

Transcript for Webinar “Reckoning with Sustainability”

Host: Building Movement Project

Record Date: May 29, 2024

View Recording: [bit.ly/reckoning-YT](https://bit.ly/reckoning-YT)

Adaku Utah ([00:00:00](#)):

Right y'all. Welcome, welcome to Reckoning with Sustainability. I'm hosted by the Building Movement Project. My name is Adaku Utah and I use all pronouns. I'm currently beaming to y'all from Lenni Lenape land, also known as Edgewater, New Jersey by way of Lagos, Nigeria, where I'm from. And I am the Senior Manager of Movement Building Programs at the Building Movement Project. And we're so grateful that you all chose to be here in a time of so much chaos, crisis and contradiction. I know so many of us are holding with tender hearts, the genocides that are happening in Palestine, Congo, and Sudan. Many of us are grieving the deaths of people who have been impacted by climate catastrophe. And many of us in this room are also working to sustain Black life into the future in a time of growing white nationalism and authoritarianism. And in the midst of that, you chose to show up here and my hope is that your presence here is a reflection of your commitment to making sure that we have the infrastructure that we need to build power right now and into the future.

([00:02:07](#)):

So a little bit by way of housekeeping. In terms of accessibility, we are recording this session. You should have heard the Zoom lady or Zoom person letting you know that we are recording. The recording will be made available afterwards, including these beautiful slides. The chat feature is open and popping. Please feel free to use it as well as the Q&A feature to share your questions and responses because we want to know what your curiosities are and also what are some of the reflections that you have based off of what you hear. And closed captioning is also available if you click on the bottom right three dots of your screen, you should have access to it. And feel free to chat us if you don't know where to look and we'll support you.

([00:02:58](#)):

So we are Building Movement Projects and we're a national organization committed to building the dignity and power of social change organizations through offering really insightful research, cultivating practical tools and resources, and also facilitating movement exchanges that help to build transformative relationships that can build a just and equitable society.

([00:03:24](#)):

And our flow for today in a moment, we're going to turn it over to y'all because we want to know who's in this space, where you repping, and we'll spend some time talking about the research that we've been up to, why we did it, some key research findings and analysis. And then we're going to spend a lot of time getting to be in conversation with some of my favorite Black leaders, although there are no favorites really within the field to get to learn more about how folks have been faring since the racial reckoning of 2020 and what are ways that our folks are building infrastructure, organizing infrastructure in these times. We'll close out with some calls to action and then some invitations around where you might join us in additional programming that we have in the future, and that'll be our time. Speaking of we, I'm so grateful that I get to co-create this space with some incredible co-conspirators. I want to actually turn it over to Sean to introduce himself real quick.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([00:04:39](#)):

Hey everybody. Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, he/him. I'm Co-executive Director of the Building Movement Project and really happy to be having this conversation with our panelists and with all of you today.

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Adaku Utah ([00:04:50](#)):

Awesome. Thanks Sean. And shout out to the panelists that we have. You're going to be learning a little bit more about them and the work that they've been up to for many, many years. Want to give honor and reverence to Toni-Michelle Williams, who's repping Solutions NOT Punishment Collaborative, want to give honor and reverence to Gina Womack from Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children, and Richard Wallace, honor and reverence to you who is throwing down for Equity and Transformation. So we'll get to hear from them in a little bit. And right now we want to hear from y'all. So drop into the chat your name, pronoun, organization that you or crew, collective community that you're connected to. And what is one thing that your organization is doing to support the infrastructure and or sustainability of Black leaders and Black led organizations? What's one thing that your organization is doing to support the infrastructure and sustain and or sustainability of Black leaders in Black led organizations? So feel free to drop that in the chat and rep where you are from. Awesome, awesome. Hey y'all. Hey, Mark Anthony. Hey, Emily. Hey, Markasa, I hope I said your name correctly. I'm going to read out a few things folks are doing to support sustainability of Black leaders. Okay. "Moving project grants to general operating." Beautiful. "Providing a conflict series to our members to support how they move generatively through conflict." Thank you for that. That's so necessary, especially in this climate. Hey, it's so good to see you. Shout out to the Gold Fam that's up in here. Wow. Yes, Vera, "Recently appointed the first director of Black Justice and healing for our team." Yes. May they be supported in that work that is crucial that they are there, and may they hold that position in a way that is sustainable for them too. Hi Kemi. Thank you for supporting Black arts and cultural infrastructure in the US and on the African continent. And Huey, I hope I'm saying your name correctly, repping Oregon Department of Land Conservation is rethinking your grant application process, vetting process for consultants. Beautiful.

([00:07:57](#)):

Also, I love just the community happening in the chat already. Y'all saying hi to each other and you might be inspired by what somebody says so feel free to connect with consent if folks want to share a little bit more one-on-one about some of the strategies that you are naming in the chat right now about how to support and sustain Black leadership and Black led organizing infrastructure.

([00:08:24](#)):

A couple more and then we're going to move. Hi Evelyn. Hi Justin. "Creating an [inaudible 00:08:35] circle, which is a network of Black foundation CEOs." Beautiful. "That regularly discusses philanthropy's role and addressing the social and economic inequities impacting the Black community." Thank you so much. Tice is shouting out the Restore Fellowship, which is the first of its kind. Yes, for pilots. I hope it goes so well. And I'm going to do one more. Hey, Maggie, repping Milwaukee, hoping to make sure that our services meet the needs of incredibly diverse leaders. Okay, beautiful y'all. Keep them coming. And feel free to share more than one if you feel so moved. We need as many resources as possible to keep Black life here. So thank you for your commitment. Thank you for the work that you are doing, that you are experimenting around and making possible where you are. So I want to pass it over to Sean to offer a little bit of context that helped to shape why we developed the research and also shapes the report itself too. Sean.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([00:09:48](#)):

Thanks so much Adaku. And before Adaku digs into talking about the interviews that we did in 2023 that really are the basis for the report, we wanted to provide a little bit of context for why we took on this as a topic for research. And so we as an organization and in partnership with funding from the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund recognized that 2020 was a particular moment of opportunity for a lot of Black-led organizations. And we also recognized that in the past, those moments had been relatively brief and fleeting. And so what we were trying to understand was what the impact was going to be of that racial reckoning.

[\(00:10:36\)](#):

And so on the next slide, you can see in terms of the research overview and the way we really approached it, we were really trying to understand the challenges that Black-led organizations were facing in terms of building their own organizational infrastructure and also thinking about that in a movement building context. And so we wanted to delve into a range of topics from the external threats that were also rising. There'd been a lot written about the internal tensions playing out in social justice organizations, et cetera. And so wanted to sort of be able to cover that wide range of topics through this research project.

