Wholesale Revolution In Operations Boosted Leaders Into The Spotlight

By Paul Clo ery

The Year 2022 had it all – rain, sleet, snow, pestilence, gloom of night, revolution and rejoicing. Sometimes it all happened at once and without a doubt nonprofit operations were forever changed.

You can't tack every evolution to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is a good start. You might be able to correctly assess that much of what engulfed the nonprofit sector during the past 12 months got its start between 2020 and 2021. The fact there was some experience with the issues didn't make the decisions easier.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated food shortages and driven up the prices of what is available. Social justice remained a priority. Meanwhile, COVID-19 resembled something stuck to the bottom of a shoe that can't be shaken off, but you walk away hoping it will wear off. It has impacted both back to the office and work from home (or the beach).

Just as the sector has been influenced by events, so has this 25th anniversary edition of The NonProfit Times' Power & Influence Top 50. Nearly one-third (32%) of those honored have not previously been inducted into the club. Women outnumber men on the list for the first time, 28 to 22. It also is arguably the most diverse list of honorees.

The honorees have distinguished themselves as initiators, innovators and leaders who can redirect and sometimes restrict vital nonprofits and their operations. An important criteria of the list is that the honoree must be a working day-in, day-out executive.

The 2022 honorees were selected from a group of roughly 300 nominated top executives. A committee of The NPT editorial staff, contributors and a few leaders plugged into executive movement were involved in the selection process. This is not a lifetime achievement award. The executives must have had an impact during the previous 12 months.

The fine china will be rolled out for honorees and their guests as they are feted in Washington, D.C., next month during the annual NPT Power & Influence Top 50 Gala at The National Press Club. One of the honorees will receive the NPT Influencer of the Year award. Turn the page and discover why these leaders are exceptional.
conventional thinking about foundations. He has long advocated for grant-makers to think about sustainability. Her focus has been mobilizing resources for Latinx communities to expand economic opportunity, and advance giving to overall trust in the sector. He's never been shy about confronting created by the...to listen to those they fund and for permanent change. For example, funders can’t shut off the fire hose opened during the pandemic for social justice. Who needs lethal weapons when you can wield a ladle? He fed the people in Boston. He's quick to admit there are intractable issues that neither...frontline of democracy reform, and nonprofits will continue to be on the frontlines of every major social issue for their communities.”

Fred Blackwell
Chief Executive Officer
San Francisco Foundation
San Francisco, Calif.
Along with dealing with numerous Bay Area issues, Blackwell is chair of the board at Independent Sector during pivotal leadership transition announced earlier this year. An Oakland, Calif., native, there’s no doubt his understanding of local connections has been key to weaving the public, private and philanthropic for community equity.

Rakim H. D. Brooks
President
Alliance for Justice
Washington, D.C.
Brooks has been in the equity fight for a long time, pushing for diverse judicial nominees. He is a politically-savvy, seasoned strategist who knows nonprofits must lead the DEI evolution. His words: “…the courts are the frontline of democracy reform, and nonprofits will continue to be on the frontlines of every major social issue for their communities.”

Nancy Brown
President & CEO
American Heart Association
Dallas, Texas
Brown is a champion for equitable health. Many don’t realize the importance of AHA and her leadership during the pandemic, leveraging technologies created by the AHA Center for Accelerated Drug Discovery to expand global understanding of the protein structure of COVID-19. Her influence extends globally, her voice heard on domestic and international boards.

Phil Buchanan
President
Center For Effective Philanthropy
Cambridge, Mass.
Buchanan is among the first to tie the decline in number of households giving to overall trust in the sector. He’s never been shy about confronting conventional thinking about foundations. He has long advocated for grant-makers to listen to those they fund and for permanent change. For example, funders can’t shut off the fire hose opened during the pandemic for social justice.

James Canales
President & Trustee
The Barr Foundation
Boston, Mass.
Canales without a doubt has ascended to the role of philanthropy leader in Boston. He’s quick to admit there are intractable issues that neither government nor nonprofits can independently solve. The foundation supports programs but it starts with Canales’ belief in investing in leaders. It’s all about having a long-term perspective but also reacting to the now.
Jonathan Greenblatt  
National Director & CEO  
Anti-Defamation League  
New York, N.Y.

Stop reading this and order his new book *It Could Happen Here* on a more catastrophic scale. “We’ve seen the normalization of hate.” Greenblatt has been correct on almost every other crusade, from online extremism to going after for-profit firms to fighting extremist groups. He was investigating against the Proud Boys before the Justice Department could get its act together.

