

## A Conversation with Movement Leaders on COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities

14 April 2020 #COVIDInOurCommunities

*Presented by Building Movement Project and Solidarity Is*

Welcome, everyone. My name is Deepa Iyer, I'm a Senior Adviser at the Building Movement Project. I'm also the Director of Solidarity Is. I want to thank you for joining our webinar this afternoon, which is focused on better understanding the challenges and opportunities facing communities of color during this global emergency. We're really grateful again to have so many of you join us, we have a lot to cover, so we're going to get started. The webinar will last for about an hour and 15 minutes.

I want to tell you a little bit about Building Movement Project and Solidarity Is, and why we are hosting this webinar. It's because we believe strongly in centering and uplifting voices and experiences of communities of color who are often not part of the narratives that emerge in moments of crisis.

For 20 years, Building Movement Project (BMP) has strengthened the non-profit sector with tools, trainings, and resources around leadership, service and social change, and movement building. Solidarity Is, which is a project I direct and that is hosted at BMP, helps individuals and organizations deepen our solidarity practices across movements and communities. We do this through a podcast, Solidarity schools, and resources such as mapping our roles in a social change ecosystem. So given our work and our values, it was natural for us to engage in this conversation in terms of COVID, by focusing on the effect of this time on communities of color and, of course, the organizations that work closely with them.

We want to talk about the goals of our webinar today, but before we get into that, I just want to take a moment to recognize that this time is a painful and disorienting and uncertain one for all of us. Each of us is coping with a unique set of challenging circumstances, whether they are professional, personal, in our communities, or in our families. Whatever your situation is we hope that you feel supported here and outside of this space, and for people of color, undocumented people, queer and trans community members who are joining us, we hope that this session provides comfort, solidarity, and resilience. At the same time, we acknowledge that we who are joining this webinar have a tremendous amount of privilege in convening and participating in sessions like these, and that each of us has a role to play in terms of learning what we hear and making change in our broader social change ecosystems.

So with that, we're hoping to reach some of these goals in our conversation today: 1) To shine a spotlight on how this crisis is affecting black, indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities; 2) to understand how organizations serving and organizing in these communities are pivoting in this moment and what's required from government policy makers and philanthropy; and 3) to try and imagine what a post-COVID-19 society would look like.

This pandemic has revealed and unmasked what advocates have been saying for decades. That there are racial and economic disparities in this country that disadvantage black, indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities. We also know that the pandemic is not the cause of these disparities—they're the result of historic multi-generational patterns and policies that have largely been ignored, denied, or papered over by government policy makers and institutions with power. And these disparities are only heightened when you add additional layers. For example, people of color who are also queer or trans, or have a disability or are working class or are limited English proficient or undocumented, face an even a deeper set of challenges and barriers.

We know that there are increased risks that different communities are facing from access to care, to gender based violence, to high rates of unemployment, to blatant racism. We know some of the stats already, that in places like Louisiana and Michigan, Black people are disproportionately comprising the numbers of deaths from this disease. We know that in terms of unemployment rates, Latinos are reporting that they had a pay cut or lost a job due to COVID-19 more than other US adults. We know that anti-Asian racism is on the rise and that Native Americans are facing a rise of cases and lack of access to care. These specifics, while surprising for many in this country, are not surprising for people like our speakers whose every day work involves Black, indigenous, Asian, and Latinx communities.

Today you will hear from Linda Campbell, who's the Director of the Detroit People's Platform; Aarti Kohli, who's the Executive Director at Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus; Judith LeBlanc, who's the Director of the Native Organizers Alliance; and Claudia Medina, who is the Executive Director of Enlace Comunitario.

Each of these individuals is also working in different parts of the country, so we'll hear a little bit about what is happening in their communities as well. We've got three questions that I'll be posing to each of our panelists. The first question is what we talked about already, that COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on already vulnerable communities that are dealing with structural racism. So how is COVID-19 only exacerbating these disparities?

