

The Unexpected Visitor Series: Whose Charity is it Anyways?  
With June Findlay  
Transcript

**Melanie Panitch:** Hello everyone. My name is Melanie Panitch and I am Director of the Office of Social Innovation. At our Office of Social Innovation, we have many ways of approaching social innovation, but primarily and exclusively we think about it as the practice of creative and collaborative approaches to challenge historical and existing systems of exclusion, thinking about transformative impact on society and the environment. I want to welcome everyone today, I want to particularly welcome the students in CYC 550: Foundations in Social Innovation, where we take up challenging and complex social issues. It was really to inspire your learning that this talk today was first imagined, thanks to my intrepid co-instructor Jane Schmidt, who will introduce our speaker later. And, I want to welcome all of you who have signed in to join us today.

This is the inaugural lecture in a new series, titled the Unexpected Visitor series, where our virtual lives make the unexpected possible: a lecture in a class becomes a public lecture. And today we have a guest speaker with an intriguing point of view to speak with us on a critical topic in the area of social justice. I've read June Findlay, and now I very much look forward to meeting you June and to hear you on your provocatively titled presentation, Whose Charity is it Anyways? I want to take a moment to acknowledge Jocelyn Courneya, Coordinator of Marketing and Communications in OSI, for her eagerness in moving on a dime to organize this talk.

Just a few points before we get started. This lecture is being recorded and will be uploaded on our website. We do have captioning, which can be accessed through an external link in the chat. Attendees are encouraged to submit questions through the chat, which will be responded to during the Q&A following June's lecture. I would, however, like to begin with a land acknowledgement. It was curated for this event by Jess Machado, Coordinator of Events and Programming at OSI.

If we were meeting in person, we would be able to acknowledge the land that we are collectively gathering on to learn together. Instead, we are joining virtually, and we will be acknowledging the land where our staff and guest lecturer are situated. We continue this practice because, as we are all treaty people, we have a responsibility to honour Indigenous Peoples' ongoing kinship to the land, and to be reminded of our treaty obligations.

We are joining from Toronto, in the Dish With One Spoon Territory, which covers the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. This treaty, initially between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Mississauga's, bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations, Europeans, and newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect. This treaty, which represents our shared land as a Dish, carries three important teachings: that we live our lives and we never take more than we need, that we ensure that we leave something in the Dish for others, and that we keep the Dish clean.

At any OSI event, we're bringing the complexities of wicked social problems and the systems that they are situated in, to the forefront. In this lecture, that wicked problem is charity, which is upheld by the colonial systems of eurocentrism, white supremacy, and capitalism. As we will hear from June, the nuances in charity can be seen from the roles of politics, identity, race, marketing, and entertainment. And I welcome Jane to now introduce our speaker for today.

**Jane Schmidt:** Thank you Melanie. Hello everyone. I'm really glad that we've been able to gather here today to welcome June Findlay. June is a talented and trusted social media creative strategist, consultant, and writer based in Toronto. She has spent many years working and volunteering in the charitable and corporate sectors, growing the online presence of major brands like UNICEF Canada, the YMCA of Greater Toronto, and the Lincoln Motor Company of Canada. June wrote her award-winning master's thesis, *Pomp and Circumstance: Communication Strategy, Charitainment, and the Media Event in the Humanitarian Context*, focusing on the communication strategy of WE Day, which won the Best Civil Society Thesis award from Swedish civil society organization Sektor3, now known as Idealistas.

In July of 2020, at the beginning of the WE Charity scandal, she wrote a twitter thread summarizing her thesis work about WE Charity, and it went viral and sparked discussion among people in the realms of charity, media and politics. This resulted in her article for Flare Magazine, writing about WE Charity's activity in the context of the current federal government scandal. June holds her BA in International Studies and French-English Translation from York University and an MA in Media and Communication Science from Mid Sweden University. And it was that twitter thread that I found while I was on vacation at the end of June this past summer, and I was so thrilled and so excited to see that there was some high quality scholarly work going on, on this topic. And I started following June and I kind of made it a bit of a mission to get to know her, and then it just so happens that we had the opportunity to invite her here today. So without further ado, June, I'm going

to pass it over to you, we're so excited to hear what you have to say. Thank you.

**June Findlay:** Awesome, thank you so much Jane, Melanie, and Jessica, and Jocelyn, all of the staff at Ryerson, you guys have been great so far. So hi everyone, it's great to meet you all. I see some of you coming in from various parts of my life and I am very appreciative that you guys are here to support. So, if no one else is, here you guys are here, and are the real ones for it so thank you, you all know who you are. But yeah, I guess you guys are here to hear me talk about, not my friends, but my recent work.

I thought about what to talk about, I mean beyond the article, and I'm so glad there's a class being taught at Ryerson about this because it's very relevant right now, but also it's a discussion that's needed to have been had for really, years. Anyone who has ever worked in charity or nonprofit sectors has really known that this has been an issue for a long time, but this time has really sparked discussion for a lot of different industries and now it's charity world's turn to have a reckoning during COVID.

So yeah, I figured, we can get going with the next slide. Before we talk about the other stuff, I guess I'll go through a few things, why I'm even qualified to talk about it, because you're probably like, who is she anyway? That picture is from one of the three trips that I took with my church throughout the early 2000s on a mission trip. That was in Swaziland. And I've also been to Cuba twice with the church I was going to, it was part of the Church of the Nazarene designation. So as part of this whole, you know, even a bit of volunteerism and whatever else, I've been part of that. But I also want to be, you know, completely honest, but also at the same time part of this is a beginning of my interest in international relations and why I wanted to do what I wanted to do. But I've always been a worldly person, I've always loved photography, I've always wondered what's going on outside of my world, and even from a very young age my family and I were traveling. So I was always wondering about, you know, I wanted to learn about other people. So volunteering through church and a few other organizations growing up, I always wanted to be able to find a way to help people, but it wasn't until I really started going on these types of mission trips that I was kind of really seeing what the contracts of those things are, and coming from an area where it's now you realize it's colonialist. And they were part of the whole church thing, so it wasn't necessarily colonial that way, but in terms of how it's structured it could be seen as that now, you know. 2020 is hindsight as they say. But it was during these few trips that I realized, why is it up to us to help people, and even is it up to us at all? Why is it that I have to take vacation time or time off from school or, because of where I live, like

you see me, I'm a Black woman, living, speaking English in a developed country, I literally could have been anywhere else. And so, why does it take for me to be in Canada or the US or another western-developed country to be able to be seen as being able to help those who are seen as less fortunate, right? So those are the kinds of seeds, that really planted the seeds, that got me into thinking about what charity is and who it's for and all that. Can we go to the next slide?

So, charitainment like I said, has been part of my vocabulary for nearly a decade. So in 2010, as you can see I moved to Sweden to pursue a master's degree. It was probably one of the smartest, impulsive decisions I made in a long time. It was slightly done out of boredom because I was working in the financial sector, if you can believe that, before I left to go to school. And at the time I was still trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew that to really pivot I needed to kind of up my game in terms of education. So at the time Sweden was accepting international students on a visa agreement where you did not have to pay tuition, you just had to have enough savings in your account to be able to live for the duration of your studies. And I was like, okay that's great! That makes it extremely more affordable than if I stayed here, ironically.

So part of that time when I was there, as you see the picture there, that was, the UN Foundation has various groups and chapters in various parts of the world. While I was in Sundsvall, which was the town that I was living in to go to school, I joined the UN Foundation there to help promote the UN's activities and awareness campaigns in various parts of the country that pertained to Sweden, so it was a lot of children's stuff we end up doing. But, honestly probably done more for UNICEF than the UN, but it was a good time and also another time to figure out what does this mean in another country? What perspective do these people have on charity and why they should give and all of that. Because it really depends on the people, but also when we're talking about charity and who it's for, it also has to take on the context of where those people are giving, and why they want to give.

