



Stephen Heinz

Filantropie en de opgebouwde erfenis voor toekomstige generaties

Scheidend president van het Rockefeller Brothers Fund



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Filantropie Bericht

Stephen Heintz neemt na 25 jaar afscheid als voorzitter van het Rockefeller Brothers Fund, een familiestichting met een schenking van ongeveer \$ 1,2 miljard die maatschappelijke verandering bevordert voor een rechtvaardiger, duurzamer en vredzamer wereld. Hier volgt zijn (Engelstalige) afscheidsspeech.

Dear Friends,

Twenty-five years ago, when I began my tenure as president of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, I could not have imagined where we would be today.

The world was a profoundly different place in 2001.

The iPhone hadn't been released, and Facebook, Twitter, and Gmail hadn't been invented. Sea levels were four inches lower. There had not been a global pandemic for over 80 years. The World Trade Center still towered above Manhattan.

With each new reality, the persistent, collective efforts of RBF grantees, partners, and staff have contributed to tremendous progress: the Paris Climate Agreement, the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal, expanded voter access in the United States, green manufacturing in China, a booming independent media in Serbia, a peaceful transfer of power in Guatemala.

When we have failed, we have learned from our mistakes, strengthened our resolve, and charted a new path. We have faced setbacks, but we have gained more.

But progress is getting harder.

The pace of change is accelerating, and institutional philanthropy has struggled to keep up.

Philanthropy has also evolved over this period. Despite a global financial crisis and rising social polarization, the foundation ecosystem is, on its surface, the healthiest it's ever been. Foundation assets worldwide ballooned from less than \$500 billion in 2001 to nearly **\$1.5 trillion** in 2026, and efforts like **Unite in Advance** demonstrate a level of philanthropic solidarity never contemplated at the turn of the century. Multiyear, unrestricted giving and other principles of "trust-based philanthropy" are supplanting traditional philanthropic models, beginning to account for the sector's antidemocratic origins. Strategic grantmaking has become widespread.

Yet the unchecked advance of hyper-disruptive tech, a new nuclear arms race, a rapidly warming planet, assaults on democratic institutions, processes and norms, and a widening economic chasm threaten our shared vision of a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. Civil society—the community of frontline changemakers like you who drive progress toward this vision—is under sustained attack worldwide.

The philanthropic foundation was the creation of massive concentrations of wealth—few more so than mine, founded by the grandchildren of the world's first billionaire. Over the next decade, as much as \$15 trillion in *new* philanthropic capital will be unlocked.

Experience indicates that the money alone will not be enough; how these dollars flow, and through what types of institutions, matters. New institutional forms are still emerging: donor-advised funds and family offices resistant to the very idea of public scrutiny, LLCs with rigid metrics and the expectation of instant returns.

I, too, have been changed by this turbulent era in history.

I once thought government was the only way to effect change, but after 15 years in public service, I realized significant change would more often result from bottom-up demand than top-down leadership. My career in philanthropy confirmed this belief. The modest scale of philanthropic resources taught me—along with some difficult lessons about privilege—how combining an ambitious purpose with a humble approach could trigger systemic change. Seeing the tenacity, agility, and compounding successes of each and every RBF grantee showed me how to get creative when it comes to impact.

That is why, although I am stepping down from my RBF post, I am not stepping away. In recent weeks, I have been working alongside the Fund's brilliant and energetic incoming president and CEO, **Ian Solomon**, who will formally join the RBF on September 22.

Even after my formal tenure at the RBF comes to an end, I will continue to engage personally in high-ambition initiatives that hold promise for shaping a future of greater political and economic equity, less violent conflict, and a sustainable planet. I will remain committed to helping build a 21st-century philanthropic sector that can address the fundamental systems failures of current economic and governance models. A sector that balances opportunistic risk capital with consistent, patient investment. That prioritizes long-term qualitative improvements to lives and communities over instant stakeholder gratification.

Philanthropy's role is to take the side of the voiceless future against the selfishness of the present. Future generations inherit the world we build. What we owe them are institutions that give them the power to determine their own future.

With enduring gratitude,

Stephen Heintz

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