**Judith LeBlanc:** Thank you so much, Deepa, for organizing this exchange. I am a member of the Caddo Tribe of Oklahoma and I have a Boston accent, which is a really good source of humor to all of Indian country. So, how is COVID-19 affecting our communities? Well, on one side, we have the amazing resilient reaction of organizing virtual powwows online. People, though sheltering in place, are conducting dances and sharing cultural music, dancing, and prayers, and highlighting individual frontline healthcare workers and what they're doing and experiencing. We're also seeing how, in Washington State, there's unusually warm weather and some of the tribes there are actually able to do harvesting and fishing. In Wisconsin, one of the groups we work with there is collecting sap and it's a beautiful thing.

But the pandemic has revealed the failure of the federal government to recognize our sovereign treaty rights. Treaties were what were signed with Indian tribes in exchange for the land grabs, for giving up our land here on Turtle Island. The pandemic has revealed how vulnerable we are in the economic arena. The chronic underfunding of housing means that there are two to three generations of families within one house. There is also the chronic under-resourcing of healthcare facilities. In mid-March, there were only 100 ventilators in the Indian health system.

But we are also vulnerable culturally. In two pueblos in New Mexico, there is the highest infection rate in the US. What does that mean? That our elders are vulnerable—people who are our culture and language carriers are very much at risk. In Indian country, we also have very high rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer. But I must say, one of the things that has struck and really shook up everyone is the lack of racial data collection in the course of this pandemic. When some of the numbers were revealed on Black and Latino communities, it sent a shockwave. It revealed to many what structural and systemic racism is all about.

For Indian country, we are always considered statistically insignificant—two million people are statistically insignificant, so we have very few data collections. But in the Indian health service, there have been over 1,000 deaths. In Arizona, which is with the Navajo reservation, 16% of all those who've

died in Arizona are Native. So I think one of the big things that it continues to reveal is that there's a racist data gap, that there isn't enough data to understand where the resources need to go in order to address not only the crisis that's unfolding with the pandemic, but the chronic underfunding of the healthcare system.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Judith, and thanks for reminding us also about the underlying invisibility of Native communities, which has only exacerbated. We'll hear more about how Judith's organization and others are responding to that crisis in a minute. But I want to move to Aarti Kohli, who's with the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco, to share a little bit about how Asian-American communities are experiencing the crisis.

**Aarti Kohli:** Thank you, Deepa. So I just want to say, the first place I lived in America was in Jackson Heights, New York, and my heart is going out to that community, including to the communities we serve in the San Francisco Bay Area, but I just feel like what Deepa said can't be emphasized enough. All the inequities have come to the fore. They've always been there and now we're seeing how current systems are failing our people.

So, San Francisco is one of the wealthiest cities in the country and also has some of the poorest populations. Our clients are low income Asian and Pacific Islanders. Many don't speak English; they're restaurant workers, they're transportation workers, they're care givers, they're elderly folks. Obviously, the first impact that we saw was economic. Our office is at the edge of Chinatown in San Francisco and it was a ghost town, immediately. A lot of the low-wage workers were losing their jobs and we had elderly people who lived in single room occupancy motel type situations, and there was no way for them to shelter in place alone. They were and continue to be in contact with many of the people with whom they're sharing bathrooms and kitchens. So that was the first impact that we saw and later on I'll share how we're addressing some of these issues.

The second piece is how we started thinking about all our clients. We have a lot of Southeast Asian clients in immigration detention. ICE has been trying to deport these folks for some time now and a lot of them have underlying conditions (asthma, heart disease, some of them are cancer survivors) and so we were extremely worried about folks in ICE facilities. Those facilities are known for having really poor healthcare, really poor conditions, and now if you're more vulnerable, it could be a death sentence. So that was the second group of clients that we were thinking about.

Last but certainly not least, for Asian-Americans, if you've read the news, you know of the hate that's coming at our East Asian community members and anybody perceived to be Chinese. With the president's rhetoric, his usual way of blaming and calling it the China virus, all of these things were just an invitation for white supremacists and other people to intimidate, bully, and harm. There's been a range of different levels of violence. Going to the grocery store is a scary endeavor for many of our community members. It's not just scary because they're worried about getting the virus. They're worried about getting harmed. They're worried about someone hurting them. In New York, a woman was putting out her trash and someone threw acid on her. Just a few days ago, four Chinese restaurants within four blocks of each other in San Francisco were vandalized and burglarized. So the hate is coming out in many different ways, like bullying at school. You would think that with sheltering in place, people are less able to do it, but you'd be surprised at what is coming out.

