Citizen service belongs to no party, to no ideology. It is an American idea, which every American should embrace.
—Bill Clinton, President’s Summit on America’s Future, 1997

In the past, perhaps the wife of the CEO was particularly concerned about Alzheimer’s so the company would donate money to that cause. The big sea change came when companies realized that this is actually corporate strategy. Now, the question about charity is, can it support corporate business?
—Carol Cone, cause-related marketing consultant

In an oft-recited story, Nancy Brinker, founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, tells how she approached an executive of a lingerie manufacturer to suggest that they include a tag in their bras reminding customers to get regular mammograms. In response, the executive told Brinker, “We sell glamour. We don’t sell fear. Breast cancer has nothing to do with our customers” (Davidson 1997, 36). The fortunes of Brinker and the Komen Foundation have clearly changed since 1984, when this event is said to have taken place. Nancy Brinker is now recognized as a pioneer of cause-related marketing, and the Komen Foundation has over a dozen national sponsors, a “million dollar council” comprising businesses that donate at least $1 million per year, and a slew of other corporate partnerships at both the local and national levels (Davidson 1997). The foundation even has a contract with a lingerie company—Wacoal—to manufacture an “awareness bra” (Frontline 1999, 10).

The transformation of the American public’s attitude to breast cancer is a central theme in the contemporary proliferation of academic and popular discourse on the disease. Maren Klawiter (2000), for instance, argues that a destigmatization of breast cancer in U.S. culture has occurred as new social spaces, solidarities, and sensibilities among breast cancer survivors and activists have emerged from the multiplication of treatment regimens, the proliferation of support groups, and the expansion of screening into asymptomatic populations in the past twenty years. Breast cancer scholars, however, understandably committed to focusing on the resistive strategies of grassroots activism and to charting substantive changes in the funding and regulation of breast cancer research, screening, and treatment, have tended to avoid the role played by breast can-
cer–related marketing in this transformation. Yet, over the past ten years, upbeat and optimistic breast cancer campaigns have become a central and integral part of the marketing strategy of numerous large and high-profile corporations. Avon, BMW, Bristol Myers Squibb, Estée Lauder, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, General Motors, J. C. Penney, Kelloggs, Lee Jeans, and the National Football League have all turned to breast cancer philanthropy as a new and profitable strategy through which to market their products. Moreover, the nonprofit and advocacy groups with which they have aligned themselves—most frequently, the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation—are two of the largest, most high-profile arms of the breast cancer movement in the United States.

The emergence of breast cancer–related marketing is just one (albeit prominent and instructive) example of a major change in corporate approaches to both philanthropy and marketing in the past two decades. During this period, corporate philanthropy has been transformed from a relatively random, eclectic, and unscientific activity to a highly calculated and measured strategy that is integral to a business’s profit-making function. While work in cultural studies has analyzed the ways in which subjects learn and practice moral and civic virtue through practices of consumption (Miller and Rose 1997; Rose 1999) and examined the ways in which corporations align themselves with social causes in order to shape their reputations as good citizens (Cole 1996; Scott 1993; Sturken 1997; Yúdice 1995), less attention has been paid either to the specific historical conditions that allowed for the emergence of strategic philanthropy and cause-related marketing or to the rationales and techniques through which generosity has been produced and marketed as a commodity. It is the purpose of the first part of this essay to trace how a broad cultural preoccupation with philanthropic solutions to social problems, the imperative for corporate philanthropy to turn a profit, changing psychological conceptions of the consumer, and invigorated consumer demands for a more ethical capitalism have converged to produce the transformation of corporate philanthropy.

My contention is not that tools such as cause-related marketing are simply manipulation or propaganda that impose meanings and values on docile consumers or incite false desires in the name of “diffusing or neutralizing political unrest” (Ewen 1976, 12). Rather, it is that cause-related marketing has emerged as a technique by which to understand, represent, and act upon the desires of consumers to be generous and civic-minded citizens, albeit in ways that are ultimately profitable for corporations. The effects are a new form of subsidized philanthropy (in cause-related marketing campaigns, corporations might best be understood as vectors for
the transfer of money spent by consumers on designated products to the nonprofits in whose name the products are sold), often a new form of advertising (resources other than money donated as a result of cause marketing campaigns are tax deductible), and a constant flow of images suggesting that the key to solving America’s social problems lies in corporate philanthropy, personal generosity, and proper consumption. While cause-related marketing sells goods through this promise, it also packages generosity as a lifestyle choice through which individuals can attain self-actualization and self-realization.

The symbolic effects of cause marketing are the focus of the second part of the essay, in which I turn to a case study of the National Football League’s breast cancer marketing campaign (entitled, in a press release announcing its launch, “Real Men Wear Pink”). Through an analysis of the articulation of popular anxieties about crime and character in the NFL to discourses on player volunteerism, I argue that the class-inflected, racially coded, and gender normative ethos of generosity offered up for consumption through this campaign is suggestive of the political stakes and dangers bound up with cause-related marketing as a mode of governing desire.

**Corporate Philanthropy: A Historical Perspective**

It was the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1953 that ruled on the legality of corporate donations. Two years previously, the board of directors of A. P. Smith Manufacturing had donated $1,500 to Princeton University for general maintenance purposes. Several stockholders challenged the legitimacy of the gift in the New Jersey courts by charging that this was a misappropriation of corporate funds and went beyond corporate powers because the company’s charter did not explicitly authorize such donations. The judge, however, ruled in favor of the company, whose president had argued that he considered his contribution to be sound because the public expects such philanthropy from corporations, because it would obtain goodwill for the company in the community, and because it would further the company’s self-interest in assuring a continual flow of well-trained personnel for employment in the corporate world (13 N.J. 154; Muirhead 1999; Yankey 1996). Significantly, the court also argued that with the transfer of wealth from individuals to corporations and with the “burdens of taxation resulting from increased state and federal aid” (13 N.J. 145), corporations were expected to assume the modern obligations of good citizenship just as individuals had in the past. Such giving was also necessary, the court argued, to ensure the survival of private educa-
While there are instances in which corporations make financial contributions without reference to their markets or overall strategic plans, most large corporations now employ a business-driven approach to contributions as they seek to attach “value,” “strategic vision,” and “mission” to their charitable activities. This business-driven approach is known as “strategic philanthropy” and requires that every dollar given must mesh with the company’s markets or employees and work as part of its overall strategic plans.

Although the development of government social welfare programs under the New Deal marked a turn toward social democracy, the development of the idea of an “associative state” was crucial to the institutionalization and expansion of corporate philanthropy in the years following World War II. Business leaders such as Frank Abrams of Standard Oil of New Jersey, Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors, and Arthur W. Page of AT&T created the Council for Aid to Education to encourage corporate support for higher education because they believed that by funding private universities, businesses might stem the growth of government-supported public education and the expansion of government programs more generally that had resulted from the war, the New Deal, and particularly the enactment of the GI Bill (Himmelstein 1996). This belief, as I shall show subsequently, remained an enduring justification for corporate philanthropy through the course of the twentieth century.

