



Black Power 50: A Funders Conversation

Speaker Bios | June 16, 2016

Dante Barry is a Black writer, grassroots organizer, digital campaigner, and Executive Director of Million Hoodies Movement for Justice, a Black racial justice membership organization working to end mass criminalization and gun violence. Million Hoodies develops the next generation of leaders to end anti-black racism and systemic violence through grassroots organizing, advocacy, and education to build a democracy where all Black and Brown people have social, political, cultural, and economic freedom and the right to be safe. As Director, Dante collaborates with the national leadership, board, and membership to build a powerful network of human rights leaders and a democracy that works for young Black and Brown people.

Sonya Childress is the Director of Partnerships and Engagement for Firelight. In this role she maximizes the impact of films produced by Stanley Nelson and provides engagement support for Producers Lab projects and independent producers. For over fifteen years Sonya has helped organizations, philanthropists and filmmakers use film as a tool to further human rights and social justice. Prior to her work at Firelight, Sonya served as the Promotions Director at California Newsreel and Director of Strategic Partnerships for Active Voice; and has provided engagement support for Kartemquin Films, Working Films and the Independent Television Service (ITVS). She has managed or contributed to numerous high-profile film campaigns including Freedom Summer, Freedom Riders, The Interrupters, Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes, Favela Rising, Farmingville and The New Americans. Sonya has produced countless media tools, including a Get Out The Vote Toolkit for Freedom Summer, video modules for The New Americans and a three-part film series called Immigration: Beyond the Headlines.

Makani Themba is Chief Strategist at Higher Ground Change Strategies based in Detroit, Michigan. A social justice innovator and pioneer in the field of change communications and narrative strategy, she has spent more than 20 years supporting organizations, coalitions and philanthropic institutions in developing high impact change initiatives. Higher Ground Change Strategies is her newest project, which she describes as “a place where change makers can get the support they need to take their work to the next level.” Higher Ground helps partners integrate authentic engagement, systems analysis, change communications and more for powerful, vision-based change. Previously, Makani served as the founder and executive director of The Praxis Project, a nonprofit organization helping communities use media and policy advocacy to advance health justice. Under her leadership, The Praxis Project raised more than \$20 million for advocacy organizations working in communities of color and provided training and technical assistance to hundreds of organization and public agencies nationwide. These initiatives include Communities Creating Healthy Environments (C-CHE), an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support policy advocacy to advance healthy food outlets and safe places to play in communities of color and Building Capacity Building Power, a partnership with Ford Foundation to support grassroots civic engagement and Policy Advocacy on Tobacco and Health (PATH)

Nat Chioke Williams leads the Hill-Snowdon Foundation in its philanthropic and programmatic work, operations and partnerships within the community. Nat manages HSF's Youth Organizing and Fund for DC programs. He is also responsible for developing learning and leveraging opportunities in these program areas. Nat is also leading up the Foundation's newly launched Making Black Lives Matter Initiative (MBLM), a three year grantmaking and strategic co-funding initiative that seeks to maximize this historic moment to begin building long term institutional and political power for Black social change and racial justice. In partnership with other social justice funders, Nat has been involved with the development of Grantmakers for Southern Progress, a network of local, regional and national funders committed to facilitating joint learning, collaboration and leveraging of new resources to help build a vibrant and enduring infrastructure for social justice in the US South, and currently serves as co-chair of the group.