

How Ethnic Minorities Can Experience Support Raising

Apr 10, 2014 08:58 am | missioeric

This entry is part 6 of 6 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

As we discuss issues with the current support raising model and how to address them, it is important for us to remember that we are not talking only in a theoretical sense. I believe solutions will be discovered based on our ability to empathize with everyone affected.

To help us with the process of empathizing with the stories of ethnic minorities who raise support, I've invited my friend "L" to share how he has experienced the support raising process. He does not speak for all ethnic minorities, but I wanted you to hear personally from someone affected by the current system. He writes here under his initial in order to protect the identity of the organization with which he is involved. This series is not about one organization, but about an entire system.

L's Story

I am a Latino man, working in full-time ministry, and this is my experience raising support.

It was 2006, a year after I graduated from college. I had been working but I knew God was directing me to join the Latino student missionary organization that had such a great impact on my own life.

In many ways I had no idea what I was stepping into, but I was motivated by the truth that God will meet our needs. Though many experience discouragement during this season, it's a time to grow in dependence on God in ways like never before. I do believe that strongly, but culturally MPD was a hard thing to wrap my mind around. Many times I could not get past the barriers in my mind that challenged whether this was right or not. Some of it was communicated by my family.

They would question why I needed to ask for money to do ministry. They would say, "You can still do God's work if you had a job". My mom even asked me not to ask the people in the church I grew up in. My network of people consisted of many from different economic and ethnic backgrounds, but for the most part my network was Latino.

Many potential supporters were very encouraged with the vision to reach our Latino community, yet often they had very little to give, if anything at all. Our average gift had been and still is about \$25-\$30. I've even been told by people that they don't want to meet with me because they don't want to feel bad that they are unable to give. I had a lot of fear and anxiety going to church, wondering what people thought of me, or if sometimes people were avoiding me. I often felt a lot of guilt and shame from asking others for financial support, and have struggled with wondering if there was something wrong with me. I've even doubted my call because my fundraising experience was so challenging and difficult.

Because the personal support raising model has been implemented with such success, I've felt that to question it at times said something about my character or God's calling on my life. More than anything, I've felt an anxiety about how my White minister counter-parts, my region, and my leaders perceived me. For example, that I may be lazy or even whether they questioned if I should even be a part of this ministry. Even in light of the fact that so many other Latino staff have expressed the same difficulty and faced the same challenges that I had.

After some time into this journey, leaders from the fundraising department of my organization came along side me, as well as several other Latino staff, to address the challenges we were facing with fundraising. I was grateful for the support and programs implemented to help us get on campus, and I wouldn't have been able to do it without the assistance. That being said, it did take me a total of 3 years to finally complete my initial goal.

Though it was an awesome feeling and a great relief to finally be finished with support raising, I could not help feel discouraged to see that many other missionaries from my 2006 missionary training class were taking on positions of leadership and new roles as I was just arriving on campus. I had already missed out on a lot of ministry experience, leadership training, and was behind on the seminary classes required after a certain number of years of joining staff. I was also not able to participate in missions projects during the summer.

Fast forward a few years and once again I'm in the fund raising phase. I got married in 2010 and my wife joined staff with me in ministry in the winter of 2012. Though it has been much easier working alongside my wife, the process has still been challenging. One of the hardest things about that was that we had to pull away from our ministry assignment. I know that under the current fund raising model it is common, but it was hard still, and momentum on campus fizzled out. We have come close to finishing our support raising goal, and we have been on the fund raising trail for 2 years.

I'd like to point out that my wife is White, and because the trend seems that this community is much more used to the culture of parachurch support raising, we both thought it would be easier to reach our goal. But the truth is that it hasn't, because many already do give to so many places, which is wonderful, and they don't necessarily connect with the need to be a part of reaching the Latino population because they live in parts of the country where that demographic is small. There's also the fact that there are parachurch ministries that have been so well established and so successful for so many years, that when we talk to them about one that is relatively new, we are not met with as much enthusiasm. This was also my experience even before getting married.

From 2006 to 2014, I've spent a total of 3 years out of 8 years actually ministering on campus. Two years before I got married, then just coming up on one complete year since being married. The other five years I've struggled to complete my initial ministry support financial goal. When people say that they don't think they want to support us because after eight years they only see a handful of students involved and wonder what we've been doing with our time, I want to scream! But I don't even try to justify to them because I don't think they would actually understand or care to hear my story.

Currently my wife and I are on campus this semester, but we've lost a lot of ministry support, so we will spend our summer on the fundraising trail once again. I recognize that if it continues to take us longer than usual to raise \$1,000 monthly than most White missionaries would take, we will not be able to do this long-term if we need to constantly go on and off our assignment. I also recognize that though programs like the one I participated in are helpful, it is not realistic to sustain ethnic minority staff long term.