Although these business leaders maintained an ambitious vision for the role of philanthropy, from the 1950s to the 1980s, corporate giving moved away from its position at the center of business activity to assume a more peripheral and independent role. Although philanthropy was viewed as valuable insofar as it enhanced a corporation’s reputation, it was not yet viewed as a tool that could be employed directly in the service of selling goods (Dienhart 1988; Drucker 1984; Muirhead 1999; Yankey 1996; Zetlin 1990). This was to change, however, in the last two decades of the twentieth century—a period in which the philosophy and practice of corporate philanthropy has undergone rapid transformation. While there are instances in which corporations make financial contributions without reference to their markets or overall strategic plans, most large corporations now employ a business-driven approach to contributions as they seek to attach “value,” “strategic vision,” and “mission” to their charitable activities. This business-driven approach is known as “strategic philanthropy” and requires that every dollar given must mesh with the company’s markets or employees and work as part of its overall strategic plans.
Reaganomics and the Rise of Strategic Philanthropy

It was during the tenure of the Reagan administration, according to Elizabeth Boris (director of the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy), that “nonprofit organizations were propelled to U.S. public consciousness” (1999, 2). In 1981, Reagan had created the Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives to encourage private-sector activity in social programs and increase nongovernmental sources of support for nonprofits. “Volunteerism,” Reagan declared, “is an essential part of our plan to give government back to the people. I believe the people are anxious for this responsibility. . . . We can show the world how to construct a social system more humane, more compassionate, and more effective in meeting its members’ needs than any ever known” (Reagan 1981, 1085). Concurrently, the administration introduced incentives by reducing corporate taxes and increasing the limits on charitable deductions for corporations from 5 to 10 percent of taxable income.4

At the same time that the nonprofit sector was called upon to partner with corporations to develop private-sector alternatives to public welfare (which was said to stifle “the volunteer impulse of private citizens and private business”), the nonprofit social service saw their budgets reduced significantly and their client rolls increase as a result of the administration’s cuts in welfare spending and an ongoing recession (U.S. Senate 1982, 2).5 These cuts, combined with the considerable public attention focused on private-sector initiatives prompted by the launching of the task force, coincided to produce a substantial increase in the number of requests on the part of nonprofits for aid from corporations.

Over 75 percent of the executives surveyed for a 1981 Conference Board report said that requests for aid had jumped substantially, with some reporting a 300 percent increase (Muirhead 1999). Although these changes appear to have had an impact on corporate giving in the short term (that is, until 1987 and the onset of the recession), there was no significant increase in contributions favoring human services. In other words, the increased level of corporate contributions facilitated by Reagan’s tax cuts and incentives (which anyway fell far short of the estimated $29 million needed to “bridge the gap”) did not flow to those areas of provision—economic development, hunger relief, or job training, for instance—most affected by cuts in expenditure (Grønbjerg and Smith 1999; Muirhead 1999; Salamon and Abramson 1982; Zetlin 1990).

Large corporations such as AT&T and leading business organizations such as the Business Roundtable linked their support for the Reagan tax and spending cuts to increases in corporate philanthropy (Levy and Oviatt 1989; O’Connell 1983; Shannon 1991). If business was serious “in
seeking to stem over-dependence on government,” the Roundtable con-
tested, it had to “increase its level of commitment” to the nonprofit sector
(O’Connell 1983, 386). However, when the cuts were actually instituted,
business leaders did not express enthusiasm or intent to fill the gap set out
by administration strategists (Muirhead 1999, 35). Executives claimed
that although their contributions had tripled between 1976 and 1985 from
$1.5 billion to $4.5 billion, the $29 billion gap left by Reagan’s cuts was
too large for corporations to realistically close (Muirhead 1999). Position-
ing business as an isolated entity that had been called upon by the
state to respond to a problem in which business was not seen to be implic-
cated, corporate leaders were said to “resent the transfer of the social
burden and responsibility to the private sector” (Muirhead 1999, 36). In
this vein, one unnamed corporate executive told the Conference Board,
“We didn’t start these programs . . . and we shouldn’t be responsible for
their continuation if federal money is not available” (quoted in Muirhead
1999, 35). And an unnamed “public affairs vice president” said, “Our
company supported [President Reagan] because we believed in the elimi-
nation of a number of these programs. Naturally, we’re not too enthused
about continuing the programs and shifting the burden to the corporate
sector” (quoted in Muirhead 1999, 36).

The Reagan administration’s cuts in social security spending coinci-
cided with rising unemployment brought about by deindustrialization
and a spate of deregulation-induced corporate mergers, diversification,
restructuring, and downsizing that had begun in the late 1970s. As busi-
nesses merged, downsized, and streamlined, corporate contributions
became the focus of managers who were seeking to gain efficiency in an
increasingly competitive marketplace. In the words of James P. Shannon
(1996), a corporate philanthropy consultant and recognized proponent
of the shift to strategic philanthropy, these changes “put the current
managers of corporate philanthropy on notice that henceforth their
departments would be evaluated by management against the same stan-
dards of performance, efficiency, production, and achievement as all
other departments in their companies” (ix). As a result, some contribu-
tions programs disappeared, while others were streamlined. Barry Las-
tra, a public affairs consultant with the Chevron Corporation, describes
the impact of the Chevron-Gulf merger on its corporate giving function
as follows:

In melding corporate contributions, one plus one seldom equals two. When
Gulf’s $10.2 million contributions budget was combined with Chevron’s
$20 million contributions budget there was an immediate 11% reduction to a
combined program of $27 million. . . . A merger forces an overall analytical
review that is invaluable—my experience would suggest this type of critical
review is in order even without the trauma of a corporate merger. (Lastra, quoted in Muirhead 1999, 41)

Lastra also articulates here the widespread belief in the need to streamline corporate contributions in general, even in times of relative economic stability—a belief that has been widely put into practice in the past fifteen years.

As pressure increased for efficiency and restraint in corporate contributions, a key shift occurred. Staff in these areas began to look for ways to make philanthropic activities profitable, and strategic philanthropy emerged as the solution. Thus, when Kodak’s community relations and contributions program faced a decrease in its budget, its staff strove to make “community relations a strategic resource in gaining revenue for the company” (Muirhead 1999, 41). Kodak’s new strategy involves partnerships between the contributions department and other units of the business so that these units learn “the value of investing in urban markets,” “promote business-to-business relationships—not just philanthropic ones—with nonprofits,” “leverage contributions to enhance sales opportunities,” and “make grants that enhance global access” (Muirhead 1999, 41). Thus, Kodak’s philanthropic and profit-making functions have become inextricably intertwined, as philanthropy is viewed as a possible route to gaining access to new markets at home and abroad, finding new partners with whom to do business, and enhancing sales.

