

# SPEAKING | SPEAKING BACK | BLACK

REFLECTIONS FROM AFRICAN,  
AFRODESCENDENT AND BLACK  
VOICES TRANSFORMING  
PHILANTHROPY

*Artwork and Design by Amir Khadar*

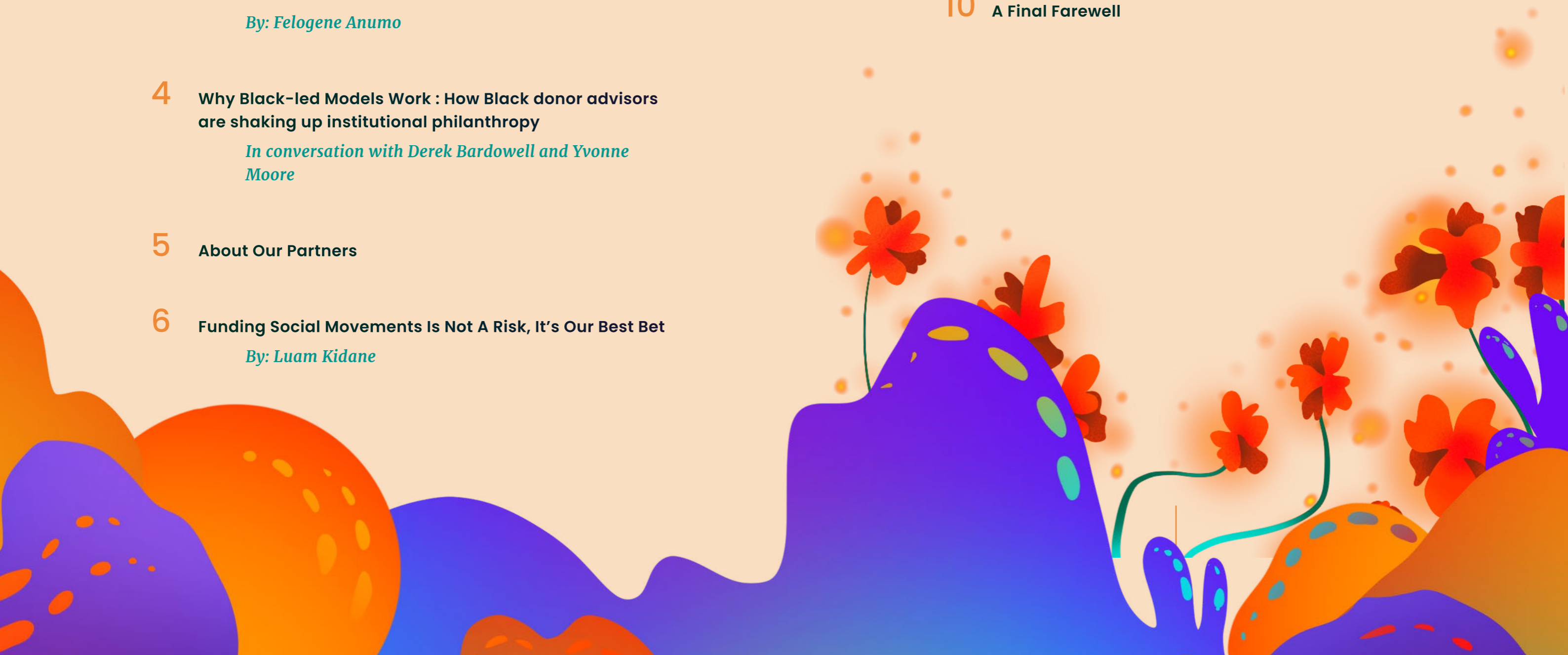


**Africans in  
the Diaspora**



# Contents

- 1 Editorial Note
- 2 Sunrising: A reparatory justice approach to expending intergenerational wealth  
*By: Esther Stanford-Xosei*
- 3 “The Jacket Was Mine!” It’s time for philanthropy to pay what it owes to Africa’s liberation  
*By: Felogene Anumo*
- 4 Why Black-led Models Work : How Black donor advisors are shaking up institutional philanthropy  
*In conversation with Derek Bardowell and Yvonne Moore*
- 5 About Our Partners
- 6 Funding Social Movements Is Not A Risk, It’s Our Best Bet  
*By: Luam Kidane*
- 7 “Aujourd’hui c’est aujourd’hui” Navigating power and speaking up as a West African activist led-fund  
*By: Caroline Kouassiama*
- 8 Inverting Innovation through Restorative Economics: Learning from our past to heal our present  
*By: Nwamaka Agbo*
- 9 Changing Hearts and Minds: How to get donors funding african social sovements  
*By: Crystal des Ogugua*
- 10 A Final Farewell



# Editorial Note

As production of this magazine drew to a close, I made a note-to-self that the final product should feel meteoric. Big, loud, and colourful, flying in from outer space with the potential to cause disruption, to bring messiness and complexities to sanitised binaries. To blow things up.

The contributions we received have done exactly that. As if singing in unison, they have told the story of modern philanthropy, and its potential, through an exclusively African, Afrodescendent, and Black lens. These are writers who have experienced living both within and outside of institutional philanthropy, and as a result, whose eye for all of its existential contradictions and deep inequities are razor sharp. From stories of how they've done it better, to tales of how they've been beaten down, they take centre stage with bemusement, disappointment, rage, adaptability, defiance, and yet always with hope.

It is fitting that we find our magazine taking the form of a meteor. A one-off spectacle that is brightest as it fades. For Africans in the Diaspora (AiD), this magazine is our curtain call. AiD will cease to exist as of this month.

Founded in 2012, AiD envisioned a self-reliant Africa. Co-founders Solomé Lemma, Stephanie de Wolfe and Zanele Sibanda created AiD as a platform to connect Africans in the diaspora to those on the continent who are committed to African-owned, -driven, and -led transformative change.

AiD emerged as a crowdfunding platform to demonstrate the powerful impact that collective resources, skills, and ideas pooled from Africans—both on the continent and in the diaspora—can have in supporting the leadership and work of grassroots movements.

After a two-year incubation partnership with Thousand Currents, AiD formally merged with the organisation in 2017. AiD now sat as a project in the organisation's Africa program.

In 2020, AiD relaunched under the vision and direction of Zahra Dalilah and Luam Kidane. In this last formation, AiD was a vehicle for donor education and organising.

We focused on enhancing the giving power of Africans, Afrodescendent, and Black folks to create a more enabling environment for the African social movements making the change that this world needs.

This year, AiD will be closing. The learnings from the last ten years will become the building blocks of a diaspora donor engagement strand which will become incorporated into Thousand Currents' donor organising and education work.

And so receive this as our parting gift. We send you this meteor not as a recreational critique but as a rallying cry and a desperate plea. We have to do better. And amongst these pages is the blueprint to how we do just that.

We, as African, Afrodescendent, and Black people are everything we need. Let these stories remind us of how we can be exactly who we need to be.

With love,

Zahra Dalilah





# **Sunrising: A reparatory justice approach to expending intergenerational wealth**

*By: Esther Stanford-Xosei*

**O**ften in philanthropy, foundations will sit on huge wealth endowments, only spending between one to four percent on grant-making and operations. But as the world endures a global pandemic, a looming climate crisis, and spiralling food insecurity and inequality, it is time to confront the way in which endowed foundations perpetuate intergenerational inequity.

These institutions are hoarding and investing what some economists have called “tainted money,” wealth that has been generated from industries that relied on economic practices of dispossession, extraction, and exploitation. Practices such as the theft of Indigenous-stewarded land across the world, the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of African people, and the genocide of countless others.

One way of confronting such reproductions of intergenerational inequity is for philanthropic institutions to engage in “sunsetting.” This is when a foundation expends its endowment at a rate that will eventually deplete its funds and lead to it eventually shutting down. One example is the Chorus Foundation which will transfer 100% of its wealth into communities i.e. “sunset” by 2024.

While this is a helpful starting point, such an approach must be informed by the perspectives and needs of those communities who have been dispossessed and denied access to the funds held in these endowments. A reparatory justice framework would not just seek to close philanthropic institutions, but transform them into conduits



**A reparatory justice framework would not just seek to close philanthropic institutions, but transform them into conduits for restituting the resources they developed from extractive models of plunder. These communities should be able to utilise the resources that originally belonged to them to rise like the sun, and so this process ought to be considered a “sunrise” rather than a sunset.**

for restituting the resources they developed from extractive models of plunder. These communities should be able to utilise the resources that originally belonged to them to rise like the sun, and so this process ought to be considered a “sunrise” rather than a sunset.

Implementing a strategy of sunrising is the most ethical approach to take, given how some of these endowments came about. These resources currently rest with those nations and institutions who acquired them through unjust means, often through those peoples’ subjugation, genocide, and ecocide. But, they rightfully belong to those subjugated and dispossessed communities around the world.

