



**“We Must be in It for the Long Haul”**  
**Black Foundation Executives Request Action by Philanthropy on Anti-Black Racism**

*“We are managing a pandemic within a pandemic. Police brutality is a scourge, it is a pandemic. The pre-existing condition before COVID, and it still exists, is racism.” -- Representative Ayanna Pressley*

While COVID-19 is novel as a virus, the pestilence of anti-Black racism that dictates its disproportionate impact on Black communities is centuries old. Few things drive this point home more poignantly than the massive protests sparked by the recent killing of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Tony McDade at the hands of the police and white vigilantes. The inability to breathe for Black people stricken with COVID-19 and George Floyd’s last breaths being stolen from him by a white police officer’s knee on his neck are profoundly painful symbols of the intersecting threats to Black life caused by the ubiquitous plague of anti-Black racism.

For several weeks ABFE worked with over 60 Black Philanthropic CEOs in the US, including Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands, to craft a set of imperatives for ensuring the well-being of Black communities to guide the philanthropic community’s response to the COVID-19 crisis. As we set to release our statement, the country erupted in righteous rage at the brutal murder of George Floyd and the demand to defend Black lives from state sanctioned violence. As the Black community struggles to manage these overlapping pandemics, we challenge philanthropy to be bold and be inspired by the courage of the protestors who are risking their well-being for the sake of defending Black lives.

Our long-term goal is to free Black people from disparate treatment that result in the racial disparities we see in COVID-19, police brutality and on almost every indicator of well-being. To get there, we must dismantle the structures (institutional policies and practices) that disadvantage and marginalize Black people as well as the false narratives about Black communities that allow for continued inhumane treatment. This will lead to stronger Black communities. Philanthropy has a critical role to play and must step forward. In addition, a more robust partnership moving forward between philanthropy, government, businesses and Black communities is needed to address immediate needs and opportunities (targeted COVID-19 relief and police reform); as well as the longer-term strategies to address racial inequity. We need deep, transformative institutional change in this country; foundations and donors that support Black communities, in addition to those from other sectors (government, business, etc.) must commit to and deploy an equity analysis to investments moving forward. This is a marathon, not a sprint and all of us in philanthropy must be in it for the long haul.

Our imperatives for the philanthropic sector are follows (for the full document, click [here](#)):

- 1. BUILD AGENCY. Increase investments in Black-led organizations that connect individuals and families to a wide array of resources and build power in our communities to lead substantive change.**
- 2. PUSH STRUCTURAL CHANGE. Given deep-seated inequities, COVID-19 relief and police reform efforts must take a “long view” and consider policy and system reform needed to improve conditions in Black communities beyond federal and philanthropic emergency and response efforts.**



3. **ENCOURAGE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.** Philanthropic funds, particularly those under the leadership of Black foundation executives are part of the solution. However, the targeted investment of all philanthropies as well as public dollars are needed to transform conditions in Black communities in both relief and long-term efforts.
4. **USE ENDOWMENTS.** The health-driven economic recession has negatively impacted foundation endowments. Therefore, there is increased need to prioritize spending on the most impacted communities. In addition, now is the time to utilize the full set of resources of philanthropy by increasing asset payout and employing various investment strategies to provide much needed capital to Black communities.
5. **CENTER BLACK EXPERIENCE.** Black leaders and communities must be engaged in the development of short and long-term philanthropic and public policy solutions to ensure that well-intentioned “helping” and reform efforts do not exacerbate existing disparities.
6. **TRUSTEE ACCOUNTABILITY.** Foundation trustees are accountable for the strategic direction, fiscal health and policies implemented by the institutions for which they govern. During this time of crisis, foundation boards should take stock of the level of grantmaking to Black communities, increase targeted giving and engage in racial equity assessments of their investments moving forward. It is necessary for national Boards to do so but critically important for foundation boards in the regions hardest hit by the coronavirus with sizeable Black populations (e.g., New York, Louisiana, Michigan, Illinois, Georgia, etc.).
7. **ENGAGE BLACK BUSINESSES.** Foundations and the public sector should actively engage Black businesses in investment management, banking, and other professional services to address the pandemic’s negative impact on Black earnings and wealth.
8. **LIFT UP GENDER.** The health and economic well-being of both Black people are under threat due to COVID-19; however, its’ impacts also differ by gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. Black women are suffering worse relative to job loss. Emerging data illustrates that Black men are at higher risk of death and racial profiling relative to COVID-19. Black LGBTQ communities are particularly vulnerable due to higher rates of suppressed immune systems and widespread housing and employment discrimination. Response efforts must take into account these differences, to ensure that all people of African descent are connected to economic opportunities, healthy and are safe from personal and state-sanctioned violence.
9. **REACH TO THE DIASPORA.** The racially charged impact of COVID-19 extends beyond U.S. borders. Black communities in the U.S. territories have been left out of many relief efforts and African immigrants are being targeted in both the U.S (as part of America’s Black population) and other parts of the world. During



