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THE CIRCLE LE CERCLE

ON PHILANTHROPY AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN CANADA
SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE ET LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES AU CANADA



PhiLab

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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé “Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes”. Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom “Evaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l’enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux”. Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d’information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d’acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called “Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations”. From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations’ knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.



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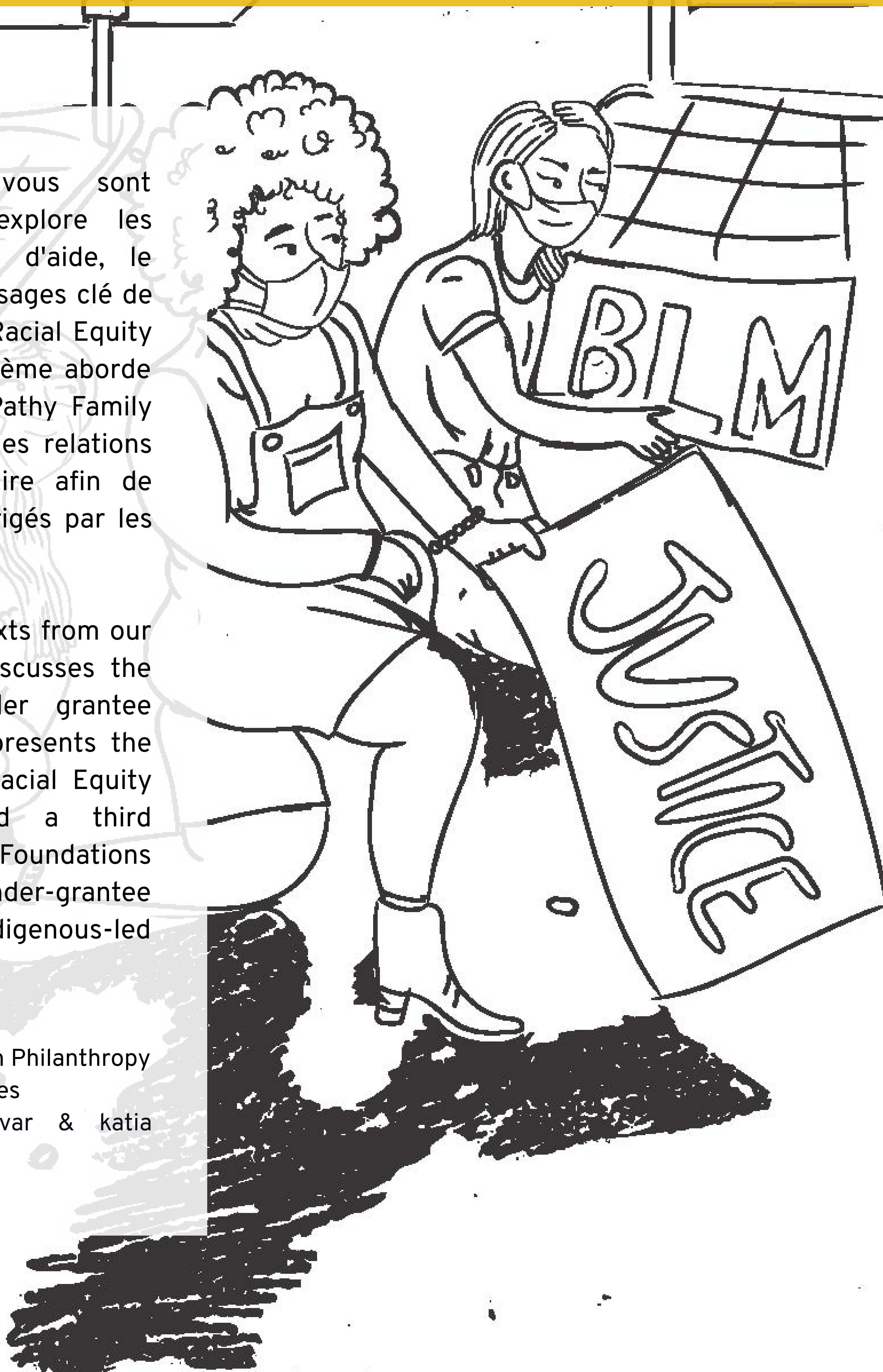
Canada

TEXTES D'INVITÉS | GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

Trois textes d'invités vous sont présentés. Le premier explore les paradoxes de la relation d'aide, le deuxième présente les messages clé de la session préliminaire du Racial Equity Summit tandis que le troisième aborde l'approche utilisée par la Pathy Family Foundation pour redéfinir les relations entre donateur et donataire afin de soutenir les organismes dirigés par les autochtones.