Conscientious philanthropists should therefore see themselves as helping to midwife the rebirth of communities by giving them access to philanthropically restituted resources for their own self-empowerment and liberation. Such philanthropists can now be assured that these resources, duly returned to those from whom they originated, will serve a better purpose in honouring the freedom-fighting Ancestors<sup>1</sup> of those colonised peoples. Sunrising philanthropy can also be an excellent testament to those within the colonisers’ communities who rebelled against colonisation in their time, honouring the legacies of all those dedicated to liberation in that era.

Two notable examples from Harvard University in the United States and the Rowntree Society in the United Kingdom of how endowments are normally used,

offer lessons for how to better distribute these resources in a reparatory way.

On 26 April, 2022, Harvard University, the oldest university in the US, released its 130-page report on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery. One of the report’s seven recommendations included a pledge to set aside \$100 million USD to set up a Legacy of Slavery Fund. This money would go to supporting the implementation of the other recommendations from the report. While this figure is being heralded in the corporate media, the fact is that this is a paltry sum not commensurate with the school’s reports of its own endowments.

Harvard’s Annual Financial Report, published in October 2021, showed that the value of its overall endowment soared to \$53.2 billion USD, a 27% increase of \$11.3 billion USD from \$41.9 billion USD the previous year. One hundred million dollars is not even half of the school’s 2021 operating surplus of \$283 million USD.

Similarly, the Joseph Rowntree Society has been working with their funders, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT), and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT), to explore the origins of their £300 million GBP endowment. The endowment was generated from shareholdings of the Rowntree family’s confectionary company - which benefitted from slavery and colonial indentureship.

In a statement released in April 2021 by the board of trustees, the organisation identified areas where they “believe further research is necessary to create a fuller understanding of how Rowntree businesses benefitted from slavery, unfree labour and other forms of racial

exploitation during the eras of colonialism and apartheid.”

While an apology was offered, for theirs to be an apology of substance, the Rowntree charities will also need to redistribute the bulk of its ill-gotten endowment to those communities within and beyond the UK who have been – and continue to be – harmed by this legacy.

In both cases, a sunrising approach would go beyond simply focusing on the people who have experienced racial oppression in their immediate vicinity to reaching out to the actual communities who continue to suffer dispossession, dehumanisation, and other forms of Afriphobia and anti-Black racism.

This would entail identifying the origins of the community’s disrepair, which is the genocide and ecocide of colonisation in their original homelands. It would also require tracing the ancestral lineages and connections between racialised communities of the past to their modern-day heirs in order to identify the full scope and range of the communities who are entitled to have a say in how the resources held in these endowments get redistributed and regenerated.

In his blog post *Philanthropy Will Not Save Us*, Rodney Foxworth critiques how philanthropy reinforces “the accumulation and privatisation of wealth, and the centralization of power and control.”

While institutional philanthropy is nestled in this reality, there are funders such as Justice Funders who envision an approach to giving that “redistributes wealth, democratises power and shifts economic control to communities in

a way that is truly regenerative for people and the planet.” Notably, they are willing to decentralise power and let others decide how to spend the money, as they see these funds as being held in trust for the communities, irrespective of their founders’ original instructions.

A sunrising reparative framework requires philanthropic institutions to, first and foremost, educate themselves about the extent, nature and continuing impacts of policies and programmes which reinforce the harms of colonisation. This means understanding how such institutions profiteer from the dispossession of African<sup>2</sup>, Indigenous, and other colonised peoples – including holding onto stolen gains such as land, artefacts, cash, and all manner of resources both material and natural. Then it must follow with a commitment to resourcing these communities’<sup>3</sup> self-determined efforts at repair and regeneration.

Philanthropic organisations should also seek to form a community of practice, that is a community of stakeholders in African reparations, to accelerate their own learning on these matters. In particular, they should highlight the approach to restituting resources that is unfolding as part of what our collective calls the Pempamsiempango<sup>4</sup> reparations planning processes in London and Bristol, and in the Accra, Ho, and Essikado-Sekondi municipalities in Ghana. These processes prioritise overlooked components of reparations, such as rematriation<sup>5</sup>, food sovereignty, decarbonisation, and equitable land restoration. They also highlight other opportunities to heal from intergenerational

trauma and dispossession, both on the continent of Africa and in the Diaspora.

One of the most strategic deployments of a sunrising approach would be for philanthropic institutions to commit to measures which seek to institutionalise grassroots-initiated justice initiatives. For example, some of the proposals being championed by the international Stop The Maangamizi Campaign operating in Europe, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean are taking steps to redress the continuing harmful impacts of enslavement and colonisation by connecting the resistance and regeneration efforts of similarly impacted communities around the world.

In this regard, philanthropic institutions need to recognise and engage with the autonomous organisations that are working to preserve the distinct racialised and ethnic lineages of communities that have been harmed. They need to support the capacity-building and resourcing of these social movement organisations, which tackle the root causes of the enduring injustices their communities face. Examples include the Maangamizi Educational Trust in the UK and Maatubuntumitawo-GAFRIC in Ghana.

Such institutions would also do well to invite the knowledge producers within such autonomous community groups and organisations to advise them on agenda-setting and priorities for their redistribution policies, programmes, and initiatives.

Ultimately, to be truly reparatory, philanthropic institutions should take the courageous step of totally moving away from

creating endowments where possible, or to increasing the annual distribution percentage of their current endowments from what is often a mere five percent to at least 33% or more. They should also commit to unrestricted grant-making, taking into account the specific claims, demands, and visions of those who have been on the receiving end of various intersecting forms of oppression and domination.

***Holistic reparatory justice can best be affected when the resources to do the necessary repair and transformation work are directly stewarded by the movements and organisations that support community and power-building processes within those affected communities.***



# Notes:

1 **Authors Note:** The capitalisation of this word, like capitalising the B in Black, gives primacy and dignity to a class of people whose names we may not know but whom we aim to honour and revere.

2 **Editor's Note:** This article is written following the style of Africans in the Diaspora, however we would like to highlight the author's original choice to spell Africa and African with a k i.e. Afrika, Afrikan. From a reparatationist lens that advocates cognitive justice due to the epistemicide we as Afrikan people have and continue to encounter, it is a political choice to promote 'holistic repairs', including linguistic repairs, and re-naming/reclaiming Afrika with a K as an act of self-determination goes beyond the colonial impositions of names, territories and identification of peoples on the continent of Afrika. The term 'Afrikan' refers to the indigenous people of Afrika and their descendants throughout the Diaspora."

3 This refers to communities of reparatory justice interest which is based on notion of communities of resistance popularised by bell hooks:  
*"When we talk about that which will sustain and nurture our spiritual growth as a people, we must once again talk about the importance of community. For one of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone."*  
—bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*

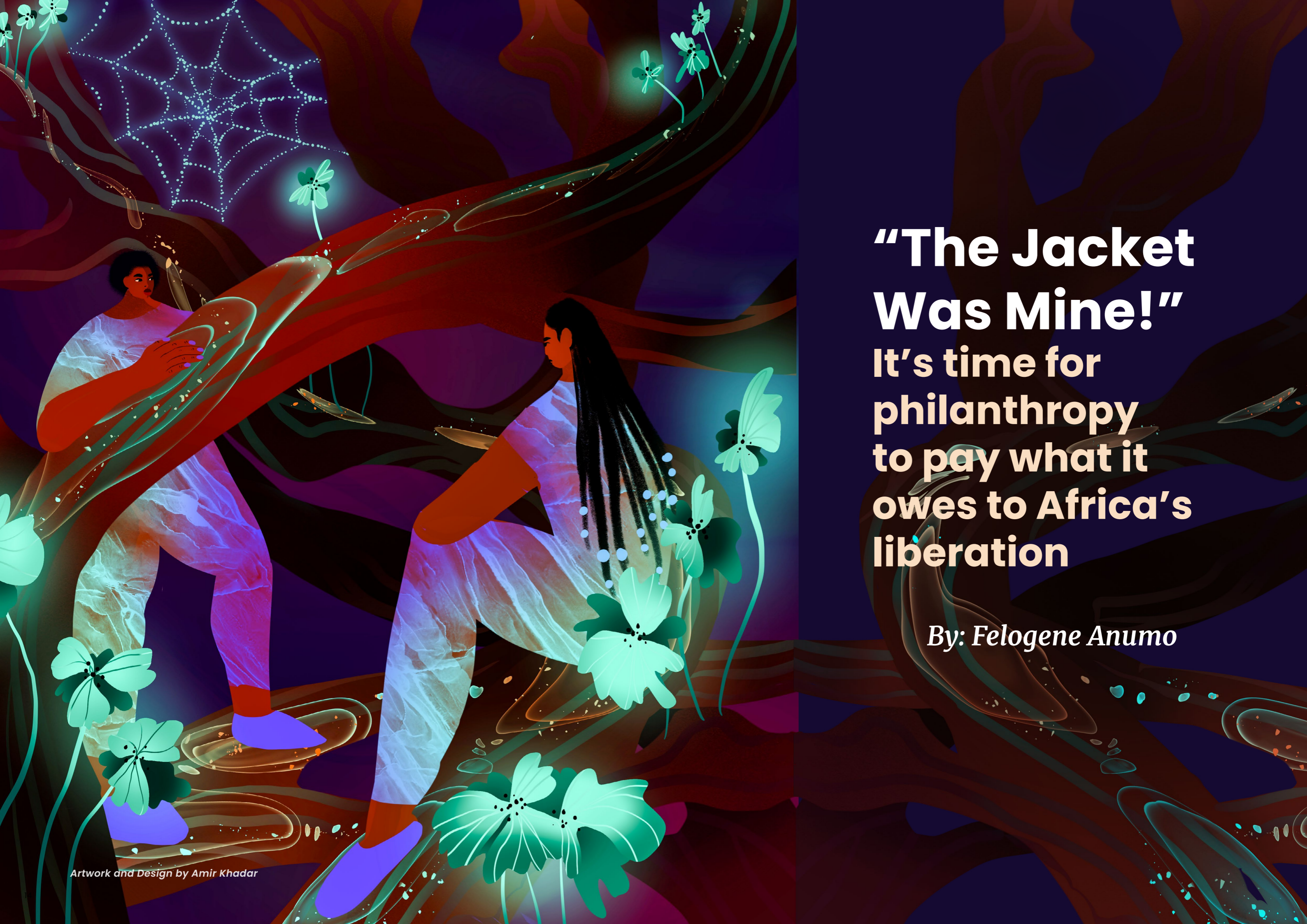
4 This is an African term combining the Pempamsie Adinkra indigenous knowledge system with the Kiswahili term for plan. This language is being accepted by public officials across the UK and is 'Africa' inclusive.

