

Meeting the Moment: Black Movement Infrastructure for Racial Justice Proposal

HSF's Meeting the Moment Framework

The United States of America is one of the most prosperous nations in world history. However, it is a prosperity borne of the conflict between the practice of our principles of liberty, justice and equality. The racialized/racist, hetero-patriarchal, classist, nativist underpinnings of our culture and society create an environment of perpetual struggle by those groups that are politically, socially and economically repressed in this country. Thus, social justice organizing is an essential, indelible and enduring aspect of American life. So too should social justice philanthropy be as enduring and important in support of social justice movements.

The slow and steady progress toward social change is helped by the continuity of sufficient and steady support from philanthropy, as evidenced by the work of the Hill-Snowdon Foundation over the past 20 years. However, there are moments of intense crisis or opportunity that require social justice movements to respond and ramp up their work, and necessarily require philanthropy to do the same. At these historical inflection points, we must meet the moment by continuing to support the work that it has been supporting AND to provide an additional level of support – immediately and over an extended period of time - to allow groups to respond strategically in an immediate and sustained fashion to best meet these moments.

This is the approach that HSF adopted when we developed the Meeting the Moment: COVID-19 plan in response to the intersecting economic, public health and governance crises at play in the coronavirus pandemic. Shortly thereafter, the country was shocked by the brutal murder of George Floyd, ushering in another historical inflection point, this time focused on racial justice/anti-Black racism. While this is a tumultuous situation, our Meeting the Moment framework provides a model for how we can again rise to the occasion of helping affected communities build power and organize for the changes they need to ensure their safety and well-being.

Core Elements of HSF's Meeting the Moment Approach

- Maintain the Regular Grantmaking for the year with no shifting of resources.
- Make an extra and substantive infusion of resources to groups which may mostly come from the corpus/endowment
 - This may be done in two sequential stages:
 1. Immediate responsive support - smaller amount granted quickly, meant to be responsive to an identifiable immediate need, and serve as a stop gap until more sustained strategic support.
 2. Sustained strategic support - larger amount granted relatively quickly, but with a strategic focus and over a sustained period of time.
- Return to “more regular” grantmaking levels when deemed appropriate (e.g., 1-5 years) based on the situation and the strategy.

The concept of doubling down to meet this moment of crisis and opportunity is gaining a lot of momentum in the philanthropic sector. Early on in the pandemic, foundations like Mary Reynolds Babcock and the Libra Foundation announced that they were doubling their payout and expediting

grants in 2020 and beyond. Recently, the Ford Foundation and five other large foundations announced that it would issue social bonds that would allow them to collectively grant out an additional \$1.7 billion over the next two years. Smaller foundations are also joining this trend with the General Service Foundation announcing that it would double its payout to 10% over the next 5 years and the Akonadi Foundation committing \$12.5 million dollars over the next 5 years to end the criminalization of Black youth and youth of color in Oakland, California. Most recently, a number of foundations and donors have committed over \$500 million for Black-led organizing and movement organizations. It is heartening that so many other foundations are recognizing what we understood five years ago when we developed the Making Black Lives Matter Initiative – strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led organizing and movement building is essential for advancing social change in this county.

Racial Justice in this Moment

This time is different. There is a marked difference in scope, support and impact in this moment compared to five years ago during the last mass mobilizations against police violence. Indeed, the current moment in racial justice movements in this country is truly remarkable, historic and indicative of a tipping point for racial justice that we have not seen since the Civil Rights era. Already noted as the largest protest mobilizations in American history, this moment of racial reckoning and Black-led organizing has resulted in a slew of organizing victories under the banners of #PoliceFreeSchools and #DefundthePolice, as well as the elimination of long-standing symbols of white supremacy in America.