Is Support Raising Unjust?

Apr 14, 2014 07:51 am | missioeric

This entry is part 7 of 7 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

When it comes to the issue of [funding multiethnic mission](#), we have seen that the current model produces systemic inequities. Sociological surveys have corroborated what anecdotal evidence has long told us: the personal support raising model doesn't work as well for ethnic minorities in the United States. The core question now becomes, "Because the model is inequitable, does that also make it unjust?" How we answer this question alters the course of the conversation.

Many people responded to my article, [How Support Raising Keeps Parachurch Ministries White](#), questioning why I said the model was unjust. They agreed with the overall premise, but felt that I went too far in calling support raising an injustice. They were right to ask these questions. In the original article I stated that the model was unjust, but I didn't give supporting evidence specifically for that designation. This post is an attempt to do just that.

I will examine the definition of justice as it is commonly used in Scripture, ask whether injustice can be perpetrated unintentionally, share a forgotten story of equitable funding from missions history, and explore how inequity in support raising represents a missional justice opportunity for the Church. Finally, I'll end with a call to prayer from the Old Testament as we prepare to discuss solutions to funding multiethnic mission equitably.

Equity: Hebrew Meaning of Justice

Before we can decide if the personal support raising model is unjust, we first must begin with a conversation about justice. What is justice? When the Bible speaks of injustice, to what is it referring?

Tim Keller, in his book [Generous Justice](#), explains that in the Old Testament one of the key Hebrew words for "justice" is *mishpat*. "Its most basic meaning is to treat people equitably."¹ A Biblical view of justice is certainly far more robust than this simple definition, but at a minimum it must include equity. Inequity means injustice is present.

Does Injustice Imply Intention?

No Evangelical parachurch organization desired to create a funding structure that was inequitable. This point has never been in doubt. But just because the designers of the personal support raising model

didn't intend for the system to be inequitable, does that mean the model is not considered unjust? Does injustice imply intention?

You'll notice from the definition of *mishpat* above that there is no mention of intention. If something is inequitable, then it is unjust, even if the creators didn't mean for that to happen. **Injustice does not imply it was done intentionally.** And while one might argue that intentional injustice is worse than unintentional injustice, if we are to follow a Biblical view both are injustice and need to be remedied.

In one sense, it can be depressing to realize that even something like the personal support raising model, created with the best of intentions, can be a vehicle for inequity and injustice. But, if we can grieve the effects of the status quo it will allow us to move forward and create new models that are equitable for all.

In another sense, it can be freeing for those of us in the majority culture to know that injustice does not imply intention. When we hear ethnic minorities say that the current model is unjust, we don't have to receive their message as a personal attack on our character. Ethnic minorities are not saying support raising was created to keep ministries white. But they are raising important issues that we need to hear and respond to. Realizing injustice can occur without intention can give us the emotional space to listen, agree, tear down inequitable structures and together build new, just ones.

The Unknown Legacy of China Inland Mission: Equitable Funding

Hudson Taylor's organization, China Inland Mission (today known as [OME](#)) faced a similar issue over 100 years ago. The British mission agency was moving from a central donation system to one where individual staff could receive donations directly from donors. After time, however, the result was that some staff (who were better connected to sources of funding) received more donations than others. This caused disparity in the amount people received in their paychecks. Some staff, because of their social connections, always received a full salary. But many others did not.

Leaders in the organization noticed the equity justice issue inherent in their new model and after a few years' discussion made the decision: no staff would receive funds directly to their account. All monies would be received to the central account and distributed equitably throughout the organization. In the 1899 CIM changed their funding model as a result of their [Acts 6 Moment](#).²

I would argue that this decision is as great a legacy for CIM as their emphasis to take the gospel past the coasts and into the interior. **At a crucial moment in their history the China Inland Mission stood and declared that for mission to be truly Christian it must be funded equitably.** The fact that we in America hardly know this story nor celebrate what it affirms about Christian mission is a statement about our values in mission. American parachurch ministries and mission agencies have not, in large part, responded to funding inequities in ways similar to the British.

Missional Justice, Support Raising, and American National Identity

I believe solving the equity issues present in the personal support raising model represents a missional opportunity for the church in culture. We are presented with the chance to speak a different identity in our country when it comes to issues of ethnicity and equity.

We have a history of racial inequality in this country. Our constitution was written so that black slaves were 3/5 of a person. We fought a civil war, the deadliest in our nation's history, over the right of citizens to keep other human beings as slaves. We followed that with years of segregation and discrimination and still struggle to live in a racially just society. We've illegally broken treaties and taken Native lands. We've interred U.S. citizens of Asian descent during World War II. As much as we hate to talk about the subject, racial inequity is woven into the history of our national identity.

