacy. Their work marks a pivotal moment in this genealogy: the emergence of a national, Black women–led philanthropic infrastructure designed to safeguard Black life, preserve cultural memory, and expand the possibilities for racial and gender justice.

CCP in Action: Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)

Mary Church Terrell and the NACW embody the institutional expression of the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets articulated in the CCP framework. Their work builds on the moral and rhetorical foundations laid by Maria Stewart and the testimonial care strategies enacted by Harriet Jacobs, transforming them into a sustained, nationwide structure of Black women's giving, organizing, and leadership.[300] Terrell's leadership of the NACW is best understood not only as political activism or club movement organizing, but as a strategic model of CCP in action.

The moral logic of collective uplift is visible in the NACW's motto, "Lifting as We Climb," which framed philanthropy as a relational practice through which Black women extended education, protection, and community-building outward from their own advancement. Terrell emphasized that those with educational or social advantage bore a moral responsibility to

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[299] See "The Mary Church Terrell Fund to End Segregation in the Nation's Capital" (1954), Box 102–12, Folder 241, *Mary Church Terrell Papers*, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC, Manuscripts Division Finding Aids, "TERRELL, Mary Church," accessed July 27, 2026, https://dh.howard.edu/finaid_manu/191/.

Established around 1953, this $50,000 fund supported the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws in legal and public campaigns to desegregate Washington, DC, public spaces. See also *Mary Church Terrell Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, accessed June 26, 2026, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009311.

[300] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 84.

those "less favored," a sentiment she expressed repeatedly in speeches and presidential messages.[301] This idea echoes Stewart's earlier insistence that racial progress is inseparable from communal obligation.

The cultural values logic, rooted in shared histories and ancestral traditions, animated the NACW's emphasis on dignity, moral character, and the elevation of Black womanhood. In direct response to a public attack on Black women's virtue and intelligence, clubwomen reclaimed narrative authority through public addresses, annual reports, and printed proceedings.[302] Their philanthropic labor also included cultural stewardship, exemplified by early efforts to preserve Frederick Douglass' home, Cedar Hill, discussed later in this profile.[303]

The NACW also drew from the communal traditions logic that shaped Black women's survival practices in extended family networks and church-based communities.[304] Clubwomen created reciprocal systems of support through mothers' clubs, training schools, settlement homes, and reform institutions that extended longstanding community care networks.[305] Terrell's maternal rhetoric and emphasis on home and education reflect these continuities between domestic care traditions and public-facing philanthropic work.[306]

The logic of self-determination is evident in NACW campaigns against lynching, segregation, and disenfranchisement. Terrell's advocacy for suffrage, her participation in international women's congresses, and her later civil rights activism in Washington, D.C. demonstrate how Black women used philanthropic labor (e.g., fundraising, mobilization, and

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[301] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 93–95.

[302] Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 60–61. See also Davis, *Lifting as They Climb*.

[303] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 134–45; see also Parker, *Unceasing Militant,* 74–78.

[304] See Niara Sudarkasa, *The Strength of Our Mothers: African and African American Women and Families* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1996).

[305] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71–93.

[306] See Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 68–69; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 95.

institution-building) as forms of resistance and agency. In CCP terms, this reflects philanthropy as a strategy for dignity, autonomy, and justice.

These cultural logics become visible through the NACW's philanthropic tenets. The organization exemplified leadership and institution building through the creation of clubs, settlement houses, and national networks (Tenet 6). Its fundraising for Cedar Hill and its national dues system represent collective resource sharing (Tenet 3). Care for widows, orphans, travelers, and migrants demonstrates mutual aid and reciprocal care (Tenet 4). The preservation of Frederick Douglass' home and the publication of NACW minutes and reports reveal commitments to cultural stewardship, narrative testimony, and memory work (Tenets 1 and 2). The national federation itself models translocal solidarity (Tenet 9), while its mission to prepare younger generations reflects intergenerational knowledge transfer (Tenet 5).

Together, Terrell and the NACW express CCP's full architecture. Their work reveals how Black women used education, advocacy, cultural production, and organizational power to respond to the political, social, and moral crises of their era. Their philanthropic model, rooted in collective responsibility and cultural heritage, created a durable infrastructure for racial justice that resonates in the contemporary moment. To fully appreciate how these cultural logics and philanthropic tenets emerged and took shape in practice, they must first be situated within the historical conditions that shaped Terrell's leadership and the emergence of the NACW.

Locating Terrell and NACW within Historical and Cultural Context

Mary Church Terrell and the NACW emerged from one of the most turbulent and defining periods in African American history. The final decades of the nineteenth century saw the collapse of Reconstruction, the intensification of Jim Crow, and widespread racial and sexual

violence targeting Black communities.[307] Black women experienced these conditions in distinct ways. They faced economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and the persistent assault of racist narratives that denied their moral integrity, intelligence, and womanhood.[308] These structural and cultural forces formed the landscape in which Terrell and her contemporaries lived, organized, and gave. Their philanthropic action cannot be understood apart from this ecology of racial violence, institutional abandonment, and collective resilience.

Scholars such as Elsa Barkley Brown have demonstrated that Black women's political and communal labor has long been obscured in mainstream history. Brown's work, including "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St. Luke" and "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," shows that African American women's organizing traditions were rooted in relational worldviews, communal responsibility, and a politics of interconnectedness that shaped both public and private life.[309] These cultural logics of community responsibility, deeply embedded in African American life, informed the emergence of the clubwomen's movement in the late nineteenth century and shaped how Black women understood their public duties, responded to racialized attacks, and built institutions to protect and uplift their communities.

Black women's philanthropic traditions were also grounded in African-derived extended kinship systems and mutual aid practices that had persisted across generations.[310] These

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[307] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71–93.

[308] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible," 71–93; and Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 42–51.

[309] Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St. Luke," *Signs* 14, no. 3 (1989): 610–33; "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (1994): 107–46.

[310] I first began to understand kinship, extended family, African-derived traditions, and culturally embedded systems of support through Dr. Tony Whitehead's Cultural Systems Paradigm (CSP), which I encountered while taking his course, African American Family Traditions, at the University of Maryland. CSP offered an early foundation for recognizing how African American cultural systems shape community responsibility and care. Although CCP

traditions emphasized reciprocity, shared moral values, and community care. They provided social and cultural infrastructure for survival under slavery and Reconstruction and continued to anchor Black family and community life into the post-Civil War period. Churches served as gathering sites, educational hubs, political forums, and organizational centers where Black women developed the skills that would become foundational to NACW leadership. These included fundraising, advocacy, educational leadership, resource coordination, and collective care.[311] These communal practices formed the cultural bedrock of Terrell's philanthropic worldview.

Within this broader landscape, the attack by Missouri Free Press Association president John W. Jacks became a catalytic moment. On March 19, 1893, Jacks wrote to Florence Balgarnie, secretary of the Anti-Lynching Society of England, in response to her appeal to American journalists to use their public influence to condemn lynching and racial violence.[312] Jacks responded instead with a defamatory letter asserting that the women of the Negro race were immoral and intellectually inferior, and that anti-lynching campaigns should not be supported.[313] Clubwomen in Washington, D.C., Boston, and across the Mid-Atlantic understood immediately that this was not simply a personal insult. It was a political attempt to undermine Black women's public agency and the legitimacy of their communities' civil rights advocacy. The circulation of his letter prompted swift and coordinated organizing that culminated in the 1895 Boston conference and the 1896 merger of the National Federation of Afro-American

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emerges from my own research, CSP provided important grounding for interpreting the cultural logics shaping Black women's giving in this study. See also Sudarkasa, *The Strength of Our Mothers*.

[311] See Cash, *African American Women and Social Action*.

[312] See Jno. W. Jacks to Florence Balgarnie, March 19, 1893, Mary Church Terrell Papers, MS 62-3874, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC; digitized image available via *Consider the Source New York*, accessed August 25, 2026 https://considerthesourceny.org/document/letter-jno-w-jacks-president-missouri-free-press-association-florence-balgarnie.

[313] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 84–89; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 60–61.

Women and the National League of Colored Women. The newly formed NACW elected Mary Church Terrell as its first president.[314]

Viewed through the CCP framework, these dynamics reveal the cultural logics underpinning the NACW's formation. The moral logic of collective uplift emerged as a direct response to assaults on Black dignity and safety. The cultural values logic helps explain why clubwomen placed such weight on education, home life, moral respectability, and cultural preservation. The communal traditions logic clarifies their development of mothers' clubs, day nurseries, kindergartens, and relief systems for widows and orphans, all rooted in longstanding practices of mutual support. The self-determination logic becomes visible in their anti-lynching campaigns, suffrage organizing, and their refusal to relinquish their right to speak publicly and act collectively for racial justice.

In this context, Terrell and the NACW's philanthropic labor emerges as both necessary and transformative. Their institutions, advocacy, and cultural work reveal a philanthropic vision rooted not in discretionary wealth but in cultural traditions of responsibility, relational care, and strategic resistance. The NACW built a national structure that formalized these practices and shaped Black women's civic and philanthropic life for generations.

Enter Mary Church Terrell and NACW: From Moral Conviction to Institutionalized Philanthropic Action

Mary Church Terrell entered the national stage with a steady voice, a formal yet accessible style of address, and a profound sense of responsibility for the condition of Black women and their communities. Her first presidential address to the NACW reflects the clarity of her purpose. Terrell framed the organization not as a social club or a polite society gathering but as a moral and civic undertaking rooted in shared obligation, inherited struggle, and a collective

[314] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 84–89; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 61–65.

vision for the race. In her speeches, she insisted that Black women had both the right and the responsibility to speak publicly, to act collectively, and to define their own image in the face of widespread attacks and racial distortion.[315]

Her writing from this period reveals a leader who understood the fragility of Black life in the post-Reconstruction era and the urgent need for organized protection and uplift. She described the NACW as an institution that must reform, elevate, and protect the race, always attentive to the challenges facing Black women who had been denied the protections, privileges, and assumptions granted to white womanhood. Her rhetoric was deliberate and carefully crafted. It was also deeply grounded in lived experience. She spoke of the injustices that Black women endured and of the necessity of joining hands across class, region, and denomination to confront them.[316]

The weeks and months surrounding the NACW's formation illustrate how Terrell and her contemporaries transformed their moral convictions and collective outrage into institutionalized philanthropic action. Having read John W. Jacks' defamatory letter, which circulated widely among clubwomen, Terrell recognized the urgency of building a national organization capable of defending Black women's dignity and coordinating efforts across multiple states.[317] Archival correspondence reveals a deep sense of urgency. Letters exchanged between leaders in Boston, Washington, D.C., and the Mid-Atlantic describe not only anger but determination, with repeated calls for unity and coordinated leadership. They wrote of the "necessity of immediate action," the imperative to "safeguard the race," and the belief that Black women were the most qualified to

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[315] See Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 65–70.