We present to you three texts from our guest contributors. One discusses the power dynamics in funder grantee relationships, the second presents the key takeaways from the Racial Equity Summit pre-session, and a third presents the Pathy Family Foundations approach to redefine funder-grantee relationships to support Indigenous-led organizations

Image: Racial Equity & Justice in Philanthropy Funders' Summit, Colouring Pages
Artists: Yaimel López Zaldívar & katia hernández velasco



TEXTES INVITÉS | GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

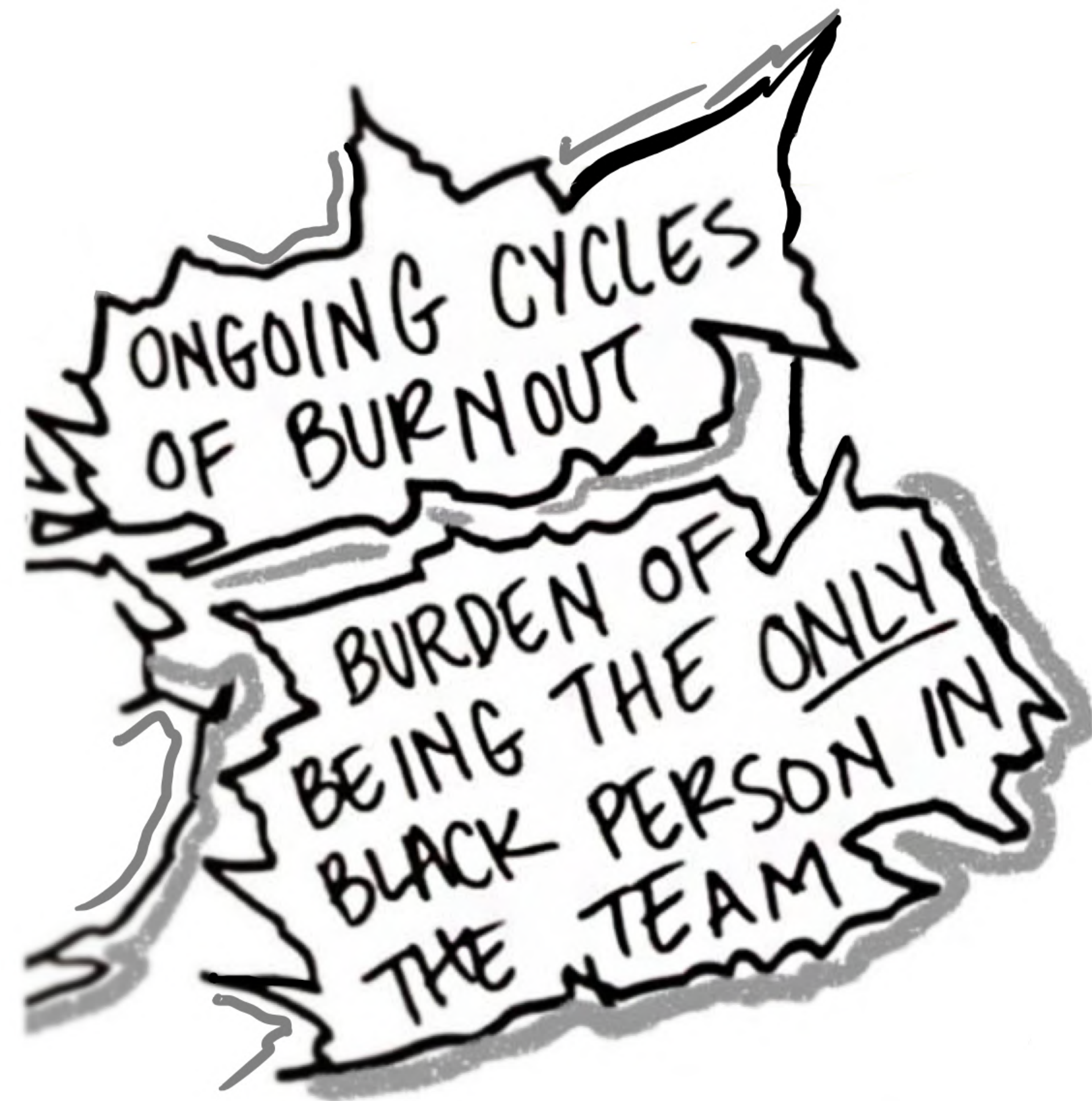
Moving Beyond the Words: Where is Canadian Philanthropy on its Journey to Dismantle Anti-Black Racism?



