

# The Best & The Brightest, Mostly

*The charitable sector has been shaped by individuals at the helm of cornerstone groups. Sometimes it worked out -- other times, not so much. These captains of industry proved that the charitable sector can be anything imagined. Here are the top 25 during the past 25.*



**WILLIAM ARAMONY.** The sector's multiple-decade poster child for greed, gluttony and mismanagement, for a long time he was a sterling executive who built United Way into an international force before displaying a penchant for teenage girls.

**LANCE ARMSTRONG.** Can you remember a time when someone didn't have one of those annoying rubber wristbands supporting something? Via LiveStrong, he slingshot branding and retailing into the sector, one wrist at a time.

**BONO.** He was doing charity before it became cool for rock stars to give a crap. OK, so there was George Harrison. But, there was a long dry spell between them. He found a way to marry charity, celebrity and profitability with several initiatives.

**EMMETT CARSON.** Change agent (n.) see Carson. Whether it is social justice grantmaking, public accountability by nonprofits, African-American philanthropy or executive diversity, Carson has changed the foundation world's thinking.

**RAYMOND CHAMBERS.** The Pied Piper of national service, he has bankrolled some of the most important meetings of the minds when it comes to community service and enlightenment of what people can do when they work together.

**ERROL COPILEVITZ.** Defender of the First Amendment when it comes to nonprofit fundraising and advocacy, he twice successfully argued before the Supreme Court of the United States in landmark free speech cases on behalf of nonprofit clients.

**MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN.** The first black woman admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Miss. A prolific author, she has been a leading voice in defense of children and families via the Children's Defense Fund.

**JOHN W. GARDNER.** A key player in President Johnson's Great Society, he quit his cabinet post because he couldn't support the war in Vietnam. He helped found Independent Sector and Common Cause, two sector cornerstones, and was called upon by numerous presidents to be the sector's voice.

**TIM GILL.** It seems that nearly every decade in America another group finds a champion and becomes mainstream. Gill did that for



gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied individuals. He is also a strong supporter of social justice organizations and educational institutions.

**SEN. CHARLES GRASSLEY.** He has been a thorn in the side of nonprofits from the day he took office. Grassley has tried to get regulations passed that would handcuff social service groups and has tried to bully organizations with the threat of hearings.

**BILL GATES.** You can't ignore the money. It's more than cash and diseases irradiated. The foundation has changed the way grants are assessed and made it (almost) OK to take a shot and fail.

**MAX HART.** He raised billions of dollars for disabled veterans but also led the charitable fight on Capitol Hill for preferred postal rates for fundraisers and nearly single-handedly revived the Direct Marketing Association's Nonprofit Federation.

**FRANCES HESSELBEIN.** A Presidential Medal of Honor winner who turned the Girl Scouts into a model organization, and disciple of management guru Peter Drucker, she is the mother of modern nonprofit management. It's all about ethical leadership and vision.

**VIRGINIA HODGKINSON.** The dean of sector research as vice president for research at Independent Sector, she launched two indelible studies, Giving and Volunteering in the United States and the Nonprofit Almanac: Dimensions of the Independent Sector. She also ran the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

**MICHAEL LOMAX.** Nobody has moved the needle more on minority education. His support of historically black colleges and universities predates his role as boss at UNCF and its Frederick D. Patterson Institute, the first black-led institute to conduct and disseminate research to the public, policymakers and educators.

**PAUL NELSON.** At a time when the public was challenging the evangelical community's financial integrity -- James Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, etc. -- Nelson established a strict set of financial guidelines for members of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

**BRIAN O'CONNELL.** Co-founder of Independent Sector, he was at the epicenter of the sector's professionalization movement and development of the next generation of leaders. He headed both the National Council of Philanthropy and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations.



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.** The numbers 41, 42 and 43 correspondent to Presidents George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton and George W. Bush. The trio put the power of the White House behind volunteerism, national service, funding for faith-based groups and embedding cooperation with the sector into the federal government.

**MARCUS OWENS.** The level head and curious mind who ran the Internal Revenue Service's exempt organization's division, for a decade he had a hand in shaping IRS policies and procedures toward the sector.

**ROBERT PUTNAM.** He turned bowling into a mental exercise. His book *Bowling Alone* dissected the American community to show why it was becoming more disenfranchised, less involved and why a civil society was, and might still be, in danger.

**HOLLY ROSS.** Technology is such a key element of the modern sector and she leads the merry band of geeks making accessible the heretofore unimaginable. Ross has made it cool to be in nonprofit technology and now everyone wants into the party.

**HANK RUSSO.** A fundraising consultant who with two partners started The Fundraising School in San Francisco before making it part of the Center on Philanthropy, he established a tradition of learning that included fundamentals of raising money and the ethical standards that needed to be observed.

**BUZZ SCHMIDT.** You mean the IRS will just give you the Form 990s, you can scan them and put them up on that thing called the Internet? People were suspect when he launched GuideStar and now transparency of financial information is second nature for 99% of the sector.

**EUGENE TEMPEL.** One of the founding fathers of the Center on Philanthropy in Indianapolis, he brought an academic institution into real-world education and research that has had a permanent impact on the training of nonprofit executives.

**RICHARD VIGUERIE.** His databases changed a nation. He was the first to figure out the nuance of direct mail coalition building, compiling like minds in a database and sending fire-breathing information. He's credited with building conservative lists, showing what computers and mail can do in fundraising advocacy. *NPT*



Top: William Aramony, Bono, Emmett Carson, Marian Wright Edelman, Charles Grassley, Bill Gates.  
Bottom: Michael Lomax, Brian O'Connell, Marcus Owens, Holly Ross, Raymond Chambers, Richard Viguerie.