



ABFE

A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities



Guiding a Giving Response to Anti-Black Injustice

A collaboration of ABFE and The Bridgespan Group

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ABFE

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Dear Colleagues:

America is in the throes of managing several pandemics: a health crisis, an economic crisis, and the long-standing crisis of anti-Black racism. The last of the three—anti-Black racism—is the reason why people of African descent in this country (African Americans, continental Africans, Afro-Latinos, and mixed-race people who identify as Black), are disproportionately bearing the brunt of these challenges. This is an extremely difficult time for our country with so many Black businesses, communities, workers, families, and children in danger. Instability in Black communities means troubled times for the country as a whole, and philanthropy has stepped up to confront these issues. We believe the sector can and should do more.

We are pleased to work with The Bridgespan Group to share this guidance with funders on addressing anti-Black racism. It contains helpful rubrics, like our *Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities* framework, to help funders think about investing to build power in Black communities. At ABFE, we believe a strong infrastructure for Black social change is an essential element to eliminating anti-Black racism and securing a progressive agenda for the country. However, our report [Redlining by Another Name: What the Data Says to Move from Rhetoric to Action](#), paints an abysmal picture of philanthropy's practices in funding Black-led groups. We are making the case for support by philanthropy to reverse the pattern of underinvestment in Black-led organizations.

It is important to distinguish what we mean by “Black-led” for funders and donors. At ABFE, we define Black-led organizations as groups with primarily a Black board, executive leadership, staff, and constituency. ABFE is an example of this. Black-led *social change* organizations are those that meet this definition and aim to build power in Black communities. Many of the organizations included in this report represent these types of Black-led organizations and Black-led social change organizations, while all have Black senior leadership. We urge donors to do their own diligence to better understand the leadership dynamics of individual organizations.

“Nothing about us, without us” is a saying used frequently by Black-led organizations in the field on matters related to our community. Taking the lead from organizations with deep experience and connections to constituencies of color and racial justice (e.g., [ABFE](#), [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity](#), [Hispanics in Philanthropy](#), [Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy](#), [Native Americans in Philanthropy](#), etc.) must be the way that the philanthropic sector moves forward in this time of racial reckoning. Funders must build direct relationships with people of color-led groups. We look forward to a new way of working together on issues facing our community and country.

Susan Taylor Batten
President and CEO
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Dear Colleagues:

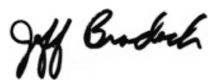
The nation is still convulsing over the recent police killings of Black individuals, nationwide protests, and the racial inequities of COVID-19's public health and economic impacts over these past months. The philanthropic community continues to reach out to The Bridgespan Group for perspectives and recommendations on how its giving can sustain the fight against anti-Black racism in the United States.

As a social impact advisor whose vision is societies characterized by equity and justice, Bridgespan strongly advocates for increased investments in racial justice and in Black leaders. We hope the [current surge of contributions](#) is sustained over the long years of systems and culture change work ahead, and [commit ourselves to supporting such investment through our advisory work](#).

The circumstances creating this moment are the manifestation of deeply entrenched systemic racism and oppression of Black people (as well as Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian and Pacific Islander peoples) in the United States. The social sector similarly has demonstrated long patterns of inequitable resource distribution. As the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) notes, over the past 15 years annual foundation grantmaking focused on reaching people of color in the United States has [ranged between 9-12 percent](#) of domestic giving. Bridgespan's recent research in collaboration with Echoing Green found that [investment in Black social entrepreneurs is substantially lower](#) than in white-led social enterprises.

At Bridgespan, we sit at the intersection of the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, and are proud of our role in advising leaders both funding and driving social change. Over our 20 years of advising and research, we have developed perspectives on funding practices that lead to more equitable giving, such as [paying what it takes](#), [closing the racial equity funding gap](#), and [centering social mobility](#). We have an obligation—and an opportunity—to influence philanthropic investments, and welcome the chance to be in conversation with any funders or field leaders whom we can support to unlock substantial new sums in pursuit of racial justice.

And yet, while we are heartened by the recent inquiries for our advisory, we recognize that there are many leaders in philanthropy and in Black-led social change who have been advancing this work for decades. Often in partnership with racial justice movement leaders, they've pushed philanthropy to tackle structural racism and contributed to mainstreaming discussions on—and commitments to—racial justice, including our own. We are honored to co-author this memo with [ABFE](#), to recognize leading organizations such as the [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity](#), and commit to amplifying existing deep expertise as we grow our work on this topic.



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Principles When Investing in Black-led Social Change and Racial Justice Work

In developing these principles, we have been guided by the recommendations of other leaders in racial justice philanthropy and Black movement leaders. See, for example, guidance from [Borealis Philanthropy](#), the [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity](#), [Third Wave Fund](#), and [Justice Funders](#).

Racial inequities are the result of [structural racism that is embedded in our historical, political, cultural, social, and economic systems and institutions](#). The effects compound and produce predictable and vastly adverse outcomes for Black people and other communities of color in the United States in areas such as health, wealth, career, education, infrastructure, and civic participation. Achieving population-level improvements in these areas of social well-being—the stated goals of many philanthropists—will require us to undo systems of racial injustice in the United States.

ABFE and The Bridgespan Group offer here a set of six principles, greatly informed by Black movement leaders and funders of Black-led social change, which can guide funders seeking to support racial justice and thriving Black lives in the United States.

In response to racial injustice in the United States, GIVE:

... to Black-led organizations

... with major new money

... in ways that shift power

... without strings or red tape

... locally as well as nationally

...for years to come.