Sweden is a very affluent country and at the time I was there it didn't always have the star system that we had over here in terms of celebrity. Like there were famous people, like actors and things like that, but until recently, they didn't really have like an Angelina Jolie or Brad Pitt. Like nothing like that, that would take over an entire news cycle except for maybe the tabloids, kind of like The Sun or whatever else in Britain, but it wasn't like we had it here. This is where I started to learn that charity looks different in different places and not necessarily by the people who are giving but people who were trying to organize and make people aware to care

about something other than what's happening around themselves. So that was, between that and my studies, which I was fortunate to be able to study with a lot of different people from almost each continent, that was super interesting.

So during that time, my thesis, the idea of charitainment came about because in my studies we were talking about political communication, that was the main crux of our studies. And I was more interested in why celebrities were getting involved in the election, so there is an example of Oprah Winfrey getting involved in the Obama election. We all know who Oprah is, what she's done, we may or may not agree with what her methods are we or who she involves and whatever else, but she's been part of North American pop culture for decades, and she does have quite a bit of influence when it comes to movement, especially political ones, which she had not gotten involved in before the Obama campaigns. And there were a couple of studies that showed, even statistically, they could not prove her influence onto the campaign, which, I mean, if you know from a pop culture context, you know that's wild, because this is Oprah we're talking about. If you can't prove statistically, then what's the point? That's when I realized, then maybe this is something that I want to talk about, but not necessarily in a quantitative context. For me, I've always been more towards the qualitative, so I kind of wanted to change that perspective from pop culture and elections to charity, because again at that time I wanted to figure out what I wanted to be, who I wanted to help, did I want to go back to charity, did I want to work in charity? So, I wanted to do all of that.

So, the idea of charitainment comes from an article in Time magazine in 2005, which Jane helped me to get to write the article, so thank you Jane. That article, kind of sparked, it was written at a very interesting time, because it was at a time when everyone remembers Angelina Jolie was, particularly, trying to be a UN High Commissioner for Refugees with UNHCR, Bono was getting his campaign out, Paul Sachs was a rockstar economist at that point. All of these different people were coming together to really talk about humanitarian issues abroad, not at home, but abroad. Even that should already spark a discussion. So why are we looking abroad and not at home, right? But this was 15 years ago, and especially now we have to ask that question too, but we'll talk about that later.

So the marriage of charity and entertainment, in terms of the celebrity star culture that we have here, merge in those times. It hadn't been around for, probably, since the 1950s when Danny Kaye had been one of the first UN Goodwill Ambassadors. But it hadn't really had a fever pitch until Angelina Jolie had done it later on in the late in the early 2000s, so that spark,

that moment for academia sparked a lot of thoughts, issues, and papers about how celebrity affects humanitarian involvement in charity, and especially in donations, and essentially world politics. So it could, there were a lot of different people that were trying to correlate the relationship between celebrity awareness and then actual policy that was being enacted in certain countries abroad through the charities that helped them in different places, so that was super interesting. We can go to the next slide.

So, eventually I had to convince quite a few people. Because as I mentioned, in Sweden at that time, their star system was not as, you know, tailored like ours is and has been for decades. So I had to convince my, my professor at the time to really who's really, he's the son of an evangelist family. His father's a very, not a prominent pastor, but he comes from the clergy. So he has a very holistic view of things, but he is also very calculating at things. He was a great supervisor, the whole time. But he, at the time, didn't really realize why I wanted to write about, you know, a particular WE charity, but also just in general, why I wanted to write about how celebrities essentially, through marketing and communications, really affect international politics, and why that needs to be more talked about, because it involves just regular people.

What I had to do to show him was, I logged onto YouTube, onto WE Charity's YouTube page, and showed him a few speeches from WE Day. Some of those speeches are actually still on WE Charity's or WE Movement are on their YouTube today. Some of those videos, I used about 10 videos to make the thesis, but some of them are still on some aren't. But I used a few of those to show him. And, the first thing he said to me was, this reminds me of a church rally where you're getting all types of people together to get towards a certain cause, and you donate your money and your time and you're swayed by the moment and it's very charismatic. So, coming from the son of a clergyman, that was super interesting, and that's where I knew I had him hooked. And I was like, well, this is what I want to write about, because honestly, this in North America, and honestly at some point, the rest of the world will be like this. This is how it's going to be. This is the only way we're going to be able to get people to care about anything beyond our borders.

And sure enough, I end up, he gave me the go ahead and that was the start of a very grueling six months, because at the time it was a brand new program and they didn't really know what, how to structure the program, but luckily it finished off in six months, and I ended up defending my thesis. I got my degree, thank goodness, because I certainly wasn't going home without one. And then later on, on the advice of a friend, I entered it into a national contest that was done by a civil society think tank, which is unfortunately

now defunct, but they read my thesis, they decided that it won and then they turned it into a monograph, which is the picture that you see there, and I got to go back in 2013 to talk about it. Go to the next slide. Oh, actually, nevermind I realized that was an old version of my deck, but yeah. Either way, I got the prize, all of that and kind of left it alone because I came back in 2012 to graduate, came back and started interning first at Journalists for Human Rights, which is a great organization, by the way, that you should follow and/or support.

But also at the time WE Charity was as they are now, were very litigious, and so anyone that raised any issue about WE Charity was immediately shut down or silenced, and as someone who came back as a very broke former student who's living at home and just trying to make a career path, I was like, I'm leaving that alone, I've had my run, this is great, let me leave it alone. So we fast forward to eight years later, and we have a problem! So we can go to the next slide.

So this is the culmination of many years of investigative reporting, mostly by Canadaland, if you guys have been following them for a while, but they had a lot of those stories that came up first. It was more of a slow burn when it comes to this moment of reckoning for them. And everyone knows that at the end of June, early July, was when, you know, things really, really hit the fan. And in terms of, you know, what people are kind of like, yeah, I've heard of WE Charity, but I didn't know they were like this. So it kind of blew up because of the whole Canada Students Service Benefit, and actually that's how the twitter thread came about. I was actually moving that day and kind of and saw the news and kind of haphazardly tweeted, but it culminated into my work, which is the first, that's the first picture you see on the side there: Yes, #WeHaveAProblem.

But there are some other really great articles like Vanmala Subramaniam's article on their property holdings. Amanda Maitland had a great, I want to say testimony in a way, because she really made it seem like it, she's a very talented speaker, but she was a former WE Charity employee who raised the question of, raised the issue of racism at WE Charity. I included the last picture there that says, What Does WE Charity Actually Do? because that was always the second question I had heard, you know, say, a) what's happening? and b) what do they actually do? But if you are working in a nonprofit, you've known that for a long time. Because while, and I don't know if it was a question of jealousy, envy, you know, admiration, things like that, but if you work in charity, you know that it's always hard to get a market share of people's attention, donations, time, talents, whatever. WE Charity always seems to do that. WE Charity always seems to do that effortlessly to the, you

know, to the chagrin of many charities, who had very talented people, but can never quite get the attention of young people, which is the holy grail of any type of marketing, like they did. And so this time brought a lot of things in terms of you know, where are we at now with the charity aspect of course, you know, WE Charity having to shut down its Canadian wing of operations is super interesting and was a surprise to me. But know that that's not the enemy to keep asking questions. But the more important thing that I've realized in talking with various people after my twitter thread and after the constant slew of great articles and fantastic reporting, and then after the article I wrote and a few others wrote, I've really realized that there needs to be a reckoning in charity in terms of where we've been and what's happening right now and where we need to go from here. So that's what I'm going to go through. So next slide.

