



A CASE FOR A NATIONAL NETWORK OF DONORS OF COLOR WORKING FOR RACIAL, ECONOMIC AND GENDER EQUITY AND JUSTICE

POC Donor Collaborative

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People of color who have high net worth (HNW) are the “sleeping giants” of social change philanthropy. Their vision, experience and leadership are **potentially transformational to the work of movements for racial, economic, and gender equity.**

For the past two years we have been engaged in direct dialogue with **HNW people of color**. We have learned that there are **nearly 2 million individuals of color with assets over \$1 million** and tens of thousands of people of color with assets greater than \$30 million. We have learned that HNW donors of color are deeply engaged in issues that matter to their lives – including education, access to economic opportunity, cultural and religious giving, and support for families of origin. And we have learned that HNW donors of color are not part of existing political and philanthropic donor networks in significant numbers, nor are they yet connected to each other in powerful networks across race or even within ethnic groups, or by issue area.

This is a moment of **tremendous opportunity** for all those who care about racial, economic and gender equity. Movements led by POC are growing and thriving. Young people are on fire and more politically engaged than they have been in years. The movement for gender equity has never been bigger nor more intersectional in its work.

This is also a moment of crisis. Across the country there is visible, continuing and rising racism, there is entrenched misogyny and deepening inequality all of which seems to have tacit approval and encouragement from political and economic leaders at the top. We see and feel the impact of white nationalism, gender bias, attacks on immigrant communities, xenophobia and significant threats to pathways for economic opportunity for working and middle class people.

Yet at this very moment, there is a significant absence of resources—philanthropic and political capital—to **support those working to advance racial, gender and economic justice.**

Our project aims to change the dynamics, face, and focus of philanthropic giving in the United States by organizing, networking and supporting the voices, leadership, and giving of individual HNW people of color.

Only 8.8% of all grant making in the US in 2011 went to support specific racial and ethnic groups.¹ Less than 7% of grant making in the US goes to issues facing women and girls.² Social justice funding priorities are set by a handful of networks that connect individual donors, yet none of these networks has significant representation and participation by individual philanthropists or donors of color.³

This project exists because we believe we can impact this moment of opportunity. We see the power of OUR own communities of color. **We believe in the power of donors of color** collectively mobilizing for transformative and equitable social change.

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In our lifetimes, there are clear examples of the power of organized money and coordinated donors to move social change. Two examples include: criminal justice reform which is being fueled by new donor investments,⁴ to the movement to pass marriage equality, which has been an example of highly targeted and coordinated donor giving. Opponents of racial equity and gender justice have also used the power of organized donors – consider the impact of the Koch Brothers network of donors and the \$400 million dollars they are expected to contribute in a coordinated manner to support conservative candidates and causes in the midterm elections in 2018.⁵ What can we learn from our opponents? They've focused on infrastructure, strategy, learning from each other and leveraging each other's giving power.

Imagine the power and potential of a network of 200 individual donors of color working regionally or nationally, capable of investing significant resources into a cause or shared objectives; of a network or networks coming together to **learn from each other** to be more effective as donors; hold network **meetings that inform and update members** of the work of leaders of social change movements; of a network or networks connecting to **discuss and share strategies** for social change; and to **set an agenda for philanthropy in this country** through the example of its members' giving.

1. Rick Cohen, Data Snapshot of Racial Justice Grantmaking, [www.racialequity.org](http://racialequity.org), June 2014, at <http://racialequity.org/docs/CIF5Data%20Snapshot%20.pdf>.

2. New York Women's Foundation, <https://www.nywf.org>.

3. See generally, The Apparitional Donor: Understanding & Engaging High Net Worth Donors of Color (2017), available at www.donorsofcolor.org.

4. Phillip Rojic, "Follow The Data: Google Ups its Support for Criminal Justice Reform," Inside Philanthropy, December 12, 2017, available at <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2017/12/12/following-the-data-google-ups-its-support-for-criminal-justice-reform>

5. Jonathan Easley, "Koch network to spend \$400 million on midterm election cycle, The Hill, January 27, 2018 , at <http://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/371069-koch-network-to-spend-400-million-during-2018-midterm-election-cycle>.

What might such a donor network (or networks) look like, how might it be organized, what would it do? We believe there are unlimited possibilities.

A people of color donor network could start as a conference of philanthropists of color – coming together to learn and build a field of knowledge about our giving and values. A people of color donor network could be issue focused, it could be a set of pooled funds focused on particular challenges that individual donors have identified. It could be expressed as a unique free standing institute that supports and nurtures and fosters the giving of people of color. It could be a campaign model that seeks to achieve a goal – changing the board composition of corporate and nonprofit boards so they are 50% people of color led by a certain date. In short, donor network(s) can be as expansive as the ideas and imaginations of donors of color themselves.

How a donor network is built will be affected by the answers donors of color provide to questions like:

- What do you see as the **opportunities and challenges**?
- What would you love to see a network of HNW POC **look like, feel like and do**?
- What are some networks you've been part of that have been **productive, community building, good**?
- What **challenges** can you imagine tackling through this donor network?
- What **shared values** might we need in order to create a network?
- What would make you want to **participate**?

We welcome your ideas, feedback as we explore the possibility of building a HNW POC donor network. **Please contact us at:**

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