[\(00:11:18\)](#):

And so on the next slide, part of what helped to help us be ready to take on this opportunity was the fact that BMP had been doing this Race to Lead research for several years. So we started this survey data collection project back in 2016. We resurveyed the field in 2019. And some of what the surveys and the research had helped us understand was that there were particular challenges that leaders of color were facing in the nonprofit sector. And some of that had to do with just stressors around workload, feeling less trust and support from board, resistance from staff, et cetera. But funding was a particular challenge.

[\(00:12:05\)](#):

And so on the next slide, you can see from the 2022 data that we collected that the data really does demonstrate that Black EDs were reporting that they were basically more dependent on foundations for their funding than other forms of funding like individual donors. White EDs were reporting much more access to individual donors than were black EDs. And then also this piece around whether or not people felt like they often or always had funding comparable to peer organizations doing similar work. That has been a gap pretty consistently over the course of the Race to Lead surveys. And so you can see here that for black EDs, it's that greenish color, lowest rate of agreement with that statement, that they are often or always getting funding that's comparable to peer organizations doing similar work. So we knew coming into this project that there were some funding inequities, so real inequities in the way that funding flows in the sector that particularly disadvantaged Black leaders and Black-led organizations. And so that was an important context and background for then digging into this project.

[\(00:13:19\)](#):

And so with the 2022 survey on the next slide, you can see that one of the things that we were trying to do with the 2022 survey was understand how people were experiencing some of what had been really dramatic and rapid succession of changes in the sector since 2020 in particular. So we added some questions that were about whether people felt like DEI strategies had been effective and we'll be putting out a report on that later this summer. We added some questions about how people felt about the

changing expectations of workplaces. We added questions in the 2022 survey about whether people were frontline workers, working from home, those sorts of things. But one of the key questions that we added that was particularly for leaders, was we wanted to understand, given the events of the recent years when organizations had their greatest success doing a variety of things.

[\(00:14:17\)](#):

And on the next slide you can see the data around when EDs reported they had the greatest success securing funding to meet their organization's budget. And so again, Black EDs are the greenish color, other leaders of color are this purple and then white EDs are gray. But for white EDs and other leaders of color, their peak in terms of success securing funding to meet the organization's budget happened during the height of the pandemic. For Black EDs, the peak in terms of when people had the greatest success securing funding was during and following the racial reckonings. And so if we then recognize that that was what the data was telling us that we collected in 2022. So then when we were doing the interviews the following year in 2023, we had to be thinking like, "Okay, even if Black leaders who had received funding that was multi-year in 2022 during the racial reckoning, generally leaders were not getting grants for more than 3 years." Unfortunately, that's just the reality of the way funding has flowed in the sector.

[\(00:15:25\)](#):

So at the time that we were doing the interviews, we suspected, and we'll be able to talk a little bit more about this, but that whatever bump in funding had happened during and following the racial reckonings was coming to an end at the time that we were doing the interviews in 2023. So I do just want to acknowledge that that was a big part of what informed for us this whole research project was just understanding the moment in time in 2020 and sort of when that window would close. And so I'm going to turn it over to Adaku, talk more about the interviews, but that's some of the context and background that helped to inform why we did this project and some of the questions that we were posing to leaders.

Adaku Utah [\(00:16:11\)](#):

Awesome. Thanks so much, Sean, for offering that context. So we had the honor of interviewing 53 Black leaders from across the country, including 3 folks you're going to be hearing from today. And 28 of those folks were from state and local organizations and about 15 of those folks were from national organizations. And then we had 10 Black leaders who represented intermediary roles, so some funders and then leaders of capacity building organizations that support movements. And we really wanted to make sure that when we were looking at movement landscape, that we were looking at organizations who worked in a variety of issue areas, making sure that we can really assess the full landscape comprehensively and see patterns and themes throughout. So folks were working across food justice, abolition, LGBTQ, and of course, given how Black organizing is rooted in intersectionality, a number of these organizations were working on multiple issue areas at the same time.

[\(00:17:21\)](#):

And as Sean mentioned, and as we all know and are still feeling, 2020 was a pivotal moment in the history of racial reckoning in the history of the United States from the multiple pandemics that were impacting and still are impacting Black lives to increased violence from the state. And Black leaders did what Black leaders have always done, which is paying attention and listening to our communities, noticing where the gaps and opportunities are within the political landscape, and then mobilizing and

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organizing our people to the tune of 15 to 26 million people y'all in over 500 locations across the United States. And over the last couple of years, the last 4 years, what we've been noticing is that the level of commitment, the level of attention which was so high, especially in 2020, 2021, has started to dwindle. And in fact, not just dwindle, but also a huge amount of backlash being turned back to either specific Black leaders or Black-led organizations.

[\(00:18:33\)](#):

And we know how intentional that is, especially with how white nationalism and authoritarianism and fascism is moving in our times. So what did some of that wave look like? There was a lot of over promising and under-delivering that came from philanthropy, from corporations saying that their level of support would extend over time. And then that only lasted through 2021, 2022. And the other place that a lot of Black leaders offered up was the level of ambiguity around some of the ways that funding was allocated, given how funds were connected to either loans or investment or mortgages. And some organizations not quite sure where either the money was coming from or where it was being specifically allocated to in organizations.

[\(00:19:26\)](#):

And what's really important to note is that a lot of Black leaders knew that this funding cliff was going to come because there are patterns in how philanthropy chooses when to fund, how to fund and who to fund to. And 2020 wasn't the only racial reckoning moment that we've had in this country. There have been several, and there have been some very specific patterns around how funding have been distributed to Black-led organizations. And so when this moment happened in 2020, many Black leaders were very aware of the patterning of really increased attention up front and then a whiplash and a retrenchment, retractment from how funding would continue to be offered up, how resources were going to be offered up, and also how much time, effort, attention would be sustained.

[\(00:20:19\)](#):

It's also important to note that not all Black leaders and Black organizations got attention or resource, particularly organizations that are more local, more statewide, particularly in the South and the Midwest did not get as much attention as maybe say national organizations or organizations that were in the coast. And some organizations had to really on grassroots fundraising efforts inside of community to be able to sustain their work over time. And there were a number of Black leaders that we talked to whose work, if it was more radical, more connected to abolition in particular, the ways in which their funding was able to be sustained was definitely cut off over time. And many philanthropic leaders or organization making different kinds of excuses around shifting their own priority and not focusing on radical efforts to shift power in Black communities.