So in general, as a result of the, as a result of the WE scandal there was a couple of surveys that had gone out, I believe this one's from Angus Reid, and this one had asked in the past six months has your charitable giving changed? What is more important to me as a marketer, but in general, and even to people who poll like pollers, always look for a couple of things. We need to know where the middle is so, or at least if there's a drastic change, great, but we also need to know where the middle is for the majority of people. It's giving the same or has not changed. But the most important thing is the 37% where it's it actually is significantly lower, mostly because of a combination of things, where people have lost their jobs, people are trying to refocus their finances, people are just trying to, honestly, their own charity cases and so the idea of trying to help someone else right now, it's not necessarily a malicious one in terms of not deciding to help anyone or just, I just need to feed my own kids. I need to keep a roof above my own head, nevermind anyone else's.

But it seems like a lot of people have been giving less and I honestly think the WE Charity's scandal has kind of brought to the forefront a lot of issues that have been brewing in charities for a long time. They may have started the discussion, but they're not the only reasons for it. So, go to the next slide.

And so all of that really leads us to whose charity is it anyway? Why are we doing charity, who is it for, who does it benefit? And what exactly can we do to kind of, help charities get better at what they do, because as much as I love charities and love working in them, I end up leaving the charity industry, mostly because, a) you know, I wasn't being compensated well for my skills but also, you know, as a black woman working in a predominantly white industry, there are some of those issues as well. But in general, all of



these things affect the people that charities serve in their mandates and their missions and I think there's, you know, all these things are discussions that need to happen. We'll go to the next slide.

So there's three parts I'm going to be talking about. So in general, I'm saying the charity system is broken, it's not beyond repair, and I'm confident of that because I still very much believe in charities. If you walk out with nothing else today, I want you to know that I still believe in charities and what they do and their work is very important, but there are a few reasons why that's important now more than ever. So the first reason, go to the next slide and then we'll come back, Jocelyn, next slide first.

Yeah, so a lot of charities have changed, society has changed especially in the last 20, you know, 20 to 30 years where, yes, we've, you know, we've made leaps and strides in terms of, you know, technology and things like that, but I don't know if you've noticed, but at least in Toronto, there is less and less housing. We are in a housing crisis. There's an opioid crisis. There is a food, not so much food shortage, but there certainly is a shortage of people who are able to feed themselves daily, and so I feel like that, unfortunately, and with governments having downloaded a lot of their responsibilities, financial and otherwise, to charities that's unfortunately become a way for them to really, you know, be stressed with just doing the day-to-day and not necessarily promoting what they're doing, so that they can eventually get more money.

So as you see there, Canada currently, at least according to the 2018 census, has 86,000 charities, which is wild to me because I never thought there was that, there's always a lot, but I never thought they were that many, but many of them are just working hard to replace, honestly the job that governments used to do. And unfortunately, that means that a lot of them are busy just trying to serve people in their community immediately and not really thinking about sustainable future projects or things like that, and how they can help their people. So that's been unfortunate with, you know, government, kind of downloading the responsibilities onto municipalities and municipalities download it to the charity. So they're doing a lot more work than, maybe more than they anticipated in some cases, and some are doing it very well, and others are struggling and that's just how it is.

And then the second thing is that society needs have changed. Like I said, we're in various types of crises. There are more now, we're at the point, in Toronto, at least where you know 60% or more of people who live in the city aren't from here, or at least have parents that weren't born here. And so with that comes a lot of different various perspectives and things like that

and you know, a lot of the times, charities don't move fast enough to address those. And that's really unfortunate because, just because you come from somewhere else and you don't have the, even just the idea of Canadian experience is still, you know, in some ways, quite racist because when you come here and, unless it's like a medical thing or something like that where you have to retrain, but in general, if you were in business somewhere else, there's no reason why you have to be, you know, on assistance or being able to be helped by charity here.

And so, unfortunately, the system isn't set up to help people out that might need it but then, because governments are less involved the charities have changed, their needs have changed, but a lot of charities, unfortunately, have not moved along with that change. And so, unfortunately, sometimes it ends up being where people, the potential to serve isn't there, or it's not met quite enough. We'll go back to the next slide for the next point, or we'll go back to the previous slide from that point.

So that second thing is, are we truly helping anyone or making things worse? And honestly that's more of an, I don't know question, it's more of a rhetorical question for all of you. Like I said, there's a lot of charities that are doing some great work. But because between COVID, you know, less funding from people, all of those things, while we have been helping people and while things have been running along for a long time, this pandemic has made things, you know, really put things in perspective for a lot of people. And I feel like with charity work and all of that a lot of charities have been doing charity for the sake of thinking they're doing good, but who are you really helping, or just raising money, are you actually impacting someone's life?

It's really made a refocus thing necessary for who's doing what. And the last thing, with the way that I see the charity system as broken within charities, because I worked in them, is that fundamental changes, and how they operate, but especially marketing, have to be made. So I'll use an example in terms of, like, so there's a really great TED talk that was done in Unionville last year by, I believe, the director of marketing for the Ronald McDonald Charities. And she had a really great point on how, you know, with donors with charities, there's a bit of a stigma in terms of how donors, you know they want to see their money go right to the cause. But they somehow, in terms of operating, marketing is seen as an operating cost, but I feel like in terms of that it needs to be shown differently because if you don't use marketing, you're able to, you can't reach as many people then you can with just, you know, with just the traditional forms where it's like direct mail and some emails and email campaigns are very successful.

But you pair that with social, with paid social media posts, other things like that and you're able to reach more and you get more back. Unfortunately, marketing is seen as an overhead cost. So a lot of donors don't really want it, and it's lumped all into one thing. So a lot of donors are just like, okay, I want to see my money being going to help, you know, build this building or support this program or whatever else, but unfortunately the way that, you know, donor committees work sometimes is that they don't really take all that into account and why sometimes they use an excuse to not put the money into marketing. It's why a lot of charities still don't have a marketing staff, except for maybe one person, but one person can't do everything, even though, in a lot instances, I did it for some charities.

But the fundamental changes, and even in terms of how they operate the board of directors, who's on the board of directors? Is it all white women? Is it all old white men? Does the board of directors, really, you know, they're the boss of the CEO, and so the decisions always come from the top. But if you don't have a diversity of thought, and really perspective and all of that, then it's really not going to trickle down and that's another way that, unfortunately, the system is broken, where you don't even have the people in place to be able to really think about how, you know, a photo might be seen as, you know, colonialist or ableist, or things like that, even just in the way you portray people that you're helping. It may be benign, but unfortunately, it may not be effective in that way and people might be turned off and melted and not donate to you. So go to the next, I think two slides are good, that's good.

So in terms of marketing I just want to show a couple of examples of really successful campaigns. The top one is SickKids, which I'm sure everyone has seen and they've gotten some pro bono help, I believe, from an ad agency. It's probably one of the better ones I've seen in a long time just because a) they treat it, for me, it's, it's the best one I've seen because they treat it like how I've seen it in the ad agency world and that is really a 360 campaign. They've definitely put the money into TV, digital, mailing, emails, and then social media as well. All of those things come into play, and even billboards. Like, even though I'm a SickKids beneficiary, like, I spent a lot of time at SickKids myself as a child, and I want to give back because hey, you know, they helped me out, I'll give them some money, but at the same time, they want to be able to affect those people that probably have nothing to do with with SickKids and so this is where they know that they have to get the people in the middle so that they are able to convince them to come over to the side and you know, and donate their money. And so using great photography, great video tactics, very strong messaging and positioning, they've been able to keep themselves, you know, not only afloat, but thrive.

The SickKids Foundation raises millions of dollars a year and honestly I really believe that's because of their excellent marketing campaigns.