- **Give to Black-led organizations:** [The data are damning](#) on philanthropy’s underinvestment in non-white leaders and in Black leaders specifically. As Crystal Hayling, executive director of the [Libra Foundation](#), notes, “[Black leaders uniquely understand the pain their community is experiencing, what the needs are, and how to address them.](#)” Funding Black leaders and communities with the lived experience of racial oppression is the most direct path to [ensuring solutions will truly address the challenges](#) experienced. Further, committing to funding Black-led racial justice work is a form of power redistribution that upholds principles of self-determination, and ensures that funding does not further compound inequities.
- **Give major new money:** [The nonprofit sector is consistently starved](#) for philanthropic investment in ordinary times, but this is an extraordinary moment. While the economic downturn may have upended funders’ balance sheets, the financial impact has been existential for nonprofits that rely on philanthropy for assistance. So funders that are ready to make a significant new investment in Black-led social change work are finding it more compelling to deploy additional funds than to simply shift their giving portfolios. (One potential exception could be thoughtfully and responsibly moving away from priorities or organizations that are misaligned with racial justice priorities.)

Dozens of institutional and individual donors are calling for a [mandatory increase in endowment pay-out rates](#) in light of the compounding crises of 2020, and [several national foundations are using debt vehicles](#) to increase funding for the next few years (partly, but not exclusively, for racial justice issues). They’re challenging self-imposed spending limits because of the dire near-term

circumstances, and doubling down on racial justice, inspired by their COVID-19 experiences of [dramatically loosening the purse-strings](#).

- **Give in ways that shift power:** We have used “racial justice” throughout this memo intentionally, with the understanding that eliminating anti-Black racism and systemic oppression requires centering justice, rather than equity. Racial justice explicitly prioritizes building the power of those most impacted, and seeks transformation of systems where needed (see the table below, excerpted from [Grantmaking with a Racial Justice Lens: A Practical Guide](#)) published by the [Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity](#).

From Racial Equity to Racial Justice	
Important features of a <i>racial equity</i> lens:	Additional features of a <i>racial justice</i> lens:
Analyzes data and information about race and ethnicity	Understands and acknowledges racial history
Understands disparities and the reasons they exist	Creates a shared affirmative vision of a fair and inclusive society
Looks at structural root causes of problems	Focuses explicitly on building civic, cultural, and political power by those most impacted
Names race explicitly when talking about problems and solutions	Emphasizes transformative solutions that impact multiple systems
Source: Rinku Sen and Lori Villarosa, <i>Grantmaking with a Racial Justice Lens: A Practical Guide</i> , Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, 2019.	

Philanthropy is a system that needs to be transformed to be more responsive and accountable to communities most directly impacted by injustice. Systemic racism and white supremacy have shaped the conditions surrounding wealth generation in the United States, and governed who has been able to accumulate significant assets, and who has not. Because philanthropy is the process by which private wealth is allocated to advance social goals, philanthropy must also grapple with how racism has shaped the ways that wealth has been created and [the ways that wealth is put to use](#) today, and seek to redress those patterns.

One way to contribute to this transformation is to give in ways that de-center funders and re-center the most marginalized communities. Consider these approaches:

- Fund work that is explicitly named as racial justice work, focused on building power and transforming systems, even if this may be language you yourself have not used previously.
- Fund entities that transfer decisions to movement leaders and community members. As just two examples, contributions to [Movement for Black Lives](#) support an ecosystem of over 150 organizations with a collective resource allocation approach based on shared priorities and assessment; the [Let Us Breathe Fund](#) at North Star Fund, which funds Black-led organizing in New York, has a grantmaking committee of community activists that makes grant decisions.

- Fund donor intermediaries who have been funding this work at the grassroots level for years, and whose team members have the expertise and trusted relationships that will ensure the resources support proximate leaders and organizations. (As just two examples, the [Black-Led Movement Fund](#) at Borealis Philanthropy supports a range of grassroots Black-led organizations; the [Groundswell Fund](#) supports women of color-led organizations working on reproductive and social justice.)
- **Give without strings or red tape:** Nonprofit organizations demonstrated how nimble they can be by navigating through the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout as well as pivoting to lead in this period of national mobilization for racial justice. Nonprofits that are on the frontlines of social change often work at the [intersection of related issues](#) and [must be responsive to shifts in context, opportunity, and stakeholders](#). To do that, they need unrestricted dollars.

Years of Bridgespan research on nonprofit funding flows, corroborated by [philanthropic and nonprofit leaders](#), has validated that nonprofits deserve and need the most flexible dollars possible. In other words, they need unrestricted grants (also known as general operating support). Many foundations relaxed their application, reporting, and outcome measurement obligations [in response to COVID-19](#). Why shouldn't they allow that same flexibility across their broader portfolio, including racial justice-specific giving, and even for new grantees? Some of that [new giving might not fit cleanly in current issue silos](#) or portfolio definitions—and that's okay.

- **Give locally as well as nationally:** While there are many impressive and relatively prominent national organizations worthy of support, consider giving equally large gifts to Black leaders and organizations in your backyard, regardless of their scale or track record. There have been protests against police brutality [in all 50 states, in over 2,500 locations to date](#). And there is important work to be done combating racism at the state, county, and municipal levels, such as in police forces, school districts, municipal budgets, local health systems, and the like. Well-supported local organizers can sustain local pressure for change.
- **Give for years and years to come:** In ABFE's 2017 report [The Case For Funding Black-Led Social Change](#), we note that "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."