[\(00:21:26\)](#):

So we want to sprinkle a few more voices here in addition to the voices that you're going to hear in the panel so that you can hear more from the Black leaders that we got to interview and hear how they're amplifying some of the experiences that they've had over the last couple of years. So this is from a Black cis man leader of a state and local organization, and he says, "We definitely saw a huge temporary influx of attention, support, donations, grants from some sources in the months following George Floyd's murder."

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[\(00:22:03\)](#):

Also, just want to just take a moment to offer reverence to George Floyd. The anniversary of his death was a few days ago on the 25th. Yeah, big love to you. "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 abolition work, around our defund work and related political work."

[\(00:22:48\)](#):

Another one from a Black cis woman leader of a national organization. She offers that, "The individual donors, they're individuals and they've moved on. But what we're finding was that the drop in funding is mostly new foundations."

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:23:04]

Adaku Utah [\(00:23:03\)](#):

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 we're like, "We're going to step back and think about our strategy." And both of the patterns that were mentioned in these two quotes are patterns that people are still experiencing right now, where funders are shifting their "strategy" or folks, Black leaders, Black lit organizations who are more radical are not able to receive the level of funding that they need to sustain their work.

[\(00:23:38\)](#):

So with all this influx of funding, Black folks made some really strategic investments, and there was a set of folks that we talked to who knew that this funding cliff was coming and they planned for the future. They're like, "This money is going to dry out soon, so we want to make sure that this money can stretch into the future." And then there were folks who knew that the funding cliff was coming, but didn't have either the financial resources or the financial management competence skills to be able to plan ahead to be able to sustain the money that they had. And then there were some folks who didn't know that it was coming, but did the best that they could with the resources that they had.

[\(00:24:24\)](#):

So a couple of things that folks were able to do was really expand not only their organizational infrastructure, but also experiment with what that organizational infrastructure could look like. So we saw a number of people name co-ED models that had two or more people who were leading the organization. We also had folks who really invested in more organizers on their staff to support the influx of new people who wanted to join movement and who wanted to be a part of a political home. There were people who also experimented with how many days of the week that they chose to have their organization working, so some people moving to a four-day work week. And then a good amount of folks who invested in a physical infrastructure, so co-stewarding land, I want to shout out Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity, who is now co-stewarding land in Hawkinsville, Georgia, 100 acres of land where we are literally building a training facility for Black organizers. And there are many Black folks in St. Louis who are doing a very similar thing to make sure that this wealth that we have is generational and that



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we're able to invest in structures that support our own healing, our own ability to come together and learn together and figure out how we build the strategies that we need in this time.

(00:25:58):

It's important to note, too, that folks really were moved... Can y'all hear me okay? Okay. Sorry, there's a weird buzzing sound that's coming from my computer. Folks were also moved to do some additional strategic planning because oftentimes with reduced infrastructure, reduced staff and reduced resourcing, there isn't as much time to spend on the long range planning. So beyond the moment of urgency, how do we plan ahead to sustain our work into the future? So a lot of folks were able to, because they had additional resources and additional staff, spend some more time doing the long range planning that they needed to be here, to be here and to be here well.

(00:26:47):

I want to offer wisdom from a Black trans woman leader of a state and local organization who says, "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. And 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 eventually 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."

(00:27:37):

Shout out to folks who've got MacKenzie Scott money over here. And I hope that that money stretches and serves the work of Black organizing in these times. We've been talking a lot about the funding realm in particular. I want to pass it to Sean to talk a little bit more about in addition to funding, what were some of the organizational challenges that were impacting how Black leaders and Black led organizations were and our building power right now?

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld (00:28:14):

Yeah, thanks, Adaku. So one of the things that came up in the interviews was that there were for many leaders and Black led organizations, some internal tensions that leaders were navigating that often revolved around power and understandings of power, struggles over power internally. And that that was also contributing to and accompanied by other factors that were leading to burnout among staff and leaders as well. So on the next slide, you can see some of the particular challenges that people lifted up in terms of managing organizational culture, how they balance formality and informality, things like that. And that there were difficult that kept coming up that people were sharing with us around how to prioritize the needs of staff and sometimes balance those needs of staff with board funders and the community while also navigating the power dynamics.

(00:29:13):

And on the next slide, you can see one of the quotes from one of the Black queer leaders we interviewed from a state local organization. And their observation is that part of the challenge is that we're not ready to fight the right, in part because we're beating each other up, looking at each other sideways as if, as they put it, other people in our camp are the same as these people who are literally legislating violence

against people's bodies. And so their analysis was that a lot of the staff drama that they were experiencing, they were seeing other Black leaders experiencing was fundamentally a wrestling with some core questions around organizational values that just needed to be moved through and that leaders were struggling to manage and move their organizations through those difficult conversations.

(00:30:09):

And so that's our recap of some of the key findings from the reporting. We wanted to wrap that up with just some big questions that really did come up for us and for the sector around how can we really support organizational leaders to not just have the ups and downs of funding, but be able to sustain their organizations and sustain their leadership for the long term. And so that's really the core question that we're bringing into this conversation with our panelists. But want to pause here and give everybody an opportunity to introduce themselves. And so the question that we're going to start with for everyone is really to give you a chance to just talk about your own pathway into leadership and also your own reflections about your Blackness and how it impacts your leadership. And is it okay if I start with Gina? Do you want to kick us off and then we can move from there?

Gina Womack (00:31:19):

Sure. Good afternoon, good morning to some. My name is Gina Womack. I'm a co-founder and executive director of Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated children, FFLIC for short, she/her/hers. And so just wanted to also add some of the things that we thought about prioritizing. I just wanted to also echo what some folks had said that we are organizing, we recognize the need for us to pause and prioritize wellness and self-care. And so my pathway into leadership definitely started organically. I was the office manager for the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, and after hearing horrific stories from families, mostly Black mothers who shared their stories of struggle to find support for their children, and when they didn't find the support that they needed, instead their child was pushed into the criminal justice system.

(00:32:24):

As a single mom raising three children, I quickly recognized that our freedoms were intricately connected. And that turned me into a fierce advocate, bringing together a support group of mothers of incarcerated children that we developed into what we call the Close Tallulah Now Campaign. And that was at the founding of FFLIC. We were able to build power and educate families. And not only that, but close one of the country's most notorious youth prisons. So 25 years later, I'm now a Kellogg fellow. And as this has been a long journey, being able to be able to learn what was happening in the system in Louisiana, as well as what is needed to run an organization. So I've been working really hard to get the support and the tools that we've needed for our organization.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld (00:33:25):

Thanks so much, Gina. And any reflections on how your own race and Blackness have impacted the way that you have chosen to lead?