A couple others down here you see are, so that's from Charity: Waters' Instagram. I'm not sure if you heard Charity: Water, but if you haven't, I actually suggest going to their Instagram. Their mandate is very simple, just to get clean water to the people that need it. But the way that they do it, and honestly, they're probably a better example for a lot of marketers in the charity industry in that their photography and portrayal of the people that they help is not necessarily with a white gaze, and I actually used that as an example when I was at UNICEF because that was part of my job, to kind of curate some photography and all that. You want to be able to show people in their habitat, how they really are. But still have that, kind of, donor edge to be able to pull at your heartstrings and be able to donate, but they don't portray it in such a way that it's poverty porn as we like to call it, so I always have liked Charity: Water's portrayal of how they do it because they're just like, and it's very simple messaging. And then, of course, their call to action, CTA, is just, hey, go to this website, go to whatever, and donate, but you get the incentive through their very visual and very honest portrayal of what their work does, because honestly, it could be a very, you can do a very complex way, but it's as simple as their mission to get clean water to people that need it. And they do that very well. They just do one thing very, very well.

The next one over here with the two boys bumping elbows on the first day of school, that's in Palestine, that's actually UNICEF. And, you know, full disclosure, I did work there for a while, but part of one of my favorite things working there was just the plethora of content that they had to potentially use. Everyone who works in the system has access to a database with millions of pictures, videos, whatever else that you can use and adapt to your own country's needs. But I always felt that UNICEF has always done well, because I mean they've been doing it for 70 plus years, but at the same time they also distill their mission very well, and so I'm just like, hey, we're helping kids, this is how we're helping kids in this part of the country, in this part of the world, here, here, here, and those are just like, we're portraying these things here, and that's why you should be able to help us. They're just showing like, this is where your money is going when you donate. And also, that's all people want to know. They just keep it very, very simple.

The last one of course is from WE Movement's page on their Instagram. That's a snippet from WE Day, that's Selena Gomez. But one thing I have admired about WE Movements/WE Day, and probably the reason why a lot of nonprofit

folks have always kind of secretly admired them too, is because they have always been able to get who they need in the right moments at the right time. Even before WE Day really blew up on social media, they got with the right media partners with CTV and Bell Media in terms of programming their stuff and really broadcast a message, but also they managed to get people who appealed both to kids at that age and to adults that were likely accompanying them to those things. So the first WE Day happened in 2005, I believe, and at the time they had Hansen, who was kind of making a comeback at the time, they had Romeo Dallaire who had just had his Shake Hands With The Devil made into a book, I believe. And then a few others, including Justin Trudeau, who was a private citizen.

But they were all sailing people to various swaths of people they're trying to get to at the same time, and I have always admired them for that because, in terms of their marketing and who they want to target, it's been very clear in terms of whole they want to get to motivate you to donate to them. What hasn't been clear is why they need you to donate this money. That's the unfortunate thing, and I think that's what's followed them slowly for all these years, but kind of blew up in the last few months, is that, what did they actually do anyway? They have all these glitzy things and whatever else, and, but now they just like, well, now what do we do? And unfortunately, now that reckoning has come. We'll go to the next slide.

So what are we learning right now? So the first thing I'd say is giving and the business of it needs to change, mostly because I feel like we've been doing the same thing for a long time. Anytime you've, if you've worked in the nonprofit, you may have encountered a situation where you may have a really cool idea, it might be small, it might be revolutionary, who knows, but either way it might be just a little different from the way things are done, and you may get, either nicely or otherwise, a rejection, because it's the way we've always done it, it's always some type of variation of that, where it's the way we've always done it, this has always worked for us. You know, we don't want to risk our donor base. Let's just keep going this way because we have proven things that works for us. And while I'm all about patterns and all of those things, the reason why so many of the newer charities, that are smaller, by the way, end up doing better is because they're able to identify their needs as they're being met, but also identify new things that are happening and really move along with it. And of course you'll always have your high donor dinners and things like that, but also, I would love to see things made a little more accessible. In the sense, where people are able to come to a gala dinner, even if they're not paying \$10,000 a table.

There's been a change in that where, you know, for example, Journalists for Human Rights and Action for Hunger have their gala dinners, but then they also have an after party function where it's mostly geared to younger professionals, you pay say \$30 to \$50 for a few hours and you go, you have cocktails, you have drinks, whatever else. It's basically a party for a cause. And even then, sometimes you might be like, you know, is this actually really helping anybody? But in terms of making things accessible, it's a step in the direction of trying to make it more accessible. And so I would love to see more of that and things like that. It'll be really, really cool to see more people giving on their terms and not necessarily in the way of, you know, the old archaic ways of, we have the high donors, we take their money, and we let them see the sights. Why not be able to have people who give consistently \$10 a month? Why not be able to give them an opportunity to see what people are doing and how people have been, other than just giving them pens and giving them a brochure. Let them see the work that's been happening but that's that's the job of social media too, not everybody can be on you know onsite, especially now, during COVID, right.

The second thing is with white supremacy and a moment of racial reckoning. So I already talked about Amanda Maitland's experience with WE Charity. But I feel like there's been a reckoning of racial revolution in almost every industry, from restaurants to business to whatever else, but for charity, it's unfortunate where, you know, in a couple of organizations I've been in as a creative who's been on more of the, you know, PR, marketing communications side, I tend to be in the minority there. Not just because I am an actual minority, but there's not many of us on one side of the office where it's very white collar, you know, there's research, there's development, there's philanthropy, there's PR and communications, there's IT, and then the other side of the floor that's where you see most of most folks of color, but unfortunately they're the ones on the phones. They're the ones in customer service. There might even, and they're the ones who are on the entry level stuff when it comes to a charity.

I would love to see more of that merged and I think it's really because unfortunately I mean, it's a lot of different things that manifest in charity business. But, you know, I'm tired of being the only one, or one of very few. And I feel like with, you know, unfortunately, the effects of white supremacy, whether it's from the board of directors from above, or decision makers who don't necessarily see it for anyone else but themselves or their own people, even just the way they hire people, you know, you'll have people that are very, very experienced in general, but because they know the boss's daughter or know this cousin or whatever else, they'll bring somebody in, and don't get me wrong, it's hard for a lot of recruiters to do their jobs if

asked for their network and honestly is nothing wrong with that. But if it ends up being the same way where you end up seeing a lot of young white women coming in, where there's plenty of others who may not necessarily have the degree experience, but certainly have the life experience or even just a certification rather than a full degree. It's, you know, even just diversifying the idea of having a degree to work in somewhere, that's also classist, elitist, and slightly racist. So even the way that we hire, the way that we administer our programs, I feel like that needs to change, and unfortunately, before you do that, you reckon with, you know, especially for white folks in the charity business, what do I need to do to give my platform to someone else? How can I give the mic to someone else? How can I listen more? How can I act on their behalf? And it's not just being an ally, where you're posting a photo or things like that. And you just go about your day. No, you're actually continuing the actions of consistently asking if you're in a, like one of my current co-workers is great in that she constantly asks me what I think about something, and her just passing the mic to me to be able to express my opinion without it necessarily being asked, means that, you know, hey, her opinion is important, she's in the room, not only she in the room, but she's contributing.

