



**2**

**Executive Greeting**

Meeting the moment and navigating unfolding crises while remaining steady in activating money to help create a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable economy

**3**

**Collective Action and Community**

Challenging philanthropy's traditional paradigms leads to new pathways that center the needs of communities and create comprehensive solutions

**4**

**Using the Power of Business for Good**

Kreyòl Essence is revolutionizing the beauty industry by empowering women and fighting climate change

**6**

**Building Relationships and Effecting Change**

The Kataly Foundation explores how to support communities and social movements that are creating new solutions to systemic problems



## EXECUTIVE GREETING

# Meeting the Moment

### Dear Clients and Friends,

As we enter the fall of this profoundly difficult year, there is much to reflect on, challenge, and embrace. We are grateful for your commitment to RSF Social Finance and hope that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy.

As we all navigate these unfolding crises, RSF remains steady in activating money to help create a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable economy. We have been providing crisis relief to social enterprises in distress. Both our lending activity and the grant activity out of our Donor Advised Funds have increased significantly over the past two quarters. And it has been incredibly encouraging to see how RSF's clients are flowing money to organizations and communities that need it most.

At the same time, RSF Social Finance is an organization in transformation: We are faced with the uncomfortable questions of how to reckon with systemic racism, unconscious bias, white supremacy, and extractive practices. RSF is deeply committed to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in how we work internally, and the ways we work with our clients, partners, and allies. While we have made progress in those areas, we have much listening, learning, and work to do as we continue this journey.

One way in which we are listening and learning is through training: In the past months, our full staff participated in three training sessions, led by Nwamaka Agbo, about Unconscious Bias and Restorative Economics. Another way is by collaborating with BIPOC entrepreneurs, clients, and partners. As part

of our mission, we are committed to supporting and funding social justice organizations. We continue to learn and grow, and we welcome your voice and your partnership on this journey. Please feel free to email me at [ceo@rsfsocialfinance.org](mailto:ceo@rsfsocialfinance.org) with your thoughts and ideas.

The unique approaches to working with money at RSF include Community Pricing Gatherings in which investors and borrowers collaboratively work toward a recommendation for the interest rate. Shared Gifting Circles are one way we work toward decoupling money and power, through participatory grantmaking practices. And our work with mission-first ownership and governance models offers innovative ways to challenge the dominant shareholder primacy paradigm. At the core of these practices is the belief that economic decisions should be in the hands of the stakeholders affected by those decisions, and that all stakeholders should seek to understand each other's needs. This is a simple yet revolutionary idea that feels more relevant and necessary than ever.

In this issue of our newsletter we focus on the extraordinary work of a few BIPOC entrepreneurs, clients, and partners in the RSF community. Social, racial, and economic justice must be central to our commitment to create an economy that works for all.

Together with you, our investors, donors, social enterprises, schools, nonprofits, fellows, and partners, we are moving money to create a more just, regenerative, and compassionate world. We are all deeply grateful for your support and engagement in this work.

With gratitude,



**Jasper J. van Brakel,**  
Chief Executive Officer

**How can you transform  
your money?**

Learn more in this new video by RSF, Do  
Good Better, and Ruben DeLuna Creative.

**MONEYTRANSFORMS.COM**





## COMMUNITY IN CONVERSATION

# Collective Action and Community

RSF's Kayla Leduc talks with Aisha Nyandoro CEO of Springboard to Opportunities and the innovator behind the Magnolia Mother's Trust, and donor Hilary Giovale about challenging philanthropy's status quo, empowering communities, and what this moment requires of us.



**Kayla Leduc**

Senior Program Associate, Philanthropic Services and Client Engagement



**Aisha Nyandoro**

CEO of Springboard to Opportunities



**Hilary Giovale**

Donor

**Kayla:** Aisha, could you please tell us about yourself and your current work?

**Aisha:** I am deeply rooted and committed to community. I moved back to Mississippi 12 years ago to do the work of community change, rebuilding, and creating opportunities for the community members' voices to be heard and elevated.

I have led Springboard for Opportunities for the last eight years where we center the needs of individuals

into the solutions and programs that are being designed for the community. Springboard to Opportunities provides programs and services for families that live in federally subsidized affordable housing. In this time of simultaneous crises, everything we do is in partnership with our residents, and is in service to them advancing their lives in some way. I'm passionate about this work because it allows me to show up, be in relationship with individuals, and really get to know folks.

