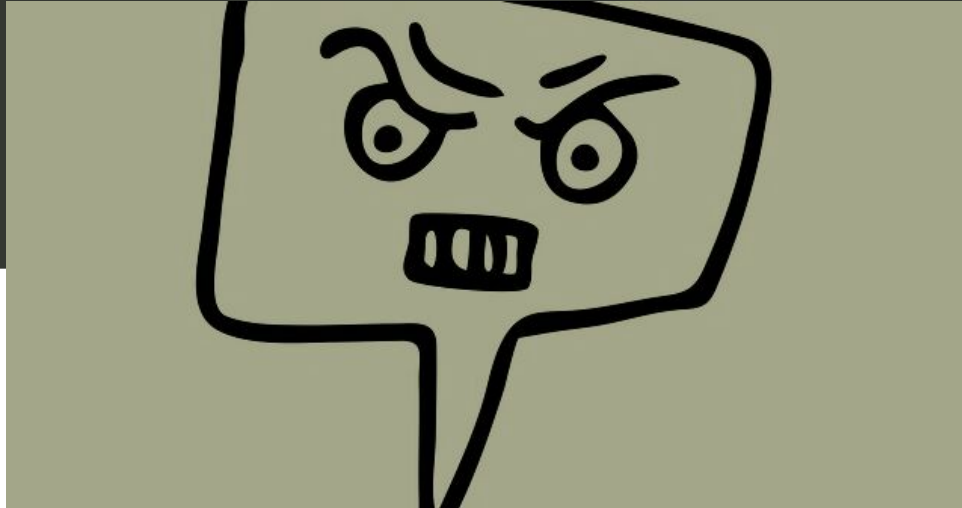


Rage Giving On Steroids

06.27.22 | Linda J. Rosenthal, JD



It's been about five years since the phenomenon of "rage giving" entered the public consciousness and discourse in America.

"While anger may have driven some donations over the past decades," the concept as a movement in philanthropy is generally understood to have gotten its start" around the time of the 2016 election cycle.

In *A New Form of Donor Motivation: Rage Donating!* (November 15, 2016), editor-in-chief Ruth McCambridge told readers of *The Nonprofit Quarterly* about a "hastily erected website" called RageDonate. When the then-president-elect would tweet or say something provocative or offensive, the volunteer webmasters would post it online next to a "donate" button. For \$10, any member of the public could make a charitable donation to an organization favoring the group just insulted or disparaged. "Try it for yourself," wrote Ms. McCambridge. "It might make you feel better—almost like you still have power and voice!"

There was a bit of initial waffling about the best name for this newfound people power. In the end, "rage giving" has emerged as the favorite; not, though, soon enough for a word substitution in our first blog post on this topic: *Surge Donations for the Charitable Community* (August 17, 2017).

In any event, this type of donating caught on with the public. And it was certainly a welcome boon to some of the "lucky" groups otherwise suffering under the new administration because of sudden and severe budget cuts, 180-degree policy shifts, or other marginalization. The list of donee organizations have included many that previously struggled for bare-bones support.

Phenomenon Development

The spigot on these sudden and "huge amounts of money falling from the sky opened on November 9, 2016, and started gushing on January 20, 2017. Remarkably, there seems to be little let-up on the

horizon.”

In our posts since 2017, we’ve focused primarily on the practical challenges for some of the recipients of this anger-fueled donor generosity. See [Rage Giving: What’s the Formula for Success?](#) (August 21, 2018). See also: [Rage Giving: The RAICES Example](#) (January 31, 2019) and [“Rage Giving”: Once Again, All the Rage](#) (October 5, 2021).

For many of the donees, there were serious difficulties in rapidly scaling up. They needed extra space, equipment, and personnel to meet the beneficiary needs being funded by the rage donations. “Money falling out of the sky does not always come free of charge; there are predictable pitfalls and complications.”

As events have unfolded over this half-decade, there has been little let-up in rage giving; indeed, now we have cycle after cycle of “anger-turned-into-money” bouncing back and forth from side to side. The pipe-dream of possibly – someday, perhaps soon – stepping back from the frantic urgency of continual “rage philanthropy” has not come into view at all.

And over the course of the past week – certainly gaining momentum during the weekend – there’s been a *perceptible* shift in the mood and the conversation about “rage philanthropy.”

The shocking (though not altogether unexpected) decisions by the United States Supreme Court last week are landing like a body blow for many Americans and across a large swath of the philanthropic sector. As of just this morning, there’s now a fourth controversial high-court decision thrown into the mix.

Something more is afoot than garden-variety “rage giving” pushes.

Setting the Stage

Last fall, as the docket for the current term of the U.S. Supreme Court was taking shape, there were already predictions of an uptick in high controversy.

For instance, Market Watch’s Charles Passy described worries from pro-choice supporters about Texas’s new (and more-draconian-than-ever) anti-abortion and vigilante law scheduled to go into effect on January 1, 2022.

