



CALIFORNIA

**BLACK
FREEDOM
FUND**

**Building
Power for a
Racially Just
California**

**2023
IMPACT REPORT**

A NOTE FROM BLACK FREEDOM FUND'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARC PHILPART

When the Black Freedom Fund was first established, it was an inflection point for racial justice grantmaking. In the aftermath of George Floyd's murder at the hands of police, the philanthropic sector galvanized in response, pledging commitment to the work to advance racial equity and justice.

Now we are at another pivotal moment - a moment when those commitments are being tested, when we are witnessing a rising tide of hate and fascism, and when our progress and our movements are under attack. Throughout it all, however, the leaders and organizations dedicated to Black power building have not retreated. As ever, they remain focused on doing all they can to ensure that Black people have power and a real say in the decisions that shape our lives, our futures, and our communities.

The Black Freedom Fund resources, connects, and strengthens these visionary leaders and organizations. At Black Freedom Fund, we believe that the solutions to the systemic inequities that diminish our power are held in communities. We know that our movements must have the resources they need to undo the legacy of racism, rid systems of structural inequity, and realize our collective vision of Black freedom. We thank our grant partners for their tireless and courageous advocacy, even amid backlash.

While we are proud of the work we have accomplished together with our funders and partners, we know we have so much more work to do. We will continue to champion Black organizing and power building, and with love, determination and participation, I know that we will win.



The Black Freedom Fund will harness philanthropic capital, public sector resources, and contributions from donors and corporations to perpetuate the active engagement of the Black community to shape a more just future for all Californians.”

— MARC PHILPART

ABOUT THE BLACK FREEDOM FUND

The Black Freedom Fund exists to ensure that Black power-building and movement-based organizations in California have the sustained investments and resources they need to eradicate systemic and institutional racism. By creating and accelerating a new state-wide ecosystem of Black-led powerbuilding organizations confronting racism and anti-Blackness, this fund aims to affect the culture, policy and system changes necessary to realize equity and justice in California.



Since our founding, we have distributed over \$37.7 million in grants to 135 organizations throughout California.

Black Freedom Fund raises and distributes resources, builds organizational infrastructure and resilience, and strengthens relationships across Black-led networks and organizations throughout the state. Since our founding, we have distributed over \$37.7 million in grants to 135 organizations throughout California.

We prioritize investments in the grassroots advocates and community leaders who are transforming our cities, our counties, our state - and our world. We believe that sustaining investments and increasing the effectiveness of Black-led powerbuilding organizations will, in turn, enhance the freedom and self-determination of Black people most impacted by structural racism – and drive our state as a whole toward healing and transformative change.



FROM AN INITIATIVE TO AN INSTITUTION: BLACK FREEDOM FUND BECOMES A STANDALONE FOUNDATION

What began as a five-year initiative to address a history of philanthropy's underinvestment in California's Black-led and Black-serving organizations now aims to become a permanent foundation.

In 2023, the Black Freedom Fund announced its plans to transform into a standalone foundation that can resource, connect, strengthen and accelerate California's Black powerbuilding ecosystem for the long haul. Beyond the fund's 55 individual and institutional private donors, in 2023, the organization secured its first major investment from the state of California, thanks to Governor Newsom and other lawmakers. With the [fifth largest Black population in the country](#), this partnership with the state of California represents an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between philanthropy and Black-led organizations, [whose average revenue is 24 percent lower than their white-led counterparts](#).

Dismantling anti-Blackness and expanding Black power and opportunity requires an independent, long-standing Black philanthropic institution. Black communities have long been denied a seat at the decision-making table, leading to historic and current inequities that prevent Black communities from having equitable access to opportunities. Throughout California, Black organizers and directly impacted people are pushing to win power over decisions that most affect their lives and communities, seeding solutions and fighting to shape policies, practices and systems that can expand opportunities for all. Yet, there is an extreme lack of funding and sustainability among Black-led and Black-serving organizations working to build power in our communities.

