

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER
GRASSROOTS**

2021 ACTION REPORT



**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER
GRASSROOTS**

PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Scholars4BlackLives

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [SCHOLARS4BLACKLIVES.ORG](https://scholars4blacklives.org)

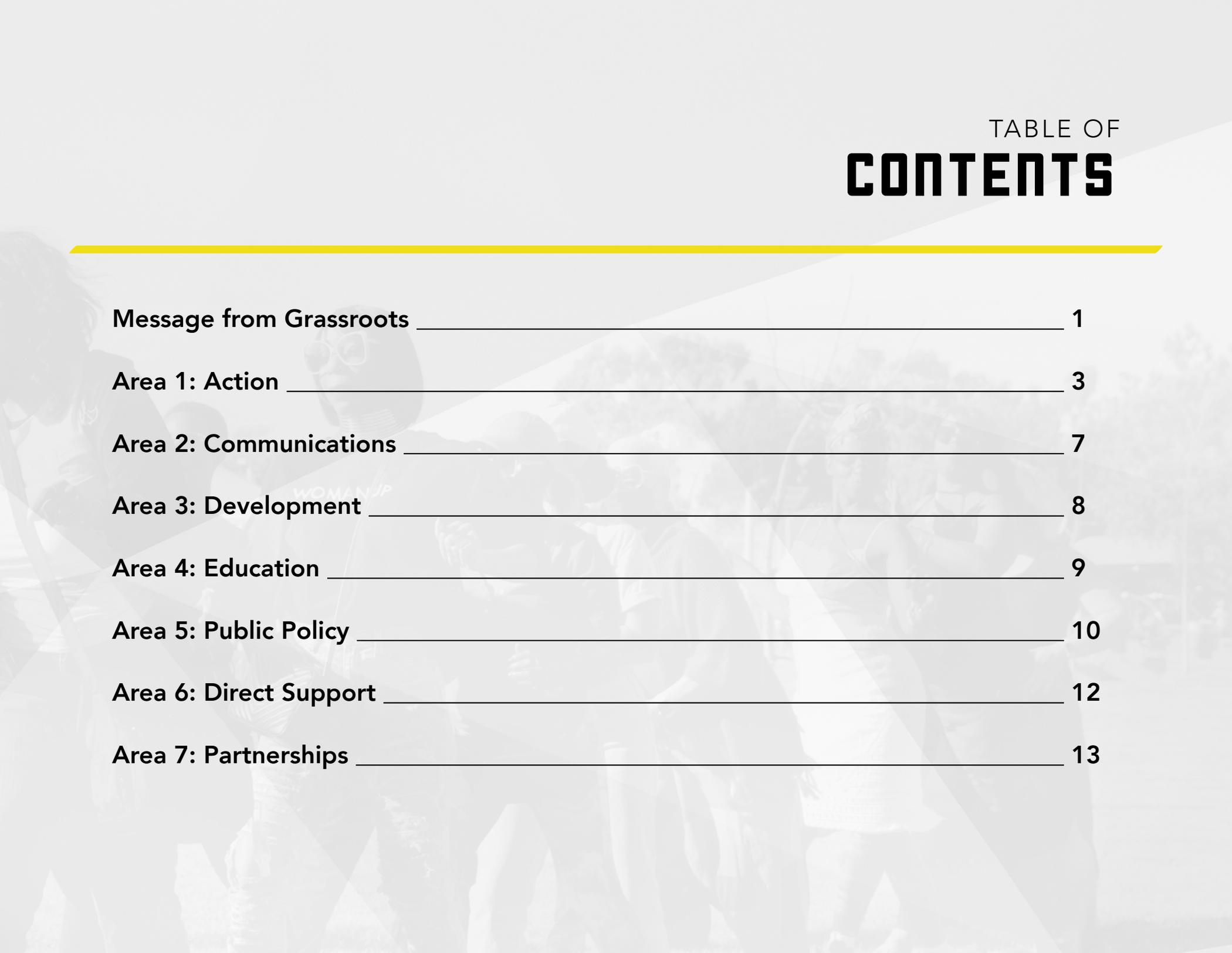


TABLE OF
CONTENTS

Message from Grassroots	1
Area 1: Action	3
Area 2: Communications	7
Area 3: Development	8
Area 4: Education	9
Area 5: Public Policy	10
Area 6: Direct Support	12
Area 7: Partnerships	13

A MESSAGE FROM

GRASSROOTS

On July 13, 2013, the white supremacist terrorist who stole the life of our beloved son, 17-year-old #TrayvonMartin, was acquitted. It seems that the entire Black world erupted. The collective pain and rage experienced by Black people living in a world grounded in white supremacist violence summoned us into the streets. It was the deep and abiding love for our people, however, that birthed Black Lives Matter as a “movement, not a moment.”