I'm South Asian, I remember what happened post-9/11. The impacts on Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities and the severe targeting. I think many of us in the community are very

afraid of an incident like Oak Creek, where people were shot and killed by someone targeting who they thought were Muslims. So, we're trying to learn from our history. We know the scapegoating is going to continue and intensify and we have to be ready for that. What has followed from the hate violence, not only from individuals, but from the state, is surveillance. We've seen of targeting of Chinese scientists as spies, and so there's all kinds of things that are going to be coming out, but this is the immediate piece that I'm seeing.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Aarti, and thank you for reminding us about this aspect of place-based violence and discrimination—the homeless, Chinatown, detention centers, and of course the ongoing racism that Asian-Americans are facing. So, we'll move on to Claudia Medina who is going to tell us a little bit about the communities that she works with: Latinx, undocumented communities and women in Albuquerque.

**Claudia Medina:** Good morning or good afternoon, everyone. Buenos tardes a todos. I work at an agency called Enlace Comunitario, which serves mostly immigrant women and victims of domestic violence. Most of them, I would say 95% of them, are unauthorized to work in this country and they have been for years. Most of them have been working under the table, meaning they work in the service sector in jobs that are the ones being more affected by COVID-19. The majority of them have lost their jobs and they are particularly affected because they don't know the language. So it has been very hard for them to understand what is COVID-19, what are the resources available to them, where to get a free test, and if there is such a thing as a free test.

Most of them do not have health insurance, they don't qualify for Medicaid, even though they are very, very low income. Due to their immigration status, they are also afraid of seeking services for fear that the public charge issue is going to affect their possibility of getting their immigration situation fixed in the future. So, on top of all the things that are related to economic insecurity, they, of course, don't qualify for unemployment or for the stimulus money that was approved by congress through the CARES Act. So they are in a more difficult situation to keep their family fed.

And if this was not enough, they are victims of domestic violence. During this particular pandemic, it has been clear that many of the abusive partners that live with our clients have also lost their jobs. So, they are having to live with the abusive partner 24/7 in the same household with an additional layer of stress, economic insecurity, and the domestic violence situation becomes more volatile. And so there have been reports of more and more incidents of domestic violence and the women feel very unsafe to make a police report, to call us seeking assistance. That has compounded all the stressors that most families are facing due to COVID-19—the domestic violence and their immigration status have made the situation untenable.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Claudia, I really appreciate you laying that out and also talking about the layers around not just the economic insecurity, but limited English proficiency and the gender violence and abuse that you all are seeing with communities. Thank you for your work. Last but not least, I want to turn it over to Linda Campbell, who's with the Detroit People's Platform in Detroit, Michigan, who's going to talk a little bit about the types of issues that they're seeing in their communities.

**Linda Campbell:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Deepa, again for organizing the webinar and I want to acknowledge my panelists, many of whom I've never met before, but I feel like we have a common bond. We are women of color. We are women of color on the front lines of this horrific public health

crisis and so we're here today to share with those of you who've joined the webinar, but to also stand in solidarity with each other, so I just wanted to lift that up.

I am a member of the Detroit People's Platform, which is an organization based in the city of Detroit, but we're also a sister organization and very much rooted in the Building Movement Project. I was one of the founders of the Building Movement Project, along with my colleague Frances Kunreuther, about 20 years ago when we set out to work with non-profits and ensure that non-profits would develop a more equitable and progressive perspective to their work. So we've been working with non-profits, trying to build capacity and lay the path to enable communities, particularly those of us who work with communities on the ground, to meet such a challenge as what we're confronted with today.

So Detroit, as many of you know, is the largest Black majority city in the country and quite recently there's been a lot in the press about the disparate impact of the Coronavirus on Black Americans. That is very much evident in the city of Detroit at this time. Right now, Michigan, as of this morning, was number four in terms of number of cases. The city of Detroit, even though we only represent 10% of the state of Michigan, accounts for 26% of positive cases and 25% of the deaths. So we are definitely the epicenter of the COVID-19 epidemic here in the state of Michigan.