**Kayla:** Can you also share a little bit about Magnolia Mother's Trust?

**Aisha:** Through Magnolia Mother's Trust (MMT) we provide a guaranteed income, which centers the narrative of economic justice and economic inequities from a racial and gender equity perspective.

MMT provides \$1,000 dollars a month for 12 months to extremely low-income Black mothers that live in federally subsidized affordable housing. We started this work in 2018, before the idea of a universal basic income was widely talked about.

We started with a pilot of 20 mothers because raising resources was difficult, plus we needed to provide a proof of concept since we were the first to work with an extremely low-income population—these families make less than \$12K a year. Because of the “benefits cliff,” we needed to make sure that we were doing good without doing harm and that families would not be kicked off necessary subsidies.

We're now in the second iteration of this work, in the midst of a pandemic, and we have 110 women receiving \$1K each month for 12 months.

It has been amazing to see in real time what having money does beyond consumer sovereignty. Yes, bills can be paid but this guaranteed income allows people to continue to dream. They can be optimistic about their future rather than stress out about how to deal with childcare as they continue to work. This is very different than what we are hearing from other women that we work with who aren't participating in this guaranteed income.

**Kayla:** How has your work evolved and adapted throughout the current health, economic, and political climate?

**Aisha:** The work of Springboard has evolved, and we see more need to address economic stability. Prior to COVID-19 a lot of our work was about economic security,



Photo: Kreyòl Essence co-founders, Yve-Car Momperousse and Stéphane Jean-Baptiste on *Shark Tank*.

# Using the Power of Business for Good

Kreyòl Essence is revolutionizing the beauty industry by empowering women and fighting climate change.



**Amy Beck,**  
Manager, Client  
Engagement

In 2009, when Yve-Car Momperousse was working in the alumni office of her alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, she was invited to a party where she thought she might meet a great guy. She wanted to put her best foot forward, so she asked her hairdresser to straighten her hair. Happily, Momperousse met the guy (Stéphane Jean-Baptiste, who would become her life partner).

But when she woke up the next morning, her hair was falling out.

“Like any good millennial, I called my mom and asked her, ‘What’s the name of that oil you used when I was growing up, that solved pretty much everything from hair loss to dryness to body aches?’” says Momperousse. “She said it was *lwil maskriti*, or Haitian black castor oil.”

Her mother sent her some of the miracle remedy, and it worked so well that Momperousse joked she ought to start a business selling it. Her mom thought that was a great idea. Five years later, after earning a master’s degree at Cornell University and working as the school’s director of diversity programming, Momperousse founded Kreyòl Essence with Jean-Baptiste. They named it after Haiti’s commonly spoken language.

The Miami- and Haiti-based company now sells organic hair and skin products at retailers including Ulta, Whole Foods, and Urban Outfitters. But Momperousse’s mission has always gone far beyond the bottom line. Her aim is to provide women of all races with clean, natural beauty products while creating a sustainable business for Haiti, empowering women economically, and having a positive impact on the environment.

“The thing that sets Kreyòl Essence apart is that Yve-Car has always had a really clear vision of where she wanted to take the business, not just in terms of financial success but also in terms of the impact she envisioned making in Haiti and the beauty industry,” says Alexandria Cabral, senior credit associate at RSF Social Finance.



“

**RSF ... has gone outside the normal practices in order to make sure that they are being good partners and good citizens in the fight for social justice and equity.”**

— YVE-CAR MOMPEROUSSE,  
KREYÒL ESSENCE

## Using the power of business to create jobs

In 2010, a year after Momperousse started what she calls her “hair journey,” a magnitude 7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti. It was a real shock: Momperousse is a

first-generation Haitian-American and Jean-Baptiste came to the U.S. from Haiti when he was 7.

Momperousse immediately shifted her focus from creating a business to working in relief efforts. When her mom asked her what would happen to Haiti when “Anderson Cooper is no longer covering the story,” Momperousse realized that her Haitian people—and women in particular—needed jobs. And she could help with her new business.

When Momperousse launched Kreyòl Essence in 2014, she began working with Haitian farmers and cooperatives to plant 100,000 black castor trees. In addition to providing the miracle oil that revived her hair, the tree farms and production facilities also provide jobs and reduce deforestation, soil erosion, and greenhouse gas emissions. And the work empowers women. Kreyòl Essence now provides work for over 300 farmers and producers in Haiti, and most of the producers are women.

