THE CASE FOR FUNDING BLACK-LED SOCIAL CHANGE



THE BLACK SOCIAL CHANGE FUNDERS NETWORK

A PROJECT OF ABFE: A PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES & THE HILL-SNOWDON FOUNDATION

"THE WAY TO RIGHT WRONGS IS TO TURN THE LIGHT OF TRUTH UPON THEM."

IDA B. WELLS

The Case for Funding Black-led Social Change

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WORDS MATTER: A GLOSSARY

This glossary aims to bring greater access and meaning to the language used in the case statement.

anti-Black (structural) racism — Term used to specifically describe the unique discrimination, violence and harms imposed on and impacting Black people specifically. (See structural racism definition below for fuller description.)

Black people/Blackness — Black people are not monolithic and represent a broad and diverse spectrum of physiological, geographical, cultural and political traits and histories. We define Black and Blackness (the state of being Black) in overlapping ways: (1) the mix of physiological, geographical and cultural traits that defines Black people as people of African descent, many of whom were moved to specific regions in the world through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (including continental Africans, African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Latinos and people of mixed ancestry who identify as being Black; (2) Black or Blackness is a political and historical reality of shared colonization and oppression at the hands of Europeans and Anglo-Americans and the resistance to this subjugation. Blackness is a political construct of survival and resistance against racialized oppression.

Black-led social change — Black-led social change organizations are those with predominantly Black board and executive leadership, staff leadership and constituents — if relevant — and whose primary organizational purpose is to work to build the political, economic and/or social power of the Black community. So, "Black-led" is about the demographic makeup and racial identity of the leadership as well as a political purpose of building power to ensure that the Black community thrives.

capitalism/exploitative capitalism — An economic system in which products are produced and distributed for profit using privately owned capital goods and wage labor. Exploitative capitalism reflects a particular ideology that celebrates individual wealth and accumulation at the lowest cost to the investor, with little regard for the societal costs and exploitation of people. Some would argue that capitalism by its nature is exploitative, but for our purposes, we make the distinction.

equity — A condition or circumstance of situational fairness, achieved by applying differential resources to unequal needs. It can be achieved when we make "targeted universalism" actionable. For universally good outcomes, use targeted strategies to get there because people are situated differently.

infrastructure (**social change**) — The interconnected web of organizational structures, capacities and functions necessary to effect lasting and meaningful progressive change in society. We use infrastructure for Black-led social change and infrastructure for Black social, institutional and political power interchangeably.

institutional power — The structural capacity necessary to move forward an agenda for social change, in a strategic and coordinated fashion and over time. Institutional power refers to the strength, stability, breadth, depth and connectedness of the ecosystem of organizations and institutions that are engaged in moving forward the agenda for change.

institutional racism — Refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for groups classified as people of color.ⁱⁱⁱ

multi-constituency movement — A cross-racial, -gender, -class, -sexual orientation, -religion, -nationality, -ability movement focused on securing racial, gender, economic and social equity.

multi-racial alliance building — Shorthand for a complex and diverse set of practices for building connections across racial, ethnic, cultural and national boundaries to achieve social change.

patriarchy — A form of social stratification and power-relationships in society that favors men, mainly white men, grants them more rights and privileges over women, and oppresses women's social, political, financial, sexual and human rights. It has a connection with a social economic system such as capitalism.^{iv}

political power — The ability to influence and change how systems operate (e.g., changing policy and practice). Political power refers to the ability to win concrete changes in laws, institutional policy and practice, and ultimately the social and economic conditions of the Black community.

race — A social/political construct used to confer white privilege and social control, and which is not an actual genetic reality.

racism — A system of structuring opportunities and assigning value based on a social interpretation of how we look, i.e., our race.

racial equity — The condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares in society. Racial equity is more than the establishment of fair treatment, and fundamentally requires that past inequities be resolved so that the current conditions, and not just the treatment of people, cannot be predicted by race.

racial justice — The systematic fair treatment of people of all races through the proactive elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race.

social power — The ability to influence and shape the way people think about issues and themselves, and to inspire people to action.

structural racism — The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal — that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society, including its history, culture, politics, economics and entire social fabric. We see anti-Black structural racism as the foundational architecture for the strategies, tactics, tools and cultural worldviews that propagate and maintain racial oppression, repression and exclusion in the U.S. and the world.

white privilege — Having something of value that is denied to non-whites simply because of the group they belong to, rather than because of anything they've done or failed to do.

white superiority — The belief in the inherent racial superiority of the white "race." White superiority is an ideology that helps achieve the goal of white supremacy.

white supremacy — A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege. Vi

i https://policy.m4bl.org/glossary/

ii https://policy.m4bl.org/glossary/

iii https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

iv http://agendatobuildblackfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/BYP_AgendaBlackFutures_booklet_web.pdf

v https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

vi Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, Sharon Martinas (Fourth Revision), 1995.

"Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Until we reckon with our compounding moral debts, America will never be whole."

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations" 1

INTRODUCTION

The country has long resisted grappling with its history of slavery and legacy of anti-Black racism, and with the impact they've had on the Black community. Today, the nation has an important opportunity to address this legacy. Philanthropy can play a pivotal role by reversing its under-investment in Black-led social change.

The history of Black-led movements is rife with social justice victories, great and small. This has contributed to advances for Black communities and landmark strides for our entire society. Black social change leaders and Black-led institutions have played vital roles in almost every major movement in this country, from the abolition of slavery through today.

Recently, under the banner Black Lives Matter, new social consciousness and mass action have exposed the pernicious impact of anti-Black racism on the Black community, sparking a renewed public discourse on racial equity and justice in the United States.

Within philanthropy there is a surge of interest in racial equity, accompanied by new support for

Black-led organizing and social change organizations. This encouraging uptick runs counter to a long pattern of philanthropic neglect and under-investment in the infrastructure of Black institutions.

Nonetheless, questions abound. Is this new philanthropic interest in racial equity episodic? And will it translate into long-term and significant support for Black-led social change organizations, in order to make Black communities matter and thrive?

More than a polemic in trying times, these are the questions posed by the Black Social Change Funders Network (BSCFN), a partnership forged by ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities and the Hill-Snowdon Foundation.

We are certain that systemic and progressive change can only be achieved with a robust and strong infrastructure for Black-led social change. The network's primary goal is to help vitalize and strengthen the infrastructure for Black-led social change by advocating for much greater philanthropic investment.

The BSCFN presents *The Case for Funding Black-Led Social Change* as a charge to inspire sustained commitment to strengthen and expand the infrastructure for Black-led social, institutional and political power in the U.S.

Our case addresses three interwoven questions:

- Why focus on anti-Black racism?
- Why is it necessary to invest in Black-led social change?
- What should philanthropy do?

A dynamic and lasting infrastructure for Black social, institutional and political power is in the best interests of transformative social change. It is essential for dismantling structural racism and charting a course for an equitable, just and sustainable nation.

WHY FOCUS ON ANTI-BLACK RACISM?

It is important to focus on anti-Black racism because it is the root cause for the racial inequity we see today. We cannot achieve true racial and social equity for all people without dismantling white supremacy and anti-Black racism.

Over the past 30 years, a host of social narratives have been used to justify or minimize anti-Black racism, including tropes like post-racialism, color blindness, reverse racism, etc. The purpose of advancing these false narratives was to delegitimize the ongoing need for Black social change in the hearts and minds of the public; to justify the dismantling of civil rights protections; and to secure and strengthen the system of white social, political and economic control, or white supremacy. Adopting an unapologetic and persistent focus on anti-Black racism is an essential strategy in addressing white supremacy.

In the 1600s, European political leaders in the new Virginia colony devised the concept of the "white race" to not only justify enslavement of African people but also maintain control of lower-class Europeans. Legal rights and distinctions were imposed to create white skin privilege. Poor and working-class white people became more exploitable, duped by a myth of white superiority to scapegoat people of color and mask the culpability of ruling white elites.

Thus "white" supremacy and anti-Black racism began, and persist today. The purpose of anti-Black racism is to ensure control and privilege for white male elites. Bigotry, racial hatred, fear and the belief in white superiority are just strategies used to help maintain this control.

Anti-Black racism is manifested in the current social, economic and political marginalization of Black people in society, such as the lack of opportunities, lower socioeconomic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

Black people encompass the various cultures, locales and histories of people of African descent.

Anti-Black racism is the foundational architecture for the strategies, tactics, tools and cultural worldviews that propagate and maintain racial oppression, repression and exclusion in the U.S. and the world.

While all people of color suffer some form of racism in American society, it is a difference in kind, not in substance, from anti-Black racism. Embracing a shared commitment to dismantling anti-Black racism will strike at the heart of all forms of racism in this country.