Under the Black Lives Matter Grassroots (BLM Grassroots) banner, our more than two dozen recognized and active chapters have served as the boots on the ground, doing the powerful organizing work to transform local communities and the world. As activism in 2020 in the names of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd surged the movement forward, millions more were brought into beloved community and we were ready. Our collective organization brought seven years of relationships, grassroots organizing, movement infrastructure, abolitionist ideas and a radical vision for free Black futures to welcome folks into the work. As the 2020 movement-moment settled, BLM Grassroots has continued to do the work necessary to transform this world through chapter-based and global efforts,

initiatives and campaigns. This report serves to to formally recognize the collective efforts of BLM Grassroots, document our victories, chart our future course and articulate our vision of Black liberation and freedom. Altogether, we focused on seven areas of work at the local, state and national level including 1) direct action, 2) communications, 3) development, 4) education, 5) direct support, 6) public policy, and 7) partnerships. Each area offers a summary and choice examples from BLM Grassroots chapters that illustrate the many levels of our engagement often unseen or disregarded by the general public, legislators and news media.

We know in no uncertain terms that visioning, organizing and building is our sacred duty; it is what we owe our ancestors, our community and the generations to come. We remain grateful to every person who has poured themselves into this work. We are especially grateful to the families of those killed by police and white vigilantism – who turned their pain into purpose. To the elders who pray for and mentor us. To those who answer the calls to action and put their bodies on the frontlines. To all who raise their voices in advocacy and lobby elected officials. To the many contributors who donated hard-earned dollars. To communities that keep us safe

from harm. To all who open themselves up to study and struggle. To the youth and their audacious vision and demands for a better world. And, to those who imagine and produce the culture that channels our rage into love. This world has been and will be forever transformed because of you and your support for our movement and our people.

To be clear, **Black Lives Matter Grassroots is Black Lives Matter.** As we continue the path ahead together, please stay plugged in with us at blmgrassroots.org and on social media at [@blmgrassroots](https://twitter.com/blmgrassroots). Let the work reported here be inspiring, instill a deep sense of pride and further our commitment to the beautiful struggle. Lest we forget, we are the ones we have been waiting for.

With revolutionary love,

Melina Abdullah
Director

Angela Waters
Director of Policy and Operations

Audrena Redmond
Director of Chapter Development and Political Education

Karlene Griffith Sekou
Director of Healing Justice and Global Village

BLACK LIVES MATTER GRASSROOTS

Black Lives Matter Grassroots supports, sustains, empowers, and uplifts the necessary agitations, mobilizations, organizing, education, expressions, initiatives, and advocacy of Black Lives Matter chapters, partnering organizations, groups and people in order to fulfill our sacred duty to advance Black liberation. "Grassroots" was added to the original Black Lives Matter formation in 2019 to distinguish the on-the-ground and policy work carried by organizers and activists from the financial thrust that was becoming priority for the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation that was taking shape under paid consultants.

AREA 1

ACTION

Area 1 covers direct action, which includes daily protests, weekly demonstrations and other mobilizations intended to address issues and concerns of our communities as well as national and local campaigns.

BLACK WOMEN ARE DIVINE

BLM Grassroots initiated Black Women Are Divine as a national call to Black women across the world to reclaim their divinity in the names of #BreonnaTaylor, #SandraBland, #WakieshaWilson and all Black women whose lives were stolen by state-sanctioned violence. This national campaign was developed as a reminder and opportunity for Black Women to celebrate life in collective joy, solidarity and power.

DEFUND THE BOISE POLICE

BLM Boise successfully secured more than 4,000 signatures from community members to defund local police. Using geographic information software, BLM Boise was able to solicit subscriptions and signatures, which allowed them to collect location data and observe the distribution of support. When denied the opportunity to deliver the petition to City Hall in person, the chapter held a rally at Ann Morrison Park.