The company’s sales grew steadily. In 2016, however, it lost a big client because it couldn’t fulfill a large order quickly enough. That nearly sank the business. To save it, Momperousse and Jean-Baptiste (who is chief operating officer) pivoted to selling online directly to customers and cultivated what they call their “tribe” on Instagram. This savvy move boosted sales and is helping the company survive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Finding the capital to deliver on the mission

After nearly losing the business, Momperousse realized Kreyòl Essence needed more capital. Like many women and people of color, she struggled to find lenders willing to take a chance on her. But when

(CONTINUES ON PG 10)

Photo: Yve-Car Momperousse in Kreyòl Essence’s greenhouse.





## COMMUNITY IN CONVERSATION

# Building Relationships and Effecting Change

RSF's Deb Nelson talks with Nwamaka Agbo and Regan Pritzker of The Kataly Foundation about the importance of relationships and how to support communities that are exploring new solutions to systemic problems.



**Deb Nelson**

Vice-President, Client & Community Engagement



**Nwamaka Agbo**

The Kataly Foundation



**Regan Pritzker**

The Kataly Foundation

**Deb:** These are intense times, to say the least. What keeps you up at night, and what keeps you going?

**Nwamaka:** These current converging crises are ongoing systemic challenges that Black and Indigenous

communities have experienced for centuries. The pandemic has revealed this vulnerability and staggering inequality by putting it under a spotlight that many can no longer avoid.

The thing that keeps me up at night is trying to understand what it will take to create systemic and structural change. For those of us that are committed to justice and equity, it's important to remain accountable to doing our own individual work while also fighting against the institutions and systems that seek to harm us.

What's keeping me going are the great organizations that we have the pleasure of supporting, because despite the pandemic and the attack on our democracy, grassroots communities are coming together to envision and implement solutions based on agency and self-determination. That committed wisdom, and the way people continue to show up despite all that seeks to hurt them, inspires me.

**Regan:** That was beautifully stated and deeply resonates for me. Recently, what keeps me up at night is the concern of backlash. My worry is that, instead of more transparency around entrenched racism and patriarchal bias, there's actually a backlash that's even more explicitly hateful, and potentially militarized and state-sanctioned. If we go in the wrong direction, the stakes are just so high.

I'm inspired that more people are engaging, educating themselves, and leaning into personal transformation. The stakes are higher now and I hope that what I am seeing is indicative of a broader moment of change. The systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and racial oppression are negatively impacting all of us, not just communities of color, but also people who have traditionally benefited from this broken system.

**Deb:** There seems to be an opening for change, new ways of thinking, and new actions. Where do you see the greatest potential for lasting change?

**Nwamaka:** One of the greatest potentials for lasting change is rooted in the relationships that individuals within communities and organizations cultivate. Regardless of where you are located, what social movement, organization, or affiliation, it's the uniqueness of these relationships that keeps people directly connected to one another in a values-aligned way, over time and across distances.

While we need to continue to fight for policy change, engage in electoral politics, and continue to experiment



with cooperative entrepreneurship and innovation, accountability sits in the relationship, and that allows us to continue along the pathway of progress together. Our ability to be accountable to one another and hold each other in community is what persists.

**Regan:** Relationships are really important, and at Kataly Foundation we're trying to live into that. Where I'm seeing change happen is in movement spaces, and this call to action to fully resource Black-led movements gives me hope. Movements are where you shift the conversation, get to the heart of the issue, and change what's politically possible. White people, philanthropy, people with wealth, need to learn to follow the lead of our movements and join in as organizers and co-conspirators, but not set the agenda.

**Deb:** I'd love to hear more about the work that you're doing at Kataly Foundation.

**Regan:** We first worked together when Nwamaka was with Restore Oakland, so I got to see her in a practitioner role, coordinating between multiple grassroots organizations, digging into the numbers, looking at the capital stack, and determining what kind of funding makes a community-owned and community-governed capital project possible. I was inspired by the clarity of vision and the integrity of a project that was looking at dismantling the structures of dependency that are built into the nonprofit industrial complex and extractive philanthropy. Though philanthropy is meant to be about generosity structurally, it is predicated on dependency instead of shifting wealth and power. Nwamaka's transformative framing of regenerative and restorative economies envisions the future that I want to live toward.