And I feel like that needs to happen in many other workplaces, but especially charity, because unfortunately we're often seen as the ones being held, but not being talented enough to be to be the ones to help, right? And that also goes of course to voluntourism, which is one thing that WE Charity and many other organizations, by the way, it's not just them, have been known for over the years. And, I'm not sure if you guys have seen the, have you seen Mark, no, it's Craig Kielburger's MTV Cribs video from the early 2000s, where he tours one of his, one of the WE Charity houses where volunteers go to stay. If you haven't seen that, please Google it, please go on YouTube and watch it. It is the most cringe-tastic thing you will ever see in your life, because to me, that is the epitome of like white saviorism, volunteerism, and supremacy, all in one. It's just this random white guy in the middle of Kenya with this gorgeous house. That is unlike anything that the people who actually live there, live in. So he's going through all these modern things, whatever else, think of it as the ultimate AirBnB, but like maybe 10 years ago, and, he's going through the motions and say, and also promoting the programs that the volunteers do, but you just cringe. I don't know. If you had a mirror on me when I was watching it the first time, I was biting my nails, like this is so cringe worthy! Oh my God!

But the only people of color and Black folks you see in there, are the ones who are helping, are the ones who run the place. They're not necessarily even the charity workers or anything else. They're the ones who are helping just

to run the house. And so, I, it's the ultimate, like it's the epitome of white saviorism because you came into someone else's country, impose your thing on them, and say, this is what's good for you, I am here, not having no background in international relations, having no background in politics. Maybe I did a course at the university, not CYC 550, you know, you guys are here for a reason, but you know, just because you took one class doesn't mean you get to go over and help somebody out. So you actually have building certifications, whatever else. One of the things from my Swaziland trip I actually did admire, because we had partnered with an American section of that church to do it, is that they had various projects, but they had licensed, you know, building people, they had engineers, they had plumbing people, they had people who are in that profession just donating their time, but really were certified people in their field to go over and build a school. And, unfortunately, and this is mostly based on anecdotal content from people I know, who've been on the WE's trips, is that most people who go, they don't really build anything, and sometimes they have to take it down before they build it back up for the next people. So that's unfortunate.

And the last thing is that, like I said, there's still some good happening in charities, but they need to talk about themselves more. And I feel like that's, it might even, I don't even want to say it's gender-based, because, I mean, a lot of one transition I noticed hugely when I went from charity to corporate was that, you know, corporate is male-dominated they're, you know, it's very big money, big spending, we break things and apologize later, we test things out. Charity is almost the opposite in that, and I'm not really going to gender it because I think it's just another, it's just a tendency, where it's really just more like, okay, we're going to say let's evaluate, let's do this first. And I agree we should, you know, evaluate and test and learn, but it's not as adventurous, and unfortunately, that makes it detrimental to a lot of charities, in the long run because if we don't know what you're talking about, or who you are, we can't support you. And unfortunately, some of that is because, you know, people don't have the budget or whatever else. But, and this is more for the big charities, a lot of them are under-serving themselves when it comes to promoting their own work because they're just not spending, they're just not investing in enough. So if I want to be able to donate to you, I need to know what exactly are you doing with my money? Who is being helped? Who's making the decisions? And all of that.

But that's easy for you to do if you have nothing really to hide or if it's clear enough. It should be almost boring if you're going to show me that, but also it's why, you know, marketing, social marketing, is especially important now because I still see this as very accessible. And that's why, honestly,



I'm still in it because it's a way for me to help others join in and really reap the benefits because there's a lot of benefits to be had through social media. We can go to the next slide, next one.

Just to, this is from another TED Talk I was watching about voluntourism. And really it's why voluntourism should not exist. If you don't have the time to learn about a place or an issue, why do you think you have the time to solve it, or right to solve it, or go there to make it better? So in my thesis, I talked about an instance called ironic solidarity, it's probably one of my favorite academic terms because it's almost like a term called pathetic fallacy in writing. But anyway, when you are motivated to do something as a collective, ironic solidarity basically means that you're only really acting in your self interest. And the irony of acting in that self interest is that you're not really helping the other person that you've been motivated to help, you're only really helping yourself, but not in a way that you're like, you know, charity, helping others does make us feel good, there is actual studies for this. But in terms of things like a media event, like WE Day, where you're motivated because, this celebrity, that person, that random guy who you kind of see on TV, but you don't really know, they made you feel good, you get a whole bunch of goodies and all those things. And you're like, okay, well, and then you get this message packed into it where you feel good now. And now, we're going to spread that love to other people. But you're not really doing that because you were motivated by a whole bunch of glitz and glamour and all of that, and not necessarily because you know what the situation is, and how you're going to help the other person.

So that really explains ironic solidarity. Acting kind of as a group, as part of a collective, but really acting in your own self interest and not for the better. So that's unfortunate. We can go to the next slide. Right, and I did talk about the anti-racism stuff at WE Charity. But like I said, there needs to be a reckoning that way in terms of racial tension and strife in the charity world, and we can go the next slide.

So where do we go from here? So there's a lot of things. I think for me right now there are these three things. So like I said, charities needs reflect the society and needs that they serve inside and out. So hire people, don't just use diversity as a key word, I'm tired of hearing, diversity is becoming a word like synergy, and I think it's almost become pointless, where I don't want it to become pointless. Diversity really means diversity of thought, race, sexual orientation, all those things do matter because they provide a perspective on how we live, and especially in a city like Toronto where we say, you know, diversity is our strength. They love saying that, but then the

way they actually act through policy and all that, it still only benefits, mostly white folks, unfortunately.

But I feel like, well, charities can kind of counter that in how they serve, rather be radically inclusive and not just because your charity like Rainbow Railroad, that already by existence is radical, but even something as benign as the United Way where you're just like, you have people who are serving on boards, who are managers, who are all of that. I'm seeing that, and I want to see different people at various ends of the spectrum.

I think even just having the idea that, you know, be radically inclusive in who you recruit to help people out, and honestly, more people, especially in the field, and having been in the field myself, people are more willing to accept you if you look like them. If this works within marketing and all of that too, people are more responsive to things where it looks like them. And I think that's because like, you know, we want to be able to relate to people as human beings, but unfortunately in the media a lot of things, or even just even today and Canadian media especially, it's very white, but we want to be able to have, just being able to see like, hey, this person is working at, I remember one time I had gone to the YMCA, to a youth project in Regent Park, and it was really cool, and the girls were actually surprised to see me, because they're like, are you like a social worker or something? Like, no, no, I'm on the marketing team just here to document and ask you questions and things. And immediately, they started asking me, how did you do this? What did you do to get there? What kind of things did you study? Do you like it? Are you on Facebook all the time? And they were just so interested in whatever I did, because they're just like, oh, this is possible. I just, I'm able to, you're here and this is possible, and I want to see more of that. I really do want to see more of that.

Second thing transparency, transparency, transparency. And of course there's, you know, to me it's like you need to demystify, a lot of things have been demystified this year and I really feel like charity work needs to be among that too. I don't just want to believe that my twenty bucks is just, poof gone somewhere, and hopefully helps a young person that shows up in an image I see on social media. I want to be able to follow the money. I want to be able to see, you know, give me a couple stories and who helps, but even, even if you want to, you should be able to just call up the charity and have someone talk to you about what's happening. I think there's a lot of, because we rely on a lot of like, you know, marketing and brochures and things. Unless you're a high volume donor, you don't get to talk to the charity and I actually think that's a problem. I would love to see just more middle income, low income, as long as you're a donor, you're interested in donating your

time, money, or talents, or otherwise, you should be able to have a direct line with the charity. I don't think it's very fair that that honor only gets to be high value donors, I shouldn't be able to give you \$10,000 and that's the only way I really know what you're doing. That's not fair.