[316] See "What the Colored Women Have Done in Clubs and Hope to Do" (9:1–15), *Mary Church Terrell Papers*, Box 102-3, Folder 126, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, accessed June 26, 2026, https://dh.howard.edu/finaid_manu/191/.

[317] Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*, 84–89; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*, 61–65.

articulate their own experiences and lead their own institutions.[318]

One of the clearest examples of the NACW's philanthropic capacity is the campaign to preserve Frederick Douglass' home at Cedar Hill in the Anacostia suburb of Washington, D.C. Although the mortgage was ultimately retired in 1918 under the leadership of NACW president Mary B. Talbert, the organizational infrastructure that made such a national effort possible drew from the foundational work established during Mary Church Terrell's presidency.[319] Talbert mobilized clubwomen across the country, calling on "every clubwoman and child" to contribute what they could, and the NACW Douglass Home Committee, which included Maggie L. Walker and Nannie Helen Burroughs, coordinated the campaign.[320] Madam C. J. Walker was among the notable donors and was invited to participate in the ceremonial burning of the mortgage papers after the debt was paid in full.[321] The campaign affirmed the NACW's conviction that preserving Black historical memory was itself a philanthropic act rooted in collective responsibility and shared purpose.

Terrell's early presidency, therefore, brought together not only her training, education, and public speaking ability but also the deep communal traditions of Black women's mutual aid and shared struggle. Her first reports to the NACW reflect the scale of this vision. She detailed the formation of mothers' clubs, kindergartens, temperance societies, and settlement homes. She emphasized literacy, home training, and moral instruction as essential tools for securing

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[318] See Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women," 20–33; see also Randolph Boehm, *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1895–1992*, Black Studies Research Sources, in cooperation with Research Collections in Women's Studies (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1994), https://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/1555_recsnatlassoccolwmsclubpt1.pdf.

[319] For the foundational primary account detailing how the NACW took on the financial burden and rescue of the Douglass estate, see Davis, *Lifting as They Climb*, 28–34. For Mary Church Terrell's personal administrative leadership as a trustee overseeing the home's initial preservation, see Parker, *Unceasing Militant,* 74–78.

[320] Giddings, When and Where I Enter, 134–35.

[321] See National Park Service, "The Saviors of Cedar Hill." *Frederick Douglass National Historic Site,* accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/the-saviors-of-cedar-hill.htm; and Davis, *Lifting as They Climb*, 28–34; and Parker, *Unceasing Militant,* 74–78.

autonomy and future advancement.[322] These activities were not peripheral to racial progress; they were its foundation.

This approach reflects the CCP framework's identification of cultural logics of uplift, cultural values, communal traditions, and self-determination. Terrell understood that philanthropy included presence, testimony, education, and the organization of collective resources. Her annual speeches referenced the sacrifices of earlier generations and the moral imperative of "Lifting as We Climb," which became the NACW's enduring motto. She treated the organization's projects not as charity but as racial advocacy grounded in shared history and future possibility.

Archival notes from Terrell's correspondence reveal her attention to the specific needs of young women migrating to cities alone, often "friendless and exposed," seeking work in environments shaped by exploitation and racial hostility. She urged clubwomen to develop programs that would meet these young women where they were, offering guidance, training, and protection.[323] This call reflects CCP's emphasis on relational care and the collective obligation to act when community members are vulnerable. It also demonstrates how Terrell's political and philanthropic responsibilities were inseparable.

Together, these close readings of Terrell's speeches, writings, and early NACW activities reveal not only her leadership but the broader ideological and cultural landscape shaping Black women's organized philanthropy. Her presidential words, her correspondence, and the organizational actions she helped initiate show a leader who believed deeply in the power of structured, collective action to transform the conditions of Black life. She entered the NACW as an advocate, educator, and strategist whose vision continues to shape how we understand Black

[322] Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901," 20–33.

[323] Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901," 20–33.

women's leadership and philanthropic traditions today.

A Genealogy of Black Women's Philanthropic Leadership

Across the nineteenth century, Maria W. Stewart, Harriet Jacobs, and Mary Church Terrell, together with the NACW, articulated a coherent tradition of Black women's philanthropy that spans rhetorical, intimate, and institutional forms of giving. Stewart's public addresses laid an early foundation for understanding Black women's moral authority, political voice, and commitment to communal uplift. Her insistence that Black women cultivate intellect and act collectively to uplift the race established an early philanthropic logic rooted in social responsibility and spiritual obligation.[324] Jacobs' testimony extended this tradition by grounding philanthropic action in the intimate, relational work of care, protection, and survival. Her writing and postwar relief efforts reflected a practice of giving, shaped by personal experience, moral clarity, and a deep commitment to safeguarding the vulnerable.[325] Terrell and the NACW built upon these foundations by transforming Black women's longstanding practices of care, education, and advocacy into national organizational structures. Their work made philanthropy visible as an institution-building, cultural-preservation, and coordinated political action that reflected the cultural logics and tenets at the core of the CCP framework.

Considered together, these profiles demonstrate that Black women's philanthropic traditions have always been adaptive, relational, and grounded in cultural memory. Stewart contributed a rhetorical and moral language that made Black women's claims to public life possible. Jacobs showed how testimony, mothering work, and protective care function as forms of giving that challenge systems of violence. Terrell and the NACW built national infrastructures that codified these commitments, extending them across generations and regions. Each woman,

[324] See Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; see also Shirley Wilson Logan, ed., *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African American Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995).

[325] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*; see also Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*.

in her own moment, translated cultural values, communal traditions, and self-determination into philanthropic practice, offering a genealogy of Black women's giving that challenges narrow definitions of philanthropy as merely financial or institutional. Instead, these profiles reveal a tradition sustained by responsibility, moral witness, skillful leadership, and collective mobilization. As a whole, they form the historical foundation for understanding CCP as a culturally grounded model of Black women's philanthropy.

When I first encountered Mary Church Terrell's handwriting in the Moorland–Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, I felt an immediate and almost electric recognition. It was the same feeling I had when I first read Harriet Jacobs' letter at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, and when Stewart's 1831 exhortations reached out across time and refused to let me go. Something in Terrell's papers stirred the same impulse in me as a burgeoning scholar-practitioner and a Black woman raised amongst some of the very forms of giving that this dissertation tries to name. Her language, careful, deliberate, and steeped in care and conviction, revealed philanthropy in a way that felt both familiar and newly visible. It jumped off the page and insisted on being seen. And in that moment, sitting with her letters and the traces of her philanthropic work, I understood more clearly why she belonged in this genealogy. The archive didn't simply confirm my intuition. It clarified it. It made the through-line undeniable, and it made the work of defining CCP feel not only intellectually necessary, but personally, historically, and spiritually anchored.

This Reflexive Pause is a deliberate moment of Black feminist reflection for me—a small interlude to breathe, to take in the emotional and spiritual weight of encountering these archival materials, and to situate myself in relation to the women whose words and lives shape this genealogy. Before moving forward, I pause to honor the importance of looking back to see more

clearly the path ahead.

The philanthropic traditions embodied by Stewart, Jacobs, and Terrell extend into the twenty-first century through the work of contemporary leaders who reinterpret and expand these cultural logics for a global, digitally connected world. Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, founder of Black Philanthropy Month, The WISE Fund, and several diasporic philanthropic initiatives, represents a modern inheritor of this lineage. Her leadership reflects the same commitments to collective uplift, cultural stewardship, and strategic advocacy that animated the work of her nineteenth-century predecessors. Copeland operates within a broader and more complex philanthropic ecosystem, yet her work continues the through-line of Black women's giving as relational, creative, community-rooted, and institutionally impactful. Chapter 5 turns to her story to illustrate how CCP functions in contemporary contexts and how the historical foundations traced in this chapter continue to shape the possibilities and practices of Black women's philanthropy today.

Chapter 5: "Love in Action": Contemporary Black Women and the Making of New Narratives of Philanthropy

The philanthropic work of Black women occupies a long and complex historical trajectory, shaped by traditions of care, cultural labor, creativity, spiritual grounding, and communal responsibility that extend across generations. These practices have been essential to Black survival and flourishing, emerging from moral and cultural logics that far exceed formal definitions of philanthropy. The profiles presented in earlier chapters—Maria W. Stewart, Harriet Jacobs, Mary Church Terrell, and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)—illustrate a genealogy of Black women who exercised agency, leadership, and cultural power under profound social constraints. Each built and sustained forms of giving that center communal well-being, narrative testimony, institution-building, and what this study calls Community Cultural Philanthropy (CCP). Their commitments laid the historical foundation for contemporary expressions of Black women's giving, memory work, and cultural stewardship.

Alice Walker's seminal essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" provides an essential epistemological frame for this chapter. Walker writes, "This is not the end of the story, for all the young women—our mothers, our grandmothers, ourselves [. . .]."[326] Her framing positions Black women's creativity, cultural imagination, and intergenerational resilience as ongoing contributions that resonate beyond the limitations of the archive. Walker's invocation of ancestral creativity names a lineage that remains unfinished and continually unfolding. This Womanist orientation foregrounds spirituality, community, and creative survival as central to understanding how Black women have long practiced philanthropy—often without the title, but always with intention, purpose, and cultural depth.

