



ABFE

A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities

Philanthropy's New Priority: Black Women

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March 2018



Black women are boss. Black women are a political force in elections. Black women are likely to graduate from high school, attend and graduate from college. More education often means more money, making Black women an economic force even as single heads of households. Black women are the leaders of Black social change. We are boss.

Black women have led social change movements throughout the history of the United States. From Abolition to Civil Rights, from Black Lives Matter to the halls of Congress, Black women are leading social change and demanding our time now. Having worked in communities from Detroit to Denver and New York to New Orleans, we are community organizers, grunt workers, nonprofit leaders, strategists, institution builders and visionaries. Our leadership often comes at a high personal cost but philanthropy does not fairly compensate our labor or indemnify the personal risk that Black women often face. Women who are leading today's movement increasingly find themselves at personal risk and require protection for their families. Does philanthropy provide funding to cover these costs?

What is philanthropy's stake in this most urgent of our social challenges, what is it risking? Investing in Black-led social change is investing in Black women, Black communities, Black-founded and led nonprofits, and next generation leadership. Unfortunately, philanthropy is missing in action when it should be leading.

Philanthropy should be investing in and nurturing the organizations necessary to overcome the structural inequities that permeate our society and marginalize people of color. We need more seats at the table.

This means changing the narrative about Black women. We are not negative data points. We are social and intellectual assets that are essential for social progress - ask Alabama about us. Black women are loving and leading our children and families. We are educated and empowered. We are leaders in our communities and churches.

Most Black families are not poor, contrary to the prevailing narrative. However, society is wedded to the pariah perspective that puts Black men and women at the center of many social ills. Philanthropy can and should lead in changing this narrative. The place to start is with grant making and investments. Foundations must examine and audit the full scope of their “spend”, including investment advisors, accountants, auditors, marketing and communications firms, and commit to more fully leveraging its assets for equity and wealth building. Every penny.

Funding programs alone will not yield sustainable or equitable change in our nation. Likewise, the largesse of charitable giving will not eradicate poverty. We need grantmaking and investment strategies that enable wealth building and inform public policy that remove barriers and create opportunities for Black women to lead, build and promote entrepreneurship. Access to capital should be a high-level priority for philanthropy. Philanthropy must significantly invest in groups and organizations that influence the tax code, health policy, banking regulations and more. Black women leading social change need philanthropy to use grant making as a tool to open doors and remove barriers to opportunities so that we continue to build businesses which employ communities and generate the social innovation that strengthens our nation.

ABFE’s Black Social Change Funders Network goal is a 25 percent increase in giving by the nation’s largest foundations over the next five years, with emphasis on strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led social change. Women are leading Black-led social change. Philanthropy must not ignore or miss this opportunity to invest heavily in and accelerate Black women’s leadership. Participating in the Network signals awareness of this need and opens the door for the alignment of philanthropic priorities with this social reality. The change is here and we need philanthropy to be here also. Black women are boss.

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