



# BOOSKA PAPER.

EXPOSING STRUCTURAL  
RACISM IN THE THIRD SECTOR

*"Booska" - the Somali word for  
'position'*



2021

#BOOSKAPAPER  
#FUNDINGSOWHITE

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**This report was first published in April 2021.**

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# INTRODUCTION

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*"We have to shift the conversation to structural inequalities and institutional racism. It isn't the individual who isn't good enough- it's the colonialist structures that are based on a history of racism that have impacted organisations and their survival. Under neo-liberalist policies, we are not even supposed to have survived."*

2020 was a year in which the reality of institutional racism came to be acknowledged in ways it never has been before. Yet, as we approach the second half of 2021, it has become apparent that the UK government is invested in the denial of it. Throughout this time a key question for us has been: to what extent will the newfound awareness catalysed by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) uprisings and the visibly disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on minoritised communities lead to enduring change, particularly for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector in which we work?

This question drove The Ubele Initiative (Ubele) to amplify the collective voice, who endorsed initiating a study on the experiences of organisations led by and working for Black and ethnic minority people, on their behalf. Some are included in this research, some are not but wanted to see it be done. It is a big piece of work to engage with a funding system that is so crucial to sustaining their activities, now reckoning with its own complicity in perpetuating inequality. The same system, whose track-record of underinvestment and neglect of our community's needs has stymied progression of Black groups.

*"I hope to see more Black and minoritised women in power. In government, GLA, funders: where the power is. No more racism! I thought society would have been completely overhauled after what happened- everyone saw what happened to George Floyd - but it hasn't. If we go back to how it was, it isn't good for anyone. Funders need to remember that."*

**Our aim with this process, was to learn how members of our community view the funding system's evolution over the past year and where they feel progress is still needed. We also interviewed multiple funders. Differently to many other studies or reports analysing these issues, we are giving precedence to the collective voice from within the sector itself.** Lifting voices often overlooked, is a conscious choice.

The views in this paper are derived from Black and minoritised community led infrastructure and grassroots organisations from up and down the country. **Booska Paper** as our title; reflects the Somali word for 'position'.

Organisations who have signed on to this paper and its Calls to Action are declaring a shared stance, standing in solidarity with each other to call for a just and fair funding system.

Ultimately, the paper aims to support funders in better equipping themselves to work in service of equality and justice. Whilst mainly for the attention of independent funders, this paper also takes note of funding provided by local authorities, health systems and other public funding mechanisms for the VCSE sector.

### **What this paper covers.**

After outlining definitions for key terms and describing the research process, this paper will provide an overview of how infrastructure organisations and funders have responded to the crisis; in addition to ways in which the funding sector has yet to address institutional racism.

Issues we have heard in this research, still to be addressed:

- Limited long-term commitment to substantive racial justice strategies
- Failure to grasp the effects of institutionalised racism in the funding sector
- Mindsets of "The Other" that continue to frame how funders approach us within sector
- Funding structures that continue to discriminate against Black and minoritised groups
- Design and decision-making processes that continue to reflect unequal power dynamics
- Limited awareness of the role and value of Black and minoritised led infrastructure organisations

The paper concludes with Calls to Action that were co-created by the organisations who have signed this paper. These nine actions are concrete and tangible steps that funders can use to address institutional racism in their organisation, the sector, the funding landscape and to benefit society as a whole.

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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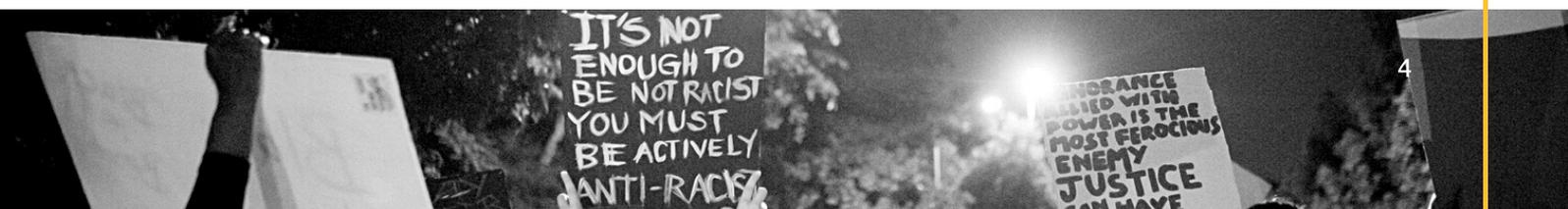
There is no doubt that a growing recognition of the barriers Black and ethnic minority organisations face in accessing finance, has catalysed changes in certain parts of the funding system. This has happened alongside the recognition of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19. However, we are far from the wholesale transformation that the funding system must undergo, to adequately reckon with the effects and influence of racism in this country.