[326] See Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

Building on Walker, this chapter takes seriously the need to recover, interpret, and name the forms of generosity, cultural labor, narrative expression, and communal knowledge that traditional philanthropic frameworks have often obscured. The CCP framework grounds this work by identifying the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets that have sustained Black women's giving across time. These include four (4) cultural logics: Moral Logic of Collective Uplift, Cultural Values Rooted in Shared Histories, Communal Traditions of Care and Survival, and Strategies of Self-Determination; and nine (9) philanthropic tenets: Cultural Stewardship, Narrative Testimony and Memory Work, Collective Resource Sharing, Mutual Aid and Reciprocal Care, Intergenerational Knowledge and Wealth Transfer, Leadership and Institution Building, Resistance and Advocacy, Creative and Spiritual Praxis, and Translocal and Transnational Solidarity.[327] CCP as a whole provides an interpretive vocabulary for reading these practices as a coherent tradition, illuminating the continuities that link the historical profiles examined earlier to the present.

This chapter extends that genealogical arc into the contemporary moment of Black women's philanthropic leadership. Today, Black women are naming themselves as philanthropists, organizing across digital platforms, elevating diasporic connections, and challenging longstanding erasures in mainstream philanthropic narratives. Their work is increasingly intersectional, global, and publicly visible, revealing how historical practices of giving have evolved in response to new challenges, new technologies, and new global realities.[328]

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[327] See Chapter 3, Table 3.1, "CCP Logic and Tenet Alignment Across Philanthropic Profiles," for an overview of the alignment of CCP's cultural logics and philanthropic tenets across the four profiles, including Copeland. See also Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital?"; Reagon, "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers"; and Shirley Wilson Logan, *"We Are Coming": The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).

[328] See Anna Bean, "Exclusive Interview with Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland, Founder of Black Philanthropy Month," *Givebutter*, July 31, 2024, accessed June 26, 2026, https://givebutter.com/blog/interview-with-dr-copeland-bpm-founder; see also Candice Georgiadis, "Female Disruptors: How Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland Aims to Shake Up Philanthropy Among the Black Diaspora," *Authority Magazine* (Medium), August 21, 2020, accessed June 19, 2026,

The proliferation of environmental justice movements, community-centered funding models, narrative and cultural production, and Black digital mutual aid demonstrates that CCP not only persists but continues to adapt as a twenty-first century praxis.

Against this backdrop, this chapter introduces Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D., whose life and work exemplify the contemporary expression of this long philanthropic lineage. As a cultural anthropologist, philanthropic leader, artist, consultant, and global advocate, Copeland embodies the moral, cultural, and communal logics that have defined Black women's giving across generations. Her work offers a vital portal into the contemporary manifestations of CCP, demonstrating how Black women today sustain, innovate, and expand traditions of cultural stewardship, environmental care, diasporic collaboration, and narrative testimony.

Accordingly, this chapter unfolds in four movements. First, it offers a concise synthesis of the genealogical arc developed in earlier chapters, situating Copeland within this lineage. Second, it turns to the contemporary landscape of Black women's giving, identifying the social, cultural, and political conditions that shape present-day philanthropic practice. Third, it introduces Copeland through a biographical portrait and ethnographic vignette drawn from our interview. Finally, the chapter analyzes Copeland's philanthropic praxis through the logics and tenets of CCP, illustrating how her work extends and transforms the historical traditions identified throughout this study. Together, these sections highlight how Copeland represents both a continuation and a new horizon for Black women's philanthropy, and how CCP offers a deeply cultural, historically grounded, and future-oriented lens for understanding the evolving contours of Black women's giving.

Tracing the Arc from Past to Present: Stewart to Copeland

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https://medium.com/authority-magazine/female-disruptors-how-dr-jackie-bouvier-copeland-aims-to-shake-up-philanthropy-among-the-black-dia-12a267f8741.

Across nearly two centuries, Black women have shaped a distinctive philanthropic tradition grounded in creativity, communal care, cultural stewardship, and justice-centered leadership. This genealogy begins in the early nineteenth century with Maria W. Stewart (1831–1833), whose published lectures offered an early articulation of Black women's communal responsibility and diasporic moral imagination. Stewart's call to the "Daughters of Africa" framed education, self-determination, and collective uplift as spiritual and civic imperatives.[329] Three decades later, Harriet Jacobs (1867) answered that call through testimonial praxis, transforming her personal narrative into a communal resource that secured care, safety, and material support for Black families during and after enslavement.[330] Together, Stewart and Jacobs established a philanthropic grammar rooted in moral logic, narrative authority, communal protection, and the belief that Black women's voices and lived experience carry political and cultural power.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this call was taken up and expanded through the organized labors of Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW, founded in 1896).[331] Terrell and her contemporaries formalized Black women's longstanding practices of mutual aid and community leadership into a federated national movement committed to "Lifting as We Climb."[332] Their institution-building, social service networks, and civic leadership extended Stewart's vision and Jacobs' testimony into structured systems of care that linked racial advancement, gender justice, and cultural uplift. This institution-based era reveals how Black women translated everyday practices of giving into

[329] See Stewart, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build;" see also Stewart, *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*.

[330] See Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: A Life*.

[331] See Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896–1901"; Parker, *Unceasing Militant*; see also Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*.

[332] See Davis, *Lifting as They Climb*.

organizational, educational, and political infrastructures that shaped Black communal life well into the twentieth century.

Collectively, these figures create a call-and-response tradition in which each generation builds on, revises, and amplifies the cultural logics of the previous generation. Stewart's diasporic exhortations resonate in Jacobs' narrative care work; Jacobs' testimonial strategies echo through Terrell's campaigns for racial uplift and the NACW's national networks; and all three embody the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets of CCP.[333] This genealogy reveals Black women's giving as a coherent cultural inheritance, rooted in intergenerational exchange, shaped by historical contingency, sustained through creativity, spirituality, and community uplift, providing the historical foundation for examining its contemporary expression through Copeland.

In the twenty-first century, Black women continue this lineage while responding to new social, political, and technological conditions. Contemporary philanthropy is marked by digital organizing, environmental and gender justice movements, transnational partnerships, and cultural production that centers Black life, memory, and futurity.[334] These practices expand and adapt the cultural logics established by earlier generations, demonstrating both continuity and innovation. Against this backdrop, the chapter now turns to Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D., whose philanthropic worldview and creative praxis synthesize and extend these longstanding traditions. Copeland emerges as a contemporary expression of this genealogy, answering the calls of Stewart, Jacobs, and Terrell in a global, digitally connected, and environmentally precarious age.

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[333] See Chapter 3, Table 3.1, "CCP Logic and Tenet Alignment Across Philanthropic Profiles."

[334] See Ndana Bofu-Tawamba, Ruby Bright, Stephanie Clohesy, Christine Grumm, Musimbi Kanyoro, Helen LaKelly Hunt, Ana Oliveira, Laura Risimini, Jane Sloane, and Jessica Tomlin, *The Uprising of Women in Philanthropy* (Routledge, 2025).

Enter Jacqueline “Jackie” Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D. (1962–present)

Jacqueline “Jackie” Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D., enters this contemporary moment not as an endpoint, but as the living horizon of the long genealogy traced throughout this dissertation. Her life and work represent the point at which nearly two centuries of Black women’s philanthropic thought converge, refract, and transform into new forms of global, digital, cultural, and diasporic praxis. She stands as a figure who both inherits and extends the moral imagination articulated by Maria W. Stewart in the 1830s, the testimonial and care-based activism embodied by Harriet Jacobs during the mid-nineteenth century, and the institutional, collective leadership advanced by Mary Church Terrell and the NACW at the turn of the twentieth century. This section introduces Copeland through a combined biographical and ethnographic vignette, grounding her contemporary leadership in the cultural, intellectual, and communal traditions that shape her philanthropic worldview. Through this portrait, we see how her lived experience and philanthropic vision echo and expand the cultural logics that define CCP.

Copeland was born in Philadelphia, where she grew up within a community shaped by strong intergenerational networks and the relational care practices that define Black communal life.[335] She often describes her upbringing as rooted in the presence of extended kinship, other-mothering, and neighboring women who shared responsibility for children, households, spiritual grounding, and community well-being.[336] These early experiences introduced her to philanthropy not as formal giving but as an ethic of responsibility, mutual support, and collective survival. Her understanding of generosity emerged from witnessing the daily acts of care, creativity, and resourcefulness that sustained her community, a set of practices that aligns with

[335] Bean, “Exclusive Interview with Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland, Founder of Black Philanthropy Month;” see also The WISE Fund, “About The WISE Fund,” accessed June 26, 2026, https://thewisefund.org.

[336] See The HistoryMakers, “Jacqueline Copeland Biography.”

the cultural and communal logics outlined in the CCP framework. Scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Bernice Johnson Reagon have long described these forms of care as rooted in Black women's traditions of other-mothering, cultural work, and community stewardship, practices that link cultural production and relational caregiving to political responsibility and collective empowerment.[337] Copeland's early life mirrors these longstanding traditions.

Copeland's intellectual formation took shape through a rigorous academic trajectory. She earned two undergraduate degrees from Georgetown University, including formal study in African Studies, followed by two master's degrees and a doctorate in cultural anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania.[338] She later completed additional training in social finance at Oxford University and corporate board governance at Santa Clara University. Her interdisciplinary grounding in anthropology, urban planning, cultural studies, and global diasporic analysis provided the methodological and theoretical tools that would shape her philanthropic worldview and leadership style.

Across her career, Copeland has held influential positions in nonprofit, philanthropic, corporate, and academic settings. She served in leadership roles with organizations including The Philadelphia Foundation, Twin Cities RISE, the African Women's Development Fund USA, the Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology, and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. She also founded and led multiple social impact initiatives focused on community investment, gender equity, environmental justice, and global philanthropy.[339] In addition to her long career as a foundation and corporate executive, she is an experienced consultant who has provided

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[337] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*; Reagon, "African Diaspora Women: The Making of Cultural Workers"; see also Patricia Hill Collins, "Black Women and Motherhood," in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal through Politics, Home, and the Body*, ed. Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 149–59.
[338] See The HistoryMakers, "Jacqueline Copeland Biography."

