

“Creating a Future of Opportunity”

Remarks of William W. Ginsberg
President of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
At The Foundation’s

Annual Meeting

The Canal Dock Boathouse
New Haven, Connecticut
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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Khalilah. Thank you for that kind introduction, thank you for your extraordinary leadership as Chair of our Board of Directors, and thank for all the wisdom and clarity of vision you bring to our work. The Foundation is deeply grateful to you.

And thank you all for joining us. Your presence here tonight, your engagement with us and the engagement of thousands of others across these twenty towns of South Central Connecticut, is what The Foundation is all about. Without that, without you, we would be nothing, or at least nothing worth talking about. The Foundation was created as a vehicle for people of Greater New Haven to support one another. After nine decades, that remains what we are. Looking out across this room tonight, and knowing so many of you and the dedication to our community that brings you here, I reflect yet again on the generosity and community spirit that distinguishes Greater New Haven. Thank you all so much for that generosity and commitment, and for your support, your interest and your work with us.

And as I look out at this glorious harbor that we are happily reclaiming after decades of turning our backs to it, I also reflect on how lucky we are to live and work in this beautiful and historic place. What a privilege it is to devote oneself to building on the work of those who came before us to create an even brighter future for those who will follow us here.

Tonight, I want to talk about that brighter future, about The Foundation’s vision of how we can – together – create a future of opportunity in Greater New Haven.

Our vision grows from three starting points:

First: Inequality is a defining characteristic of our time, inequality so deep and entrenched that it seems at times to be threatening the core institutions of our society. Two decades into the twenty-first century, the benefits of American prosperity are going almost entirely to a privileged few and our high-performing economy is widening inequality, not ameliorating it. This reality shapes the work and the thinking of The Foundation.

Second: Connecticut is different, but not in a good way. While we have long spoken of the ‘two Connecticuts’ – a State defined by its disparities, a State of deep urban poverty amidst great wealth – in our time this is becoming more pronounced, not less. But unlike much of our country, Connecticut is just not growing. Over the last decade, Connecticut’s economy has declined more steeply than any other state, and Connecticut is the only state to have lost both economic output and population. As a result, we simply can no longer support the quality of life that our residents – and in particular the neediest and most vulnerable among us – deserve. We see the impact of this every day, with our non-profit sector ravaged by State budget cuts and our best-educated and most accomplished young people – those on whom the future of Connecticut depends – leaving the State for greater opportunity elsewhere.

Third: we believe that our community of Greater New Haven can be a counterpoint to both the national experience and the Connecticut experience. Our community has the talent, the assets, the amenities and the commitment to show the way to a different future, a future of opportunity for the many, not just for the few.

We envision a future of opportunity in Greater New Haven because a new generation is bringing a new civic activism and a new sense of urgency to the work of community. For an old guy like me, that is a wonderful thing to see.

And what is it that we envision when we say Greater New Haven can be a community of opportunity?

We envision a community that is providing education and training that equips our people with the habits of mind and the skills that are suited to the jobs of the next generation. You can see what this looks like in the profiles of Holberton School and ConnCAT in The Foundation’s 2019 annual report, which awaits you in the next room.

We envision a community that values everyone, and that understands that even beyond skills, people need dignity and a sense of self-worth to flourish. You can see what this looks like in the profiles of Emerge and – again – of ConnCAT in your annual report.

Third, we envision a community that supports the dreams of its entrepreneurs, because it understands that innovative new small businesses will be the wellspring of growth. You can see what this looks too in your annual report, both in the profiles of Collab and Ives Squared at the New Haven Free Public Library, and in the highlighting of The Foundation’s mission-related investments in local companies.

Fourth we envision a community that understands that our medical and educational institutions are the basis of our economy and will be even more so in the future. Our “eds and meds” are our largest employers. They draw people, investment and attention to our community from across the globe. You can see what this looks like in the profile of Arvinas in your annual report, a successful and growing local biotech company located in Science Park in Newhallville that is committed to New Haven.

Fifth, we envision a community that invests in its youngest and in their families, knowing that the path to full participation in the benefits of a successful community starts at birth, or even before. And so I am thrilled to say tonight that last month The Foundation received a new five-year, \$5.4

million Federal grant to continue our New Haven Healthy Start program until 2024. And we are so excited too at all the innovative and ambitious new ideas and plans that are being birthed in our community for expanding and enhancing early care and education.