5 **Authors Note:** Rematriation is a term often deployed by indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (the so-called Americas) to characterise the actions needed to heal the epistemic violence suffered at the hands of white enslavers and colonisers who brutality disconnected them from the land and epistemologies of their forebears. It envisions 'the restoration of a living culture to its rightful place on Mother Earth', or the restoration of a people to 'a spiritual way of life, in sacred relationship with their ancestral lands, without external interference'. A similar idea of Rematriation is also being used in reference to the historical and spiritual restitution needed to repair the violations suffered by the descendants of those who were forcibly removed from Afrika. It is seen as the method by which the Afrikan Diaspora can return — culturally and spiritually — to its indigenous knowledge archives and inform ways of thinking and being in the world. As both a theory and a praxis, it acknowledges that slavery was not only about the theft of the body and its [pro]creations but also, and equally importantly, about the severing of the captive Afrikan from the cosmological and metaphysical knowledges that inform the very foundation of human identity; in this case, the Afrikan self. True Rematriation

includes the right to return and belong. It encompasses the Sankofa principle of returning to Afrikan indigeneity to fetch one's Afrikan personality in material and spiritual terms, which are all rooted in the land and peoplehood of Afrika.

—Nicola Frith, Joyce Hope Scott, Esther Stanford-Xosei, *Rematriation: Defining an Afrikan-centred reparatory justice response to the epistemic violence of Afrikan enslavement*, University of Edinburgh Research Explorer, 2022.





**“The Jacket  
Was Mine!”  
It’s time for  
philanthropy  
to pay what it  
owes to Africa’s  
liberation**

*By: Felogene Anumo*



The wealth inequalities we witness today are a direct result of colonial legacies of resource theft and extractive labor of Africans, Afrodescendant, and Black people. According to Harper's magazine's estimates, enslaved African people performed approximately 222 million hours of forced labor between 1619 and 1865. If this was paid at the United States' minimum wage today, it would be worth approximately [\\$97 trillion USD](#). This is just the tip of the iceberg for we know this massive pillage of natural resources took place alongside countless other losses in the form of relationships, art, innovation, intellect, and dignity – all of which have left a lasting, devastating impact on communities in Africa.

While the form, scale, scope, and sophistication of this dispossession has changed over the years, the systematic extraction and exploitation of African people and their natural resources continues. Even now, the continent's capital flows are being steadily diverted towards the economies of countries in the Global North, a process generously facilitated by transnational corporations and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, as well as through unfair trade agreements and illicit financial flows (IFFs). This has led to Africa's economies being riddled with debt and citizens reeling in a state of impoverishment, neglect, and poor health outcomes.

From unjust economic practices starting from the colonial era in Africa to damages

resulting from generations of enslavement, the Global North needs to compensate for [centuries of ecological and reproductive debt](#) owed to African, Afrodescendant, and Black people.

***While there is no amount of money that can truly compensate for the damage inflicted, the need to right the wrongs of the past in order to address prevailing inequalities is becoming more urgent.***

The COVID-19 health pandemic has unearthed social and governance challenges in Africa, including the need to strengthen public health-care systems. There also exists a simultaneous climate crisis which threatens humanity's survival. Impoverished and historically oppressed groups from the Global South are likely to bear the greatest burden of this crisis even though they are contributing the least to it. Furthermore, the intensifying and unpredictable impacts of climate change are making food and energy production in Africa even more difficult, a situation that has been made worse by the unfolding war in Ukraine.

According to Forbes, the United States is home to the majority of global high net worth individuals (HNWIs), and 62 percent of HNWIs live in the US, Japan, Germany and China. Studies by the WINGS Network, report that philanthropic

foundations are also highly concentrated in the Global North, with 60 percent of the total in Europe while 35 percent is in North America. Despite this, the vast majority of money that foundations are distributing does not return to sites of historical and current exploitation and extraction. Indeed in 2017, according to [a report](#), just a quarter of it went to Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Africa **combined**.

It would appear that there is a "leaking hole" when it comes to the impact of monetary philanthropy and aid in Africa. This therefore begs the question, where does all the money "supposedly" being channeled to Africa go, and even more importantly, to what end?

A study done by Harvard University on the global state of philanthropy revealed that 75 percent of existing philanthropic foundations were formed in the last 25 years. Some of the factors attributed to this sharp increase include: the concentration and growth of private wealth, persistent inequalities, and concerted efforts by governments and the private sector to encourage giving. The report findings also show that individual giving exceeds institutional giving, though it is much harder to track. In particular, technological advancements such as online, crowdfunding, and via SMS, have opened up new forms of giving.

The Harvard study was conducted in 2018 and the state of philanthropy has changed quite significantly since then. There has been even more outpouring of wealth through foundations owned by wealthy individuals like multi-billionaires Jeff Bezos and Mackenzie Scott, and

even musicians like Rihanna. "The reaction of my family and me to our extraordinary good fortune is not guilt, but rather gratitude," said billionaire Warren Buffett as he joined The Giving Pledge. The Pledge was an initiative founded in 2010 by former billionaire couple Bill Gates and Melinda French in an attempt to convince the world's billionaires to donate at least half their fortunes to charitable causes. While it is great that there has been such a growing appetite for philanthropy, giving must be rooted in ideological grounding. For philanthropy to have some impact, we must build on the success of decolonial organizing and liberatory practices.

However, movements and movement formations are not waiting on the "benevolence" of the wealthy to chart their liberatory paths. Take for example the work of [Malawi Union for Informal Sector](#) (MUFIS) which was formed in 2000 to organize, promote, protect, and negotiate on issues around the rights of popular economy workers. These informal workers are the engine of African economies but are often invisible. Or consider [Abahlali baseMjondolo](#), the democratic social movement of shack dwellers and the impoverished in South Africa. In the face of multiple challenges, including the recent catastrophic flooding in Durban, violent backlash, persistent death threats and the brutal assassinations of their members, this group continues to fight for land, housing, and dignity by mobilizing landless people and building power from below. The [Rural Women's Assembly](#) (RWA) a coalition of rural women in southern Africa, sit at the intersection

of multiple sites of oppression and have organized themselves into a powerful social movement that challenges agribusiness and patriarchal oppression while at the same time advancing agroecology and building feminist leadership in the food sovereignty movement.

There truly is no shortage of examples of social movements led by African, Afrodescendant, and Black people that are mobilizing below. However, very few philanthropic initiatives are able to move crucial resources to the frontlines based on trust.

As I conclude, I am reminded of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's response when asked whether Africa was ready for independence in 1959. His response: "If you come into my house and steal my jacket, don't then ask me whether I am ready for my jacket. The jacket was mine!"