[Bridgespan's own research on philanthropy that has led to lasting change](#) highlighted that nearly 90 percent of those successes spanned more than 20 years—with a median of approximately 45 years. Beyond immediate response giving, what is needed is [significant adjustments to funding portfolios and practices](#) to provide continuity of funding for racial justice for years to come. To make this more than a moment, [giving priorities, giving practices](#), staff, and board composition may need to adjust to position for sustained commitments.

Endowments, for those who have them, are another manifestation of funders' long-term commitments. They should be invested in ways that align with a foundation's racial justice priorities, and might even enable more ambitious funding goals.

The present moment, with its shocks and great sadness, also contains cause for hope. For committed funders, this can be the beginning or the deepening of work to align priorities, partners, and practices

toward racial justice. So much of what we are collectively doing would have been considered impossible, improbable, or impolitic only months ago—this is no less true for the philanthropic sector.

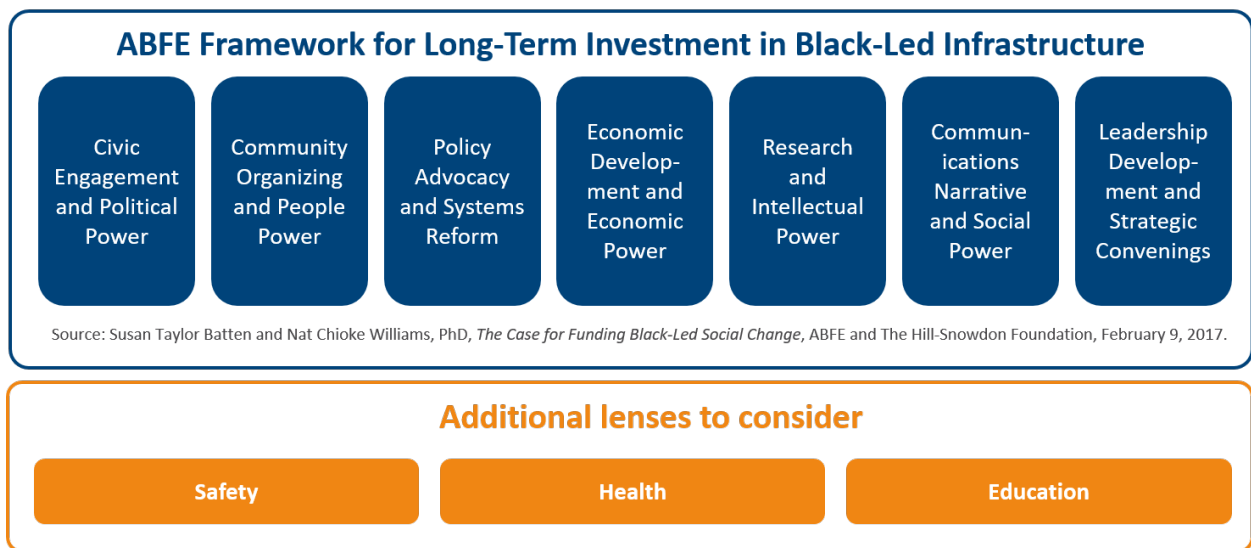
The bravery and leadership of Black and allied racial justice leaders and the communities they have mobilized nationwide—together with the long leadership of long-time advocates in philanthropy—have already inspired new philanthropic investments and moved the set point of many funders. Investing in and building relationships with these leaders has the potential to drive deep and transformative societal changes. If thoughtfully and humbly managed, these new investments and relationships can support our individual and institutional learning journeys as well.

We at ABFE and The Bridgespan Group are eager to work alongside funders who see equity and justice as their work. There are [others in philanthropy making this journey](#) alongside you, and [resources](#) that can guide your work.

A View of the Black-Led and Black-Centered US Racial Justice Ecosystem

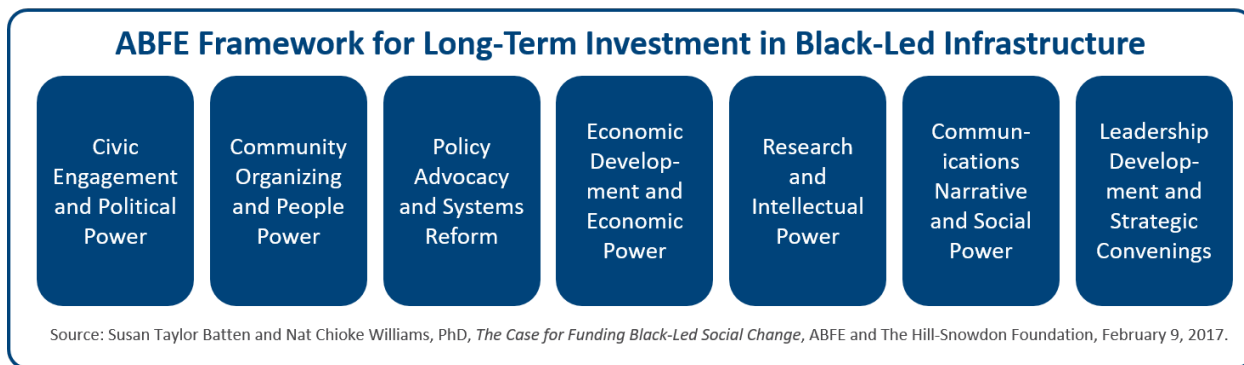
There is a wide range of ways that organizations and leaders are advancing racial justice priorities. Systemic racism is a structural problem deeply embedded in all aspects of public and private life; accordingly there are many necessary approaches to addressing different aspects of the issue.

In order to orient funders and help them familiarize themselves with opportunities to learn and invest, ABFE developed a framework for Long-Term Investment in Black-Led Infrastructure—the social, institutional, and political structures needed to effect lasting and meaningful progressive change in society. This memo supplements the framework with three broad issue areas—safety, health, and education—that, while not comprehensive, may be useful entry points for funders committed to these issues.