Black Freedom Fund has and will continue to step into the gap to raise and align resources, shift narratives, and provide a prominent voice and platform to Black power-building organizations. In addition to our grantmaking, we also design and deploy programs and initiatives that are responsive to the needs of our movements. For example, in 2024, we are partnering with the California Legislative Black Caucus and our anchor networks on the State of Black California Report and Conference, organizing a series of events throughout the state to advance strategies for statewide structural change. In addition, through the support of the Chinedu Valentine Okobi family, we will begin administering a sabbatical program to sustain Black power-building leadership. Finally, we are launching the Legal Education, Advocacy, and Defense (LEAD) for Racial Justice initiative to provide much-needed legal education and support to racial justice funders and advocates (read more on page 5).

Through our grantmaking, initiatives and convening power, we are building a new approach to philanthropy, one that invests in those closest to the issues and the solutions. The new Black Freedom Fund will be an innovative model of partnership with philanthropy, organizers, policymakers, and Black communities to shape a more racially just California.

“It's impossible to dismantle systemic racism in a five-year period as an initiative. These are 400-year-old problems that we're grappling with. We need a multigenerational entity that's going to be able to exist in perpetuity to safeguard the rights and freedoms of Black people and be able to be an effective kind of catalyst within the racial justice movement.”

— MARC PHILPART, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PROTECTING PROGRESS: LEGAL EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND DEFENSE (LEAD) FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Over the past decade, we have seen an increased and courageous commitment by philanthropic institutions to undo the harms of structural racism and achieve racial justice. Unfortunately, opponents are attempting to derail our progress by attacking racial justice movements and our right to support them.

A domino effect started by the recent affirmative action ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, which drastically restricts diversity in education, is reverberating among foundations and being felt by organizations that are on the ground serving communities of color. Additional lawsuits now target programs promoting diversity in law firms, funding for Black women entrepreneurs, and guaranteed income for Black birthing people and Black trans communities. If left unchallenged, this domino effect could undermine our decades-long collective efforts to undo structural racism and discrimination's harms in every sector – especially for Black and Latinx communities.

Now, it is imperative that we fight back and redouble our commitment to bolster the movement to build a California where everyone belongs and thrives. Together, we can take informed and bold action that deepens, rather

than diminishes, our shared commitment to racial justice. That is why we are launching our **Legal Education, Advocacy, and Defense (LEAD) for Racial Justice Initiative** in partnership with legal experts, advocates and philanthropic leaders. The initiative will provide robust and relevant legal education and accessible tools to help nonprofits and philanthropic institutions understand the shifting legal landscape and chart a path forward.

We aim to ensure that nonprofits and foundations serving communities of color fully understand their ability to conduct and invest in vital, racial justice work. The initiative will offer: clear legal analysis and answers to frequently asked questions about the ruling and its impact; in-person and virtual training for organizations and funders; and, a bank of legal support hours and pro bono representation for training attendees.



GRANTMAKING TO STRENGTHEN CALIFORNIA'S BLACK POWERBUILDING ECOSYSTEM

The Black Freedom Fund sustains Black power-building organizations throughout California with unrestricted, multi-year funding that is responsive to urgent needs. In 2023, Black Freedom Fund distributed two rounds of grants to Black power-building organizations and networks across the state.

In its most expansive funding round to date, in 2023, the fund awarded \$3.5 million in grants to 75 Black organizations in the Central Coast, Inland Empire, Los Angeles County, Northern California, San Diego, San Francisco Bay Area and the San Joaquin Valley. These groups are now more securely resourced to meet intersecting crises affecting Black Californians such as:

- health and maternal health
- gentrification and housing
- over-incarceration and policing
- education and leadership development
- immigration
- transgender
- reparations

Also in 2023, Black Freedom Fund awarded \$7.5 million in grants to our three statewide network partners;

Black Equity Collective, California Black Power Network, and LIVEFREE CA. Collectively, these established Black networks have proven, long-term working relationships with 115 Black-led organizations across the state.

In addition to direct financial support, we also provided training, event support, convenings, networking opportunities, and capacity-building assistance. Read more about our grantmaking [here](#).

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GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS



Inland Empire United Education Fund, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties

IE United Education Fund is a collaboration of community agents and leaders that coordinate civic engagement power-building and advance Black power-building in the Inland Empire region. Through transformational electoral outreach efforts, IE United Education Fund now manages over 90,000 contacts per election cycle. During the redistricting cycle, they played a crucial role in advocating for fair and transparent processes, resulting in the creation of multiple Voting Rights Act compliant districts that maximize Black voting power at various levels, such as Districts 39, 45, and 60, each with significant Black Citizens Voting Age Population percentages.