Because like I said, the majority of charities rely and operate on people who consistently give smaller amounts every month. Why don't they get anything more than the pen, right? The other thing is with transparency is that, with various watchdogs like, you know, Charity Watch and things like that, like Kate Bahen and Mark Bloomberg have been excellent resources on this, especially in the last few months. But they've really brought to the forefront that even charities need watchdogs to really figure out, you know, to have some transparency but also to have some accountability into where they're going and, you know, with WE Charity's reckoning moment too, and that's where the crux of it was, you know, we want to be able to see where the money goes. Why is it going to real estate and not people? Why can't we see where it goes in Me to We? And that's not necessarily wrong to have a for profit and a nonprofit arm, banks do this all the time, like TD has Friends of the Environment Foundation, their reading club, all of that. Those are nonprofit arms for a for profit business. But as long as you're able to separate them and have those entities, being able to be checked out, that's no problem. The problem is when you have things convoluted. And I would suggest basically following anything Kate Bahen says because she's actually a very brilliant lady. I got the pleasure of meeting her a few weeks ago online and she's very brilliant. I would suggest following her on Twitter, but also reading any of her articles on what she does. And Mark Bloomberg as well is a very good subject expert on that.

Last thing is open your purse. Those of you who are well versed in meme culture will know exactly which meme I'm referring to, but with opening your purse, especially if you're a government or a corporation. I did mention earlier about how governments have downloaded a lot of responsibility and not necessarily more money to the charity business, and I know that there was a petition to, from various charities and various signatories to get the government to help them out because of COVID, unfortunately they're losing, there's something about like \$6 billion dollars lost as a result of COVID and maybe even the WE scandal. And so as a result, some charities have banded together to lobby the government to be able to give them more support so that they can keep serving their communities because they're losing so much money. So I would love to see some of that responsibility put back on the government to be able to a) provide accountability, but also provide support where it's needed. And not necessarily when they need to quickly get out a student program that wasn't really well thought out. And honestly, no charity would

have done right, nevermind WE Charity. And then if you're a corporation, of course, like I said, banks have charity arms all the time, but I would like to see more donations from corporations, go to even the smaller organizations because a lot of times you get your YMCA, your United Nations, your United Way, but I would love to see it go to smaller charities that don't always get that. I was talking to someone, an executive director of a charity the other day, and he mentioned that in some cases they are too small to even get municipal support because their volunteer base, their donor base, and their staff, which is basically one, is too small to receive support. Why is that the case? I always found that very weird in that, you know, no matter, as long as you're registered, you have volunteers, whatever else, you have a mandate, and you have paperwork to back it up, you should be able to get support from your local government. It is our tax dollars at work anyway. And I don't see why that shouldn't be the case, to be able to help, get help when you need it so that you're able to, you know, help other people. Go to the next slide.

There's another way I think we can also go from here, and that's the donors. That's us. So I think the onus is on us too to really hold charities accountable. Because at the end of the day, we can't just, I think we should treat them more like businesses in the way that, you know, we hold them accountable to things, we want to know where our money was spent, and we want to know that they reflect our values. So, you know, you ask yourself questions such as, how much of a difference can I make? And not necessarily through your money, of course, you know, any charity would love to get your money, but at the same time, they can use your talents, they can use your networks, they can use, you know, networks to bring in other people from, you know, your world or wherever else you can use your own talents, but even just sharing a post is sometimes just as effective as paying money because reach is so important. And I'm definitely living proof of that. Where, and where does my money go? So you want to have an annual report. But like I said, if we can have more of a two-way communication between the charity, if I wanted to talk to someone at the YMCA, I should be able to pick up the phone and be like, can I talk to someone in this department about this? Where does my money go? I want to be able to get more explanation.

But that's more you know that's easier said than done. Because it's not the way it's currently set up, but I'd love it to be more of a two-way communication between charities and donors, but also is this organization meeting its goals and mandate and how so? Again, the WE Charity scandal kind of brought that to the forefront. Is that a) do we actually know what they really do, b) how do you track impacts? Tracking impact is super, super important for any charity, because that's the basis for getting more or less

donations sometimes from the government itself. I think the failure with WE Charity's reporting in that, you know, tracking impact, is that sometimes they counted like an action such as a kid writing a letter as an action towards something that happened in one of their places. And unfortunately, that's not good enough. But tracking impact is super important. And there should be a way for donors, big and small, to really come to terms with that. Go to the next slide.

So I'll use myself as a last example before I close. So in terms of, you know, donations, and what can you do, back in June, so my birthday is in June, as my name probably indicates, that was at the peak of, you know, the beginning of the, after George Floyd died, was murdered by the police, you know, huge reckoning, and just if you were Black, honestly, it was just, you're just feeling very low and yet we're still expected to show up to work and meetings like nothing was wrong. Meanwhile, you have this existential dread. And so, usually what I was, you know, kind of not feeling great. But then I was like, well, what can I do, I feel helpless? But I was like wait, I'm still thankfully working, I'm okay enough to be able to maybe donate some money to someone else, but also I want to be able to, you know, I know that charities are the ones that are helping people right now, but also in addition to that we have, you know, care mongering. White people call it care mongering. But if you've read an article about mutual aid by Vicky Mochama in The Walrus, an excellent article, we have, like, when I say we, I mean, Black folks, we've had those types of networks forever, as long as I can remember. If you know what a susu is, you know what I mean. So I would suggest reading that article and some other ways that people are helping others directly, even without charity, and I do mention this at the end of my Flare article and that some of the rigidities of larger organizations prevent real change from happening right now. If someone's just like, I just need to have food in my belly, today, my ODSP cheque is a couple days late, does someone have something to tide me over, and then you pay that forward to somebody else. There's a great Facebook group of care mongering about this. But as for me, I was like, okay well I have, I'm still working and I still have a little bit of money to spare. And I have a pretty good social network across, you know, various countries now because of where I've been. Why don't I help use that network and funding to be able to help smaller charities in Toronto and across the country that are Black-owned, Black-facing, or Black-serving?

And so my usual birthday celebration is called 30 days of June, it is a real hashtag I made for myself and that I use to organize parties for different groups of friends I have throughout the month of June, but for this particular year, every day I promote on my Instagram various charities, big and well, mostly smaller ones, but I had certain ones that were about health,

were about youth, were about arts, were about history, especially history societies that were Black-serving, Black-owned, or Black-facing and I had friends in the States donate, friends here donate, friends from overseas like in Europe donate, I'm pretty sure, like I did the tally the other day. I'm pretty sure it was upwards of \$1,000 in change that we raised, it was all small donations to end up being a large thing. So whether using your own network or using your own talents, your time, and your money, that is one way we can still help each other.

But I think in the charity world we need to realize that people are doing this more now and that they're moving, people are moving towards nimbler solutions that can help people right away, but I still think charities are very necessary because they're, most times are able to look at the bigger picture of things because they have access to various government data and government databases. And things like that. And so they're able to see the bigger picture of, what can happen for the future? And so I think those things working in tandem where we've really realized that we need to help each other out even more now. We can't really act individually anymore. But also with charities, charities need to have that mindset to where, you know, they've been acting independently for a long time, it might be time to pool some resources with other charities.

And like I said, 86,000 charities, as much as I love to see that much, I also feel like there could be some efficiencies where maybe, you know, a few can merge and pool their resources, talents, and whatever else, and be even more effective to reach more people. So those are some things I think that we can do to look towards the future of giving. Because like I said, where, you know, you can't be traditional anymore in terms of how things have always been a TV campaign, can't always work anymore because a lot of people aren't watching TV. They're streaming. Or they're on their phones. Some people don't even own a television. I have cable for the first time in my life in my name, I have never had that and I'm 37 years old. So some of the traditional stuff is not going to work on me, but a social media post might. So things like that are things I feel like charities need to be able to recognize and move towards especially now that, you know, a lot more people are in need, but I feel like there needs to be a multi-disciplinary approach to how that can happen. Go to the next slide.