This memo focuses on the Black-led racial justice ecosystem. As a result, this does not fully reflect the racial justice priorities and work of the Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It also focuses primarily on content and exemplar organizations relevant for a philanthropic audience. For example, it only touches lightly on critical levers such as electoral politics, the corporate sector, and capital markets.

In the following section, we share more on why each priority investment area is critical, as well as a sampling of organizations we've identified as related in their work as a means of making tangible some investment opportunities. While organizations routinely work across approaches and/or issues, we have tried to highlight their *primary* approach or issue. In addition, the information and organizations below are certainly not exhaustive, but rather a starting place. Recognizing this, when selecting which specific organizations to name as examples, we have aimed to elevate the recommendations of movement and funding leaders as well as to highlight breadth and variation—in priorities, approach, geographic scope, scale, etc.



Civic Engagement and Political Power

Ensuring that Black Americans can participate in democratic processes requires eliminating discriminatory [disenfranchisement](#) and [voter suppression tactics](#), rolling back [re-districting](#) that reduces the influence of Black votes, increasing Black and allied voter turnout, and including racial justice priorities into political platforms. Representation also matters, yet, as of 2015, [90 percent of US elected officials are white](#). So more support for Black political candidates and elected officials is clearly needed. Racial justice has become a kitchen table issue in the 2020 presidential election, but civic engagement with local and state politics are also critical given the local and state governance of policing, education and social services, [local and state tax policy](#), and the importance of [elected local prosecutors](#) in shaping justice outcomes.

The [Black Futures Lab](#) is leading a coalition of Black-led organizations in a massive Black voter registration effort for 2020, and conducted the [largest-ever survey of Black Americans](#) to develop a 2020 policy agenda that responds to the needs to Black Americans. Black Voters Matter’s [Capacity Building Institute](#) drives civic and nonpartisan voter engagement. [The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation](#) is dedicated to increasing civic engagement and voter participation in Black communities with affiliates around the country, and [Higher Heights for America](#) supports Black women’s political leadership.

There are many local and regional efforts focused on civic engagement. [Fair Fight](#) blends litigation, voter education, and advocacy to fight for free and fair elections in Georgia and increasingly nationwide. [Action St. Louis](#), founded in the wake of Michael Brown’s death and the Ferguson, Missouri, protests in 2014, focuses its work on building political power. [California Calls](#), an alliance of dozens of grassroots organizations across the state, recently launched the [African American Civic Engagement Project](#) that uses grassroots organizing to increase political participation among Black Californians. Several political action committees are doing important related work. [The Collective PAC](#) is focused on redressing underrepresentation of Black elected officials, while Color of Change PAC’s [Voting While Black](#) and the [Black Voters Matter \(BVM\) Fund](#) are focused on voter registration and mobilization. The [Black Church PAC](#) is a national network of Black clergy who align with candidates and elected officials, focused on ending mass incarceration, defending voting rights, curbing gun violence, and equitable treatment of Black and Brown communities. While individual contributions to PACs are not tax-deductible and private foundations may not fund PACs, these efforts are a critical complement to political power building.

Community Organizing and People Power

Organizing is a means by which individuals most directly impacted by a problem can collectively identify priorities for change and advocate in numbers to demand these changes. [North Star Fund](#) and [GrantCraft](#) have published useful overviews of [key elements of community organizing](#), notably including leadership from individuals directly impacted, growth in the size and power of a base that can pivot to address many issues over time, trainings and leadership development among the base, campaigns that name systemic root causes of injustice, and advocacy for solutions that are responsive to community needs and that hold systems and leaders accountable for the public good. The mobilizations against police violence in every state this spring are the result of community organizing, as were signature civil rights protests such as the Selma March and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Modern organizing for racial justice takes advantage of both digital and in-person approaches and reflects the multidimensional nature of systemic racism. The [Black Lives Matter Global Network](#) builds and funds local power through its nationwide chapters, which organize against state and vigilante violence against Black people as well as for a broader platform to address racial injustice in all forms. [Faith in Action](#) is a national community organizing network grounded in local multi-faith coalitions of congregations, which work on local issues and are supported by state-level training and resources, and the [Black-Led Movement Fund](#) at Borealis Philanthropy funds two dozen Black-led organizations that directly organize or provide critical infrastructure to organizers. [Community Change](#) builds the power of low-income people, and particularly people of color, to mobilize on a national scale, and houses the [Black Freedom Collective](#), a network of 11 Black-led community organizing hubs across the country. [The BlackOUT Collective's](#) mission is to train 10,000 Black people in the next four years to be direct action practitioners and strategists through campaign, abolitionist, and rapid-response frameworks. There are important local and regional organizing efforts nationwide. [Project South](#), headquartered in Atlanta, is a hub for local organizing and provides trainings and support for people of color-led organizations throughout the South to develop shared regional plans, while the [Black Organizing Project](#) is a local leader in Oakland. [Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle](#), a member of the [Baltimore United for Change](#) coalition, is a key local organization that organizes Black residents in that community to influence policy and make systemic change. The [Organization for Black Struggle](#), in St. Louis, Missouri, is one of the oldest Black-led organizing institutions in the state with a priority on empowerment of the Black working class. [SCOPE](#), in Los Angeles, organizes to improve the lives of low-income, female, immigrant, Black and Brown communities in LA, while [Detroit Action](#) builds power among workers and Detroit residents of color.

