



# Hill-Snowdon Foundation

MAKING BLACK LIVES MATTER INITIATIVE

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**HILL SNOWDON FOUNDATION  
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**A Unique Moment & Rare Opportunity**

The tragic killings of Black men, women and boys by mostly white police officers in the past year has sparked a Black social justice movement the likes of which we have not seen since the Civil Rights era. This growing Black Lives Matter movement has the potential to become the Black civil and human rights movement for this generation – confronting structural racism in policing and a host of other issues that constrict the ability for the Black community to thrive and matter in this country. There is a growing opportunity to win policy changes to help ensure greater police accountability and for examining and addressing racial discrimination across many aspects of Black life. However, this opportunity is limited by the relatively under-developed and under-resourced infrastructure for Black-led political and institutional power that currently exists. Black-led organizing and power building/social change organizations have been under-resourced for decades, thereby reducing the capacity to secure substantive change in moments like this. Much of the dynamic organizing that is part of the Black Lives Matter movement is being done by newer formations with limited funds and borrowed or volunteer staff. If these groups and other parts of the Black social change ecosystem are not sufficiently supported, then it is likely we will squander this unique moment for achieving Black social change and racial justice in this country. Consequently, the real opportunity and need in this moment is to strengthen and build the power of the Black community to secure the policy, institutional, political and social changes necessary to make Black lives matter and thrive in this country.

While the issue of police violence has sparked this historic moment, the leaders of the Movement for Black Lives understand that police killings of Black people are perhaps the sharpest point of a very long blade that inflicts daily wounds on the collective body of the Black community. This systemic State violence or death by a thousand cuts spreads across all quarters including housing, education, criminal justice, health, jobs, economic security, environment, reproductive rights, media, social regard, etc. In order to make Black lives matter, we have to figure out how to support work on police accountability while at the same time strengthen the infrastructure to build power and win on the array of issues where Black lives do not matter.

In order to do this there needs to be an explicit focus on strengthening and cultivating Black-led power building organizations, leaders, campaigns, cultural production, strategic analysis and narrative framing. The infrastructure for Black social change has diminished over the last several decades, in part due to the under-resourcing of Black led social change organizations. This has helped create a capacity conundrum for Black led social change organizations and a practice of giving grants to more established, non-Black led groups to win policy campaigns in and for the Black community. The philanthropic community needs to get creative to figure out how to strengthen the capacity of Black led organizations without diminishing their ability to grow the necessary resources and experience to build power.

## **HILL SNOWDON FOUNDATION MAKING BLACK LIVES MATTER INITIATIVE**

As the call for an explicit focus on Black led social change has been increasing, there have been questions about the strategic prudence of this approach, especially in relation to desire to foster multi-racial power building. However, as the institutional and political power of the Black community increases, so too does the strength and effectiveness of multi-racial coalitions that Black organizations and leaders are a part of. The converse is also true - the strength and effectiveness of multi-racial coalitions is limited, in equal measure, by the relatively weak infrastructure for Black institutional and political power. Therefore, we argue that a focus on strengthening Black institutional and political power has the dual effect of addressing the specific issues impacting the Black community and expanding the capacity for multi-racial coalitions to address racial and social justice issues writ large.

### **The Making Black Lives Matter Initiative**

In response to this unique moment and opportunity, the Hill-Snowdon Foundation has developed the **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. The overall framework of the MBLM Initiative is to:

- 1) Win real policy change on police accountability and other issues that limit the ability for Black people to thrive and matter.
- 2) Build the long term Black-led institutional and political power to win on any issue, anywhere.
- 3) Re-capture the public discourse to legitimize the need for Black social change against structural racism.
- 4) Work with philanthropic partners and colleagues to develop an aligned and coordinated strategic co-funding regime to maximize our collective impact.

The desired outcomes of the MBLM Initiative are:

- Actual policy wins that remove racialized barriers and produce concrete outcomes to enable Black communities and people to thrive across a spectrum of issues and places.
- A dynamic, strong, connected and powerful Black-led and allied ecosystem for building power for the Black community
- Notable progress in shifting the public discourse and prevailing narrative that delegitimizes the need for Black social change and justice.

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**Grantmaking**

The Making Black Lives Matter Initiative will make \$900,000 in grants over the next three years in new grants to Black-led organizations building power in the Black community to make Black Lives Matter. The primary purpose of the grants are to:

- Build power to win policy change campaigns on the issue of police accountability and other intersecting issues (e.g., economic security, criminal justice reform, education, etc.) in:
  - **strategically significant places** (e.g., places that are symbolically important (Ferguson; the South, etc);
  - places where there is a good opportunity to win; and
  - places where a win will have broader impact, etc.
    - ***We are looking for reverberating success that can propel support and engagement in the work beyond a particular locale.***
- Strengthen the capacity of and pipeline for Black organizing and power building leadership.
- Provide opportunities for consistent strategic coordination and convening through gatherings and networks.

**Grants will be made to:**

- Black-led organizing groups
- Black-led organizing and training intermediaries
- Black-led coordinating and convening spaces/gatherings

**We define Black-led organizing groups as groups that:**

- have a predominantly Black Board, executive leadership, staff leadership and membership/leadership base; and
- the primary purpose of these groups is to work to build power with and for the Black community.

The reason why Black-led groups are emphasized is in order to facilitate the rebuilding of a Black social change leadership base and pipeline. This can best be achieved through supporting Black leaders in the process of leading organizations, campaigns and through providing supplemental leadership development support. It is also important to work to reverse the historical trend of under-resourcing Black-led groups, particularly Black-led social change groups.

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**Strategic Co-Funding**

The events that spurred the Hill-Snowdon Foundation to develop the MBLM Initiative have also compelled other foundations and donors to act and explore how they can best support racial justice for the Black community. For instance, the North Star Fund created the Let Us Breathe Fund that prioritizes “Black-led and allied organizing of communities directly impacted by “broken-windows policing, poverty and injustice in New York City” and Resource Generation has granted \$1.4 million dollars to Black-led organizing groups across the country working towards Black liberation. In addition to collaborative funds, individual foundations are also developing plans to expand their grantmaking to respond to this moment. To make the most of this moment though, we believe that philanthropy must push beyond its traditional discrete issue focus to adopt an intersectional approach to substantively address structural racism against the Black community.

Consequently, a core component of the Making Black Lives Matter Initiative is to develop a strategic co-funding and joint learning table where funders can coordinate and align their grantmaking for the greatest impact across a range of sectors, issues and strategies. The overall purpose of the table is to help build the institutional and political power of the Black community to make Black lives matter and for the Black community to thrive. There are many different strategies, issues and sectors that need to be involved in order to build the requisite power. Foundations that join the table would continue to fund their typical strategies, issues and sectors, but commit to dedicating a meaningful portion of their work specifically to Black social change and racial justice and to working together with other partners to maximize our impact and learning. For instance, a foundation like HSF would focus on Black-led grassroots organizing and leadership development, while other partners could focus on other strategies that are necessary for building Black political and institutional power, including research, policy and legislative advocacy, strategic communications and media, cultural arts and production and electoral organizing. However, the table will help to ensure that our approaches and grantmaking are in dynamic, reflective, strategic, aligned and coordinated relationship with one another in order to build the overall political and institutional power that is necessary for the Black community to matter and thrive as a whole, on any issue.

We will partner with the Association of Black Funding Executives to host and coordinate the MBLM funder table. We are excited to partner with any and all foundations and donors who are aligned with the purposes of the Making Black Lives Matter Initiative.