[339] See Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland, "Bouvier.world," accessed June 26, 2026, https://bouvier.world; see also The WISE Fund, "About the WISE Fund," accessed June 26, 2026, https://thewisefund.org.

strategic guidance to philanthropic institutions, corporations, and international organizations on funding equity, cross-cultural leadership, and systemic change.[340]

Copeland is perhaps best known as the founder of Black Philanthropy Month (BPM), launched in 2011 to advance equity, visibility, and collective action among Afro-descendant donors and leaders worldwide.[341] BPM has since grown into a global observance recognized in more than 60 countries, engaging an estimated 100 million participants through convenings, campaigns, research, and advocacy.[342] The Women Invested to Save Earth Fund (WISE), which she founded, serves as the fiscal and administrative home for key initiatives, including BPM. While she transitioned executive leadership of BPM and The WISE Fund in recent years to focus more fully on cultural production and creative practice, Copeland continues to serve on The WISE Fund's governing board and maintains strategic oversight and guidance across its programs.[343]

In addition to her philanthropic and social impact work, Copeland is a vocalist, songwriter, and cultural practitioner who performs under the name "Bouvier."[344] Her music

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[340] The HistoryMakers, "Jacqueline Copeland Biography."

[341] See BackBlack Movement, "The History of Black Philanthropy Month," accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.backblackmovement.org/black-philanthropy-month.

[342] BackBlack Movement, "The History of Black Philanthropy Month," accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.backblackmovement.org/black-philanthropy-month; see also The HistoryMakers, "Jacqueline Copeland Biography."

As of 2025, Black Philanthropy Month (BPM) is organized by the BackBlack Movement following a leadership transition from its founder, Dr. Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland, who continues to support the initiative in an advisory capacity. This transition illustrates how Black women's philanthropic vision and practices can endure beyond changes in organizational leadership through intentional stewardship and movement continuity.

For more information, see BackBlack Movement, "About Black Philanthropy Month," accessed July 17, 2026, https://www.backblackmovement.org/black-philanthropy-month; see also Jackson, "New Leadership Emerges as Black Philanthropy Month Founder Dr. Jacqueline Copeland Steps Down."

[343] See Women Invested to Save Earth Fund (WISE), "About The WISE Fund," accessed June 26, 2026, https://thewisefund.org.

[344] See Copeland, *Bouvier.world*.

projects, including *Blachant*[345] and *Mother Tongue: An Afro-Diaspora Journey*,[346] integrate African diasporic traditions, spiritual practices, ancestral memory, and contemporary jazz influences. She views music and artistic expression as forms of philanthropic labor, describing her creative work as a vehicle for healing, consciousness-raising, and the generation of community resources. This multidimensional approach to giving exemplifies the creative and spiritual praxis at the heart of CCP and demonstrates how cultural production itself operates as a mode of collective care, cultural memory work, and social transformation.

Through these overlapping roles as anthropologist, philanthropist, innovator, artist, consultant, and advocate, Copeland embodies the contemporary horizon of a long philanthropic lineage. Her work reflects the persistence of cultural logics that have shaped Black women's giving across generations and demonstrates how these practices continue to evolve in a global, digitally mediated, environmentally precarious world. As this chapter will illustrate, Copeland's life and career illuminate both the continuities and the new possibilities emerging from Black women's philanthropic traditions, offering insight into how CCP functions as a twenty-first century praxis of cultural stewardship, resistance and advocacy, leadership and institution building, and translocal and transnational solidarity.

Copeland Ethnographic Vignette: Giving in Practice

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[345] See Jackie Bouvier Copeland, Facebook video post, November 2021, announcing the release of her debut album *Blachant* ("Black Chant"), accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=625763461929835. In this project, Copeland frames her music as both protest art and a philanthropic practice, directing all net proceeds from the album to Black Philanthropy Month and The WISE Fund. The project reflects her long-standing commitment to using cultural creation as a vehicle for collective uplift, resource sharing, and community investment.

[346] See my Facebook post, March 2025, introducing Jackie Bouvier Copeland's song "Mother Tongue Mantra," the lead song from her album *Mother Tongue: An Afro-Diaspora Journey*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=copeland%2C%20mother%20tongue. In this work, Copeland weaves autobiographical threads, diasporic memory, and Afro-ancestral musical traditions into a creative praxis grounded in lineage, identity, and global Black cultural expression. As with *Blachant* ("Black Chant"), she directs proceeds to The WISE Fund and Black Philanthropy Month, demonstrating how creative labor becomes a form of giving and social investment within the CCP framework. I cite this post as part of my research archive to document my contemporaneous engagement with and interpretation of Copeland's work and to recognize social media as a dialogic space where Black women collectively negotiate and redefine philanthropy in theory and practice.

Like the historical profiles in earlier chapters, this chapter includes a vignette to bring the reader into a single, intimate moment that reveals the lived dimensions of Black women's giving. For Maria Stewart, Harriet Jacobs, Mary Church Terrell, and NACW, the vignette form allows for a narrow but vivid aperture through which to glimpse their philanthropic ethos in action. Copeland's story spans continents, decades, and multiple fields, and much of this chapter necessarily unfolds through her biographical and professional arc. However, it was equally important to dwell in one moment with her—to witness how her philosophy of "love of humanity in action" is embodied in practice.[347] The following vignette invites the reader into the brief yet resonant encounter that grounded our interview, in which caregiving, testimony, and shared vulnerability converged. As a Black woman academic researcher in conversation with a Black woman cultural leader and public intellectual, I experienced the "outsider-within" vantage point not as distance but as a bridge, one that allowed me to recognize the vernacular forms of giving—time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties—that Copeland offered even in the midst of her own responsibilities.[348] This moment becomes a lens through which to see her philanthropic praxis not only as theory or institutional accomplishment, but as something lived, relational, and deeply human.[349]

It was late afternoon when the Zoom room opened, and we arrived with a kind of quiet urgency. Before we began, "Dr. Jackie"—as I respectfully and affectionately called

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[347] Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland, interview by the author, May 6, 2025.

[348] Copeland, interview by the author, May 6, 2025. Unless otherwise noted, excerpts from this interview are incorporated throughout the following profile to illuminate Copeland's reflections on her personal and professional trajectory, her evolving definition of and engagement with philanthropy, and the relationship between her scholarship, community leadership, and creative practice.

[349] Copeland, interview by the author. This co-constructed interview was methodologically significant because Copeland understood the importance of building an archive of Black women's philanthropic thought. Her willingness to reflect publicly on her work created a rare opportunity to document Black women's giving on her own terms—an act of epistemological and historical agency that aligns with Black feminist commitments to self-definition, shared authority, and writing our stories into the record for future generations.

her—mentioned that she was preparing to visit her mother in nursing care shortly after our call. I shared that I would be doing the same. In that moment, the space between interviewer and participant shifted, not erased, but transformed into what Patricia Hill Collins describes as the "outsider-within," a vantage point shaped by shared experience, mutual recognition, and the intimate weight of responsibility.[350] We both knew that our time was limited, and because of that, it felt sacred and precious.

It is fitting that this conversation began under the sign of care. Care is the throughline of Copeland's life, the connective thread between her childhood in Philadelphia, her global philanthropic leadership, and her creative work as a cultural practitioner. As she explained, "I was raised in a world of other-mothers [. . .] surrounded by women who took care of each other's children, each other's needs. That's where I learned philanthropy, not from money, but from community."[351] This statement alone aligns directly with CCP's focus on mutual aid, collective resource sharing, and intergenerational knowledge.

Copeland's story, however, is not only one of inheritance but also one of translation. She translates Black communal ethics forged in neighborhood contexts into transnational philanthropic movements that now span more than sixty countries. She described her childhood community as structurally abandoned yet rich in cultural wealth. "We didn't have a lot of material resources, but we had so much creativity, so much genius," she said, recalling dancers, singers, spiritual leaders, teachers, and organizers who shaped her earliest understandings of giving. These influences would later become the backbone of her philanthropic framework, a fusion of creativity, environmental justice, diasporic solidarity, and Black feminist thought.[352]

[350] See Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought."
[351] Copeland, interview by the author.

[352] Copeland, interview by the author.

Throughout the conversation, Copeland returned to the importance of voice. For her, voice is not merely communication but a spiritual and cultural tool. “My voice was trained in the church. That was my first experience of understanding that sound could heal, gather people, change a mood, shift an entire room.”[353] This insight animates her artistic, musical projects, including *Blachant* and *Mother Tongue,* which she sees not as side pursuits but as philanthropic vehicles, ways to raise awareness, generate resources, and sustain cultural memory.[354] These practices reflect the creative and spiritual praxis of CCP, in which artistic production serves as a mode of caregiving, testimony, and memory work.

Copeland’s trajectory into national and global leadership emerged from this grounding. Through Black Philanthropy Month, she reframed Black giving as a global diasporic phenomenon. “We are everywhere,” she said. “And because we are everywhere, our generosity is everywhere. What we need is a shared language and shared strategy.”[355] This insight speaks directly to CCP’s emphasis on translocal and transnational solidarity. Her creation of The WISE Fund operationalizes another tenet of CCP: leadership and institution building. Supporting women-led initiatives in environmental justice and technological innovation, the fund reinforces her belief that ecological and gender justice are inherently diasporic issues requiring both local and global responses.

Across the conversation, she articulated a philanthropic worldview shaped by what she called “love in action,” a commitment to cultural rootedness, shared responsibility, and collective uplift. “Black love is not sentimental,” she said. “It’s survival. It’s our strategy.” Through these reflections, the continuity between her lived experience and the historical genealogies introduced

[353] Copeland, interview by the author.

[354] Copeland, interview by the author.