He cited the example of one pro-choice woman who had previously been an activist and had donated money to Planned Parenthood. This soon-to-be operative law was her “[Oh Crap](#)” moment. She donated to “yet another group” and also “put together a social-media fundraiser, encouraging others to contribute to organizations behind the cause. See [How the Supreme Court Texas abortion ruling could spur a wave of ‘rage giving’](#) (updated September 4, 2021).

Of course, there were publicity campaigns and calls to action from the major abortion-rights organizations. There was news of (eventually unsuccessful) efforts and legal action to delay the start date, obtain a stay pending appeal, or otherwise to blunt the most damaging effects. There was similar chatter and activity around the nation.

Rage Boiling Over

Fast forward to last Friday morning, June 24, 2022, as the Supreme Court announced its 6-3 ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

In *How Philanthropy Can Unite in Protecting Abortion Access and Reproductive Justice* (June 24, 2022) *Inside Philanthropy*, Elizabeth Baranjas-Roman and four other leaders of reproductive-rights organizations describe feeling unsurprised but devastated nonetheless by the official court decision. It's "another gut punch to much of the country," they explain.

Then they drop the boom.

These five women and their organizations have launched a nationwide, no-holds-barred battle plan, effective immediately. There will be massive fundraising blitzes, certainly, but much more. There are plans in place with established strategic partners at the federal, state, and local levels to deploy and use the funds strategically including – of course – right away to help red-state pregnant patients obtain needed care. There are long-term action-plan elements as well.

Take a look at it. Even in overview form in the *Inside Philanthropy* article, it presents an intriguing and supercharged version of "rage philanthropy." A tweet posted on June 24th reads: "Our organizations have fought for reproductive justice for decades. Now is the time for all of philanthropy to join the fight for our collective liberation."

It's likely there are many other such plans now in the works. See, for example, last Friday's statement from the Borealis Foundation: *We Keep Us Safe: Philanthropy's Role in this Critical Moment #BeyondRoe* (June 24, 2022) Borealis News & Updates ["They threaten to come for our freedoms—and they do. At Borealis Philanthropy, we act as a bridge between funders and organizers to resource movements for long term transformative change...."]

You may have noticed something else just in the past few days. All over social and news media, there's a subtle but unmistakable twist in the latest pleas for emergency charitable support. Before, the money "ask" sat patiently on the sidelines, politely waiting for its cue to speak. Now, it's elbowed its way on stage, front and center, demanding immediate attention.

It may well be that the era of simple "rage giving" is waning in favor of a newer paradigm of "rage-giving-on-steroids."

Helpful Resources

Because it's so new, there's much less information and analysis on rage philanthropy than for the more standard charitable money-raising models.

For a few selective samples, see:

- [*The Rise of the 'Rage-Donation'*](#) (January 31, 2017) Ashley Fetters, *gq.com* ["Welcome to the age of the rage-donation, the act of feverishly throwing money at a cause you believe in because you just don't know what the hell else to do."]
- [*Why You Shouldn't Donate Angry: Pitfalls of Rage Giving*](#) (December 12, 2018) Jane Hodges, *yesmagazine.org* ["Anger can be a good motivator for donations. But not everyone wins when it's the only factor."]

- *Will Donors Like You When They're Angry?* (November 15, 2019) Kevin Peters, GS Insights, grantstation.com ["In recent years, when some citizens get angry, they've also been flashing green... in the form of donation dollars. Thus the phrase "rage donating" has been born."]
- *Engagement: All the Rage—Philanthropy Amid Crisis* (January 1, 2021) Melanie M. Sidwell & Amy Voida, Ph.D., *afpglobal.org* (Association of Fundraising Professionals) ["Rage giving" is here to stay, and you should be prepared for when—not if—it happens to your nonprofit."]
- *Rage donations and mobilization: Understanding the effects of advocacy on collective giving responses* (February 9, 2022) Cassandra M. Chapman, Ph.D. *et al*, British Journal of Social Psychology ["Advocacy is intended to change people's attitudes and behavior.... Overall, mobilization pathways were stronger, especially on donation behavior and in the context of the abortion debate."]
- *Rage Giving* (April 2022) Professors Jennifer A. Taylor & Katrina Miller-Stevens, Cambridge Elements, *Nonprofit & Public Administration*, available also in Kindle version (\$16.00) at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) ["... a new phenomenon in online charitable giving has emerged – donating motivated by rage.... [G]iving motivated by feelings of anger and rage is an unstudied behavioral shift in online giving"]

Conclusion

Trying to order the Amazon Kindle version of the Cambridge Elements publication titled "Rage Giving" can be a bit tricky.

By typing just the words "rage giving" into the Amazon search box, up pops: *Rage Baking: The Transformative Power of Flour, Fury, and Women's Voices: A Cookbook* (February 4, 2020) by Kathy Gunst & Katherine Alford. It looks like an interesting and delicious selection.

But, after the last few years, there isn't a woman in America who needs instruction in rage baking or encouragement to do it.

– Linda J. Rosenthal, J.D., FPLG Information & Research Director