Gina Womack (00:33:36):



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Yeah, definitely. We work with, again, families whose children are impacted by the system. And so again, it definitely makes me know that we have to really listen to our community in order to be able to develop and grow our organization. So it's definitely one of our value systems. And so knowing as, again, a Black mom, a single mom, we come from an interesting perspective. And so it takes time to develop our leadership and we are needing to hear what families need and work from that perspective. And it definitely impacts the way I move as a leader. I make decisions based on impact or input, rather, of our youth and our families. And that has been one of the values that we utilize and move from at our organization because I can't know what another mom or young person experienced. I don't know their path. And so we have to join together to commune and gather and gain understanding on how we're going to fight and push for changes in our communities and throughout the system.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([00:35:04](#)):

Thanks so much. Toni-Michelle, can you introduce yourself and let folks know about your own pathway into leadership and your reflections on race, identity and how it all impacts your leadership?

Toni-Michelle Williams ([00:35:19](#)):

Yeah, sure. Hey everybody, happy Wednesday. My name is Toni-Michelle Williams. I go by my first name Toni-Michelle. My pronouns are she and beautiful. And I have been positioned to lead an incredible, fiery, fierce organization in Atlanta called the Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative or SnapCo. Throughout the socials, we're known as Snap for Freedom, many names, many iterations, much love because we do a lot of good work. I started my leadership journey actually just as a student organizer and leader. I had to navigate at a HBCU being Black and trans and non-binary. And although a lot of my Blackness was centered at a historically Black college, my experiences as a queer person and trans person was not. And so I oftentimes had to fight within the institution that I was given monies to, to be seen, to have opportunity to lead and was given those opportunities thanks to other Black women leaders who had eyes and hearts open for young folks like me.

([00:36:53](#)):

And over the years, that's still been my heart to fight for folks and to fight for everybody even when they don't fight for me. And knowing that that's the only way that we all get free and that I won't be old in a corner by myself, but there's love pouring and sending to me spiritually and physically in all the ways. And so that has been my commitment and why I've engaged in movement for so long. And I've, at SnapCo., been able to really practice and create, envision what those spaces are for other trans, Black and queer leaders and organizers and young people, that there is an institution that is preparing them to lead and that gives them the space to try out all of the creative ways that they find themselves. And so that's what we are up to in Atlanta.

([00:38:01](#)):

And at Snapco., we were on just the pre-call at 12:30 and I was sharing a story around being around white people and them looking at me like, "Well, honey, what is there that you have to possibly juggle during this time? We're all doing these things." And I'm like, "Well, baby, being Black is something to juggle, being transsexual is something to juggle." And so I think that that sentiment is so real for so many of us that we know that we all hold so many things. We all hold grief in ways that are unimaginable. We

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hold joy in ways that are similar, whether it be through music, the arts or community building, but we hold a lot of things, especially at this time. And so being able to practice grace and silliness and using comedy to keep us connected and to move through the moves of genocide and heartache and violence is important to our work.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([00:39:32](#)):

Thanks so much. Richard, want to turn it to you to introduce yourself, share about your background and any reflections on your race and impact on your leadership.

Richard Wallace ([00:39:47](#)):

Yeah. Well thank you for the question. It's good to see everybody on the panel. My name is Richard Wallace, he and his. I'm the founder of an organization in Chicago called Equity and Transformation. We also got a chapter in Joliet. Shout out to Tyse. I see you on the chat. It's always good to see family on the call. They also hold you accountable. So you got to be honest and that's a good thing. And so who am I? I'm the grandson of Alma Taylor and Columbus Taylor, who made their way to Chicago during the Great Migration. And they had my mother, Queen Makita, aka Reverend Green, aka mama, who was an activist and an organizer who began organizing behind the prison walls in the '80s.

([00:40:37](#)):

And so she would take me back behind the prison walls as a baby, and I would sit at the feet of some of the most profound people, and I'd always wonder why they were in cages. She ended up falling in love with an incarcerated person. His name is Mike Smith, that's my stepfather. And we would go visit him and he would read Souls of Black Folks to me from W.B. Du Bois. And so I was reading Souls of Black Folks and all of those things. Fast-forward, there's a moment in my life where I was incarcerated too, and I was writing him letters from the penitentiary to the penitentiary.

([00:41:17](#)):

And so I come from organizing, I come from hardship. And I think that my mother and my stepfather taught me what organizing was all about because even through my contradictions, they held me. Even through my failings, they held me. And I think that's an important attribute to an organizer. It is not just can you move this policy? It is, let me walk with you and some days even crawl with you towards this destination of healing from the wounds of the current system that we're under. And so I say that to say that as a formerly incarcerated Black leader from the city of Chicago, there is no days off. Whether the funding comes or doesn't come, we got to organize. And it's because my freedom is intrinsically linked to the conditions that need to shift. So although I do want, shout out resource, our organizing resource us in real ways, but the reality is that the work has been going on without resources and it will continue to go on.

([00:42:35](#)):

And so I'm grateful to be on this panel. I will get into the discussion of how and why we need resources to do our work. And I will say that one of the core reasons why we need resources to do our work is that some of the greatest beneficiaries of the workforce development organization, some of the greatest beneficiaries of social change are the employees themselves. They get a guaranteed income, they get universal healthcare. And for a number of our staff, we hire impacted individuals. That is actually a

qualification on the application. And so if you're formerly incarcerated and for the first time you've actually gotten a salary, you've actually gotten medical care, what that means is that folks are going to the doctor on a regular basis. That means that we're actually addressing life expectancy, which is 71 for Black folks in the city of Chicago, which is down to 10 years below the average, or whatever the case may be, I forget the exact numbers. But then you're also getting income. So we're addressing the racial wealth gap. We're addressing the unemployment statistics.

(00:43:46):

And so if we want to get to the root of it, we have to resource the organizations and also resource the organizations that are investing in the lives of the people that need to change, that are actually hiring folks that are system impacted. It changes things. And I'll say this just as an anecdote. One of our staff went from having no license, showing up driving without L's to getting his license to actually buying a car, to moving into his own apartment, his own home, over the course of two years. And that changed an intergenerational story. And so for me, I feel like that is also important and key to the work that we're doing and why it needs to be invested in. So thank you. And I'll pass it back to the center.

Adaku Utah (00:44:44):

Goose bumps. Y'all feel that? Thank you, Gina, thank you, Toni-Michelle, thank you, Richard for sharing the lineage of the organizing traditions and the intentions that y'all come from and for staying in and really holding at the core relationship, how we move and crawl with our people so that we can not only re-shift power, govern on our own terms, but also, as Toni-Michelle said, grieve together, have joy together, break bread together so that regardless of whether we get these resources, although we need them, we are still going to show up. We are still going to show up.