[355] Copeland, interview by the author.

in earlier sections became unmistakable. As our conversation ended, Copeland offered a quiet affirmation that reflected the ethic she practices: "We do this work because our people deserve to live. That is our legacy. That is our future."[356] In that moment, the call that began with Stewart in 1831, carried through Jacobs' testimony and Terrell's activism, felt present and alive, echoing across centuries. Copeland did not simply answer that call. She amplified it into a global movement.

This moment with Copeland offers more than a glimpse into her personal circumstances; it provides an entry point into the broader cultural, intellectual, and political commitments that shape her philanthropic life. The intimacy of the exchange—rooted in care, testimony, and shared responsibility—serves as a lived expression of the cultural logics and communal values at the heart of Black women's giving. Moving from this moment to a broader view of her career allows us to trace how these deeply held principles operate not only in her personal commitments but also across the global, institutional, and artistic spheres in which she leads. What follows turns from the immediacy of the vignette to a fuller account of Copeland's life and work, situating her biography and philanthropic praxis within the genealogical arc and the theoretical framework of CCP.

Community Cultural Philanthropy in Practice: Analyzing Copeland's Philanthropic Vision

This portion of the chapter, again, draws primarily from the aforementioned personal interview with Copeland, conducted while she was living remotely in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, caring for her aging mother, a lived demonstration of the "love in action" she insists is at the heart of authentic philanthropy.[357] Through Copeland's own words and experiences, we encounter the (re)definition of philanthropy as "love of humanity in action," the foundational

[356] Copeland, interview by the author.

[357] Copeland, interview by the author.

role of intersectionality and Ubuntu,[358] the importance of community and culture, the power of storytelling, and the ongoing evolution of Black Philanthropy Month and cross-cultural leadership. Copeland's journey, spanning her family's "Gullah Geechee" roots, her academic and professional achievements, her creative practice, and her vision for generational change, offers unique insight into how Black women's philanthropy disrupts and expands the boundaries of the field.[359]

Through the lens of CCP, Copeland's philanthropic vision can be read as a contemporary articulation of the logics and tenets that have structured Black women's giving for generations. Her narrative activates CCP's four cultural logics and exemplifies the nine philanthropic tenets of cultural stewardship, narrative testimony and memory work, collective resource sharing, mutual aid and reciprocal care, intergenerational knowledge and wealth transfer, leadership and institution building, resistance and advocacy, creative and spiritual praxis, and translocal and transnational solidarity. In doing so, it makes visible the often immeasurable dimensions of Black women's philanthropy, the moral, cultural, and spiritual forces that are often obscured in mainstream philanthropic framings.

Defining Philanthropy as "Love of Humanity in Action"

Copeland's philanthropic journey exemplifies the tradition of Black women's strategic intersectional philanthropy, centering her work on community uplift, cultural preservation, self-care, and the generational transfer of wealth in its many forms. In both her published work

[358] For a comprehensive definition of Ubuntu philosophy, see Michael Onyebuchi Eze, *Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 190–91.

[359] Copeland, interview by the author. "Gullah Geechee" refers to Afro-descendant communities living along the coastal regions and Sea Islands of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida whose language and cultural traditions retain strong ties to West and Central Africa. Their heritage has endured in part because of the relative geographic isolation of the Sea Islands. Copeland's own Afro-Diasporic roots and commitment to preserving Black culture reflect this legacy and align with CCP's tenet of translocal and transnational solidarity. See Jekyll Island Foundation, "Preserving the Gullah Geechee Heritage," accessed June 26, 2026, https://jekyllislandfoundation.org/about/for-the-record/preserving-the-gullah-geechee-heritage/.

and in-depth interviews, Copeland defines philanthropy as "love of humanity in action," insisting that authentic giving encompasses time, talent, treasure, testimony, and ties (i.e., social and relational connections), and that the philanthropic industry often fails to put these values into practice.[360] Her approach is deeply rooted in Black women's historical practices of mutual aid and collective care, as scholars in American Studies and anthropology have noted, where cultural context and community solidarity have long shaped Black women's giving traditions.[361]

For Copeland, this definition is not rhetorical. It is a moral logic that demands embodiment. She challenges philanthropic institutions that adopt the right language while continuing to operate in ways that preserve hierarchy, distance, and abstraction. In her view, philanthropy must be measured not only by dollars granted but by the degree to which it enacts an ethic of love, makes visible the humanity of those most impacted by injustice, and redistributes power in ways that foster communal flourishing.[362] This moral logic is central to CCP, which reads philanthropic practice through the ethical commitments that animate it, rather than through the size of endowments or the prestige of institutions.

Her approach is deeply informed by Black feminist and womanist thought, which emphasizes the intersection of race, gender, and class as crucial to understanding cultural and political life.[363] Copeland's philanthropic vision is shaped by the recognition that structural inequalities not only determine who gives and who receives, but also whose definitions of

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[360] Copeland, interview by the author. See also Georgiadis, "Female Disruptors: How Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland Aims to Shake Up Philanthropy Among the Black Diaspora."

[361] See Banks, "Black Women in the United States and Unpaid Collective Work"; Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

[362] Copeland, interview by the author. See also Georgiadis, "Female Disruptors: Dr. Jacqueline Bouvier Copeland."

[363] See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection"; "Some Group Matters: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought"; and Dianna N. Watkins-Dickerson, "Womanist Rhetorical Theory," in *Communication Theory: Racially Diverse and Inclusive Perspectives*, ed. Mark C. Hopson, Monica P. Castillo, and Jeanetta D. Sims (San Diego: Cognella, 2022), 197–205.

philanthropy are treated as authoritative. By centering love, community, and cultural wealth-building, she reclaims philanthropy as a tool for social transformation, self-care, and intergenerational resource transfer that extends far beyond monetary wealth.

Copeland's philosophy of giving is grounded in intersectionality and collective uplift, which together express the communal ethic at the heart of CCP. In her interviews and writing, she explicitly references Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality and Alice Walker's womanist ethos as foundational influences on her work, demonstrating how interlocking systems of oppression shape both her personal and professional approaches to philanthropy.[364] As she explains, "I am a feminist through and through, but I am an intersectional Black activist, what Alice Walker would call a 'womanist.'"[365] She further notes that this commitment requires advancing "the human rights of all marginalized people, including Black men, women, children, trans people, nonbinary persons and others, understanding that our oppression and destinies are linked."[366] For Copeland, intersectionality is not only an analytic tool but also a lived reality that shapes how she understands responsibility, solidarity, and the necessity of systemic change.

She draws on the South African principle of Ubuntu, often summarized as "I am because you are," to frame giving as fundamentally communal, interdependent, and culturally grounded.[367] This principle affirms that individual well-being is inseparable from the well-being of others, and that the measure of a just society lies in its willingness to recognize and affirm the humanity of all, particularly those historically devalued. Copeland often explains that her own

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[364] See Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; and Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*.

[365] Copeland, interview by the author.

[366] See Georgiadis, "Female Disruptors: How Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland Aims to Shake Up Philanthropy Among the Black Diaspora."

[367] See Eze, *Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa*, 190–91. Eze validates this communal framework by detailing Ubuntu as an interdependent mode of "collective responsibility." Rather than an isolated state of being, he argues that personhood functions as a dynamic, culturally grounded practice where individual identity is inherently co-constituted through relations with others.

well-being, as a Black woman and as a leader, is tied to the recognition of others' innate humanity and the structures that either support or deny that humanity.[368]

This intersectional, Ubuntu-informed ethic aligns closely with CCP's moral logic of collective uplift and cultural values rooted in shared histories. It situates philanthropy within a worldview that rejects individualistic, transactional models and instead demands relational accountability, shared obligation, and the recognition of interdependence as a source of strength and responsibility. Copeland's insistence that philanthropy must reflect love in action rather than performative rhetoric thus emerges from both a deep philosophical grounding and lived experience.

Copeland's approach privileges narrative and testimony as central to Black women's giving traditions. As she notes, "Storytelling is both cultural preservation and a tool for community empowerment."[369] She expands on this in a 2022 Arabella Advisors podcast, describing testimony as "a form of giving that builds community and resilience."[370] This aligns with Black feminist theory on the power of narrative as a mode of resistance, identity formation, and communal survival.[371] Within the CCP framework, such storytelling practices constitute a form of narrative testimony and memory work that preserve communal knowledge, transmit values across generations, and mobilize affect and empathy in the service of justice.

In both interviews and her writing, Copeland emphasizes the role of culture and generational knowledge in Black women's philanthropy: "Our philanthropy is an expression of our culture, that we in fact have culture [. . .]. So we have a strong cultural tradition. It is

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[368] Copeland, interview by the author.

[369] Copeland, interview by the author.

[370] Leslie Bernard, host, "Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland and Black Philanthropy Month," *From Ideas to Impact*, episode 10, produced by Arabella Advisors, August 19, 2022, podcast audio, 39:15, accessed June 26, 2026, https://from-idea-to-impact-podcast.castos.com/episodes/dr-jackie-bouvier-copeland-and-black-philanthropy-mipw.

[371] See Amoah, "Narrative: 'The Road to Black Feminist Theory.'"

manifested in large part through our philanthropy, Black American philanthropy."[372] Her published research foregrounds this, noting the importance of cultural preservation, generational wealth transfer, and the collective memory of Black communities as essential components of giving.[373]

Copeland's integration of womanist rhetorical theory broadens the understanding of Black women's contributions to philanthropy, underscoring a culturally and historically informed approach to giving.[374] By drawing on this framework, she enriches the political and theoretical dimensions of philanthropy, highlighting how Black women have long utilized their cultural narratives to combat systemic inequalities. This womanist perspective reinforces the critical role of Black women's voices in reshaping philanthropic discourse and emphasizes the need for inclusivity and diversity in storytelling. As these narratives are woven into philanthropic practice, they challenge traditional power dynamics and advocate for a more just and equitable society.

Black Philanthropy Month and Transnational Institution Building

Copeland's most visible institutional intervention, Black Philanthropy Month (BPM), is a concrete expression of these logics and tenets. Launched in 2011, during the United Nations' Year for People of African Descent, with the support of the Pan-African Women's Philanthropy Network (PAWPNet), BPM was created to recognize and celebrate Black giving globally and to show that these traditions are strong, diverse, and vital to social change. The initiative has since

[372] Copeland, interview by the author.

