



**SELF INC.**  
STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING  
LIVES AND FUTURES

# DONOR SPOTLIGHT

**CHEKEMMA FULMORE-TOWNSEND**  
President, Hamilton Family Charitable Trust



## Why do you support SELF, Inc.?

Supporting families and individuals who are housing- insecure is just a basic dignity and decency effort on my part. So, I have a lot of empathy for people in transition. I have some personal experience through [a family member] with being homeless. I had an aunt who had a mental illness, and that took her in and out of the shelter. So, I'm very familiar with the challenges of not having a safe place to call home, and I think the efforts SELF makes to ensure that Philadelphia residents at least have a safe place somewhere are worthwhile.

When Dr. Dash came, I learned more about SELF. I was very aware of the organization, but I didn't necessarily fund it before. But her leadership and passion also inspire me. I want to see her effort to be successful. Then, when I attended the gala, just hearing what you all were doing for young people who are also in transition was equally inspiring. So, it just seemed like it definitely is a worthwhile cause; if I'm invested in this organization, I know it's helping people. I know the leader is a trustworthy leader, and I'm clear about the impact. So, it's easy to support, from my perspective, because I know so many good things are happening as a result of my donation.

By: Candy Hagamin, Dir. of Development

**Q**

**Where did your philanthropic heart come from?**

Well, I would say that goes back to my upbringing. I don't think you have to have a "deep pocket" to be of service to other people. I'm a woman of faith. I'm a Christian woman, and as long as I can remember, my grandmother, who is my greatest example, would always help other people. We always tithed in church and would always donate and support. I've benefited from people's generosity, as well. So, it doesn't matter how much you give, but I feel like if I have something, then I'm going to share it. I'm going to support it. That is something that is ingrained in me. You know, it's kind of the fee we pay for all the blessings that we have, it's to be a purpose. From my perspective, there's no point in having success if you can't help other people. So, that's what sparks my generosity. And like I said, it's not about having a lot of money because that's not the case; I'm a working-class person, it's not like I have unlimited resources, but I think it's important that if I have some [resources], I give from my overflow. And I am thankful for the overflow. Thankful that I can be supportive. I feel good about helping others. It gives me joy, gives me energy. So, I think for me, it's a part of my personality to help, and sometimes that help is financial.

**Q**

**What has been your career path in relation to service and impact?**

I'm currently the president of the Hamilton Family Charitable Trust. I've been there since 2022. I came to Philadelphia to go to the University of Pennsylvania. I am a social worker by training and have a master's degree in social work. I have a bachelor's degree in psychology. I started out working in welfare-to-work programs and employment training programs. My work in employment and training programs was mostly because I grew up on public assistance, so I always wanted my professional life to be in an area that would make a difference. So, I focused on women and women's needs, and then an opportunity came to work with youth programs when I worked at the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation. I also worked with young people at Children's Hospital. I have research and social service backgrounds. Once I started working with young people, I just kind of fell in love with the population, with the potential, and with all the ways I could be helpful, and that's what I've been doing for the last 20 years. It's really just fighting for young people to have the greatest opportunity available to them.

**Q**

**With other organizations doing work in homeless services, why do you choose to continue to support SELF?**

I think it is a couple of things. I know the passion Dr. Dash has, and I have experienced the team as well, through my interaction. So, I feel inspired by people I know care, and I know that the staff at SELF really care about the people they can serve and help. So, for me, leadership matters, absolutely, but also knowing that when you give your money to the organization, it's actually supporting those who need it the most, and it's working. It's about partnership and reputation, too. I think knowing that the people who work there care just as much as she does. It just makes you want to help, right? Makes you want to help them be successful.

Q

**If you were to share your giving experience with other foundations, corporations, and organizations as potential supporters, and encourage them to support SELF, what would you say?**

I would say that if you are looking to make the greatest impact possible, if you are looking to partner with an organization whose results speak for themselves, if you're looking to connect with the most needy, Philadelphia residents, then SELF is a no-brainer guarantee organization and your money will go so much further because it's adding to what is an already great impact. So, I think if my peers are looking for greater impact, I would highly recommend they consider a partnership with SELF, because the impact is consistent. I think the organization really prioritizes being there for people at some of the most challenging times. And so, I think that if that's what you're looking for, if you're looking to be of the greatest service, then it makes sense. It's an easy win-win situation. And also, if you're looking for an organization that's responsible and does as much as they can with the resources they have, then I think SELF is their prime candidate for that. [SELF is] just very responsible in your relationship with and stewardship of your partners, but also of the people you serve. Treating them, treating humans, with dignity is never going to be a cause that is underrated. It's always going to be a cause that's worse investing in, and I think my peers are often looking for those kinds of impacts and want to know about organizations that are doing the very best they can.

Q

**FULL** **What would you say to a potential supporter on an individual level, who may feel that you need to have “deep pockets” to be philanthropic?**

I would say that there are many things that compete for your resources, and money is one type of resource. But also your time, being an ambassador and a champion is a resource. I would definitely encourage someone who maybe doesn't have “deep pockets” or doesn't even know where to begin to just start. There's always something you can do and offer what you can, and don't feel like the smallest effort is not impactful. So, if you can come in and do mailers, post on your social media, or organize your friends to do a blanket drive, all of those things add up. It's about starting, and you never know, once you get into a relationship, you figure out so much more about how to be observant. I think people will be very surprised that they probably have a way to help, and it may not be as taxing or as costly as they might think. But just start. If you can only give \$5, that \$5 matters. I think sometimes people think it has to be big dollars, but change happens; so, don't despise small beginnings. Change happens when you take action. It doesn't have to be big action. It can be a small action, but taking action is critical to leading to change. My hope for SELF is that they continue being there for people who need them. There is a lot of pressure, and a lot of challenges, and I know that the work itself is not getting any easier. I understand that, but I would hope SELF continues to just be there for people who need it the most and to keep doing what you're doing because it is transformative.