

Marsha Morgan on How Collective Giving Can Uplift Women and Girls

Editor's Note: This interview in our [Feminist Giving IRL series](#) features Marsha Morgan, a founding member of the Birmingham Change Fund and past Chair of the Community Investment Network.



Marsha Morgan, courtesy of Marsha Morgan

1. What do you wish you had known when you started out in your profession?

I wish I had started my journey in philanthropy with a proper understanding of the true definition of philanthropy: love of humanity. Having this knowledge and perspective would have allowed me to take more ownership of my power and would have changed how I leveraged my resources as a philanthropist when I first started working in collective giving.

2. What is your current greatest professional challenge?

[Research from Women's Philanthropy Institute](#) shows that organizations committed to serving women and girls receive only 1.6% of charitable funding, and funding allocated specifically to women and girls of color is far less. Although I have found some awareness around the need to support women and girls, we must do more. In order to bridge this gap, as a field, we must work in partnership with the community. One shining example of this is I Be Black Girl's Black Girls Lead program, where members ages 14-19 participate in leadership exploration. Members get to lead their own giving circle, share their experience as black girls in Omaha, Nebraska, and bring a youth perspective to the work of IBBG.

3. What inspires you most about your work?

I am always inspired by the passion of giving circle members because they understand the power of collective giving. The Community Investment Network, a national network of giving circles, empowers communities of color to leverage their collective resources to create the change they wish to see. Also, I stand in awe of how giving circles can build genuine relationships in their community to empower and strengthen those who are often overlooked and marginalized. Within the collective giving movement, we are demystifying the assumptions about who gives and receives because we are developing authentic relationships where we are giving our time, talent, treasure and testimony, which motivates me to continue on this path and create a legacy for others coming behind me.

4. How does your gender identity inform your work?

As a Black woman working in this space, I understand the needs of girls and women because of my lived experience. Historically, women have not been at the table or had the decision making power to raise awareness and direct resources to issues and causes directly impacting them. It is my role to act in

honor of every woman that has poured into me to help them claim their seat at the table and to have the necessary support to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

5. How can philanthropy support gender equity?

Philanthropy has a tremendous opportunity to level the playing field by creating pathways to encourage gender equity through education, economic advancement and leadership development. We must ensure resources are deployed to organizations that impact women and girls in a way that erases existing gaps. When resources are equitably distributed, we can foster a society that uplifts women and girls.

There are examples of philanthropic organizations ensuring women in their communities have equitable opportunities. For instance, the Sisterhood of Philanthropists Impacting Needs (SPIN), a Denver-based giving circle of African American women, is currently fundraising and pooling member contributions for Educational Justice for Black Coloradans, an initiative to address the economic and educational gap between Black and white students in Colorado.

SPIN is leveraging their collective resources to meet a community need. If other philanthropic institutions followed their lead, we would no longer need to discuss the “how” but we could celebrate the results of their investments.

6. In the next 10 years, where do you see gender equity movements taking us?

Gender equity movements are creating more space and opportunities for women to develop the talent and skills required to impact the issues that affect them directly and, more importantly, change, erase and eradicate those issues. Over the next 10 years, I’m hopeful that the gender equity movement will not slow down, but rather propel us to take more strides to ensure that women of all backgrounds and walks of life are fulfilling their wildest dreams because their educational, financial, professional and civic goals have been achieved.

More on Marsha Morgan

Service has always been a way of life for Marsha Morgan. She is one of the founding members of the Birmingham Change Fund, a giving circle founded in 2004. She credits the organization with changing the trajectory of how she defined philanthropy and her role as a philanthropist.

Currently, she serves as the immediate past Chair of the Community Investment Network, a national network of 19 giving circles impacting African American and communities of color. Members of the Community Investment Network believe in leveraging their resources of time, talent, treasure and testimony to create change in their local communities. Marsha has a background in engineering, regulatory compliance and project management, with nearly 20 years of energy industry experience. She is very active in her community and serves as an advocate for giving circles and minorities and women in STEM. Her desire to give back is rooted in a quote by Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

This interview has been minimally edited.

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