FREEDOM SUMMER

BLM Michigan hosted an eight-week summer youth organizing school to support youth in love, learning and action. Youth were provided with technological resources and a \$400 stipend as well as the opportunity to join the Peace & Prosperity Youth Action Movement, a youth-led organization, following completion of the program.

POLICE-FREE SCHOOLS

BLM Los Angeles led marches to Defund LA School Police (#DefundLASPD) and was one of the primary conveners of the #PoliceFreeLAUSD Coalition. BLMLA continues to play a major role in co-leadership along with student partners in LA Students Deserve. The coalition has secured a \$25 million cut to the LASPD budget and re-allocation of those funds to create a Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP), which was subsequently increased to over \$100 million in annual funding. The coalition also secured victories banning use of pepper spray by school police and removing cops from all permanent on-campus posts. In Long Beach, BLM Long Beach mobilized for #CareNotCops and #CopsOffCampus following the killing of 18 year old Mona Rodriguez by a school police officer.

BLM FLORIDA x #ALTONSTERLING

BLM Florida traveled to Baton Rouge, Louisiana in support of the family of Alton Sterling. Impacted families, including the family of Andrew Joseph III, and supported by BLM Grassroots leadership engaged in dialogue and discussion on the work forward. The family of Alton Sterling expressed love and appreciation for supporters who traveled to stand with them in their struggle for accountability in Alton Sterling's death.

