

BACBAB



INSIGHTS IN BRIEF:

A BETTER NORMAL

**BUILDING SCALED, SUSTAINED AND
ENGAGED INVESTMENT FROM FUNDERS
INTO RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE UK**

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Commissioned by Baobab Foundation UK

1. WHO IS BAOBAB?

Emerging from the seeds of emotion, anger, and a deep-seated desire for real change, The Baobab Foundation is a new type of foundation that seeks to reshape how black and ethnic minority-led organisations are funded and supported. The Baobab Foundation will support, grow and strengthen organisations and groups in our growing membership network by centring the voices and lived experiences of black people and communities experiencing racial injustice.

Our vision is to change the way things are done in the interests of the people we support, with a focus on transparency, representation, innovation and connection – we will be led by and for communities, groups and organisations who are impacted by racial injustice.

As we look to the future, we wanted to reflect on what has worked and not worked in the last twelve months of work by funders to bring greater resources and support to people affected by racial injustice, understand their current experience, and help shape a better way forward.

This report was commissioned with that intention in mind with a specific focus on the funding landscape and how this has enabled or limited the work of organisations and communities led by Black people and communities working on racial justice.

“DIFFERENT MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES CANNOT BE LUMPED INTO ONE CATCH-ALL TERM LIKE THIS [BAME]. IT ERASES OUR OWN UNIQUE HISTORIES AND THE REALITY OF THE INTERSECTIONAL INEQUALITIES WE FACE DAY TO DAY.”

– BAOBAB REVIEW RESPONDENT

2. WHY THIS REPORT, WHY NOW?



Our aim is to not repeat the mistakes of the past as we set out to build the Baobab approach. The review aimed to unpack what lessons can be learned from the initiatives and opportunities set up in 2020, most of which emerged from the crisis and recovery response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement following the killing of George Floyd.

As we begin to focus on recovery, we need to acknowledge multiple pandemics have taken place, one, Covid-19 and efforts around which have focused on the immediate needs and symptoms arising from health and other inequalities in the UK, which disproportionately impact Black and ethnic minorities. The other is racial injustice, which requires us to take up structural and systemic solutions to bring about lasting change, and cannot be fixed in one year.

We spoke to 26 respondents across 19 organisations in the UK.

These conversations revealed that while the last year saw an unprecedented rise in funding to organisations led by Black people and

ethnic minorities, there is still a significant gap in provision and support to create sustainable change and proportionate investment to organisations representing and working directly with these communities.

Discussions also indicated the balance of investment has focused on Covid-19 response efforts (immediate needs) not investment into long-term solutions directly tackling racial injustice (root causes). There is still significant work to embed a racial justice approach across funding systems in the UK.

It was clear some funders are on the journey to progressive change, however, deeper and decisive action is still needed to integrate a racial and intersectional lens across funder strategies and practice that will create real change. No funder or organisation can deliver this level of change in isolation, we need scaled and coordinated efforts from funders, working with those advocating with and for communities subjected to racial injustice in an open and transparent way beyond Covid-19 response.

3. KEY TERMS

PEOPLE NOT ACRONYMS

As an organisation, we choose not to use acronyms like BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) because they oversimplify the different lived experiences of individual and groups that fall into this category, while potentially disregarding minority ethnic groups who may not identify as Black or Brown per se, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. In an effort to acknowledge the depth and breadth of discrimination experienced by marginalised people around the world, and unless referencing the work of other organisations, we prefer phrases like 'Black people and communities experiencing racial injustice'. We recognise this definition is not perfect, however, it reflects our orientation towards a broader view.

BEYOND TICK BOXES

Intersectionality is a framework rooted in Black feminist labour, originally developed by African American legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, which describes how interlocking systems of oppression lead to distinct forms of marginalisation.

An intersectional approach supports us to understand systemic inequities beyond singular axes of oppression e.g. gender injustice. Intersectionality calls on us to consider the socio-economic and political contexts within which we live, and how these are not only shaped by our identity, e.g. race, sexuality, gender, wealth, disability, faith, class and so on, but also by historic and enduring forms of oppression which have privileged some but not others, such as colonialism, for example.

Intersectionality is not a paper exercise to categorise and identify groups and needs, but to go deeper into knowledge building, lived experience, and resistance.

4. SIGNS OF PROGRESS

While questions remain as to why it took a global and social crisis to stimulate change, marked progress has been made by funders, including:

- Increase in funding available, and greater flexibility of funding, which gave community groups and organisations the opportunity to expand their Covid-19 response and innovate.
- A welcome albeit belated shift towards participatory funding models which has seen reduced levels of due diligence, easing of application processes, and funders taking on feedback from experts with technical and lived experience of racial injustice.
- Investment into lived experience funders and organisations who have played a critical role in building trust and creating access to tailored funds over the last year.

This progress has been welcomed across the board, and needs to be sustained beyond this period.

“ORGANISATIONS
STILL HAVE TO
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HARD TO SECURE
FUNDING AND
GAIN TRUST WITH
MAINSTREAM
FUNDERS”

– **BAOBAB REVIEW
RESPONDENT**



5. CRITICAL ISSUES IMPACTING COMMUNITIES NOW

However, progress remains limited and at risk of stalling, because many groups and organisations are at risk if in long-term and scaled flexible investment isn't achieved in the UK. This is because:

- Much of the funding offered so far is tied to Covid-19 efforts and will not extend beyond March 2021
- Funding provision has been outstripped by the level of demand for resources and support from groups see Fig 1 (visualisation)
- Funding has failed to address geographical and intersectional disparities across the UK.