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**crises, we must remain vigilant of how anti-Black racism impacts people of African descent around the world and look for opportunities to unite our philanthropic efforts to save and support Black lives.**

- 10. ADDRESS DISPARITIES IN PRISONS. U.S. prisons are disproportionately filled with Black and Brown people and are breeding grounds for the spread of coronavirus, other infectious diseases, and, generally, hopelessness. COVID-19 relief efforts have reminded us that institutional custody should be reserved as a last resort when there is a risk of community safety or flight. That use of institutional custody must become a standard of operating in all instances. Current efforts must support the safety of those currently imprisoned, early release of incarcerated individuals and advance sustained investments in alternatives that reduce reliance on incarceration over the long-term to support Black communities.**

### **SIGNATORIES**

**R. David Addams**, W. C. Graustein Memorial Fund  
**Ivey Allen**, Foundation for the Mid-South  
**Tonya Allen**, The Skillman Foundation  
**Jamie Allison**, Walter & Elise Haas Fund  
**Kim Bailey**, Youth Outside  
**Susan Taylor Batten**, ABFE  
**Judy Belk**, California Wellness Foundation  
**William Bell**, Casey Family Programs  
**Stephanie Bell-Rose**, TIAA Institute  
**Fred Blackwell**, San Francisco Foundation  
**Allison Brown**, Communities for Just Schools Fund  
**Cedric Brown**, Kapur Center  
**Tina Brown**, Overtown Youth Center  
**Sharon Bush**, Grand Victoria Foundation  
**Lauren Casteel**, The Women's Foundation of Colorado  
**Melanca Clark**, Hudson-Webber Foundation  
**Carol Thompson Cole**, Venture Philanthropy Partners  
**Nelson Colon**, Puerto Rico Community Foundation  
**Flozell Daniels Jr.**, Foundation for Louisiana  
**Michelle J. DePass**, Meyer Memorial Trust  
**Alicia Dixon**, Marcus Foster Education Institute  
**Liz Dozier**, Chicago Beyond  
**Shawn Escoffery**, Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation  
**Patricia Ford**, Sterns Family Foundation  
**Patrick Gaspard**, Open Society Foundations  
**Helene Gayle**, The Chicago Community Trust  
**Laura Gerald**, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust  
**Michelle Gilliard**, Venture Philanthropy Partners

**Chet Hewitt**, Sierra Health Foundation  
**John Jackson**, Schott Foundation for Public Education  
**Deanna James**, St. Croix Foundation for Community Development  
**Juanita James**, Fairfield County's Community Foundation  
**Candice Jones**, Public Welfare Foundation  
**Monique Jones**, Evanston Community Foundation  
**Jacqueline Jones**, Foundation for Child Development  
**Mark Lewis**, POISE Foundation  
**Connie Malloy**, Panta Rhea Foundation  
**Karen McNeil-Miller**, The Colorado Health Foundation  
**Margo Miller**, Appalachian Community Fund  
**Wes Moore**, Robinhood Foundation  
**Na'ilah Suad Nasir**, Spencer Foundation  
**Isaiah Oliver**, Flint Community Foundation  
**Raymond C. Pierce**, Southern Education Foundation  
**Alicia Procello**, Avery Dennis Foundation  
**Yanique Redwood**, Consumer Health Foundation  
**Jennifer Roller**, The Raymond John Wean Foundation  
**Robert Ross**, California Endowment  
**Shanaysha Sauls**, Baltimore Community Foundation  
**Daniel Shoy, Jr.**, East Lake Foundation  
**Lateefah Simon**, Akonadi Foundation  
**LaTida Smith**, Moses Taylor Foundation  
**Janet Y. Spears**, Metta Fund  
**La June Montgomery Tabron**, W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
**Peter Taylor**, ECMC Foundation  
**Nicole Taylor**, Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
**Darren Walker**, The Ford Foundation



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**Darrin Goss**, Coastal Community Foundation

**Brennan Gould**, Charlottesville Area Community Foundation

**Crystal Hayling**, Libra Foundation

**James Head**, East Bay Community Foundation

**Sherece West-Scantlebury**, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

**Jay Williams**, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

**Nathaniel Williams**, Hill-Snowdon Foundation

**Starsky Wilson**, Deaconess Foundation