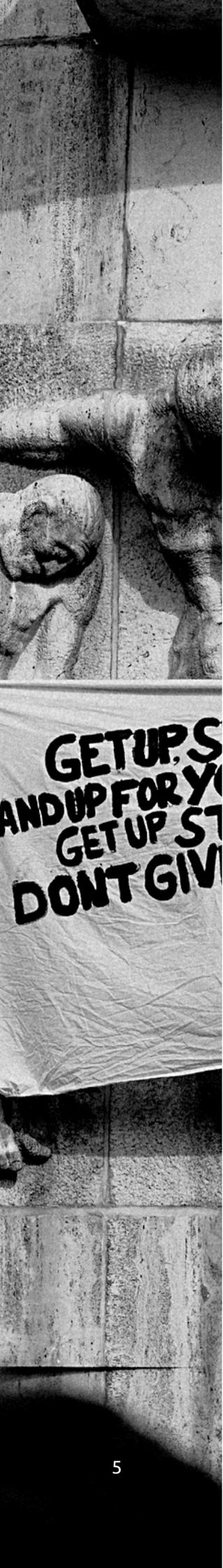
**Particularly, because we remain in a context where the argument that racism exists and is bad; still hasn't actually been won.** As unbelievable as that sounds, we see this in the latest Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report (CRED), that was in direct response to the Black Lives Matter movement. The Department for Education has banned any "victim narratives" it deems harmful to British society being taught in schools - that can be used to target the teaching of Black History. The crackdown on our fundamental right to protest in a democracy - especially against policing in the UK, is escalating. Public reactions to Meghan Markle's experience within the Royal Family reveal the extent to which society is still not able to understand how pervasive racism is. As we were almost about to publish this paper at time of writing, we had to stop to consider yet another response to the outright gaslighting by the British government co-opting leaders from our community to claim its legitimacy, whilst doubling down on gaslighting Black and minoritised people through the CRED report. This constant onslaught on our mental health and wellbeing in the wake of a deadly virus that has disproportionately left us with untold grief, is a method of wearing us down. We are tired, but the truth of institutional racism can not and will no longer be denied.

**We stand in absolute solidarity with Runnymede Trust, all of the people and organisations behind the letter to Boris Johnson to #RejectTheReport.**

Some of the questions this raises for us include: what is the role of the system of funding the VCSE sector in such a context? Is it to maintain a fundamentally unjust status quo? How does it source its legitimacy when the wealth on which it depends was mostly generated through historical processes of dehumanisation, extraction and exploitation that both created and have long sustained the inequalities we see today? In addition to their Board of Trustees, who should funders be accountable to?

These questions point to the long and difficult journey ahead for funders that get to the very core of their legitimacy and purpose.





# 1. TERMINOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESSES

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In this paper, we acknowledge several terms are used to refer to organisations and communities of concern to us. "BAME" (Black Asian Minority Ethnic) has been commonly used to refer to Black and minoritised communities. Although many people in our community use it out of choice, we also understand its problematic nature. The recent report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities highlighted this, however, in so doing- has also minimised and diminished the reasons for why this term is pernicious and dismissed the underlying structural issues that persist. (see *Appendix 1*)

We shall be referring to Black and minoritised people, groups and community led organisations; as that. These are organisations that are made up of the community they exist to support. That includes, at a leadership level. This can and does include people of African, Caribbean, South Asian, East Asian, Latin, Middle Eastern, Eastern European and all mixed heritage that are regarded an ethnic minority in this country.

These are also sometimes referred to as "*BAME infrastructure organisations*" which exist to provide support to a wider range of organisations that serve Black and ethnic minority communities. Infrastructure and grassroots organisations made up of our community are also regarded as "*the BAME sector*" or "*the sector*"; however it is important to note that they technically exist "*within the sector*" as they are still the minority inside a predominantly white country, society and VCSE sector as a whole.

Infrastructure organisations provide a variety of services intended to strengthen capacity, confidence and amplify the impact of the organisations they serve. This includes capacity building, convening and networking, supporting access to funding as well as carrying out advocacy and research relevant to their base. They sometimes (more recently - under COVID) act as a conduit or intermediary for funds, because they have the relationships and expertise to effectively channel funds to the grassroots that large funders may not be well placed to do. Black and minoritised community groups have traditionally faced significant barriers in accessing support and funding, so infrastructure organisations have a critical role in the development of grassroots needing it.

This paper has a two-pronged focus on the funding system itself and on Black and minoritised organisations; out of recognition the latter has often been written about regarding the funding to them and for them, whilst their collective voice was missing. For this reason, we targeted a selected group of 25 funders and Black and minoritised community organisations to carry out semi-structured interviews over the first quarter of 2021.

We interviewed 16 Black and minoritised infrastructure and grassroots organisations and 11 funders. The full list of organisations interviewed can be seen in Appendix 2. The findings of this paper have been informed through these interviews. The quotes used in this paper have been anonymised and are paraphrases of statements that were made during the interviews.





## 2. KEY INSIGHTS

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### 2.1

#### The Role of “BAME” Infrastructure Organisations in Responding to COVID-19

The devastation unleashed by the pandemic in Black and minoritised communities has already been well documented. We can cite numbers of lives lost, the families grieving their loved ones, the closure of businesses, the increase in rates of poverty, the rise in domestic violence, the toll on mental health among many other indicators. These are numbers that do not even begin to capture experiences.