Par | By: Dorla Tune
Consultant

Dorla Tune has worked for over 20 years in the Canadian non-profit sector, including philanthropy, with a focus on community building and equity. Originally from Ontario Dorla moved to the unceded lands of the Musqueam, Squamish and T'sliel Watuth (Vancouver, BC) 12 years ago. Her career has spanned work in child welfare, immigrant and refugee settlement, and in recent years working with the United Way of the Lower Mainland and supporting the Vancouver Foundation in a voluntary role as a grant advisor. Dorla currently lives New Westminster, the Quaqat territory, with her family, enjoys writing, and currently work doing non-for-profit capacity development.

The everyday reality of Black people living in Canada includes facing anti-Black racism in all of its overt and covert forms. As short as five months ago, you may have bristled at this statement and instinctively denied it to be true. Yet, since the catalyzing murder of George Floyd in the United States, Canadians are taking a fresh look at the daily experiences of Black people living in the nation. Though Canada's relation-



ship with its diverse Black communities has a different historical context than that of the United States, the Canadian context is also steeped in colonial and racist systems that continue to negatively impact Black lives.

Shortly after this traumatic event, I was asked to facilitate a session for Black people working in philanthropy to participate in a pre-session for the [Racial Equity and Justice in Philanthropy Funders' Summit](#) (REJPFS). Grappling with my own reflections on where I stood as a Black woman socially and professionally, there were not many things I felt like doing at that time. All I craved was a protected and healing space in which to attempt to process the shifting Canadian consciousness and its impacts on my community. Taking on the designing and facilitation of this session provided exactly this space for Black professionals working in philanthropy and aligned with my and others' need for restorative moments.

The [Shifting Structures in Black Philanthropy](#) session was a protected space for Black people in the sector to connect,

share, and reckon with what philanthropy work currently looked like for them and to inform what it may become in the days ahead. We ended this session with the articulation of 12 Calls to Action, in no particular order, for the sector to shift power structures and combat anti-Black racism. These calls were widely amplified and revisited throughout the virtual summit and held some steady traction on social media in the days to follow. It was an exhilarating and healing few days.

Like many of my friends and colleagues, I felt ambivalence towards this seemingly sustained attention on Black lives. We have seen similar revolutions of national consciousness raising on matters of life and death for equity-seeking communities before, and these conversations remain urgent for insultingly brief moments.

Similarly, when I looked at the final list of the Calls to Action, I had mixed feelings. They are a strong first step in naming critical actions the philanthropic sector needs to enact and a great tool to start necessary conversations in the workplace. The transformative work to be done is primarily by those in power and in resistance to this. I worried additional emotional and literal labour to keep the current sense of urgency to address anti-Black racism (Call #2) would be placed on the Black staff. The work that makes up these actions are not new or radical ideas. Black people have and continue to do the heavy lifting of articulating how to deconstruct racist systems. There are blueprints, 12 point plans, toolkits, frameworks, infographics, dissertations, blog posts, books, tv shows, movies, songs, TikToks, and more, spanning 4 or 5 decades (to be conservative) that explain ways to break down the racist practices that disproportionately target Black people and their



Progress stalls where process meets power. For any of these calls to have traction, the gatekeepers, the boards of directors, the policymakers, and those in senior leadership need to believe the work lies with them and be willing to relinquish or shift power. Recently, I had conversations with a few colleagues in the sector across the country to discuss the progress.

“...until it is acknowledged that the system that oppresses Black people is not a problem for Black people to fix, it is a problem for the gatekeepers of the system. Those gatekeepers who fail to act must be moved aside and it is time to see a new and truly inclusive era. But in order for that to happen our board members in those positions really need to adopt policies and create change that looks at not just changing policies but developing support that will help create opportunities for Black people in these organizations to have their voices heard.”