[373] Bernard, "Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland and Black Philanthropy Month."

[374] See Watkins-Dickerson, "Womanist Rhetorical Theory."

engaged over 100 million people across 60 countries, providing a global platform for celebrating and recognizing Black giving.[375]

By centering intersectionality and cultural heritage, BPM demonstrates the strength and resilience of Black philanthropic traditions while inspiring new generations to embrace giving as a vehicle for social and economic justice. In CCP terms, BPM is an institution of narrative testimony and memory work, cultural stewardship, collective resource sharing, and translocal and transnational solidarity. It functions as a translocal gathering space where stories, strategies, and resources circulate among Black communities dispersed by diaspora, migration, and displacement.

Copeland's leadership of PAWPNet further demonstrates her commitment to global, cross-cultural solidarity. She recalls facilitating philanthropy sessions in which emerging leaders were inspired to create their own movements and nonprofits, among them Ayo Tometi, co-creator of Black Lives Matter.[376] These spaces exemplify CCP's emphasis on leadership and institution building as intergenerational, collaborative, and rooted in cultural responsibility. As Copeland notes, "I am surrounded as I have been my entire life with Black philanthropy; it has saved my life."[377] Her work underscores that Black philanthropy is not only about financial contributions but about the networks of care, mentorship, and cultural affirmation that sustain activism and community life.

Reflecting on her own legacy and the sustainability of Black Philanthropy Month, Copeland remarks, "I decided several years ago that it was time to pass the baton to someone who was able to walk the talk of Black philanthropy at its best. Without the competition, without

[375] See Bernard, "Dr. Jackie Bouvier Copeland and Black Philanthropy Month"; see also Cynthia Eyakuze, "Through the Philanthropic Lens," in *Where Is the Money for Black Feminist Movements?* (Black Feminist Fund, 2023), 12–43, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.fundblackfeminists.org.

[376] Copeland, interview by the author.

[377] Copeland, interview by the author.

the infighting. And with a focus on inclusion."[378] Her transition in leadership is anchored in a vision for inclusive, sustainable, community-driven initiatives, reinforcing CCP's emphasis on collective stewardship rather than individual ownership.

Creative Spiritual Praxis and Healing Work

Copeland's creative work as a musician and writer extends her philanthropic philosophy, using art and spirituality for healing, resilience, and the affirmation of Black women's self-worth. She describes music as a form of therapy and testimony, noting, "Music became my therapy. Writing it. And singing it [. . .]. My creative work as a musician and writer extends my philanthropic philosophy, using art and spirituality for healing, resilience, and the affirmation of Black women's self-worth."[379] This creative dimension is central to her current and future projects, including her multi-art album *Mother Tongue*, which she frames as a "contemporary ancestral jazz" project that honors Black women's ancestral wisdom and emotional labor.

Her ongoing role as a caregiver for her aging mother is not only a personal commitment but a lived expression of her philanthropic values. The margins of my interview notes reflect this truth, where I wrote: "Her [Copeland] willingness to devote time to this conversation, even amid personal caregiving, powerfully exemplifies the very ethic of 'love in action' that she employs to (re)define philanthropy." Family, for Copeland, is both a site of trauma and resilience, shaping her commitment to healing. Reflecting on her childhood in Philadelphia, she describes an environment marked by instability and challenge, but also by elders who modeled "love in action." She admits:

> Family, extended family members with big dreams really had gone through hell through the Great Migration. And they were devoted to ensuring that they gave us moral values, formal education, and faith. Those three things. That we knew

[378] Copeland, interview by the author.

[379] Copeland, interview by the author.

how to take care of ourselves and that meant taking care of others.[380]

These intertwined experiences of adversity and care led Copeland to conceptualize intergenerational wealth transfer as encompassing not only material assets but also knowledge, cultural traditions, and emotional resilience.[381] This understanding aligns with CCP's emphasis on narrative testimony and memory work, cultural stewardship, and mutual aid and reciprocal care as foundational to Black women's philanthropy. Her music, caregiving, and mentoring reflect a creative and spiritual praxis in which healing is both personal and communal, and in which art becomes a vehicle for intergenerational affirmation and resistance.

Mentorship, Generational Leadership, and Future Directions

Copeland's commitment to activism and next-generation leadership is deeply embedded in her approach to philanthropy. She not only mobilizes resources for immediate needs but also invests in the long-term development of emerging leaders and movements. Through her work with the Pan-African Women's Philanthropy Network (PAWPNet) and the establishment of Black Philanthropy Month (BPM), Copeland has created platforms that amplify Black women's voices and foster cross-generational dialogue. Her mentorship of leaders such as Ayo Tometi demonstrates her dedication to nurturing future visionaries who carry forward the work of social justice. Copeland intentionally cultivates environments where mentorship, cultural caregiving, and intergenerational wealth transfer are central, ensuring that the legacy of Black women's leadership in philanthropy continues to thrive.

Her work highlights the historical significance of Black women's philanthropic involvement, particularly during periods such as Jim Crow and the civil rights era, when Black women's organizing sustained key movements for independence and equality.[382] By engaging in

[380] Copeland, interview by the author.

[381] Copeland, interview by the author.

[382] See Hine, "We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible"; and Freeman, *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*.

what might be called philanthropic archival practice, Copeland and her contemporaries preserve and layer Black women's contributions, making them legible to future generations and reshaping contemporary philanthropic norms. This archival orientation is itself a form of CCP memory work, one that insists Black women's historical and present labor must be recorded, celebrated, and used to inform future practice.

Ultimately, Copeland's vision of philanthropy challenges mainstream, transactional models by advocating a holistic, action-oriented approach grounded in love, community, and cultural wealth-building across the African Diaspora. Her leadership exemplifies how CCP's logics and tenets operate in the twenty-first century, making visible the moral, cultural, spiritual, and creative dimensions of Black women's giving that are often overlooked. In Copeland's work, the genealogical arc traced through Stewart, Jacobs, Terrell, and the NACW finds a contemporary expression that is at once continuous with the past and oriented toward a future in which Black women's philanthropic traditions shape not only their own communities but the broader field of philanthropy itself.

Love in Action: A Contemporary Horizon of Black Women's Philanthropy

The arc of this study has traced nearly two centuries of Black women's philanthropic thought and practice, revealing a genealogy rooted in care, cultural production, moral imagination, and collective survival. Across the preceding profiles, from the early exhortations of Maria W. Stewart in the 1830s to Harriet Jacobs' testimonial activism in the mid-nineteenth century, to the institutional architecture built by Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women, and into the global, intersectional leadership embodied by Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, this study has illuminated how Black women's giving has consistently shaped visions of freedom, systems of mutual care, and models of leadership that

endure beyond their immediate historical moment.

Through the analytical lens of CCP, the chapter has demonstrated how Copeland's contemporary praxis reflects and extends long-standing cultural logics within Black women's philanthropic traditions. Her philosophy of philanthropy as "love of humanity in action," her grounding in intersectionality and Ubuntu, her emphasis on testimony and cultural stewardship, and her institution-building efforts through BPM and PAWPNet demonstrate how CCP's logics and tenets operate within her contemporary philanthropic praxis. Copeland's leadership underscores that Black women's philanthropy is both historical and evolving, deeply rooted yet adaptable to the demands of a global, digitally mediated world.

This synthesis section clarifies that CCP provides a conceptual and methodological framework for understanding philanthropic practices that are often illegible within mainstream philanthropic narratives. By centering the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets articulated throughout this study, CCP allows us to identify the expansive, culturally grounded strategies of giving that have long existed in Black communities but have not always been recognized as philanthropy within traditional literature and archival records.[383] Copeland's work demonstrates these continuities while also revealing emergent directions for the field, including the integration of cultural production, diasporic coalition-building, and embodied care as philanthropic strategies.

As this chapter concludes, it is clear to me that Copeland's contemporary contributions serve not only as a culmination of the genealogical arc explored in this study but also as an opening into new possibilities for philanthropic theory and practice. Her work offers a model for how CCP might be taken up in global, community-centered, and culturally sustaining ways, and how Black women's philanthropic leadership continues to redefine the boundaries of the field.

[383] See Freeman and Williams-Pulfer, "Liberating the Archive, Emancipating Philanthropy."

The following coda to this study extends this synthesis by outlining the broader contributions of CCP to American Studies and Philanthropic Studies. It also considers future directions for research, praxis, and institutional leadership, and reflects on the implications of Black women's cultural and communal giving for the evolving philanthropic landscape.

Coda: Charting the Future of Black Women's Philanthropic Thought: Black Women's Giving in the Twenty-First Century and Beyond

As mentioned, this study has traced nearly two centuries of Black women's philanthropic thought and practice, revealing a genealogy rooted in care, cultural production, moral imagination, and collective survival. From Maria W. Stewart's exhortations in the 1830s to Harriet Jacobs' testimonial activism, and from Mary Church Terrell and the NACW's federated leadership to Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland's global, intersectional praxis, Black women have continually redefined what it means to give—and what counts as philanthropy within American history and culture. Their work challenges deficit framings and illuminates the aspirational, community-building, and resilient dimensions of Black life.

The throughline across these histories is the merging of idea and action, echoing Payton and Moody's understanding of philanthropy as both theory and practice. Black women's giving has always been a praxis—a lived, embodied convergence of vision, ethics, creativity, and communal responsibility. This study argues that Black women do not simply participate in philanthropy; they (re)define it. They expand the field's intellectual, moral, and cultural boundaries by demonstrating how giving emerges from cultural knowledge, storytelling, mutual aid, and everyday labor in the service of collective uplift.