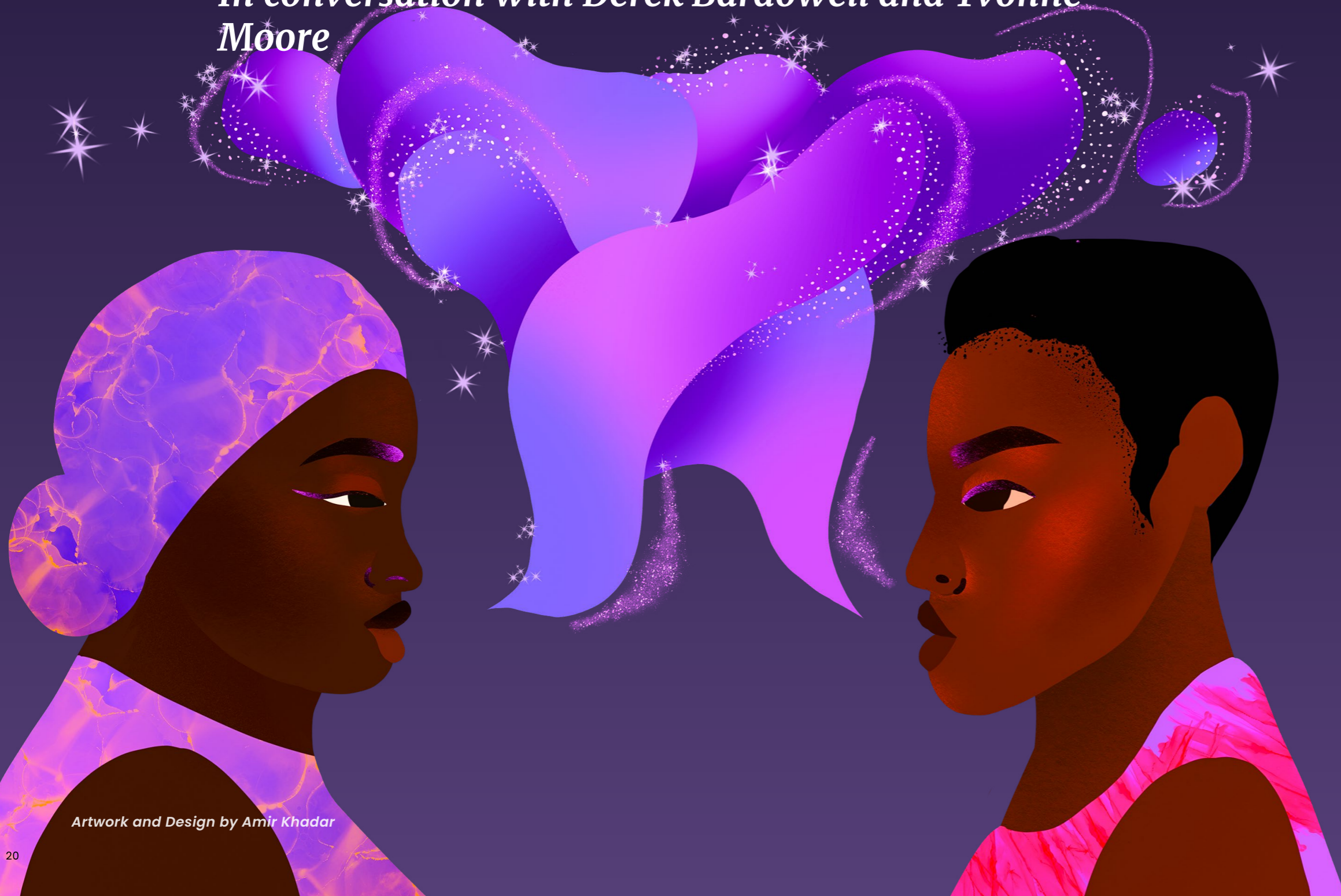
If we apply this metaphor to philanthropy, we can appreciate how philanthropic practices can not only be harmful but are often offensive. As with stolen land and extraction of Africa's natural resources, philanthropic money belongs to African people. Every effort should be made to ensure all stolen resources are returned to the rightful owners, hastily, in a dignified fashion, and in support of their visions for liberation.





# Why Black-led Models Work: How Black donor advisors are shaking up institutional philanthropy

*In conversation with Derek Bardowell and Yvonne Moore*



Artwork and Design by Amir Khadar

Institutional philanthropy fails Africa, Africans, Afrodescendants, and Black people every day.

[In 2017](#), the vast majority of the nearly seven billion dollars that was spent as grants from foundations and bilateral and multilateral institutions was spent in North America and Western Europe. Just a quarter of it flowed into Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Africa **combined**. And not much has changed since then. Last year, the Black Feminist Fund released research evidencing that only [0.1% of the world's philanthropic money goes to Black feminist activists](#).

Every day, institutional philanthropy fails us. But we don't fail ourselves. From [crowdfunders for students stranded in Ukraine](#), to the [\\$714 billion USD](#) sent by folks in the diaspora to relatives in their home countries in 2019 - we know how to take care of our communities.

Many Africans, Afrodescendants, and Black people learn their own sense of philanthropy at home. Whether through eating communal lunches out of the same bowl, sharing gifts with siblings and cousins, or making every inch of bed space count when relatives are visiting, practices of generosity and care are often learned in childhood. Underpinning so many African and Afrodescendent cultures is a fundamental understanding

that the line between 'mine' and 'ours' is wide, blurry, and often irrelevant.

However, Africans and diasporans who are looking to redistribute their wealth in the ways they learned to at home too often find that the world of donor advice was not built for this - nor for them.

Yvonne Moore and Derek A. Bardowell are two people who have seen firsthand how we've been treated by the world of donor advice. Yvonne has worked in the government, civil society, and in philanthropic sectors and is currently the Founder and Managing Director of Moore Philanthropy. Derek is a writer and CEO of the philanthropic advocacy organisation Ten Years' Time. He has been responsible for managing over £150 million GBP to good causes in 34 countries.

With over 30 years in the philanthropic sector between them, Derek and Yvonne were the perfect people to help us dive into a deeper understanding of what is going on in the sector.

## What does the word philanthropy mean to you?

**Yvonne Moore:** The pure definition of philanthropy is love of humanity. As a person of faith, I take that literally when I do my work, and try to navigate

spaces and conversations with that in mind. How do you love folks? How do you interact with and treat folks? Do you allow folks to come into your spaces as they are, bringing their full selves - and their work - into authentic conversation?

**Derek Bardowell:** I think I always separate philanthropy as an institution from philanthropy as a practice. So when you think of it as a practice, the practice is about what people give within their communities. People of color in philanthropy, what has made them really good at their work is not that they have integrated into the system, but the fact that they have fought against it. They've gone back to some of the instincts that they've had from their communities and actually try to implement and inject that into what is a very extractive, paternalistic system.

## So in your work, how do you see the institution of philanthropy creating problems for donors of African descent who want to give? What barriers might they face?

**YM:** Typical philanthropic advisors in the United States are not intentionally trying to track donors from the African diaspora. There have been instances where a very famous artist who is almost a billionaire was - I can't say dismissed - but there definitely was not active follow up from the advisory firm that his folks went to.

One of my colleagues thinks that they don't do more because they think that Black donors can't pay their fees. There's this assumption, this myth, that Black folks don't have wealth.

Talking to a donor right after the George Floyd murder. He was like, "they don't even have any ideas for me. They can't assist me." Donors have gotten more mature than the financial institutions where they hold their money - because they're actually trying to do more. But if they don't have the folks around them that can actually advise them, then you're stuck. You're there until you find out you have other options.

## Do they find other options? Are there examples of donors cutting through that?

**DB:** In Britain, most of the independent foundations give away [less than 5% of their wealth](#). Last year, of all the people

that gave away over a million pounds in charitable donations [Black British footballer] Marcus Rashford gave a [higher percentage of his wealth](#) than anyone else in the country. He was exemplary. Yeah, he's a millionaire, he's got lots of money, but he is not one of the richest people in the country. He's nowhere near one of the richest people in the country and he still gave away a higher percentage.

## What are the structural issues at play here? Why is money not effectively moving through those institutions which should be redistributing individual wealth?

**DB:** Every single person that's surrounding a person with wealth - wealth advisors, lawyers, solicitors - their sole purpose is to: a) preserve their wealth, b) to retain their services. This doesn't matter whether it's a Black donor or a white donor. They are still surrounded by a whole bunch of people



that want to have their services forever and ever and also want to preserve their wealth. By continuing to preserve or grow income for donors, advisors can retain the donor's services, which means that there really isn't an economic incentive for those surrounding donors to give money to good causes. So you are always battling this system of preservation and client retention as the model.

**YM:** Many wealth advisors whose job is to protect wealth through sage and sustainable investment act as though they're philanthropic advisors whose job it is to redistribute wealth to meaningful causes. It's really super irritating because there's a difference between these two sectors in motivation and intent. Wealth advisors are there to *preserve* your wealth. So they're not going to tell their client: "you know what, spend some more of this money, spend more and give more." Right? So there's an inherent conflict.

## ***So how can donors be supported to move substantial proportions of their money?***

**DB:** At my organisation, Ten Years Time, we take philanthropists on a learning journey of honest reflection and radical action. So we are challenging people not just to give away money in a better way, but also to really interrogate their wealth and philanthropic practices, and what they should do to challenge that, that culture of preservation.

**YM:** One of the reasons that we launched Moore Philanthropy is we, as Black people, do give, we are donors. We are not only receivers.