(00:45:26):

So speaking of resources, Toni-Michelle, I want to bring you in again. We know that we are still going to do the work regardless, and resources matter. The example that Richard just gave is one of many examples that all of us have witnessed to some degree when we have the right resources coming in on our own terms. And then the other side is true is when those resources are taken away, there is a huge impact, not only on the livelihood of Black people, but the ways in which infrastructure can be built and...

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:46:04]

Adaku Utah (00:46:03):

... but the ways in which infrastructure can be built and sustained. So I'm curious for you, Toni-Michelle, we've been talking about this funding Cliff. I'm curious, how did it impact you as a leader, your organization, and what were some of the ways that you saw that Cliff and also responded to support the organizing that you're doing?

Toni-Michelle Williams (00:46:24):

Absolutely. Well, I've been with the Solution Stop Punishment Collaborative. We actually celebrate our 11th year anniversary this year. We started as like most organizations do as a coalition, a group of

organizations that came together to fight against the crappy things that were happening in the city of Atlanta. At that time, back in 2013, the city of Atlanta was trying to pass a piece of legislation that would banish people, particularly Black trans women who were charged with prostitution or solicitation. The punishment was banishment, right? And if you've ever been to Atlanta, you know that Atlanta is right in the middle of a circle of a metropolitan area that everyone has to cross through, pass, move in, work in, operate in however, which way. Folks came together to really again, support the future and livelihood of folks who were surviving and engaging in quality of life, work and underground work, like sex work, like drug work.

[\(00:47:50\):](#)

And there were just a group of folks who loved that work, won and got an opportunity to build and create more alternatives to policing based upon that work. And I joined the organization back in 2015. I've been with Snap Co now for nine years, and in the height of the pandemic was 20... Well, right before the pandemic 2019, our ed or founder of the Racial Justice Action Center was like, "Hey, y'all, there are many things happening and I need rest. I need to pour back into myself, into my love. I've birthed and have doula-ed so many projects and movements, and so this is an opportunity for us to recreate something. And so either you can take it and run with it or you can lay it to rest with me and let's sunset this thing." And so the Aries in me was just like, "I want to try it. Let me see if we can do this thing." And so at the height of the pandemic, well right before the pandemic, I chose to learn more about ED-ship and commit myself to the role. I was appointed in January of 2020.

[\(00:49:24\):](#)

And then, as we all know, February came quick, baby. March came quick. And so the challenges of operating a nonprofit and definitely a new iteration, really like a startup of nonprofit, although we're 11 years old, this iteration is truly like four years old, that we came into our work with about \$300,000. And by the end of year one of the pandemic we had reached one million. And so we were learning... We were blessed in so many ways, but we were again faced with the opportunity and the challenge of how do we sustain these funds? How do we do a few things? Number one, stay relevant to community. And really by asking ourselves really, who are our people? Not this grandiose, "Who are our people? Where are they at?" But, "Who are these people that's right there? Who's always at the door? Who's always going to need the things and who's always going to give back to the things? And who are the donors who have been committed to us?"

[\(00:50:40\):](#)

And so similar to the report, a lot of our monies were foundation heavy. And so we really used the opportunity to invest our funds in a few things. Number one, a development team as a small nonprofit, they're in BIPOC led, queer/trans led organization. It's rare that we are filled with the roles that sustain large organizations. And so we wanted to make sure that we had a development director, whether it be a contractor or a role for a grants' writer. We wanted to have those things. And then we also wanted to shore up again how we stay relevant, but then also how we stay authentic to our blackness and transness and our queerness. So that took some marketing work and narrative building. And so we wanted to make sure that we were investing our resources and email marketing structures that we didn't have before.

[\(00:51:55\):](#)

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Our social media and other platforms that we're communicating with, make sure that those graphics were sexy and inviting and that our language was clear around, although we are a trans-led organization, that we're fighting for everybody and we need everyone. So we wanted to really invest in those departments and into those structures as the work speaks for itself. We talked about no matter if we get the funds or not, the work is going to be done. And so we just wanted to make sure that we were sustained across the board and pilot new programs that again allowed us to be in a lane that was specifically supporting trans people in the south and trans people in Atlanta. Over the last four years, we've seen a rise in violence, particularly murders against trans people in Atlanta. Most folks know Atlanta as the Black, I don't like to use the word Mecca, but the Black hub of the world, of the nation, the queer hub.

(00:53:01):

Atlanta has four different moments of pride throughout the year, but we don't talk about... we talk about the lineage of the civil rights movement, but we're not talking about enough cop city. We're not talking about the murders and deaths of Black trans women, the rapes of Black trans men and masculine folks that literally happened down the street a year ago. So we wanted to be able to pilot new initiatives that brought more awareness, that supported, again, building our narrative around the why and the how as we were sustaining how we were doing it and leading the work.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld (00:53:51):

Toni-Michelle, thanks so much for sharing about the kind of strategic investments that you all made that were possible. I want to switch to pose a question to Gina about... this also is a moment of rising external threats. And as we were talking earlier, there were also these internal tensions that a lot of organizations were managing and trying to balance. So curious, your reflections during this period of time over the last few years of what you observed in terms of the threats and the internal tensions and your own response, but also what kind of support either did you take advantage of or would've been beneficial to be able to navigate these difficult waters?

Gina Womack (00:54:42):

Thank you for that. That's definitely a big question. I think one of the things, as the report has stated, not all of the Black-led organizations benefited from the additional funding, and I think that also continued to perpetuate division and competition. So instead of sometimes really coordinating the work around criminal justice and the juvenile justice, we end up working in silos a lot. And so sometimes there's just these unintended consequences that work gets recreated and we end up working all over each other, and that just sometimes can set us back. So I know here in Louisiana over the past several years, our office of Juvenile Justice who oversees the state youth prisons has come under scrutiny around the reports of abuse shackling and human rights violations.

(00:55:42):

And so FLCC has been working a fight against the youth who had been transferred to the Angola State Prison, but we experienced a lot of pushback from some of our close allies who, because of the different focus on whether... FLCC focuses on abolition and some folks focus on around the conditions of a confinement and the illegal act of putting children in adult systems, that creates some tension. So again,

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you see a lot of the divide and conquer that has happened opposed to, again, really looking at the bigger picture and how we can work together to coordinate the services for our young people and in our communities. And so I think that's just been a huge struggle and a lot like what Toni-Michelle was saying in regards to how be an organization, to adhere to the community, to really work and hear from our families and our young people who are impacted and what their needs are. And then also balance what it takes to create and develop your organization, if you will.

