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OTHER VIEWS

10 ways to make more mindful charitable gifts

If you're a community-minded person, it's easy to be overwhelmed with solicitations for financial support from worthy nonprofit organizations, especially at the end of the year. Being as thoughtful and intentional about personal and business philanthropy as you are about your own finances is a step in the right direction.

Here are some charitable giving ideas I recommend keeping in mind as you delve into your philanthropy this month. And, despite what bookkeepers or certified public accountants might cheerfully counsel, I try to think of the tax deductibility of my own personal gifts as an added bonus, not a primary motivation.

1. Ask yourself the key questions. What's a realistic budget for charitable contributions? And, given my current and likely future available resources, where do I think I can make the greatest impact?

2. Don't wait for organizations (and causes) to find you. Do some homework to evaluate the vision and effectiveness of groups you're considering, then connect with them in ways that make the most sense. Sometimes, it's good to link with organizations that align directly with your work or your hobbies. That's why home improvement retailers have supported Habitat for Humanity and why tech firm owners give hardware and software to schools and colleges. You'll be far more invested in their success if you pick the right partners.

3. Determine the best sources of information. Charity Navigator and GuideStar are two readily accessible online sources of intelligence about the structure and performance of many nonprofit organizations, but they don't evaluate and rate everyone. Ask trusted experts about what groups are really doing the best work on multiple measures: breadth and depth of effective services, financial management, leadership, innovation, community support and involvement, sustainability, etc.

4. Make gifts that satisfy both your heart and your head. Over time figure out what really inspires you and commit to giving most generously there. The real key to long-term success and satisfaction is to give honestly, not solely for ulterior motives.

5. Leverage your resources. There are many simple ways to make your money go farther. For example, consider making a match challenge to other individuals and businesses who care about the same things you do. And investigate how "aggregators" such as community foundations can effectively pool donor dollars to increase the number and size of grants, scholarships and other forms of support.



MAX WILLIAMS
Comment

6. Fewer may be better. As the old saying goes, if you're thirsty, it's better to fill up a few cups than put one drop in a thousand. You'll achieve the greatest return on your investment with deeper, longer-term commitments, not with a flavor-of-the-month approach. And, if you have a solid giving strategy in place, it's much more reasonable to decline opportunities that don't fit the profile.

7. Involve family members and employees. Bring your children, grandchildren or parents into the conversation and give them a chance to share what is important to them so they can help guide your giving. Or, if you are a business owner, let staff members give you input on what causes and groups are most important to them. Even owners of micro-businesses often match their employees' donations up to a certain limit. Also, consider creating fun and meaningful staff volunteer activities such as a nonprofit facility clean-up or a holiday food drive.

8. Contribute things other than money. Time, talent, treasure — everyone has some of each. Once you've identified who you want to support, constantly inventory what you have to give that matches up best with what's needed. In addition to cash, you may want to join a nonprofit's board or host a get-to-know brunch for potential donors.

9. Think outside the "collection box." Many organizations, religious and secular alike, rely on donors who commit to making regular contributions. But, every once in a while, it's good to check around and see if there are emerging groups meeting new and more critical needs.

10. Ask for help when you need it. If doing all the research and legwork associated with creating and managing your charitable giving this year seems daunting, think about tapping into the expertise of The Oregon Community Foundation (www.oregoncf.org). It has helped thousands of donors make this community and ones around our state great places to live and work.

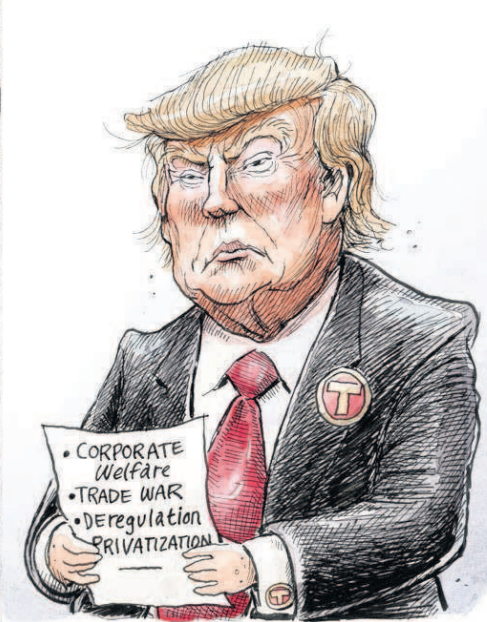
One final thought. Although you may want to use charitable giving to enhance the visibility of your cause, not all donations need to be publicly acknowledged. Many cultural traditions teach that the most rewarding gifts are made quietly and we have a number of foundation donors who have expressed how much they love seeing themselves listed as "Anonymous" at the top of the donor list!

■
Max Williams is the president and CEO of The Oregon Community Foundation. The organization just announced \$162,000 in grants to support the important work of nonprofits along the North Coast.

OTHER VIEWS

New DEAL...

Raw DEAL...



Books for the Donald Trump era

The Donald Trump presidency is not yet officially upon us, but the Trump era has already been good for political reading lists. Book buyers baffled by Trumpism and seeking understanding have turned to various sociologies of the ur-Trump voter, making best sellers out of J.D. Vance's "Hillbilly Elegy," Nancy Isenberg's "White Trash" and Arlie Russell Hochschild's "Strangers in Their Own Land."