**Deb:** What are your roles at Kataly Foundation?

**Nwamaka:** What's special about Kataly has been true partnership with Regan, Chris, and Susan, who show up and are committed to this work. Our work is about wealth liberation and directly investing resources in Black, brown and Indigenous communities and being in solidarity with social movement leaders.

We think of ourselves as a practice-based funder, where, in addition to moving financial and non-financial resources, we're also providing strategic advice and technical assistance to our partners to make these projects work with a shared commitment to see them all succeed as a whole.

At Kataly I have the pleasure of serving as CEO in support of our amazing team by strategizing how to best resource and support Black, Indigenous, and communities of color across our three program areas. These include an integrated capital vehicle called the Restorative Economies Fund, where we move financial

resources across the capital spectrum to support projects, particularly in ensuring that they have access to the catalytic capital to help get them off the ground. Our environmental justice grantmaking program is led by another amazing consultant, Marni Rosen, and focuses on bringing together environmental justice leaders in a participatory grantmaking process to determine how to resource communities that are oftentimes hit first and worst by climate chaos.

Our mindfulness and healing justice body of work, being led by Donna Bransford, Larry Yang, and Kimi Mojica, focuses on ensuring that these impacted communities have the opportunity to engage in contemplative practices that allow them to heal, restore, and rest.

Our work on restorative economics, environmental justice grantmaking, and mindfulness healing justice are all integrated into what we understand as necessary to support communities on the ground from a holistic Kataly vision. We try to activate all of our resources, financial and nonfinancial, to support communities at their highest point of need and to be in deep solidarity with them.

**Deb:** I love your holistic, integrated approach. Regan, what flipped the switch for you and motivated you to start activating money for good?

**Regan:** I grew up in a family with wealth. Our family name was very public and my external experience of that was uncomfortable. But my parents raised me with love and compassion and as their child, I really felt seen by them.

That gave me the self-concept to critically examine my relationship to that inherited wealth. I didn't get comfortable talking about my wealth privilege until I was into adulthood, which I think is a testament to how deep-seated the discomfort is for many people with wealth.

When my parents started the Libra Foundation in 2004, I had been interested in the idea of aligning investments with our mission. We had a clear human rights mission, but our investments weren't aligned, and I had an idea that that was wrong, but I didn't feel like I had the capacity to know how to actually engage and make it less bad.

When I attended Play BIG in 2014, I recognized that I could learn along the way. I explored how my values were being reflected, where my money sleeps at night, and how to reduce this feeling of contradiction when I have values that aren't matched with what my financial resources are making possible.

(CONTINUES ON PG 8)

Building Relationships and Effecting Change

(CONTINUES FROM PG 7)

**Deb:** Nwamaka, what challenges have you faced in using money as a force for good and encouraging others to do the same?

**Nwamaka:** The challenge of using money as a force for good is to spend the time to disaggregate capital as a tool, and capitalism as a system that is designed to extract natural resources, exploit labor, and accumulate more wealth. We have a responsibility to ask the question “why,” to be well informed, and to push back when we are engaging in systems that are designed to create more hurt and harm.

Capital and money have become so intrinsic to our ability to provide for ourselves, and because we don’t yet have a system that fully honors the dignity of every human life, people have to engage with capital as the tool by which they take care of themselves. When people challenge how we move money, structure deals, and think about profit, it can feel like it is an attack on an individual’s ability to provide for themselves.

The opportunity is to understand that we do get to enact choice and create economic structures that are tied to our public health system, criminal justice system, and education system. We can choose to create a safety net that meets the needs of all people.

**Deb:** Regan, you’re an RSF investor and attended Play BIG. And Nwamaka, you’re an ICI fellow, a consultant, and advisor to RSF. You both had a very positive impact on the work we do. How did you end up collaborating with RSF, and what impact have those collaborations had on you?

**Regan:** Play BIG was my first introduction to the organization, and it has evolved. RSF’s philosophy to change the way people engage in relationships around money really affected me.

I was introduced to the idea that it’s possible to have a conversation about mutual needs in a financial transaction, rather than just following rules, issuing contracts and technocratic solutions. Interactions with money can contain a set of conditions in which people collectively make decisions about what and how to resource.

