



To Live & Give In L.A. Philanthropy

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The difference in the social landscape of New York and Los Angeles can be measured in the length of the red carpet at the Golden Globes tonight. New Yorkers revel in good works and historic institutions. In Los Angeles, people revel in the beauty, clothing, love affairs, and talent of the entertainment industry.

The cult of celebrity has shaped the way people perceive philanthropy in Los Angeles.

Although the two cities share a large number of nonprofit organizations and foundations, as well as wealth and complex social problems, out West the work of celebrities gets all the attention.

"Maybe in 100 years we'll achieve the kind of status that New York has," the president of Southern California Grantmakers, Sushma Raman, who took the job after working at the Ford Foundation in New York, said. "Los Angeles has a lot of potential."

At the moment, Los Angeles has a lot of star-studded parties. Some are similar to the black-tie affairs in New York, particularly the ones for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Los Angeles Opera. Others are far different. "I once attended a charity event at the Playboy Mansion that raised money for parrots: the plight of parrots!" an editor at the society glossy Los Angeles Confidential, Lara Morgenson, said.

Every nonprofit in Los Angeles wants an association with a celebrity, so the number of events with a charitable component is extreme. "There are so many events supporting so many charities, it starts to feel like just another party. You forget what the event is raising money for," the Los Angeles bureau chief of the trade publication BizBash, which covers the event-planning industry, Alesandra Dubin, said.

Ms. Dubin noted an event she attended last week at a mansion in the Hollywood Hills, where the only money raised was voluntary donations placed in a jar at the entry.

Aspiring screenwriters and actors go to Los Angeles to make their name, while those who want to be taken seriously as philanthropists come to New York. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett chose the New York Public Library to formally announce Mr. Buffett's gift to the Gates Foundation. President Clinton located his foundation here, and so has Mayor Bloomberg.

"In L.A., celebrities are the draw. In New York, wealthy people are the draw," an entertainment journalist who has worked in both New York and Los Angeles, Zoe Alexander, said.

New York's history of innovative philanthropists who continue to inspire assures its reign as the world capital of philanthropy. Los Angeles has less to be proud of in that regard. "Southern California is a very narcissistic culture; people are giving to see their names on buildings there," an urban studies professor at New York University, Mitchell Moss, said. "In New York, people give because they want to be attached to great institutions."

And so the set of women who occupy themselves planning charity events is smaller in Los Angeles. An event producer of premieres and fund-raisers, Ben Bourgeois, said, "New York events are much more society-driven. There are dozens of people involved up and down Park Avenue. In L.A., we have a handful of names."

The Entertainment Industry Foundation, which gives small grants to more than 300 Los Angeles area nonprofits, is the bestknown entity tying Hollywood to philanthropy. A similar entity in New York is the Robin Hood Foundation, which gives small grants to 140 New York nonprofits. Its primary funders are people in the hedge fund industry who are much quieter about their affiliation.

The presenters of the awards shows are also involved in philanthropy, although attendees as well as the general public tend to be more interested in how wins will increase the salaries of actors and directors.

At the Golden Globes tonight, the presenter, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, will take in more than \$5.1 million from broadcasting rights, of which it will distribute \$1.2 million to entities such as the California School for the Arts, Columbia University's film school, the L.A. Latino International Film Festival in Santa Monica, Calif., and the Ghetto Film School in the Bronx. The association does not plan to even mention the gifts onstage.

The Academy Awards, meanwhile, supports a much larger organization, the Academy Foundation, which will spend more than \$10 million this year on artists' grants, cultural programs, and running a public film archive. Its take from broadcasting rights is \$58 million.

Los Angeles leaders in philanthropy say the centrality of the entertainment business is a misperception. They acknowledge donors such as David Geffen and Steven Spielberg, but point to others who made their fortunes in technology, real estate, and finance: Eli Broad, Michael Milken, Richard Atlas, and Peter Norton.

"In L.A., philanthropy is not totally driven, as everyone seems to think, by the entertainment industry," the West Coast head of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Judy Berk, said. Her office, founded by the New York-based Rockefeller family, consults for donors and foundations. "Some of the best work is going on at nonprofits nobody has ever heard of, and that's okay," she said.

Often it takes individuals to change perceptions. Mr. Broad, the founder of SunAmerica Inc., has spoken passionately about his chance to make an impact in a young city with young institutions. Because Los Angeles has less baggage than New York, it's easier to become involved and rise as a player. New Yorkers and Los Angelenos often collaborate on events. Nancy Davis Rickel of Los Angeles, daughter of the late Marvin Davis, who once owned 20th Century Fox, founded the Race to Erase MS gala with Tommy Hilfiger of New York. Mr. Hilfiger's sister has multiple sclerosis, as does Ms. Davis. "I wanted to do an event to put money in a very good place," Ms. Davis said. "I realized that I had this very underfunded disease and that I needed to find a cure."

In an era of globalization, thinking about philanthropy regionally may be passé. New York foundations are playing a major role in the rebuilding of New Orleans, for example. Some people attend fundraisers in different cities each night. Others make on-site visits to their grantees in different continents.

"Donors here are like donors all over the world. They're scratching their heads and thinking about how best they can make a difference," Ms. Berk said.