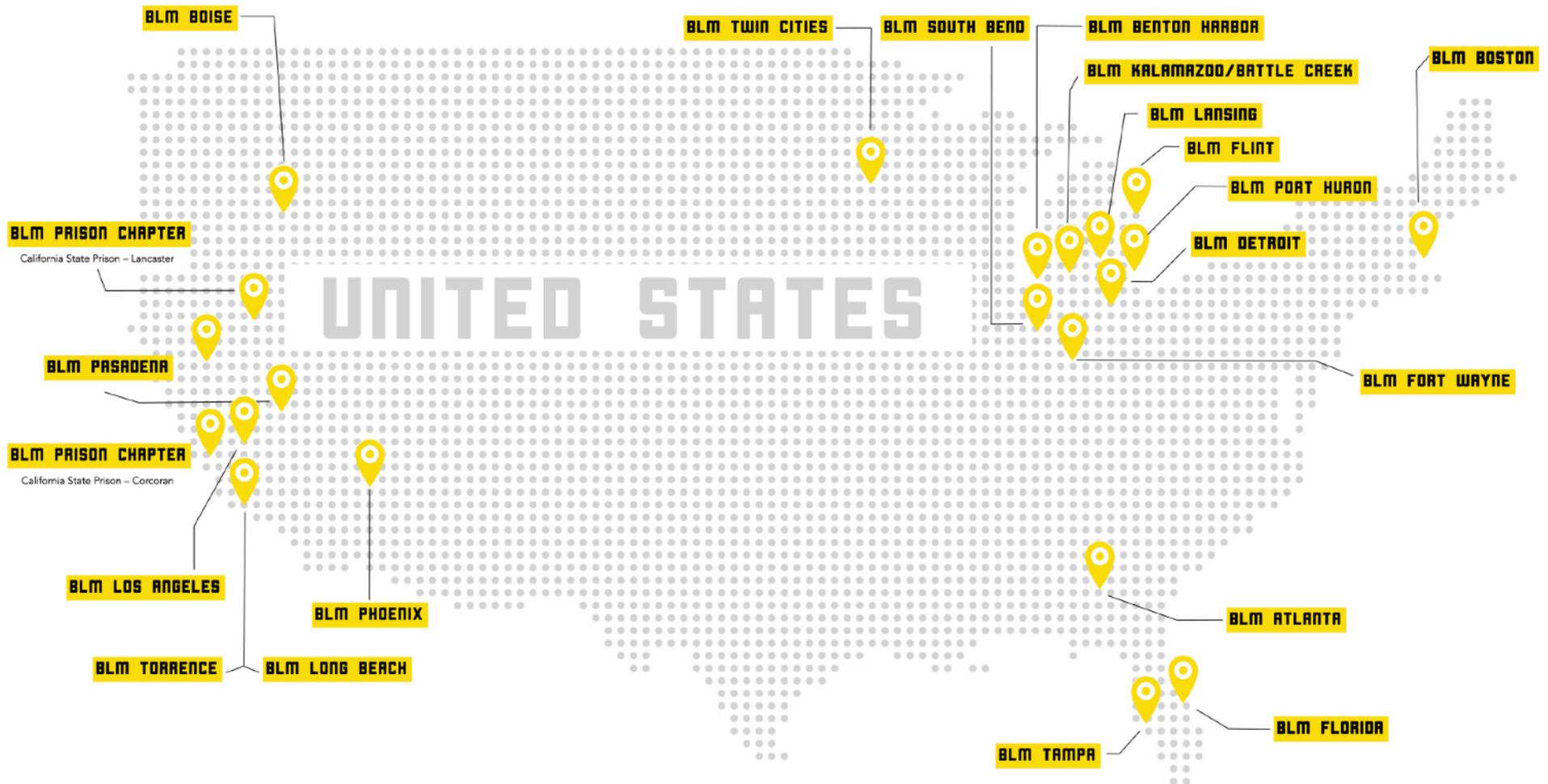
#ENDPOLICEASSOCIATIONS

BLM Los Angeles launched #EndPoliceAssociations (EPA), which has since become a national campaign. The goal of EPA is to expose police associations as a driving force that bullies and bribes elected officials, pilfers the public purse and municipal budget in most major cities and shields police from accountability through legal doctrines like qualified immunity. The campaign contends that police associations are not unions and should be ousted from the House of Labor.



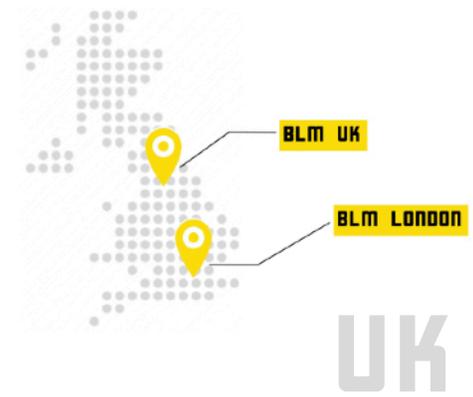
SPOTLIGHT: BLM PRISON CHAPTER

The BLM Prison Chapter is responsible for bridging the gap between the prison class to bring the Bloods/Crips/"gangs" into a united force to educate, build and protect advocates and our communities. The chapter also hosts a Black Power Reading Circle as a space that supports literacy development and critical discussions on social and political topics.



MAPPING THE MOVEMENT

Black Lives Matter Grassroots is comprised of 26 chapters in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. While most chapters are located in cities, BLM also operates in statewide and international chapters to organize around policy and legislative affairs. Two chapters are also currently operating in the California State Prison System to support the political education, development and advocacy of those currently incarcerated.



AREA 2

COMMUNICATIONS

Area 2 covers BLM Grassroots' major communications initiatives to include media production, social media engagement, public scholarship, and news stories.

THIS IS NOT A DRILL

First launched on Facebook in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the state of emergency as experienced by Black America, This Is Not a Drill! (TINAD) was created by the Los Angeles chapter as a means of conveying vital information. After the murders of Ahmaud Aubrey, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, the hour-long show shifted to focus on more than the pandemic. In June 2021, when Tavis Smiley founded the only Black-owned talk radio station on the West Coast, TINAD was invited to give on-the-ground updates and news from the frontlines. TINAD is now a two-hour program with a Saturday time-slot and an encore on Sundays. The format allows BLM Grassroots to highlight BLM news, the stories of people killed by police or white supremacy in our #MoreThanAHashtag segment)and a variety of topics related to Black people and liberation.

CENTENARIAN CHATHAM HOUSE AWARD

In October 2021, Great Britain's Chatham House presented Black Lives Matter with its Centenarian

Chatham House Award. Melina Abdullah was invited to accept the award on behalf of the movement and delivered a keynote address. The Chatham House Award is the equivalent of the United States' National Medal of Honor, with the Centenarian award being particularly prestigious. Black Lives Matter was presented the award alongside Sir David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg. The family of Andrew Joseph III, BLM Youth Vanguard co-founder Thandiwe Abdullah, and members of BLM UK and BLM Los Angeles attended the ceremony in London.