**Deb:** After going to business school and working in finance, I thought, “These structures, terms, and systems don’t make any sense,” because they usually don’t. They weren’t really created to do good, but to keep a small percentage of people in power with money, access, and privilege.

**Regan:** Financial jargon is intentionally designed to create a sense of expertise or hierarchy, so that someone who hasn’t gone through the sanctioned venues of power-gaining could easily feel intimidated. It’s very intentional, and that’s been a big learning for me, too.

**Nwamaka:** I agree with that assessment of the jargon. I went to ICI to learn more about impact investment and to deepen my own technical skills around the work. I was deeply moved by the model of inviting investors and donors to think about activating their entire portfolio of resources, and using grants alongside non-extractive investment tools to resource entrepreneurs and communities.

What I left with was a rich set of relationships and communities across different perspectives. I could bring my social racial justice analysis work into conversations with those who have a traditional finance background and to be in a relationship with unlikely allies. We can deepen our impact beyond what we could do individually, and I’m excited for this space where people across sectors can come together to reflect on economic and financial systems and move capital in a different way.

**Deb:** Can you share something you’ve learned about wealth and power?

**Regan:** The idea I’ve worked on the most is that power, in and of itself, isn’t a bad thing. I think a lot of well-intentioned people who have power can sometimes think of it as a bad thing, something you’re not supposed to wield, or that you’re going to corrupt the system by stepping into your power. I think learning how to step into power responsibly, wield it with accountability, and in partnership with community can be extremely meaningful, helpful, productive, and liberating.

**Nwamaka:** I think wealth and power are meant to be shared for our collective good. We’ve structured ourselves as a society with the misconception that our money will keep us safe. Regan and I both know that it’s our deep relationships and communities that are the actual things that keep us safe.

People do need access to resources to support their communities, but it is being able to be in deep relationship with our community that holds us and takes care of us. Seeing how communities have responded in the COVID-19 crisis despite the failure of our government to act has shown that it’s our neighbors, friends, and families that show up to care for us when everything else has fallen to the wayside. So, yes, I would say wealth and power are meant to be shared for our collective good. 🌱





including guaranteed income, children's savings accounts, and workforce development. In addition to monthly guaranteed income, since COVID-19 we have provided \$500 disbursements to 400 families for a variety of immediate needs. Within our 11 affordable housing communities we also offer food and diaper bank deliveries through our community partners.

While we address immediate needs, we are also having conversations about how to sustain our communities beyond the present COVID-19 crisis. For the long haul, we are ensuring that our staff has the skills and tools necessary to lead this work, establish partnerships, and respond to the needs of our communities.

**Kayla:** It's incredible how your work has been pivoting and expanding during this time.

**Aisha:** Part of this long-term work is changing the narrative about poverty and shifting from the moralism of poverty to centering on the needs of families. And narrative is important. Most "essential workers" are not consulted in decisions that directly affect them. Because they are not being supported in telling those stories, the information is being extracted from them in the telling of their story, and then others act as authors.

We are now trying to do a storytelling lab to support and train individuals in the art of storytelling, whether that's verbal or writing an op-ed. Most Americans do not understand what it means to live in poverty in this country. The only way that can change is to shorten that gap, which requires hearing authentically from those impacted individuals. They are empowered to tell their stories, we are helping to make sure they are equipped to tell their stories and own their voices.

**Kayla:** Hilary, can you introduce yourself and share a bit about how you've been working with RSF?

**Hilary:** I'm a ninth-generation American settler. I live on Hopi, Havasupai, and Diné land in the place that's now called Flagstaff, Arizona, next to a mountain that is a being of kinship. I'm a mom, dancer, community organizer, and writer. I love to be in relationship with people.

I've been working with RSF for almost a year, mostly through a Donor Advised Fund. RSF has helped us find different ways of moving money and connected us with organizations we wouldn't have known about otherwise.

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**While we address immediate needs, we are also having conversations about how to sustain our communities beyond the present COVID-19 crisis.”**

—AISHA NYANDORO

**Kayla:** Can you share a bit more about what's enabled your philanthropy?

**Hilary:** I grew up in a middle class family that is committed to social justice. I married into a family that leads a multi-generational business. My in-laws have always been active in philanthropic work, and they invited my husband and me to participate with their family foundation.