**DB:** I think that is really important - demonstrating what philanthropy as a practice looks like, because it's not about rich people giving money to the poor.

**YM:** Right. You don't have to be wealthy to want to give - again, we're already doing this. That's one of the things that we're doing: allowing people to set up their donor-advised fund. If you want to build a legacy with your family, your children, we have a minimum when we start giving, which is five thousand US dollars, but it doesn't mean you can't open an account with us. We have an account where you can actually just start saving and putting your money in there and when it gets to five thousand, then you can start giving. If you want to have a more structured way of doing this, work with your family or friends - it's kind of similar to a giving

circle. We hold a couple of giving circles as well, and we just allow people to come, however they want. If you're trying to do good philanthropy, thoughtful philanthropy, you're trying to engage friends, family, and kids. Come as you are.

# About Our Partners

Throughout this magazine, you'll be hearing all about the funding theory and practice of Thousand Currents' Africa Program. But where does the money actually go? Find out more about our partners from the descriptions below.

[African Centre for Biodiversity](#) - The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is a research and advocacy organisation working towards food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa, with a focus on biosafety, seed systems and agricultural biodiversity. ACB is committed to dismantling inequalities and resisting corporate-industrial expansion in Africa's food and agriculture systems.

[Abahlali baseMjondolo](#) - Abahlali baseMjondolo is a democratic social movement of shack dwellers and the poor in South Africa, fighting for land, housing, and dignity by mobilising landless people and building power from below.

[Amadiba Crisis Committee](#) - The ACC and its members fight to preserve their understanding of life, community, Indigenous belief systems, ecology, land, and sustainable ways of life.

[Health of Mother Earth Foundation](#) - Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) is an ecological think tank founded in 2011 that advocates for environmental/climate justice and food sovereignty in Nigeria, South Sudan, and Africa at large.

[Nous Sommes La Solution](#) - Nous Sommes la Solution is a rural women's movement for food sovereignty in West Africa.

[South Durban Community Environmental Alliance](#) - South Durban Community

[Environmental Alliance \(SDCEA\)](#) is an environmental justice organisation based in South Durban, South Africa. It has been actively fighting toxic industries since its formation in 1995.

[Surplus People's Project](#) - SPP is aimed at advancing agrarian transformation for land, food, and climate justice in South Africa through three interrelated programmes: Agroecology and Food Sovereignty, Land Tenure, and Farmworker Rights.

[Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum \(ZIMSOFF\)](#) - ZIMSOFF's mission is to influence policies and raise public awareness with regards to agroecology and the rights of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. They have a membership of 12,000 smallholder farmers.

[Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens \(ATTAC\) Maroc](#) - ATTAC Maroc is an action-oriented popular education association committed to the struggles in Morocco against capitalist globalisation and the domination of international financial institutions.

[Kenyan Peasants League](#) - The Kenyan Peasants League (KPL) is a social movement of Kenyan farmers and consumers whose main goal is promoting peasantry and agroecology as a means to ensure food sovereignty.

[L'Observatoire Tunisien de l'Economie](#) - OTE is an informal network of activists



and researchers acting to shift the development model of Tunisia. OTE seeks to democratise who has access to, can understand, and engage with the economic policies of Tunisia.

[The Malawi Union for Informal Sector](#) - The Malawi Union for Informal Sector (MUFIS) was formed in 2000 to organise, promote, protect, and negotiate on issues related to the rights of workers in the informal economy.

[Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Zimbabwe \(PELUM Zimbabwe\)](#) - PELUM Zimbabwe's mission is to upscale participatory ecological land use management practices for improved nutrition security, livelihoods, and environmental sustainability.

[The Rural Women's Assembly](#) - The Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) is a self-organised network of national rural women's movements, assemblies, grassroots organisations and chapters of mixed peasant unions, federations and movements across ten countries in Southern Africa.

[Sam Moyo African Institute for Agrarian Studies \(SMAIAS\)](#) - The SMAIAS is an independent research institute that focuses on interdisciplinary research initiatives, policy dialogues, training, and information dissemination.

[Seed Savers Network Kenya \(SSN-Kenya\)](#) - SSN-Kenya is a not-for-profit movement support organisation focused on strengthening farmer managed seed systems while resisting industrial agriculture and challenging biopiracy.

## Catalyst Partners

Before moving into long-term partnership, Thousand Currents will start the relationship with our partners through a one year grant called a Catalyst Grant. It is still core and flexible funding, but unlike our long-term partnerships it has a pre-determined end date.

[Muyissi Environnement](#) - Muyissi is a national non-profit non-governmental organisation in Gabon. It works to protect the environment and defend the rights of communities affected by the exploitation of natural resources.

[Association Technique d'Appui à la Sécurité Alimentaire Nutrition et la Protection de l'Environnement \(ATASANPE\)](#) - ATASANPE is a group of agronomists, nutritionists, environmentalists, jurists, and sociologists who promote food sovereignty and

environmental protection in Chad.

La société coopérative simplifiée Walé des Artisans Pêcheurs de Grand-Lahou (SCSWAPGL) - SCSWAPGL is a network of 315 artisanal fisherfolks in Côte d'Ivoire, predominantly women, who contribute to meeting member needs through trainings, information sharing, purchasing of fishing equipment, and the promotion of socio-economic activities that help to improve the fishing communities' resilience to climate change.

[Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien-Etre au Bénin \(GRABE Benin\)](#) - GRABE-Benin has been working to regenerate and safeguard Benin's natural ecosystems through cultural biodiversity, eco-citizenship, and local development and support to Indigenous peoples.

## Our Thematic Areas

*Food Sovereignty* - Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems on their own lands. It includes the struggle for land and genuine agrarian reform that ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food.

*Climate Justice* - Climate justice is a framework of contextualising the climate crises (i.e. breakdown of ecosystems, loss of life on land and water, increasing temperatures, environmental damage such as the poisoning of lands and waters, and subsequent weather events such as floods and hurricanes) through a lens of social justice. It offers a historical framework of the current extractive and capitalist systems as a basis for understanding the root causes of the climate crises and showcases that everyone is not impacted equally by climate change. A climate justice lens fosters a reciprocal relationship with the land, guided by Indigenous knowledge systems.

*Economic Justice* - In the words of Âurea Mouzinho, "If 'the economy' is understood as a series of relations, institutions and practices oriented towards the sustenance of livelihoods," economic justice is a series of systems or practices which offer collective, care-oriented, regenerative and emancipatory economies which foster well-being and ensure those engaged in it are well, well fed, and well cared for.



# Funding Social Movements Is Not A Risk, It's Our Best Bet

*By: Luam Kidane*

***Over the last few decades the descendants of those who built neo-liberal economic practices have been telling us that the problem is not capitalism, the problem is how it is being applied.***

***“Burning carbon from fossil fuels in one part of the world cannot be ‘balanced out’ by offsetting carbon from natural land carbon cycles—that’s not how ecosystems work.”***

***[COP25: KEEP CARBON MARKETS OUT OF THE PARIS RULEBOOK!](#)***

Over the last few decades the descendants of those who built neo-liberal economic practices have been telling us that the problem is not capitalism, the problem is how it is being applied.

However, we can't get out of the current climate crisis using the same capitalist logic that got us into it. Proposals which rely on the continuation of neo-liberal economic systems to address the climate crisis are meant to use the principles of the so-called free market economy to address global inequality and social injustices. The problem? The logic underpinning these solutions still insists on the primacy of profit, alienated labour, concentrated power, and constant accumulation - not the wellbeing of people and the planet.

One solution that capitalist logic has offered us is Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP). Take for instance, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa, a PPP launched in 2012. The alliance aimed to provide aid from countries in the Global North to facilitate investment in industrial agriculture in Africa. African countries would adopt “cooperation frameworks” which outlined their policy commitments, and companies from the Global North would

provide “letters of Intent” identifying the investments they intended to fund.

[But what actually happened?](#) The alliance made it easier for corporations to grab land under the guise of investing in them while preventing farmers from saving, reusing and exchanging their seeds to promote and protect corporate intellectual property rights. It also heavily promoted chemical fertilisers and pesticides, which increased farmers' risk of debt and damaged their health and environment. And it incentivised low paid, insecure jobs by promoting contract farming, prioritising crops destined for export at the expense of local biodiversity.

Another example are the much-touted cap and trade mechanisms which suggest that burning carbon from fossil fuels in one part of the world can be “balanced out” by offsetting carbon from natural cycles in another part of the world. Except, [that's not how ecosystems work](#).

Carbon off-setting schemes like [REDD+](#) have resulted in people across the Global South being forcibly displaced from their lands. Furthermore, these schemes obscure



the fact that [oil, gas, coal, industrial logging and agribusiness, and large scale industrial infrastructure such as mega-dams](#) are the main contributors to the climate crisis. Depositing these risks at the feet of communities in the Global South so that those in the Global North can continue business as usual once again perpetuates the geopolitical economic structures that birthed the problem.