"The Black Freedom Fund grant directly supports us in recruiting and sustaining Black talent in the inland region. As an organization focused on strengthening democracy, we offer grants and technical assistance to other Black-led civic engagement organizations in the region, support the Decarcerate Inland Region initiative, and educate the community about policy change that strengthens the civic power of black communities and other communities of color. We experienced a major leadership transition in 2022 where Sky Allen became the first Black woman Executive Director of a regional table in California."



Critical Resistance, Oakland and Los Angeles

Critical Resistance is a national grassroots abolitionist organization, with chapters all over the country dedicated to ending the prison industrial complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. Currently, the primary focus of the California chapters in Oakland and Los Angeles is the "Close California Prisons" campaign with Californians United for a Responsible Budget. The campaign involves building a base of support for prison closure in the state including organizations, directly impacted people, and their loved ones and community members, all while targeting California decision-makers and amplifying strategic media to the public.

"Our work to abolish the racist systems of imprisonment, policing, and surveillance not only results in dismantling the inherent violence and anti-Blackness of these systems, but in building community power to resist harm and fight for life-affirming resources. We aim to change policies and practices to support meaningful jobs, stable housing, dynamic education, and food abundance."



Community Advocates for Just and Moral Governance (MoGo), San Diego

MoGo is an impact litigation non-profit organization committed to engaging in litigation and various forms of advocacy to make our government more just and fully accountable to all people, particularly those who have been marginalized from society. Their primary focus is to change unjust and anti-Black governmental systems, policies, and practices. With Black Freedom Fund's support, MoGo is working to end biased policing through its participation in the Coalition on Police Accountability and Transparency and demanding data-driven police reform with the proposal of The PROTECT (Preventing Over Policing Through Equitable Community Treatment) Ordinance.

"Black power building means that Black people exercise the power to eradicate the racial injustice at the root of all American systems and transform oppressive systems into truly just, equitable, and inclusive ones that support the well-being of all people. Our work empowers communities directly impacted by racially biased, inherently anti-Black, and discriminatory systems to organize themselves, amplify their voices to inform critical decisions, and lead transformative policy and systems change."

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHTS

Black Freedom Fund is proud of our multi-year, multi-million dollar commitment to sustain investments in three Black-led networks to further amplify our reach and impact across California. Black Equity Collective, California Black Power Network and LIVEFREE CA are grantees and strategic partners in establishing a strong Black power-building infrastructure with deep community relationships and policy expertise. These organizations have been instrumental in advocating for and shaping the next phase of our fund, including through our state budget campaign.



BLACK EQUITY COLLECTIVE

Black Equity Collective (BEC) currently has a membership base of 54 Black-led and empowering organizations. In 2023, BEC ran all three of its Organizational Resiliency Tracks, which couple culturally tailored organizational development programming with technical assistance, community organizing, and multi-year implementation grants.

In June 2023, BEC hosted its third annual Equity and Justice Symposium. In October, it launched a pilot program with a select group of funders designed to reimagine how the field defines “an effective organization.” Using the Principles for Black Equity, funders will implement a framework co-designed by Black leaders and funders to introduce new metrics of effectiveness.



CALIFORNIA BLACK POWER NETWORK

The California Black Power Network (CBPN) supports the civic engagement and democratic participation of dozens of Black power building organizations. In 2023, CBPN became an independent 501c3 organization and began rolling out a vision for a thriving Black community through a long-term multi-issue Black power policy agenda. CBPN co-led a Community Day of Action that brought over 150 community leaders to the Capitol in support of reparations, BFF's state budget ask and other priorities. They also launched a multiracial collaborative effort for reparations solutions and contacted 29,400 voters through a large-scale civic engagement program in the fall.




LIVEFREE CA

In 2023, LIVEFREE CA programming provided targeted strategies to advance the intersectional lens of over 500 Black faith leaders and system-impacted grassroots leaders across California to move power together. These leaders engaged in state-wide campaigns and civic engagement that included Clergy Learning Labs, State-wide Action convening at the capital, LIVEFREE Sabbath Weekend, LIVEFREE Boot-camps, and LIVEFREE Symposium in preparation for the 2024 election. Utilizing its leadership development, bridging, and organizing model, LIVEFREE facilitated the building of cultural and political power of these leaders to activate and mobilize more Black voters and lobby for additional resources to support Black prosperity, and sustainability, and reduce community and police violence.