And sixth, we envision a community that is a magnet for talented, committed young people – both those raised here and those from elsewhere who come here to be educated – talented young people settle here after college, drawn by our growing industries, our suburban towns and our urban amenities, including strong neighborhoods, a vibrant cultural life and, of course, restaurants and bike lanes. You can see what this looks like in your annual report in the profile of New Haven Promise, now in its ninth year and still the recipient of The Foundation's largest single grant each year.

In all these ways, we envision that Greater New Haven can grow in ways that provide more opportunities for more of our residents.

Yet to be more than a pipe dream, this vision for our community must be a community-wide vision, not just a Foundation vision. This is not something that The Foundation can do alone.

Recognizing that, we also envision a new civic dialogue in our community, with the social sector, the business sector and our major private and public institutions sharing perspectives and working on a shared agenda day in and day out. This needs to be an inclusive leadership dialogue – bringing together leaders of major local institutions and of small neighborhood-based efforts - a dialogue across lines of race and ethnicity, a dialogue among suburbanites and city dwellers, a dialogue shaped not by politics or competition for resources, although those dynamics will always be there, but by a shared vision of Greater New Haven as a community of opportunity. It must be a dialogue that confronts the structural racism and gender bias that have closed the doors of opportunity to too many for too long. It must be a dialogue grounded in understanding, and respect for others' experience, and we know that the arts can play an important role in creating that understanding.

Speaking candidly, for all the good works and good intentions that exist in our community, not enough of this kind of dialogue happens in our community today.

The Foundation has been convening groups to create this dialogue since last year, and we will be taking steps to further advance it in the coming months as well. On June 20, the annual meeting of our Community Fund for Women & Girls will focus on the industry of care giving and its importance to the economic advancement of women. The Foundation is also planning a community-wide convening on inclusive growth to take place on September 25, and we will have more to say about that as we get closer to that date.

This new civic dialogue needs to be grounded in a shared vision, not in what divides us. We do not need to choose between welcoming market rate housing development and fighting displacement; we must see both as critical to a future of inclusive growth. We do not need to choose between encouraging the growth of our great nonprofit economic engines and developing new tax revenues to support needed public programs; again, both are essential to our future. Put simply, we need not choose between growth and inclusion.

I am not saying that there won't be difficult and painful choices to be made; as we at The Foundation know well, reconciling differing priorities and allocating all-too-scarce resources is very tough. Particular issues will inevitably result in strong disagreements. But what I am saying is that

growth and inclusion are not at odds with one another. They are both essential. Indeed, they are mutually dependent.

Why do I say that? Because our community will never achieve its social objectives - expanding services for those who need them, reducing and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health and educational outcomes, achieving greater social justice - without the jobs, tax revenues and expanded private philanthropy that will come from more robust growth. And our community will never truly unite behind a growth agenda that transcends individual transactions unless we believe - based on real demonstrated results - that the benefits of growth will be widely shared.

Allow me to underscore this last point. I have known this community for 35 years, and I know it to be a place where people of all races, ethnicities and income levels, people from Milford to Madison to Wallingford, care deeply and contribute generously in many ways to making Greater New Haven fairer, more humane and more just. That is who we are. At The Foundation we see this everyday in our work with community residents and community leaders, with our donors and our nonprofit leaders. And yet the disparities and divides continue from year to year and generation to generation. The people of our region should be forgiven if they have grown somewhat skeptical about whether our aspirations as to greater social justice can be achieved.

I for one am optimistic. Our sometimes complacent “land of steady habits” seems ready in 2019 to confront its challenges with a new mindset and a new determination. I say that because last year’s gubernatorial campaign was the first in my memory in which the central question before the people of our state was how we grow more robustly. I say that because of philanthropy’s unprecedented leadership on these issues, with the announcement two weeks ago of the Dalio Foundation’s \$100 million grant to strengthen public education and promote greater economic opportunity in Connecticut. And I say that because philanthropy is responding in other ways too: I see our fellow community foundations both here in Connecticut and around the country focusing on these same imperative of developing an opportunity agenda to counter the divisive inequality of our time. I expect that we will learn from and work with others as we pursue this path.

