Reckoning with Sustainability: Black Leaders Reflect on 2020, the Funding Cliff, and Organizing Infrastructure
ACCESSIBILITY

closed captioning available

chat feature on for Q & A

recording and slides available afterwards
About the Building Movement Project

Our Vision

Building Movement Project (BMP) imagines a world where all community members live with dignity and power, supported by diverse and resilient organizations, networks and movements that work to eradicate root causes of inequity and injustice.

Our Work

Now in our 25th year, BMP provides insightful research, practical resources, and pathways for transformative relationships that support nonprofit organizations, networks, and movements in their work to create a just and equitable world.
BUILDING MOVEMENT PROJECT

Welcome and accessibility
Who is Building Movement Project?
Relationship building
Overview of research
Research findings and analysis
Panel discussion
Calls to Action
Next steps and closing

WHAT WILL WE COVER
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

IN CHAT, SHARE.....

Name
Pronoun
Organization

One thing your organization is doing to support the infrastructure and/or sustainability of Black leaders and Black-led organizations.
After the uprisings in 2020, some Black-led organizations experienced new infusions of funding from individual and institutional sources, increased visibility from the media, and/or greater legitimacy in their local political and nonprofit ecosystems.

This project aims to understand how Black-led groups are positioned now, three years after the racial reckoning that focused attention on anti-racism and Black liberation.
**RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

Understand the approaches and challenges to building organizational infrastructure for Black-led nonprofits, particularly those that center organizing and power-building.

Delve into how organizations are approaching a range of factors; from external threats to internal tensions, from unprecedented visibility in 2020 to potential funding cliffs in the next year.
More than 3k respondents in 2022; over 800 nonprofit EDs/CEOs, ~15% were Black.

Third RTL survey; prior ones conducted in 2016 & 2019.

Previous surveys showed that leaders of color:

- Reported added challenges around stress, workload, funding – particularly when leading identity-based org.
- Felt less trust from board and more resistance from staff – particularly when predecessor ED/CEO was white.
Percent of EDs / CEOs reporting they “often” or “always” have access to...

- Individual Donors
- Foundations
- Funding Comparable to Peer Orgs Doing Similar Work

- Black ED / CEO
- Other POC ED / CEO
- White ED / CEO
NEW TOPICS FOR 2022

Impact / Effectiveness of DEI Strategies
Changing Expectations of Nonprofit Workplaces
Frontline Workers and Contact with Community

Impact of Major Changes:

Considering the events of the past two years, please indicate during which moment your organization had the greatest success in ...
When had greatest success securing funding to meet org’s budget?

- Before pandemic
- During height of pandemic
- During and following racial reckonings
- During return to new normal
- During Summer/Fall of 2022

Legend:
- Black ED / CEO
- Other POC ED / CEO
- White ED / CEO
INTERVIEWS

BMP CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS TO FOCUS ON BLACK-LED ORGANIZING AND POWER-BUILDING ORGS.

THE INTERVIEWS EXPLORED:

- THE CHANGING EXPECTATIONS AND CONTEXTS FACING BLACK LEADERS RUNNING MOVEMENT- AND POWER-BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS
- THE INTERNAL / ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES AND EXTERNAL THREATS BLACK LEADERS ARE DEALING WITH
- THE ANALYSIS OF BLACK LEADERS ABOUT BROADER MOVEMENT AND SECTORAL / ECOSYSTEM DYNAMICS
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RESEARCH

MILESTONES

53
TOTAL INTERVIEWS

28
LEADERS OF STATE OR LOCAL ORGANIZING/POWER BUILDING ORGS

15
LEADERS OF NATIONAL ORGANIZING/POWER BUILDING ORGS

10
INFORMANTS PROVIDING FUNDING OR OTHER FIELD SUPPORTS
ISSUE AREAS

- ECONOMIC JUSTICE
- MIGRANT JUSTICE
- REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
- LGBTQ JUSTICE
- RACIAL JUSTICE
- FOOD JUSTICE
- DEMOCRACY AND VOTING
- ABOLITION
- HEALING JUSTICE
- DISABILITY JUSTICE
An estimated 15 to 26 million people participated in demonstrations in more than 500 locations across the United States.

Short period of growing public consciousness, political support, and direct action.

Shifting public sentiment
- Fluctuations in support for BLM movement
- Stability of support among people of color contrasted with decline among Republicans and white Americans
Corporate Pledges and Black-Led Organizations
○ Brief 2020 "racial reckoning" saw significant corporate pledges toward racial equity.
○ However, many of these efforts were labeled as "blackwashing," revealing empty promises.

Ambiguity in Fund Allocation
○ Majority of funds were profit-generating loans, investments, or mortgages, leaving questions about direct support.
Concerns in Philanthropy
- Post-2020 protests led to increased funding to Black-led organizations.
- By 2023, widespread worry and skepticism emerged about retreat from commitments to fund racial justice efforts.