OUR 2023 GRANTEES

1. A New Way of Life Reentry Project
2. Monterey County Black Caucus
3. Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
4. Californians for Safety and Justice
5. Amelia Ann Adams Whole Life Center
6. Anti Police-Terror Project
7. Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates
8. Belle Haven Action
9. Black Alliance for Just Immigration
10. Black Californians United for Early Care and Education
11. Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation
12. Black Equity Collective
13. Black Futures Lab
14. Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project
15. Black Parallel School Board
16. Black Students of California United
17. BLACK Wellness & Prosperity Center
18. Black Women for Wellness
19. BreakBox Thought Collective
20. The Brotherhood Of Elders Network
21. NAACP CA/HI State Conference
22. California Black Health Network
23. California Black Media
24. California Black Power Network
25. Coleman Advocates For Children and Youth
26. The Collective For Liberatory Lawyering
27. Color Farm Media
28. Community Advocates for Just and Moral Governance
29. Community Reflections Inc.
30. Concrete Development Inc.
31. Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement
32. Critical Resistance
33. Expecting Justice
34. FIERCE Advocates
35. Game Changers Leadership Institute
36. Gateway Educational Services
37. Healing Justice Santa Barbara
38. The Central Valley Urban Institute
39. I Am SAC Foundation
40. Imoyase Community Support Services
41. Initiate Justice
42. Inland Empire Black Worker Center
43. Inland Empire United Education Fund
44. Where Is My Land
45. Lift Up Contra Costa
46. LIVEFREE CA

OUR 2023 GRANTEES

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47. Love Not Blood Campaign
48. Mirror Memoirs
49. OC Justice Initiative
50. Oscar Grant Foundation
51. Parenting for Liberation
52. Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
53. People Acting in Community Together
54. Pillars of the Community
55. San Diego Black Worker Center
56. Santa Cruz Black
57. SF Black Wall Street Foundation
58. Safe Return Project
59. Social Justice Learning Institute
60. Social Justice PolitiCorps For Sacramento County
61. Special Needs Network
62. Starting Over, Inc.
63. Tha Hood Squad
64. Black Organizing Project
65. The Community Action League
66. Equal Justice Society
67. The G.R.E.E.N Foundation
68. The Hannah Project Partnership for Academic Achievement
69. The Transgender District
70. The Village Method
71. Training Institute for Leadership Enrichment
72. Transgender, Gender-Variant, Intersex Justice Project
73. UnCommon Law
74. United Women of the Horn
75. Voice of The Youth
76. WISE Choices for Girls
77. Young Women's Freedom Center/ Because Black is Still Beautiful
78. ZEAL

USING OUR CONVENING POWER AND PLATFORM TO ADVANCE RACIAL JUSTICE

Throughout 2023, we brought together funders, organizers and policymakers from across California to focus on the most intractable issues facing Black Californians today, and to outline solutions to meet those challenges head on. We hosted 15 in-person and virtual community events with participants from across the state, who share our commitment to racial justice and transforming how philanthropy works.

FEATURED EVENTS



STATE LEGISLATURE DAY OF ACTION

At the State Capitol, Black Freedom Fund, network partners and allies united to demonstrate our support for our state budget request and secure a commitment from the state of California to invest in Black Powerbuilding Organizations through the Black Freedom Fund.



BUILD JUSTICE FOR CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BRIEFING

This webinar invited funders to collaborate with Lift Up Contra Costa (LUCC) to help advance their civic engagement efforts and empower communities in Contra Costa County dealing with ongoing racism and corruption of local law enforcement.

USING OUR CONVENING POWER AND PLATFORM TO ADVANCE RACIAL JUSTICE



COMBATting BOOK BANS, CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT) ATTACKS, AND ANTI-BLACKNESS IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

Black Freedom Fund created a safe virtual space to discuss the forces behind the rise in book bans and anti-CRT legislation and uplift the essential work happening at the state and local level by community leaders. Our goal was to help funders and grantee partners strategize how to collectively shift power and culture to protect and empower Black students in their schools and beyond.



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR ON RACISM

In partnership with the [Edfu Foundation](#) (past grantee), BFF hosted Black leaders and experts from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Racism at the California Community Foundation in Los Angeles to speak on the need for urgent action to resolve the policing crisis in Antioch and Contra Costa County, connecting local to global anti-racist efforts.