Because of ties to these communities and the frontline organisations working there, infrastructure organisations were quick to grasp the scale of the emergency and to respond. It is important to note that they were not equipped with adequate resources and funding to do so at the time. Nevertheless, they did, as one interviewee stated: *“We felt forced to step up; if we didn’t do it, who will?”* Many infrastructure groups already had an extensive volunteer network in place they quickly mobilised to help add capacity. However, they could only ever mount an effective response if they had adequate financial backing to do so.

Many of the funders interviewed cited that [Ubele’s research](#) showing that 9 out of 10 Black and minoritised community organisations were facing closure- influenced their strategic response to the crisis. This unlocked dedicated sources of emergency funding for the COVID response, which many infrastructure groups were able to channel onwards to grassroots organisations. Grassroots have been a lifeline to struggling families and individuals that had nowhere else to turn.

This period also opened up new opportunities for dialogue and relationship building with funders. Ubele convened a number of conversations with infrastructure organisations, which helped to bridge the gap between sources of funding and these groups. For many local Black and minoritised groups, this was the first time that they either applied for or received funding.

However, all the groups we spoke with raised serious concerns about the sustainability of both this funding and of the relationships that were established during the extraordinary events of last year. Many spoke of the cliff-edge that will be faced when emergency funding ceases in March 2021. These and further concerns are explained further in this paper.

*“This year can’t be about last year. Last year was about emergency funding, this year it has to be about sustainability.”*

## 2.2

### The Role of Funders in Responding to COVID-19

As a result of the global pandemic followed by Black Lives Matter uprisings, funders started to engage with questions of racial inequality and equity in ways they hadn't done so before. From our interviews, many funders cited robust discussions that took place within organisations and at the board level on the reality of racism in the UK. Significantly, many talked about how they are on a journey to understand what it means to be anti-racist. Many openly admitted, there is much work yet to be done. Some, gave examples of where they witnessed racism operating in action but felt restricted to do anything about it.

This new consciousness has influenced funder policies and practices. These include undertaking efforts to develop organisational diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) action plans to improve staff and board diversity. Some funders have started collecting data on their funding allocations to determine the extent to which their portfolios are representative. Some have reviewed their funding practices, introducing more inclusive and accessible processes such as better outreach, a more streamlined application process with support offered to applicants, changes to eligibility criteria and other measures. Some also launched dedicated funding streams to target Black and minoritised organisations. Equally Ours, just recently released a review of 34 dedicated funds. Baobab Foundation also emerged with some interesting research that highlighted how institutional racism in funding systems needs to be faced. Comic Relief's efforts and the National Lottery Community Fund's Phoenix Fund were often cited as positive responses.

These new practices, and principles behind participatory processes that have been piloted over the last year, have been critical to recalibrating the funding dynamic that has traditionally been characterised by an imbalance of power. Not only are these new practices reducing barriers, they are also putting more power into the hands of Black and minoritised community leaders with lived experience of inequality and who are directly addressing inequalities affecting the BAME community.

Whilst funders have taken important steps to acknowledge the ways in their practices have upheld discrimination over the years, many interviewees felt that there is still a long way to go for funders to fully grasp "what it will take to resource racial justice?" For example, when the Resourcing Racial Justice collective set out with a strategic intervention to resource racial justice groups, they were confronted with how all-encompassing their methods and approaches needed to be, and how much risk and accountability they were asked to take on as individuals.

Despite these positive developments, a key question for us is **how will the lessons learned from the past year inform funders' future strategies?** Is that a future in which the attention to improving funding allocations and practices is not just an immediate reaction but part of considered, long-term strategy? These and further concerns are the subject of the next section of this paper.

## 2.3

### How Institutional Racism in the Funding Sector Continues to Show Up

#### 2.3.1

##### **“Was this Performative Funding, or For Real? Will it Last?”**

Serious doubts exist in the sector as to whether funders come to this work with a long-term commitment to addressing racial inequalities.

Because of their personal knowledge of and experience with how institutional racism plays out in this country, many interviewees feel that **last year is likely to represent a high tide that simply will not last**. It remains to be seen whether funders will disprove this hypothesis by sustaining and improving on the important progress that was made last year.

This dovetails with a sense that the emphasis on DEI, while a necessary step, could be a tokenistic and easily digestible gesture. However, improving **human resources policies and practices and diversifying staff cannot be equated with having a substantive investment in place to address systemic racism in the UK**. Once the latter is in place, funders will then be demonstrating a long-term approach to justice and equity. The recent [statement from Future Foundations UK](#) eloquently outlines how the changes made by funders over the past year, while positive, do not amount to a fundamental shift in power.