(00:57:04):

And how sometimes looking at being true to hearing from our community, and you have so many things that are happening in the moment to be able to stay focused on that, but also really look at what it takes to maintain an organization. And that's been really huge. And as Toni-Michelle mentioned, to go from a 300,000 or \$500,000 organization to a million dollar organization, the struggles that takes and having to make sure you have the qualified staff to be able to work in those spaces. So we've definitely heard from our counterparts what that looks like. We can support those organizations new that's coming up so that we could be able to spend more time coordinating the more meaningful work, but also maintaining an organization. I think that that has just been a huge internal and external struggle, building the capacity of our members who we also hire from our membership base. A lot of times our folks are impacted, but having that kind of communication around what it takes to run an organization.

(00:58:31):

Shout out to you, Toni-Michelle, to be able to jump in and take over that space and being able to grow your leadership from the inside to really have folks understand what it looks like to build the capacity. And again, and to continue to focus on wellness and the development of our family members while also maintaining the organization. I think it's has definitely been a challenge, but also bringing the outside community and look at issues from a holistic perspective, I think has also been an internal struggle that we've been having to work with.

Adaku Utah (00:59:25):

Thank you for your generosity, Gina. I think sometimes in the presence of a lot of generosity and abundance, some people can hoard their resources and keep it to themselves. And what I'm hearing you speak about is just passing it forward. So really investing in other organizations and supporting how they grow as they... whether get an influx in financial resources or an influx in community members. And that is hard to do. So in addition to supporting your own organization. So just want to shout you out in doing that. And in the report, that was one of the... in terms of sustenance and how folks were able to sustain themselves into the future, there were so many leaders who kept talking about what you're saying, Gina, is just this interdependence between Black-led organizations between black leaders to figure out, okay, how do we do this right now in the midst of so much chaos and contradiction?

Gina Womack (01:00:26):

Right, exactly. As you mentioned earlier, the work is interconnected, and when funders shift their focus, it's like, "Where are you going? We're going to be working with the same community members." And so really trying to spend time to educate the funders around those particular issues. And also, like you just mentioned, making sure that we are able to share our experiences and learning to help develop and



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build organizations that are coming to existence continually out of the need that we hear from our community and family members.

Adaku Utah ([01:01:08](#)):

Beautiful. Thank you, Gina. Richard, I want to bring you into this conversation around external threats and internal tensions. All of you were really clear about your assessment around the conditions. And Black people were innovating, Black people were building out alternative ecosystems of care that we're not relying on the state and also experimenting with what might an infrastructure look like that can support where we are now and where we're headed. And so I'm curious, what were some of the strategic innovations that you all tried on at EAT in Chicago? And also if you want to shout out other examples that you saw in the movement landscape, feel free to share too.

Richard Wallace ([01:01:58](#)):

Thank you. Again, I'm Rich with EAT in Chicago. I mean, there was a ton of innovation. We would not have made it through the COVID-19 pandemic without the leadership of grassroots Black-led organizations, very specifically, interventions like the CARES Act excluded folks that were formerly incarcerated, who hadn't worked... Let me put it right, excluded folks who hadn't worked in the last five years or who owed child support. And so for us, it was like, "Actually, folks who hadn't worked in the last five years and didn't have the money to take care of their children are probably in the most need during the pandemic." And what did work from home actually mean for folks who were activated in our space, which is the street economy? There is no work from home option. There is no Zoom option if you make your money on the ground. And so they had to be out in the streets. And at the same time, there were dispersal orders and curfews put in place.

([01:02:59](#)):

And so our folks were in very complicated relationships with the state in a number of ways in the city of Chicago. So it called our movement organizations like EAT, like many others who began doing mutual aid during that time. We were also battling the ghost of Tuskegee. We're not necessarily believing that this COVID-19 thing is real. And so we had to get out in community and actually have real conversations with folks about COVID-19 and how to keep themselves safe, particularly when the largest COVID-19 cluster was actually in Cook County jail at the time. And Black folks were the ones that were dying right around the COVID-19. So I think when it comes to the alternatives, one is it's immediate. It's in our bones. We don't need a strategic plan and five year, a flow chart. We know what we need to do when we need to do it. And I think the pandemic showed us that we could do that.

([01:03:54](#)):

I think behind the COVID-19 pandemic, what we saw was we had distributed direct financial assistance to 875 households. And we had no idea how to tell that story because we didn't do a lot of... it wasn't a qualitative study, a quantitative study, so we couldn't say, "Here's a survey, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera." We're also in a moment where we had fought [inaudible 01:04:23], the first recreational cannabis policy to include reparations for the war on drugs, which was implemented in 2020. And legalization, this is a year after legalization in a legal economy. We saw that there was over 8,000 arrests in the city of Chicago for cannabis, and this is under legalization. And there were primarily Black folks.

80% of those that were arrested in 2021 for cannabis under legalization were Black in the state of Illinois. We're like, "Oh, well this ain't reparations." And so also one of the things that we learned is that there was a defund.

[\(01:05:07\)](#):

And I also want to shout out to the movement, right? Because at times there's this... I feel like this disconnect with the power that we have and this kind of tendency to fold back and reassess when in actuality we had power. When the White House is on the floor talking about defund, that's a monumental moment in the history of movement building when you have folks on the floor talking about presidents, et cetera, talking about this framework that started with grassroots organizing, that's a big moment. That doesn't mean we don't have power. That means we have power. But thinking about the learnings from that moment around divest-invest, which is really the framework that this came from, is that there was, I think a hunger and community for a deeper discussion around what the alternatives are. And as abolitionists, we've been funded and we've been trained to articulate very well the system that we want to deconstruct. Where is the investment and the work around... Abolition is a two-sided paradigm. It is dismantle and rebuild.

[\(01:06:20\)](#):

Where's the investment in the work around imagining what the systems are that we are going to rebuild? The piloting of the systems that we want to see rebuilt. That investment has been one-sided, and so our organizations have been one-sided. We can talk very clearly about what it is that we want to dismantle, but when it comes to what it is we want to rebuild, there is less curiosity. And one of the things that I've noticed within at Equity And Transformation is that the community is hungry for it. They're excited for it, they're into it. You ain't really got to do a whole lot of talking them into this, right? And I know I'm talking about a lot of things. At the same time, there was a tax credit expansion intervention that was a ballot initiative that would've definitely benefited Black communities primarily, would've primarily benefited Black communities, but there was no political education done in community around it.

[\(01:07:19\)](#):

And so progressive organizations, movement organizations were frustrated with the outcome of the ballot initiative, but had never done the actual work of boots on the ground political education in community around what this alternative actually can do. So they didn't necessarily see themselves in the ballot initiative. And some of them just didn't... either they didn't vote or didn't know what the question was, so they just either left it blank or didn't fill it out or filled it out wrong. And so for me, it was like, "Oh no, we need real investment in the realm of alternatives." So we built out a program called the Chicago Future Fund, which was a guaranteed income program that really came out of our work around reparations.

