



THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

GIFTS & GRANTS

[Events](#) | [Deadlines](#) | [Internet resources](#) | [Jobs](#)

From the issue dated May 16, 2002

SEARCH THE SITE

SITE MAP

SECTIONS:

[Front Page](#)

[Gifts & Grants](#)

[Fund Raising](#)

[Managing Nonprofit Groups](#)

[Technology](#)

[Jobs](#)

FEATURES:

[Guide to Grants](#)

[Ideas & Resources](#)

[The Nonprofit Handbook](#)

[Facts & Figures](#)

[Internet Resources](#)

[Events](#)

[Deadlines](#)

[Products & Services](#)

CHRONICLE IN PRINT:

[Current Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

SERVICES:

[About The Chronicle](#)

[How to Subscribe](#)

About Gifts and Giving



HOMELAND PHILANTHROPY

More and more immigrants to the United States are giving to charities in the countries they left. Some are gathering together to pool resources through groups like the Brazil Foundation, run by Leona S. Forman.

Arnold Adler, for The Chronicle

New Fund for Brazil Hopes to Inspire a Tradition of Giving

By Stephen G. Greene and Grant Williams

About once a month, Renata Pereira – a citizen of Brazil and an international bank associate in New York -- joins as many as 60 expatriate young professionals to hear about ways to help needy people back home through a new organization, the Brazil Foundation, or Fundação Brazil.

At each meeting, people who head charitable organizations and foundations in Brazil, as well as corporate leaders who promote social change, describe the details of their work in a country that is widely considered to have one of the greatest divides between rich and poor of any nation in the world.

"I get goose bumps just listening sometimes," says Ms. Pereira. The gatherings, called "Ideas That Transform Brazil," resemble seminars or lectures, and participants include Brazilian citizens, like Ms. Pereira, as well as native Brazilians who have become citizens of the United States.

So far, the Brazil Foundation, which was formed nearly two years ago as a charity, has received \$50,000 in undesignated contributions and an additional \$90,000 in donor-advised funds that it will use after

[How to Subscribe](#)

[How to Register](#)

[Subscriber Services](#)

[Change Your User Name](#)

[Change Your Password](#)

[Forgot Your Password?](#)

[How to Advertise](#)

[Press Inquiries](#)

[Feedback](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Help](#)

consulting with those who made the gifts. The organization also intends to solicit gifts from American companies that do business in Brazil, as well as Brazilian companies that operate in the United States.

"The Brazil Foundation is a tremendously important initiative because there is a sense of urgency that our country's problems need attention," says Ms. Pereira.

Just as important, she says, are the foundation's efforts to inspire a Brazilian tradition of charitable giving. "We Brazilians don't have the culture of 'giving back' like people here in the United States, where a 3-year-old child is already selling chocolates to do fund raising for school," says Ms. Pereira. "In the United States, everybody breathes in a sense of philanthropy and of giving back to their community. We need that culture to be more developed among Brazilians, wherever they live."

She adds: "Brazilians have not been used to giving money because we often don't know exactly how it will be used, and the foundation can help change that."

United Nations Career

The founder and president of the Brazil Foundation, Leona S. Forman, holds the monthly gatherings in her Manhattan apartment, which, to save money, doubles as the organization's U.S. office.

Ms. Forman, born in China of Russian parents, arrived in Brazil as a 13-year-old refugee.

She started the Brazil Foundation in New York after retiring from a 20-year career at the United Nations, where, among other things, she worked with nongovernmental organizations around the world "and saw how difficult it is for them to find resources." (Her husband, Shepard Forman, worked for the Ford Foundation for 18 years, including three spent in Brazil. "I have a vicarious view of how a foundation can have a tremendous impact in a country like Brazil," she says.)

Ms. Forman says the number of Brazilians moving to the United States has grown rapidly over the past two to three decades, including a large influx of young professionals in recent years. More than one million people from Brazil now live in the United States, many of whom cluster together in such places as Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Brazil has a population of about 170 million.

Many of those expatriates, as well as companies, want to help charitable organizations in Brazil, says Ms. Forman, but don't know which ones deserve support. About 250 nongovernmental organizations in Brazil have gained national recognition to date.

"With all these trends coming together, I thought to myself, I want to give something back to Brazil, and wouldn't it be great to have a Brazil foundation working to develop a diaspora community of donors?" says Ms. Forman. "People do give, do send money back, but

not in an organized fashion as a social investment."

With help from volunteers and a start-up grant from the Avina Foundation, which is based in Switzerland with offices in Miami and Latin American cities, Ms. Forman started the Brazil Foundation and established offices in New York and in Rio de Janeiro. She and the charity's other three officials are declining to take salaries while the organization gets off the ground.

By contributing to the Brazil Foundation, Ms. Forman says, Brazilians in the United States and others interested in helping Brazil can be sure their money will go to appropriate causes while their gifts also qualify for charitable tax deductions under U.S. law -- a write-off that is not available to residents of Brazil who make gifts to charities or churches there.

"We're building a bridge between those who can help here and those who need it in Brazil," says Ms. Forman. "On this side in the United States, we are creating a community of Brazilians to give. In Brazil, we are mapping organizations and analyzing projects that we know are able to receive money and use it responsibly."

First Campaign

The fund, which developed a Web site with the help of nearly a dozen volunteers, will soon begin its first formal fund-raising campaign, and expects its coffers to rapidly grow, especially as it increasingly looks outside New York for individual supporters, as well as to companies and American foundations.

"There are many Brazilians like me in the United States in their late 20s or in their 30s who are lawyers, investment bankers, accountants, architects, journalists, that type of people, who all want to do something to help Brazil," says Marcello Hallake, a 32-year-old international lawyer in New York who volunteers as general counsel of the Brazil Foundation.

The foundation wants to help promote an organized way of giving, he says, "like it occurs in many other diasporas, whether Indian, Jewish, or others," he says.

75 Applications

This summer, the Brazil Foundation will make its first major grants from unrestricted funds to groups that focus on education, as well as on citizenship, culture, health, and human rights. To be selected, the foundation says, organizations must "distinguish themselves for their ability to transform social conditions in Brazil and serve as models for other social programs in the country."

The organization has received 75 proposals for grants from nongovernmental organizations in Brazil.

One grant the Brazil Foundation has already made is \$10,000 in a donor-designated gift for human rights to the Instituto Sou da Paz (I Am for Peace) in São Paulo, an organization founded by young

lawyers that works to disarm youths in economically disadvantaged areas and to help police departments work more closely with neighborhood leaders. The money will be used to help representatives of nongovernmental organizations in other cities visit São Paulo to see how the Instituto Sou da Paz carries out its projects. "A grant of \$10,000 is small, but in Brazil is a lot of money," says Ms. Forman. "It will be enough to make a difference."

As the Brazil Foundation charts its course, the organization relies heavily on volunteers in the United States and Brazil, and on its board of advisers. That board includes Brazil's first lady, Ruth Cardoso, who heads a new partnership of nongovernmental organizations, companies, and government ministries to improve literacy and help eradicate poverty. Another member, Gilberto Gil, a singer and composer, has established a nonprofit group concerned with environmental issues.

Ms. Pereira, both a donor and volunteer, says she expects the Brazil Foundation's impact to be far-reaching: "Most incredible about Brazilians is that if you give them very little, they are able to make miracles."



[Easy-to-print](#) version



[E-mail](#) this article

To comment on this item, send a message to comment@philanthropy.com

[Copyright](#) © 2002 The Chronicle of Philanthropy