#### 2.3.2

##### **Failure to Grasp the Effects of Institutionalised Racism in The Funding Sector**

If we understand the relationship between funders and Black and minorities from a relational (not transactional) point of view, we have to acknowledge and address a fundamentally unequal power dynamic. This dynamic playing out, has fuelled mistrust towards funders and added to a **crisis of confidence** in the sector: *“No institution has ever told Black or ethnic minority communities that they are worth any money. They have to invest in building that kind of confidence in themselves, and many still don’t believe in their own capabilities.”*

The impact of repeated discrimination in this dynamic, is that groups can even feel as though they aren’t deserving of funding. Given the trauma of systemic racism, it’s not hard to imagine that rejection from funding can make both individuals and groups exhausted by the process, which will impact their confidence, will and capacity to apply for funds in the future.

Almost all the people we interviewed cited lack of confidence as one of the most significant barriers to groups accessing funding. So when funders say they are not receiving enough applications from the sector, it needs to be understood that eroded confidence is as a key factor that needs to be addressed. **Blaming groups as the problem doesn't help, it actually makes it worse.**

*"Funders have conditioned us to convince us that we are not good enough. Conditioned us to think we are not competitive or that it's the quality of our bids, that just don't make it through. I am talking to CEOs who have been running organisations that have existed for decades. Suddenly, they are feeling like they don't have the confidence to submit a funding application. That is not right. That has been conditioned by the funder. We need to bust this myth that it's because we aren't good enough, because it's ridiculous."*

*"'I am just not good enough as an individual' is a myth and 'structural and institutional racism is happening' is reality. Stop gaslighting people to believe it's their own fault."*

*"Do not expect people to fill out a 20 page application form when every institution is showing them they aren't worth investing in."*

When the COVID-19 Emergency programmes were announced last year with very short deadlines, many were afraid that the funding would not last and panicked to rush their applications through the process, out of fear that they would miss what was understood as a one-off opportunity. This triggered a great deal of anxiety. On top of trying to identify emergency needs as the pandemic unfolded and missing staff with sickness and bereavement at the same time due to COVID-19 - there was also a pressured rush to produce applications. This led to incomplete projections. Groups are now worried that they will be viewed negatively for not meeting their targets. As a result, many feel that they were "set up to fail."

*"We are reacting to society suddenly noticing we have been underfunded by 40% for decades - that is to take the opportunity, even if it's not fully thought through because there is a panic that the money is going to leave if you don't put something down. This could set us up to fail, for the narrative that we aren't responsible enough to be confirmed."*

We also heard stories of applicants cutting down their ambitions to fit in with funder expectations: minimising their needs, visions and strategies in order to obtain funding, even though often the funds were insufficient.

Another way in which power dynamics have negatively influenced the sector, is through fuelling a **culture of competition**. The scarcity of resources for Black and minoritised community led groups can lead to a highly competitive landscape which finds groups pitting themselves against each other. Some felt that funders have deliberately chosen to work with Black and minoritised community leaders who will not demand better treatment for all. Organisations do not want to buy-in to the competitive nature of funding for the small pots of money available, realising how destructive this can be, undermining solidarity and collective power-building within the sector itself.

*"Don't inflict 'crab mentality' on us for the sake of £10k. We shouldn't be forced to fight each other for such a small amount."*

### 2.3.3

#### **Mindsets of “The Other” Continue to Frame how Funders Approach the Black and Minoritised Communities**

One funder directly told us: *“you should all get together and coordinate better amongst yourselves.”* This statement we heard a funder say needs challenging for the following reasons; 1) it assumes it is our responsibility and not the funders to address how we are treated 2) we are not one homogenous group 3) not all Black and minoritised community led organisations have the same purpose and mission, nor the same role. Whilst acknowledging that there is room for better coordination and communication within the sector, the problem with this type of thinking is that Black and minoritised communities are seen as the ones at fault here. It does not account for funders’ own responsibility producing the dynamics that shape the current landscape in the first place.

What it also reveals, is the **distance between funders and the sector** resulting from decades of underinvestment, oversight and unequal power dynamics. Our view is that it is primarily the responsibility of funders to close that gap. Funders should actively build their own networks and nurture relationships across the sector with an openness to learn and listen. Find courage to challenge their own biases, transactional assumptions and commit to build trust and respect.

### 2.3.4

#### **Funding Structures Continue to Discriminate Against Black and Minoritised Community Groups**

As long as the following features of current funding structures remain, Black and minoritised groups will be prevented from accessing resources on terms that are beneficial for our long-term growth and impact.

- Many Black and minoritised community groups benefited from the emergency funding that was made available this year, which is by nature short-term and thus offers limited potential for growth. Some of the new funding mechanisms developed over the past year have offered core and flexible funding – this should be built into funding strategies going forward to support essential, longer term, recovery work.

Otherwise, when Black and minoritised community groups do receive funding it has tended to be on a project basis, which restricts support to only certain activities the funder is willing to support. It is simply not possible to establish an organisation on a sound and secure footing through project-based funding alone. What is needed is **multi-year core support** so that organisations can concentrate their energies on strengthening their own infrastructure. This is what sets them up for future success. [The Alliance produced a helpful racial justice audit for funders to use.](#) Knowing how the sector has been severely de-capacitated by historic underinvestment, providing project-based funding is inherently limiting its potential to grow.

