

# within our lifetime

Take action to end racism.

Dear Foundation Leaders:

As the transition of presidents happens in one week, we would like to share with you some resources as well as insights drawn from a funding survey that we at [Within Our Lifetime](#) (WOL) - *a national network of racial justice and racial healing organizations across the U.S. committed to ending racism in our lifetimes* - conducted with our member organizations in 2016.

The [funding survey results](#) speak to how to effectively support your grantees working for racial justice. We urge philanthropic organizations to do all that they can to deepen and widen the movement for racial justice. We offer these recommendations based on the urgency of this critical moment and plan to convene activists and philanthropic organizations to discuss the question, ***What would it look like to develop long-term, equitable strategic partnerships to systematically tackle structural racism and white supremacy and end racism within our lifetimes?***

We welcome and look forward to the discussion and your comments regarding these recommendations:

**Be Nimble:** To build capacity among promising though nascent organizations, consider mixing general operating support grants with grants that support more targeted strategies. You may consider streamlining application processes, modifying reporting requirements, or revisiting the boundaries between 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) grants. Now may be the best time to part ways with old strategies, review your funding ratios, and re-double your efforts to raise donor funds that will increase your flexibility.

*Learn more:*

- [Hill Snowden Foundation has provided multi-year grants over the next three years to groups that are emergent and are currently a part of the Movement for Black Lives.](#)
- [Read NCRP's publication \*Pennies for Progress: A Decade of Boom for Philanthropy, A Bust for Social Justice\* and Bay Area Justice Funders Network's publication \*Funding Movement Building: Bay Area Approaches.\*](#)

**Be Responsive & Support Experimentation:** We need you to be in relationship with us and trust our judgment and expertise by providing the space, support and time for us to gather and work collectively on what we need to do in the movement and across movements immediately and over the next 4 years. We encourage you, rather than identifying priorities and next steps with your foundation colleagues, to make this the time for deep and intentional listening. Invest in grantees, potential grantees and community members to design and implement strategic gatherings where we can discuss rapid response and long-term movement-building activities. This will be a critical time for deepening relationships and strengthening networks so we can work in solidarity.

As we work collectively to intensify and refine existing efforts that could lead to transformational change, we need time and trust to experiment with new, untested practices. As we continue to assess

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what strategies work and don't work, we will need to innovate and think collectively so we can identify creative access points that may allow us to bring initiatives to scale. If indeed we have arrived at a unique tipping point, our political crisis is in fact our best chance to dismantle overt and covert white supremacy on a scale many of us have not experienced.

*Learn more:*

- Review the [Funder Tour and learning reflections](#) from *Standing Rock*;
- Movement Netlab's blog post, [Crisis Pimping or Preparedness Investing in Social Movement Encapsulation](#) by Allen Frimpong;
- Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity's report, [Ferguson and Other Structural Racism Flashpoints: The Philanthropic Strategic Response and Role](#); and
- The [Emergent Fund from Solidaire](#) and [OSF's Rapid Response](#) are resources to being responsive.

**Think Systemically:** Think about the racial justice pie (ecosystem) and the ingredients (the roots of structural racism and their intersectionality) and ask: How are your investments addressing root causes of structural racism? How are you creating ways for us to work collectively? Customary grant proposals require us to justify ourselves. Ask us, instead, to reflect on our place within the ecosystem and the ways in which we are working in solidarity with other organizations as we align to achieve racial justice. Given what is ahead with the change of administration, it will be important to invest in increasing our knowledge and practice of strategic intersectional approaches through think/action gatherings. It is also important to consider whether the resources dedicated to efforts to undo specific systemic and structural forms of racism and white supremacy are reasonable given the amount of resources dedicated to supporting those very systems and structures.

*Learn more:*

- Read about Akonadi Foundation's [Ecosystem Grantmaking: A Systemic Approach to Supporting Movement Building](#);
- Movement Netlab's [Living Resource Systems: A New Approach for Supporting Movement Networks](#); and
- Funders for LGBTQ Issues' [Towards a More Responsive Philanthropy: Grantmaking for Racial Equity & LGBTQ Justice](#).

**Commit to justice inside your organization:** Consider a fearless inventory of your foundation's internal processes and align your own policies and practices with your value for justice. First, look internally on how your program staff in different portfolios are talking to each other. Are your current practices setting up silos of racial justice work and workers? Are you being explicit and naming racism? Are you accountable to your grantees? Second, talk to your communication and marketing department to determine if they are branding ownership of grantees' work. The need for you to "own the work" has come at a cost to our progress. For example, promoting a grantee's work on the front page of the foundation's newsletter as a promising practice while at the same time sharing with the grantee their funding will end this grant cycle. Third, talk to your peer funders and assess how you can align your work to partner more effectively, considering systemic processes and the racial justice ecosystem.

The work before us all will require new thinking and new actions. Grantees can either be positioned for impact or disabled within the complex politics of a funding organization. Leverage your dollars and

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assess how you can be equitable and authentic partners. Now is the time to build new credibility and develop trust through new – and often untried – alliances.

Learn more:

- *Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity's [Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from Racial Justice Grantmaking](#) publication;*
- *Foundation Review's article: [Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity](#) by Gita Gulati-Partee and Maggie Potapchuk;*
- *Nonprofit Quarterly's article: [Speaking Truth To Power of the MacArthur Foundation](#) by Jim Schaffer;*
- *ABFE's [The Exit Interview: Perceptions why Black professionals leave grantmaking institutions](#) by LM Strategies.*

**TAKE RISKS!:** In a [literature review of foundation responses to past flashpoints](#) (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, Los Angeles Uprising, etc.) “risk aversion” was the number one concern. This is not a surprising insight; many organizations are, by their very nature and structure, risk averse. We implore you to engage your colleagues and trustees in these critical conversations; ensure that your core values are reflected in your practices; take steps to experiment with new funding behaviors that meet real needs on the ground; listen to the critics; and be prepared to deal with conflict and backlash. We know what it feels like to engage conflict and feel backlash. As your partners in the pursuit of racial justice, we need you to make this work a priority and we need you to STAY COMMITTED! We need you to be our allies in this critical work.

At this historical moment, we are inviting you, in your most courageous spirit to partner with us — your grantees — in the movement for racial justice. Activists across the country are gathering, reaching out, and coming together to address an unprecedented challenge. We look forward to partnering with you to achieve equity and racial justice – within our lifetimes.

If you or your philanthropic organization is interested in participating in convenings with racial justice activists to discuss long-term, equitable strategic partnerships to systematically tackle structural racism, please complete this [contact form](#).

**In Solidarity,**  
***Within Our Lifetime National Network***