With this national history, we need to ask ourselves, “How is it then, in the area of ministry funding, that we have continued to live out a story of inequity?” How have we tolerated a model that systemically disenfranchises the very same communities who have historically been marginalized by our society at large? Are we truly living out Christ's vision of the church? Or have we been co-opted by the culture?

Have we gained the whole world, but lost our soul?

We can be a chosen people in the world who proclaim with our systems and structures, and not just with our lips, that we serve a risen Savior who is coming is for all peoples. We can listen to the prophetic gifts God has given our Body, our ethnic minority brothers and sisters, and treat them with dignity. We can ask them to lead us into a glorious future in service of a King who comes to make all things new.

May we be parachurch ministries, mission agencies, and support raising missionaries who declare with our lives that in a society whose history is rife with inequity, it has no place with us. The opportunity for missional justice is here, to bring the good news of Jesus to our culture through our words and our structures. We can have a different identity and tell a different story. **“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of The Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.” – Isaiah 58:8-9**

We truly are in our Acts 6 moment. This is what is profound about the early church's response to the widows: knowing that they were coming out of a system, Judaism, where Gentiles were excluded from the center of worship, the church brought the kingdom by inserting them at the very center of the solution. Will we in America see the same “Act of the Spirit” in our day when it comes to our systemic inequities?

“God loves and defends those with the least economic and social power, and so should we. That is what it means to ‘do justice’.” – Tim Keller³

Isaiah's Message

If our primary model for funding mission is inadvertently filled with injustice, could this be a major reason keeping us from finishing the Great Commission? We are now at a place in this blog series where we will

begin to focus on solutions to the issues that have been raised. In the coming days you will hear from a variety of voices, both ethnic minorities and majority culture members, who share ways to begin solving these problems.

As we take the next step towards solutions, I can't help but wonder if the prophet Isaiah has a message for us today. Would you join me in praying through [Isaiah 58](#) over the injustice in our current funding models? As we tackle these problems together with God may we come to be known in the world as "those who can fix anything".

Isaiah 58

"Shout! A full-throated shout!
Hold nothing back—a trumpet-blast shout!
Tell my people what's wrong with their lives,
face my family Jacob with their sins!
They're busy, busy, busy at worship,
and love studying all about me.
To all appearances they're a nation of right-living people—
law-abiding, God-honoring.
They ask me, 'What's the right thing to do?'
and love having me on their side.
But they also complain,
'Why do we fast and you don't look our way?
Why do we humble ourselves and you don't even notice?'

"Well, here's why:
"The bottom line on your 'fast days' is profit.
You drive your employees much too hard.
You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight.
You fast, but you swing a mean fist.
The kind of fasting you do
won't get your prayers off the ground.
Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after:
a day to show off humility?
To put on a pious long face
and parade around solemnly in black?
Do you call that fasting,
a fast day that I, God, would like?
**"This is the kind of fast day I'm after:
to break the chains of injustice,**
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed,
cancel debts.

What I'm interested in seeing you do is:
sharing your food with the hungry,
inviting the homeless poor into your homes,
putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
being available to your own families.
Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your righteousness will pave your way.
The God of glory will secure your passage.
Then when you pray, God will answer.
You'll call out for help and I'll say, 'Here I am.'

"If you get rid of unfair practices,
quit blaming victims,
quit gossiping about other people's sins,
If you are generous with the hungry
and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out,
Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.
I will always show you where to go.

I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—

firm muscles, strong bones.

You'll be like a well-watered garden,
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.
You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.

You'll be known as those who can fix anything,

restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,
make the community livable again.

"If you watch your step on the Sabbath
and don't use my holy day for personal advantage,
If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy,
God's holy day as a celebration,
If you honor it by refusing 'business as usual,'
making money, running here and there—
Then you'll be free to enjoy God!
Oh, I'll make you ride high and soar above it all.
I'll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob."
Yes! God says so!

[Isaiah 58 \(The Message\)](#) [emphasis added]

Bridging the Gap: A Solutions Guest Post by Byron Johnson

Apr 15, 2014 07:20 am | missioeric

This entry is part 8 of 8 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

I am excited to have [Byron Johnson](#) of [Vision938](#) guest posting on the blog today. A 20 year veteran of campus ministry, Byron now leads Vision938 to help empower and equip ethnic minority missionaries. We talked on the phone a few weeks ago and Byron was gracious enough to jot down a few notes on solutions to the inequity present in the personal support raising model. His passion is to solve the issues I've been raising during this series and I'm thrilled to be able to share some of his thoughts and the practical steps he has already taken. Learn more and contact Byron at [Vision938.org](#)

Vision938 Solution

Our primary solution at Vision938 is to supplement (bridge the gap) the current missionaries that are falling short in their monthly support by coming alongside them for 4 years. We raise funds and commit to giving to the missionary to help make up for the gap they are experiencing in their support. This is one person (or organization) making a commitment to go out and raise the necessary funds for something like this to take place.