*“Funders love to work on the “issue” of racial justice – but not invest in black and minoritised people to do what their community is asking for.”*

- With funding that is on offer to Black and minoritised community groups, it appears that inequities persist in how this funding is distributed.
  - Funding allocations need to be made through an **intersectional approach** so that those with additional protected characteristics, such as gender, LGBTQI and disability, are not further marginalised.
  - Because of historic neglect, many **Black and minoritised community groups are excluded from most funding programmes by default because they don't meet requirements**. Many are micro or small, operate at the grassroots level and lack robust financial and governance structures. It is our view that if funders want to address inequality it is their responsibility to design programmes and adopt approaches to be responsive to these features, rather than continue making them a subject to eligibility. There also needs to be recognition that the scrutiny funders often apply at the review stage for these smaller organisations only reinforces the culture of dominance. Black and minoritised community groups are in their current condition *because* funding has been structured to benefit certain portions of the VSCE sector.
  - **Funders often look for the latest "innovative approaches," but overlook basic needs of Black and minoritised communities that are fundamental**. They are the services and programmes that communities need for their core well-being and survival, not in place because of deprivation from underinvestment and austerity.

*"Funders ask for "innovation" because they like the idea of something new that is sexy- what about what works? Innovation does not replace basic needs. Fund what we are telling you works. Basic needs are not being met."*

*"Just because governments have pulled out, does not eradicate the basic needs of black and minoritised people that are not being met. Whilst people are arguing over whose role it is to plug that gap - we are dying."*

- The **proportion of funds going to organisations 'serving' Black and minoritised communities as opposed to those led by-and-for them**, remains imbalanced. Funding dominant (generic) organisations to address disparities faced by minoritised groups, can often undermine funding that would otherwise go to these groups. When Black and minoritised community organisations have been recruited as a sub-partner in a funding application, this may reflect in an unequal relationship or partnership between organisations. This has been witnessed in the Violence-Against-Women-and-Girls (VAWG) sector in particular: *"unfair partnerships that do not adhere to the Anti-Racist charter set out by black and minoritised women within the VAWG sector is **not** funding black women, it is increasing their dependence and harming their organisations."*
- Black and minoritised groups exist across the UK, not just in London. While efforts have been made to distribute the funding on a fairer basis, there is still a sense that **London-based groups are given preference**. This has been confirmed by the recent analysis conducted by Equally Ours.

*"A lot of national meetings I have attended are dominated by London organisations. They are London-centric down to the acronyms they use that are different- you feel like you have to battle to be involved in those conversations. When you are the only northern-based organisation in the room out of one or two, you also realise you are the tickbox in the tickbox."*

- Some funders have chosen to work through intermediaries – such as Black and minoritised community infrastructure organisations – who bring knowledge and relationships to the community. Whilst there are clear positive benefits in doing so, there are some questions that this practice raises. **Does this allow funders to evade responsibility for adopting a more comprehensive approach to the racial justice movement if it reduces its engagement to a few key intermediaries?**

*"When funders are giving to the same known big ones- they are driving inequality deeper. No one is checking that the bigger bodies are actually getting to the grassroots or who they are asking to do it on their behalf instead."*

- Many wider funding policies related to commissioning and public procurement processes continue to operate on an unequal basis. More scrutiny is needed to understand the **extent to which procurement and tendering processes associated with the Social Value Act (2013) are providing equal access to Black and minoritised groups**. As the funding landscape has changed moving from grant making to commissioning, critical changes in statutory funding have impacted Black and minoritised organisations disproportionately.
- One organisation recently had their funding cut by the local council when they decided to only offer funding for service delivery. This forced them to change what they were as an infrastructure organisation to delivering services: putting them into competition with their members and preventing them from providing the more strategic level of support needed by them. The social value and community assets of Black and minoritised organisations are not recognised by public procurement or in new funding regimes that align themselves to state priorities and to competition-led cultures. For example, £1 of a grant from local authority = £4 of investment by the local by-and-for infrastructure organisation and yet, this is not recognised as adding value.

Public procurement favours cost over quality: for example, in some procurement exercises, the weighting is 70% price to 30% quality. Open competition for services often means competing with big organisations that can be scales larger than the specialist Black and minoritised organisations. This means that Black and minoritised organisations are subsumed and their work is appropriated over time.

- Funders can have a role to play in addressing the under-representation, unequal partnerships and inequalities that have emerged due to changes in public funding.

