

Center on Philanthropy 2011 Symposium  
Women World Wide Leading through Philanthropy  
Chicago, IL

### **Shaw-Hardy Taylor Achievement Award**

Comments for presentation of Shaw-Hardy Taylor Achievement Award to Barbara Dobkin  
Presented by Trish Jackson, WPI Council member and Vice President for Advancement, Smith  
College, Northampton, MA  
March 11, 2011

Benazir Bhutto, the first woman elected to lead a Muslim state said, “Throughout the ages, leadership and courage have often been synonymous. Ultimately, leadership requires action...challenging the status quo in order to reach a brighter future.”

If this describes a leader, then Barbara Berman Dobkin is its model. She challenges the status quo and she funds transformative change. Barbara’s philanthropic activities span many communities: Jewish, general, women’s funding, gay and lesbian, political leadership, and global. Her resume is replete with visionary gifts of leadership and money. In concert with the theme of this conference, Barbara Dobkin is indeed a woman who leads through philanthropy worldwide.

Certain constants permeate her remarkable philanthropic journey. I’d like to share a few of them with you.

**Barbara is committed to acting out of her faith.** At the Auburn Theological Seminary she said, “Faith has a powerful place in social change. And we need that. And we need it now.” Barbara’s commitment stems from a belief in *tikkun olam*, a core Jewish value that means “repair of the world.” She has funded Ma’yan: The Jewish Women’s Project of the JCC in Manhattan, an organization that is a catalyst for change in the Jewish community to create an environment that is inclusive of women and responsive to their needs and experiences.

**Barbara is committed to big ideas.** She established the organization Advancing Jewish Women Professionals and the Jewish Community because she wanted to bridge the gender gap in Jewish communal leadership. She helped to create the Boston based Jewish Women’s Archive because she recognized, as she has said, that “we can no longer teach history without including the accomplishments of women. You cannot be what you cannot see.”

**Barbara is committed to women and girls.** She remembers the clearly defined gender roles of her youth in Baltimore in the 1950s. She says that when she found social change philanthropy, she knew she “had to emphasize the importance of targeting women.” Her engagement and philanthropy have extended to virtually every infrastructure organization in this arena: the Women Donors Network, the Women’s Funding Network, the Ms. Foundation for Women and other individual women’s funds across the country and world,

One reason she joined the American Jewish World Service board, an organization which she currently chairs, is that she was drawn to the international aid organization’s grassroots work that

targets women and girls in the developing world. She says “giving women and girls economic resources and educational opportunities is an investment in the entire community.”

Barbara supports women and women’s leadership at all levels and in many fields, including the Southwest Women’s Law Center and the Women’s Sports Foundation. She has been a staunch supporter of The White House Project, an initiative that focuses on women’s political leadership.

**Barbara is committed to operating support and building capacity.** She says, “When you find an organization you really believe in, it’s important to give unrestricted funding. You have to trust the organizations that you give to; the professional staff of the organization knows best and you have the confidence in their leadership.”

One organization Barbara trusts is the Women’s Funding Network. She has invested significantly in its work to provide the tools needed to help local women’s funds around the world lift women out of poverty. Recent gifts have focused on increasing the capacity and power for women’s funds around the world through her significant involvement in the Women Moving Millions campaign.

**Barbara is committed to strategic giving.** Barbara’s philanthropic journey initially followed a trajectory common to other women in her generation. She says her husband was viewed as a “source of money, and I as a source of volunteer labor.” As resources became more available, her understanding of strategic philanthropy also expanded. She is a thoughtful mentor to peers and younger women and speaks widely about the need for women to become better educated and comfortable with money. She advocates for women to articulate their values through their funding.

Barbara – you are all of this and so much more. You epitomize innovation, strategic thinking, and leadership.

We are delighted to present the Shaw-Hardy Taylor Achievement award for moving women’s philanthropy forward to activist, leader, volunteer, and philanthropist Barbara Dobkin.