IN OUR OWN WORDS

Black Lives Matter In Our Own Words is a forthcoming edited volume written by Black Lives Matter organizers and aligned scholars. In support of the volume's collaborative production, BLM Grassroots held its first writers retreat and fieldwork exercise in Jamaica in late December 2021, which included 21 participants. Authors were coached by renowned scholar and MacArthur Genius Award winner Dr. Kelly Lytle Hernández and were also engaged in building with on-the-ground organizers, including those who are considering forming a BLM Jamaica chapter.

DEVELOPMENT

Area 3 covers BLM Grassroots' organizational development and growth including fiscal partnerships and onboarding of new chapters

CHAPTER ONBOARDING

BLM Grassroots has been engaged in a year-long onboarding process for new chapters that include political education and chapter development sessions. All active Grassroots chapters are united under BLM Guiding Principles and a unity agreement that ensures a shared vision and political lens while maintaining distinct chapter identities and local priorities. Through this process, BLM Grassroots has grown to 26 active chapters globally, with more scheduled to be onboarded over the next year in the U.S. and the Caribbean. We encourage those interested in starting a chapter to contact the onboarding process.

GLOBAL VILLAGE

BLM Grassroots Global Village affirms Black Lives Matter as a *global* movement. Grounded in Pan-Africanism, the Global Village continues to grow and build with Black communities around the world to include recent chapter development taking root in Jamaica, Brazil, and Nigeria. In August 2021, BLM Grassroots hosted an online forum

featuring prominent Cuban artists, cultural workers, and activists who are demanding an end to the 60-year U.S. embargo. In October 2021, BLM Grassroots received the Centenarian Chatham House Award and the Sean McBride Peace Prize from the International Peace Bureau in Barcelona, Spain.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BLM Grassroots has dedicated the last year to carefully and intentionally building the infrastructure our chapters deserve. As chapters working collectively to create what is needed to support the intensive on-the-ground work—and build a culture of collective vision, social ethics, cross-movement collaboration and cohesiveness—sound infrastructure, organizing best practices, financial health, and community accountability were among BLM Grassroots' top national priorities for 2021. This work was aided by securing a capable and committed national leadership team and organizational partners who provide supplementary support in financial management, vendor relations and strategic communications. BLM Grassroots is grateful to our partners at the Tides Foundation, One Love Global, Scholars for Black Lives, and Clergy 4 Black Lives for their support during this critical period in our development.

AREA 4

EDUCATION

Area 4 covers BLM Grassroots' political education program and initiatives. These programs are facilitated at the chapter level as well as globally through in-person events and digital content that include social media campaigns, podcasts and webinars.

BLACK MEN MATTER INITIATIVE

The mission of the Black Men Matter Initiative is to help start conversations about mental health among Black men and to help build a support system for Black men and boys throughout Port Huron and St. Clair County. Through this initiative, BLM Port Huron has served more than 80 men and boys in helping them recognize the signs and symptoms of mental and emotional distress, understand the barriers to treating mental health that are unique to Black communities and build a strong system of support for themselves and their families.

HEALING JUSTICE WEBINARS

Healing Justice curates monthly webinars offering education and somatic practices and trauma-informed modalities that integrate body work. These webinars are resources for both BLM Grassroots chapters and the broader community. Healing Justice provides national and international support for communities experiencing

loss through state violence, facilitates grief circles, and offers spiritual support. Much of the work is also supported by Clergy 4 Black Lives, a community of interfaith clergy who work in support of BLM Grassroots, and Sacred Resistance, a network of prayer and spiritual warriors who offer intentional prayer, meditation, and spiritual work in communities several times per week.

BLM/S4BL NEXUS PROJECT

BLM Grassroots and Scholars for Black Lives launched the neXus Project, a collaborative political education effort for Black lives that aims to recover histories, report insights, and reimagine a commitment to public teaching at the grassroots level. Just as a nexus represents a connection or link, this project undertakes the relational work of connecting community and campus scholars in the production of essays, lectures, dialogues and other digital media content that is accessible and free to the public. This has most notably included the #BlackHistoryMatters campaign, which occurs each February as a broad political education effort facilitated through digital media content production and informed by campus and community scholars.

PUBLIC POLICY

Area 5 covers local, state and national policy and other legislative action undertaken by BLM Grassroots.