**Kayla:** How would you describe your approach to giving and your own personal journey with money?

Do you have a strategy that you work with?

**Hilary:** When my husband and I started philanthropic work, it was in tandem with building relationships with Indigenous people and communities. Indigenous cultural values have informed our process. When I met Edgar Villanueva (author of *Decolonizing Wealth*) I learned that less than 8% of philanthropic dollars go to communities of color. Our strategy has developed into directing funding primarily to Black and Indigenous communities. We do this by building relationships, listening, and following the leadership of those communities.

**Kayla:** I know you're also working on a book, *Becoming a Good Relative*. Can you tell us about it?

**Hilary:** It has been a journey. I discovered a book of family genealogy that my great uncle had written. That's where I learned that I am a ninth-generation settler. Some of my ancestors received grants of stolen land in North Carolina, and later enslaved people in Mississippi.

Learning this brought up overwhelming grief, created an identity crisis, and disrupted my worldview. I realized that it was happening for a reason, and that I would be part of the generation to unpack it, speak about it honestly, and try to heal this legacy as best I could.

**Kayla:** You've expressed interest in participatory grantmaking processes—what draws you to these modes of grantmaking as a donor?

**Hilary:** Our economy was designed to concentrate wealth and power into the hands of a few, and this pattern has been replicating itself



Photo: Yve-Car Momperousse and a farmer in Haiti.

Using the Power of Business  
for Good?

(CONTINUES FROM PG 5)

she met RSF in 2017 through the Sephora accelerator program, Momperousse found a supportive partner. “We could really see the potential for Kreyòl Essence to make a significant impact,” says RSF’s Cabral.

To launch her products at Whole Foods, Momperousse needed a mix of permanent and working capital. RSF did its due diligence and extended a \$200,000 line of credit from its Women’s Capital Collaborative (WCC), a fund that uses an integrated capital approach to provide woman-led social enterprises with growth capital when they need it most. Kreyòl Essence launched in Whole Foods, and the company’s sales were again growing steadily. About a year and a half later, RSF upped the credit line to \$300,000.

Kreyòl Essence also got a huge publicity boost in January 2020, when Momperousse and Jean-Baptiste appeared on the reality show *Shark Tank*. Their story brought

audiences to tears and resulted in a torrent of media coverage.

## A big order powers a big vision

Prior to the *Shark Tank* filming, Kreyòl Essence received a \$2 million order—its largest ever—from beauty retailer Ulta. But to fulfill the order, Kreyòl Essence needed quick access to purchase order financing. This kind of financing can be risky for both sides, incurring high interest rates or leading to predatory lending practices, but RSF had worked with Momperousse long enough to feel comfortable lending her an additional \$500,000 from the WCC to fill the order. It was the largest loan the WCC had ever made.

“RSF is a good example of an institution that has invested in a Black-owned business and gone outside the normal practices in order to make sure that they

are being good partners and good citizens in the fight for social justice and equity,” says Momperousse.

With support from RSF’s loan, Kreyòl Essence launched in 1,300-plus Ulta stores, created 15 new jobs in Miami, and increased sales fivefold—all during the pandemic. Momperousse projects that Kreyòl Essence will need to cultivate over 1,000 hectares of land in Haiti in the next 5 years to meet projected sales. The boost also helped set the stage for her larger long-term goals: to provide enough work to make a positive impact on 30,000 families and become one of the largest employers in Haiti in the next 5 to 10 years.

And in the U.S.?

“We’re paving the way,” says Momperousse, “for even more clean and inclusive beauty. This fall Kreyòl Essence is partnering with Goop and QVC to launch products and spread the social impact and moisture gospel.” 🌿

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**Yve-Car has always had a really clear vision of where she wanted to take the business, not just in terms of financial success but also in terms of the impact she envisioned making in Haiti and the beauty industry.”**

—ALEXANDRIA CABRAL, RSF SOCIAL FINANCE



for centuries. Today, I see an opportunity to change this pattern. One way is to embrace giving practices that are grounded in reparations and mutual healing.

We're engaging with different models of grantmaking and philanthropy that return decision-making power to the communities from which it was taken, through historic harm and ongoing systemic inequity. I was excited to learn about participatory grantmaking, especially RSF's Shared Gifting model, and offer some resources toward reparative action in Mississippi, because of my family history on that land. I'm grateful that RSF helped facilitate connections to the important work Aisha and her community are leading in Mississippi.

