



**CONNECTING THE DOTS:  
CHANGE.ORG ADVANCES RACIAL AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA AND BRAZIL**

**IN THE WAKE OF THE TRAGIC DEATHS OF GEORGE FLOYD AND BREONNA TAYLOR IN 2020, CHANGE.ORG LAUNCHED THE RACIAL JUSTICE FUND - A GRANTMAKING PROGRAM SUPPORTING BLACK-LED EFFORTS WORKING ON RACIAL JUSTICE. WHILE THEIR FOCUS BEGAN IN THE UNITED STATES, IT BECAME CLEAR IN 2021 THAT THERE WAS A NEED FOR ACTION IN OTHER PARTS OF THE GLOBE AS WELL. CHANGE PARTNERED WITH KBFUS TO IDENTIFY DYNAMIC, LOCAL INITIATIVES THAT ADVANCE RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND EMPOWER MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES IN FOUR AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND BRAZIL. TEN GRANTEES SHARED A TOTAL GRANT AMOUNT OF \$500,000.**

Change.org rings familiar to most in the United States. The name registers as one of the key tools in the current movement advancing racial and social justice across the country. Through its digital advocacy platform, Change empowers communities, gives a voice to all, and stimulates transformative change, especially for the most marginalized in society.

Fast approaching their 5 billion signature mark, Change community members have spearheaded impact large and small, using the power of petitions. These include campaigns for the addition of plant-based burgers to McDonald's menu, a significant change given the dire health and environmental impacts of its traditional menu, and installing air conditioning in UPS vehicles for the well-

being of drivers. Another recent campaign led by WNBA star Maya Moore contributed to the release of Jonathan Irons from federal prison. Jonathan had been wrongfully imprisoned for 22 years. It was a victory and a joyful moment for Mr. Irons, his family, and the large team that supported his cause.

### CONNECTING THE DOTS GLOBALLY

A conversation with Lori Rodney, former Director of global communications, and Rashawn Davis, Associate Director of the Racial Justice Fund, reveals a lesser-known side of Change's work - its contributions to equity work across the globe and its support of international grassroots organizations that exemplify these values. Ten years ago, Change began its global expansion, staffing teams in many countries around the world. "We have developed cutting-edge technology to make collective action possible," describes Lori Rodney, "and Change is now the world's largest platform for social transformation."

### BORN OUT OF TRAGEDY

The tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 created catalytic national and global movements for racial justice. Rashawn Davis shared that, "In light of these tragedies, we began to ask - What more can Change

do?". Turning inward, Change created a grantmaking program called the Racial Justice Fund and allocated \$6 million to financially support Black-led efforts working on racial justice across the United States. Being new to grantmaking, Change sought guidance from experts in this field, who understood philanthropy's catalytic role in impact. They found a perfect partner in NorthStar Fund, a 40-year-old social justice funder that supports grassroots organizations led by communities of color.

---

**"AT THE TIME OF THE DEATHS OF  
GEORGE FLOYD AND BREONNA TAYLOR, IT WAS  
CLEAR THERE WAS A GLOBAL CONCERN."**

RASHAWN DAVIS

---

### EQUITABLE PHILANTHROPY

Following NorthStar Fund's grantmaking approach, Change opted to engage in 'equitable philanthropy.' "We established a selection committee composed of petition starters, staff, and experts from NorthStar Fund," describes Rashawn Davis. "We learned that the kinds of organizations we wanted to fund were typically left out of traditional philanthropy. We decided that Change would seek out these organizations and provide them unrestricted grants - no strings attached. We especially included diverse communities and structures beyond coastal cities and smaller organizations."

Grants went to a range of organizations like Hidden Genius Project, which teaches young people of color in Oakland, California, to write computer code, and Action Saint Louis in Saint Louis, Missouri, whose mission is to 'leverage organizing, communications, advocacy and direct action to mitigate harm against the (African American) community while fighting for long-term transformation.'





The feedback from the grant recipients was favorable. “These organizations believed in our grantmaking approach,” Rashawn recounts. In 2021, the Racial Justice Fund Committee awarded \$5 million in unrestricted grants to 40 grassroots organizations, including funding for education and justice reform programs in the American South and the Midwest. “The grants were specifically set up to let recipients allocate the unexpected contributions exactly where they saw fit,” says Rashawn. “We also created extended relationships with our grantees. We organized webinars, introduced them to our campaigns staff, and offered additional support when requested.”