Liberals looking to feed their sense of alarm have been steered toward Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism," Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here" and Philip Roth's "Plot Against America." "What Is Populism?" by German political scientist Jan-Werner Mueller has been widely recommended; so has Mark Lilla's anatomy of reactionary thought, "The Shipwrecked Mind"; so has Richard Rorty's "Achieving Our Country," from back in 1998, mostly for a prescient few paragraphs on "the nonsuburban electorate" and its potential affinity for strongmen. The racial element in Trumpism has sent people back to W.E.B. Du Bois on "Black Reconstruction" — once they've finished, of course, with the latest from Ta-Nehisi Coates.

But for your last-minute Christmas shopping, I have some slightly different recommendations to make. The Trump-era reading lists I've seen include many worthy titles, but they also tend to focus heavily on the dark forces lurking somewhere outside enlightened circles — in the hills of Appalachia, in the postindustrial heartland, in the souls of racists and chauvinists and crypto-fascists. They are anthropologies of populism, cautionary tales from history, blueprints for blunting revanchism's appeal. But they do not generally subject Western liberalism itself to rigorous critique.

And that might be what liberal readers need right now: Not just portraits of the Brexit and Trump-voting domestic Other, but a clearer sense of their own worldview's limits, blind spots, blunders and internal contradictions.

So my reading list starts with two of liberalism's sharpest internal critics, both deceased — a reactionary of the left, Christopher Lasch, and a conservative liberal, Samuel P. Huntington. Their most-cited works, Lasch's "Culture of Narcissism" and Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," have obvious applications for our culture and politics today. But the books I would recommend are a little different.

For Lasch, it's "The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy" (1995), a polemic against the professional upper class' withdrawal from the society it rules and a critique of the ways in which multiculturalism and meritocracy erode patriotism and democracy. For Huntington, it's "Who Are We? The Challenges to American National Identity" (2004), a book widely denounced as racist for arguing that the recent wave of Latin-American immigration might not be easily assimilable and might instead balkanize the country into identitarian redoubts.

Both books are imperfect: Lasch's is too angry, Huntington's too pessimistic (I think). But in different ways they both offer, in Lasch's words, a "revisionist interpretation of American history, one that stresses the degree to which liberal democracy has lived off the borrowed capital of moral and religious traditions antedating the rise of liberalism." And they illustrate how the Western elite has burned the candle of solidarity at both ends — welcoming migration that transforms society from below even as the upper class floats up into a post-national utopia, which remains an undiscovered country for the people left behind.



ROSS DOUTHAT
Comment

My next recommendation is from across the Atlantic: "The Abolition of Britain" (1999), by Peter Hitchens, Christopher's right-wing brother. Writing early in the Tony Blair era, Hitchens argued that Britain's rulers had broken faith with the island nation's past, burying its history, customs and traditions, subjecting their people to a misguided European pseudo-empire, and tolerating social decay and disarray as the price of tolerance and progress. Nearly 20

years on, you will not find a clearer case against both Blair and David Cameron's shared worldview, or a clearer explanation for why so many Britons voted for Brexit.

Then I recommend widening your gaze to Europe as a whole, through Christopher Caldwell's "Reflections on the Revolution in Europe" (2009), which critiqued the Continent's rulers for welcoming — out

of idealism, economic calculation and indifference — an unprecedented level of immigration from the Islamic world that their societies lacked both the competence and the civilizational confidence to assimilate.

When Caldwell's book came out it seemed as if it described a slow-burning, hopefully manageable social and religious crisis. Today, in the wake of Angela Merkel's decision to hit the accelerator on demographic change, the book's mordant tone seems, if anything, too optimistic.

Which is why my next recommendations are a few shades darker: First "Submission" (2015), Michel Houellebecq's seemingly dystopian novel about an exhausted near-future France that ends up choosing between Islamism and fascism (it picks the veil), and then one of Houellebecq's earlier novels, "The Elementary Particles," whose portrait of a loveless, sex-fixated and disposable modern masculinity reveals that its author believes the real dystopia is already here — that the end of history is actually a materially comfortable desert, from which the political and religious extremisms of "Submission" offer a welcome and rehumanizing form of escape.

This is itself an extreme idea, of course, and so is the comparison offered in my final recommendation, Ryszard Legutko's "Demon In Democracy" (2015), in which the author, a Polish political philosopher, explicitly links the ideological conformism and faith in capital-P Progress of contemporary liberalism to the oppressive communism of his youth.

Legutko is a member of Law and Justice, the right-wing party currently ruling Poland, whose ascent has provoked the Western media to panic over its religious nationalism and illiberal forays. Which is all the more reason to read him, and to see through his eyes (and not only his) how the open society as envisioned by contemporary progressives can seem to conservatives like a closed and stifling one — closed to transcendence, closed to memory, closed to the pre-liberal traditions upon which Legutko (and most of the writers I've just recommended) would argue the liberal democratic order actually depends.

Liberal readers probably will not finish "Demon" ready to vote for Law and Justice; Houellebecq probably won't convince them that our civilization's choice is porn and cloning or the caliphate; Hitchens probably won't persuade them to become Brexiters.

But even for the unconvinced, reading these writers will go a long way toward explaining the most unexpected thing about Western politics in the strange year of 2016 — the sheer number of people in our prosperous, at-peace societies who don't seem to want to live in liberalism's end of history anymore.

■

Ross Douthat, the previous senior editor at *The Atlantic*, joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in 2009.



YOUR VIEWS

Hands off ag research center

Once again the federal government is throwing agriculture under the bus. This year the Pendleton Experiment station has been selected to take a beating. All they do is research dryland food, improve yield of food, identify pests and weeds and design ways to

prevent and control them. Maybe the folks in Washington D.C. will recognize the importance of food grown and made in America when their bread comes from the Hanchin Bakery somewhere in China and costs \$29 a loaf.

Frustrated as usual,

Mike Mehren
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

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