Alix Guerrier  
President & CEO  
DonorsChoose  
New York, N.Y.

You know that Guerrier is going to use technology to fundamentally change operations wherever he happens to be. An early supporter of digital currency, he is also being measured about its use. Co-founder of the curricular platform, he’s making crowdfunding more equitable and transparent. Always the instructor, he’s also teaching empathy which is too often lost on digital denizens.

Crystal Hayling  
Executive Director  
Libre Foundation  
San Francisco, Calif.

Hayling showed profound leadership through her writing about the moral urgency for philanthropy during the racial justice uprisings and by also announcing before COVID that the foundation was doubling grantmaking in response to community need. She is founder of the Democracy Frontlines Fund and enlisted other funders to pool their funding for a strategy focused on racial justice and democracy.

Eileen R. Heisman  
President & CEO  
National Philanthropic Trust  
Jenkintown, Pa.

Heisman runs the donor-advised fund that isn’t a for-profit in nonprofit clothing. She opened the U.K. to the concept, opening an office in London with NPT Transatlantic, a dual qualified charity which means it is recognized as a charitable organization in both the U.K. and U.S. With 58 billion under management, Heisman is key to this evolving and sometimes targeted fundraising method.

Melanie L. Herman  
Executive Director  
Nonprofit Risk Management Center  
Leesburg, Va.

An unassuming executive might believe nonprofits are safe from risk. That’s only because the person hasn’t read one of Herman’s dozen or so books. She is the right call before, during and after something happens and she is the architect of prevention plans for nonprofits with risk profiles that would scare almost anyone.

Ben Jealous  
President  
People For The American Way  
Washington, D.C.

You want Ben Jealous to have your back in a fight. He has referred to recent legislative actions as “sadistic.” He’s making clear how much progress is at risk and working toward legislative and ballot box action. There’s also the video series on an antigovernment extremist group and his leadership for transformative change in public safety.

Jo Ann Jenkins  
Chief Executive Officer  
AARP  
Washington, D.C.

Jenkins keeps redirecting the organization’s reach. It’s always about social change for her and redressing, reclaiming the ideas and images of people who are 50-plus. She has been a thought leader on the future of work, inequities in healthcare and it would be a challenge to find an organization, with which AARP has not partnered when she sees innovation.

Nicole Lamoureux  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics  
Alexandria, Va.

Don’t let Lamoureux’s cheerful demeanor fool you. She is tougher than any three people. She leads a nonprofit network that delivers basic healthcare to roughly 2 million people that for some reason has become politicized. Granted, many people might want to see their dentists but Lamoureux has stood down death threats and home break-ins. She is a healthcare policy advocate whose opinion matters.

Mindy S. Lubber  
President & CEO  
CERES  
Boston, Mass.

Start with the Ceres Investor Network where she corrallled more than 200 institutional investors, managing roughly $47 trillion. There’s also the National Environmental Law Center, which she founded. Lubber is an international change leader with the muscle to pressure firms to integrate environmental challenges into core business strategies and the funding to make it happen.

Sr. Donna Markham  
President & CEO  
Catholic Charities USA  
Alexandria, Va.

A lot of social sector people talk but Markham has actually seen the situations upon which she opines and takes action, like going to the border. She asked her 58,000 associations for challengers they are seeing. Given the responses, she is turning a $4.5 billion behemoth toward housing and healthcare, particularly seeing housing as a moral imperative and partnering with anyone willing to pitch in.

Rebecca Masisak  
CEO  
TechSoup  
San Francisco, Calif.

TechSoup was a nice little nonprofit getting tech out to nonprofits and then Masisak showed up. She successfully established the program in North America and developed an international expansion model that became the TechSoup Global Network which operates in nearly 250 countries. She is correct when she argues data is a resource for civil society.

Suzanne McCormick  
President & CEO  
YMCA of the USA  
Chicago, Ill.

Even though she’s only been in the job roughly 20 minutes, McCormick has been using the CDC’s 15% across the nation to lift up the voices of youth. She is a clarion voice on the impact of COVID isolation and its impact on the mental health of children. She is a steady and persuasive member of the influential Leadership 18 and the Independent Sector board.

Shannon McCracken  
President & CEO  
The Nonprofit Alliance  
Washington, D.C.