Additionally, without an exceedingly explicit and persistent focus on dismantling anti-Black racism, the American social, political and economic system will always reinforce a white racial hierarchy, as it was originally intended to do. Finally, a focus on anti-Black racism and white supremacy is critical to all struggles for justice and equity.

SAVAGE INEQUITIES

The interlocking systems of white supremacy, patriarchy and exploitative capitalism are the root causes of most of the inequities that exist in this country and much of the world. These systems work to create a reality of structural violence and systematic deprivations of all Black people.

Despite historic civil rights laws 50 years ago, Blacks fare worse than whites and, in many instances, other people of color on almost every indicator of well-being. While there has been progress over time, some gaps are persistent and worsening.²

- In the area of **health**, Black children are two times more likely to die as infants or suffer from asthma than white children. Black women are two times more likely to die of cervical cancer, and Black men are two times more likely to die of prostate cancer than their white counterparts.³
- In education, Black students are suspended and expelled at three times the rate of white students. They make up 16 percent of school enrollment, but account for 32 percent of students who receive in-school suspensions, 42 percent of students who receive multiple out-of-school suspensions, and 34 percent of students who are expelled.⁴ Black girls are suspended at six times the rate of white girls.⁵

- In the area of wealth and poverty, white homeownership rates have always exceeded rates of Black homeownership. Compounding the racial wealth divide, the recent economic recession decimated gains in Black wealth, and Black communities are the least likely to recover. 6 Census Bureau data for 2015 indicate 24.1 percent of Blacks live in poverty, compared to 9.1 percent of whites. One of every three Black children, 32.9 percent, live in poverty, compared to 12.1 percent of white children.
- In **criminal justice** nationally, Blacks are incarcerated at a rate of 1,408 per 100,000, while whites are incarcerated at a rate of 275 per 100,000 resulting in a Black incarceration rate that is 5.1 times that of whites.⁷ One in every 15 Black men, compared to one in every 106 white men, is incarcerated. One in every 18 Black women, compared to one in every 111 white women, is incarcerated.⁸

WHY INVEST IN BLACK-LED SOCIAL CHANGE?

It is important for philanthropy to invest in strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led social change to reverse its pattern of under-investment, so that the Black community can thrive and the broader progressive community can achieve its most ambitious goals.

We define Black-led social change organizations as those with predominantly Black boards, executive leadership, staff leadership and constituents. The primary purpose of these groups is to build political, economic and social power in order to secure freedom and equity for the Black community.

FOUNDATION REDLINING

Bias against Black-led organizations has fed a false narrative about their effectiveness and worthiness for investment. "Foundation redlining" of Black-led organizations⁹ — fueled by explicit and implicit bias — has been an unspoken reality for decades. Similar to other instances of racial exclusion, Black-led organizations are often met with greater skepticism and scrutiny than their white counterparts when applying for funding. This can even happen in racial justice grantmaking programs, where the need for immigrant-led groups is assumed but the need for Black-led groups is sometimes questioned.

Available data suggests that foundation funding targeted specifically at Black communities declined during the late 1990s and through 2006. This pattern of neglect is likely worse for Black-led social change organizations, given that organizing and advocacy account for a relatively meager amount of overall giving, thus limiting institutional power to make Black communities thrive.

The under-investment and neglect has not been absolute; there are several foundations that have supported Black-led social change organizations, particularly in the last two years with the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement. This is an encouraging development, and the Black Social Change Funders Network aims to build on this work to ensure Black-led groups that work outside of the issues of criminal justice and organizing strategies receive necessary support.

However, a fair portion of the new funding granted to Black-led social change groups comes from short-term or discretionary pools. A challenge will be to see whether funds can be moved into regular funding pools to institutionalize support for Black-led social change within foundations.

"WE ALL GET FREE"

Self-determination is an abiding and essential social justice principle, as expressed in the maxim that those most affected by an issue must be at the forefront of resolving that issue. The call for strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led social change is fundamentally a call for philanthropy to fully actualize this most basic principle of social justice, racial equity and human rights.

Building a powerful Black-led infrastructure for social change will best ensure the changes necessary to create thriving Black communities and to dismantle anti-Black structural racism. We argue that regardless of issue focus, all foundations committed to equity, justice and fairness should have an explicit focus on supporting Black-led social change to achieve their goals.

This infrastructure would not only benefit Black communities, but the nation as a whole. A strong infrastructure for Black institutional and political power is the cornerstone of an effective and broad multi-constituency movement for deep and lasting social change in this country. As history has demonstrated, when the Black community increases its capacity and power to dismantle anti-Black racism and white supremacy, it helps ensure a more equitable future for everyone.

