



WOMEN DONORS NETWORK
Generosity Multiplied

ALIGNING OUR ACTIONS WITH OUR VALUES

WDN Board Position Statement Adopted November 3, 2011

The founding sisters of WDN came together with an intuitive knowledge that as women with wealth, we are situated in the world differently from our fathers, brothers, and husbands, and are also situated differently from people whose earnings do not allow for significant philanthropy. Our founding sisters recognized that our particular circumstances, or *situatedness*, have corresponding advantages and disadvantages that compelled them to create a community based on a shared experience of class and gender. We wanted a community of women with whom we could lift up the knowledge and insights of women, safely discuss our anxieties about wealth, race and power, and explore our common concerns and interests as philanthropists.

Though we did not call it this at the founding, our network grew from the seeds of an *intersectional* gender-class analysis. Intersectional, in this context, means that we paid attention to *both* gender and class in the forming of the “women” “donors” network. The trajectories of own lives confirmed that the experiences of class, gender, sexual orientation and race are not easily separated or compartmentalized, but rather have ramifications, both positive and negative, on all aspects of our experience.

With this initial underlying analysis, paired with our passion for learning and taking action, WDN today continues to create a space in which friendships are built, information is shared, ideas are generated and leaders develop as we work together to grow as individuals, as an institution and as a partner to effect systemic change. As an organization, we want to be more explicit in our efforts to develop an analysis that integrates class as well as gender because, although class has always been implicit in our analysis, it has not been directly expressed or applied to our work.

At the same time, we also want to acknowledge explicitly that racialization has, in the past, and continues today, to shape our individual lives and the lives of all communities. We prefer to use the term “racialization” to emphasize that race is neither static nor biological, but rather is an evolving phenomenon or *process*. Similar to gender and sexual orientation, racialization powerfully influences outcomes even in the

absence of racist, sexist or homophobic actors. Growing out of the shared values articulated in our strategic plan, the Board of Directors is making a commitment to deepen and broaden WDN's intersectional analysis and apply that analysis to all aspects of our work.

As we move into the third decade of our network, WDN is committed to supporting organization wide efforts to understand how different forms of inequity work *together* to shape outcomes in WDN priority issue areas and how we as an organization can improve our practices so that they reflect our values. Practically speaking, rather than focus on race, sexual orientation, class, or gender as issue areas, WDN circle members will work together to understand how different forms of inequity shape outcomes in their respective issue areas, be that reproductive rights, environment, incarceration, and so forth. For example, by investigating how military conflict impacts both women as a whole and specific subgroups of women, the Women Confronting Militarism Circle may be able to reveal unseen aspects of that issue, identify new allies, discover innovative ways for WDN members to exert political pressure, and even develop previously unseen strategic interventions. Similarly, the Board will work together to strengthen organizational policies and practices so that those, too, reflect our shared values.

During the coming year, WDN will ask Education and Action Circles, on a volunteer basis, to develop, test and evaluate tools to help each circle analyze how race, class, sexual orientation and gender shape their issue area. The Board's hope is that through this process, WDN will be able to sharpen its focus, strengthen its collaboration with strategic partners, and deepen our relationships with each other. We acknowledge that discussions about sexual orientation, race and class can be anxiety producing, but we believe that by focusing on a common purpose, we will be able to support each other in this complex, but necessary work.

In this time of increasing worldwide intergroup hostility and fear of exclusion, the urgency for WDN to develop strong progressive women leaders who are able to ask tough questions of themselves and of others, who are willing to speak about difficult topics in constructive ways and who are committed to practices to strengthen our capacity to build solid, long-term relationships that embrace differences, has never been more pressing. By deliberately working to align our actions with our values, WDN is continuing in the tradition of our founding sisters. With this decision we are affirming our commitment to collaborative learning, leading by example, and taking action in partnership with each other and with all people working for a fair and just world.