The big issue for minority missionaries is the lack of a network of relationships. This being said, if we as Vision938 can come along them for 4 years, it will give them time prayerfully to consistently do ministry without being overly concerned about their support. It gives them 4 years to live in a community and connect with a local church with the hope that in that 4 year period, they will garner relationships in which to raise support. They could wean themselves off of the support we are giving. This would definitely look different for a new missionary just beginning to raise support. (See other solutions below) The long term goal is sustainability.

Other Potential Solutions

All non-minority staff raise an additional percentage (1-4%) above their goal to contribute to a minority fund for hiring and maintaining minority staff. As the minority missionary reach the fully-funded stage, they participate in the raising of additional percentage as well.

Creating an endowment (\$1 million) of sort for the funding of minority missionaries; maybe using a sliding scale model.

Sliding scale model... 100% funded, year 1; 75%, year 2; 50%, year 3; 25%, year 4; Self-sustaining fully-funded in year 5. The percentages can be modified (100%, 67%, 33%, etc.). I don't know if I really like this model because it could promote laziness in that first year in particular. i.e. "I'm fully-funded so I don't have to be concerned about support." When that second year rolls around, the minority missionary has not raised the necessary percentage.

Referral system... Non-minority staff introducing the minority staff to potential donors. Another idea along these lines, that as the non-minority is rolling off of staff or away from the mission field, he or she would challenge their donors to stay committed to the vision by transferring their support to the minority staff. This could include the non-minority staff introducing the minority staff to their donors and challenging them to continue give to the mission though the white staff is leaving the mission field.

Team Support Raising. Everyone raises support the traditional way but instead of having individual goals there is one team goal that everyone works towards.

NOTE: None of these solutions are created to alleviate the minority missionary from raising support. The missionary must take some responsibility. In all these solutions, there has to be some strong accountability along the way.

Contextual Support Raising: A Solutions Guest Post by Pablo Otaola

Apr 16, 2014 07:39 am | missioeric

This entry is part 9 of 10 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

Today's guest post is by [Pablo Otaola](#). Pablo serves on staff with [YoungLife in Denver](#). Previously he served with YoungLife in the Chicago Area. Pablo is also involved with [CCDA](#), the Christian Community Development Association. The views and opinions he shares here are his own. We talked on the phone recently and I was encouraged and challenging by Pablo's ingenuity and willingness to think outside the box. He's a great leader on these issues.

A contextual model for fund-raising is of utmost importance to me. Eric's articles have touched on something that can, and in many cases has, impeded indigenous leadership staff development within minority communities. The past five years on Young Life staff exposed me to fund-raising models that have some cross-cultural merit. However, the underlying cultural assumptions left me with tools I had to tweak and contextualize, or not use at all. Recently, Young Life was selected as one of the top 10 non-profits in the country for the way they steward wealth. I agree with this assessment. But no ministry is without systemic flaws. The Young Life funding model definitely has some of these systemic flaws that Eric proposes in his series.

In my search for potential alternatives, or at least temporary Band-aids, I have concluded the issue is two-pronged. **First is the lack of meaningful understanding that the issues existing within many low socioeconomic communities require long-term funding solutions.** This long-term need is frequently not reflected in the apparent urgency in the funding models. **The second component surfaces in a lack of honoring local communities.** Jesus is involved with the local communities long before any national or international staff arrive. When "we" show up, and before WE attempt to fix the funding issue, we must honor and empower the local community to resolve their own challenges.

Thinking Outside the Box

My immigrant identity has fostered in me a drive to find a way around these funding model hurdles. In Argentina I tasted the privilege of financial legacy. We left all financial resources behind and thus began with no financial legacy passed onto us when we immigrated into the United States and had to start from scratch. The immigrant mindset often includes a fervent attempt to find financial security, or at least to “get by”. The US system is not designed for the immigrant, so many adopt an entrepreneurial mentality: since there’s no systemic way to be upwardly mobile financially, one must create their own means of making headway. Even then, inherent systems can prevent success no matter how hard a person tries.

The way that I was taught to fund raise is not enough. I have been forced to think outside the box. I have been forced to generate alternative funding sources. My network’s net worth was very small, so I had to figure something else out. No person forced me, but if I wanted to continue walking out my call, something had to change.

My paradigm shifted when I broadened my focus beyond fund-raising to include raising capital or think about business cash flow. When it comes to indigenous leadership development, there are not enough wealthy people within my reach to support all the indigenous minority leaders I desire to develop and there are not enough wealthy people in Young Life’s reach to empower and financially support all minorities that could come on staff. That means personal funding can be only part of the pie if I am serious about developing communities, and not just looking out for myself.