The most important factor for why this time is different is the growth and development of Black organizing and movement infrastructure over the past five years and its ability to build a broad foundation for racial justice in this country. While the COVID-19 pandemic, suffering under years of an increasingly overt racist President and rabid supporters, and the video of the horrible murder of George Floyd were important contributors to the current moment, these circumstances served as the raw materials for the scope, breadth and impact of the current uprising for racial justice. Without the work of Black organizers and movement to shape and channel the response to these crises, we would not be in this moment of national reckoning with anti-Black racism. Black organizers and movement infrastructure have relentlessly pushed decision makers and the general public to bear witness and take action against racial injustice and inequity over the past five years and earlier. It is by virtue of having an infrastructure for Black organizing and movement, that movement actors were ready to seize historical moments and turn them into tipping points for social change. Even with the relatively meager investment provided for Black organizing from HSF and a handful of other sources, Black organizers and leaders were able to help create language, narrative, policy, programs; build public consciousness and support; win and advance strategic campaigns and; readied the ground to seize the day in this moment.

But let's be clear, Black-led organizing and movement infrastructure is still woefully under-resourced and the organizations that formed in the last five years are still in their early stages of development. The successes that we are seeing are a testament to the brilliance of movement organizers and leaders making the most out of what they have in order to contend with the overlapping crises we are facing in this moment. Now with public support at an all-time high for racial justice, we must deepen our support and collaborative efforts for Black organizing and movement building to help secure and defend crucial racial justice wins in the near term and continue to build infrastructure and power for long term transformative change so that Black lives can matter and thrive.

HSF's Making Black Lives Matter Initiative is a critical, relatively unique and influential strategic philanthropic intervention with its focus on providing long-term support to strengthen the infrastructure for Black-led organizing and movement building. The MBLM Initiative was based on the assertion that a strong infrastructure for Black-led social change is the cornerstone of a strong multi-constituency movement for progressive change and; that the most ambitious goals for progressive change in this country could not be achieved without a strong infrastructure for Black-led organizing and movement building. We are witnessing the truth in that assertion with the recent movement for racial justice and its' reverberating impact across all American society.

This is a moment that we cannot waste or under-estimate. HSF's philanthropic leadership on Black-led organizing is critical and we should expand our reach and efforts in order to organize and leverage support from the philanthropic community to help build a strong, robust and lasting infrastructure for Black led social change. This infrastructure will not only secure transformative change for racial justice and equity but, as has happened historically, support and provoke sweeping social, economic and political changes necessary for all communities to thrive. Leading by example, HSF staff is proposing that the Foundation intensify and expand our support for Black led organizing and movement building to help maximize the prospects of securing long overdue and transformative changes for racial justice in this country. Specifically, **we are requesting that the Foundation commit \$5.5 million dollars over the next five years, in addition to our regular grants budget, to support and strengthen Black organizing and movement building for racial justice¹ in this country.**

Our approach expands on and refines the framework we employed for the Making Black Lives Matter Initiative, now with an emphasis on community safety and well-being. The MBLM framework included support for Black-led organizing groups advancing issue-based campaigns in key geographies (60% of funding); support for Black-led intermediaries that would help amplify and support the work of Black-led organizing (30% of funding); support for strategic convenings and coordination of Black led organizing (10% of funding). For the Meeting the Moment: Black Movement Infrastructure for Racial Justice strategy, we will employ the following refinements and expansion of the Making Black Lives Initiative as detailed below.

¹ Racial justice — Racial justice is a broad concept that fundamentally refers to the systematic fair treatment of people of all races through the proactive elimination and replacement of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race. More recently, racial justice has unfortunately been reduced to criminal justice for Black people. When we use the term racial justice, we are using the expansive definition as it relates to Black people in America and securing systematic fair treatment across a broad range of areas, inclusive of, but not limited to criminal justice, economy, housing, education, civic engagement, etc.