In the days and weeks following the REJPFS, many Black professionals working in philanthropic and grant-making organizations experienced a welcome increase in breathing room; the space to stretch and move into areas that were previously off-limits. The Calls to Action were discussed at team meetings and in board meetings. Black staff were met with a desire from others to listen, understand, and be reflective.

“Now, we actually have some safety when talking about our daily realities and highlighting it in conversations.”

In some cases, Black professionals have enjoyed an expansion in their leadership within the organization and in the community to lead or inform how their organization is moving towards implementing anti-racist policies and practices.

“We have never called it out. We talk about diversity which is really not the same. We really need to name anti-racism work.”

The most valuable asset the philanthropic sector has in this work is the Black staff who remain present and committed in their organizations. All the conversations of the past three months on racial equity and justice have not erased anti-Black racism in the sector or in the workplace. In some cases, it has increased. Black professionals continue to experience hardships while navigating new or expanded roles. Some who are trying to receive equity in their jobs are not being treated with the equitable approach that the organizations are professing to adopt.

However, many organizations began to dig into the work. The nimbleness of any given organization to respond to these calls is impacted by their location in the community. Small foundations with mandates which previously identified Black and Indigenous communities as priority areas of investments can maneuver faster than a foundation that is an extension of the provincial government and at the mercy of government bureaucracy. Despite this, almost every organization has moved to develop and resource internal strategies for institutional change, often in the form of organization-wide anti-racist training, and in best-case scenarios, starting the process of organizational equity audits (Calls #4 and #6).

Many philanthropic organizations have publicly taken a stand on anti-Black racism (Call #1), or are in the process of community consultations to ensure that public stance is informed, authentic, and evergreen. Some have used these public statements to name commitments to other actions found on the list of calls. Collecting race-based data (Call # 5) is a priority for one particular foundation:

INTEGRATE
COMPREHENSIVE
RACE-BASED DATA
COLLECTION & ANALYSIS
TO PLANNING & EVALUATION
(EQUITY DRIVEN
DECISION-MAKING)

“We know how many Black people are in a specific municipality, but locally, we have very little data about the work Black-led organizations have been doing and their impact.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated some Black staff to mobilize funds to prioritize the immediate investment of money and resources into Black communities, touching on the action linked to Call # 7 - naming Black communities as priorities for investment. Similarly, one foundation is taking the lead by collaborating with other foundations with mandates focussing on anti-racism and undertaking intentional outreach strategies to Black-led organizations and communities. Yet, increasing access to money and resources by making short term changes to granting procedures, or mobilizing around a crisis, are not solutions that challenge the system. There is a tendency to want to create one-off granting programs that focus on Black or BIPOC communities and issues as a way for a foundation to feel like it is answering the call to action.

“It is great to have the resources in the hands of the people but what kinds of shifts is your organization doing in the meantime? It is easy to have a one-off granting program, but it is just as easy to get rid of that granting program after priorities change if you are not actually doing the work in terms of relationship building.”

NAME & RECOGNIZE
THE EXPERIENCE OF
BLACK INDIVIDUALS
& COMMUNITIES



Building authentic relationships with equity-seeking communities and seeing them as active contributors (Calls #10 and 11) requires humility on the part of philanthropic and grant-making organizations. It is vital to understand that:

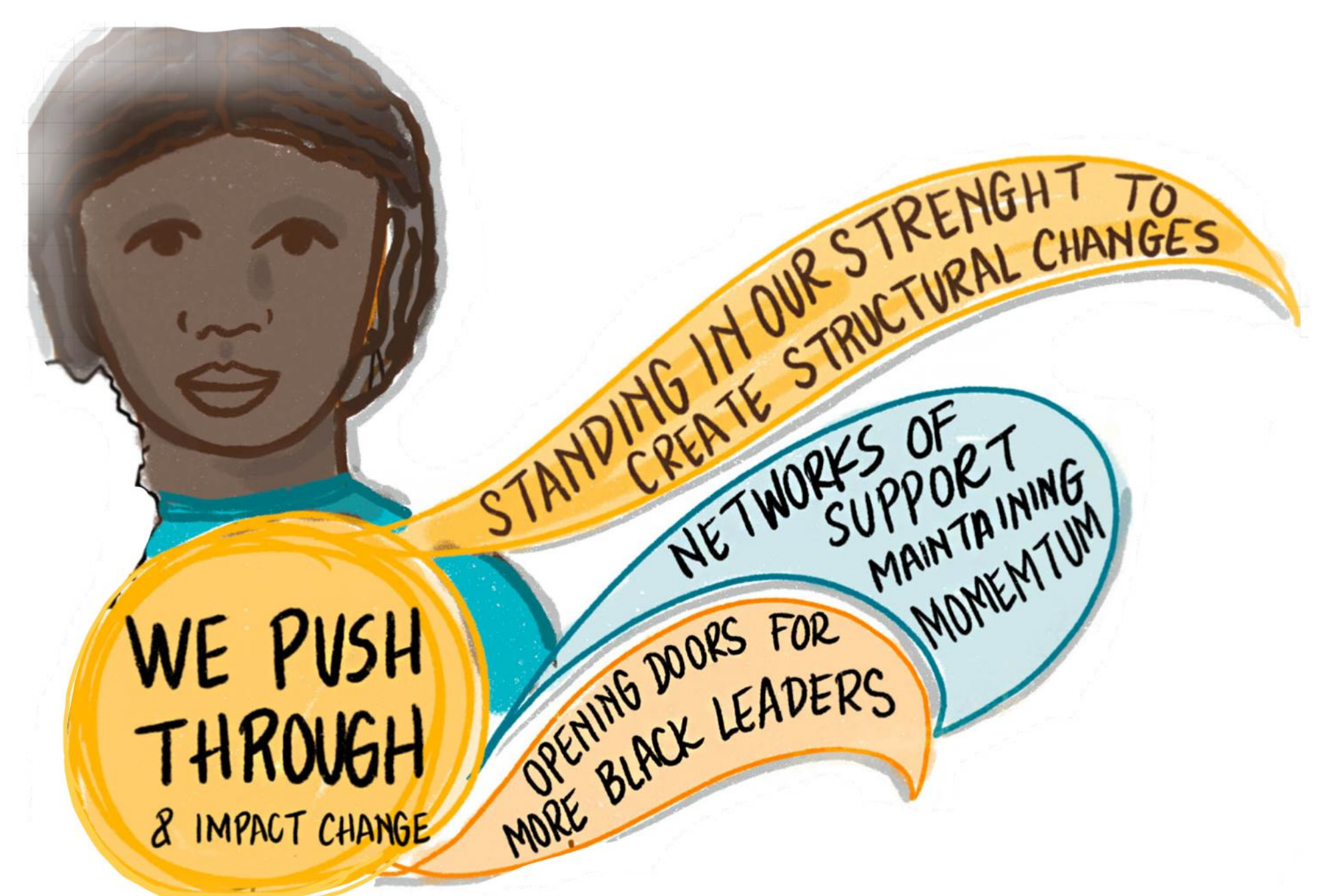
“The majority of equity-seeking groups are also relational groups. Because once you have experienced the depth and fullness of oppression, relationship building is one of the conduits, of the central pieces, to being engaged.”

Strategies for building these relationships are simple. Black staff have begun to see great work in proactively building relationships with Black-led organizations and communities through outreach initiatives and work to expand how these organizations can engage with the foundation. According to one partner, what is even more effective is:

“Attending the conversations that the community is already having instead of creating your own conversations that require the community to come to you.”

Incredible momentum and initiatives have emerged in the philanthropic sector over the past three months, like the securing of an endowment to be help by the first Black Canadian philanthropic foundation, and the [Black Opportunity Fund](#); work being led by Black people. True to form, Black professionals in philanthropy are standing tall in their strength and power, leveraging their networks and showing up to drive the work forward. They are undertaking introspective reckonings to figure out how to reconcile their professional work with their personal identities; all at continued risk themselves as those in power are just starting to listen and learn.

“There are all these things coming together in terms of my personal interests and my professional work and my strengths in certain areas. I am really trying to hone it down to be intentional in how I show up in this work.”