We have to be clear: philanthropy exists because of the concentration of wealth held by a few. Often the wealthy individuals in philanthropy wield power not only through their wealth but also through their “giving.” While the sector can be shy about the idea that wealth should be curbed, at this point this is a matter of survival. In philanthropy, financial flows are often diverted towards systems that deepen structural economic inequalities and oppression. In other cases, it supports [false climate solutions](#) such as carbon pricing and bioenergy.

So, I’d like to pose a question that I’ve been sitting with from my position as a funder:

**How can we shift power and money to social movements and communities that are creating the alternatives to capitalistic economic models? Risk – and how we think about it – is one place we can start.**

Those with vested interests in capitalism are willing to bet big to see their economic and political visions come to life, whether these ideas work or not. They do not understand such investments as risks, no matter how many generations of evidence we have that these visions and practices are killing the planet.

On the flipside, supporting progressive social movements that are constructing systemic alternatives to patriarchy, capitalism, fundamentalisms and fascism are still considered “too risky” to fund by many in philanthropy. This is despite [evidence](#) that shows that enduring change is driven by autonomous movements. As my colleague Felogene Anumo and I have discussed, a lot of what is deemed as risk in philanthropy is often how funders reinforce existing power structures and hierarchy.

Zahra Dalilah, the African Diaspora Partnerships Manager at Thousand Currents, gets it spot on when she [writes](#), “[o]ften the boldest, most daring movements with the capacity to make the most radical, impactful and healing change are those which are perceived as the highest risk to fund.” But social movements need to be understood as the big bets that philanthropy needs to make if we are to have any hope of finding our way out of the multiple crises we are in.

We have plenty of examples of how these movements are fighting for, and enacting, justice and equity. For the last 12 years, Thousand Currents’ partner the Amadiba

Crisis Committee has been engaged in a community-wide struggle, taking on the South African government and an Australian mining corporation to stop the environmental destruction and displacement that the mining would cause. Their work has resulted in some precedent-setting legal wins on prior and informed consent.

Another partner, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terras (MST) has led - with approximately 370,000 families - over 2,500 land occupations throughout Brazil since 1984. Today, MST has won 7.5 million hectares of land as a result of their occupations, land that those 370,000 families are now living on.

With over 200 million members, La Via Campesina has influenced various policy decisions - including the 2018 adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas by the United National General Assembly, the first global policy instrument of its kind.

So how can philanthropy better support such movements? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Provide flexible core grants so that movements can access funding that trusts their expertise, not rigid, project-specific funding wholly mismatched to their needs.
2. Longer term funding is key. Systemic change takes time and long-term funding gives movements the space they need to experiment, enact, and realise their visions of liberation.

3. Ensure that your approach to funding is rooted in learning. Focus on continually ensuring that your systems work with, not against, movement formations. Ask yourself at every turn if what you’re doing is creating a more enabling environment for the movements you are funding. If you are not sure, ask the movements themselves. Be willing to shift your practices if they are not creating a more enabling environment for movement formations.

4. Shift your learning tools away from short term, siloed metrics. Movement building is not linear or short term, so learning tools that encourage complexity and don’t punish experimentation are key.

5. In a just and equitable world the inequity that philanthropy depends on would not be. So spend down by moving larger grants to movements who are bringing about a world where philanthropy would not and could not exist.

We must fund, trust, and learn from movements. Not doing this would be the biggest risk of all.

# “Aujourd’hui, c’est aujourd’hui”: Navigating power and speaking up as a West African activist-led fund

By: *Caroline Kouassiaman*

**Y**ou know how when you sleep under a mosquito net there are still some mosquitos that will find their way inside – persistent, despite your best attempts at protection? Then there are the other mosquitos still swarming around, waiting for you when you come out. Despite the current beautiful discourse around shifting power and decolonization in the philanthropic and international development sector, issues like colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia have incredible staying power – just like those mosquitos.

They are hanging around in the area, perhaps not close enough for their warning hum to be heard, but they are there. Most of the time, it’s not the overt expressions or actions, but rather the “did that just happen?!” microaggressions in meetings, the subtle silencing of voices, the shifting of contributions that challenge the status quo to “offline” or “bilateral” discussions, the ignoring of certain people’s comments in the shared document, the assumptions of who is an expert in a given subject.

In 2020, I was the relatively new Executive Director of Initiative Sankofa d’Afrique de l’Ouest

(ISDAO), a West African activist-led fund, based and operating in West Africa. And I was faced with a situation that I was absolutely not ready for: I found myself forced to risk my career, and my organization, to speak truth to power.

The year before, in 2019, we had embarked upon a series of engagements to establish a partnership with a powerful Global North organisation for a future project. We were excited to be a part of the development process and to extensively contribute our ideas and knowledge, especially as future partners in the implementation of the vision.

Along the way, there were some issues around the coordination and leadership of this process, particularly connected to the individual holding this role. In hindsight, the mosquitos were there – there were plenty of red flags. In 2020, shortly after one particularly tense and prolonged consortium call, a few of us began exchanging WhatsApp messages, which quickly led to organizing. We had reached our breaking point – as we say in Côte D’Ivoire, “aujourd’hui c’est aujourd’hui”!



There are many intersecting identities that are essential not only to the work we do as ISDAO, but to “how” we do it. We are feminist. We are an activist-led, participatory grantmaker, we are primarily and unapologetically led by and for West Africans who are LGBTQI+ persons. And we are aiming to transform how philanthropy works in our region and our communities. We strongly believe that if we are serious about building movements, we have to be willing to have - and often initiate - uncomfortable conversations about power and privilege wherever we go. Being a queer Black, feminist - an African woman - I felt I needed to speak out about what was happening. In this spirit, along with several other women leaders in the group, we decided that we could not remain quiet and we filed a formal complaint against the cisgender white man who was coordinating the partnership. We were asked to provide testimonies and evidence. And, so we wrote...

Pages and pages of individual and collective testimony, backed by evidence from emails, meeting notes, and recordings. We wrote about being shut down, dismissed, ignored or minimized as women in the group. About microaggressions. About the perpetuation of white supremacist culture<sup>2</sup> within the relationships between our organizations. About the paternalistic and top-down approach to engaging with and thinking about African LGBTQI+ communities. About being tokenized. About being tasked with “coming up with solutions” to challenges that were a shared responsibility. About how organizational and individual information

had been shared publicly without our consent. About the blurred lines of accountability and power between us, the project lead, and the organization.

We wrote. Then, we waited.

About three months later, the official response following a supposed investigation was a short, four-sentence email that concluded: “further formal investigation is not warranted and that the case is now closed.”

I naively assumed that surely some other communication would follow - something about measures to be taken, a recognition of the gravity of the concerns raised, and any efforts that would be made to address them.

It did not come.

Rather, representatives of the organization contacted ISDAO, aiming to revive conversations about our potential involvement in the project. No mention of the complaint. We were expected to just continue working together, business as usual. As if nothing had happened.

For ISDAO, it was a clear “absolutely not” - we walked away. Not least because their visions for our involvement was a significant departure from the idea we’d initially come on board for. Afterwards, we sat down and calculated the time that our team had spent contributing to the project over those 12+ months. We decided to cost that time and ask for payment. With determination and anticipation, fueled by the lyrics of Rihanna’s song, *Bitch Better Have My Money*, and Beyonce singing, “Fuck you, pay me,” I sent our demand.

They did not pay us.

Looking back, there are countless alternate paths that this could have taken. In the early conversations about the complaint, one colleague wanted to “blow it up,” using our collective media contacts to publicly call out the organization. At the time, I advised caution and emphasized the importance of “going through the process.” Might we have had different outcomes if we’d gone the media route? Did we wait too long or should we have spoken out sooner?

In reflecting on this situation, I draw strength from the power of [Sankofa](#), which is a reminder of the need to return to our history/histories/herstories, to draw from the past in order to move forward and build a better future.

***Both this story - and the writing of it - is the embodiment of the spirit of Sankofa, which is so essential to us that it is part of ISDAO’s name. If we had not been grounded in our intuition and our values, and instead had followed the money and the opportunity, we would be leaving behind what is most precious to us.***

We would be ignoring all of the experiences of disruptive and destructive funding that has often undermined or narrowed the scope of LGBTQI organizing in West Africa.

In my personal testimony, as part of the complaint, I wrote:

“I feel it is important to note my own positionality, power and privilege within this situation, which also compel me to speak and to bear witness to what I have seen happen within the group. I recognize that while I am a queer African woman, I also come into this space as someone who is partly of the Global North, who speaks with an American accent, and who has a level of familiarity, knowledge and relationships within the philanthropic world. I recognize that this may impact how I am seen, heard or how others relate to me. While I have not directly and consciously experienced the overt condescension, erasure, defensiveness and “shutting down” by this person at the same level of other women within this group, I have experienced this, and I certainly have witnessed this first-hand. And, I have sought to where and as much as possible amplify their voices and critical contributions within the group.”