END QUALIFIED IMMUNITY

BLM Grassroots is calling for the end to qualified immunity, the unjust legal doctrine that shields police from accountability when they kill and harm people. Andrew Joseph III, who was just 14 years old when he was killed as a result of sheriffs' misconduct in Tampa, Florida in February 2014 and still has not had a day in court, has been lifted as the face of the campaign. In 2021, BLM Grassroots initiated an End Qualified Immunity petition, enlisted BLM member and actress Eva Marcille as celebrity spokesperson, engaged in a political education campaign, and signed-on as an endorser of the *End Qualified Immunity Act* sponsored by Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley.

LAPC FAILS

LAPC Fails is a coalition of BLM Los Angeles, LA Community Action Network, WhitePeople4BlackLives, and Stop LAPD Spying Coalition that works to call-out police misconduct, offer public comment, and impact the decisions of the local police commission. LAPC Fails reviews and analyzes the commission agenda weekly and

mobilizes for public attendance at the virtual meeting. The coalition prepares a toolkit to assist the public with understanding the agenda and the impact action items on the agenda will have on the public.

THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

BLM Grassroots, BLM Lansing, BLM Los Angeles, and BLM Long Beach have all advanced an approach to democratizing municipal budgeting processes. A series of National People's Budget calls were hosted online and in-person to assess community priorities and offer tools for advancing budgets that prioritize the needs of the people, rather than over-spending on police. Participants included BLM chapters and a wide-range of community groups. In Los Angeles, the annual People's Budget survey which received responses from more than 2000 Angelenos in 2021, shows that people's lowest spending priority is policing. Nonetheless, officials in municipalities across the country continue to allocate the greatest portion of public funds to law enforcement. Communities were surveyed online and convened through in-person town halls to facilitate urgent, year-round input on the city budget priorities that center resources that meet people's needs while divesting from policing and criminalization.



#BLACKHISTORYMATTERS CAMPAIGN

As a part of our ongoing partnership and digital political education program with Scholars for Black Lives, BLM Grassroots co-launched the #BlackHistoryMatters campaign in 2021. The series included informative social media content created by various campus and community scholars that aimed to deepen our historical understanding beyond conventional historical figures. Specific attention was given to amplifying the legacies and contributions of Black queer freedom fighters and radical Black women, which included 28 posts currently archived at scholars4blacklives.org/blackhistorymatters.

RESISTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

BLM Boise undertook a research project to assess the relationship between water contamination and the prevalence of cancer. Researchers hypothesized that racial disparities in both the frequency and distribution of cancer were consequences of corporate pollution and ineffective oversight that led to poisoned air, land and waterways. Ultimately, the project aims to use data to identify and call to account harmful environmental practices that disproportionately affect Black communities health outcomes.

THE BREATHE ACT

BLM Grassroots is supporting local, statewide and federal advocacy for Black-centered civil and human rights legislation that will reallocate resources to repair the harm caused by policy and practice. The BREATHE Act establishes a standard for transformative policy that reduces the investment in and normalization of a carceral system as justice. The BREATHE Act promotes community-driven policy that builds new systems of care to replace state-sanctioned violence. BLM Lansing and partnering organizations also hosted a co-governance space to discuss and inform the public about the BREATHE Act and envisioned priorities for a local Lansing BREATHE Act.

DIRECT SUPPORT

Area 6 covers mutual aid and support provided through fundraising, donations, and other initiatives that directly support Black communities and families.

BLACK SURVIVAL FUND

The Black Survival Fund put \$3 million directly into the hands of Black people who were suffering disproportionately in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of three-hundred \$1000 mini-grants. Grants were disseminated in 3 phases: 1) the families of those killed by police and white-supremacy. 2) Black organizers who put their bodies, lives and jobs on the line in the struggle for Black freedom, 3) Black people most vulnerable to the pandemic recession, especially Black mamas, Black formerly incarcerated people and Black trans and nonbinary folks.

SUPPORTING JUSTICE FOR BLACK FAMILIES

BLM Grassroots continued helping to organize local efforts in support and at the request of families seeking justice. In 2021, this included support for hundreds of families globally, with close coordination with the families of #IsakAden, #OscarGrant, #AndrewJosephIII, and #DaunteWright through their trials and legal proceedings. Support included

coordinating travel for loved ones during legal proceedings, facilitating relationships among families affected by state violence, organizing local vigils and protests, training and advocacy work to advance policy change, healing justice and other support for family foundations.

