

WE CAN HANDLE THE TRUTH



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MEMBER SINCE: 2025

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I co-founded DreamYard, an arts and social justice education organization in the Bronx, 30 years ago. As DreamYard grew, I was very proud of our success, and felt it was due in large part to my own hard work.

Around 2012, three colleagues of mine at DreamYard, all Black women, asked me why I was doing this work, co-leading an organization that serves 100% Black and Brown children. I was 45 years old, 15 years into leadership, and I actually said, "Oh, I don't see color." They lovingly reminded me that Black and Brown people in America do not have that luxury. Thanks to their patience, I began to learn about systems that I now see helped make my success more likely.

YES I worked hard - AND philanthropy disproportionately supports White-led nonprofits, and supports them with more unrestricted funds. White-led nonprofits are likely felt to be more trustworthy because we look and sound more like donors with whom we share similar life experiences. Philanthropy is possible because of wealth compounded over generations for White households far more than for Black households because of centuries of Whites being advantaged over Blacks in education, housing, employment, and finance.

I can now hold two truths at the same time: I can be proud of my hard work and also see that the playing field is not level.