

# Moving Money, Making Change: Funding the Movement for Black Lives

By Amoretta Morris

*Emmett Till. Kerry Baxter. VonDerrit Myers Jr. Mike Brown Jr. Kendrick Johnson. Rekia Boyd. Eric Garner Sr. Cary Ball Jr. Oscar Grant III. Anthony Hudson. James Rivera Jr. Mario Romero. Meagan Hockaday. Jordan Davis. Ramarley Graham. Tesfaye Mokuria. Andrew Joseph III. Tamir Rice. Tanisha Anderson.*

It has been almost three months since the families of those 19 victims of police violence took the stage at the opening ceremony of the Movement for Black Lives National Convening, joined by a thousand activists.

As a professional grantmaker, grassroots philanthropist and lifelong activist, it was a privilege to be in this intergenerational space filled with Black families, movement elders, high school activists, young nonprofit leaders, formerly incarcerated people, differently abled participants, fellow funders and old and new friends. From acknowledging our collective trauma in the opening ceremony to celebrating our joy in impromptu drum circles, the gathering was a reflection of what has happened to the communities touched by this movement. Many funders have taken advantage of this political moment to advance new strategies and deepen their support for communities, but it isn't enough. Many still hesitate to support the organizers and activists at the heart of the movement. Funders looking to do more should consider three things:

## **1. Practice inclusion and accountability in new ways.**

One of the most compel-

ling pieces of this movement is that its leaders are committed to an intersectional analysis that says ALL Black lives matter. Movement groups analyze and reject patriarchal and homophobic ways of doing business. At the national meeting, the most beautiful example of this inclusion was when Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, an elder Black transgender woman who was a leader in the Stonewall riots, opened the testimonials session and shared advice on movement building. The next day, the agenda was amended to create space for trans and gender nonconforming attendees to take the stage to share ideas on how to create more safe space at the conference, and in the movement, to love all Black people. This is what community accountability looks like.

**2. Fund system change.** If we want to advance equitable outcomes for the communities in which we work, we must understand that race is socially constructed and politically maintained in ways that allows structural racialization to be deep and pervasive. Funders must provide evidence about effective programs within the context of a structural analysis of the problems we seek to address. As a conference attendee said, "Don't let folks talk about what is happening in the Black community unless they are willing to talk about what got us here."

**3. Tell our stories.** In a field invested in evidence-based practices and measuring results, it feels unproductive to stop and daydream. But, we need to do this. It's time for the sci-fi fans and

Afro-futurists in philanthropy to come out in force. It is your radical imaginations that the field and this movement most need to expand our notion of freedom.

Institutional funders, individual donors and donor networks alike have an important role to play in creating spaces for the Black community to come together. By funding convenings such as the one in July, as well as infrastructure and staffing for networks such as Black Lives Matter and intentional leadership development like BOLD, they increase the capacity of local groups and individuals to organize, connect and build power with others across the country. Resource Generation, a network of young high-wealth donors, and the Community Investment Network, a national network of giving circles of color, provide examples of two non-traditional funders using their resources flexibly and efficiently to support the movement.

For more information about investment opportunities, strategies, organizations in your local area and potential co-investors, contact Funders for Justice, an organizing platform for funders, donor networks and affinity groups to connect with each other and with the movement for racial justice and police accountability across the country.

Let's dream together. ■

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