HEALING JUSTICE

Over the last several years, Healing Justice has become a prominent concept and practice within our movement that is transforming our culture. Healing Justice is a space for BLM chapters to build a shared analysis, develop skills around healing interventions, organize network-wide campaigns and offer cross-chapter support. For more insight about Healing Justice, please watch *Healing Justice, Embodiment, Praxis, and Building Black Futures*, a conversation between healing practitioners grounded in sacred practice, Black traditions and radical freedom.

HOUSING FOR ALL

BLM Kalamazoo/Battle Creek has taken active efforts to support housing accessibility for housing insecure and unhoused members of the community, especially Black women and mothers. This included coordinating and

providing eviction responses, amplifying stories of unhoused and evicted Black community members and securing funds to temporarily shelter unhoused Black neighbors in hotels following an encampment sweep. Personal care items and hot meals were also distributed.

MONTH OF SHELTER

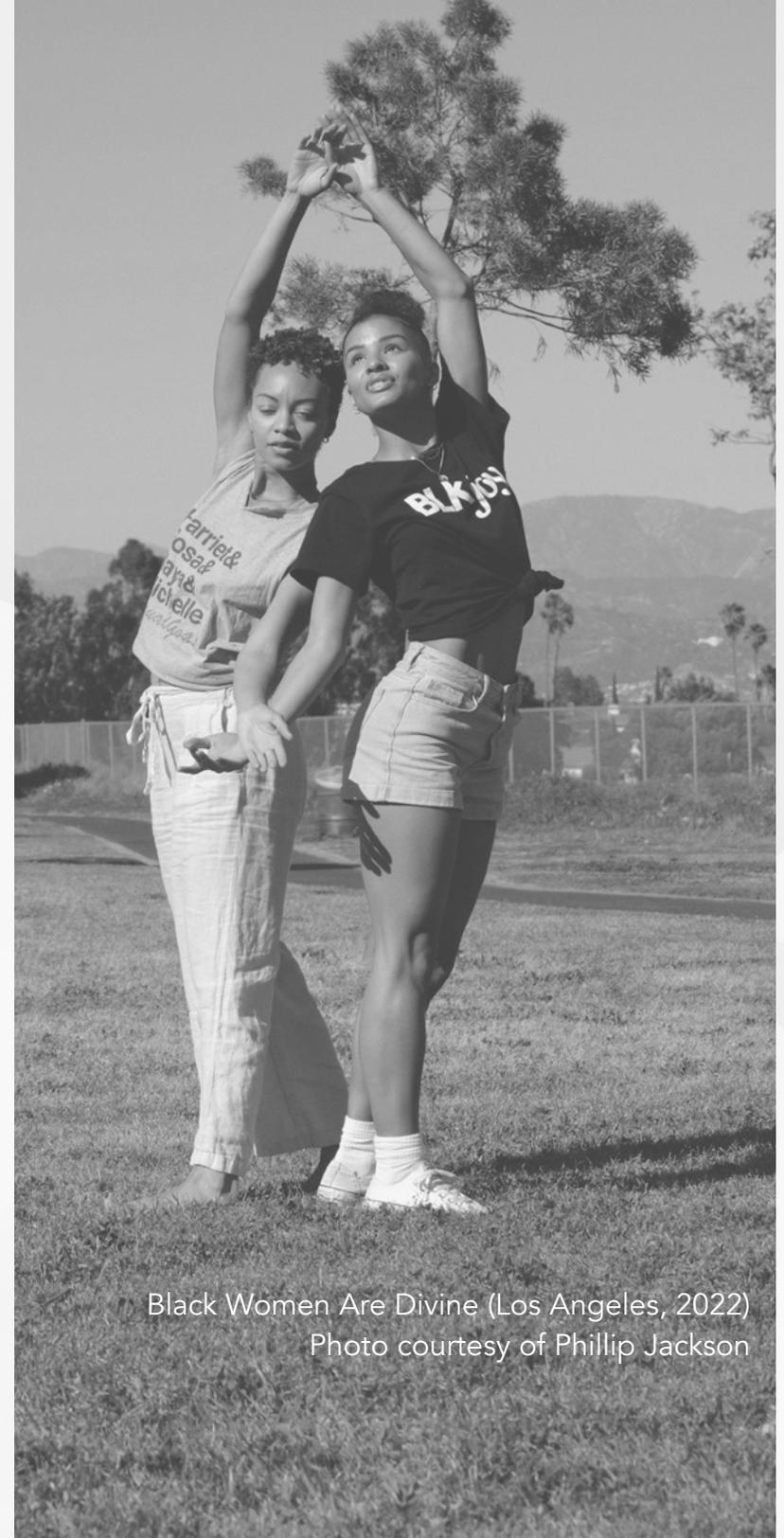
BLM Atlanta partnered with Soul Underground to support and provide resources to the local unhoused community in July and December. This included providing housing assistance, job opportunities and skills development to help improve overall quality of life. The months of shelter were spurred as a response to white-supremacist threats on the lives of Black unhoused community members.