Kodak’s shift toward strategic philanthropy is typical of corporate America’s move to “treat donations like investments” and thus to “expect some return from them”—a move that simultaneously represents a turn away from the understanding of philanthropy as a more straightforward obligation of corporate citizenship (Dienhart 1988, 64). By the 1990s, management guru Peter Drucker’s (1984) argument that altruism cannot be the criterion by which corporate giving is evaluated had become a guiding assumption of contributions programs as businesses discharged their social responsibilities by converting them into self-interest and hence business opportunities.

As executives have searched for ways to make corporate philanthropy profitable, they have also sought ways to make it more scientific. Referring to the effect of demands for efficiency on corporate contributions departments, James P. Shannon wrote, “The problem posed by these new standards is that until now many corporate giving programs have had no clear mission statement, no regular documentation of their effectiveness and no systematic way of measuring whether or how their work products complement the mission or the strategic plans of their parent companies” (1996, ix). Similarly, Craig Smith, president of Corporate Citizen (a cor-
porate philanthropy consulting firm) and another leader in the move toward strategic philanthropy, called for increased research in the field and argued that “if corporate philanthropy is to flourish or even survive, it will be at least in part because researchers have generated the theoretical framework, the methodologies, measurements, and data that show skeptical corporate executives how corporate philanthropy assists corporate competitive strategies” (1996, 1).

From these developments, a new generation of philanthropic consultants trained in the principles of business administration has emerged. The role of these consultants is to develop appropriate strategies and research methods to decide how and where to distribute grants and other resources and to help corporations develop systems for tracking the effectiveness of their giving programs in terms of both impact on their designated social problems and profitability. Thus, instead of merely giving in reaction to appeals for charitable grants, the process has become proactive, with “sets of objectives, budgetary priorities, program planning, coordination, and accountability” (Smith 1989, 335). In turn, it is these professionals who have been charged with inventing a vast array of tools, plans, strategies, and techniques for governing philanthropic activities.6

In practice, the shift toward strategic philanthropy has meant that most large corporations have undertaken at least some of the following changes in their approach to philanthropy and community relations: the use of a narrow focus or theme, such as environmental protection, breast cancer, or youth literacy, to maximize the impact of giving and to align contributions with the company’s business goals and brand characteristics; the support of programs that target beneficiaries who are or could become customers; the integration of the company’s giving program with other departments such as marketing, public affairs, and government relations; the formation of partnerships with community groups, local governments, and other companies who share a common interest in a particular concern (Bill Clinton’s drive to build “empowerment zones” in economically depressed communities through business, government, and nonprofit partnerships is one prominent example of such a strategy); the development of volunteer programs with awards, matching gifts, paid-volunteer time, or other incentives to encourage employees to serve their communities; the instigation of global volunteering or grant-making programs that emphasize and attain a “worldwide” presence;7 the utilization of already existing company resources to enable noncash forms of contributions; the use of public relations campaigns that highlight company activities; and an increased emphasis on the measurement of program results (Alperson 1995; Levy 1999; Muirhead 1999).

The development of these tools and tactics of strategic philanthropy
point to the extent to which a practice that was previously relatively ran-
dom, eclectic, unscientific, and based largely on the individual prefer-
ences of high-ranking corporate leaders has been transformed into a
highly calculated, measured, quantified, and planned approach to giv-
ing—or “charitable investing.” The effect of this transformation has been
to place philanthropy at the center of business activity and to transform it
into a revenue-producing mechanism—at exactly the moment in which
activist demands for a more responsible corporate citizenship have gained
considerable strength and public attention and in which corporations have
been pointing to campaigns that have emerged from strategic philan-
thropy as evidence of their heightened responsibility and compassion. Of
all the tools of strategic philanthropy that have emerged in the past fifteen
years, cause-related marketing—the subject of the following section—is
one of the most widely used and publicly visible, in part because it is
understood to accomplish efficiently the integration of a corporation’s
philanthropic activities with its drive for profit.

**Cause-Related Marketing**

Cause-related marketing emerged in the mid-1980s as a strategic market-
ing tool for differentiating a brand and adding value to it. Carol Cone,
founder and CEO of Cone Communications, a firm that earns more than
$4 million per year promoting cause-related marketing, explains the turn
to this new strategy: “No one wants to compete on the basis of price or
innovation. Everyone can cut prices, and with today’s technology any
innovation can be copied within ninety days” (quoted in Davidson 1997,
37). Instead, companies and brands associate themselves with a cause as a
means to build the reputation of a brand, increase profit, develop
employee loyalty to the company, and add to their reputation as good
corporate citizens (Alperson 1995; Davidson 1997; Foley 1998; Graham
1994; Muirhead 1999; Mullen 1997; Stark 1999).

Unlike traditional charity promotions, in which a brand or company
simply donated money to a cause or sponsored a range of unrelated char-
ities without a coherent strategy, cause-related marketing seeks to ensure
that the brand and the cause share the same “territory” in a “living, altru-
istic partnership for mutual benefit” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 3).
Thus, since the mid-1990s, cause-related marketing has evolved from
what were mostly short-term commitments from corporations to their
chosen causes—that is, a one- or two-month promotion with a charitable
organization, at the end of which the corporation donated a portion of its
profits—to major, long-term commitments to an issue through an alliance
that links the company or brand name with the issue in the consumer’s mind. According to marketing professionals, the short-term approach is gradually giving way to the long-term approach, as the former has come to be seen as opportunistic and therefore possibly harmful to a company’s image. Moreover, weak links between a cause and a company are thought to increase the likelihood that a corporation appears to be “cashing in” on other people’s misfortune. From the marketer’s perspective, longer-term programs have a measure of built-in immunity to charges of opportunism. In addition, short-term promotions are not thought to shore up the association between the brand and the cause for consumers and thus fail to “build the brand” in the desired manner (Arnott 1994; Pringle and Thompson 1999).

Marketing experts frequently refer to cause-related marketing as a means to “cut through the clutter” caused by increasing competition between manufacturers, the power of multiple retailers, technological advances, fragmentation of media audiences, and the increase in the sheer volume of commercial communications directed at the market (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 12). Hence, cause-related marketing is understood as a “filter,” a way to attract the attention and loyalty of the consumer, who is understood to be increasingly adept at reading marketing messages and dissecting the meaning and symbolism of any particular commercial or advertisement (Pringle and Thompson 1999).

In so-called developing markets, experts claim, the priority for marketers and brands is to achieve rapid gains in consumer “penetration” and market share: “The battle is all about acquiring new customers before the competition does” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 14). However, in more “mature” markets, where growth is slow and steady, if it exists at all, marketers have decided that new customer acquisition strategies are expensive and that the pursuit of brand share often comes at the expense of profitability. In these markets, practitioners increasingly focus their attention on retaining customers and building loyalty to their brands.

