“The Sweetness of Charity”

(Maya Angelou)

Discussion or Reflection Activity

Share the attached article with your program participants during your pre-field training or course experience. Use the questions below as a guide for a group discussion or as a written reflection prompt. (Questions from The Civically Engaged Reader, 2006)

Some possible questions for discussion or as a prompt for a reflection paper:

- What does Angelou mean when she says that, “giving liberates the soul”?
- Why does Angelou think the fact that we can’t influence the speed of time makes it “an imponderably valuable gift”?
- According to Angelou, how much should one give?
- Why do the donors in Angelou’s audience strike her as “ashamed of themselves”?
- Is being philanthropic different from being charitable?
- How does Angelou think that benefactors can “feel estranged from the objects of their generosity”? Why would estrangement prevent them from taking “little, if any, relish from their acts of charity”?
- How does Angelou think we should “change the way we think of charity”?
- Why is charity sometimes considered “degrading to accept” and “debasing to give”?
- What is charity, and why is it often called sweet? Should we find it sweet?