Many of you are familiar with the historical, social, and health disparities that are part of our communities as women of color, but also have been rooted in our existence here as Black Americans. We suffer from disproportionate rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, obesity, and all of those pre-existing conditions make us more susceptible to the impacts of the virus. In that regard we are very much aligned with our sister cities across the state of Michigan who are also seeing among their Black communities, disproportionate numbers in terms of infections and death, and very much aligned with our other Black communities across the nation. Deepa mentioned earlier New Orleans and the city of Chicago.

So, I would lift up a couple of conditions that exacerbate the virus and its impact here in Detroit. One of the things I want to say is that a lot of what we're seeing here in Detroit, in addition to that which is related to the health and existing conditions that our people have, is also rooted in a sort of a strategy around economic development and comeback that many of you have heard over the past several years. It felt like Detroit had rounded the corner and was finally emerging from emergency management and bankruptcy. You'll recall we went into bankruptcy, the largest bankruptcy in the history of the country, which impacted us in a variety of ways. It reduced the level of services to Detroit, to residents, and really put us under a pretty austere fiscal policy. That resulted in policies that we believe have had an impact on our preparedness to deal with the virus. One of those policies was the mass water shutoffs that came about because of a need to make sure that the city was able to collect on the debt of low-income folks and others here in Detroit. Well, as we all know, one of the primary prevention strategies for addressing the virus is hand washing. It took a lot of hard work on the part of advocates to convince local authorities that there was a need to revisit that policy and restore water to citizens here in Detroit, many of whom, as of late February, were living without access to water.

Some of our investments that we've made in terms of economic development have resulted in what we believe is an over investment in leisure and hospitality. Therefore, a number of our families and residents are in those public facing situations where they're more likely to be impacted by the virus. Many of them continue to serve as essential workers and because of the incredible cost of housing in Detroit, we've got mixed-housing where generations live together and there may be only one person

working. And so, even in the mitigation, social distancing, staying safe at home, we find that there are underlying issues that exacerbate their vulnerability.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Linda, and thanks for driving home the underlying structural issues that are leading to a crisis that's much bigger for Black, indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities. So now that we've got that kind of framework in mind, I want to shift to our second question, which is around how organizations are shifting their work, how communities are shifting in the wake of this crisis, and what we need from governments, philanthropy, and policy makers. How are you pivoting to shift your work in the wake of this crisis and what do you require? What do you need from government, which is making response efforts, from philanthropy, which is sending up rapid-response emergency funds, and from policy makers? What do you need from them?

**Claudia Medina:** We have to make significant changes in the way we operate Enlace Comunitario. My first responsibility is with my team. We have a wonderful team of close to 30 people that work day-in and day-out to provide services to the victims, but we didn't want them to be infected with the virus. So we had to close our center physically, but we have to continue providing services from afar. To do that, since we have to keep very strong confidentiality protections for the data and the conversations with the clients, we had to do a lot of accommodating to get all our services electronically protected through a very strong firewall. This is through web-based services that are HIPAA protected.

At the beginning, there were a lot of logistical things to make sure that people could use their own cell phones, but that the cell phones were not tracked. There were lots of little logistical details. After that, what we starting doing was contacting one by one, every one of our clients and making sure that they understood what resources were available to them, what COVID-19 was, the additional services that we were provided, making sure that they knew that we were still open and that we were completely available to them, but through different technology. Many of the immigrant members of our community are very comfortable using WhatsApp, but they are not comfortable using Zoom or FaceTime.

Many of them don't have sophisticated iPhones, so we had to start connecting with them via FaceTime, our website FaceTime. Instagram was constantly updated to make sure that our clients knew where to go for free food, where to get free testing, etc. In addition to that, we were very concerned with the safety of our clients, so we started providing information about safety planning. For example, when they are living with the abusive partner, making sure that they knew that they can call us at many different times, particularly when the abusive partner wasn't around.

In addition to the safety planning, we were in need of offering more counseling and more flexible opportunities for them to do counseling. We also have to move some of our support groups to the web, the same with parenting classes and life skills classes. We had to pivot that way to make sure that our clients had that additional information, but the most important thing that we did is responding and reallocate funding in a way that allows us to provide cash to our clients. We have many, many families that didn't have any money to buy medicine or food, and so we have been providing \$500 cash in a gift card to our clients when we get donations.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, I think you laid out the players really well in terms of both staff who were affected, as well as obviously, the most affected community members that you work with. Same question as we turn to Aarti. What other ways are you pivoting, and what do you require from philanthropy, government, and policy makers?