**Kayla:** Aisha, as a nonprofit leader in the region, you're bringing your expertise and co-leading this Shared Gifting Circle with us. Can you share why you were interested in co-creating the circle with us?

**Aisha:** I was honored that you reached out for the opportunity, and grateful that there was someone who was interested in a Shared Gifting Circle in Mississippi. I've been able to strategically think about who is doing some of the best work within this region that could use this support. I'm thinking about support in two terms: financial support, but also the communal support.

**Kayla:** What was your process for identifying the different organizations to participate in the circle?

**Aisha:** We are focused on the challenges that families are facing right now. With the COVID-19 crisis, so much of what has been invisible within society is now very visible. There are huge health disparities and COVID-19 has been ravishing African American communities at alarming rates. We think about advocacy, community voice, and who is helping individuals understand the power of their voices and voting. I think of access to capital and how to support entrepreneurs in our community during this time of financial uncertainty. We've tried to pull all these pieces together to come up with some collective power and strategic forward momentum, not just for this moment, but also for the longterm.

**Kayla:** Aisha, something that you've said that has stuck with me is that work is happening on the ground and donors and money just need to match the momentum. As a nonprofit leader, do you have any feedback for people working in philanthropy? What is needed from donors to meet the momentum of these times?

**Aisha:** I need donors to, quite frankly, do their own work. I think much of what holds up their process is



Photo: Sarah Stripp @ Springboard to Opportunities.

the inability to recognize that your own work is required in order to liberate your capital. I'm not saying this flippantly because it's hard and requires self-awareness to be in tune with your wealth and your money story and to be comfortable with being honest and authentic in liberating yourself from that.

In this moment there is so much work that is necessary and we do need money moving relatively quickly, and donors need to be willing to invest in unknowns, innovation, and pieces that might have previously scared them. Those that are truly in tune with their purpose are more willing to take that leap of faith.

**Kayla:** Hilary, as someone who has done a lot of personal work around your money story and your family history, what advice do you have for donors who are interested in exploring some of these topics?

**Hilary:** I would echo what Aisha said about doing our own work. I can share some things that have been useful in my process. A few books I recommend are *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz; *The Half Has Never Been Told*, by Edward E. Baptist, about slavery and the making of American capitalism; and *Decolonizing Wealth* by Edgar Villanueva, about the oppressive dynamics in philanthropy and finance.

One important pillar of doing our own work is learning what really happened in American history. Many of us were taught a version of history that seems innocent, idealized, and benevolent, which it wasn't. The accurate version is disturbing and heart wrenching. Those of us who come from settler families need to learn how to move through guilt and shame, because it's not going to get better until we look at our history and deal with it. I've found that it's important to have a grounding spiritual practice, because this process can be heavy and disorienting.

I think that building trustworthy relationships and making reparations is how we will eventually heal from the wounds of colonialism and realize mutual liberation. We have to reach out with humble inquiry, listening and supporting what's being asked of us at this critical time. 💎



#### Shared Gifting

brings nonprofit leaders together to review each other's proposals, ask questions, and decide how to distribute financial resources among themselves.



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# Activate Your Money for Transformative Social, Ecological, and Cultural Change

With the RSF Donor Advised Fund (DAF), you will join a community of active philanthropists, learn, explore, and co-create solutions with us.

We believe gift money has an important role to play in economic life. As the most flexible, catalytic, and risk-tolerant capital, philanthropic funds are ideally suited for empowering communities and supporting systemic change.

**Our DAF offers a unique combination of benefits:**

**LEARN MORE ABOUT DONOR ADVISED FUNDS**

[rsfsocialfinance.org/daf](https://rsfsocialfinance.org/daf)

## COMMUNITY

When opening a Donor Advised Fund at RSF, you are joining a vibrant, learning community. RSF can facilitate connections to like-minded donors as well as experts in your fields of interest.

## INVESTMENTS

We continually advance RSF's pioneering impact DAF portfolio, investing assets in climate and social justice solutions while preserving liquidity for grantmaking.

## INNOVATION

The RSF DAF lets you catalyze solutions to systemic problems and experiment with new giving models that challenge philanthropy's power dynamics.

## PERSONALIZATION

We can create a customized fund structure and work with you to develop a customized plan for your giving.