At a time when professional organizations are under financial stress because memberships continue to plummet, McCracken just keeps building. She’s thrown open the doors to many associations about to close for any number of reasons. She has led the Fight state legislature by state legislature when the ability to fundraise or protect donors’ rights have been targeted.

Gail McGovern  
President & CEO  
American Red Cross  
Washington, D.C.

The pressure on McGovern is tremendous. Lives are literally on the line with blood shortages and other COVID-related supply chain issues. A trusted advisor among the Leadership 18, her counsel is helping to evolve some of the nation’s largest nonprofits. She is a leader on refugee resettlement and coordinating with other NGOs. She is involved on so many fronts it is impossible not to be in the Top 50.
Brian Mittendorf, Ph.D.
Fisher Designated Professor of Accounting
Fisher College Of Business/The Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

There’s provocative and then there’s curiosity. Mittendorf pulls them both off, often in the same Tweet. He asks great questions online and provokes some of the sector’s best financial minds into short bursts of discussion, which no doubt get longer form thinking. Many financial academics couldn’t spell MBA before he started asking questions.

Michelle Nunn
President & CEO
CARE USA
Atlanta, Ga.

It is a challenge to work in international relief when your own government works against you. That’s what Nunn was faced with but somehow coordinated efforts to get the job done. Fiscal year 2021 revenue that was the highest in the organization’s history and programs reached more than 90 million people. And, she’s bringing back the iconic CARE Package.

Michael J. Nyenhuis
President & CEO
UNICEF USA
New York, N.Y.

Nyenhuis was CEO at MAP International and Americans before landing at UNICEF USA and has been a board member of both the National Alliance and InterAction. He knows international relief and has the connections to bring people to an issue. He buffed up the brand at Americans, so he understands the worth of public involvement with mission and the value of the UNICEF brand.

Una Osili, Ph.D.
Associate Dean For Research and International Programs
Lilly Family School Of Philanthropy/IUPUI
Indianapolis, Ind.

There is nobody better at explaining the sector’s economics than Osili. She oversees survival research at Lilly. Among the projects are Giving USA, the Global Philanthropy Environment Index, the Global Philanthropy Tracker, and Generosity for Life. Finding and tracking the numbers is one thing. Her unique points of view are what really make the numbers useful to the nonprofit community.

Sabeen Perwaiz Syed
President & CEO
Florida Nonprofit Alliance
Jacksonville, Fla.

Perwaiz Syed united Florida’s nonprofits, making them a force on policy matters—not an easy feat given the vast geography and the lack of any real history of nonprofits working together beyond their regions. She’s lifted the visibility of the sector with the media, funders, and policymakers. She is also vice president of the Women’s Giving Alliance and executive producer/organizer of TEDxJacksonville.

Jonathan Reckford
Chief Executive Officer
Habitat For Humanity International
Atlanta, Ga.

Reckford led Habitat’s pivot from building to rehab as the supply chain from COVID and backed-up ports stalled needed supplies. They are building again and re-opening retail operations. He’s a member of Leadership 18, on the Freddie Mac Housing Advisory Council and global economic forums. He has international muscle but it is his humanity that compels leaders to follow.

Lisa Rice
President & Chief Executive Officer
National Fair Housing Alliance
Washington, D.C.

Rice has spent nearly four decades in the fair housing arena. She is an author and influencer on the topic. She was NAHF’s 200 members with 29 states that changed outcomes. She’s a national leader for ending housing discrimination, obtaining data to block algorithmic bias in lending, and pushing the federal government to provide access to government national mortgage databases to root out bias.

Nancy Roob
President & CEO
Blue Meridian Partners
New York, N.Y.

What’s a striking four-letter word? Cash. Roob was among the first to make direct cash payments to nonprofits during the pandemic. She also pioneered growth capital aggregation which turned $355 million into $467 million. It’s about solving significant problems, scaling, replicating and laying the groundwork for a better future for youth via big bets.

Douglas Rutzen
President & CEO
International Center For Not-For-Profit Law
Washington, D.C.

The trouble with getting Rutzen on the phone is you never know which time zone he is in. He’s a force in the international NGO community, counseling organizations and governments on the protection of democratic principles and the vital role nonprofits play in their communities. His point of view is also welcomed at the White House.

MacKenzie Scott
Philanthropist & Author
Seattle, Wash.

She started what is becoming a wave of female billionaires writing unrestricted, transformational checks to nonprofits. She is putting the power behind trust-based philanthropy. Her Last Horse philanthropic arm is giving to schools, kids, nonprofit infrastructure organizations, healthcare, etc. She and her team research, write checks and then get out of the way.