### 2.3.5

#### Decision-making Processes Continue to Reflect Unequal Power Dynamics

*“Whiteness has become the norm. The boards – don’t look like us. I struggle to name more than a handful of organisations where I know Black and minoritised people are represented on the board fairly.”*

*“Often Black and minoritised communities will say ‘we don’t have capacity to submit bids.’ That can be true for some small organisations. But we also do have capacity, and we submit really good bids. We usually make it through to the initial rounds because we actually submit good quality applications, but they don’t get shortlisted. We have to look at why they are not making it at the decision making stage. It’s because the decision makers (the board that makes the big decisions)– do not represent us. They don’t understand the case that is being made, because it isn’t their lived experience.”*

Earlier in this paper, we suggested the limitations of the DEI approaches that many funders have started to adopt. For the most part, these have yet to have a significant impact on the composition of funder boards. Persistent inequalities at the governance level will continue to undermine a broader approach to racial justice.

Funders have increasingly focused on building a more diverse profile at the staff level, however these efforts tend to be isolated to one of two additions within a wider team comprising a more privileged background. For many Black and minoritised organisations, their access to funders seems to rely on direct relationships with these one or two staff members or a small handful of allies in the funding sector. This is extremely precarious, unsustainable and unjust.

Setting up review panels of people from the community must be done in a way to account for the position and power dynamics within the sector itself, otherwise there is a risk that they may act as gatekeepers. This can fuel the competitiveness which was covered in an earlier section. Often, these roles are not remunerated; just have more influence. Funders need to rethink the nature of their relationships and adopt an intersectional approach when setting up review panels (e.g. ensure feminist and young people’s perspectives are strongly represented).

*“We need to take this argument back to the structure. The structure of funds, how they are set up. Who they are accountable to, where their accountabilities lie, what representation do they have of the community, do they look like the community and do they understand the lived experiences of the communities? A lot of those decision making boards can’t tick those boxes.”*

Deep-seated concerns exist with the opacity of funding decisions at the outcome level. Applications that get in the door – because some funders have now adopted a “light touch process” – seem to be facing a block at later stages. **Transparency is needed not only about what is being funded but also which applications are being turned down and for what reasons.**

While funders have been more communicative about the decision-making processes, limited data is available about funding decisions at the outcome level, which is crucial to detecting additional barriers. The London Funders Group's approach to analysing its emergency funding outcomes is a model that other funders could follow.

*"When there is a rejected application, we need monitoring data to know how many black and minoritised organisations got rejected through a particular funding round. We need more concrete information about why those rejections are occurring. We need much better accountability and transparency around the decision-making process. This is a structural problem and if we don't address this process, we will continue to be rejected."*

### 2.3.6

#### **Awareness of The Value of Infrastructure Organisations**

It became apparent through our interviews that **funders need to broaden their knowledge about the role of infrastructure organisations**, the services they offer, the value they provide and the distinct yet complementary functions played by different infrastructure organisations. These groups come in many guises and carry out their roles as infrastructures organisations in different ways.

It was encouraging to hear nearly all interviewees cite Ubele's research which showed that 9 out of 10 Black and minoritised community organisations faced closure as a result of the impact of COVID-19. For many funders, this report was an important catalyst for developing new funding programmes, demonstrating the critical impact that sector-focused research and data can have on influencing funding patterns.

We call for more **investment in building sustainable research capacity in the sector** so that we can continue building the knowledge base around Black and Minoritised VCSE organisations.



### 3. CALLS TO ACTION

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Based on the findings in this research, we compiled nine Calls to Action that are concrete and tangible steps that funders can work towards to address institutional racism in the sector, the funding landscape and to benefit society as a whole.

#### **1. Addressing racism requires sustained, long-term investment.**

Funders should demonstrate commitment to Black and minoritised communities in the following ways:

- Funding structures and systems should be set up to ensure funders are moving from the performative short-term allocation of funds, to long-term sustainable investment in recognised Black and minoritised-led community organisations, that also represent community assets for Black and minoritised people developed under a social justice approach.
- Consider establishing fund intermediaries with recognised Black and minoritised infrastructure bodies to support them through formal partnership arrangements in the allocation of funds. This will help to shift funding structures to more participatory systems that work closely with communities that funding is designed to benefit. In this way, direct beneficiaries through their representative bodies, are involved in the allocation of funds.
- Publicly commit to protecting the social value of grassroots community organisations within this overall commitment, ensuring that all voluntary work responding to basic needs failed by government, is paid salaried work.

**2. In light of the recent report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, funders should now recognise that putting Black and minoritised people in positions doesn't automatically equate to being anti-racist. Despite the higher likelihood of a shared lived experience; that alone is not assurance individuals (including those in leadership) will act in the interest of Black and minoritised communities. In fact, the strength of institutional racism is such, they may knowingly go against the interests of their community, in an effort to sustain their own livelihood as an individual by a system that actively supports and rewards them for doing so.**

Funders should demonstrate anti-racist practice through considering the following questions:

- How much money, time and energy are you focussing on Diversity and Inclusion? This measure should not outweigh the proportionality of funding that goes into Black and minoritised community led infrastructure organisations to reach communities on the ground.
- Are you committed to resourcing Black and minority-led community organisations to deliver vital services to the communities they serve, long-term?
- Are resources for this work being facilitated in a consistent and sustainable manner?
- Are you asking with Black and minoritised group leaders to share their trauma, sit on panels, come and talk, deliver seminars or provide education about diversity and anti-racism without paying them? If you do offer payment, are you ensuring their organisations are being funded sustainably as a priority before you ask?
- Does your board look like, represent, and reflect the communities they serve?
- Would you be happy to publicly publish the proportion of Black and minoritised organisations you fund, or would you be fearful of that information being released?

