



# VOICES FOR JUSTICE

*in the Movement to End Homelessness*

As part of our [Commitment to Racial Equity](#), Funders Together shares statements, articles, and other resources that highlight the voices of Black leaders in the fields of philanthropy, homelessness, and intersecting systems. While it's important for white leaders to speak up, we can further our commitments to racial equity by listening to, learning from, and incorporating the recommendations of Black leadership into not only our grantmaking but also into the structures of our organizations.



In the spirit of Black History Month, it is important to name a crucial but all too often overlooked aspect of racial justice and liberation: Black Joy. Author [Tracey Michael Lewis-Giggetts](#) has set out to encourage the Black community to embrace their joy and celebrate it as a form of power for racial justice.

## **Black Joy = Resistance**

In 2020, Lewis-Giggetts [wrote an essay](#) for the Washington Post that captured the complex emotions and realizations she experienced when she shared a moment of joy with her daughter as they danced in the rain. In the essay, she states "Our dancing in the rain wasn't

a denial of all the storms that had moved in on black people that week. It was a dare. An indignant stance of confidence in the midst of this malignant monsoon called systemic racism. Our laughter was a way to say “you can’t steal our joy” to anyone who’d dare deny our humanity.”

Her newest book, "[Black Joy: Stories of Resistance, Resilience, and Restoration](#)" is a collection of essays that acts as a testimony to the beauty and power of Black joy and its existence in the world. The stories she tells are meant to empower Black folks to harness joy as a birthright and pathway for healing, especially in the face of injustice, and can enlighten allies around the importance of supporting that joy.

Often times, racial justice efforts by non-Black folks focus on the trauma the Black community experiences both collectively and individually. Sometimes, that trauma can be exploited as a means to an end, which in turn can exacerbate it. But as Lewis-Giggetts and other racial justice leaders remind us: **Black joy is essential to achieving transformational change and liberation.**

## Creating Healing Spaces For Joy

[Lewis-Giggetts shares](#) that for Black folks finding and feeling able to access joy "can be quite a challenge because we’re constantly trying to prove ourselves in a lot of ways.”

Working within the confines of white supremacy culture, philanthropy has contributed to creating and upholding environments where Black joy feels not allowed and when it is, it often comes with paternalistic boundaries and rules that require full expression of joy to be stifled. It is past time for philanthropy to examine and reconcile the ways in which it has prevented Black joy, both within our organizations and externally with our grantee partners and community.

As we work towards housing and racial justice, we need to reflect on what practices philanthropy not only has in place, but actively supports that minimizes joy and the expression of it. We should ask ourselves how funders can meaningfully contribute to the resistance and dismantling of white supremacy and racism by supporting, funding, and encouraging healing spaces for Black joy and restoration.

[Read more about Tracey Michae'l Lewis-Giggetts book.](#)

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