This is what is meant when people say, "When Black folks get free, we all get free!" Free to be our true and full selves. Free to strive together as a broader human family that maximizes the talents of all for the good of all.

"Contained in the struggle between black liberation and white supremacy is almost every issue that concerns us currently."

Quinn Norton, "The White Problem" 11

Building multi-racial alliances and Black-led social change organizations is not an either/or proposition.

Multi-racial alliance building should not be done at the expense of building Black-led infrastructure for social change. We embrace building multi-racial alliances as an important organizing principle for building power for communities that suffer similar political exclusion due to structural racism.

However, we oppose the loss of political distinctiveness from the use of terms like "people of color" and also the zero-sum approach of multi-racial alliances that too often exclude Black-led groups.

A true approach to multi-racialism would mean a focus on racial equity and require a differentiated analysis of the needs of Black, Latino, Asian and Native people, as well as a tailored investment strategy that builds the capacity and power of each of these groups to secure equitable outcomes.

WHAT SHOULD PHILANTHROPY DO?

to significantly increase its investment in strengthening the infrastructure for resources directed toward Black-led social change. The following section offers the BSCFN's core areas for infrastructure investment, starting position on a resource goal as a target for increased investment, and key considerations to guide grantmaking related to Black-led social change.

WHAT TO FUND

The BSCFN recommends that philanthropy, both foundations and donors, prioritize sustained, long-term investments in Black-led infrastructure in seven key areas:

- Civic Engagement & Political Power.
 Building the political power of the Black community is a sorely needed and central capacity to create thriving Black communities.
 This includes strengthening and/or building Black-led C3 and C4 organizations locally and nationally. It is also important to fund strategies for litigation and defense against legal threats and attacks.
- Community Organizing & People Power.
 A well-organized Black community will fuel change in this country. A significant increase for "pre-existing" and "new guard" Black community organizing groups and networks is essential.
- Policy Advocacy & System Reform. Greater capacity is needed to support legislative advocacy to influence, develop and disseminate policy and model legislation, and to assess their impact on the Black community. In addition, it is important to fund multi-issue work that allows

intersectional approaches to address the complexity of anti-Black racism.

• Economic Development & Economic Power.

Building wealth is a major strategy toward better opportunities for the Black community. As such, it is important to strengthen and connect leaders and organizations to expand Black businesses and increase their access to credit and operating capital (through CDFIs, cooperatives, etc.).

- Research & Intellectual Power. To facilitate change in the Black community, stronger connections between Black researchers and research organizations are needed to carry out work relevant to our experiences and needs. Support could include partnerships between HBCUs, endowed chairs and existing or newly created Black think tanks, etc.
- Communications Narrative & Social Power.

Change for the community is intrinsically tied to the "narratives" about who Black people are. It is important to strengthen media and strategic communications to advance accurate portrayals and images of Black realities. This includes support for Black journalists, social media activism and the use of the arts to shape accurate Black narratives.

• Leadership Development & Strategic Convenings. The most fundamental part of the infrastructure for Black-led social change is skilled and supported Black social change leaders. Philanthropy must invest in supporting and expanding the leadership pipeline of Black social change leaders across a wide spectrum of issues and sectors. This can be done through supporting skills building

trainings, fellowships and other leadership development strategies. Also critical are regular convening opportunities for Black social change leaders to build relationships, cultivate strategic partnerships, and develop collective action plans and visions for Black social change. This should be a standard part of the infrastructure that philanthropy supports as a matter of routine.

In addition to these key areas, the BSCFN suggests that grantmakers prioritize an explicit focus on the U.S. South and Midwest as key areas to build Black-led infrastructure. These regions have significant Black populations and little philanthropic capacity.

Strong consideration must also be given to those most vulnerable in our community — namely, organizations led by Black women (responsibly broadening the recent investments in Black men and boys), youth, LGBTQI and immigrant leaders.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Our call raises the question: *How much is needed?* Quantifying an amount that would enable Blackled organizations to address the accumulated impact of anti-Black racism over centuries is almost impossible.

However, enduring transformational approaches to funding and other resources are a critical first step. The goal is to focus on achieving racial equity and thriving Black communities as the benchmarks for the level and nature of investment, evaluation of outcomes and ultimate success. Available data indicate that less than 2 percent of funding by the nation's largest foundations is specifically targeted to the Black community.¹²

During the next five years, BSCFN calls for at least a 25 percent increase in giving by the nation's largest foundations to the Black community, with a particular emphasis on strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led social change.