Marketing professionals are explicit in their belief that cause-related marketing should be first and foremost a strategy for selling products, rather than an altruistic or philanthropic activity. For instance, public relations consultant Jennifer Mullen, writing in *Public Relations Quarterly*, points out that cause marketing has emerged as “corporations increasingly want added value for their charitable giving activities” (Mullen 1997, 42). Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, Jerry Welsh, the president of Welsh Marketing Associates, expresses his concern that some cause-related marketing campaigns do not give consumers a good reason to remember the company or brand “at the end of the day”;8
Cause related marketing was meant to be marketing, not philanthropy. Otherwise we would know it as “marketing related philanthropy” or something to that effect. The practice was aptly named, however, to describe an innovative and socially useful way to augment the power of more traditional marketing, promotion, and public relations efforts. (Welsh 1999, 24)

Mullen even goes so far as to suggest that cause-related marketing campaigns might help save a company’s reputation if it is brought into disrepute: “Consumers who believe a corporation is ethical may be more likely to have preconceived notions and positive expectations, and they may give the benefit of the doubt in otherwise difficult situations such as negative publicity stemming from a crisis” (1997, 43).

Moreover, a recent report of the Conference Board suggested that the very idea of corporate philanthropy might be questionable in the light of the rise of cause-related marketing and other aspects of strategic philanthropy: “The appropriateness of the term ‘philanthropy’ to describe corporate giving is being debated. As companies are increasingly driven to analyze the return they’re getting for their donations, the process is becoming one of financially sound goodwill” (Alperson 1995, 10; emphasis added).

Marketers and the corporations for which they work overwhelmingly view cause-related marketing as a successful business strategy. According to oft-quoted statistics from Mintel Marketing Intelligence, American Express’s campaign to raise funds for the renovation of the Statue of Liberty generated an estimated $1.7 million for the cause, a 27 percent increase in card usage, and a 10 percent jump in new card membership applications (Pringle and Thompson 1999). Condé Nast reader surveys on the Ford Community Action Team breast cancer campaign found that 63 percent of readers said it “made them feel better about Ford Motor” (Green 1999, 34) and that the number of women who would consider purchasing a Ford product the next time they are in the market is increasing (Connelly 1998).

While marketing professionals are usually explicit about the profit motive behind such marketing, they often explain the emergence of cause-related marketing as reflecting a shift in consumer attitudes. In this vein, Bill Laberis, editor of Computerworld magazine, said of contemporary American consumers, “They want something to believe in, whether it’s family, a set of values or some passion they can pursue. . . . [It’s a] kind of spirituality” (quoted in Stark 1999, 20). And Robert Eckert, president/CEO of Kraft Foods, told the annual meeting of the Association of National Advertisers, “Consumers are yearning to connect to people and things that will give meaning to their lives” (quoted in Stark 1999, 20). At these moments, the consumer is understood as the driving force behind
corporate America’s turn to cause-related marketing—an understanding that positions corporations as democratically minded bodies that are responsible to their constituents/consumers, even as it reconfigures consumers’ political concerns about corporate power into psychological yearnings for self-fulfillment.

We can also glean from these examples that marketing discourse, like the popular media, understands and represents the 1990s—in contrast to the alleged self-centeredness and greed of the previous decade—as a more ethical era in American history, a decade of “values,” “decency,” “spirituality,” and “generosity” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 23). Whereas in the 1980s, “brands successfully constructed ravishing imagery, enlisted psychological tricks and built aspirational style on TV,” in the “‘morning after’ decade of the 90s, the consumer pendulum has swung back to a concern with intrinsic values and the market is less convinced by cosmetic displays” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 23). Thus, claim Pringle and Thompson, “There is growing evidence that consumers are looking for new sorts of brand values. These go well beyond the practical issues of functional product performance or rational product benefits and further than the emotional and psychological aspects of brand personality and image” (xxi). “Consumers,” they claim, are “moving towards the top of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and seeking self-realization.” In other words, “material wealth is decreasingly relevant to personal happiness as the desire for ‘belonging,’ ‘self-esteem’ and ‘self-realization’ becomes more important” (12). Thus, while cause-related marketing is, on the one hand, a response to consumer desires as these desires are revealed through technologies of market research, it is also, on the other hand, a tool for incorporating heightened consumer interest in corporate ethics as “people are asking more and more questions about the role of commercial organizations in society and are looking for demonstrations of good corporate citizenship” (xxi–xxii).

In this respect, marketing discourse on the desire of the consumer to find meaning in life through ethical consumption converges with social science discourse on declining civic trust: “There has been an alarming decline in the levels of trust in the traditional institutions, the pillars of community such as the Church, government, and the police to which people had been accustomed to ‘belonging’ or from which many had gained their sense of social direction and moral authority” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, 12).

Pringle and Thompson’s words sound remarkably similar to those of writers such as political scientist Robert Putnam, who argued in a widely circulated and debated essay, “Bowling Alone,” that Americans are less likely to join groups, volunteer, and participate than they have been in the
past and that this trend is an index of weakened “civil society” and a less healthy democracy. Indeed, Pringle and Thompson suggest that as a mechanism with the potential to fulfill widespread desire for social direction and moral authority, cause-related marketing represents one possible solution to declining civic trust:

While traditionalists may regret the demise of the previous pillars of society, the exciting prospect for the corporate beneficiaries of the situation is the possibility to leverage their well-earned degrees of consumer trust and confidence to their commercial benefit. This can be done through the technique of Cause Related Marketing. . . . If the sense of “belonging” which is so important to consumers according to Maslow’s theory, becomes reality, and there’s not much left around to belong to in terms of traditional institutions, then perhaps newer ones, even brands, can step into the breech. (32)

Based on a survey of British voters, they even suggest that corporate sponsorship of elections might help increase voter turnout:

Often obscure and perhaps even potentially intimidating routes to rarely visited village halls and community centers were a strong disincentive to many. By contrast, the possibility of casting a vote at the checkout of a local Safeway was very much more attractive and seen as bringing voting into the mainstream of daily life. (32)

Thus, the “threat” of global competition coexists with the “opportunities” presented by the “citizen’s sense of alienation and lack of fulfillment,” and cause-related marketing, they suggest, presents the most promising solution to this bind (12).

While the development of cause marketing technologies represents an attempt to ascertain and measure “emerging customer demands for ‘higher order attributes’” (Pringle and Thompson 1999, xxii), that is, to find ways to satisfy consumer aspirations to be engaged and generous citizens, such technologies simultaneously constitute marketers as arbiters of ethical citizenship and civic virtue. “Belief systems must become part and parcel of the marketer’s armory,” Pringle and Thompson argue (xxiii). Marketers, in other words, must extend their understanding and interpretation of a brand’s “territory” “beyond the functional performance and emotional or aspirational imagery into that of ‘ethics’ and ‘beliefs’” (4).

But what “ethics” and “beliefs” does cause-related marketing deploy? What forms of “social direction” and “moral authority” does it offer? What kinds of life and forms of conduct does it support? As one of the largest private funders of breast cancer research in the United States, one of the breast cancer movement’s most prominent arms, and one of the
pioneers of cause marketing in the United States, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation provides a potent site through which to explore these questions.