Organizing, civic engagement, and building political power efforts led by and for specific populations include:

Black youth:

- [Black Youth Project 100](#): member-based organization of Black youth activists and organizers in chapters nationwide; local organizing under a shared agenda with an emphasis on economic justice
- [Dream Defenders](#): Florida-based youth organizing and activism, with a comprehensive agenda and campaigns focused on supporting the Black community's strength and safety
- [Black Swan Academy](#): Washington, DC-based organization that supports youth empowerment through civic engagement

Black LGBTQ:

- **Audre Lourde Project:** New York-based LGBTQ community organizing that prioritizes inclusive leadership development, with a focus on anti-violence, political organizing, and coalition-building
- **Black LGBTQIA + Migrant Project** at the Transgender Law Center: advocacy, and financial and legal resources for Black LGBTQIA immigrants and asylum seekers
- **The Center for Black Equity:** national network that connects members of the Black LGBTQ+ community with information and resources to educate, engage, and empower their fight for equity and access

Black immigrants:

- **Black Alliance for Just Immigration:** educates and engages Black communities broadly to align and organize for just immigration policies and broader racial, social, and economic justice
- **UndocuBlack:** network of currently and formerly undocumented Black immigrants that advocates for their rights and provides leadership development and wellness supports

Policy Advocacy and Systems Reform

Federal, state, and local legislation and policies have created or upheld [persistent racial inequities in employment, criminal justice, healthcare, income, wealth, and education systems](#). These systems have deep impacts on the lives of all Black Americans and require many policy reforms. Formal advocacy for policy and systems change can build on the strength of organizing, and also can use other forms of legislative influence and litigation.

The [Movement for Black Lives](#), an ecosystem of many Black-led organizations working across advocacy, organizing, electoral politics, and narrative change, has developed a multi-issue platform that guides aligned systems-reform advocacy. [PolicyLink](#) blends research with policy development and works with a range of stakeholders to develop and support policy changes that lead to more equitable solutions. [The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies](#) is a Black think tank whose mission is to inform the nation's major public policy debates through research and analysis to improve the socioeconomic status of Black communities in the United States. They are a critical link among Congress, philanthropy, and civic leaders on policy proposals to address the impact of COVID-19 on Black communities and broader racial justice issues. The [NAACP](#) and the [National Urban League](#) advocate at the federal level and in communities nationwide through their local branches, and maintain legislative agendas for federal reforms, while the [National Black Justice Coalition](#) works at the intersection of Black civil rights and racial justice and LGBTQ individuals and families, focusing on federal policy advocacy. Models to influence state and local policy broadly on specific issues is critically important. Through organizing, policy, and advocacy, [Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children](#) are working to reform systems to improve the lives of Black youth and to reduce disproportionate minority confinement. [Mothers of Hope](#) in Kalamazoo, Michigan, works to reform systems and influence policy to better outcomes for communities impacted by substance use disorders, poverty, violence, and systemic inequities.

Litigation is a powerful tool—both to bring about civil rights advances on a large scale and to achieve justice for individuals whose civil rights have been infringed. [The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund](#) has worked since the 1940s to challenge unjust legislation, rulings, and practices restricting civil and human rights, and the [Equal Justice Institute](#) challenges wrongful convictions, among other

activities. **Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law** similarly works broadly across the landscape of civil rights litigation, and coordinates the year-round **Election Protection** coalition, with over 100 partners committed to defending the right to vote. **Law for Black Lives** connects lawyers and legal workers with Black-led movement organizations and conducts research, sponsors fellows, and develops model legislation.

Economic Development and Economic Power

Economic security for Black individuals, families, and communities is an essential building block of racial justice. Systemic barriers and explicit discrimination in employment, education, homeownership, and access to credit, capital, and financial services—**beginning historically with enslavement, continuing through redlining, and persisting to this day**—have inhibited Black Americans from building wealth and have led to **generationally compounding socioeconomic disparities**. The economic crisis resulting from COVID-19 has exacerbated these disparities both for **Black individuals and families**, and for **Black-owned businesses**.

Addressing the drivers of income and wealth inequality is critical. **Prosperity Now** uses a multipronged approach (research, piloting new services, policy advocacy) to support financial security, consumer protections, and wealth-building, particularly for Black and low-income Americans, and **The Greenlining Institute's** research and policy advocacy on economic opportunity addresses the multi-issue nature of economic justice. The **Insight Center for Community Economic Development's** research unearths the race and gender biases at the root of economic disparities, and addresses the narrative changes necessary.

Jobs with Justice's national affiliate network and organizing campaigns support Black workers to address employment and wage disparities and working conditions, while the **National Black Worker Center Project** and affiliated local organizations such as the **New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice** and the **LA Black Worker Center** are advancing local equitable employment efforts, and providing trainings and support to Black workers. **Equity and Transformation**, in Chicago, organizes Black workers in the informal economy who lack legal protections to develop research and campaigns for change. **ONE DC**, based in the Shaw neighborhood in Washington, DC, mobilizes residents to exercise political strength to create and preserve racial and economic equity, including focus on land, housing, and worker rights and wellness.

Black entrepreneurship has been demonstrated to shrink the wealth gap for Black business owners, and increasing access to capital and credit is the focus of many **community development financial institutions (CDFIs)**, such as **Hope Credit Union**, working in the Deep South. The **Expanding Black Business Credit Initiative** is a coalition of Black-led CDFIs leading work to channel dollars to Black-owned businesses, and the **Association for Enterprise Opportunity's** own and partner activities provide capital and services to support underserved entrepreneurs; their Tapestry Initiative focuses specifically on scaling Black businesses and entrepreneurs. **Camelback Ventures** invests in and coaches early-stage entrepreneurs of color, with a focus on social entrepreneurs in education, equitable technology solutions, and local economies. **The US Black Chambers, Inc.**, supports Black Chambers of Commerce and business organizations through strategies connecting them to access to capital, advocacy, entrepreneur training and chamber development.