Often times fund-raising comes down to internal ministry grants, external grants from foundations, personal relationships with friends and family, and different endowment opportunities. I don’t believe that’s enough to have self-sustaining long-term financial health. I don’t believe that our work is limited to the generosity of people. Why would I limit the revenue potential that could fund my ministry?

Here’s how I see it: If I can have access to all people and to their entire monthly revenue, then I will focus on that. People often focus on the Christians that can give above and beyond their tithe which is often a small percentage. Disposable income is a privilege that minority communities often do not have. Why would I not look at 100% of my market cash flow and figure out a way to get a larger piece of the pie? What follows are some components of community development that motivate my creative thinking and help me to implement unique and innovative funding models.

Cornerstones of Ministry Funding

When I contemplate infusing funds into ministry, I consider eight cornerstones: Relocation, Reconciliation, Redistribution, Leadership Development, Listening to the community, Church-based (or partnership-based), Wholistic, and Empowerment. Those eight components were developed by the Christian Community Development Association (www.cdda.org). Those components are for Christian community development, but when thinking about fund-raising, I live by those components so that a community and their culture, their values, their needs, their assets, and their worth are held high, honored and leveraged. I would never want to dishonor the local community to achieve the goals of any organization.

In raising funds, I concentrate quite a bit of my time into thinking about economic engines that generate revenue with a long-term goal of having those engines be self-sustaining; or at least not being sustained

by me. In thinking about that, I try to see where there is revenue leakage in the community. It takes time, but one can often see that things can be done more efficiently; that one might be able to provide a service that saves someone money and in the process I can take a share in the profits which would be fully reinvested into the ministry. One such example is food. People will pay money for food all the time. So if I can empower my local teens or community to provide a small food service that leverages local culture, then the local people's culture is honored and leveraged for income that can go directly into the community.

Taco Crawl

One such micro-business is what I call a Taco Crawl. You might have heard of a bar crawl. Well, this is similar. I have a large RV come into the city and I fill it with Mexican drinks and about 30 adults. Each adult pays \$100 – \$500 to get into the RV. These people are most likely not people from the community so I get about 5-8 people from the community to make the room a bit more culturally and racially diverse.

We drive from taco joint to taco joint tasting only one taco per restaurant. At the end of the night we all rank the taco joints and the winning restaurant gets a plaque from our ministry saying that they won “Best taco in Southwest Denver 20XX.” In turn, I build relationships with the local restaurant owners that will hopefully turn into a community funding partner, a job for a local teen or adult that I might know, or just a friendship that enhances my presence in the community.

During the drive from taco joint to taco joint, we share a lot of laughs and the story of what God is doing in the community. Cross-cultural relationships are formed and hopefully maintained. One of my goals is not to always have to go to the suburbs or wealthy city areas to raise money but to bring those people into the communities where I am ministering so that reconciliation and redemption can happen.

Leveraging Community Assets

I attempt leverage every community asset that I can get my hands on. Churches are huge assets in several ways. Many churches do not have financial resources but they have building resources. One of those building resources can be that I do not have to pay space. Many churches were donated or bought very cheaply from areas that have gentrified so local minority church buildings are usually a hidden gem. In other words, the church budgets usually cannot support a missionary due to their lack of funds, but they can let me use their building for free.

We also have several church partnerships that allow me access to people. Access to people is a huge resource! These local community people might not have the funds to be monthly financial supporters, but they can definitely help cook food for another micro-business or they can be non-staff help etc. When we share resources, we can definitely lower the cost that it might take to have a person of color on staff.

Another way that these churches help fund-raise is by raising awareness. They have been in the community long before any of our large ministries were even thinking about going into those neighborhoods and therefore have a lot of social capital. People know they are not leaving and therefore

they are trusted entities. This social capital will definitely generate financial revenue if they advocate for you and your minority staff in the community.

One of the things that we are doing is to have our Latino Student Staff, who are members of these local churches, update the community from the pulpit on how ministry is going once a month for 10 minutes. When locals see their own talking about ministry in their own neighborhood, they are incredibly more likely to get involved financially. And if they cannot get involved financially by giving out of their disposable income, they will likely buy taquitos or enchiladas right after church from us instead of a local restaurant. They enjoy that. Who doesn't?! They enjoy the community time with their church as well as knowing that their \$10 went to God and a local ministry that is mentoring their own youth.

There are of course many more cultural advantages to this type of fund-raising, but it takes a while to understand the local community and culture and then know how to leverage the assets.