[\(01:08:02\)](#):

It came out of the vision for Black Lives, which came through the movement for Black Lives. And it was like, "Okay, well, in a world where you've actually legalized recreational cannabis and you have this well of Black informal workers who were part of the legacy market, that mean the legacy market before it was legal and not necessarily being... they're not the primary beneficiaries in this recreational market. Why don't we create a way to really satisfy compensation to those survivors?" And so for us, the Chicago

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Future Fund was more than just saying and educating people on reparations. It was like, "Our folks actually need real life, lived experience in the alternative." And so for us, we built the Chicago Future Fund to really model what compensation could look like and for the community members in Austin, Englewood, West Garfield Park, to actually experience the alternative. So now we have a whole host of-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:09:04]

Richard Wallace ([01:09:03](#)):

... experience the alternative. So now we have a whole host of folks that have actually experienced this, and so when it does hit the ballot, they're like, "Man, Joe, I know what they talking about because so-and-so was in the program. No strings attached, they got compensated." They become believers in the vision, not because we just talking about it, but because we're building it, we're building the alternative. And I think that same model needs to be replicated as it relates to the other pain points within our community, as it relates to safety, as it relates to housing. And so there's work that's happening around solidarity economy work. There's work that's happening around worker's co-ops. There's work that's happening, and that work needs to be invested in, supported because that is how the vision of abolition actually wins.

([01:09:48](#)):

And last thing I'll say is that a lot of our grassroots organizations, we don't get access to the research money. I'm being very honest. Y'all do not cut us checks for research, and we can do the research. Matter of fact, most of the resource organizations that you do fund share crop to us in order to complete and fulfill their research obligations. They can't do it without us. And so fund us so that we can actually have the research personnel, which is necessary because research is the language that the bureaucrats speak in, to defend the interventions that need to be made in order to win towards this vision. And so I'm going to say that and put it back in the middle. And all of that what I just said is kind of like my answer to the question. But yeah, it's really posing a commitment from funders to invest in our organizations in a more robust fashion.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([01:10:47](#)):

Thanks so much, Richard. And want to invite folks to pose questions, utilize the Q&A if you have questions for the panelists. And as folks are coming up with questions, did want to pose a question to our panel related to innovations, I guess, to sort of stay on this theme that Richard was lifting up around innovative strategies, innovative investments, and how you all have seen those impact the building and sustainability of infrastructure for your organizations, organizing infrastructure in your communities, just organizing capacity for our movements. What have been the innovations or interventions that you all have seen that have helped to build the kind of infrastructure that we're all going to need collectively to win for the long term? Curious if any one of Toni-Michelle, Gina or Richard want to start us off with sharing some of those highlights.

Toni-Michelle Williams ([01:12:04](#)):

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I can start. I think Richard hit a lot of them when talking about the creation and commitment to mutual aid in community as an initiative to support community engagement and sustainability. In Atlanta, SnapCo also supports our community with a mutual aid fund called the Taking Care of Our Own Fund, supporting black trans and queer folks with emergency bailouts and transitional housing in addition to making any necessary referrals to mental health support, other community engagement opportunities and all of that good jazz. We also piloted two programs, one called the Trans Safety Initiative. Again, as we're imagining safety for our folks in the south in a time where there's heightened violence and scary rhetoric that puts most LGBTQ youth and specifically trans youth at more risk.

[\(01:13:46\)](#):

And we know that visibility is not all that is required to keep people safe. In fact actually, as we've seen more visibility for trans and folks, whether it be in the media or bathrooms, causes there to be more panic and more confusion and rapid response that's harmful to the communities that they're targeting. And so our Trans Safety Initiative was really focused on piloting collaborations with tech companies, particularly the Citizen app, to offer up free premium subscriptions to trans people across the city that allows them to have direct communication with an agent within five seconds outside of the police. And sometimes and most oftentimes outside of the community, folks are busy, not answering the phone. But for a trans woman who's navigating public transit, it's not always the safest thing.

[\(01:15:03\)](#):

So we wanted to make sure that folks were shored up and piloting, again, initiatives like that. We also hosted an expungement clinic and collaborated with the City of Atlanta as well as the Law for Black Lives to do the research and program design for our expungement clinic. And yes, expungement clinics happen often within city government entities. But again, oftentimes trans folks don't necessarily have the IDs and documentation that support navigating legal systems. And again, wanting to create something that supports our people in real time. And now we're gearing up for the third phase of this safety initiative, which is focused not just on expungements and/or tech, but on documents. And so we're hosting our second documents clinic where we're focusing on legal name changes for trans and non-binary folks in addition to securing passports for trans folks, as we know that on a state level it's really hard for trans folks to get their gender markers changed, but on the federal level it's a little easier to navigate. So we wanted to imagine a city, and again, a south where trans folks are traveling freely with the correct documentations that they need to last us through the pandemic and also past the pandemic. So those are some of the creative things that we've been doing, again, to support our community, but sustain our base, which sustains our organization and our retention and the buy-in that our institution is necessary for our folks.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld [\(01:17:06\)](#):

Thanks so much. Toni-Michelle. And Gina, want to also give you a chance to talk about innovations that you all had with FFLIC in terms of organizing strategy and infrastructure, and noting that there was a question in response to something you shared about the divide and conquer strategy that happens between peer organizations and just the interests in understanding how that was addressed with peer organizations. And after you have any reflections on that, if Richard or Toni-Michelle have other strategies around addressing divide and conquer, would welcome that as well. But Gina, I want to start with you.

Gina Womack ([01:17:46](#)):

Definitely. That was a lot and a big question. But mutual aid is definitely the topic right now. And so in addition, just thinking about having to be innovative around those issues, in addition to what was already mentioned, we're in Louisiana, we're in the south and we're gearing up for the hurricane season. And Louisiana is a scary time, not only for our policies that we have to constantly develop and be innovative around developing toolkits for education and all of those things, but what does mutual aid look like when it's this time of the year and everything is around preparing? And so that also means that a lot of our families just don't have access or the ability to be able to prepare and plan for evacuation or staying put.

([01:18:43](#)):

And so we have been working on mutual aid and hearing from, again, our community and what the needs are. And sometimes it may be funding to leave or developing a methodology out of the city. How can we collaborate and work together so that we can pull resources for our families to be able to evacuate? Or what is the process that we need to be able to communicate with loved ones who are incarcerated and developing a system of communication so that, one, we have to fight and make sure that the young people who are incarcerated, that they are evacuated properly and not afterthought? And so not to belabor that, but that's just a huge issue when we are working with leaders, we have to think about those things that may be a little bit outside of criminal justice or juvenile justice.