Driving national, state, and local agendas that support the economic prosperity of Black communities requires electing leaders and holding them accountable. The **Black Economic Alliance** advances an

economic policy agenda focused on improving economic outcomes in three core areas: work, wages, and wealth, and provides campaign support to candidates focused on wealth and assets in the Black community.

Improving economic opportunity in place is a priority. **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)** is a national intermediary that provides financing, and technical and management support to boost housing assistance, and grow businesses and community organizations in neighborhoods in which capital has been historically underinvested. LISC's local offices are community partners, and it has several initiatives focused on supporting Black-owned businesses and Black-led community organizations.

Local Black-led community anchor organizations found nationwide, such as **Martha's Table** in Southeast DC and the **Northside Achievement Zone** in North Minneapolis, provide wraparound programming that support school success, family health, career training, and economic security for neighborhood children and families experiencing persistent poverty. Justice-based initiative **Russell: A Place of Promise** focuses on generating investments in the people and places of the Russell neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky, through strategies that support Black wealth building and investment in an effort to retain residents and businesses. In southern California, the **Black Cooperative Investment Fund** is based on the African tradition of cooperative economics. It provides microloans through pooled dollars from individuals and companies to Black applicants that have a high likelihood of building financial assets. **Springboard to Opportunities**, in Jackson, Mississippi, is a leader in community-centered change, centering residents of affordable housing in the design of economic support and other programs.

Research and Intellectual Power

Research and intellectual power that centers Black experiences and needs provide a base on which organizing and advocacy for reform can build. Many organizations take a multidisciplinary approach to research and scholarship. The **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies** conducts research across multiple issues such as employment, housing, economic policy, and the like to inform policy changes. **Race Forward's** research focuses on identifying and developing alternatives to institutional, structural drivers of inequity, while the **African American Policy Forum** develops new ideas, frameworks, and strategies to transform discourse and policies at the intersection of race, gender, and class.

The **Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity** at Ohio State University, the **Othering and Belonging Institute** at the University of California at Berkeley and the newly established **Boston University Center for Antiracist Research** are each interdisciplinary research and academic centers that produce and collaborate on research to drive systems and policy change.

Research and advisory groups that are experienced in working in and with communities are critical to building research that reflects the lived experiences of Black communities. **Frontline Solutions** works with leaders and thought partners to articulate the challenges, opportunities, and solutions they see in their own communities. **BCT Partners** offers a full range of services including consulting, research, training, technology, and analytics services in order to deliver results that improve lives. **The Genius Group** provides strategy support to private foundations, technical assistance to grantees of foundation-funded initiatives, and advising on managing growth, strategic planning, financial management, and diversity and inclusion to nonprofits and social enterprises. The nonprofit consulting firm **Beloved Community** provides training, assessment, and advisory solutions for diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations.

Communications Narrative and Social Power

Cultural narratives, media representation, and art are highly influential in shaping perspectives on race and Black Americans. Mainstream media present a distorted and racially biased view of Black America—for example, **Black families are featured in articles about poverty at rates twice as high as poverty incidence demographics would dictate**. Research connects these and other **failures to tell the truth about our national history to negative real-world consequences for Black people**. **Black journalists are underrepresented in US newsrooms** and Black people are **underrepresented in media production broadly**.

Color Of Change, the largest online organizing effort for racial justice, is a movement leader on narrative and culture change. The **Equal Justice Initiative** helps change the narrative of race in America by elevating the history of racial injustice, including slavery, lynching, and legal racial segregation. Efforts to address resource disparities in media outlets led by people of color include the **Fund for Black Journalism** housed at the Local Media Association and the **Racial Equity in Journalism Fund** at Borealis Philanthropy, which has 15 grantees such as **The Atlanta Voice** and **MLK50 – Justice Through Journalism**. **Colorlines**, an online publication of Race Forward, is independent advocacy journalism that leads with racial justice.

Supporting the professional development and pipeline of Black journalists is key in sustaining accurate narratives about Black communities. The **National Association of Black Journalists** is an organization of journalists, students, and media-related professionals that provides support to and advocates on behalf of Black journalists worldwide. They also carry out work to sensitize mainstream media on the experiences of Black communities.

Organizations providing support for Black artists include the **We Shall Overcome Fund** at the Highlander Center, which invests in organizations, educators, and cultural activists who use art and activism to change the Black narrative in media, and the **Black Art Futures Fund**, who provide grants to small and emerging Black arts organizations.

Museums are culture bearers for communities and are critical to protecting the values and traditions of those under threat. The **Association of African American Museums** supports Black museums in the United States and globally, as well as the professionals who protect, preserve, and interpret Black history and culture.

Communications expertise that is culturally and racially competent and can drive impact on complex issues of racial and social justice can be difficult to acquire from white-dominant communications firms. In contrast, **Buoyant Partners** is a full-service marketing and communications firm that helps organizations shift outdated and unproductive narratives that impede their ability to deliver real and measurable impact, and **Blackbird** provides Black-led organizations and movements with critical public campaign expertise.