**3. Intersectionality has to be taken into account if you want to reach Black and minoritised women, LGBTQI people, disabled people and those who face additional structural oppression including institutional racism. Ring-fenced funding for Black and minoritised people led organisations is a positive start, however it heightens competition within that group without the criteria being made any lower for the more marginalised.**

Funders considering ring-fencing funding for those facing structural oppression should also include:

- Ring-fenced funding for Black and minoritised women and girls that is centred and inclusive of Black and minoritised led organisations.
- Ring fenced funding for organisations with protected characteristics that is centred and inclusive of Black and minoritised people (e.g disability-led or LGBTQI-led)
- Remember we are not either/or. We exist at the intersection of every form of oppression in society.

**4. If funders rely only on insights from academic and white-led research, they fail to see the full and true picture. Whilst academic research has a place in knowledge generation, such research should consider decolonising methodologies and approaches. Building sustainable research capacity in the sector in this way, builds capacity for funding decisions to be made with appropriate knowledge and context.**

Funders should check that research to inform their funding decisions is from a decolonised perspective through:

- Use of Black feminist / critical race theory analysis in understanding the lived experience
- Inclusion of the lived experience in understanding how strategies should be formed and resourcing decisions made
- Placing appropriate weighting on qualitative research to inform the knowledge base
- Diversify the knowledge base by identifying the role of infrastructure bodies in producing meaningful knowledge about the communities they serve, call upon existing research they have done to be used as evidence

**5. Exclusion takes many forms, and a harmful experience for Black and minoritised people to go through in social and professional networks that eventually erodes their health, wellbeing and eventually life expectancy. Funders building their own networks and relationships with more people in the sector to build and nurture trusting relationships, fosters a much more open dialogue.**

Funders should change transactional relationships with the community, to relational:

- Take steps to reach out, nurture and foster authentic relationships with Black and minoritised people in a community that takes into account the power dynamics at play from the offset. Listen to them, learn from them.
- Understand that the structures of oppression we exist in has lowered confidence in Black and minoritised people to apply for large amounts of funding as it is. Especially when they have been repeatedly told they are not good enough by Funders, even if funding is available.
- Share your networks and your contacts, with community groups. Give your recommendations of Black and minoritised people led organisations you have come into contact with to others you know, who wouldn't come into contact with them otherwise.
- Participate and resource roundtables with and for Black and minoritised people, organisations and recognised infrastructure bodies- reflecting the principle that nothing about us is without us, ensuring that we have space to speak and represent ourselves.

**6. We hear of rejections more than we do of successes with achieving funding, from our community. This has a devastating effect on confidence for community groups to go back and re-apply. Publishing data about the application processes is just one aspect, we need to understand who is being turned down and for what reasons; for Funders to demonstrate accountability.**

Once funding has been allocated, Funders should publish their outcomes in an accountable way that includes the following information:

- Number of applications received with clear information on how many applications came from Black and minoritised-led organisations.
- Number of applications that passed the assessment stage with clear information on how many applications came from Black and minoritised-led organisations.
- Number of applications that received a positive outcome with clear information on how many applications came from Black and minoritised-led organisations. In relation to successful outcomes, clear information on amounts requested and awarded.
- Number of applications that were not successful at each stage with clear information on how many applications came from Black and minorities-led organisations and the reason why they were refused.

**7. Gaslighting of Black and minoritised people has been intensified to an even stronger degree by the recent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities by the UK Government. In the sector, too many Black and minoritised community organisations are receiving feedback that the reason they are not getting funding they need is because their applications are just not good enough.**

Funders must shift the narrative, culture and view of their role to play- to more substantively challenge the failures to recognise institutional racism that affects Black and minoritised people and organisations. They can address structural inequality with these actions:

- Apart from some smaller organisations with less infrastructure support; we know that applications simply not being good enough is not true, to the degree it is being used to justify the inequality.
- Racial gaslighting across all institutions in society means Black and minoritised people are already suffering a crisis of confidence from being made to feel that they do not deserve funding, even when they need it. Validate their needs and respond to the value of social good they address that have fallen through structures that should have been there for them in the first place.
- Create a framework for resubmission where Black and minoritised organisations do not receive a successful outcome.
- Commit to a genuine outcome-based approach to support unsuccessful organisations with concrete guidance in preparation for re-submission.
- Use Black and minoritised people led infrastructure bodies more effectively in building such capacity.
- Challenge your own perception of what is 'good enough' taking into account your unconscious bias that takes regular practice to unlearn.