Chronicle of Philanthropy Findings
- Examination showed a return to normal practices in philanthropy post-2020.
- Decline in grants and consensus that progress in racial equity funding was insufficient.
Uneven Distribution of Financial Benefits

- Not all Black-led organizations experienced increased funding or visibility during the "racial reckoning" of 2020.
- Funding often bypassed organizations engaged in intersectional work or located in regions less prioritized by institutional grantmakers.

Benefits Experienced by Some Organizations

- Half of the interviewees reported clear benefits from increased attention to racial justice causes.
- Increased donations, both individual and institutional, provided unprecedented exposure and funding opportunities.
Challenges and Surprises in Philanthropy

○ Surprising lack of mass mobilization from the philanthropic space despite increased attention to racial justice.

○ Shifts in institutional philanthropy toward more flexible grantmaking, including multiyear general operating support, were noted by some leaders.

○ Despite initial benefits, many organizations faced challenges with grant renewals or reduced funding flexibility in subsequent years.
“We definitely saw a huge temporary influx of attention, support, donations, grants from some sources in the months following George Floyd’s murder, and throughout the back half of 2020. … But it was, in some ways, a repeat of what happened in 2014 and 2015; we grew a lot in that period and sort of gained a lot of notoriety in that period … and then it receded again. And then there was quite a lot of backlash, particularly around our abolition work, around our defund work, and related political work”. – Black Cis Man Leader of State/Local Organization
“The individual donors, they’re individuals and they’ve moved on, right? But what we’re finding was that the drop in funding is mostly new foundations who started with ‘This is our first time doing racial justice work,’ and now were like ‘We’re going to step back and think about our strategy.’

Black Cis Woman Leader of National Organization
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RECKONING WITH SUSTAINABILITY

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS FOR FUTURES BEYOND THE FUNDING
Anticipating Funding Challenges
- Black leaders were aware of the short-term nature of funding opportunities during the "racial reckoning" of 2020.
- Planned for potential pullback from funders and tailored investments in organizational infrastructure.

Investment in Staff and Capacity
- Initial investment often directed towards hiring or increasing pay for staff to boost organizational capacity.
- However, cautious approach needed due to risks associated with maintaining funding levels for future sustainability.
Innovative Strategies for Sustainability
- Leaders experimented with hiring and staffing amidst u
- Utilized temporary paid internships and training programs to
  address capacity needs while planning for future funding
  fluctuations.
- Land investments

Importance of Flexible Funding and Strategic Shifts
- Flexibility of funding, such as grants from MacKenzie Scott,
  provided opportunities for strategic planning and
  organizational growth.
- Local organizations utilized additional funds for staff
  education, participatory budgeting, and investing in physical
  infrastructure for long-term sustainability.
“We went viral on social media on a list of Black-, trans-led organizations and we started getting celebrity endorsements from people like Dan Levy, Christina Aguilera, Kelly Rowland … The only regret that I have is not creating an endowment. We ended up having to use all that money to get through 2021 and 2022, and now in 2023, all that money is gone because people stopped giving. We knew that eventuality would come because none of it was long-term; none of it was an investment. MacKenzie Scott didn’t descend from the heavens and give us a 10-year grant.”

Black Trans Woman Leader of State/Local Organization
Internal Conflicts and Power Dynamics

- Internal tensions within Black-led organizations often revolve around conflicting values and power struggles.

- Polarization, retraumatization, and burnout among staff raise concerns about organizational well-being and sustainability.
Complexity of Organizational Culture and Decision-Making

- Challenges in managing organizational culture include balancing formality and informality, structure and autonomy.

- Difficult decisions arise in prioritizing the needs of staff, board, funders, and the community while navigating power dynamics.
“I feel like, at least in my corner of the ecosystem, we ain’t ready to fight the right. We over here beating each other up, looking at each other sideways, as if the other people in our camp are the same as these people who are literally legislating violence against our people’s bodies. … A lot of the staff drama and conflicts that are happening, a lot of the leadership burnout that’s happening – I think that is all of us wrestling with the question: What really are the values that we stand on?”

Black Queer Man Leader of State/Local Organization
GROUP DISCUSSION

• What are some practical actions or strategies that you believe can be derived from these findings to strengthen Black-led movement building?

• How can we best utilize these research findings to inform and guide our collective efforts in supporting and advancing Black-led movement infrastructure?

• How can we use this research to push the field to resource movement infrastructure?
CALLS TO ACTION

- Research analysis
- Sustained and flexible funding
- Funding for training and skills
SOLIDARITY IS
2024 PROGRAMS

APRIL 30
STATE OF SOLIDARITY
Building Solidarity in an Era of Silos

JUNE 26-28
RAPID RESPONSE ECOSYSTEM LAB
A learning and practice space for nonprofit staff who want to expand their skills in building crisis response infrastructure

SEPT-OCT
SOLIDARITY IS COHORT
6-week training for emerging activists and organizers on transformative solidarity principles and practices

SEPT 26
STATE OF SOLIDARITY
Protecting Cross-Racial Solidarity: Countering Attacks on Each Other

NOV 14
STATE OF SOLIDARITY
Solidarity Beyond the Elections

learn more: bit.ly/solidarityis-programs