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EDITORS' PICK

Black Girl Freedom Fund Invests Over \$4 Million In 68 Organizations, Part Of #1Billion4BlackGirls Campaign

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SAVE GIRLS ON FYER INC (SGOF), one of Black Girl Freedom Fund's grantees, focuses on the liberation ... [+] COURTESY OF SGOF//JACQUEE PORTER

Although more conscientious efforts towards funding for women continue to increase, the statistics are still staggering, especially for Black women. Moreover, looking at the micro-level of financing for women, young Black girls, femmes and gender-expansive youth receive even a smaller amount of monetary support. In 2020, Ms. Foundation for Women released a landmark [report](#) sharing the statistics on philanthropic giving for women and girls of color. Black women and girls receive only 0.5% of \$66.9 billion from foundations, totaling just \$5.48 per woman and girl of color in the United States. As more donors and organizations become aware of the lack of resources available to underserved recipients, more programs, initiatives and grants are created to combat the dire misappropriated funds.

Dr. Monique Morris, president and CEO of Grantmakers for Girls of Color (G4GC) and cofounder of the #1Billion4BlackGirls campaign, and her team have built out the Black Girl Freedom Fund (BGFF), an [initiative](#) of G4GC that invests in Black girls. The Fund just announced its second round of grants totaling over \$4 million to 68 organizations throughout the U.S. whose work promotes and expands the leadership and organizing power of Black girls, femmes and gender-expansive youth. They were chosen by six Black girls and gender-expansive youth from BGFF's Grantmaking Council, ages 14 to 22-years-old. Some of the organizations' areas of expertise include STEAM education, career opportunities, sports and financial and economic literacy.

The Fund is part of the #1Billion4BlackGirls campaign, which aims to invest \$1 billion in Black girls by 2030. It uplifts these underrepresented communities by mobilizing investments in their innovation, health, safety, education, artistic visions, research and joy.

“One billion [dollars] was inspired by the data that came out of the Ms. Foundation report,” Morris explains. “We started to think about what girls of color in general, and Black girls specifically, give to conversations about equity and justice to this country; that was not just a woeful underinvestment, it was an insulting disregard. So we wanted to challenge ourselves to do better. We wanted to challenge philanthropy to do better. We wanted to make a statement that we know it is possible to generate a billion dollars that is specifically focused on the well-being of Black girls and femmes over ten years. ... to think about how we cultivate the ways in which Black girls and femmes are already showing up in their communities ... because they are worthy of investment in and of themselves.”



Dr. Monique Morris, president and CEO of Grantmakers for Girls of Color and cofounder of the ... [+] COURTESY OF GRANTMAKERS FOR GIRLS OF COLOR

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From the time Morris was in high school, she was involved in educational justice and advocacy programs. She then focused her efforts on the research side of social justice campaigns and practices. Interested in the intersection of race, gender and justice, she noticed gaps in the research, which prompted her to ask more questions. Her curiosity led her to research the juvenile justice systems, which brought her into contact with many young people across the gender spectrum who were detained and incarcerated for their response to the conditions in their lives. Morris was interested in identifying the goal of seeking a remedy to these conditions.

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Through her experience, Morris authored five books and co-wrote and produced a documentary, *PUSHOUT: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*, based on two of her books. Additionally, she founded the National Black Women's Justice Institute, a nonprofit that engages in research, training and technical assistance to address the criminalization of Black women and girls across the country.

During this time, the NoVo Foundation launched G4GC and successfully convened 100 funders from the U.S. Immersed in the philanthropic community, the Foundation invited Morris to

address the first convening of G4GC as an organizing body. In 2020, Morris became its first executive director. A year later, her title changed to president and CEO. Two years ago, G4GC became its own institution separating from NoVo Foundation.

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“It’s important to center the voices of those impacted by the inquiry,” Morris states. “We started to build out our funds. As I started to move into philanthropy, I had a deep question about how philanthropy was moving resources. How resources were being defined and how we could be more expansive in our definitions to ensure that we are reaching those who have been historically marginalized by conversations about investment and equity.”

Over \$500 thousand was released to six organizations during the Fund’s first round of disbursement. Additionally, over \$20 million was raised in investments in the campaign’s first year. The campaign is a mobilization effort within philanthropy, not just through G4GC and BGFF, but in partnership with other organizations and foundations. As the Fund expands, it is also building an infrastructure to help Black girls have a better relationship with money and understand how to utilize it in a business allocation.



Urban Word, a Black Girl Freedom Fund grantee, uses the transformative power of the written and ... [+] COURTESY OF URBAN WORD

As Morris and her team continue to develop and expand the campaign and Fund, they focus on how investing in Black girls, femmes and gender-expansive youth will transform society:

- By investing in Black girls and femmes, you deepen the rigor associated with society's understanding of critical issues. It sharpens our ability to develop more comprehensive approaches that sustain society's well-being.
- It'll force us to explore how investment in social issues must include their work, participation and engagement. Then, they can articulate what a remedy looks like for these conditions.
- Black girls will continue to elevate those around them without neglecting their needs; they will empower their communities.

Cidra M. Sebastien, manager of the BGFF, adds, "It's not about what Black girls need to do. It's about what we need to do to show

that we believe it. There needs to be funding behind it. There needs to be a policy behind it. There needs to be intentional action that’s coming from a place of honoring Black girls and gender-expansive youth. ... When we invest in Black girls and gender-expansive youth, we’re actually making an investment in our collective futures.”

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