Since then, others in the group have decided to re-engage with this organization, with the strategy of trying to influence it from within.

ISDAO has not.

To be an African philanthropic organization, particularly one where activists make

decisions, often means dealing with a buzz of questions (especially, but not exclusively, from Global North funders and partners) about our credibility, our accountability, and if we have enough expertise and capacity to do what we exist to do. I needed to write this story because even in a situation where an organisation like ours exists and is becoming stronger, more resilient, and more visible, those mosquitos buzzing around us haven't stopped - and won't readily do so.

In telling this story, I also wanted to do the critical work of documenting ISDAO's resistance, and our determination to build our work in ways that are accountable to our communities. I wanted it to become a part of our living history, that

***we are building a young,  
African, activist-led  
organization that refused to  
just shut up and accept the  
terms and funds that others  
wanted to give us.***

ISDAO was initially conceived by a group of queer women activists and funders, and gradually shaped and molded through the leadership and visionary thinking of LGBTQI activists and allies from across West Africa. We were created not only to mobilize resources for the community, but to contribute towards building an ideologically-principled LGBTQI movement. A movement that is not just a sum of projects and

activities, but has a vision for transformation and liberation, for a more just and equitable West Africa.

For this story, I wish that there was a more triumphant ending. That I could say that our intellectual contributions and labor were eventually recognized - even if not compensated. However, we have ultimately been able to resource much of what we have envisioned in the original project. It may have taken a bit longer, but we are stronger than ever.

What we do celebrate is that this experience is/was a part of the journey of building power, using our power, and being powerful as an African LGBTQI activist-led organization and grantmaker. It's part of the journey of living our feminism, it's part of the journey of being in solidarity, of thinking collectively, and ultimately of being accountable to ourselves.

# Notes:

1 Ivorian expression. Literally translates to "today is today". The most similar alternative expression is in pidgin: "today na today", which means in essence, "today is the day of reckoning" or "today is The Day."

2 Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001.

Summary of the characteristics:

[https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture.pdf](https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/museums/files/White_Supremacy_Culture.pdf) (accessed April 18, 2022)





Artwork and Design by Amir Khadar

# Inverting Innovation through Restorative Economics: Learning from our past to heal our present

*By: Nwamaka Agbo*

**A**s a young child, I remember traveling to the ancestral villages of my parents in Nigeria.

Our family compounds sat on land that was governed by a family clan. As older generations passed and transitioned into ancestors, the clan would convene to redistribute the available land to the male members of the extended family. This redistribution was done according to seniority, and regenerative land management strategies were the norm. The impact has been two-fold: 1) this system preserves the ancestral village, providing homes for the whole clan, and 2) the sustainability and integrity of the land is maintained for generations.

My work on [Restorative Economics](#) is directly inspired and informed by the ways that my family, and Africans, Afrodescendent, and Black communities across the globe, have developed these practices and agreements. Restorative economics is the work of creating shared prosperity, self-determination, and collective political power through community-owned and community-governed projects. These are connected to traditions and practices of collectively sharing resources, skills, and labor. Reflecting on these traditions, I began to question the Global North's unending

quest for innovation, for something new – something that has never existed before.

Continuously classifying processes, concepts, and products as “new” means that they can then be captured, labeled, and marketed for profit. In short, the concept of constant innovation is used to drive extractive market-based systems, rewarding “innovators” as uniquely special human beings who are separate from the communities or collectives from which they emerge.

***Focusing on the “new” as something divorced from our past might also cause us to miss the root causes of the systemic failures that plague us in the present.***

But our histories of social organization can help us facilitate more connection and collaboration to address disparities around the world.

The West African concept of Sankofa – “Go Back and Get it” – is visually represented by a bird craning its neck to look back over its tail. These words and [this image](#) represent the belief that we must learn from our past in order to chart our way forward. This is not a new concept, but it is a useful one.

What if we thought about innovation through the lens of Sankofa? Instead of seeking to create something new, or re-brand something old as new, can we learn from Indigenous cultures who have stewarded their critical resources in service of the collective good rather than private gain? What strategies can we learn from our past to help us heal our systemic economic, social, and political inequities – and inform how we move forward into a future where we all thrive together?

Today, there are many instances of modern collectives and institutions working with models from the past to guide their work. One example is the adaptation of the [Sou-sous model](#). Sou-sous historically brought women together in financial solidarity to achieve their economic goals and milestones. They have recently resurfaced as a type of modern-day savings club. In philanthropy, [gift-giving circles](#) designed to support members of the broader community, rather than just the members of the circle, are another modern spin on the sou-sous structure.

The sou-sous model also inspired the design of a project that I’m part of called [Thrive Africa](#). Thrive Africa brought together African migrants living in the United States to raise funds to

support African immigrants struggling to settle in the country. As Africans, we could all identify with what it’s like to pull together resources to help someone resettle in a strange, new country. We watched our own parents pull together small amounts of money to create a sum much bigger than its separate parts.

Past community traditions also have much to teach us about strategies for land stewardship. Around the world, communities and families have written and unwritten agreements around how to manage and steward collective resources across generations for the well-being of the community. This commitment to each other’s collective welfare is when stewardship of shared assets transcends ownership.

For instance, the clan governance systems utilized by my family in Nigeria have been used widely across the African continent as a way of retaining place-based economic, cultural, and political power for a community. These strategies date back generations and live on, despite being threatened by modern laws demanding proof of written titles and deeds documenting ownership of the land.

Community ownership of assets was designed to aggregate and generate financial wealth for the good of the whole. Such collective stewardship of natural resources ensures that we all have access to the food, clean air, water, and energy that we need to live self-determined lives. However, settler colonialism and capitalism made it possible for outsiders to extract value from resources once held in

commons, leaving the community to suffer all of the social and ecological impacts but receive none of the benefits.

As we seek to transition out of an extractive capitalist economy, we must also disentangle ourselves from the other systems that prop up and strengthen it, such as white supremacy and patriarchy. In this, Sankofa offers a discerning eye to help us assess what is useful and necessary to learn from our past in order to bring it forward into our present. It also gives us a chance to pause and to reflect on what should remain in the past because it no longer serves us in the modern context.

For example, the clan governance strategy that both protects against injustice and exploitation in my family also perpetuates gender inequities. Our family’s land stewardship strategy is still rooted in patriarchy—ceding power and control to the men of the village while failing to give voice or agency to the women. It does not allow for flexibility in how families may shift and change over time as people age and society progresses. While remaining respectful to my fathers and elders of the clan, I can’t help but wonder where someone like myself might fit into these cultural practices. Under current practices the only way that my sisters and myself might seek to claim land is through my younger brother. The choice between self-subjugation and maintaining a generational cultural practice and family history is a false one.

The work before us is to study, learn from,





and distill the wisdom from our past cultures and traditions, and use them as a guiding light for how we advance a more sustainable, just, and equitable world together. The ability to translate past practices into our current cultural context is an essential skill for continuing to dismantle systems of oppression, while experimenting with updated strategies for resource sharing and community wealth building.

In my work, I have developed, organized, and operationalized the principles behind the restorative economics framework by incorporating what I have learned and experienced from those around me. Our commitment to healing, growing, and transforming as individuals can connect to our desire to reshape past systems and practices.

***Resisting the Western urge to capitalize on individualism is a constant internal struggle that we must be aware of if we are committed to the principles of cooperative economics.***

In working with Thrive Africa, I have reflected on how the powerful push and pull of ego and capitalism to claim something as an innovation can be an alluring temptation. However, doing so would pull us farther away from our values of collective care and well-being, which we carry in tune with our culture

and traditions, and which are the very integrity of the project.

Systems are made up of the choices that individuals, particularly those in power, make every single day. Our systems can become more compassionate and just if we internalize a spirit of empathy and generosity towards our neighbors and those in need. Policies are only successful if they are implemented by people committed to actualizing the hope and promise written into laws designed to change extractive and oppressive systems and practices.

My family's land stewardship practices is one of the many examples of how to create more holistic wealth and well-being for the community. Ultimately, calling on collective economic traditions and practices of the past while making decisions together based upon shared values is what builds our collective capacity to transition towards a more just and equitable world in the future.





# Changing Hearts and Minds: How to get donors funding African social movements

*By: Crystal des  
Ogugua*



Artwork and Design by Amir Khadar



We are in the midst of an ongoing existential threat in climate change, and frontline movements - particularly those of the Global South - have borne the brunt of responding to its impacts. Movements have been bold and ambitious in addressing the contamination of their water sources and air, the deforestation of their ancestral lands, and the increase of [natural disasters](#) and its disproportionate effects at the intersection of gender oppression, poverty, and racism. Yet, these movements are the least directly supported by institutional philanthropy.

Today, there are 2,668 billionaires in the world, 573 more than in 2020, according to a 2022 [Oxfam report](#). These funders, new and old, have pledged to resource climate solutions, and we view this as an opportunity to influence how money moves so that it can finally reach the frontline movements who

have the vision and strategy to solve the crisis.