I am optimistic for another reason too. As we here in Greater New Haven have been tested over the last several years, we have shown what we can do. We have come together to reject a vision of America that sees only winners and losers, a vision of inclusion only for those who “belong,” accompanied by the vile rhetoric of exclusion for everyone else. When national policy threatened our bedrock commitment to our immigrant newcomers, we stood tall. When natural disasters overwhelmed the capacity Puerto Rico to respond and our national leaders shrugged with indifference, we rallied. The call for *Community Now More Than Ever* has been heard and heeded; in this difficult time, we have shown how much we value our connections as a community.

In many ways, the work I have been describing to you will require The Foundation to do our work differently in the future. This is one of the reasons why, for the first time in many years, The Foundation is undertaking a new strategic plan in 2019.

This year, The Foundation is redesigning our grantmaking process to make it less burdensome for nonprofits, we are expanding our mission-related investing even as we re-focus it to support inclusive growth more fully, we are re-examining the relevance of our legacy commitments, we are

reconsidering how we can most effectively engage donors - including more diverse and younger donors - in the challenges of today and tomorrow, we are re-thinking how we engage directly with the residents across our community, and we are taking stock of our internal Foundation culture. All of this introspection is being undertaken within this framework of creating more opportunity for more of our residents; it will all roll up into a plan that will shape our work for the next five years.

As a follow-up to your attendance here this evening, you will receive a short email survey asking for your input into some of the issues that we are considering in our strategic plan. I hope you will take a moment to help us in our planning by responding.

This strategic plan is an ambitious undertaking. While it may be producing some measure of anxiety in some quarters, it is even more so truly energizing The Foundation at both the Board and staff levels.

I feel that energy around our Board table; it lights up our Board and committee meetings with a forward-looking sense of possibility. I would ask our Board members who are present to stand. The Foundation Board is truly extraordinary. Each member brings her or his singular talent and experience and knowledge and perspective to our work, and combines it with an eagerness to learn from each other and to collaborate to produce the best possible decisions. And each brings an unimpeachable record of commitment to our community. Khalilah Brown-Dean and Nick Norcott are a great Board leadership team and we have been so pleased this year to welcome Terry Jones of Jones Family Farms in Shelton as our newest Board member. To our Board members I say: thank you for all you bring to our work and for all you do. It is an honor to work for you and to learn from you.

I am deeply proud of Foundation staff. This is an extraordinary group of talented, dedicated professionals whose commitment to the community seems infinite. I would ask them to stand too. In recent years, on top of all of our traditional work with donors and nonprofits, we have challenged the staff to think differently about our technology, our infrastructure, our mission-related investments, our development products, our professional development and supervisory structures, and a variety of our internal processes. Our staff has responded by upping their already very high game. It has been deeply inspiring to be a part of, and my gratitude to the Foundation's staff is boundless.

While it is always risky to single out one individual, I do want to note on this occasion that earlier this month, Kara Straun, our Knowledge and Evaluation Manager, was recognized by the Association of Black Foundation Executives at its annual conference as its national Emerging Leader in Philanthropy. We are so proud of Kara.

I also want to offer thanks to The Foundation's senior leaders, each one of whom is not only delivering extraordinary results but also taking on the challenging role of changemaker. Angela Powers is driving our strategic planning. Christina Ciociola in leading the inclusive growth team and redesigning our grantmaking processes. Leon Bailey is maestro of our work to strengthen our internal organizational culture, including our work on diversity, equity and inclusion. Dotty Weston-Murphy is leading our efforts to diversify our donor base and to develop new products and strategies to meet the challenges of the ever-changing philanthropic marketplace. And Drew Alden is our ship's captain as we voyage into the complex and vitally important world of mission-related investments. I feel so proud to call these good people my colleagues.

I hope I have succeeded this evening in painting a picture of a community foundation that is thinking about our work differently and planning for a different future. Yet I also hasten to add that the future we envision builds very directly on the work we do today, and on the core principles that have made The Foundation a focal point for this community's philanthropy for nine decades. Allow me to mention just a few highlights of our current work.

In 2018, The Foundation made more than \$31 million in grants and distributions to hundreds of local nonprofit organizations, plus an additional \$3 million in other programmatic expenditures. There is a very long listing of our grantees in your annual report.