**Aarti Kohli:** Similarly, we had to shift our staff to remote work. We were very lucky that we had invested in our infrastructure, so we had remote desktop access. We have access to all our files with confidentiality, with security, which was really important given the work that we do. We were up and running within a day or two. We basically switched our phones lines and we started telling all our community partners that we were available. What we ended up doing was creating, especially for the workers, language videos to help them understand their rights under California law. We've been doing a lot of training with our community partners, because we're a community lawyering organization, so we work hand in hand with a lot of organizing groups and memberships groups. So, we've been training them on applying for unemployment insurance. It is difficult for those of us who have degrees, so imagine it for somebody who is not an English speaker.

And we're stocking clinics with our partners, so that was sort of the immediate work, to do advocacy with the courts for filing a petition for detained clients, but what's become apparent even in this short time frame is what we need more of is coordination. And so we have multiple undocumented funds and we're fortunate in California, but where is the coordination.

Also, we could tell that our state agencies were over-burdened, the language lines, the wait times were incredible. No one's answering the phone. So there were two infrastructures (the non-profit infrastructure and the government infrastructure) that are strained and one of the things that's really important is communication. So communication on the front end from those of us who are providing the services, seeing the issues that are coming up for our communities, and receptivity from the government agencies who are also trying to pivot and absorb the application for services and benefits.

You could see where the lack of investment in both infrastructures was really showing up, right? Because if you're an organization that doesn't have the ability to pivot, it's taking much longer to serve people. If you're a government agency that's not equipped to take applications or have a lot of rules in place, sometimes unnecessary rules, you're going to have to shift. That's actually part of what we're seeing—some of the extra paperwork, the extra stuff, if the agencies can get rid of it now, why couldn't they have done it before? That's one of the questions that we're asking and I think for philanthropy, it is that issue of rapid response. It's great and I see the rapid response for the cash benefits for people who aren't eligible for federal benefits. I see that need and I absolutely believe it, but without the long-term investments in our communities, in our organizations, and in building up a government infrastructure that works for our communities, this will continue.

I think that's kind of the issue and I appreciate the short-term support, but I'm really concerned about the long term. That is where I worry, not only about my organization's health and future, but about my community's health and future, right? I think everyone is recognizing we are essential, we are essential now. That investment should be thought about in a more concerted way. The last thing I'll say is that AAPI communities get 4% of philanthropic dollars. Yet we're more than 27% of the population. We're the fastest growing part of the immigrant communities and we're also perceived as model minorities, but I can tell you, there's huge need and so I think some of that invisibility which is shared by my colleagues needs to be brought up.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Aarti, and thank you for bringing up two ideas that I keep hearing. One is the coordination and lack of infrastructure, and the second is long-term investment in our communities, not just the rapid response efforts. Philanthropy has to stay on the scene long after the crisis is abated. I want to move on to Linda now in terms of hearing about beyond the staffing needs and some of the

program needs, what other ways have you switched your strategies, Linda, and what is needed from government? You began to talk about government a bit in the last time, too, now and in the future.

**Linda Campbell:** Well, of course, in compliance with the emergency order here in Michigan, the staff is all working from home or working remotely and as you identified earlier, that's a very privileged place to be. For us that's a decided change because about 90% of the work that we do at Detroit People's Platform, we do that work in the community face-to-face, meeting with people in their neighborhoods, in church basements, in community centers, and so this is a major disruption in the way that we do our work. We've spent all that time building trust and relationships, because we show up, we show up in the community.

The work of Detroit People's Platform actually grew out of our initial partnerships about 14 years ago with social service agencies, so what we've been able to do successfully in light of the pandemic is to strengthen the role of our social service partners by giving them extra support. For example, supporting them with immediate fundraising activities, also redirecting a little bit of our funding to them to help support purchase for water, food, and masks for volunteers, as well as essential workers. We've also been very active with our local Social Justice Fund in helping to push out a rapid response grant to get money to folks on the ground because it's a huge, every day need as folks continue to lose their jobs. The unemployment benefits are slow in coming because there's such a high demand.