Internship Program

Yet another way that our minority staff is aided in fund-raising is with our Latino Student Staff Omega program. We take Latino staff from around the country and we teach them how to fund-raise by teaching them how to be cross-culturally intelligent. We also dive into how their race and culture gives them a unique cultural advantage. We teach them how to interact with wealthy donors and much more in this two-year process. Lastly, one of the most important things that we do in this program is that we give the staff access to personal relationships with people of wealth. For every indigenous Latino leader, we pair them up with 5 to 10 local wealthy donors. Without this access to wealth, there is no access to power.

We are early on in this leadership development program but the two Latino Student Staff that are graduating from this program went from raising under \$100 combined in personal monthly support from their personal network to fund-raising a combined \$22,000 per year. Each of them is raising this through a combination of their local communities and the people of wealth that they were introduced to.

Legacy Funds

Something that Young Life regions around the country are also doing is creating legacy funds for urban staff. In general, they are endowments of 3 to 5 million dollars that are used to subsidize the fund-raising efforts and empower the minority staff by giving them time to learn how to fund-raise in their local context and still continue to give a certain percentage of their fund raising responsibility. Chicago and Denver have these models and are each finding that these funds are needed for long term sustainability.

In order to have long-term sustainability, the original investment is not touched, but instead, only the yearly profit yielded is used as cash flow for ministries. There are definitely pros and cons with these funds and it is still in the beginning stages (under 15 years). I think that one of the major issues with this model, however, is that if a city does not have this available, then the minority staff is usually not able to work in this city unless some other combination of the above is somehow implemented. Something to keep in mind is that there is a fine line between empowerment and enabling people. I would never want to stop the potential professional growth of a minority staff that needs these funds by giving them a

staff position where they do not have to learn how to raise funds in these methods as well as traditional ones.

Mission Trips as Social Enterprise

When we continue to think about how to leverage and partner with local culture to provide a service that people of means (middle class and up) can pay for, we have come up with an urban plunge summer trip (www.YoungLifeHorizons.com). Young Life Horizons is a social enterprise of Urban Young Life Chicago and Denver. It is a discipleship trip and immersion into the inner city and Young Life's response to the need for cultural intelligence and a better theological understanding of Jesus through the theologies of celebration and suffering.

We use this tool to teach about cross-cultural humility and cross-cultural intelligence and all the profits are put right back into the local ministry. We ONLY hire people from the community in order to give them jobs and we ONLY have community volunteers to help create cross-cultural relationships that will last beyond the trip. We honor the locals by having them lead these mostly White suburban groups into their own communities and to teach them about their communities and culture. We have found that there are plenty of these types of ministry models.

However, what I think is unique to ours is that we saw a financial opportunity within our Young Life cash market and thus why we treat this as a social enterprise. We saw that our suburban groups were oftentimes spending over \$1,000 per person to go on these crazy fun trips into the mountains, rapids, etc. So, we took the opportunity to invite these groups to come into a cross-cultural experience that most do not get to experience: God in the city. These teens and young college students will be the leaders of our ministries by serving as staff, volunteers and in board positions. We want them to have a seed planted about cross-cultural ministry. We want them to see the face of God in a completely different way. So once again like the Taco Crawl, we leverage local culture in order to receive funds that our communities could otherwise not provide in the conventional way of fund-raising.

We have come up with other contextual ways of raising-funds and we will continue to think and live outside this fund-raising model and box so that our indigenous minority leaders are not excluded from the opportunity to be on staff.

Turning the White Parachurch Ship Around? – A Solutions Guest Post by Scott Bessenecker

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This entry is part 10 of 10 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

The following guest post is by [Scott Bessenecker](#). Scott serves at the Associate Director of Missions for InterVarsity. The views he expresses here are his own. The author of multiple books, including [The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor](#), Scott is an insightful missions strategist. I

have quoted him earlier in this series. His new book, ***Overturning Tables: Freeing Missions from the Christian Industrial Complex***, will be out in October. For more info, please see the following blog series Scott wrote: [The Twilight of North American Missionary Structures](#).

(The picture above is a painting of a Dutch trading vessel from 1762.)

The Protestant world's connection with for-profit styled organizational structures dates back to the early 1600s when the first limited liability corporations were forming. The East Indies trading companies emerging from countries like Great Britain and the Netherlands were founded and run by devout Protestants. Protestants were, by and large, the architects of both early capitalistic ventures and of the modern non-profit organization. William Carey, one of the early Protestant missionaries, used the commercial trading society as the template for the missionary society he founded.¹ The capitalist business structure and Protestant mission were wed long ago. Thus, a parachurch organizational model, founded upon the idea of doing mission by using the capital investment of middle class or wealthy people, is in our organizational ancestry.

Turning around this capitalist, business-shaped, organizational paradigm is no small feat. Funding our mission from wealthy and middle class benefactors has been a pillar of parachurch mission for hundreds of years. Add to this the ways in which income disparity has grown in recent years, concentrating wealth into fewer and fewer hands, and we will find that funding people who are not well-connected to the middle and upper class a profound challenge.