“Brand Aid: Cause Effective”—The Rise of Breast Cancer–Related Marketing

Throughout the year, many large, well-known multinational corporations stage special events to raise money for the Komen Foundation: American Airlines holds an annual Celebrity Golf Weekend; BMW organizes a series of sponsored test-drives; Bally’s Total Fitness offers self-defense classes; Chili’s restaurant chain stages an annual 10K run; Danskin holds a women-only triathlon series; *Golf for Women* magazine sponsors Rally for the Cure, in which women pay to play in golf tournaments at country clubs across the United States; Jazzercise, in conjunction with the Atlanta Falcons, organizes Dance for the Cure; Johnson & Johnson coordinates the Virtual Runner Program, which allows supporters across the United States who cannot actively participate in the Race for the Cure to take part in a “virtual run” via the Internet; and *Self* magazine organizes a series of events called Workout in the Park, in which participants give a donation in exchange for the opportunity to try out various fitness classes. Other corporations—including J. C. Penney, Titleist, Pinnacle, and Tomichi Studio—hold promotions in which they donate a percentage of the sale price of “breast cancer awareness products” to the Komen Foundation. Perhaps the most high-profile of this category of events is the Fashion Targets Breast Cancer campaign, in which Saks Fifth Avenue stores across the country hold “shopping events” to raise money for Komen and other national and local breast cancer charities (*Frontline* 1999).

During National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, in October, corporate activity to raise money for the Komen Foundation intensifies. In October of 1999, for instance, Lee Jeans staged its annual Lee National Denim Day, for which it asks corporations and businesses to allow their employees to wear denim to work on a chosen Friday in exchange for a $5 donation; Charles Schwab & Co. donated all commissions from one day’s trading through its campaign, Commission for the Cure; Hallmark Gold Crown stores gave money raised from the sale of particular cards; Pier 1 sold a breast cancer awareness candle and donated a percentage of the sale price; and Yoplait placed breast cancer awareness messages on the lids of its yogurts and for every lid mailed in by consumers, contributed ten cents to the Komen Foundation.10
As the opportunity to participate in raising money for breast cancer research has been used to sell products ranging from Hallmark cards to motorcars, breast cancer marketing has become the focus of much commentary and analysis among marketing experts seeking to understand and chart the passions, interests, and desires of contemporary consumers. Under headlines such as “Cancer Sells” (Davidson 1997), “Brand Aid: Cause Effective” (Stark 1999), “Brand Builders: Ford, Cars, and Caring” (Green 1999), “Illness as Metaphor” (Goldman 1997), and “Right Cause Can Boost Image and Sales” (Harris 1997), these experts have labeled breast cancer “a dream cause” and pointed to the success of corporate campaigns against the disease as a way to encourage other companies to pursue cause-related marketing (Goldman 1997, 70).

There is, of course, an irony at work here. For, as numerous corporations have turned to breast cancer as a way to differentiate their products and to cut through the clutter of commercial communications, they have had the effect of making breast cancer marketing ubiquitous. In turn, this has produced intense competition as corporations struggle, in the words of Avon’s Joanne Mazurki, “to gain ownership over the issue” (quoted in Davidson 1997, 4). While this struggle has occasionally been enacted explicitly and with recourse to the law (when Estée Lauder sought to secure the breast cancer ribbon as its exclusive property, for instance), it has for the most part been evidenced in the diversification and expansion of breast cancer marketing (Fernandez 1998). That is, in the struggle to gain ownership over the ethos of generosity, corporations have invented new ways to differentiate their versions of generosity from those of their competitors.

In April 1999, the National Football League became the latest corporation to sign on as a national sponsor of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation’s Race for the Cure.11 This arrangement—which partners a professional sports league that is the epitome of American hypermasculinity with a nonprofit that is the epitome of pink-ribbon hyperfemininity—brought with it an immediate guarantee of differentiation and recognition. Moreover, the announcement of the new partnership coincided with an ongoing effort on the part of the league to show, in the words of Detroit News writer Becky Yerak (2000), “that it’s in touch with its feminine side.” Yerak continues: “New advertising and marketing campaigns by the National Football League . . . have begun muting the usual machismo and shaping pitches more to women, children and even men who aren’t necessarily hardcore fans of the weekend showcase or alpha males.” This new approach to marketing was created, in part, in response to a survey that found 40 percent of the NFL’s weekly television viewers are women and, of those 45 million, “20 million call themselves
avid fans” (Yerak 2000). Hoping to maintain this market and to capture the interest of new fans, the NFL turned to breast cancer—an already tried and tested focus for a cause marketing campaign—and the cultivation of a compassionate, yet strong, masculinity.

In a press release announcing the deal, Nancy Brinker of the Komen Foundation and Sara Levinson of the NFL described their new partnership as an opportunity to spread the message of early detection to the league’s huge fan base, which includes more than 68 million women (NFL 1999b). Situating the promotion of mammography at the center of the campaign (and thus, as is common practice with the Komen Foundation, erasing questions of cause and prevention) and pointing to the promise of this new alliance against cancer, Brinker said of the deal:

We are thrilled to have an organization like the NFL as a national sponsor of Race for the Cure. This partnership will allow us to spread the life saving message of early detection to millions of professional football fans, both women and men. With the support of NFL teams, players and fans, we can win the race against breast cancer. (NFL 1999b)

The sponsorship deal included a promise by the NFL to enhance marketing and “grassroots” support of the Komen Race for the Cure series. Grassroots activities were to include appearances by players and their families at race events, national television advertising, breast cancer detection information affixed to all “NFL for Her” merchandise, and race sign-ups at NFL Workshops for Women (NFL 1999b).12

DeAnn Forbes, owner of a “female-owned” advertising agency that has a contract with the Detroit Lions, explained the NFL’s new approach as follows: “People are tired of seeing a guy in a uniform and another guy in a uniform. Human interest is what’ll bring a broader audience. . . . Whether it’s the average fan or novice, they want to know what drives these players. The only way you can really feel connected is to see them, hear them, know them” (quoted in Yerak 2000). Thus, the NFL’s campaign is designed to stimulate what is understood as the peculiarly female desire for human interest and personal interaction. Of course, as this discourse constitutes women—in contrast to men—as more emotional and more in need of such interaction, it also helps solidify historically embedded links between women, nurturing, and benevolence.

Beginning in October 1999, to coincide with Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the NFL aired a selection of six different TV spots featuring NFL players to “help raise awareness and encourage fans to join in the fight against breast cancer” (NFL 1999c). The spots, entitled “Real Mean Wear Pink,” aired during NFL games and primetime and daytime programming on ABC, CBS, ESPN, and FOX. Each spot is tagged with a
logo bearing the NFL shield wrapped around a pink ribbon and a phone number to call for information about Race for the Cure events. The footage for the spots was filmed in July 1999 at the Race for the Cure in Aspen, Colorado, a week before the opening of NFL training camps. Press releases created to accompany the release of the spots emphasized the details of the players’ involvement. To ensure the authenticity of the players’ commitment, the release explained that they did their “unscripted” voice-overs during a group discussion before and after the event (NFL 1999c).