We're thankful to have had those relationships that allowed us to be there and to be ready to lend support. I would say, in terms of what we need from government, we're very concerned about transparency right now, because we understand that even though we're in the midst of this pandemic, there are lots of decisions that are being made about what post-COVID Detroit will look like. And so we are asking that our city government particularly utilizes all the tools that they have at their disposal to make sure that governance is transparent and remains as open as it can be to residents. That means complying with all of the open meeting laws as best they can and also taking advantage of the existing and varied forms of communications so that they can receive feedback around accountability and their decision making.

We want to make sure that Detroiters have a role in how the CARES funding will be allocated in the city. We hope that we can use CARES funding to address some of the structural and systemic issues that have occurred over the past several years, with the way we've invested large tax public investment and private development. We want to shift that to make sure that the CARES money is used to rebuild the social infrastructure in our neighborhoods. And then we also want to make sure that philanthropy understands that those folks on the frontline who are doing this heavy work don't always show up like the large, professionally-led non-profit organizations. We want to encourage philanthropy to make more investments in those frontline organizations, many of them led by women of color, and we want them to streamline the requirements that allow these groups to get access to funding and help provide that neighborhood infrastructure that's there, not only in times of crisis, but throughout, as part of the everyday infrastructure in supporting these neighborhoods.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Linda. That was really, really helpful, not just for Detroit, but for all of us listening who are living in different parts of the country. I want to now turn it over to Judith to tell us a little bit from your perspective at the Native Organizers Alliance, how is organizing shifting and what do you all require?

**Judith LeBlanc:** The Native Organizers Alliance was founded out of the grassroots mobilization in Indian country for the passage of Obamacare. Solidarity and working together with others are a part of our DNA. We're an organizing and a training network, so immediately we've begun to redesign our training with folks. Native community organizing based on traditional practices of community building, as well as leadership development, based on traditional ways of nurturing and mentoring leadership. We've begun to redesign those trainings to go online, but we've also made some big shifts in conversations and in collaboration to make some big shifts on campaigns, in particular the 2020 elections.

In the 2020 elections, there are seven states where the Indian vote is the swing vote, that will determine the fate of 77% of presidential electoral votes, as well as some key senate and congressional races. We want to create a way for the grassroots to mobilize for the policies that are needed to defend democracy, because that's what we're talking about. Because under cover of this pandemic, it has always been the case that the right wing wants to push its longer-term platform.

What we're doing at the grassroots level is this: we're about to initiate a campaign to raise resources and money to ensure that there are clusters of leadership on reservations and urban areas who have access to WIFI and broadband, by paying for extra data on their phones or to get that WIFI added to their cable and to hopefully get Chromebooks for these clusters of leaders. Chromebooks as a way of getting online and helping tribal leaderships to begin to function on a leadership decision-making basis online. I know one tribe in South Dakota, one group we work with, convinced their tribal leadership to meet on Zoom and therefore allow for members of the community to meet with the tribal leadership. We also see it as leadership development, because the trainings that we'll do plus the participation in discussing political developments as they are happening, moment to moment, is a critical feature to leadership development.

And lastly, we really think that campaigns that move toward systemic change are necessary. So we're about to launch a campaign around broadband access to tribal communities. The digital divide is great, but the truth is that at a time of crisis, we know that given the needs for telemedicine, given the needs for communication and understanding the nature of the impact of this crisis, both the economic and the social and the health crisis is critical for the survival of families, our elder, and also for our culture. Traditional teachings have always shown our people that science and culture move on parallel paths, but at times, they intersect and in a time when science does not know what it doesn't know, when there are unanswered scientific questions as it is with Coronavirus, then it is our spirituality, and our culture, and our values that will carry us forward.

We're even hearing now of some of the groups that we're working with who are convening song circles where they're able to sing and lift each other up in tribal communities. We're hearing about feeding communities that are sharing traditional feeding. We're going to sponsor a series of ribbon skirt tutorials online so that people can feel that they're, as they say, "alone together." But the truth is that our values and our spirituality are being interrupted by this pandemic, and so with solidarity. So we believe that launching a campaign, hopefully in alliance with those to guarantee broadband access for elders, for those who are at the most risk, and across communities (urban, rural and reservation) would be a significant step forward. We're hoping to launch that campaign in the next couple of weeks.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Judith, and thank you so much for bringing us back to culture and values, history and ancestors. I think that's really important and that we actually center a conversation that's about communities of color. Some of the concepts that I kept hearing over and over again, with philanthropy in particular, are concepts like digital equity, frontline organizations, systemic change, and political

education. There was even a question around how political does philanthropy need to get and I think the answer is clear. Who are the frontline organizations to support these and their partners? That was another question that came up.