But is widening the parachurch staffing pool to include ethnic minorities and those cut off from wealth impossible? Certainly not. The majority of Christian mission for the past 2,000 years has been conducted by “ordinary and unschooled” men and women. “... not many were influential; not many were of noble birth” (I Cor. 1:26).

Here are a few ideas which could move parachurch ministries further down the road of attracting and retaining qualified ministers who are either ethnic minorities or not well-connected to the middle class.

1. The Bi-Vocational Option: This is standard fare for ethnic minority urban church pastors, but relatively un-accommodated and only marginally tolerated in the white parachurch world.

I think that a more aggressive approach to make space for bi-vocational ministers without burning them out would open the door for many. How might we work around a variety of employment situations? Are there best practices from those who have tried and failed or tried and succeeded from which we can learn? Are there business owners or industry professionals who would be willing to work with parachurch ministries to create healthy options for the bi-vocational minister? Are parachurch ministries willing to spin off businesses which could supplement the incomes of our bi-vocational ministers?

2. Creative In-kind Giving: Parachurch ministries might focus more energy on calling ministry partners who may not be able or interested in giving money but who could help reduce living expenses of our ministers. I know a developing world Christian leader, for instance, who lives rent-free due to the generosity of a poor friend whose family owns the apartment in which he lives. A YWAM ministry I know is

in fellowship with a local restaurant owner who gifts the YWAMers one meal per day. Intentional communities who share a common purse or work together to pool their resources might be able to free someone up to minister part or full time. I think we could open up our imaginations simply by drawing enough people together to explore these options.

3. Redistribution: I realize that redistribution is a dirty word in some circles, but the fact remains that wealth has been very poorly distributed, and those who have been cut out of wealth for generations have so much to contribute to mission if they could only be released to full or part time ministry. Some organizations (my own included) take a percentage of all donations and release this to our minority communities to bolster the funding of good ministers who simply have little access to the enclaves of wealth in this country. Just how much redistribution is necessary and the mechanisms for redistribution are likely to differ from parachurch to parachurch, but it should be an ongoing and open discussion, and the minority communities should be given the greater say in this process. Which leads me to my final point.

4. Turn the Purse Strings Over to the Excluded: In Acts 6 the excluded community (Greek speakers) received the short end of the stick when funds were distributed for their poor widows. The solution was that the Apostles (the “included” Hebrew speakers) released control of the funds to those who were being overlooked. They choose a handful of godly leaders (all Greek names) to take charge of the common purse, trusting they would not commit reverse discrimination and short change the Hebrew speaking widows. Parachurch ministries should release, or heavily involve, godly, minority leaders in policy-making decisions around finances.

Obviously there are a variety of governmental regulations by which we must abide, but our financially excluded friends are quite capable of navigating these regulations, particularly if experienced white leaders partner carefully without shutting down creative options with a “that-won’t-work” knee-jerk reaction to alternatives.

We live in a broken world where wealth has concentrated into relatively few hands. One of the consequences is that wise, talented and godly individuals who could dramatically advance our mission find it extremely difficult to pay the entrance fee to mission. To compound this, most Protestant churches and parachurch ministries are founded upon a predominantly white, predominantly capitalist worldview. **We have constructed resource-driven, individualistic, for-profit shaped organizations that work well for white and middle class ministers but not so well for ethnic minority staff.**

Addressing this systemic inequity will be painful and messy. Likely there will be many mistakes along the way. **But until we create a more severe attempt at partnership between the haves and the have-nots, our ministries will continue to exclude too many capable, gifted leaders.**

I say we take the commercial vessels we’ve been sailing our ministries upon and chart a new course.

[What Can An Organization Do? – A Solutions Guest Post by Ted Esler](#)

Apr 22, 2014 07:05 am | missioeric

This entry is part 11 of 11 in the series [Funding Multiethnic Mission](#)

I am privileged to share today on the blog a guest post by Ted Esler. Ted serves as the Executive VP for [Pioneers USA](#). Ted has a Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Seminary. He was gracious enough to share some of his thoughts as an organizational leader to some of the issues raised in this series. Quick to affirm that neither he nor Pioneers have all the answers, I appreciate his vulnerability to share in a public forum how his organization is approaching these problems. You can engage more with Ted in the comments below, on [his website](#) or on [twitter](#).

As a leader in [Pioneers USA](#) I have been a part of a team that seeks greater diversity in our missionary force. It has been pointed out earlier in this blog series that the support-raising system is a contributor to the “whiteness” of ministries. From my perspective as an agency leader there is much truth to this charge.

