

THE SOUL OF MONEY Meets the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*

by Beth Raps

MANY OF US HAVE HEARD OF LYNNE TWIST, her book, *The Soul of Money*, and her institute of the same name. She's known for having raised hundreds of millions of dollars in the past for The Hunger Project and now for the Pachamama Alliance from super-wealthy individuals. Her comfort with fundraising from the super-wealthy can make some of us in the grassroots fundraising world uncomfortable. Yet when I attended a Twist training this past spring, I found a lot that was both radical in its viewpoint and useful for grassroots fundraising.

Let's start with Twist's teaching that we are enough even if we don't feel we have enough. Twist contends that even very wealthy people need to be reminded of the fact that self-esteem goes beyond monetary wealth—a radical idea indeed! The oppressive equation that net worth = self-worth is apparently something we all have to unlearn. Unlearning it makes us better able to imagine approaching wealthy prospects no matter how much money we grew up with.

As we seek to do better major-donor fundraising, we can try on the idea that people much wealthier than we are may, like us at times, feel that they don't have enough and that therefore they aren't good enough. This understanding can change our approach to building relationships with donors wealthy enough to make us nervous. We can approach them the same way we do less wealthy donors, by assuring them their gift is meaningful.

Increasing our confidence to approach people with wealth not only makes good fundraising sense, it makes good radical political sense as well. *We Journal* readers are trained that a fundraising campaign requires donors at each giving level. This diversity, I like to point out, is also true of the beloved community we seek to build, where no one is too poor or too rich to qualify. (And I also enjoy pointing out that it's like Marx's maxim, "From each according to ability, to each according to need.")

Sometimes, though, we cheat this ideal of diversity in one of two ways: we either avoid asking people whose wealth makes us nervous or we overemphasize large gifts to the exclusion of the many small ones we equally need to build our base. The appropriate distribution of large gifts, medium-sized gifts, and small gifts to our particular campaign, grounded in the confidence we can ask whomever we need to ask, balances our work and builds the beloved community, where each person and gift has a place.

Twist also teaches that giving money is always an honor. When we ask for a gift, we are doing others a service by seeking to involve them in our world-changing work. It's a blessing we have the power to share, a privilege we offer people of every degree of wealth. In this sense, we are conferring a blessing on others by inviting them to join with us in solidarity across class: what radical confidence! Twist's work seeks to impart this confidence. No matter how much money we grew up with or have now, remembering that the person in front of you has sometimes felt that they were never enough creates an opening in us. That opening then builds a feeling of solidarity from human to human in the service of the amazing work we are doing. This solidarity then builds our self-confidence and sense of entitlement in inviting them to join in by giving.

Some of what Twist teaches feels like magical thinking if we don't have our own sense of entitlement to ask. One "magical" Twist teaching, for example, is that there is always enough money for what we need if our fundraising is driven by our mission and our passion. My personal experience is that this is true: money comes when we share our passion for the work with others.

But how do you drum up the feeling of being entitled to ask wealthy people for money for your cause if you simply don't feel you are—yet? One way is to act "as if," act as if you did. The better actor you are, the quicker this will work. Try treating your scariest donors as if you had something deeply special to offer them, that there's plenty of support for it but that you knew they'd want to be a part of it, so you are inviting them to join in by giving. After you've made a presentation like this, debrief with a supportive colleague when you get back to the office, and evaluate whether you felt more comfortable and confident.

Try this new mindset. Visit donors or prospects grounded in confidence, entitlement, and openness, and see where it leads you. Don't be afraid of success! May your fundraising not only increase the giving you seek but the beloved community we deeply desire. ■

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