There are a lot of questions that came in through the Q&A portal, and we appreciate them. We can't get to all of them. We will however take these questions and we'll put them together in a way that we can answer them in another fashion later on, with the follow up materials. We also really appreciate folks who are writing in and reinforcing what our panelists are saying.

One question that came up that I wanted to ask actually, and at some point Linda mentioned that they're all women here leading these organizations. The question is: what do leaders of color need? What do movement and grassroots leaders of color like you need right now? Because you, too, are affected individually and personally, as you lead, so what is it, if you could name one to two pieces that you're thinking about in terms of what it is that you need to sustain your leadership, to sustain your momentum and your commitment, that I think would be really helpful to hear.

**Linda Campbell:** I need to be trained in how to use technology, that's one of the things that I need. I would say that I'm going to speak on behalf of other women of color leaders, particularly African American women leaders in Detroit. I am a Boomer, I've been on this scene for a long time and I'd like to lift up the needs of those women. I would say those women need to be brought to the table and given the opportunity to exercise voice and power in decisions that are being made for their community. That would be my one recommendation.

**Claudia Medina:** I echo Linda, but I think that women of color need more opportunities to build their leadership capacity and to be able to create their own network of support so that they count on peers to lend them a hand when things become overwhelming. The opportunity to get more funding from foundations and the government, that's on our shoulders, but our shoulders sometimes have a heavy, heavy burden of trying to be the link between policy work, every day work in the trenches, leading our team, and trying to do it all with very limited resources. And if we have more opportunities as women of color to have higher capacity, more time, more resources, more training, we would do wonders. We already do wonders for this work. But it would give us more tools in our toolbox to build a stronger movement. We need a stronger movement to deal with all these crises.

**Judith LeBlanc:** Well, I believe that at a moment like this, we need to all rely on our spirituality and our values and our ancestral knowledge and practices; rely on those things to develop the strategies for the short-term and the long-term. We have to rely on humankind's ability to respond in ways that build community, but also provide the resilience for generations to come. And lastly, it's a two part-answer, I think we all need to become Zoom-alicious, like totally Zoomified, know how to do it and do it well, because we're going to be doing this for a long time. It's going to take until the vaccines are made and that's a long time.

**Aarti Kohli:** Many of us are caregivers, that's just our natural orientation. If you're like me, you're sitting up at night, thinking about all the things you could do better, you're taking care of your staff, your communities. And I think we need to give ourselves the space to know that we are human and that we really are here with integrity to do our work and we shouldn't be criticizing ourselves and putting ourselves down. I think one of the hardest things in social justice movements is that people want us to be all things to all people and we need to have the ability to just navigate that and to have that inner strength to know that you are showing up as strong as you can.

The other thing I'll say is we're going to be told when this is over: "Don't be too bold. This is too hard, we're in an economic crisis. This is not the time, just take what you can get." And I would just say, "No way." This is the time, this is the moment to say, "Absolutely not." All the things we've had on our agenda, everybody's got one. We've had it for decades, you know, whether it's broadband or immigration or clean water, clean air. Those are the things we need even more. I would say the other thing we need to do is be absolutely bold and don't let people say no to you.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Aarti. That actually segues very nicely into the last question that we had and then I'll try to do a little bit of a synthesis if I can of the amazing knowledge and gems that you all have dropped.

Our last question is what Aarti alluded to, a bold vision. I've recently read a piece, and many of you may have as well, by Arunhati Roy, who's a writer in India. She wrote that the pandemic is a portal and a gateway between one world and the next. So if you could imagine what a post-COVID society looks like, what does it look like? What is that bold vision? And what do we need to start doing now in order to usher in a more equitable future for Black, indigenous, Latinx, and Asian communities?

**Judith LeBlanc:** A post-COVID society, well, I think we have to realize that we are never going back to the way things were. This has been a total, permanent, political, economic, social, cultural interruption, so bridging that interruption and building forward, I agree with all of my sisters. We've got to be bold and the one thing that I hope we can do is educate a broad cross-section of people who are the majority being affected by Coronavirus. Indian country has a very complicated relationship with all the other movements and governmental institutions, because treaty rights and tribal sovereignty is not only a legal category, but it is also a moral and inherent right.