More than \$1.7 million of that amount was raised and contributed during the thirty-six hours of last year's Great Give, when more than 11,000 donors made more than 15,000 gifts to support almost 400 local nonprofits – all records. It was our greatest Great Give – to date. Next week, all around this community nonprofits will challenge their supporters to beat our own records, to go one better, to stand up for Greater New Haven in the 2019 Great Give. *Let's do this – together!*

The Great Give was just one part – albeit the most frenetic one – of another year of outstanding donor support for The Foundation in 2018. Altogether, The Foundation received more than \$18 million last year from donors and institutions across our region – donors whose interests span the full range of the community's charitable activity, donors wanting to build permanent legacies through endowments and donors wanting to support the community's current needs, and institutions wishing to take advantage of The Foundation's consistently outstanding investment performance.

In the negative investment climate of 2018, The Foundation continued to outperform our benchmarks, although our overall investment performance was down last year. Markets have rebounded in the first quarter of 2019 and The Foundation continues to add value over and above market indices. As of March 31, total Foundation assets have grown to approximately \$615 million.

Our partnership with the Valley Community Foundation, was renewed in 2018 with the signing of a new ten-year affiliation agreement. We remain as committed as ever to the Valley and its residents, a commitment that has its roots in the generosity of the Gates brothers of Derby in the 1950s. We are privileged to be doing our Valley work with and through the Valley community leaders who are building VCF, including its CEO Sharon Closius and its board chair Lynne Perry and her colleagues.

The Foundation is doing more and more of our work at the neighborhood level. This past year, the Neighborhood Leadership Program supported the work of emerging neighborhood leaders in New Haven, West Haven, Hamden and East Haven. In advance of the 2018 Connecticut and national elections, The Foundation worked with local nonprofits in a very successful nonpartisan effort to promote voter registration in historically low turnout neighborhoods, work that is continuing this year and next with a focus on both the 2020 census and the 2020 elections.

I could cite so much else that we are doing; you can see much of it set forth in our annual report.

I want to conclude this evening with a reflection and an exhortation.

This past year – The Foundation’s ninetieth – provided us with a moment to reflect on what it is that has built this remarkable community asset, the charitable endowment that The Foundation stewards for our donors and for the community. In reflecting on this, The Foundation reaffirmed our core commitments to:

1. Earning the community’s trust by making independent and knowledgeable decisions based on what we believe to be in the community’s best interest;
2. Promoting connection among the peoples of our region, for connection is the essence of community; and
3. Honoring the intentions of the thousands of individuals and families who have come to The Foundation to create permanent legacies that are both personally meaningful while also contributing to the larger story of our community’s progress.

These core principles will remain embedded in our DNA no matter what else changes at The Foundation going forward.

There is a fourth principle too, one that I have already said enough about this evening: community progress. The Foundation has always been and will continue to be about progress toward a brighter future for our region.

That last point leads to my exhortation.

Last week, the Urban League of Southern Connecticut with its research partner Quinnipiac University published its report on the *State of Urban Connecticut 2019*. The Foundation is proud to be one of the funders of this vitally important document, a report that sets forth clearly and painfully how we have both progressed and not progressed in ameliorating the persistent disparities that define life for too many of our neighbors in Connecticut and in New Haven in 2019. The report’s introduction was written by Hugh Price, a man with deep New Haven roots who served as President of the National Urban League from 1994-2003.

I had the privilege of interviewing Hugh at an Urban League event last October, which gave me the opportunity to talk to him in depth and to get to know him better. Mr. Price is an inspiring figure, a man who has fought the good fight for people of color and for the nation’s cities – notably this one – for over half a century. At one level, as he states in his introduction to the *State of Urban Connecticut*, the persistence of the racial disparities and urban challenges that he has worked on since the 1960s is deeply dispiriting. Yet Mr. Price’s own life story as well as his writings remind us of the progress that has been made. And his introduction ends with a reminder that we all need to attack these challenges today with the same conviction and urgency that he remembers from his work on Congress Avenue for the New Haven Black Coalition in the late 1960s.

I leave you with that thought: our work requires as much or more conviction and urgency as ever. Ours is a deeply challenging time in many ways. But it is a time when youthful energy and activism is coming back to the cities, and investment is following. That is true in New Haven too. As I said before, our community has all the talent, assets and amenities that it needs to become a growth center, and it has all commitment it needs to grow in a way that truly and broadly benefits the people of our community. Let us resolve to work together to promote growth and inclusion; if we do so, we can create the future of opportunity for our people that I have sought to describe this evening. .

You may be assured that your community foundation is committed to working with all of you to make that happen.

I thank you all once again for being our partners in the work of community.