Five of the six spots feature a different high-profile player—Jamal Anderson, running back with the Atlanta Falcons; Tony Gonzalez, tight end with the Kansas City Chiefs; Hardy Nickerson, linebacker of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Kordell Stewart, quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers; and Jason Sehorn, defensive back of the New York Giants—describing their experiences as volunteers at the race. The sixth spot is a compilation with music but no voice-overs. The commercials are visually similar: hundreds of white, middle-aged women (along with smaller numbers of white men and children) decked out in pink and white athletic apparel walking and jogging along the tree-lined streets of Aspen. Interspersed with these images is footage of the featured players (four of whom are the only people of color visible in the commercials) erecting banners and signs, handing out water to participants as they run by, shaking hands with the men, holding hands with the children, and hugging the women.  

In each commercial, the featured player describes his appreciation and admiration for the courage and pride of breast cancer survivors. These voice-overs are accompanied by long, lingering close-up shots of the faces of individual survivors (identified by their pink visors and T-shirts). Jamal Anderson says, “There’s nothing like the look of the survivor. And you look into their eyes and you can’t help but be overwhelmed.” Tony Gonzalez declares, “Man, these people are the true warriors. Man, they’re out there struggling with life and death. It’s just . . . it’s an inspiration for me.” And Hardy Nickerson explains:

Once I got to the race and started talking to people and started hearing their stories, I think that was the most uplifting part about the whole Race for the Cure. Once you get around the survivors, man, they tell you, “I’ve been a survivor for thirty years.” “I’ve been a survivor for forty years.” I found myself caught up and just wanting to talk to everybody and wanting to hear all the stories.

Such narratives constitute breast cancer survivors as the bearers of a heightened sense of wisdom, courage, and values. In turn, the survivors’ testimonials (which are recounted by the players) serve to reciprocate this

An All-Consuming Cause
The values that both survivors and players are said to bear appear as universal and transcendent—appear, that is, to rise above the lines of difference that are thought to have fractured U.S. “civil” society.

As the players express their admiration for breast cancer survivors, they also describe how their experiences at the race have inspired them to “do more” for the cause. Gonzalez says it is something he might “ wanna do in the future,” while Anderson suggests that their participation “might help make next year’s race bigger” and that it “hopefully raised the awareness of what the Komen Foundation was trying to do.” Hardy Nickerson points to the uplifting stories of survivorship as a motivation to bring more people into the fight against breast cancer: “‘Cause the more you hear the stories, the more encouraged you get, and the more encouraged you get, the more you’re able to encourage someone else. That’s what life is all about.” And Kordell Stewart, who describes his mother’s battle with breast cancer and her living ten years after diagnosis instead of the one year predicted by her doctors, says: “It’s about these people out here who are struggling with cancer and not knowing if they’re gonna make it or not. But yet, if we come out here and just give a helping hand, they might get an extra year or so. You just don’t know how strong the mind is.”

**Real Men Have Character: Race and the Criminalization of the NFL**

While the significance of the Real Men Wear Pink campaign lies partly in its capacity for attracting new consumers, we cannot reduce its significance, or that of cause-related marketing in general, to the production of new markets. Nor can we begin to understand its implications simply by undertaking a close textual reading of these commercials. Instead, I want to suggest that we must read Real Men Wear Pink as indicative of the psychic dimensions of broader historical conditions, conditions shot through with the normalizing and exclusionary logics of race and gender. In order to explore this claim in more detail and read the Real Men Wear Pink campaign contextually, I want to take what may seem like a detour through contemporary debates about what has come to be known as the “character issue” in the NFL—that is, the alleged propensity of NFL players to criminality—and concomitant debates among officials, coaches, players, academics, and media critics about how best to screen out “undesirable characters” when recruiting new players to join the league.

Public discussions about the world of professional basketball and football have long been a site for the expression of cultural anxieties about
race, crime, and violence. Cheryl Cole (1996) argues that during the 1980s, popular knowledges about the inner city, urban problems, and black masculinity were produced and rendered visible through the categories of “sport” and “gangs”: where sport appeared as the locus of “conventional values” such as a healthy lifestyle, productivity, and discipline, and gangs as the site for those “behaviors” that were thought to threaten such values—out-of-control violence, insatiable consumerism, and a refusal to take proper and meaningful employment. In turn, such behaviors were deemed responsible for the devastation and “disorder” of America’s inner cities. The sport-gang dyad, while ensuring that the values articulated to both sport and gangs remain unquestioned, does not guarantee black athletes an escape from the discourse of racism. For the sport-gang dyad also works as a normalizing lens within the world of sport: the criminalization and pathologization of black masculinity is so deeply inscribed and so utterly pervasive as to make African American athletes—like all African American men—always potential criminals. Hence, the mass media present the American public with a constant flow of stories detailing the lives of professional athletes who have apparently been unable to abandon the modes of conduct allegedly instilled in them from a young age. Sports author Jeff Benedict makes this point explicit when he claims in an interview with *Sport* that “you can take the boy out of the inner city but you can’t take the inner city out of the boy” (quoted in Keteyian 1998).

Although the alleged propensity of athletes to criminal behavior has been well established in the popular imagination for some time, the past four years have witnessed a proliferation of discourse on the “character issue.” When Lawrence Phillips, a player known for his “past bad behavior,” was drafted by the St. Louis Rams in 1996 and subsequently arrested on a number of occasions for a variety of offenses—all the subject of intense media coverage—NFL team owners introduced a violent-crime policy by which players arrested for such crimes would be subject to therapy, fines, suspension, or banishment, depending on the type of crime committed and the verdict reached by the courts (Attner 1997, S2; Freeman 2000a). The Phillips “fiasco” (Attner’s term) was followed, in 1998, by the publication of Jeff Benedict and Don Yaeger’s *Pros and Cons: The Criminals Who Play in the NFL* (1999), “the most highly anticipated sports book of the year” (Keteyian 1998). Benedict and Yaeger’s “explosive exposé” purported to reveal the “shocking percentage” of NFL players who have been formally charged with committing a serious crime such as rape, domestic violence, assault, battery, and DUI (Keteyian 1998). Responding to charges by NFL officials that the book would “unfavorably serve to perpetuate stereotypes” and “may, in fact, have been racist,”
coauthor Benedict told *Sport* magazine that the fact that “so many athletic offenders are black is not a function of race, but rather of the rising recruitment of poorly prepared young men, the majority of whom are black, whose social backgrounds are rife with problems” (Keteyian 1998).

The NFL’s response to the book was to commission its own survey of crime in the league (Freeman 2000a). And when the debate over crime, character, and the NFL reached new heights in the early months of 2000 with the arrest of two high-profile players (Rae Carruth of the Carolina Panthers and Ray Lewis of the Baltimore Ravens) on charges of murder within the space of a few weeks, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue had the survey findings on hand.14 Professional football players, Tagliabue declared, committed crimes at a rate commensurate with the general population “of the same age and racial background” (quoted in DeFord 2000). Thus, as the NFL attempted to undermine the notion that athletes are somehow predisposed to criminal behavior, their response only served to confirm the notion that young black men are predisposed toward crime. It suggested, that is, that the NFL is no different from the “general population,” in which crime can also be predicted by age and race.