Barron Segar
President & CEO
World Food Program US
Washington, D.C.

Segar is trying to head-off a famine that will take tens of thousands of lives and is convincing corporate leaders that they must get into the fight. He is making the organization’s case to anyone who will listen and is raising more money than ever. Feeding people seems like a no-brainer but it’s much more complicated and Segar knows and navigates the politics of it.

Sonal Shah
Interim Executive Vice President
United Way Worldwide
New York, N.Y.

There is no doubt that Shah has become the sector’s “fixer.” This is the first time someone with an “interim” title has made the list. She raised more than $1 billion in just a few months at her last gig, The Asian American Foundation, has worked at the White House, key academic centers and in global finance. She is now an integral part of remaking United Way for the next 25 years.

Mark Suzman
Chief Executive Officer
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Seattle, Wash.

Suzman is responsible for keeping sanity at the foundation after the co-founders divorced and the other major funder, Warren Buffett, decided to direct much of his money elsewhere. Suzman proved he can pivot the organization when COVID hit. He has refocused and broadened the international influence and is looking at better targeting of funding.

LaJune Montgomery Tabron
President & CEO
W. K. Kellogg Foundation
Battle Creek, Mich.

Tabron was the first person of color to be hired full-time at the foundation, smashing barriers along the way. With considerations of nearly $5 billion, she’s a national player on foundation and children’s issues who is laser focused on her community, equity and the evolving workplace. Her words: “We have to change everything we thought about how work gets done, how we are being equitable.”
Nicole Taylor
President & CEO
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Mountain View, Calif.
Nonprofits and the people of the Bay Area would be in trouble without the SVCF and Taylor has put it back together after a few jarring events. Perhaps the region’s most important funder, SVCF raised more than $65 million for pandemic response and established a Community Advisory Council of 25 local leaders who keep tabs on funding through a race and equity lens.

David L. Thompson
Vice President of Public Policy
National Council Of Nonprofits
Washington, D.C.
You might have heard there is an employee shortage in the sector. Thompson crafted and then advanced policy solutions interwoven at the federal, state, and local levels to help ensure that nonprofits have the resources to deliver what individuals and communities need. That’s connection. He is in the middle of every legislative fight, negotiation, and reconciliation when there is impact on the sector.

Thomas Tighe
President & CEO
Direct Relief
Santa Barbara, Calif.
He is the epitome of Malcolm Gladwell’s connector from Tipping Point. He seems to know everyone. Tighe makes everyone feel as if their work is game-changing, which involves Direct Relief in everything from solar hubs to healthcare to equity around the world. He’s putting $75 million from Mackenzie Scott into partnering, always spotlighting the network of nonprofits that are making change.

Henry Timms
President & CEO
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts
New York, N.Y.
Lincoln Center was always central to New York’s elite. Timms hasn’t forgotten the big donors and patrons but is also creating a network of performance organizations that will stitch together communities and bring new energy to an important resource that had grown somewhat stale. It’s no surprise, partnerships have been his stock and trade wherever he’s been.

Darren Walker
President
Ford Foundation
New York, N.Y.
Walker continues to confound conventional thinking and funding. There’s an old saying – “Follow the money.” In his case, the money follows him. Social justice, LGBTQ, and impact investing. He put $1 billion to work in the sector when COVID hit. Walker was recently selected commander of France’s Order of Arts and Letters, the nation’s highest honor, for his work as a benefactor of the arts.

Elise Westhoff
President & CEO
The Philanthropy Roundtable
Washington, D.C.
What was that rumbling? Oh. It was Westhoff annoying some of the sainted tenets of philanthropy. She opposed legislation to change the rules for donor-advised funds and thinks donors are smart enough to make decisions without guardrails. She believes, and just might be correct, that philanthropy is in danger of being hijacked by political ideology.

Rachel White
President
theguardian.org
Washington, D.C.
She has pretty much established the model for resourcing journalism with philanthropic dollars, which other media outlets are now emulating. It has big implications for media and journalism, especially local reporting. She has led the way and established relationships with an impressive array of funders.

Angela Williams
President & CEO
United Way Worldwide
Alexandria, Va.
Let’s start with the $25 million MacKenzie Scott donated after Williams had been in the job roughly 15 minutes. She has been a bit of a lightning rod but the locals now have a voice on dues and an avenue for more input. She also has hit the ground running internationally, such as speaking at the Milken Institute Global Conference and forums outside North America.