Through the analytical lens of CCP, this project shows how Copeland's contemporary leadership reflects and extends these longstanding cultural logics. Her framing of philanthropy as "love of humanity in action"; her grounding in intersectionality and Ubuntu; her institution-building across PAWPNet, Black Philanthropy Month, and The WISE Fund; and her creative endeavors through musical projects like *Blachant* and *Mother Tongue* all exemplify the merging of theory and action that lies at the heart of CCP. Copeland's multidisciplinary work

underscores that Black women's philanthropy is historical and evolving, deeply rooted yet responsive to a global, diasporic, and digitally mediated world.

CCP, as articulated here, offers a framework for understanding forms of giving that mainstream philanthropic narratives often overlook or render illegible. By centering the cultural logics and philanthropic tenets articulated throughout this study, CCP makes visible a constellation of practices that have always animated Black communities. Copeland's work demonstrates these continuities while revealing emergent directions for the field, including the integration of cultural production, environmental justice, spiritual creativity, and global coalition-building as philanthropic strategies.

Together, the genealogical arc and profiles presented here affirm that Black women's philanthropy is both a historical inheritance and a living, evolving praxis. This ethical and imaginative tradition continues to shape communal life, cultural futures, and the broader landscape of American history, culture, and civil society. A more expansive view of these trajectories can be found in the Appendix, which includes a selected list of Black women–founded organizations, funds, and giving circles across time, offering a broader frame for understanding the scope and continuity of Black women's philanthropic practice.

This dissertation makes three central contributions: First, it establishes a genealogical lineage of Black women's giving, one rooted in narrative, memory, cultural production, spiritual imagination, and the everyday practices of care and mutual responsibility. This lineage grounds philanthropy not in wealth or institutional power but in the lived experiences that have sustained Black communities across generations. Second, it introduces CCP as both a theoretical framework and praxis for understanding Black women's (re)definitions of philanthropy. CCP reorients philanthropic studies toward culture, creativity, narrative, and communal care, naming

practices that have long existed yet have remained marginalized or illegible within dominant philanthropic discourses. Rather than defining philanthropy as transactional or elite-driven, CCP illuminates it as cultural labor, ethical responsibility, and a mode of survival.

Third, this dissertation demonstrates a methodological approach that foregrounds testimony, memory work, and community-based narratives. The use of narrative inquiry, close reading, reflective interviewing, and cultural analysis expands the methodological possibilities for philanthropic studies, particularly within American Studies, Black feminist thought, and cultural history. Collectively, these contributions invite scholars and practitioners to reconsider and reimagine the histories, records, and cultural texts that shape our understanding of who gives, how they give, and what philanthropy means.

Future Directions: Continued Research and New Work

A natural extension of this study involves returning to the interviews and interlocutors outlined initially in Chapter 3. The individuals selected for this project represent a rich landscape of Black women's philanthropic thought and practice across sectors, generations, and geographies. Future iterations of this work would benefit from completing the additional interviews, deepening comparative analysis across participants, and expanding the qualitative archive that undergirds CCP. Revisiting those conversations, alongside further archival research and community-engaged inquiry, would allow for a fuller articulation of the cultural, narrative, and institutional dimensions of Black women's philanthropic leadership.

Several promising directions for future research include the following:

1. Expanded biographical and institutional profiles of Black women shaping contemporary philanthropy. Example: A'Lelia Bundles' second biography, *Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance*, offers rich terrain for understanding intergenerational

cultural stewardship and philanthropic creativity. CCP provides an important lens for engaging her work.[384]

2. Community-based, collective, and creative philanthropy models. Example: Writer, curator, and philanthropic strategist Valaida Fullwood—a leading voice in contemporary Black philanthropy—has been at the forefront of efforts to name, reframe, and redefine philanthropic practice beyond elite, wealth-centered traditions.[385] A self-described "idea whisperer," Fullwood played a key role in shaping and publicly amplifying the early framework for Black Philanthropy Month, advancing Copeland's vision into a broader movement through narrative strategy and cultural design. Her national touring exhibition, *The Soul of Philanthropy: Reframed and Exhibited*, uses photography, oral history, and immersive visual storytelling to illuminate everyday Black generosity and to challenge prevailing assumptions about who gives, how, and why.[386] Through its portraits, interpretive texts, and multimedia elements, the exhibition reframes Black giving as a creative, culturally produced practice. It makes visible forms of care and collective responsibility that mainstream philanthropy has long overlooked. In addition, Fullwood's founding role with the New Generation of African American Philanthropists (NGAAP) —a regional giving circle in Charlotte, NC, models locally rooted collective giving grounded in equity, community, and intergenerational stewardship.[387] Together, these initiatives exemplify culturally grounded generosity, narrative reclamation, and the community meaning-making at the core of CCP.

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[384] See A'Lelia Bundles, *Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Scribner, 2025). See also A'Lelia Bundles, "About," *ALeliaBundles.com*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://aleliabundles.com/about.

[385] See Valaida Fullwood, "Bio," *Valaida.com*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://valaida.com/bio.

[386] See *The Soul of Philanthropy: Reframed & Exhibited*, TSOPCLE, accessed June 26, 2026, https://tsopcle.com/.

[387] See *NGAAP: New Generation of African American Philanthropists*, "Home," accessed June 26, 2026, https://new-philanthropists.org/home/.

3. Youth, digital, and movement-based Black philanthropy. Example: The Young, Black & Giving Back Institute's (YBGB) 2023 study: *Grassroots, Black & Giving: How Philanthropy Can Better Support Black-led and Black-Benefiting Nonprofits* provides a significant empirical foundation for understanding contemporary Black philanthropic leadership.[388] Based on 227 survey respondents, drawn from organizations participating in YBGB's annual "Give 8/28 Day" campaign, the study found that 79.6% of leaders were women, most under age 55, with over a decade of sustained commitment to community uplift. This finding resonates deeply with CCP's focus on Black women's labor, narrative leadership, and communal care within Black-led institutions. Having worked closely with the YBGB Institute and its founder, Ebonie Johnson Cooper, since its inception—beginning with my early involvement in Black Benefactors, a Washington, D.C.–based giving circle—this research carries particular resonance.[389] Witnessing Johnson Cooper's evolution into higher education leadership and a national philanthropic voice affirms the full-circle continuity of Black women's community-centered giving.[390] Her work charts new pathways for the next generation while recreating and expanding the archive of Black philanthropic practice.[391]

4. Narrative-building and leadership within formal philanthropic institutions. Example: Toya Nash Randall—a philanthropic strategist, curator, and catalyst—has emerged as a

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[388] Young, Black & Giving Back Institute (YBGB), "Home," *YoungBlackGivingBack.org*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.youngblackgivingback.org. See also YBGB Institute, *Grassroots, Black & Giving: How Philanthropy Can Better Support Black-led and Black-Benefiting Nonprofits* (August 2023), accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.youngblackgivingback.org/research.

[389] See Tracey Webb, "A Giving Circle's Journey: The Black Benefactors," *Resource Generation*, June 17, 2014, accessed July 17, 2026, https://resourcegeneration.org/a-giving-circles-journey-the-black-benefactors/.

[390] Ebonie Johnson Cooper. "Faculty/Staff Profile." *University of Maryland School of Public Policy.* June 26, 2026. https://spp.umd.edu/our-community/faculty-staff/ebonie-johnson-cooper.

[391] See also Give 8/28 Day, "Home," *Give828.org,* accessed June 26, 2025, https://www.give828.org/.

central figure in advancing narrative practices that center Black women's lived experiences and leadership philosophies.[392] Through *Voice. Vision. Value*. *Black Women Leading Philanthropy*—the digital narrative platform she founded, Randall has helped shape a distinctly twenty-first century model of storytelling and sector-wide engagement, one that listens to Black women across the field and amplifies their insights through multimedia narratives, leadership cohorts, and collaborative research. Now in its fifth year, *Voice. Vision. Value*. reflects a sustained commitment to documenting and elevating Black women whose labor and expertise are often overlooked within institutional philanthropy.[393] Randall's work has also been recognized by Black Philanthropy Month, The WISE Fund, and The Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University's Lilly School of Philanthropy, which jointly named her one of the ten inaugural "Black Women Give Back List" honorees in 2021.[394] Her narrative strategies and institutional leadership align closely with CCP's emphasis on cultural production, narrative reclamation, and the transformative potential of centering Black women's lived experiences within philanthropic theory and practice.

5. Digital communal care, archiving, and social media philanthropy. Example: Black women's digital practices—including fundraising, mutual aid, healing spaces, and narrative documentation—represent vital forms of contemporary philanthropy. My long-term digital archiving practice using the hashtag #BlkWmnPhil (Instagram

[392] Toya Nash Randall, "Bio," *Voice.Vision.Value.*, accessed November 29, 2025, https://voicevisionvalue.org/about/toya-nash-randall/.

[393] Voice. Vision. Value., "About," *VoiceVisionValue.org*, accessed November 29, 2025, https://voicevisionvalue.org/.

[394] Valaida Fullwood and Ebonie Johnson-Cooper were also honorees in 2021 and 2022, respectively. See *Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University*, "Announcing the Inaugural Black Women Give Back List," accessed November 30, 2025, https://philanthropy.indianapolis.iu.edu/news-events/news/_news/2021/announcing-the-inaugural-black-women-give-back-list.html.

2017–2026) has served as an informal record of discourse around Black women's giving. Although hashtags evolve, this remains a meaningful site of listening, documenting, and tracing emerging practices.[395]

Collectively, these trajectories reveal that Black women's philanthropy is adaptive, intergenerational, and expansive—moving fluidly across platforms, media, and community contexts—offering fertile ground for continued research.

Implications for American Studies and Philanthropic Studies

CCP offers one pathway for scholars and practitioners to revisit historical biographies, archival documents, philanthropic records, and community narratives with attention to the cultural and communal practices that traditional frameworks often overlook. For example, Alison Parker's biography *Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell* provides an extraordinary portrait of Mary Church Terrell's intellectual, social, and civic labor without naming it as philanthropic. CCP invites us to read these contributions as integral rather than peripheral, to expand the archive rather than correct it, and to encourage new forms of inquiry and storytelling that honor Black women's intellectual and cultural labor.