Under headlines such as “NFL: National Felons League” (Baker 2000), “N.F.L. and Union Weigh Players’ Violent Acts” (Freeman 2000a), “Despite Lip Service, Teams Can’t Keep from Drafting Questionable Characters” (Duncan 2000), “A Dubious Cast of Characters” (Myers 2000), “Tests of Character” (Hruby 2000, 28), “Stains from the Police Blotter Leave NFL Embarrassed” (Freeman 2000b, 1), “Off-Field Violence May Stain NFL Image” (Smith 2000), the media set about trying to explain this “unfathomable” set of circumstances and to seek solutions to the “character issue.” The theories proffered as explanations ranged from the violent nature of the sport, to the dangers and temptations of women (the “evil that lurks in skirts” according to Diane Shah [2000] of the *Chicago Sun-Times*), to the background or “environment” from which the players originate, to their upbringing in female-headed “welfare” families. The solutions put forward included more intense education for rookies, therapy for violence-prone players, more thorough character screening during the drafting process (NFL teams already perform extensive background checks and psychological testing on potential recruits), and a greater emphasis on character-building practices such as volunteerism.

The NFL has also proposed “dealing” with the “character issue” by emphasizing, through mass media campaigns, “the positive deeds players do in the community” and encouraging “wives and girlfriends to participate more in the programs designed to help players stay out of trouble” (Freeman 2000a). Thus, in line with the recommendations of cause-
related marketing experts such as Jennifer Mullen who, as we saw previously, suggests that such campaigns may give corporations the “benefit of the doubt” during moments of negative publicity; the NFL views marketing tools such as Real Men Wear Pink as vehicles for repairing their public image. Moreover, the league looks to women, who are thus reaffirmed as the moral guardians of men, as key to the ethical transformation of their “troubled” players.

The importance of professional athletes’ participation in philanthropy or volunteerism is understood, moreover, to go beyond its public relations potential. As the media scrutinized Ray Lewis’s “character,” for instance, they also looked to his record of philanthropic or volunteer activities to strengthen their assessments. In an extended analysis of the Lewis case, Jarret Bell asks if we should understand Lewis as a “Saint or Thug?” One interviewee, Ronald Cherry, a Baltimore lawyer who “has known Lewis for four years,” told Bell that “Lewis is easily one of the nicest men I’ve ever met” (Bell 2000). For evidence to support Cherry’s claim, Bell turns to Lewis’s “involvement in the community as a testament to his character”:

Lewis is considered a “go-to” guy by the Ravens staff because of his generosity with time and money for needy causes. He routinely visits children in hospitals, and he became active with the Police Athletic League in Baltimore. He once purchased 250 tickets for underprivileged kids to attend a Washington Bullets (now Wizards) game, and he hosted a bowling tournament to aid needy kids. And Lewis once matched the team’s $23,000 contribution to a food drive.

“But,” Bell continues, making explicit the apparent disjunction between a propensity toward volunteering and a propensity toward crime, “Lewis has also been the focus of police interest.”

Following Lewis’s and Carruth’s respective arrests, the NFL draft became the focus for further discussion of the character issue. In the run-up to the draft, league general managers “talked endlessly about picking players with character” (Goldman 2000), and when the New York Jets drafted “three players with rap sheets” (Myers 2000), critics expressed their skepticism (Battista 2000; Duncan 2000; Myers 2000). Alongside details of these players’ “troubled ways” (Battista 2000), critics drew attention to new draftees who scored highly on character tests and attributed their scores to their realizing the importance of volunteerism: LaVar Arrington, who was drafted by the Redskins, “spoke about responsibility and character,” and Chris Samuels, also picked by the Redskins, “visited with inner city kids in Brooklyn during his stay in New York” (Myers 2000). Unlike officials at the New York Jets, Arrington and Samuels “get it,”

**Building “Proper” Citizens: The Pedagogy of Volunteerism and the Racialization of Generosity**

How then should we read the Real Men Wear Pink campaign? What does this campaign suggest about the United States’s preoccupation with volunteerism and philanthropy? About its relationship to breast cancer as a charitable cause? And about the “character” debates in the NFL?

At one level, the Real Men Wear Pink campaign promotes an alternative version of masculinity—one that is sensitive, compassionate, and charitable—from that with which the NFL is more commonly associated. For a culture obsessed with role models and citizen education, the image of five professional football players who are suitably “diverse” and who are engaged in genuine and meaningful service to their fellow citizens is surely ideal. However, as the preceding pages have stressed, the meaning of these images and the ways in which they operate are more complex and more dangerous than a decontextualized analysis might suggest.

The Real Men Wear Pink campaign is problematic not because there is something inherently wrong with sensitive or compassionate masculinity, but because the brand of masculinity the campaign produces gains its very meaning, legitimacy, and appeal from its implicit difference from a demonized masculinity that is constituted through the inscription of criminality and “bad character” on the bodies of black men. It seems important to clarify here that my argument is not that the Real Men Wear Pink campaign creates a myth of compassionate masculinity in order to detract public attention away from the “true” deviant masculinity that “really” characterizes the NFL. I am not interested, in other words, in adjudicating the “characters” of NFL players. Instead, my argument is that the campaign is inevitably part of a discursive formation in which a player’s character is judged—at least in part—on the basis of his involvement in volunteerism, and in which participation in volunteerism is articulated to good character and understood—like race—to be predictive of a player’s propensity to crime.

The character problem in the NFL, if we remember, was also blamed on the absence of a father figure in the players’ childhoods. While anxieties about absent fathers are most obviously anxieties about the disintegration of the disciplinary mechanisms of the heteronormative nuclear family, these anxieties are linked, in important ways, to contemporary discourse on volunteerism and philanthropy. Like the youth who are cur-
rently the target of Colin Powell’s highly publicized volunteerism crusades, many NFL players have grown up in households headed by a “welfare mother” and have thus, it is implied, been deprived of “generous” and “independent” role models. In this context, it is notable that the official aim of the President’s Summit on America’s Future—the 1997 extravaganza at which Powell and Clinton launched their campaign to “make volunteerism part of the definition of citizenship” (Clinton, quoted in Hall and Nichols 1997)—was to provide 2 million underprivileged youth with “five fundamental resources” by the year 2000: mentors, adequate health care, safe places to go after school, job skills, and the opportunity to do volunteer work. Thus, the underprivileged youth who were to be the beneficiaries of the newly invigorated individual and corporate generosity that was to emerge from the summit were also to be trained as volunteers—trained to avoid, that is, the life choices taken by their implied and figurative parents, the “welfare queen” and the absent black father. In an era in which “neither the government nor the private sector can adequately address the needs of the nation’s 15 million disadvantaged children” (Clinton in Hall and Nichols 1997), these children were to learn how to give as well as to receive; to become a generation of adults who are not dependent.

