

2018 Project Redwood Annual Meeting Weekend

Project Redwood ANNUAL MEETING 2018 Weekend

We are very pleased to report that the New York Regional Alumni Meeting and the Project Redwood Annual Meeting exceeded expectations in many ways.



Andrew Ow, Clara Chow and Stacy Williams

The NY Regional Alumni Meeting:

New Project Redwood Co-Chair Rick Agresta worked with GSB staff to set up the Regional meeting on **Thursday**, October 18, at the glamorous New York offices of Pinterest, “the world’s catalog of ideas.” We stepped off the elevator past a wall covered with “ideas” on postcard-size pictures, and into a room filled with familiar Class of ’80 faces, members of several other classes, and representatives of several PRW grantees. Since one of the continuing goals of the Project Redwood board and active members is to include members of other classes in our work, this was gratifying to see. For example, Stacy Williams, ’13, was there with classmate Clara Chow, CEO of our grantee Generation Enterprise,

Ken Inadomi served as MC for the gathering. He started by recapping some of the highlights of Project Redwood’s recent work. An important fact he presented is that Project Redwood has awarded \$2.1 million in grants since 2005, with evidence to show this is not cannibalizing our giving to the GSB.

Another is that we have refined our niche, with our grant size of around \$25,000, as providing “catalytic capital” to organizations poised to scale their early stage work to a higher level of reach and a greater number of lives served.

The third is that we are creating a paradigm for volunteer engagement with classmates and other GSB alums, by reaching out one person at a time to investigate how they may be involved. In our outreach, we promise to find a role that capitalizes on each person’s unique gifts and that we will not waste their time.

And finally, we are planting the seeds for deeper collaboration with the GSB. Dean Levin, Stephanie Frost, Yossi Feinberg and Kim Meredith are all aware of and interested in what we’re doing. The alumni office responded to our suggestion to centerpiece the Fall 2018 New York Regional Meeting.

While enjoying wine, beer and an array of Mediterranean-inspired snacks, we mingled and caught up with each other. Then we settled down to hear from representatives of three of our grantees: Ruth DeGolia of [Mercado Global](#), Elana Pollak of [Educate!](#), and Clara Chow of [Generation Enterprise](#). They gave inspiring and informative answers to questions from Ken such as the source of their organizations’ inspiration, advice to members of other classes as they approach non-profit involvement, and addressing how they replenish their own energy in the face of the unrelenting demands of the work. Conversations continued allowing the grantee presenters to answer questions and meet personally with GSB alums.

[Click HERE to see images of the Regional Event](#)



Elena Pollack and Ruth DeGolia

Friday was a free day, so we explored the streets of New York, gaining energy from the crowds of pedestrians, the busy construction activity everywhere in Manhattan, and the fresh fall air, and we enjoyed individual interests such as the cultural excitement of museums.



Friday evening we were generously hosted by Blair and Mary Brewster at the Heights Casino, which is actually a historic sports club in Brooklyn Heights known for its local and international squash and tennis tournaments. A delicious buffet included mussels, olives, and cheeses, and passed hors-d'oeuvres of the ever-popular pigs in blankets and their upscale cousin, mini Beef Wellingtons. Classmates shared pleasures of retirement including travel adventures, grandchildren, and philanthropic work outside of Project Redwood, as well as the satisfactions and tribulations of continuing careers. Following the reception, the group split into two sections (but not along the lines of first-year "sections") and went to dinner in nearby restaurants around Brooklyn Heights.

The Project Redwood Annual Meeting:

The Brewsters hosted us again on **Saturday** in their 19th-century brownstone in Brooklyn Heights. We mingled over bagels, smoked salmon and "schmear", picked out name tags and seats, caught up with classmates, and met alums who were new to the group.

Ken Inadomi welcomed us by citing an African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together," relating to the power of working collaboratively. He also encouraged the Jewish concept of "tikkun olam," often translated as "repair the world," which, in a small but impactful way, Project Redwood is accomplishing.

Ken reviewed the three main goals that came out of last year's meeting: to continue expansion to other classes, to continue to further our relationship with the GSB, and to increase our focus on fundraising.