And so with that, I say charities and nonprofits have to fundamentally change the way they do good in order to continue, because ultimately, I believe that a charity's ultimate goal should be to put itself out of business. And at the end of the day donors, which is us. We need to hold ourselves but also charities accountable, but also being conscious about why we give, not

necessarily how much we have around what why are we doing it. Am I doing it because a celebrity told me to? Am I doing it because I see someone in my network that is a need? Am I helping out because right now it's a cool thing to do? And I want to post on social media and look like I'm okay and then just not do it again? You have to really look at why you're giving in order for it to be effective. And so that's that's all I have to say, I mean there's a lot but I thank you so much for your time and let's stay in touch. I'm especially active on Instagram and Twitter. Those are my two favorite platforms anyway. I am on some of the others. But I'm more of a lurker there, I'm way more active on Twitter. So I would suggest you join me there. And then if you want a copy of my thesis, my original thesis, not the book, I have a Patreon for that. So you can join that, and then, we can also connect via LinkedIn, of course, too. I will have a website soon, but it's been super busy. I haven't had time to finish that but I'll get to it soon. It's funny, I have so much time to create stuff for other people, but for yourself, you know, it's a bit more difficult, but thanks. Let's answer some questions. I want to see what people are asking

**Jane Schmidt:** Thank you June. That was wonderful. I was writing down lots of notes of different themes that we've been talking about in class so far, things like the white savior complex and how do we track impact and I was particularly gratified that there was a few comments about things that the students have had to read. So the mention of the MTV Cribs, that very cringe worthy movie, that's in one of their readings and then they were supposed to listen to Kate Bahen on The Current just before our session. So yeah, that's great. And we didn't plan that, I promise. So we have lots of, we had some questions come in during your lecture. And we also ahead of time, I asked the students after reading your article if they had any questions for you. So we've got a few of those. And I want to make sure that we get to everything, so it's 4:08, so I'm cognizant of the time. There was a question that came in from Sweden, so I have a feeling that's maybe someone that you know, so I definitely want to give that, it's in the chat, and it's from someone named Nathan in Sweden.

**June Findlay:** Okay.

**Jane Schmidt:** And so, Nathan asks, what is your greatest fear when it comes to how the charity industry system works? Their increasingly for profit setting, or the way a charity distributes it's donation? If it happens to be the former or another setting framework, you would think of such as more of a government based charity.

**June Findlay:** Yeah, I think my greatest fear, I wouldn't say fear, maybe concern, I don't necessarily, I'm not really scared of the for profit stuff in terms of marketing. I actually think charities should act like for profits that way, I did mention that with the SickKids thing. But maybe the charity, the way the charity distributes donations, that's always more of my concern in general because we need to know where the money's going, I need to know, you know, how much is going overhead and really break down that overhead too. I think, like I said, a lot of times you just kind of lump everything, as long as it's not, like a lot has to do with operations, nothing else. It's just lumped in. So yeah, I would say more of my concern is how a charity distributes its donations. But yeah, the for profit thing, there are some tendencies charities need to steal from that world.

**Jane Schmidt:** So I'll take a question from one of the students now. So one question was, do you think youth or teachers who attended the WE Day events could now have a different outlook on their experience with all this new information brought to light? How do you think people are feeling about the experiences that they've had?

**June Findlay:** It really depends. And I have friends who have worked for WE Charity in camps and things like that. But I also have quite a few teacher friends. And for the majority of them, they always had a bit of a nagging feeling that something wasn't quite right, especially because the curriculum was almost forced on them. So you don't really have, as long as the school board decides that we are doing this part, you will teach this part as part of your curriculum for the year. They don't have a choice. And so they're already like, well, I have to teach this stuff, but great teachers will take that in their stride and do what they have to do because they want kids to learn, they're great teachers. But most of my teacher friends anyway, always had a bit of a nagging feeling about what exactly was happening there. And for those that were, you know, of course, you're going to have uber fans that might have a reckoning right now. And so I think it's more just like blissful obliviousness in terms of, like, hey, you know, at least the kids are at school, they get to learn how to help others, which is true, but in what context and why? Why is this happening this way? Why is, why are they being handed swag bags from corporations that almost, what we think have nothing to do with international relations, but ultimately do because they might be, like drilling or things like that? Just the exposure of various things. Like I get that the idea itself is great in terms of like you get out of the classroom again to the real world and you need some, and because they're teenagers, you need to get you know something out of it, too, because no one will do anything for nothing, but the same time, I think the teachers in this



respect, most of them always were a bit suspicious of the whole thing in general.

**Jane Schmidt:** Thank you. A question from the chat was, when you say “charity business”, is it cognitive dissonance for you or cringe worthy? So I guess this is talking about the marriage of charity and business.

**June Findlay:** Yeah, it's a bit of both. Honestly, because like I said, I do think there are some aspects like marketing that charity needs to take from the advertising world. But also, like, yeah, the fact that it even has to become a business to become, to be even considered relevant. Yeah, I see that too. And I understand why you asked that question. It's a great question. But for me, yeah, it's a little. It's a little bit of both. And it's kind of like I hate that it has to be business but that's, at least in North America, that's the way we have to operate, unfortunately. And so to really be effective, you kind of have to play the game a bit, even buying into Facebook ads to do that, I mean, even though I kind of, it's funny, as a marketer I loathe Facebook, but I know it's still the most effective way to get reach right, and so it's kind of like charity business where it's like, yeah, you shouldn't have to resort to these types of things, but unfortunately it's where you got to meet people where they are and where they are is, you have to do it the same way that I didn't see us do it. Maybe not with as much money, of course, but it's the one thing I learned when I moved over to the ad world. I was like, why aren't charities doing this.

**Jane Schmidt:** The tension with values is always an issue. Okay, I'll do one more from the class. This was interesting, was that, do you think that the future of social change will move toward less structured collaborative movements operating outside of a charitable framework. Or do you think that some sort of organizational framework is necessary to make genuine traction or impact?

**June Findlay:** Both. So at the end I talked about, you know, care mongering, you know, we've all seen GoFundMes blow up in the last, especially this year. But in the last few years where, people are like, hey, I need to get, especially for, you know, especially for trans folks, people of color, who may be falling out of the healthcare system because they need this thing done to be, you know, to complete, you know, themselves and they can't do it because it's not seen as an essential surgery. So like, okay, well a GoFundMe and people will help them out or you have people who are just like, yeah my ODSP cheque is short, but the government's gonna take a while to fix it, but my kids need milk today, can someone just, you know, can someone just email

me a couple bucks. And there's never a sense of you'll pay you back in that group. I love the sense of like, just pay it forward, I help you out, you paid for it to somebody else. And then, of course, with the mutual aid article that Vicky Mochama wrote in the fall in The Walrus. And then with my campaign for thirty days of June. But then also for the big policy things, there still needs to be a framework for that.

And that's why I also said that government needs to get involved again with that, because ultimately, it is government that still creates the structure and framework of policy that implements things that prevents the situation that charities have to fulfill like if there wasn't a sense of like, you know, food shortages. There's no food shortages, as we found out, like how the food system really works. But why is it that we have farmers dumping milk and people can't buy milk at the grocery store? Do you know what I mean? And that's a question that only really large scale, like policy things can solve, that we can't solve by ourselves. It's like trying to say, you know, you saw save the environment by switching to paper straws, which are honestly the most annoying. Don't use paper straws, they don't do anything! Maybe a metal straw, but not paper ones. It just shows the whole futility in it. Anyway. But I do believe there needs to be a bit of both for things that need to happen right now and that we can move quickly, yeah go help that person out, give them a couple bucks, help them, you know, help them stay up in your house for a little bit, but for the major things like, charities have been acting as a band aid for government for so long now that it's almost gotten ridiculous. Why isn't there a case where we build a framework so that if we had enough sustainable housing, we wouldn't need to help, we wouldn't need to build more shelters, because there'd be enough housing for everybody, right? I live at Yonge and Eglinton, and I live down the street from where that whole protest happened with the Roehampton Hotel. And it was sad to see that because I was a huge favorite. In fact, of where it was, like this is actually a perfect location because this area is so densely mixed with so many people from all walks of life. Why not them too? They're part of the society. They deserve a place to stay, and to be safe. Why can't they? Almost as soon as they got kicked out, I've immediately seen more people on the street right afterwards, so.