Part of our work in the donor education program is to push our funders towards solidarity as a practice in order to shift power to grassroots movements. This involves challenging the extractive systems of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and colonialism, and building more just alternatives rooted in feminist, Indigenous, Black, and Afrodesendant values and practices. Our pedagogical frameworks intend to decenter the theories that perpetuate colonial approaches to giving, such as white saviorism.

For example, Western-based climate solutions have long used Africa as a ground for experimentation for their frameworks by investing in climate solutions created by outside “experts” without regard for the perspectives and needs of the communities they are being

***Western-based climate solutions have long used Africa as a ground for experimentation for their frameworks by investing in climate solutions created by outside “experts” without regard for the perspectives and needs of the communities they are being designed for.***

designed for. Instead, we uplift our partners as thought leaders and encourage funding practices that listen deeply to them, developing strategies around their analysis of the crisis we face. This is how we move towards solidarity as a practice.

The Thousand Currents Academy was born out of this exact approach. A week-long training of personal transformation toward concrete action, it began in 2014 as a response to a request from our Global South partners to create a space where funders could have deeper dialogues about how to align their practices with the needs of frontline communities. It brings together folks in funding and philanthropy with donors and people in the finance and impact investment sectors to figure out how to improve their partnerships and truly be in solidarity with grassroots organizations and social movements worldwide.

This year, we decided to experiment with a training that focused on funding climate solutions. Our aim was to influence the strategy and frameworks used to address the urgent climate crisis we face.

For our Climate Funding Academy, we targeted funders who were new to the work of climate funding. Our curriculum was creative and heart centered, channeling artwork, individual and group reflections, and journaling. We invited our movement partners to come in as educators, sharing their global and intersectional understandings of the climate crisis. Our guest speakers featured movement leaders, Thousand Currents staff, and funders who could speak to their experiences implementing

solidarity practices into their approach to giving.

Though these academies are designed to move our funders towards transformation, the content can sometimes be difficult for participants to immediately accept. Funders who had not previously heard about movement-centered frameworks, or the notion of “false solutions,” and alternative approaches to grantee evaluations, often found it challenging to immediately dismantle their assumptions.

For our part, we found that expanding their frameworks and horizons required providing them the space to challenge the intersections of their positions of power and their beliefs. Through individual reflections and small group interventions, we were able to witness a change in our funders’ understanding of their individual responsibility and their capacity to support shifting institutional practices.

During this year’s Academy, one participant had felt challenged by the program’s intention to decenter western approaches of philanthropy. However, on the last day they found themselves at the other end of that learning journey. They shared that the course had prompted them to reflect on “how my networks and close proximity to capitalism has influenced my thinking [and] confront a lot of my own biases.”

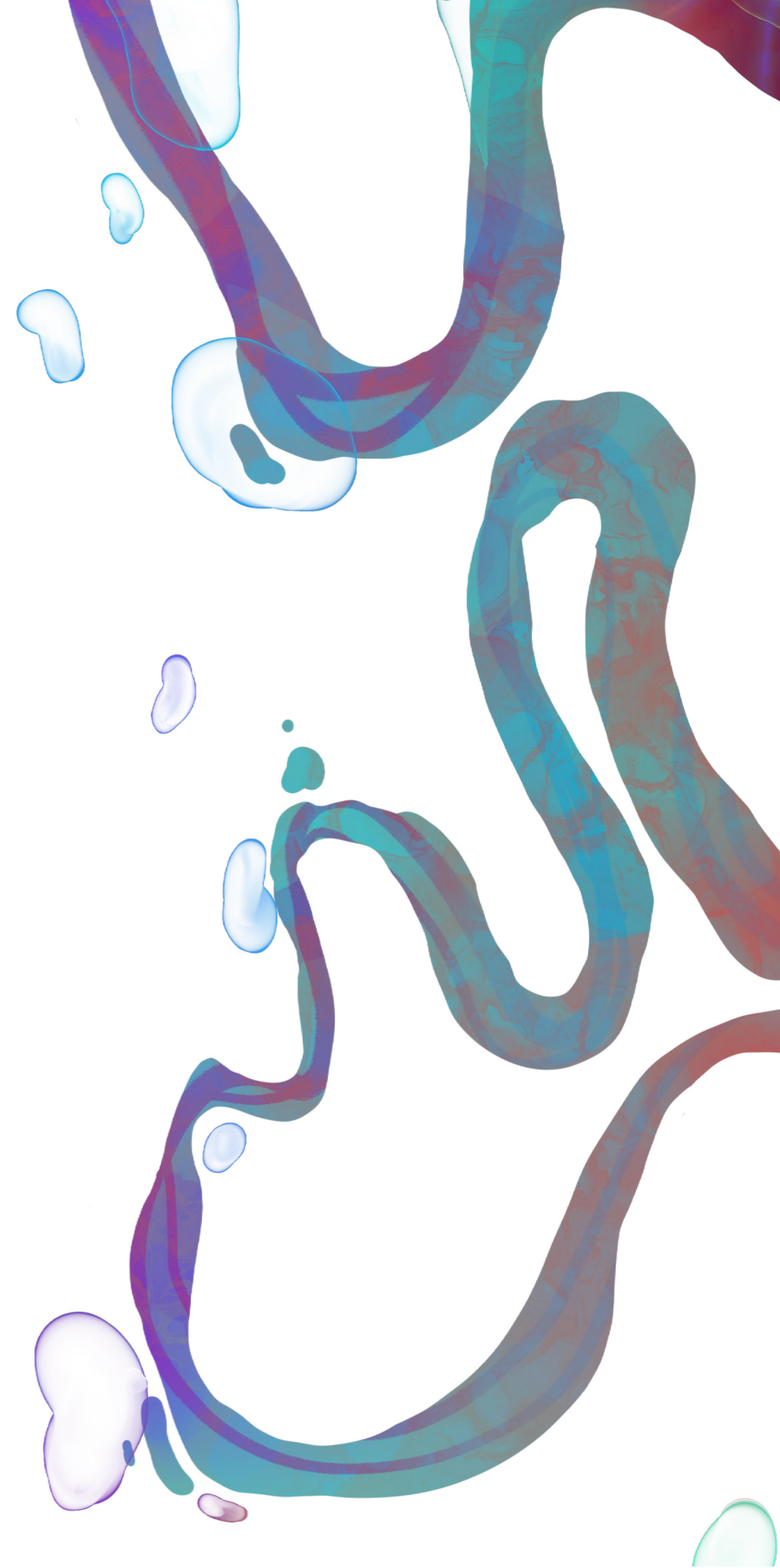
The program culminated with funders creating action plans to transform their methods and practices to better align with

movement-led climate solutions. Drawing from these plans, we designed a post-academy engagement strategy customized to accompany our participants as they work to implement their learnings into action.

Shifting power into the hands of grassroots movements of the Global South, particularly those in Africa, South America, Asia, and the Pacific, requires not only the changing of hearts and minds, but also taking concrete actions.

So, what can you do to push funders into alignment with these efforts? Encourage them to join us for an academy or share the program within your networks. Challenge funders to learn about African social movements and understand how to better resource them. Task them to participate in giving circles rooted in African practices, such as sou-sous. Curate learning experiences with African diaspora groups where funders can uplift the knowledge production and work of African-led movements. Urge them to fund Global South grassroots movements like they want them to win.

Thousand Currents will be hosting an Academy in the Spring of 2023. Sign up for our newsletter to stay updated on our next offering.





# A Final Farewell

It's been a ride, friends. With gratitude, wonder and pan-African love and power, we bid you farewell.

We give huge thanks to each and every one of our writers. Your passion, wisdom, and artistry really came through in the work submitted and, of course, this magazine would not exist without you.

We'd also like to thank Felogene Anumo for her sharp oversight and endless support and encouragement on the project.

This magazine, and indeed this iteration of AiD from its relaunch in 2020 to date, was the manifestation of the vision of Luam Kidane. The clarity of her political grounding and leadership allowed AiD's analysis to deepen and complexify whilst always ensuring the work remained a visual delight.

Thank you of course to Solome Lemma, Zanele Sibanda and Stephanie de Wolfe without whom this project would never have come into existence.

Our consultant editor Chinelo Onwualu and her diligence, resonance and commitment to honouring the words and ideas of each and every writer whilst shaping a magazine whose clarity and shine is definitely the work of her polish.

Amir Khadar - your art is a wonder and we are so blessed that you continue to share it.

We also give thanks to our fantastic translators Roze Russo, Wanjiku Mwotia, Maria-Gracia Guimaeres, Simone Bado, Michele Cubillo, wendelin regalado, and Helder Libelela, without whom this magazine simply wouldn't be available in French, English, or Spanish.

Thank you to the whole team at Thousand Currents for all of the support, love and care that Africans in the Diaspora has received.

Onwards and upwards, friends.





A PARTING GIFT