The business of the meeting began as Rick Agresta described the activities of the Grant Review Committee, which recommends grantee candidates for approval by the Board. He mentioned the importance in the review of a project being able to find and work with local staff and volunteers, rather than parachuting in an expert from outside. The committee welcomes new members to help with the large task of reading through the many lengthy applications that must be winnowed down to a dozen or so for consideration by the board. Amanda North, Class of '82, who sponsors Mercado Global, pointed out that in the context of reviewing grantees as a group, Project Redwood might bring leaders of grantee organizations together, to share insights and fellowship.

Kristi Hernandez talked about our fundraising goals and approach. We have an aspirational goal of raising an endowment to \$3 – \$5 million, to be able to afford part-time staff and possibly a part-time fundraiser. To this end, Kristi and Mike Watt will now focus on raising funds to support our projects, and Phil Jonckheer, our long-time fundraising chair, will turn his attention to establishing this endowment.

Amy Minella introduced our expansion efforts. First Kirk Renaud discussed the somewhat disappointing results of pitching at other classes' 25th reunions. Discussion then turned to the greater success of introducing Project Redwood in one-on-one conversations with members of other classes, for example at other regional events. Stacy Williams, Class of 2013, mentioned that her interest stemmed from a desire to give back and a wish to get a sense of projects that are relevant to her interests.

In addition to reaching out at GSB-sponsored regional events, Dave Fletcher and Donna Allen reviewed what a tighter relationship with the GSB might mean and how we're establishing this.

Our goal is a long-term GSB endorsement such as that with A.C.T., the Alumni Consulting Team, a pro-bono non-financial resource for non-profits. Other aspects of our growing relationships within the school include the Design for Extreme Affordability class at the d.School, Stanford's Center for Social Innovation, and the GSB Alumni Advisory Committee.



Mary Priuett, Joan Agresta, Kirk Renaud, Martha Clark, Dave Fletcher

The interesting and inspiring grantee section of the meeting began with Ruth DeGolia of [Mercado Global](#), who reviewed how our grant has helped unleash the power of indigenous women to use their traditional textile skills to enter the large global fashion industry, and how important it's been to see the fashion industry bring their supply chain to help outside of the private sector.

We also heard from Dan Dougherty of [Cristo Rey](#) NY High School, a past grantee that is guiding and mentoring inner-city US students to become "professionals for others". Their success is the result of academic support and creating a path for students to crack out of their "social cocoon." In a location where possibilities can seem limited, Cristo Rey places students with corporate partners in real entry-level jobs while preparing them academically to enter and succeed in college. Many of these students have subsequently been re-hired for summer jobs or permanent jobs after they complete college.

Clara Chow told us more about the genesis and progress of [Generation Enterprise](#), which operates a home-cleaning business as an "incubator for skills," bringing kids out of the slums of Nairobi to build social mobility. Generation Enterprise used their most recent grant to help codify their process so that they can be ready for expansion into Kenya and other businesses can replicate their methods.



The grantee Ongoza was described by CEO Alexi Dunaway. [Ongoza](#), the imperative “to lead” in Swahili, provides entrepreneurs with one year of customized weekly business coaching, market linkages and access to debt financing in order to propel their growth. Ongoza has used their Project Redwood grant to help build a path to greater funding.

Kristi Hernandez presented [Farming Hope](#), the project she sponsors as a San Francisco project aiming to lift people out of homelessness by providing job training in the foodservice industry.

Farming Hope is soon to open Manny’s, a restaurant that will employ these workers and provide an outplacement program to help them solidify their progress.

As a grand finale, Dick deMarle, who has done stand-up comedy a couple of times in clubs, brought us to laughter with a tale about his son, too much Mexican food, and Power Ranger pajamas. The pajamas did not survive.

There were many productive side conversations, ideas discussed and participation opportunities commented on. These continued during our dinners as we talked about plans for PRW farther into the future. We covered a lot, made progress in constructing the pathway ahead, and left the meeting with a feeling of satisfaction from seeing old friends and of hope for the future of Project Redwood and our grantees.

[Click HERE for images of the Annual Meeting Events.](#)