**8. Despite the common experience of racism of all Black and minoritised communities; the same mindset that regards everyone as “BAME” means people are often pitted against one another in competition for the limited ring-fenced resources available. London-centric narratives mean even fewer resources are available for communities outside of London to share between them. This fuels toxic competition.**

Funders should foster collaboration over competition by engaging with strategic mechanisms that are growing between Black and minoritised infrastructure groups to ensure funds are distributed across ethnicities and geographies, taking the following as examples:

- Mechanisms like The National Strategic Alliance convened by The Ubele Initiative, are key to building capacity and relationships between groups who are making a conscious effort to unlearn competition and relearn trust.
- The Phoenix Way, working in a way that convenes an intergenerational group of Black and Minoritised national and regional leaders of organisations at every stage; from initial strategy through to co-design and funding decision making in the allocation of funding process.
- In models like Participatory Budgeting, the actual participants/potential fundees make decisions as to who get funded.
- It is not helpful to make assumptions about the relationships between Black and minoritised people led groups, without understanding the context in which they are expected to relate to each other.
- It is not helpful to compare Black and minoritised people led groups to one another when they exist for different purposes with different missions.
- Refrain from ‘cherry-picking’ organisations that are the least risk, the most popular brand or the ones that are the most comfortable.
- In order to reach those who need funding the most, you must tackle assumptions or perceptions about types of organisations which are viewed as high risk and bring up feelings of discomfort.

## **9. Prove your legitimacy by publishing and demonstrating how you are taking accountability for where your money comes from.**

- Funders should clearly publish the sources of their funds demonstrating commitment to ethical practices which require full transparency of the source of finances. These practices will instill confidence in funders and their code of ethics as consistent with building a fair, just and equal society.
- Funders should provide clear information about their board of governance and their positions including any conflict of interest, staffing, donors, sources of revenue and any other governance and income-related information.
- Funders should publish a list of all donors to them, as public acknowledgement of the receipt of funds.



### Why do we not want to use the term "BAME", which is now being used against us?

The origin of this term and all of its predecessors, including the potential acronyms that might be used in the future; are rooted in history. Like the way in which everyone has been taught history in a UK school system- it has derived from the perspective of the British Empire being the norm; everything outside of it being "Other". What we are called- won't really make a difference until the mindset itself, has been altered.

Unfortunately this messaging of non-white people being "Other" has been perpetuated worldwide through centuries of colonisation. Therefore, it actually serves as a tool for convenience; homogenising everyone who is non-white and lives in the UK, as one group also described as the minority. However, what it also conveniently does is centre whiteness as the norm, and keeps the fact that "BAME" people are actually reflective of a global majority (not a minority) living in the British Empire's legacy worldwide: out of sight, out of mind.

The issue is not so much what it does stand for, it's what it does not. It does not and will never adequately capture the population of 171 countries across the world that were invaded by the British, all of the Black people from across the world who were enslaved, tortured and disenfranchised by the Transatlantic Slave Trade the UK owned and ran over hundreds of years directly responsible for the treatment of Black people worldwide to this day- or even any of the regions now known as "The Commonwealth" (that most British people today can barely remember in full as ex-colonies).

What it also does not capture, are the ways in which the British gave more rights to some to oppress others in this group. Anti-blackness still exists in these communities as a result. When Britain ran its colonies; all indigenous people to the lands they invaded, however vastly different from one another; were all branded in the same way. "Other" people that did not deserve the same human rights as white people. That is what this term actually does; brand us all in the same way in opposition to whiteness, once again.

Most "BAME" people in this country have arrived here, as a result of the legacy of The British Empire at some point in their family history, which means: the context of their relationship to each other is through the institutional racism in which they exist. The UK government wanting to do away with the term, whilst simultaneously denying the existence of the systemic oppression we are under: is dangerous. We all experience the intense pressure to internalise racism in common, which as we unlearn to accept each other and ourselves- has a heavy impact on our mental health too.

We all experience it in a country that denies its own history. Therefore, if the legacy of the British Empire is the main thing that "BAME" people have in common; then it would do everyone a lot more justice to understand that legacy better for what it is and what it actually did- then try new names on a historical fact that forever exists and is still denied, covered and avoided and used to commit violence by the UK government to this day.

## APPENDIX 2

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Representatives of the following organisations participated in the interviews which informed the findings of this paper.

### **Funders:**

Association of Charitable Foundations  
Baobab Foundation  
Barrow Cadbury Trust  
Comic Relief  
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation  
Global Fund for Children  
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust  
London Funders Group  
National Lottery Community Fund  
Paul Hamlyn Foundation  
Resourcing Racial Justice  
UK Research and Innovation

### **Black and Minoritised Community-led organisations:**

All Inclusive Training  
Black South West Network  
Black Training and Enterprise Group  
Caribbean and African Health Network  
Carnival de Pueblo  
Council for Somali Organisations  
Croydon BAME Network  
Imkaan  
Kanlungan  
Lancashire BAME network  
Manchester BAME  
Race on the Agenda  
Bishop Leroy & Rock-iorganisation Community Project  
Voice4Change  
Voluntary Action Leeds

