



Humanity United

Racial Justice & Equity (RJE) Strategy

2025

artwork by Blu Murphy

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**I see Black
people as art.**

cover art by

Blu Murphy



This strategy design features powerful artwork from Blu Murphy, a mixed media artist, educator, and photographer based out of Washington, D.C. This strategy includes pieces from Blu's "Le Drip" and "Red Line" series which are tributes to the Black community, intended to showcase her subjects' stories and experiences. We are grateful to Blu for lending her work to bring depth and meaning to our work and reminding us of art's power to amplify voices, challenge narratives, and celebrate those too often unseen.

RJE Racial Justice & Equity

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**There is no such thing as a
single-issue struggle, because
we don't live single issue lives.**

Audre Lorde

Message from the Team

We want to express our immense gratitude to our partners, communities, consultants, and racial justice ecosystem for fueling the vision of the Racial Justice & Equity (RJE) strategy that we are incredibly proud to share with you. The mandate for Black life and calls for racial and economic justice in 2020 cleared the long-obscured brush of racial capitalism, and its roots in policing, police, and prisons.

This, alongside a global pandemic, sparked a widespread call to action, one that facilitated a material commitment to resourcing racial justice movements. It was a privilege not only to meet this critical moment, but to organize our relationships and our work in a way that investment in the wellbeing, joy, culture, and power of Black and brown lives.

We are indebted to the work of our partners to build power and thriving communities across the racial justice ecosystem, to create the conditions for political and economic power, now more than ever. This strategy feels salient, especially so during exponential rollbacks on the very work, infrastructure, and livelihood that facilitated the function of our society. These are unprecedented times, where cuts that benefit the ruling class continue to strengthen the matrix of domination against communities of color. The participation of our partners to shape this strategy was critical to visioning the future of this work, and the RJE team maintains a steadfast posture to stand in solidarity with communities of color on this lifelong journey to build collective power.

The RJE team (Racial Justice, and Equity)
at Humanity United



Who We Are & How We Came to Be



The most visionary movements – especially those led by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and working-class communities – are clear that incremental changes and reformist approaches are not sufficient to manifest the societal transformation we seek. Rather, they are calling for a Just Transition away from our current extractive, profit-driven, capitalist economic system (by ‘stopping the bad’) toward a more regenerative economy rooted in social equity, deep democracy and ecological sustainability (by ‘building the new’).

Justice Funders

RESONANCE: A Just Transition
Guide for Philanthropic
Transformation



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guide**



Humanity United (HU)
began supporting
exploratory work
on Racial Justice &
Equity (RJE) following
the racial justice
awakening of 2020.

Key factors that influenced
our decision include:

HU's desire to address systemic
inequalities in our own backyard

The far-reaching impact and
influence of U.S. policies on a
global scale

Benefit to HU's international
reputation, influence, and moral
standing

Opportunities for learning,
growth, and collaboration within
HU in the field.

Our work is guided by HU's focus on supporting everyone's basic dignity and human rights, and our locally-led approach which prioritizes local agency and community expertise.

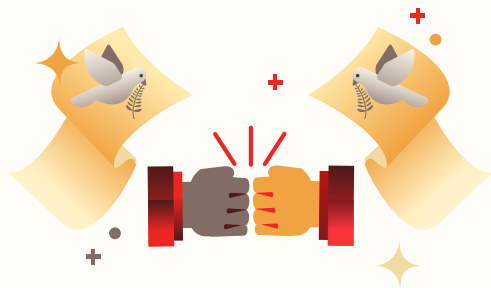
RJE honors the lived experience of our grantees by leading through collaboration and centering the grantees' visions. We desire to promote the voices of our partners in non-extractive ways while investing in communities of promise, thereby attempting to mitigate harms that often occur in philanthropy.

While best known for our international funding, HU recognizes the importance of supporting racial justice and equity issues domestically due to:

- HU's desire to address systemic inequalities in our own backyard;
- The far-reaching impact and influence of U.S. policies on a global scale;
- Benefit to HU's international reputation, influence, and moral standing;
- Opportunities for learning, growth, and collaboration within HU and the philanthropic racial justice field;
- The global impact of U.S. policies;
- HU's desire to address systemic inequalities and philanthropic harm;
- The concern of enhancing HU's international reputation and influence for continued impact;
- HU's resulting opportunities for learning, growth, and collaboration;

How **RJE** Connects to Other **HU** Portfolios

In their most recent strategies, HU's different portfolios have made note of the ways in which our RJE work intersects with their areas of work.



Peacebuilding Strategy

While the Peacebuilding portfolio conducts its work predominantly internationally, we reflect on our shared commitment and learning around justice, recognizing the through line of intersectional movements and wellbeing of frontline actors.

Public Engagement Strategy

Each team within PE – and the portfolio as a whole – closely collaborates with the Peacebuilding and Forced Labor & Human Trafficking portfolios, as well as the RJE program, on mutually aligned goals that strengthen our collective work while increasing our ability to effect change toward our shared mission.



Forced Labor and Human Trafficking Strategy

Our work is increasingly more explicit in considering macro-trends that influence (and are influenced by) the Forced Labor & Human Trafficking (FLHT) system, such as racism, climate change, ultra-capitalism, and shrinking civil society space. We don't specifically fund in these spaces, but we are paying attention to how these forces shape our system and our actions.

Racial Justice and Equity

Peacebuilding's work has influenced RJE efforts by fostering understanding, reconciliation, and dialogue among diverse communities, addressing root causes of conflict and injustice, and promoting inclusive approaches to building a more just and equitable society.