**Jane Schmidt:** Okay, there was an earlier question about positions of privilege in nonprofits and charities, but I believe that you did address that throughout your talk. And then, a very recent question that just came in. Greetings from England, great presentation, is charitainment mostly a North American thing or is it popular, gaining popularity in other parts of the world? If it's just North America, what makes it popular there and not so much elsewhere? And that's from Ainslie Harris.

**June Findlay:** Hi Ainslie! I know Ainslie, we went to junior high together! That's a great question. So yeah, so I think at first when I was doing my thesis it was not a thing outside of North America. It was very much like the reason why the UNHCR, they were pioneers in this in that they had, you know, Danny Kaye then Audrey Hepburn, I talk about Audrey Hepburn versus Angelina Jolie both in my article but also my thesis. It was a thing in North America because the UN was very smart in merging their vision with knowing that people here cared about celebrities enough to listen to them talk about this other thing, right? So for a long time it was very North America only, but I believe in the 10 years since the thesis and really the 15 years since that article, it has spread to other parts of the world. Even in Sweden, where I, remember, I had to convince my professor that it was even a phenomenon because he didn't believe it. But he's not so necessarily a pop culture aficionado, at least he wasn't at that time.

So now they have in Sweden, for example, they have what's called Radiohjälpen, which is basically like charity radio in Swedish. And they have various famous jockeys like, you know, DJs and jockeys from the country, and they'll have other people host a show, have celebrities host a show for an hour, and then you tune in and do all this other stuff. So now what's the thing, but it wasn't always. And especially with COVID now, it's been super interesting to see how that's kind of proliferated in different areas, like there's an excellent, if you're into house music like I am, there's an excellent channel on YouTube called Boiler Room and they typically do concerts and sessions from all over the world. What's been very cool in the last few months, is that they've been able to raise thousands, maybe even millions of dollars with us at this point, by having some of their celebrity DJs do sets where during the set, the live set, people will donate and then they might get a chance to get a favorite song played or something like that.

So other countries have, they've been using this for a while now, too. But this was just definitely generally a North American idea first. But I think with the proliferation of Angelina Jolie being a world celebrity, but also with Bono and things like that, that's where it really started to disseminate from all over, but everyone is doing a bit differently. But the UN, especially UNICEF, has been really good at getting various celebrities from different countries to promote their causes, but it's also the point where it's almost benign now where it's like, okay, they're a Goodwill Ambassador, so what are you doing now? So maybe it's been too successful in that sense.

**Jane Schmidt:** Okay, I think we're going to give the last word to the last question that I got from the class. I was so happy. And I think it's appropriate, given your, your expertise and perhaps a positive forward looking note to end on. If you were to open for an event for social change that targets youth, like WE Day, how would you grab youth's attention and raise awareness without celebrity endorsement or employing a little star power?

**June Findlay:** That's hard, that's very, very hard to do. Great question though. I feel like it depends on who starts it, but even just with, you know, movements have started on, so social media is the key for me, not just because I work in it, but I feel like it's been the catalyst for so many movements like Black Lives Matter, like the Arab Spring, like #MeToo, and it's mostly at the time, most of those movements are mostly faceless, it might have been one person who started it, but that takes on a life of its own and whatever else. And I feel like, as long as there's, you know, there's a collective of people who believe in the same thing who are able to proliferate that vision through their own networks, that's what keeps it going.

And I think that's also what's made, you know Black Lives Matter stuff so interesting and keep growing, despite everything, is because there's a central belief and movement, but there's not a central amount of people that are controlling it. And so that would be like, if I were to do an event like, even just with some of the protests that have been happening, you know, that as long as there's a common cause for something and you're like, let's use this hashtag to organize and meetup and whatever else. That's where you can get, that's where you can get a movement going for a typical event. So even like, there's different events that have been happening during COVID and they have had no celebrity involvement, maybe some local artists that people know through their networks and things like that, but I feel like there's been a lot of great events that have been happening without necessarily celebrity involvement. But the key, the key to all of that is really a central, a core belief and goal towards something and you have enough people in your network that and you've got to be strategic about your network to, it's like, who has access to this, you pool your resources, like who has access to people in government, who has access to, you know, artists, but not necessarily like celebrities, but people who have, you know, to me, the core, not the core, but, an essential part of any movement is the artists, because they're the ones that a) have the time to create and be prolific with their visions, but also they're able to illustrate, whatever you want to do. Then you have people who can capture it. Like, who can who can be a photographer, videographer, who can write, who knows things about law, who knows things

about permits. I mean, the one thing I've learned that I didn't expect to learn through the last three years working the ad business is permitting and how important that is and how producers basically run everything and how you should very respect them a lot because they run everything. So even without celebrities, you definitely need a central core belief and a core movement towards a common goal. How you come about that is how you do it. But I feel like that's why movements on social have kept on for so long, because, without celebrity endorsement. It's really hard. I think as long as you keep having those types of things. It'll keep growing. I would definitely use the Black Lives Matter movement as an example of that.

**Jane Schmidt:** That's great. Thank you so much June. Melanie, I'm wondering whether or not I should turn it over to you for some closing remarks. So this is wonderful. Thank you so much.

**Melanie Panitch:** Yes, it was absolutely wonderful. And thank you so much for starting with your own personal journey and your introduction as that and how you became curious about celebrity involvement in charity work, but that question of becoming curious is such an important opening to a journey and a life and a body of work. And so for everybody who's listening and our journeys, but it's particularly important as instructors that, of course, with a group of students, to know about the importance of becoming curious about something that's poking at you, and I loved your message of agency of taking time, recognizing our talents, and contributions that could be made at a number of levels. And your own personal example of 30 days in June, submit a beautiful example of networking and innovation so well rooted in our communities, and of course on social innovation and it's so elemental to and fundamental to how we talk about social innovation. Your breadth of knowledge and commitment and deep rooted values and beliefs in social justice just permeate everything you said. And I can't imagine how we could have launched this unexpected visitor series with anyone other than you. So thank you for taking a risk with us and being game to go from a virtual classroom to the virtual university and I appreciate that we'll be able to have a record of this talk going forward. So, many thanks to you for that.

**June Findlay:** Thank you so much. This is, I was gonna say this is a bit of a full circle moment for me because, like I started this, the idea started while I was at university. And it's kind of full circle come again to talk about it again 8 to 10 years later afterwards. So thank you for the opportunity, and risk is my middle name, like this is what we do in social, so we're taking a risk every day, every day.

**Melanie Panitch:** Continue to loop you in. So thank you. And I want to thank everybody on behalf of the Office of Social Innovation, and there's ways of staying in touch with us. Please just go into the slide just before, we have an upcoming lecture next week. As part of our Free School where we're rethinking how we work with archives in this day and age of thinking about history and who gets to tell it, and how it's recorded, and Cheryl Thompson will be speaking about how to navigate archives when there's missing information or incorrect information. So please join us for that. And if you want to stay in touch with OSI, here's how, and through our various means of social media, Twitter and Instagram, subscribe to our mailing list, and we hope to see you at future events. And to students in the course we will see you in the course online. Okay, thank you everybody for attending. Thank you again June.

**June Findlay:** Thank you everyone.