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By [Roxane Gay](#), *Work Friend*

***“I work on a small team within a large city’s government. We are doing work around equity, and one of the first things is to hold speaker events to educate ourselves.***

***“Because it’s government, we don’t have a budget for this. Our budget is allocated well in advance and there’s nothing we can shuffle around. One of the members of the organizing sub-team said we should ask employees who attend these events to contribute personally to pay speakers. I’m deeply uncomfortable with asking people to pay for things associated with work. Am I wrong to object?”***

**— Anonymous**

“Kudos to your team for their willingness to do the work of expanding and improving their thinking and efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion. Public speaking is labor that deserves to be compensated, but it is absolutely unacceptable that your team members should be spending their own money on this. You are not at all wrong to object. It is ridiculous that the most feasible solution here is for your staff members to assume their employer’s financial obligations. I suppose that’s a reflection of how governments all over this country, including the federal government, are shirking their responsibilities and hoping — if they care at all — that right-minded individuals will take up the slack.

“I do not believe there is nothing in the budget that can be shuffled; I believe there is nothing your organization is *willing* to shuffle. When an organization truly wants to find money for something they prioritize, they find the money. If they aren’t going to treat work around equity as a priority, you and your fellow employees don’t need to pay the bill. There are other things you can do — reading groups, discussions and the like. But mostly, you need to hold your management accountable. This is their responsibility, not yours.”

**Read the original [here](#).**

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