Grounded in American Studies, CCP positions philanthropy as a critical cultural analytic—one that moves us beyond deficit framings and toward a deeper understanding of how Black women have historically worked for the collective uplift of communities in creative, intentional, and spiritually grounded ways. It reorients the field to consider philanthropy as a site of meaning-making, identity construction, political engagement, and cultural transformation.

[395] See #BlkWmnPhil, *Instagram*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/blkwmnphil/.

Closing Reflection: Love in Action → Litany for Survival

Audre Lorde's "A Litany for Survival" (1978) is often read as a Black queer feminist meditation on fear, vulnerability, desire, and the audacity to exist in spaces never meant to sustain one's life or love.[396] In queer literary traditions, the poem registers as a coming-into-being against the backdrop of erasure. Yet its resonance extends much further: Lorde's litany speaks directly to the conditions under which Black women have historically lived, resisted, created, and cared. Choosing Lorde to close this study is intentional. Her work reflects the multiplicity of identities Black women hold—Black, woman, queer, mother, poet, organizer—and the interlocking systems of oppression we must navigate. And yet, even in the face of those systems, Lorde insists on the possibility of love, of voice, of imaginative rebirth. The poem acknowledges fear but refuses to be governed by it; it calls us toward a deeper ethic, one grounded in the refusal to disappear. It insists that survival is collective, relational, and bound up in the courage to speak and act.

In many ways, this resonates profoundly with Black women's philanthropic labors. Within mainstream narratives of philanthropy, which have long excluded or minimized Black women's knowledge, leadership, and creativity, Black women have continued to give, build, testify, and create infrastructures of care. They have redefined giving not as charity but as a cultural ethic, not only as wealth but as relational power, not as transaction but as love in action. Lorde's line gestures toward a larger truth: that love, when practiced, enacted, and embodied, is a verb.[397] For Black women in this study and across the genealogical arc traced here, love in action is a litany for survival. It is the repeated, intergenerational practice of sustaining life in the face

[396] Audre Lorde, "A Litany for Survival," in *The Black Unicorn: Poems* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 31–32; also available at *Poetry Foundation*, accessed June 26, 2026, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147275/a-litany-for-survival.

[397] Lorde, "A Litany for Survival," 31–32.

of oppression, reinventing what is possible, and transforming both community and culture. Closing with a Black queer feminist poet honors this tradition. It affirms that Black women's philanthropic imaginaries—their visions, their refusals, and their moral imagination—continue to reshape the landscape of American history, culture, and civil society.

In the spirit of Audre Lorde, philanthropy as "love of humanity" becomes, for Black women, "love in action" → a verb that is a litany for our survival.

Appendix: Selected Black Women-Founded and Led Philanthropic Organizations and Initiatives

This appendix presents a selected, non-exhaustive list of Black women-founded and led organizations, funds, mutual aid formations, and philanthropic initiatives across historical and contemporary contexts. Spanning mutual aid societies, clubs, civic organizations, philanthropic funds, and contemporary social impact initiatives, it reflects the breadth of Black women's giving across time. Organized by category, each entry includes founding year, location, focus area, and brief context where relevant. While not comprehensive, this list offers a representative framework that highlights both well-documented and lesser-known formations shaped by Black women's expansive philanthropic leadership in service of Black communities.

Early Mutual Aid, Fraternal/Sororal Orders and Institutional Foundations

Independent Order of St. Luke
Founded: 1867 (expanded 1899)
Location: Richmond, VA
Focus: Mutual aid, insurance, banking
Website: https://dslrichmond.org
Context: Led by Maggie Lena Walker; foundational Black cooperative economic institution.

Home for Aged Colored Women/ Bannister House Nursing Home
Founded: 1890
Location: Providence, RI
Focus: Elder care, housing
Context: Founded by Christiana Carteaux Bannister; early care infrastructure prior to the welfare state.

Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Indigent Negroes
Founded: 1908
Location: Auburn, NY
Focus: Elder care, housing, mutual aid
Website: https://www.nps.gov/hart/learn/historyculture/home-for-the-aged.htm
Context: Established by Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman's Boarding Houses
Founded: 1850s–1860s
Location(s): Auburn, NY; Boston, MA, St. Catharines, Ontario
Focus: Shelter, mutual aid, community care
Website(s): https://www.nps.gov/places/harriettubmanhome.htm; https://tubmanboston.org

National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACW/NACWC)
Founded: 1896
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Education, racial uplift, reform
Website: https://nacwc.org
Context: National federation institutionalizing the philanthropic ethos of "lifting as we climb"

Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Co.
Founded: 1906
Location: Indianapolis, IN
Focus: Economic empowerment, enterprise-based philanthropy
Website: https://madamcjwalker.com
Context: Founded by Madam C.J. Walker

National Training School for Women and Girls
Founded: 1909
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Education, vocational training
Context: Founded by Nannie Helen Burroughs

Civic, Political, and Social Organizations

National Council of Negro Women (NCNW)
Founded: 1935
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Advocacy, policy, social reform
Website: https://ncnw.org
Context: Founded by Mary McLeod Bethune; later led by Dorothy Height

Jack and Jill of America, Inc.
Founded: 1938
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Focus: Youth development, leadership
Website: https://jackandjillinc.org
Context: Intergenerational community investment.

The Links, Inc.
Founded: 1946
Location: Philadelphia, PA
Focus: Civic engagement, cultural enrichment
Website: https://linksinc.org
Context: National Black women's philanthropic network

Black Sororal/Greek-Letter Organizations
(Education and Service-Based Philanthropy)

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Founded: 1908
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Service, education
Website: https://aka1908.com

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Founded: 1913
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Social action, public service
Website: https://deltasigmatheta.org

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
Founded: 1920
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Community service
Website: https://zphib1920.org

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
Founded: 1922
Location: Indianapolis, IN
Focus: Education, youth development
Website: https://sgrho1922.org

Archives, Narrative Platforms and Cultural Stewardship

Madam C. J. Walker Family Archives
Location: United States
Focus: Archival preservation, public history
Website: https://madamcjwalker.com
Context: Stewarded by A'Lelia Bundles

The Soul of Philanthropy: Reframed and Exhibited (TSOP)
Founded: 2015
Location: United States
Focus: Exhibition, public history
Website: https://tsopcle.com
Context: Founded by Valaida Fullwood

Voice. Vision. Value. Black Women Leading Philanthropy
Founded: 2020s
Location: United States
Focus: Narrative platform
Website: https://voicevisionvalue.org

Black Gives Back
Founded: 2007
Location: United States
Focus: Digital archive, philanthropy blog
Website: https://www.blackgivesback.com
Context: Founded by Tracey Webb

Contemporary Black Philanthropy Funds and Giving Circles

Black Benefactors/Benefactors: A Black Giving Collective
Founded: 2007; Relaunched: 2024
Location: Washington, D.C.
Focus: Giving circle
Website(s): https://www.blackbenefactors.org
E-News: https://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/news/benefactors-a-black-giving-collective
Context: Co-founded by Tracey Webb

Community Investment Network (CIN)
Founded: 2003–2004
Location: United States
Focus: Giving circle network, including a number of Black-women-led giving circles
Website: https://thecommunityinvestment.org

Black Philanthropy Month (BPM)
Founded: 2011
Location: Global
Focus: Philanthropic equity campaign
Website: https://www.blackphilanthropymonth.com
Context: Co-founded by Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Copeland, Ph.D.

Young, Black & Giving Back Institute (YBGB)
Founded: 2012
Location: United States
Focus: Philanthropy, nonprofit support
Website: https://www.youngblackgivingback.org
Context: Founded by Ebonie Johnson Cooper

Give 8/28 Day
Founded: 2018
Location: United States
Focus: National online giving day
Website: https://www.give828.org
Context: Administered by YBGB Institute

Black Philanthropy Banister Fund
Founded: 2016
Location: Rhode Island
Focus: Grantmaking
Website: https://rifoundation.org/grant/black-philanthropy-bannister-fund-grants

Contemporary Funds, Ventures and Philanthropic Initiatives

Fearless Fund
Founded: 2019
Location: United States
Focus: Entrepreneurship and venture philanthropy
Website: https://fearless.fund
Context: Black woman–led venture fund addressing capital inequities.

Black Girls Freedom Fund
Founded: 2020
Location: United States
Focus: Movement funding
Website: https://blackgirlsfreedomfund.org

Black Feminist Fund
Founded: 2021
Location: Global
Focus: Feminist philanthropy
Website: https://blackfeministfund.org

Sisters' Circle of Greater Kansas City
Founded: 2016
Location: Missouri
Focus: Philanthropy, nonprofit support
Website: https://www.facebook.com/sisterscircle

Women Moving Millions
Founded: 2007
Location: United States
Focus: Philanthropy initiative
Website: https://womenmovingmillions.org
Context: Includes Black women leadership

Contemporary Funds, Ventures and Philanthropic Initiatives *(continued)*

Women Invested to Save Earth Fund (WISE)
Founded: 2020
Location: Global
Focus: Environmental impact, race, gender, technology
Website: https://thewisefund.org/
Context: Fiscal sponsor of BPM

Grassroots Mutual Aid, Health and Community Care

SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
Founded: 1997
Location: Atlanta, GA
Focus: Reproductive justice
Website: https://sistersong.net

Black Women's Blueprint
Founded: 2010
Location: New York
Focus: Advocacy, healing
Website: https://blackwomensblueprint.org

Soul Fire Farm
Founded: 2010
Location: New York
Focus: Food justice
Website: https://soulfirefarm.org

Black Mamas Matter Alliance
Founded: 2016
Location: United States
Focus: Maternal health advocacy
Website: https://blackmamasmatter.org

The Okra Project
Founded: 2018
Location: United States
Focus: Food insecurity
Website: https://theokraproject.com

Recognition and Visibility Initiatives

Black Women Give Back List
Launched: 2021
Location: United States
Focus: Recognition initiative
E-News: https://philanthropy.indianapolis.iu.edu/news-events/news/_news/2021/announcing-the-inaugural-black-women-give-back-list.html

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