The following list is from notes from our leadership team’s internal study of the issue. I call this list “Advice to Ourselves,” because we know we have a problem and we know we can address it. There are certainly more radical approaches to the problem but we are who we are. Our organization has a long way to go before we reflect the demographic changes occurring in the United States. As I write this post, this morning I will be speaking to a group of about 45 new staff candidates. I note that this group of candidates has more African Americans than possibly any other group we have had on our campus.

Advice to Ourselves

- **1. Understand the dynamics of the support-raising paradigm and its effect on organizations.**

It would be easy to ignore the fact that the support-raising paradigm does make it difficult from some ethnic groups to participate in the life of your organization. It’s not that these systems are designed to do so, of course, but that they are culturally bound to the majority culture’s church history and development.

- **2. See each ethnic group in their own context. Lumping them into one category reflects a majority viewpoint.**

I frequently read/hear advocates of diversity in missions discuss this topic in a way that categorizes all minorities into one group. In our organization’s experience this defeats the need for cultural/racial sensitivity. For example, our previous leader in the area of recruitment (an Asian American) was committed to avoiding the hiring of an “ethnic mobilizer.” His view was that people don’t want to be labeled as identifying primarily with their subgroup and recruiting them on this premise was a negative influence in the pursuit of diversity. African American mobilizers, on the other hand, have assured me that until we give them a unique track into our organization they will feel sidelined.

- **3. Leaders, like myself, must be personally involved in the process.**

Leaders at the highest levels of the organization must see and appreciate the problems inherent in mobilizing the minority church in the USA. Tough decisions will need to be made. For example, as long as majority culture people sit in

the seats of authority those same seats will not be made available to others. We leaders must be very willing to vacate and move on in order to see our organizations transformed positively.

- **4. Change the board membership.**

Boards provide for unique opportunity to be inclusive. Organizational boards are not subject to the support-raising paradigm. They are influential and can guide senior leaders in making institutional change. Use of the board's rotation schedule makes board transformation possible. This is hard work: we struggle to find competent, available minority leaders that can meaningfully contribute to the organization. They are out there, of course, but (similar to the support-raising issues noted elsewhere) we simply don't have a relationship with them. Thus, it is hard for us to find them and challenge them to participate.

- **5. Focus on the local churches that support the organization.**

Understand the role of the local church in each community as fundamentally different. Start with this distinction in mind. See the culture of the church, not just the objective of the organization when talking with pastors. In most ethnic churches the pastor has a stronger, more centralized leadership role. One cannot plan to relate directly to people involved in a church. Pastors, in many of these churches, are gatekeepers.

- **6. Look at alternative funding paradigms.**

Many people have suggested that we must adopt a different system of financing mission. While I applaud their efforts, this is a very hard thing to see happen. Agencies can and should be experimenting with alternate ways of sending. Examples are organizations like [Movein](#) (tentmaking) and Positive Impact (business as mission). Another suggestion has been to layer "general fund" support-raising on top of existing mission agencies to directly fund workers. Be aware of sustainability in these paradigms. Also be aware that organizations that utilize these methods (like World Vision, World Relief and Samaritan's Purse) wrap their objectives around fund-able projects. The more abstract the organization's objective is (like church planting) the more difficult it will be to attract donations.

- **7. Partner.**

Allow for partnerships that you might not otherwise consider or see unless you have an eye for minority mobilization. For example, look for a minority-led organization that you can partner with to achieve both organization's goals. In the process you will learn from them. You may also find that backing their efforts will yield far greater involvement of a minority group than through recruitment to your organization. Be generous to these fledgling organizations both in resources and time. Be willing to go outside of your organizational objectives to do this when necessary.

- **8. Look at your staff mix.**

Look at the mix between support-raised positions and salaried roles on your staff. All agencies have some salaried positions. In our organization support-raising is not a requirement to hold any position. Obviously, those who come "off the field" and have raised support often have a greater likelihood of rising to prominent positions. Even so, we have a number of positions that are held by senior leaders who do not raise funds. When possible, leverage these salaried roles.

- **9. Challenge the minority church.**

Minority churches could and should encourage a culture of support-raising. The model is, in

part, taken from the pages of the Bible. Simply accepting the status quo among minority congregations sells them short of their potential.

- **10. Look deep down the pipeline.**

Missionaries don't just appear overseas one day. There is typically a long pipeline that gets them there. It often starts with missions experiences that expose people to cross-cultural realities. Working with minority mobilization may mean engineering experiences for them that start in the early formation of a person's missiology. A church may, for example, decide to allow people to take short-term mission trips that grow a person deeper in their exposure. The first year they may be on a short-term trip to their own ethnic background culture (such as Africa or China). If they want to go short-term again, a church could require that the second experience be in a completely different culture. We can't transform the current situation by simply looking at organizations: a developmental model of people in the "missions pipeline" must be considered.