([01:19:46](#)):

But in regards to the part around the divide and conquer or working in silos, definitely we don't have all of the answers, but I do think that trying to work on a continuum and hear from our community partners on what their messages are and tie those things together. And I think Richard, you said that really well in regards to how we're working to build this movement. And so it just means that we're doing connected work, so how can we coordinate it much better so that we're working in a continuum and not in a silo where we don't have to ignore our counterparts, but we want to be able to bring those folks along with us. And so sharing opportunities for funding sources, talking to our funders about who our partners are so that there's a huge understanding that we are in this work together. Are there ways that we can provide support from the money that we may be able to have so that we are not working as a division, but rather as a collective?

([01:21:19](#)):

And I do think that that takes a lot of work. And so even talking to our funders about what that looks like, how we're really working in collaborations or in partnerships, I think are things that we are grappling with. And if you're developing a liberation curriculum over here, we can send our young people and our parents and we can go to your training. We don't all have to develop the same kinds of training. And if we're working on the school to prison pipeline, what does that look like? That's huge. And so climate and all of those things are part of the school to prison pipeline. So how can we map those things out so you're working on this piece and we're working on the next piece, and we're actually really building a continuum? It's a lot of work. It's very complicated because we got to get on the same page on what that looks like.

([01:22:24](#)):

Richard, you were talking about abolition, and we can't just get rid of all the prisons, but what are the solutions to those pieces that we can build and talking about it from a collective holistic perspective? I think we've spent a good amount of time being able to try to do that work. So it's like, yeah, we need these support, we need a better education system. We're just hearing that from our communities and wanting to bring all of that along with us. But again, it's a process. And so we have to recognize that it's long term. And again, if we are talking about the work that we were doing around sending our kids to Angola, I think the light bulb went off for a lot of folks and they were like, "Oh, this is a larger issue, and if we don't work together, this is what happens." Because we are over here and all of a sudden we turn, and even after all the work from a FFLIC perspective, I had to look up and say, how is it that the governor just chose to ignore and send our kids to Angola? And so it's just incumbent upon us. We got to work together or things are going to slip through the cracks.

Sean Thomas-Breitfeld ([01:23:56](#)):

Thanks so much. And Richard, did you have thoughts on this question about collaboration and working with peer organizations not being pitted against each other?

Richard Wallace ([01:24:07](#)):

Yeah. To be honest, I think philanthropy has to do their due diligence. I'm going to keep it a buck. If I go to Atlanta, I'm going to meet somebody that knows Snap. You get what I'm saying? If you come to Chicago, you're going to meet somebody that knows E. If you're actually doing the work, invest in organizations that are doing the work, don't invest in brands, invest in organizations that are actually doing the work. And that seeds out competition. There's nothing worse than going through, I'll say the Mackenzie Scott situation. It was like a peer review grant process. I'm like, unless these peers are community members in Austin, Englewood, West Garfield Park, then who's reviewing these grant applications? And so for me it was like, nah, what would've made more sense is that you could have used those resources to send someone to the City of Chicago, knock doors and be like, "Have you heard of this organization, particularly because they say they organize in your community?" And if they say yes then move the resources.

([01:25:11](#)):

But the idea that the competition comes through, I think a lot of those interventions where philanthropy chooses not to do their due diligence and lean on trusted voices, whatever the case may be. But I think they need to invest in their due diligence and actually invest in the organizations that are doing the work, that are committed to doing the work. And I think that'll address some of the underpinnings around competition because if you're doing the work, there aren't that many people with you. You know what I mean? There's a few organizations in each states that are actually committed to doing the work. Fund those organizations and find out who those organizations are, I think is the hard part, is actually find out who those organizations are. I think in some ways philanthropy got lazy and are just like, "We're just going to invest in what we see." But what rises to the top is not always what's moving the grass. And so we need people that are going to actually go and do their due diligence, find out who the organizations are that are doing the work, interview community, and then do some investment. I don't want to speak negatively on any organizations. You know what I'm saying? And I don't necessarily believe in that. We don't innately have competition. It becomes competition when resources are added to the mix. And so



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it's not necessarily our problem to solve, you know what I mean? We got to exist in our work and we can show you our work and you should invest in that work. As it relates to the competition thing, I don't know how to answer that. But yeah, that's what I guess I can add to the conversation and put it back in the middle.

Adaku Utah ([01:27:06](#)):

Y'all heard it, some real crisp and clear calls to action, and not just as a funder if you're in the funder seat, but also if you are a community leader, if you are somebody who cares deeply and loves black people or want to see less investment in the state and prisons and more investment in communities, or you want to see trans women live into the future, or you want to make sure that our democracy does not turn into a dictatorship, be really intentional about where and how you are resourcing. And the report has all of this goodness that y'all just got to receive, but also additional calls to action that black leaders have been making for some time and are still calling in folks to show up and do better.

([01:27:57](#)):

And I want to quote Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson, long time organizer from the South, "Fund us. Work with us like you want us to win." So when you imagine winning, who is in that image? Who's in that vision? Hopefully it's all of us. And in the ways that we collaborate and the ways that we do research, in the ways that we organize, in the ways that we build relationship, how might that be a through line, especially in these times right now when so much is at stake and so many of our folks are dying at the hands of fascism and white nationalism and climate catastrophe? So we're going to end here, and we want to say thank you all so much. Thank you so much, Gina. Thank you, Rich. Thank you Toni-Michelle. Thank you for the work that you've been doing. Thank you for how you love upon our communities, and we have a deep commitment to each of you on the panel and also all of you in this work. That is part of how we get to literally build movements in these times.

([01:29:11](#)):

And we will be sharing out the recording as well as the slides so that you have access to that. Also, just want to drop into the chat, in addition to this research, we also have public programs around how do we build solidarity. That was a word that came up a couple of times in this conversation across different movements. How do we build necessary ecosystems, especially in moments of rapid response, as well as not just focusing on the urgent needs that need to be met, but also building long-term infrastructure? So I put a link into the chat for programs that we have coming up that create some practice spaces, not just conversation spaces, but practice spaces for us to build out what we might need as we move forward in our time. So thank you all so much again. It has been such a pleasure. I'm sending a lot of compassion and care as we figure this stuff out. And remember, you are not alone. We got us. We got us. See you all around soon and thank you again. Thank you, Sean. Appreciate you. So grateful we got to do this together. All right, y'all. Peace.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:30:28]