



# RACIAL FAIRNESS AMERICA

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## Who Determines How Benefits are Distributed?

Throughout this website, we say **People of Color make these decisions**. This is one of the two main tenets of our project (the other being that white folks gather the resources from their own kind).

But exactly who are these “People of Color” and how do they make the decisions? Both of these are tricky questions.

### Who are the People of Color who decide who benefits from our project?

Generally, we aren’t talking about the whole population of non-white communities. We aren’t going to set up a big tent from time to time filled with free stuff, envelopes of cash, and people hawking their availability to help. Seems like maybe someone else tried that and coined the phrase “free-for-all.”

Instead, again speaking generally, we think the way to go is for our local affiliates to establish good relationships with nearby organizations that serve People of Color, and then let *them* decide what they need to further their cause. This may be to help support or expand existing programs, or to create new ones, or to redistribute to individuals, families, small businesses, or others needing help or doing good things in the neighborhoods they serve. And if we have what they need, they can just claim it.

The people in the central office, whatever their color, cannot know all the needs, or judge which are most meritorious, across the whole territory. So ideally, the true needs are identified at a very local level by people who live there; then, either by a direct connection to the local Racial Fairness affiliate or through other already established organizations, those needs are at least recognized and at best totally fulfilled through our local affiliate.

### Sounds good, but can it work?

There are obvious problems with this.

Realistically, we won’t be able to provide everything there’s a need for. And if we could, additional needs would arise. Everyone can use “more,” and there’s no particular limit to that. So there will often be a contest for resources the white folks can collect. Regrettably, any such on-going contest becomes political: who has the “pull” to get what they want and who doesn’t? In any given region, winners in terms of respect and fundraising are already established, and everyone else competes for what’s left, sometimes fiercely. And of course, wherever money or other

items of value are floating around in significant amounts, there's not only the possibility but eventually the likelihood of corruption creeping in somewhere.

There are also questions about whether some projects or groups should be ineligible. Should we directly support churches, or gangs (probably no)? Should we support great social projects *sponsored* by churches or gangs (probably yes)? How much should we support huge and very worthy initiatives – at the expense of numerous smaller organizations and projects? Or *vice versa*?

Tough questions, and we come back to one of our basic principles to resolve them: People of Color decide. Each affiliate will need a “Distribution Committee” composed entirely of People of Color to create guidelines that work locally and ensure fair distribution – by recipient group, by community, by racial or ethnic group, by type of need served, etc. We'll be posting some suggested guidelines by and by, which will help, but consistently making equitable decisions can still be incredibly difficult – probably the most difficult job in the entire enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

### **So say again: Who are the People of Color who decide?**

This has to be determined locally. But there are two main ways to go here.

First, try to eliminate partisanship right up front. For example, the local affiliate could create a panel of distinguished, accomplished people of varying races and cultures (whichever groups are present in that particular area), and they would discuss and decide all the difficult issues. But even if that can be done, over time others who are perhaps less unselfish about their own cause could manage to get named to the Distribution Committee. Why not? They'd be kind of foolish not to try. So the original distinguished panel might well become increasingly partisan and unable to do the job justly any more. (The U.S. Senate was supposed to be this kind of above-the-fray deliberative body. So was the Supreme Court and the Electoral College. How's all that been working out?)

The other way is to make sure there's at least one representative from each major group (however that's defined), with maybe a few seats left over for rotating representation among the smaller groups. Each can advocate for its own needs and those of the people it represents and serves, but when it's time to vote on a particular situation, those who would receive funding for that matter have to be recused from the vote. Still, there are also ways this kind of arrangement can be corrupted, and the loudest and more influential or more determined still get more than their share.

**But it could be worse!** White people could be making these decisions.

### **The role of the Board of Directors**

Although each local affiliate's By-Laws should be written in a way that gives the Distribution Committee near total independence, the Board of Directors still has ultimate responsibility for

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<sup>1</sup> This calls to mind a satirical article in *The Onion* after Barack Obama was first elected President, titled “[Black Man Given Nation's Worst Job.](#)”

everything that happens in the organization. So the Board, or probably some multi-racial committee of the Board, should be responsible for keeping track of how resources are being distributed, and should investigate any apparent irregularities and report back to the full Board if needed.

The Financial Committee of the Board should also be making sure that *all* financial transactions are both legal and appropriate, and should be ready to quickly identify anything that seems questionable.