### FOCUS ON AFRICA AND BRAZIL

By the end of 2021, with all but \$1 million already invested in organizations across the U.S., Change’s Racial Justice Fund began to think globally. “At the time of the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, it was clear that racial justice was a global concern,” says Rashawn Davis.

Change.org sought to further address racial injustice in other places where the organization had communities of users and staff, which brought them to look at the continent of Africa and the impact of generations of

colonial rule and abuse. Additionally, “we also wanted to work with areas with significant populations from the African diaspora,” he notes, drawing their attention to Brazil, the country with the largest population of African descent outside of Africa.

### SEARCHING FOR A NEW PARTNER

To do this international work, the Racial Justice Fund decided to follow the same parameters as they had for domestic grants - to select grantees that matched their criteria and provide them with unrestricted funds. To do so, Change realized it needed an international version of the NorthStar Fund and began searching for the ideal partner.

---

**“THE GRANTS WERE SPECIFICALLY SET UP TO LET THE RECIPIENTS ALLOCATE THE UNEXPECTED GIFTS EXACTLY WHERE THEY NEEDED THE MONEY.”**

**RASHAWN DAVIS**

---

“We knew that outside the U.S., racial justice takes on a different dimension of complexity. When we met with KBFUS, it was clear that they had the capacity to address this - their team had lived experience on the continent (of Africa) and in Brazil - so they rose to the top of our list right away,” says Rashawn Davis.

### \$500,000 FOR TEN GRANTEES

Working through a donor-advised fund at KBFUS, Change granted a total amount of \$500,000 to 10 nonprofit initiatives in four African countries and Brazil. In Brazil and South Africa, the focus was placed on racial justice, with support going to four grantees:

- Geledes Instituto da Mulher Negra (Brazil).

- Coletivo Sapato Preto - Lésbicas Negras Amazonidas (Brazil).
- The Black Sash Trust (South Africa).
- Social Justice Coalition (South Africa).

In other African countries, the grants went to African-led organizations that promote social justice and empower marginalized communities. Six organizations received a grant:

- Akirachix (Kenya) - training program in technology and entrepreneurial skills for young women.
- Book Bunk (Kenya) - turning once segregated libraries into dynamic educational and community centers.
- Wecyclers (Nigeria) - urban waste management and creation of jobs for marginalized communities in Lagos.
- TechMe (Nigeria) - leveraging technology to improve the lives of marginalized girls, youth and women.
- Association of African Women on Board (Nigeria) - fast-tracking the trajectory of African women into the leadership roles of the future.
- Barefoot Law (Uganda) - providing the public with free legal information using innovative approaches, so that they can uphold the law and protect themselves.

“KBFUS gave us an excellent introduction to the international grantmaking scene. They connected us to excellent initiatives in Africa and Brazil, and we are very thankful to all the organizations we were able to invest in,” says Rashawn Davis.

Being in its tenth year of international work, Change has entered a strategic planning process. “We are looking at how to level up. Everything is on the table now. Going forward, we are looking to make an even greater impact with our global work,” explains Lori Rodney.

*Pictures: WeCyclers, Nigeria (cover), Coletivo Sapato Preto, Brazil (page 2), Social Justice Coalition, South Africa (page 3)*

**The King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS) facilitates thoughtful, effective giving across borders - it is a trusted advisor to U.S. donors seeking to support their favorite causes and nonprofit organizations overseas. To learn more about our donor advised funds, legacy funds and KBFUS ART, visit [kbfus.org](http://kbfus.org) or contact us at (212) 713-7660 or [info@kbfus.org](mailto:info@kbfus.org).**

**Change.org** is the world’s largest nonprofit-owned tech platform for people-powered, social change. More than 450 million people across more than 196 countries use its technology-driven petition and campaign tools to speak up on issues they’re passionate about. Approximately 70,000 petitions are created and supported on its platform every month, with 1.7 million new people joining its global network of users every week. Every day, users collaborate to organize on local, national and global issues; hold corporations to account; and demand action from decision makers at the highest levels of government and business. The platform is free to use, open to all, and independent because it is funded by the people who use it. This independence also makes Change.org a trusted resource for decision makers, who turn to the platform to hear from the communities they represent. People on Change.org have powered tens of thousands of campaign victories worldwide, and more are winning every week.