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On a more fundamental level, we're calling for a sustained philanthropic commitment of expanded financial resources, coupled with investments in human, social, political and moral capital.

Readiness Factors and Building Blocks for Investing in Black-Led Infrastructure

In order to maximize foundation investments in the areas described above, there are steps that donors and philanthropy-serving organizations (PSO) can take immediately. These include:

 Map the current infrastructure for Blackled social change. To further understand the current Black-led infrastructure and its capacity, the BSCFN is calling on colleagues in the field to carry out scans by place and issue area. As it relates to place, select PSOs like Regional Blacks in Philanthropy (BIP) groups and regional associations as well as community foundations can lead these efforts to further clarify what donors are investing in Black-led social change, the number of groups, (relative) level of investment and capacity-building needs. As it relates to topic, national issue-based PSOs (e.g., Grantmakers in Health, Grantmakers in Education, etc.) can carry out similar scans.

 Increase awareness. Exposure to the lived experiences of Black people, informed by research and training, will shape philanthropy's commitment and approach to Black-led social change organizations. Additionally, supporting narrative change work for Black communities is crucial. It is important to prioritize Black-led researchers and institutions to do this work for a grounded perspective and to increase the capacity of these Black-led groups.

• Develop racial equity and diversity plans.

Every foundation should be equipped with a racial equity plan to move funds toward Black-led social change and to ameliorate the impacts of anti-Black racism. The plan should exact a range of strategies and tactics — including racial equity training for foundation boards and staff, and diversity and inclusion for Black people within foundation executive leadership and program staff as well as vendors and professional services.

As it relates to equity in grantmaking, foundations should review their portfolios to assess the racial diversity of the leadership of their grantees, with a particular eye toward Black-led organizations. Additionally, foundations should assess whether there is any mismatch between the leadership of their grantees and the constituents they

serve (e.g., white-led organizations serving predominantly Black constituents). Foundations should take appropriate corrective measures if they find evidence of racial inequity in their grantmaking portfolios. We further encourage foundations to share their findings with the field to provide much needed data on funding patterns for Black-led social change organizations.

CONCLUSION

confluence of circumstances has created our cause and our call for action. Persistent inequities faced by the Black community, leadership by existing and new Black-led social change groups, and the associated backlash require concerted action to increase and leverage resources to strengthen infrastructure for change in our community.

The results of the 2016 election cycle further give cause and reason for building Black institutional and political power. A more powerful Black community working alongside other communities will be necessary to fend off these current threats

and, more important, to fight to make this country live up to its founding principles of justice and equal opportunity for all. Black-led social change organizations that employ a strategic, expansive approach to dismantling anti-Black racism and white supremacy are uniquely situated to lead and be effective in achieving this goal. Supporting Black-led social change in pursuit of racial equity is more than an ask from nonprofits to donors. It is a philanthropic responsibility and a moral imperative.

This is our call. Now is the time.

ENDNOTES

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³ Families USA, "African American Health Disparities Compared to Non-Hispanic Whites" (infographic), April 2014, http://familiesusa.org/product/african-american-health-disparities-compared-to-non-hispanic-whites.

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¹⁰ There is evidence that grantmaking for people of color has declined as a proportion of grants awarded by the largest 1000 foundations. For Blacks, the proportional decrease has been more significant: 3.8 percent of these grants went to African Americans in 1998, but only 1.9 percent in 2005 and 1.5 percent in 2006. Source: Rick Cohen, "Dimensions of Racial Equity in Foundation Grantmaking," (Community Service Society, May 2009).

¹¹ Quinn Norton, "The White Problem (Part One of a Series on Whiteness)," Medium.com, October 3, 2014, https://medium.com/message/whiteness-3ead03700322#.has0fda8r.

¹² Cohen, "Dimensions of Racial Equity in Foundation Grantmaking."

APPENDIX

SAVAGE INEQUITIES: SUPPORTING DATA

The data below illustrate wide disparities in black social, economic and political conditions.

Education Black Facts: www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ABFE-Education.pdf

Employment and Workforce Development Black Facts: www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ABFE-Employment-and-Workforce.pdf

Criminal Justice Black Facts: www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ABFE-Criminal-Justice.pdf

Wealth and Asset Building Black Facts: www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ABFE-Wealth-and-Asset-Building.pdf

Health and Wellness Black Facts: www.abfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ABFE-Health-and-Wellness.pdf

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