In the context both of contemporary discourse on volunteerism and responsibility and the debate about character in the NFL, Real Men Wear Pink might best be read as an advertisement for the promise of personal, private philanthropy in the post–welfare reform era. Because at the same time that the emergence of cause-related marketing is an effect of social developments associated with the rise of Reaganomics and neoliberalism in the United States, marketing strategies such as Real Men Wear Pink are also mechanisms for the production of ideals of citizenship. The players who appear in these commercials and whose participation in philanthropic and volunteer activity is the stuff of an endless stream of press releases are the exemplars of “good character,” where the latter is defined by a willingness to embrace bourgeois, humanistic values such as the need to perform organized, charitable works. The particular form of compassionate culture that the campaign represents and for which the “American people” are currently supposed to strive is one in which acts of organized volunteerism signify both concern for others and self-responsibility and fulfillment. However, this is most definitely not a culture that recognizes the informal networks of support and care upon which poor urban and rural communities often depend as (American) generosity.

At the same time that the Real Men Wear Pink campaign offers a model for the ideal practitioner of American generosity, it also offers a
model for the ideal recipient of volunteerism. Unlike the welfare queen—the quintessential antimother and the symbol of all that threatened the moral guardianship, selflessness, and good health on which nationally sanctioned motherhood depends—the breast cancer survivors we see in Real Men Wear Pink and in discourse on breast cancer more broadly are the embodiment of a white, heteronormative, nationally sanctioned womanhood. As survivors, they are ordained with an inherent wisdom and morality. Through their participation in the race they are at once recipients and purveyors of charity and bearers of the moral worth bound up with healthy discipline. Moreover, they appear as beacons of hope who through their individual courage, strength, and vitality have elicited an outpouring of American generosity—a continued supply of which will ensure the fight against breast cancer remains an unqualified success.

The Clinton epigraph at the start of the essay illustrates how contemporary discourse on philanthropy and volunteerism posits generosity as an innate, timeless, and transhistorical trait that is distinctively American. This discourse appeals to a mythic American past—a past in which citizens are imagined to have had more unique, personal, localized, moral bonds with their “communities”—in order to, in Sheldon Wolin’s words, “ease the path toward the future” (1989, 23). While cause-related marketing is posited, in part, as a response to the consumer’s desire for an ethical, meaningful, community-oriented life, it is also used to consolidate existing markets, capture new ones, and increase corporate profit. Moreover, by constituting well-intentioned consumption, personal generosity, and allegiance to a homogenized, sentimental, and privatized way of life as the normative configuration of American citizenship, it stands as yet another yardstick against which the capacities of individuals to become proper Americans are measured.

Notes

I am grateful to Sonya Michel, Radhika Mongia, and Paula Treichler for their incisive feedback on earlier drafts of this work.

1. The Susan G. Komen Foundation is one of the largest private funders of breast cancer research in the United States. It was founded by Nancy Brinker in 1982 in memory of her sister, who died of the disease. The foundation is most well known for its national network of 5K runs, the Race for the Cure.

2. Klawiter is an exception in that she recognizes that organizations such as the Komen Foundation have collaborated with the beauty, fitness, and fashion industries in order to challenge the stigma of breast cancer. For other critical work on breast cancer and the breast cancer movement, see Altman 1996; Batt 1994; Brady 1991; Cartwright 1998; Epstein 1978, 1998; Klawiter 1999; Leopold 1999; Lorde 1980; Solomon 1992; Stabiner 1997.
3. Before the 1960s, corporations did not publicize their contributions. But during the social unrest of the 1960s, and in specific response to activists who challenged corporate America on its environmental and hiring practices, corporations gradually decided to abandon anonymity in giving.

4. Changes to the tax code were made through the passing of the Economic Recovery Tax Act in 1981. Hayden Smith (1989) argues that these changes had a significant impact on corporate giving, at least in the short term. For 1982, there was a 22.4 percent increase in the number of companies reporting contributions equal to 5 percent or more of net income and a 38.4 percent increase in the average amount of their contributions. The total contributions of companies reporting 5 percent or more increased from 25.5 percent of total giving reported by all corporations in 1981 to 37.7 percent in 1982.

5. Escalation of government contracts for services with the private sector in the 1970s had made the private sector more dependent on public sources of funding. Cutbacks in public funds, therefore, left voluntary agencies with less money to spend (Katz 1996).

6. These include manuals detailing the components of a profitable contributions program (Alperson 1995; Muirhead 1999; Shannon 1991); qualitative and quantitative methods to measure outcomes and performance (Scott and Rothman 1992; Wood and Jones 1996); the creation of new courses in philanthropy (such as the New York–based Rockefeller Foundation Course in Practical Philanthropy and the Boston-based Impact Project), which teach potential philanthropists and corporate contributions officials how to evaluate organizations for their financial responsibilities (Miller 1997); and the publication of numerous new magazines such as *Guidestar* (“the Donor’s Guide to the Nonprofit Universe”), *Who Cares: The Toolkit for Social Change, More than Money*, *The American Benefactor*, and *Build*, which have joined more established journals such as the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* and the *NonProfit Times*.

7. “Global” volunteering and philanthropic programs are becoming increasingly prominent among large multinational corporations seeking to secure a responsible profile as their labor practices and environmental impact come under increased scrutiny from activists.

8. As the creators of the 1983 American Express campaign to raise funds for the renovation of the Statue of Liberty, Welsh Marketing Associates of New York are widely regarded as the founders of cause-related marketing.

9. The fact that Reebok spent over $10 million to promote and produce Amnesty International’s Human Rights Now! Tour in 1988, which amounted to over 90 percent of its entire marketing budget for that year, indicates the level to which corporations view cause-related marketing as a good investment (Pringle and Thompson 1999).

10. In 1998, Carol Cone of Cone Communications told *Mamm* magazine that eighty to a hundred nationally recognized companies were involved in breast cancer marketing (Fernandez 1998).

11. The National Football League is perhaps more accurately described as a cartel, not a corporation. In other words, it is an organization of independent firms (the teams) that restricts influence on the production and sale of its commodity and controls wages. The Real Men Wear Pink campaign was created and produced by the NFL (which is funded by the pooling of profits from individual teams, NFL-specific advertising revenues, NFL-specific television rights, and the sale of NFL merchandise) as a leaguewide rather than team-specific campaign.
However, individual franchises can and do invent their own breast cancer fund-raising events within the broad terms of the NFL’s contract with the Komen Foundation.

12. Since the signing of the agreement, NFL officials, players, coaches, and spouses have made heavily promoted appearances at a range of Komen events (NFL 1999a; National Race for the Cure, 1999). Moreover, in the week leading up to the Superbowl, NFL players offered a class for breast cancer survivors affiliated with the Susan G. Komen Foundation who wished to “know more about football” (Auchmutey 2000).

13. Out of a sample 509 NFL players on the 1996–97 roster, Benedict and Yaeger claim that 21.4 percent had been arrested for “more than petty crimes” (Cannon and Glassner 2000).

14. Lewis was acquitted in June 2000.

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