Leadership Development and Strategic Convenings

The challenges of social justice leadership are compounded for Black leaders who experience **systemic bias when seeking philanthropic investment** and additional barriers to achieving senior leadership roles in the nonprofit sector. **Building Movement Project** calls this the “white advantage,” found despite the fact that Black nonprofit professionals express higher ambitions in the sector than their white peers. In

addition to systemic changes in hiring, retention, and promotion to close this gap, Black social change leaders need support to develop skills, to nourish and replenish their energy for leadership, and to develop networks that can strengthen their work and the movement overall.

Highlander Research and Education Center provides a range of educational opportunities, organizing training, participatory research, and fellowships to support emerging and seasoned social justice leaders, with a focus on Appalachia and the Deep South. **Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity** builds the capacity of the Black-Led Social Justice Infrastructure by providing trainings to organizers nationwide on how to develop campaigns that both effect change and develop other leaders. The **African American Leadership Forum**, based in Minnesota, runs the Leadership Academy (an annual cohort-based leadership development program), maintains a network of Black leaders from a diverse range of backgrounds and professional experiences, and provides community wellness resources.

Efforts that prioritize leadership development for specific populations include:

- **JustLeadershipUSA**: goal of halving the incarcerated population by 2030; builds leadership of individuals directly impacted by the system of incarceration
- **Black Trans Fund** at Groundswell Fund: funds Black transgender social justice leaders nationwide
- **100 Black Men**: chapter-based nationwide Black-led mentoring organization with programming in education, health and wellness, and economic empowerment
- **The Southern Rural Black Women’s Health Initiative for Economic and Social Justice**: supports leadership development and training across Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia in critical areas such as human rights, story-telling, and filmmaking.

Organizations working to support broader infrastructures of Black social justice leadership include **Southerners on New Ground**, which builds and maintains a southern US regional base of LGBTQ people through regional capacity building, leadership development, intersectional analysis, and organizing, and the **Advancement Project**, which provides direct legal, communications, campaign expertise, and leadership development to organized communities while taking on national projects to connect across efforts. The **Ms. Foundation for Women** is a public foundation supporting women of color and low-income women-led grassroots organizing to achieve health, safety, and economic justice, while **My Brother’s Keeper Alliance**, an initiative housed at the Obama Foundation, and the **Alliance for Boys and Men of Color**, a national network of hundreds of advocacy organizations, coordinates efforts to address opportunity gaps and policies failing Black boys and men. **BMe** is a network of Black male innovators, leaders, and champions that offers leadership fellowships and trains organizations on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Additional lenses to consider

Safety

Health

Education

Safety

The most fundamental freedom is that of life itself. Ending sanctioned and unsanctioned violence against Black lives is of the highest urgency. Criminalization of many aspects of American life, policing priorities and practices, high rates of incarceration, and failure to invest in community-based supports all drive this violence and loss of freedoms.

The legacy of policing and incarceration based on [the maintenance of social and economic control over Black people](#) persists to this day. In the United States (which has the highest rate of incarceration in the world), [70 percent of prisoners are non-white](#) (whereas 60 percent of the US population is white). Police have [been demonstrated to disproportionately use force in interactions with Black people](#), and the [outcomes for Black people become progressively poorer at each stage of involvement with the criminal justice system](#), including reintegration. Criminalization—the process of responding to community situations and challenges through the lens of criminal justice as opposed to, say, public health or social services—[slows progress in many domains important to social change](#)—such as voter engagement, health, community development, education, and employment—as well as disproportionately restricts the rights and freedoms of Black people and other people of color.

There are many organizations that specifically address policing and police reform such as the [Center for Policing Equity](#), which compiles data on policing bias to support reforms, and [Borealis Philanthropy's Communities Transforming Policing Fund](#), which funds dozens of grassroots organizations advocating for a range of solutions—from policing and incarceration reform to more substantial abolition. [Essie Justice Group](#) mobilizes women with incarcerated family members and the [National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls](#) organizes directly impacted women to advocate against the incarceration of women and girls.

The [National Bail Out Collective](#) and [many local bail funds](#) address one [unjust intersection of poverty and the criminal justice system](#) by providing bail for low-income individuals detained pre-trial. More broadly, the [Alliance for Safety and Justice's](#) coalition of crime survivors and formerly incarcerated individuals challenges myths about incarceration and safer communities, and advocates for investments and solutions that support communities and individuals, as does the [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#).

Health

Health disparities for Black Americans are [present in nearly every aspect of public health](#). These disparities are the result of systemic social determinants rather than the result of individual or community behaviors. [Social determinants](#), which include quality of housing, availability of healthy foods, and income level, play a significant role in health and wellness. For many Black Americans these social determinants suffer because of [historical and current racial bias and disparities](#) in economic, housing, and food systems.

Large [gaps in access to health care coverage](#) for Black Americans and other people of color (driven by income and employment disparities) have contributed to a lack of preventative care. To be sure, the [Affordable Care Act has reduced the size of these gaps](#). Bias in [medical research that in decades past coercively and intentionally harmed Black participants](#) is echoed in current medical research practice, where there are [lower levels of investment in Black medical researchers](#) and in topics important for Black community health, and where [biased delivery of care](#) results in [poor outcomes for Black patients](#). All of these disparities have been [heightened by COVID-19](#): Due to systemic factors, Black people are disproportionately more likely to contract the virus and to suffer poor outcomes.

At the systems level, the [National Collaborative for Health Equity](#) promotes health equity by leveraging data, developing leaders, and catalyzing partnerships across sectors and systems responsible for creating a more equitable and just society. The [National Medical Association](#) is the professional association of Black physicians in the United States and a voice of influence for health policies to eliminate health disparities.