SHARED PATHWAYS TO HEAL, REPAIR, AND LIBERATE

Gathered at the Japanese American National Museum — a site of struggle and solidarity — the California Reparations Task Force and a panel of community leaders joined us to explore the significance of the Japanese American community's critical movement for redress, drawing parallels to the pursuit of reparations for Black communities and the dismantling of white supremacy.



IT WILL TAKE ALL OF US TO MAKE RACIAL JUSTICE REAL: JOIN US!

These unprecedented times call for us all—including philanthropy—to double down on our commitment to racial equity and justice. To build a lasting and strong movement to dismantle systemic racism and racial inequities faced by Black communities, we must invest in and sustain Black-led movement-building organizations.

Private, corporate and community foundations and individual donors have the opportunity to join together, push back against systemic barriers and expand access to opportunity.

Together, we can accelerate the racial justice movement underway in California by making sure that Black-led organizations and movements have the resources they need to win. Join us in building the capacity and power of Black organizers and advocates to make justice real in California.



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

The Black Freedom Fund would not exist without strong community and philanthropic partnerships, and the contributions of the dedicated leaders who have rolled up their sleeves to dream, plan and act with us. We are deeply grateful to our anchor networks, CEO Circle, and Advisory Committee for their extraordinary leadership, commitment to Black power building, and active thought partnership as we shape the next phase of the fund.

Advisory Committee

- James King, Ella Baker Center
- Kaci Patterson, Black Equity Collective/ Social Good Solutions
- Joseph Devall, Ballmer Group
- Cidra Sebastien, Grantmakers for Girls of Color
- Rick Callender, CA HI NAACP
- Retha Robinson, San Francisco Foundation
- Madelyn Adams, Kaiser Permanente
- Rev. Ben McBride, Empower Initiative
- Byron Johnson, East Bay Community Foundation
- Anthony Thigpenn, California Calls
- Nicole Taylor, Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- James Woodson, California Black Power Network
- Dina Walker, Blue Educational Foundation

CEO Circle

- Fred Blackwell, San Francisco Foundation
- Cathy Cha, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund
- Sam Cobbs, Tipping Point Community
- Shane Murphy Goldsmith, Liberty Hill Foundation
- Miguel Santana, Weingart Foundation
- Tim Silard, Rosenberg Foundation
- Lateefah Simon, Meadow Fund
- Nicole Taylor, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Funder Operations Committee

- Cecilia Chen, Akonadi Foundation
- Kendra Fox-Davis, Rosenberg Foundation
- Robert Joseph, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund




THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

We thank the institutional funders and individual donors who have helped build the Black Freedom Fund and continue to invest in the future of Black liberation.

- Acton Revocable Trust
- Akonadi Foundation
- American Endowment Foundation
- Annenberg Foundation
- Arrow Impact Foundation
- Association of Black Foundation Executives
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Black Funders Network
- Blue Shield of California Foundation
- California Community Foundation
- California Health Care Foundation
- California Wellness Foundation
- Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- Choate, Hall & Stewart LLP
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
- Crankstart Foundation
- East Bay Community Foundation
- Elise K. Haas Fund
- Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
- Farella Braun + Martel LLP
- Fresno Building Healthy Communities
- Google
- Hellman Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Kaiser Permanente
- Kapor Center
- Larsen Lam Family Fund
- Liberty Hill Foundation
- Libra Foundation
- Marin Community Foundation
- Meadow Fund
- Metta Fund
- National Philanthropic Trust
- Northern California Grantmakers
- Pacific Gas & Electric Company
- Panta Rhea Foundation
- Reis Foundation
- Rosenberg Foundation
- San Francisco Foundation
- Sierra Health Foundation
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Sobrato Family Foundation
- Stuart Foundation
- Stupski Foundation
- Sunset Development Company
- Surdna Foundation
- T Rowe Price Program for Charitable Giving
- The California Endowment
- The California Wellness Foundation
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- The Grove Foundation
- The James Irvine Foundation
- The Nathan Cummings Foundation.
- The WhyNot Initiative
- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Tides Foundation
- Tipping Point Community
- Tundra Glacier Fund
- Walter & Elise Haas Fund
- Weingart Foundation
- Y & H Soda Foundation



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