Significant work to be done to reach groups outside London; as well as communities that have been hyper-marginalised, including: women, disabled people, Roma, gypsy and traveller people, and trans people coming from communities experiencing racial injustice.

- Many organisations are dealing with historic under-investment, operating with limited systems, personnel, and financial continuity.

Core and unrestricted financial support is vital to address gaps in infrastructure costs, overheads, reserves, and delivering organisational strategies, which were inadequately supported through current funding provision.

"FUNDERS MUST BE CAREFUL WE DON'T CREATE A...
SITUATION WHERE WE DON'T GIVE YOU
LONG-TERM FUNDING UNTIL YOU PROVE YOUR
SUSTAINABLE, BUT YOU CAN'T BE SUSTAINABLE
UNTIL YOU HAVE LONG-TERM FUNDING"

– REVIEW RESPONDENT

6. MOVING TOWARDS AN ANTI-RACIST AND INTERSECTIONAL FUNDING APPROACH

A number of funders have stated they are seeking to become anti-racist in their approach, and require greater depth and ongoing action in order to support change.

- Funders need to get comfortable with being explicit about race, racial inequities, and intersectionality in their work.
- Funders need to ensure racial justice efforts are not siloed, but intentionally cut across all social change strategies to ensure maximum impact to most marginalised communities in the UK.
- Funders need to challenge their existing fund distribution models, looking to increasing access and equity in non-tailored provision, and increase equity and transparency in leadership of large scale delegated funds, particularly where spaces are dominated by white-led intermediaries.
- Funders need to review how they assess risk considering whether there is a bias against these organisations; and whether risk is being passed downward, impairing programme outcomes. We should be adopting risk-taking behaviour to generate innovation and bring in new voices and approaches into sectors and spaces across the UK that have excluded a racial or intersectional lens, providing extra support if needed.
- Funders need to work proactively to engage with diverse representation outside of London and on an intersectional basis, ensuring this is reflected back into decision making structures throughout funding systems and processes.
- When working with communities dealing with ongoing oppression and crisis, safe spaces are required, along with a trauma-informed approach to reduce harm in the funding process.

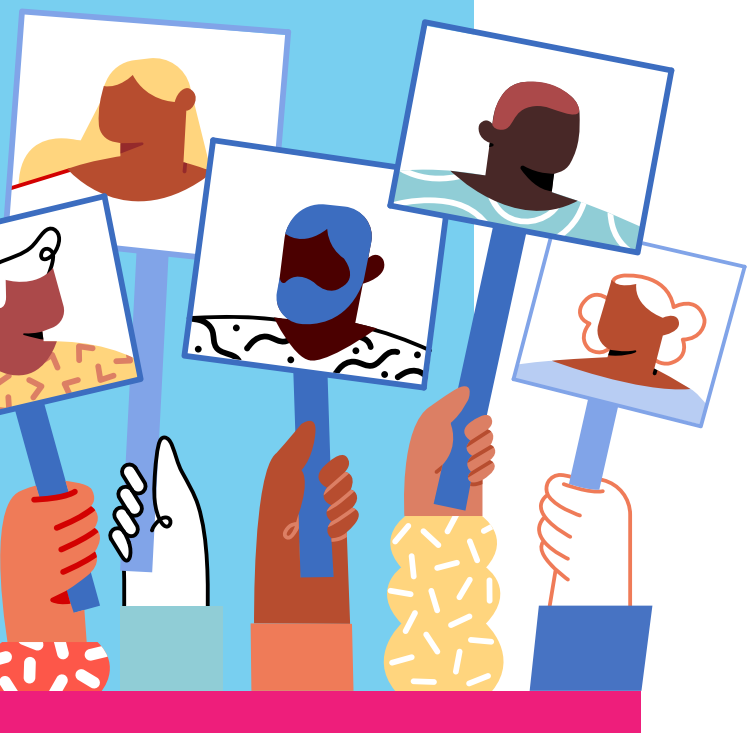
“BLACK DISABLED PEOPLE ARE OFTEN
HOMOGENISED WITH THE EXPERIENCE
OF WHITE DISABLED PEOPLE, AS IS
OFTEN THE CASE FOR BLACK AND ETHNIC
MINORITY WOMEN”

– **BAOBAB REVIEW RESPONDENT**

A BETTER NORMAL

7. OUR CALL TO ACTION TO FUNDERS:

- Deliver on **large scale**, sustained (5 years +) and **flexible funding** to organisations led by and for black people and communities experiencing racial injustice in the UK.
- Address the **significant disparities** in funding provision for groups outside London and those tackling intersectional oppression at multiple levels.
- Build **strategic partnerships** with organisations led by black people and communities experiencing racial injustice to tackle structural inequities across a range of social justice priorities.
- Adopt **transformative policies and practices** to address inequities in large-scale fund distribution and to take ethical investment portfolios to the next level, focusing on anti-racist investments.
- Improve cultural competency, representation and **trauma-informed practices** across funding to reduce harm, including fully acknowledge the leadership and labour of people bringing technical and lived expertise of racial injustice in the pursuit of this agenda in your work.



THANKS

Thank you to everyone who generously gave their time, particularly to the individuals bringing their technical and lived experience of racial injustice to shape a better future for us all. We are indebted to you.

FIND OUT MORE

To access the full report, visit
www.baobabofoundation.co.uk/research

You can follow us on twitter [@TheBaobabUK](https://twitter.com/TheBaobabUK)

If you would like to contact us about the review, or ways in which you can support our work in the future.

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