PARENT APPRECIATION AND GIVEAWAY

BLM Lansing hosted a giveaway for Black parents in which \$10,000 in gift cards were distributed to support parents' everyday needs for their families. BLM Los Angeles and BLM Grassroots also provided back-to-school support for children returning to in-person learning as well as love offerings to the parents of those killed by police and white supremacist violence for Mother's Day and Father's Day.

WATER IS LIFE

BLM assisted with coordinating access to water following a local water main break as well as donations of water filters for local schools.

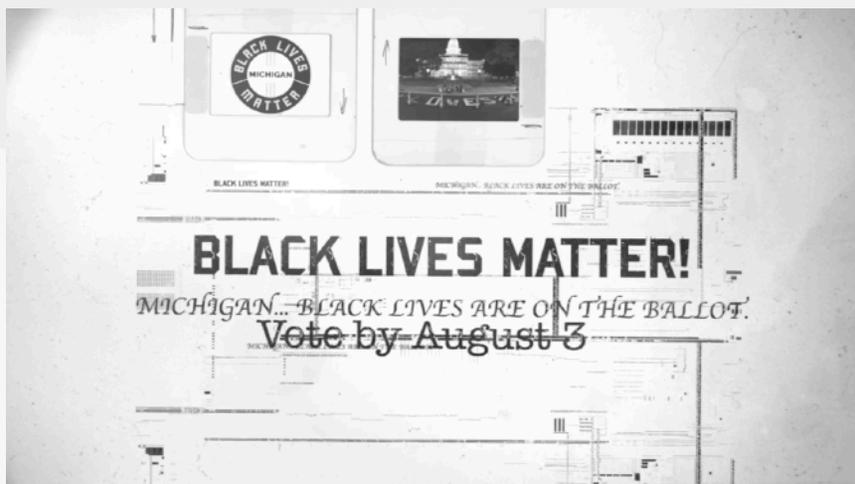


Black Women Are Divine (Los Angeles, 2022)
Photo courtesy of Phillip Jackson

PARTNERSHIPS

BLM Grassroots engages in partnerships with mission-aligned organizations and initiatives. Partnerships include both financial support and engagement from BLM Grassroots chapters and organizers. Over the last year, we are honored to have partnered with the following organizations that embody and demonstrate a commitment to struggle for Black liberation:

- Huey P. Newton Foundation for the establishment of the permanent Huey P. Newton Memorial in Oakland, California.
- Andrew Joseph III Foundation for the memorial weekend, which brought hundreds of families and organizers to Tampa to push for child safety in Andrew's name.
- The Sepia Collective for the Black Panther "Iconic" showing and installation.
- Jean Charles Academy in Boston to support culturally relevant education for Black children.
- Kilombo Center in Atlanta, Georgia to support African-centered education for Black children.
- Medicine Bowl in North Carolina to support autonomous spaces for Black and Indigenous people.
- Spirit of Mandela Coalition for the "We Charge Genocide" convening.
- Love Not Blood to support the families of those killed by police.
- The Trayvon Martin Foundation for his memorial weekend in Miami, Florida.
- Families United for Justice to support more than 300 families of those killed by police for essential healing and organizing work.
- The Michael Brown Foundation to support family-led organizing that works to end state-sanctioned violence



SPOTLIGHT: BLM MICHIGAN GOTV

BLM Michigan, a statewide chapter organizing for political action, hosted a monthly series to educate Michigander candidates and to advocate for the issues that are a priority for Black residents. This included a statewide Get Out to Vote (GOTV) social media campaign to encourage participation and support for candidates and ballot measures aligned with BLM Grassroots' policy agenda (i.e., defunding the police and investing in community resources).

BLACK
LIVES
MATTER
GRASSROOTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT BLMGRASSROOTS.ORG