Meeting the Moment: Black Movement Infrastructure for Racial Justice

Grantmaking Area	Description
Support for Black-led Issue Based Organizing Groups Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The initial campaign focus for this work would fall under the category of Community Safety and Wellness, including campaigns to around police free schools, defunding the police, police accountability, divest/invest, alternative structures, etc. • Over the five year period, other issues may grow to become the leading edge of Black movement work like community safety is now, and we could shift accordingly.
Support for Black Movement Intermediaries/ Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to the original MBLM framework, these grants would be for larger Black-led movement intermediaries or networks. The two-fold purpose of this support would be to strengthen the movement intermediaries themselves, as well as to provide support for local members of the network through re-granting or other types of supports. • Necessarily, these would be larger grants than the individual grants to Black-led organizing groups, as they would be supporting a broader cross-section of organizations.
Support for Developing the Black Organizing and Movement Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the current leading edge of Black organizing is focused on community safety and the groups affiliated with the Movement for Black Lives are playing a central role, the broader ecosystem of Black organizing and movement building also helped pave the way for this moment to be possible. As we talk about supporting the development of a strong and robust Black movement infrastructure it is important to understand the full scope, breadth, needs and capacities of the overall ecosystem of Black organizing and movement building. • Similar to HSF’s Black Organizing Map, we plan to partner with Black organizing and movement leaders and other funders to build out a comprehensive mapping of the Black organizing and movement ecosystem in the US. This mapping is essential to identifying gaps, facilitating strategic alignments and coordinating resources.
Support for Healing justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black organizers and movement leaders are called to carry a tremendous body of work in an unprecedented moment of crisis and trauma. This is not sustainable. Movements are made up of people, not just organizations and issues, and if the well-being of the leaders are not taken into account, the movement will wither and stagnate. • While not our normal wheelhouse, it is important to support the well-being, healing and rejuvenation of Black organizers and movement leaders in order to have a strong, robust and lasting Black movement for justice. This might include support for sabbaticals, counseling services, retreats and rejuvenation practices. • This is an area where we would partner with and follow the lead of healing justice funders and others.

<p>Support for Culture/Narrative-Change/Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A movement is effective at creating lasting social change because it reshapes the social narratives, language and cultural norms of a society. This cannot be done through protest and policy alone. Consequently, it is important to support Black movement cultural workers and communications/narrative change efforts to build a robust and lasting movement for racial justice in this country. • This work is always a part of organizing in some way, and it is particularly important when integrating digital organizing and social media into grassroots organizing. But it is a skill set and resource that needs to be strengthened within the Black organizing and movement infrastructure. • Again, this is an area where we would partner with other funders who focus on this work.
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Leveraging

As with all of our grantmaking programs, we develop complementary philanthropic organizing efforts to leverage resources in support of our broad goals. Accordingly, we need to help build infrastructure within philanthropy to marshall resources for Black power building that is broad, connected and goes deep, so that we develop a norm around funding Black organizing and movement building. Recently, there have been major announcements from foundations committing over \$500 million for Black-led organizing and power building. We have been beating this drum for six years and now we have a chorus joining in. The challenge now is to help coordinate these resources so that they have a long-term impact and help build the infrastructure and power necessary to really advance the call for racial justice in the country.

In addition to presentation and articles, HSF is also proposing to initiate the following activities to organize and collaborate with our philanthropic colleagues:

- **Freedom Funders** – pulling together funders who are giving or planning on giving significant resources (at least \$1 million annually) for Black organizing and movement building to help inform, strategize, and coordinate our grantmaking. The purpose of this group would be to help establish a philanthropic center of gravity for Black organizing and movement funding that persists and influences the broader sector.
- **Ecosystem/Mapping** – As mentioned above, it is important to understand the scope and breadth of the ecosystem for Black organizing and movement. This could be an initial project of the Freedom Funders or some other grouping of Black movement funders.
- **Black Ascending Futures Foundation** – begin doing exploratory work towards the establishment of the Black Futures Foundation - an independent c3/c4 foundation committed to ensuring thriving Black futures through power building, investing in alternative economic, community and political models in the Black community and investing in a broad spectrum of work to ensure thriving Black futures. Many years ago, there was a Black-led, Black focused public foundation called the 21st Century Foundation that was committed to improving the lives of the Black community. Unfortunately, it no longer exists and what we have in its place is a handful of different funds supporting Black communities and movement building. However, having a permanent, centralized public foundation committed to a broad range of strategies to help

ensure thriving Black communities is both essential and timely. HSF staff will do concept development and outreach to see if this idea resonates and can get traction.