Several organizations dedicate their work to reducing morbidity health disparities and improving health outcomes among Black women: [Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#) advocates for maternal health, rights, and justice, and the [Black Women’s Health Imperative](#) invests in evidence-based strategies to deliver programs and advocate for health-promoting policies for Black women and girls. [SisterSong](#) elevates women of color and indigenous women’s leadership for reproductive justice, while the Groundswell Fund’s [Catalyst Fund](#) and [Birth Justice Funds](#) invest in women of color-led organizations working for reproductive justice and maternal health and support. [GirlTrek](#) provides a platform to help Black women organize walking teams, mobilize community members to support monthly advocacy efforts, and lead a civil rights-inspired health movement.

Some organizations are working to address disparities for Black Americans in particular health domains. The think tank [Black AIDS Institute](#) is focused on ending the Black HIV/AIDS epidemic. It maintains a national network of service providers, community members, and people living with HIV/AIDS; provides technical assistance to health departments and service providers; and provides direct services in Los Angeles. The [Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#) has multiple initiatives to ensure that Black residents have access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to support health and well-being.

Many Black-led organizations have initiated interventions to bring awareness and acceptance to mental health support, for which there are [disparities in access to culturally competent care](#). The [Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective](#) is a training, building, and grantmaking organization dedicated to the healing and wellness of Black and marginalized people. The [Black Mental Health Alliance](#), based in Maryland, develops, promotes, and sponsors educational forums, trainings, and referral services that support the health and well-being of Black people and other marginalized communities, while [The Loveland Foundation](#) provides financial assistance for mental health supports for Black women and girls. The [Community Healing Network](#) aims to mobilize Black people across the African diaspora to heal from the trauma caused by centuries of anti-Black racism and to reclaim their dignity and humanity as people of African ancestry through evidence-informed and culturally grounded support.

Education

[Unequal access to quality educational resources and instruction](#) in education creates an “opportunity gap” that disproportionately impacts students of color. This structural gap [is an extension of economic injustice](#), because personal and community wealth gaps lead to public school [funding gaps](#) through

property tax and other school funding disparities. This disparity is compounded by systemic and interpersonal biases that contribute to a more challenging academic experience for Black students; for example, [disproportionate disciplinary actions](#) against Black students ([including Black girls](#)) are linked to achievement gaps between Black and white students.

Systemic disadvantages impact Black student success in the transition to and completion of higher education as well. [Racial gaps in college enrollment and completion](#), as well as important differences in the quality and cost of enrollments, result from disparities in the availability of college preparation resources, such as [appropriate coursework](#) and [counseling](#), the economic burden of higher education tuition, and documented [public](#) and [private funding disparities](#) for historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately black institutions (PBIs).

Research, technical assistance, and policy development are important levers in addressing these gaps. A national leader in equity in education research and policy, [The Education Trust](#) focuses on enabling high academic achievement for students of color and students experiencing poverty. The [National Equity Project](#) provides technical assistance and professional learning for schools, districts, and education organizations to help them address systemic racial disparities, while [Kingmakers of Oakland](#), a nonprofit grown out of a successful initiative at the Oakland School District, now supports school districts nationwide to improve outcomes for Black boys.

Building on indigenous institutions in Black communities is critical to culturally competent education support. [A Black Education Network](#) is a coalition of schools, churches, nonprofits, educators, and parents working together to provide science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and cultural programs to Black students to ensure that they reach their full potential. There are many regional and local organizing and advocacy efforts: the [Southern Education Foundation](#) advances equitable education policies and practices that elevate learning for low-income students and students of color in the southern states. The [Communities for Just Schools Fund](#) is a donor collaborative that supports community-led organizations nationwide to address school climate and advocate on behalf of students disproportionately impacted by exclusionary school discipline practices. [Girls for Gender Equity](#) is a New York-based leadership development, advocacy, and organizing nonprofit, by and for young women, with a priority on eliminating sexual harassment, race-based disparities in discipline and pushout, and race- and gender-based violence in schools (and on streets). [Racial Justice NOW!](#) focuses on stopping the school-to-prison pipeline in Dayton and around the state of Ohio to fulfill its commitment to dismantling structural and institutional anti-Black racism.

Many organizations are addressing aspects of college preparedness and affordability, and preparedness for the workforce. [PeerForward](#) has a research-validated peer organizing and leadership model that provides college counseling and preparation support in schools. The [Thurgood Marshall College Fund](#) provides financial support for students attending member schools (HBCUs and PBIs) as well as advocates for equity in public funding for member schools. At the college-to-career transition point, [Management Leadership for Tomorrow](#) offers multiple initiatives that connect Black, Latinx, and Indigenous college and graduate students to employers to ensure these students can achieve the economic benefits of a higher education investment.

About the Authors

About ABFE

ABFE (www.abfe.org) is a membership-based philanthropic organization that advocates for responsive and transformative investments in Black communities. Partnering with foundations, nonprofits, and individuals, ABFE provides its members with professional development and technical assistance resources that further the philanthropic sector's connection and responsiveness to issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Established in 1971 as the Association of Black Foundation Executives, the all-volunteer organization was credited with many of philanthropy's early gains in diversity. It since has evolved into a fully staffed, influential network. In 2013, the organization shed its descriptor and adopted the simpler ABFE (ab-fee) to better reflect its broadening membership.

About The Bridgespan Group

The Bridgespan Group (www.bridgespan.org) is a global nonprofit that collaborates with social change organizations, philanthropists, and impact investors to make the world more equitable and just. Bridgespan's services include strategy consulting and advising, sourcing and diligence and leadership team support. We take what we learn from this work and build on it with original research, identifying best practices and innovative ideas to share with the social sector. We work from locations in Boston, Johannesburg, Mumbai, New York, and San Francisco.

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