



Funding a Racially Just Food System *Reflections on Strategic Resources*

“But all our phrasing -- race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy -- serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions, all land, with great violence, upon the body.” ~ Ta-Nehisi Coates

Strategy #1 Reparations to POC-led Projects

There is a reason why the typical white household has 16 times the wealth of a typical black household - 80% of wealth is inherited, often traceable back to slavery times. Existing policies reinforce and augment the wealth gap. The most important action that people with resources can take to uproot racism is to enact reparations, to quite literally give back what was stolen...We are talking about true reparations, which have the following three characteristics:

1. **“Nothing about us, without us” - Dispossessed people get to define what reparations look like**
 2. **“No strings attached” - transfers of land and resources without oversight or conditionality**
 3. **“The whole pie” - give the land, money, and jobs away, even and especially when it entails personal and organizational sacrifice**
- How does your organization (or how do your grantees) find out which POC led organizations are working toward liberation in your area and what you can do to support?
 - Does your foundation (or do your grantees) practice reparations? If yes, who defines what reparations mean for the communities being partnered with? In which ways are (or can) those who are most affected by the issues involved in this process?
 - What “invisible strings” are attached in receiving funding and other support from your organization?
 - What specific steps can be taken by your organization to “give away the whole pie”?

Strategy #2: How to Distribute Funding

Real change is not simply a result of “numbers of people served.” Donors and foundations can make resources more accessible to frontlines organizations by using guidelines set by the people who are most affected by issues of marginalization.

- How can foundations better “fund what counts” to include general operating expenses, “overhead,” salaries, insurance, and tangibles and take more “risks” in order to put real dollars toward grassroots projects?
- How can the grant process be streamlined to make resources more accessible to frontlines organizations across geographic, racial and class lines?
- How can your organization best respect the time and energy of frontline organizers?
- What are some ways your organization can partner with grantees to offer culturally relevant administrative and technical assistance?

- How can we move the funding world past the quantifiable or instant “results” thinking?

Strategy #3 - Alliances and Relationships With Community

Adopting a listener’s framework is the first step for white people and white-led organizations who want to form interracial alliances. Rather than trying to “outreach” to people of color and convince them to join your initiative, find out about existing community work that is led by people directly impacted by racism and see how you can engage. Frontlines communities have the long term commitment, strategy, and expertise necessary to transform the system.

- What are some next steps/areas of improvement for your organization regarding “interracial alliance building” and engagement vs outreach?
- How are people of color setting the agenda and determining the priorities in your alliance work?
- How is the feedback, time and expertise of people of color invited, valued and compensated by your organization?
- How is your organization proactive about interrupting white supremacist culture and shifting the norms that uphold it?

Strategy #4: Internal Organizational Transformation

Given that fewer than 20% of nonprofit leaders are people of color, it is very likely that you will find yourself working in a white-led organization on social justice issues. There are several inherent problems with this arrangement, from the moral fallacy of the “white savior complex” to the exploitation inherent in “poverty pimping” to keep white do-gooders employed. Existential questions should also arise for. Even with these sticky and challenging questions, many white-led organizations take the courageous step toward internal transformation.

- Is your organization a predominantly white? Can the resources going into your organization be allocated more effectively and justly by investing in Black-led projects?
- From Saving to Serving to Sharing Power. How does your organization work to make itself obsolete by eliminating the roots causes of issues?
- “Racist structures are perpetuated through the accrual of seemingly minor exclusive and bias acts.” Which of the white supremacist patterns (conscious or unconscious) listed in the “Behaviors” section happen within your organization? Which of these do you feel might be the hardest to interrupt or eliminate for yourself or team members within your organization? Why?
- What explicit actions can your organization take to shift power in decision making? Budget and finances? Accessibility of offerings? Commitment to an anti-oppressive culture?

Strategy #5: Self-Reflection and Education

Almost all of us embody a complex matrix of identities, including some that provide social advantage and others that limit access. Explore the “Matrix of Intersectionality” and record your identities in the appropriate categories. Then, share stories related to the identities that are most difficult for you to claim. What action can you catalyze by bringing your privileged identities into awareness?

- What privileges do you hold?
- How can you use them to eliminate inequality and stand for fairness with those who don’t hold the same power?