And we have a situation where the Trump administration proposed zero money for Indian tribes in this CARES Act, this last legislation. There was a pitched battle to get just \$8 million, when the estimates are \$40 million needed just to meet the urgent needs right now in Indian country to respond to this crisis. The fact is that treaty rights and sovereignty are not just good for Indian people. It's good for democracy, because the truth is that we gave up land in exchange for healthcare from life to death, for housing, and education, and the resources to build our nation.

The Navajo reservation is the hardest hit, it's the size of West Virginia. It is having an extreme crisis there, but they've got to set up GoFundMe pages in order to respond to the COVID crisis. I hope in a post COVID society that people begin to understand how important it is that treaty rights are recognized, because it will mean that there's a strong political and economic democratic system. Because we're not going to achieve tribal sovereignty without deep, deep democracy.

**Claudia Medina:** I agree that this is a tremendous opportunity to change the conversation, a conversation where we as leaders push a bold agenda to gain more power for people that have been disenfranchised for ages and ages in this country. We need to bring awareness to all the inequality that there is in this country and the need to organize and mobilize so that eventually, we have a post-COVID world that is more equitable, has more opportunities for people of color and for women. I really, really dream of a world where social norms that tolerate violence against women are over, and social norms that allow the slavery of people that don't have resources are over as well. So, I hope that the post COVID is a different world full of hope and full of resources.

**Aarti Kohli:** I addressed this a little bit already, but the intersectionality and the infrastructure that we're building now because we have to, I'm hoping that post-COVID we can really enhance that. Because we all need each other in order to achieve this vision, this bold vision we have of a new society and no one community or group is going to be able to achieve this alone. And so I'm hoping that for our communities, this is also a moment where we are here for them to engage even further. As we're providing service, as we're giving cash cards, this a moment to engage them and have them also think about the long-term fight that we all need to do together.

**Linda Campbell:** I would like to say that in the post-COVID society, I hope that we would be brave and courageous enough to really as a society begin to grapple with the historical legacy of slavery and the impact that that legacy has had and continues to have on the Black community here in the United States. How it influences the current moment, how it shows up around our education, wealth gaps, health gaps. It's there and it's rooted in these systems and structures that support a white supremacy nation that has not come to grips with the impact of slavery.

To that end, I would offer up that we join in solidarity and support the HR40 Bill that was put forth by the late John Conyers, Congressman from Michigan, who wanted to bring forth in his revised bill an opportunity for us as a nation to both study and offer remedies around the impact of slavery on African Americans.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Linda. I don't think that I could summarize everything that you all said so eloquently, but there are concepts that keep coming up for me that I wanted to quickly share as we begin to close our conversation. There's this big piece around how we can't go back, as Judith said, that it is time to expose, lay bare, what I think we all knew, the structural racism caused by slavery, genocide, capitalism, settler colonialism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia. That these structures and institutions and policies are finally being laid bare and that they have to be dismantled.

As Linda said, to be brave and courageous enough to address them, confront them, and dismantle them, and then build something new. Which you all have already been doing. As Claudia said, resources, communities where people feel safe, where people can actually exercise their full empowerment, and as Aarti said, that government and policy makers have to stand with us. So, whether that is long-term investments in terms of sustaining organizations on the front lines or sustaining women of color who are leading, as well as building an infrastructure that actually is coordinated and that is effective.

All of these are concepts that stay with me and, of course, it is all about building power. Building power and building solidarity across our communities and movements together. I'm so grateful to all of you. We didn't get a chance to talk about this, but there's also a global piece here that many of you are building, many of us are building across countries and borders. Recognizing that this is affecting everyone all around the world and so that global solidarity is important to learn from and build together.

To learn from you has been an honor, so thank you Claudia Medina, Judith LeBlanc, Aarti Kohli, and Linda Campbell for being part of Building Movement Project and Solidarity Is webinar, perhaps one of many that explore the effects of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities and how to build power.

All of us at Building Movement Project send each of you and the entire collective a hope for health, peace, equity, and power, moving forward.