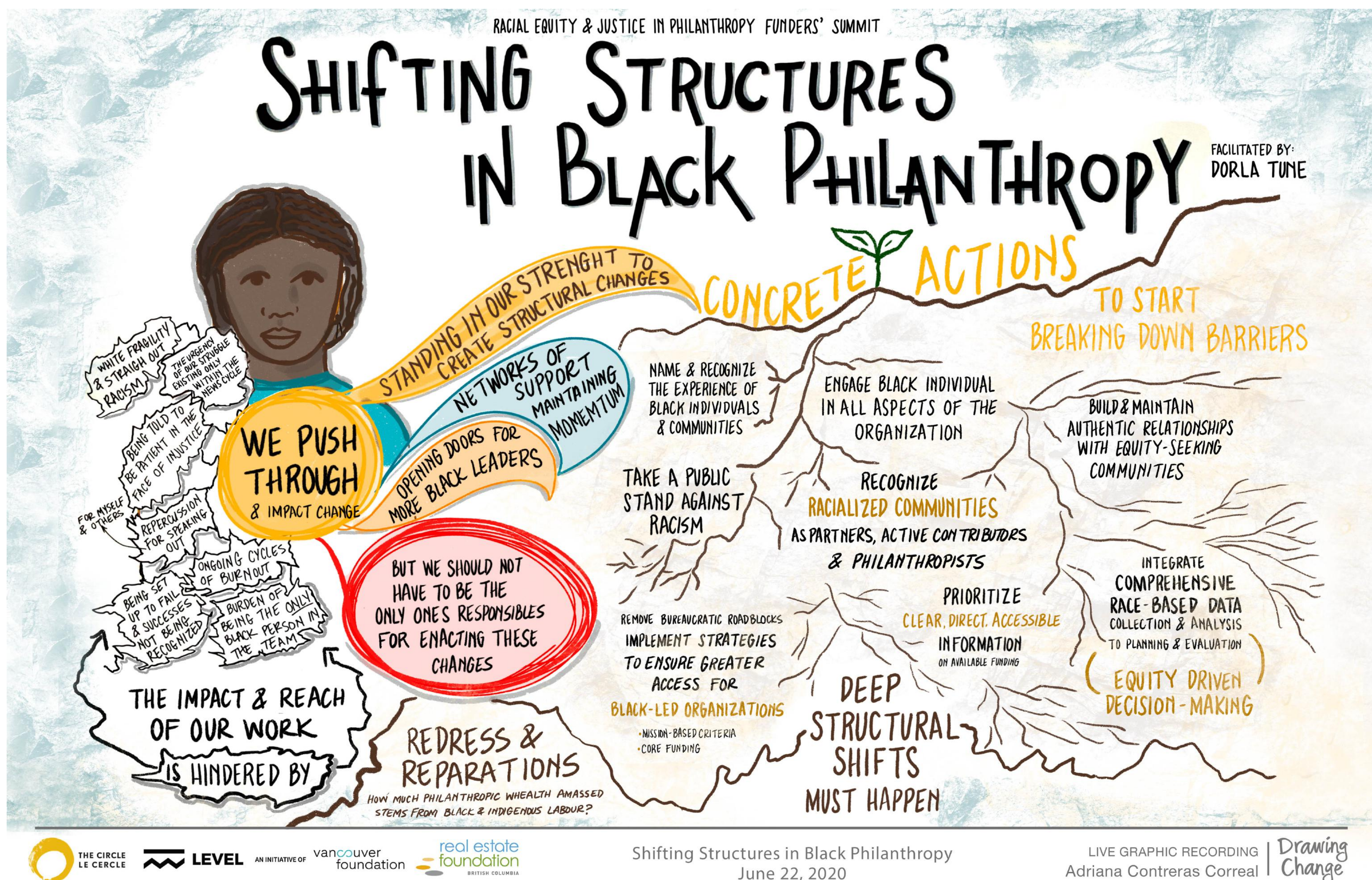
To honour the work Black people in this sector continue to accomplish against the odds, philanthropy's board members, policymakers, gatekeepers and fundraisers need to start answering these questions:

- What reckoning am I willing to face individually to better understand anti-Black racism in philanthropy?
- What solutions will we collectively implement that create long term structural changes to improve the lives of Black communities in Canada?
- Where is philanthropy uniquely placed to be a leading sector on the national landscape in implementing true systemic change? (Hint: see Call #3)
- How do we start seeing Black-led organizations and communities as philanthropists and contributors in their own right and as allies in this work?

The heavy lifting cannot continue to rest on the shoulders of the people most adversely impacted by the injustices of our current systems.

“We are beyond words at this point; we want to see action.”

The contents of this article refer to the Racial Equity and Justice in Philanthropy Funders' Summit pre-session held on June 22nd 2020.



Graphic Recording by Adriana Contreras Correal

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