Public Engagement has influenced RJE efforts by amplifying marginalized voices, mobilizing communities to advocate for systemic change, and fostering dialogue and awareness around issues of racial discrimination and inequity

Forced Labor and Human Trafficking has influenced RJE efforts by highlighting the intersectionality of race, poverty, and exploitation, advocating for the rights and protection of marginalized communities disproportionately affected by these injustices, and driving systemic reforms to address underlying inequalities and vulnerabilities.



Developing Our Strategy

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It's hard to actually imagine a situation in which a strategy would be successful for people who are most impacted by whatever injustice you're trying to solve if that strategy came out of a foundation. For us, when we clarified our values, [we asked] where should the leadership live? We recognized that if we believe that those who were most impacted by injustice should be leading efforts towards justice, then why would we be the ones to say how to do that?

Dimple Abichandani

Move the Money,
General Service Foundation



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the
guide**



In partnership with Coactive Change, the RJE team and partners engaged in an eight-month participatory strategy process using consensus-based decision making to disrupt “power over” dynamics, or the belief and action of extractive leadership, done by force, coercion, domination and control.

RJE recognized that power over leadership fails to understand and address the needs, interests and lived experiences of communities impacted by those decisions. This process held by Coactive Change supported a pod structure, including:

Vision: Tasked with identifying the values and resourcing approach that will guide future RJE grantmaking. As part of that process, this pod was responsible for aligning on a hypothesis driving the approach to a Just Transition framework alignment, and how it connects to the broader Humanity United organization

Grantmaking: Tasked with forecasting post-strategy RJE sponsorship outreach, application, review, selection, and award processes, which best reflected the RJE vision. When selecting partners, the RJE team considers organizations whose work aligns with our pillars toward building power, and thriving communities.

Non-Financial Resources: Tasked with identifying self-determined roles and resources that Humanity United can catalyze to fortify RJE partners' work

Learning and Evaluation: Tasked with assessing and testing if, how, why, and for whom an RJE strategy makes its progress towards the vision more immediate

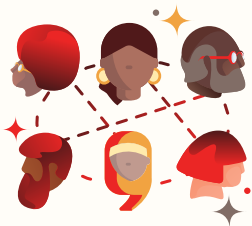
Fundraising: Tasked with creating a proposed budget for the RJE Strategy, and developing a fundraising strategy to raise any fun

The partnership culminated with the RJE team's strategy being approved unanimously.



Centered in Decision Making

Participatory grantmaking invites communities most impacted to directly shape and lead initiatives that address systemic issues. By giving them control over funding decisions, it ensures that resources are allocated to projects that reflect their priorities and aspirations.



Authentic Representation

This approach ensures that diverse voices and perspectives, particularly those of marginalized communities, are authentically represented in decision-making processes. It helps dismantle power imbalances and ensures that funding decisions are informed by the lived experiences and expertise of those most impacted.



Greater Impact

By engaging directly with communities, participatory strategy and grantmaking can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions. Community members have intimate knowledge of the challenges they face and are best positioned to identify strategies that will create meaningful change in their lives.



Building Trust and Accountability

Participatory strategy and grantmaking builds trust between funders and communities by fostering transparency, accountability, and mutual respect. When communities have a say in how funds are allocated, it fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to stronger partnerships and more impactful outcomes.



Systemic Change

Supporting participatory strategy and grantmaking initiatives is not just about addressing symptoms; it's about tackling root causes and working towards systemic change. By investing in community-driven solutions, donors can contribute to dismantling structures of oppression and advancing racial equity on a broader scale.



Learning and Adaptation

Participatory strategy and grantmaking encourages a culture of learning and adaptation, where funders and communities can continually refine their strategies based on feedback, evaluation, and shared learning. This flexibility allows for greater responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities.



Long-Term Sustainability

By investing in the capacity and leadership of affected communities, participatory strategy and grantmaking contributes to long-term sustainability and resilience in the work. It builds movement infrastructure and networks that can continue to advocate for change and mobilize resources beyond the lifespan of individual grants.



**I paint outside the frame
because I don't believe
that my people were
meant to be inside boxes.**

Blu Murphy



art by Blu Murphy



Systems We Want to Impact



There's got to be acknowledgment that if we're going to achieve systemic change, we've got to reshuffle the power dynamics. We've got to be organizers in our sector and think like organizers.

Kevin Ryan,

Move the Money,
Ford Foundation



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guide**



Near Star

We seek to establish a model of non-extractive, collaborative, community-driven philanthropy that over time influences how funding happens in the sector. We will achieve this by empowering BIPOC leaders and communities to have greater agency over funding decisions and ensuring their voices are heard at decision-making tables, thus democratizing the distribution of resources.



Guiding Star

The future we seek to achieve through our efforts is one where BIPOC people in the United States have political and economic power to organize for self-determined solutions to liberation in our lifetimes.



photography by Blu Murphy

Why We Can't Pick One Issue

White supremacy and structural racism persist within and across our many overlapping systems including:



Political

Voter suppression of formerly incarcerated folks, authoritarian governance, redlining



Healthcare

Disparities in access to healthcare, biases in medical treatment, persistent poor health outcomes for Black and Brown communities



Criminal-legal

Policing and surveillance, criminalization, mass incarceration



Housing

Housing discrimination, redlining, displacement, racial segregation and disparities in homeownership and rental access



Financial

Inequitable access to resources and wealth accumulation/racial wealth gap



Education

Disparities in funding, access to quality education, school-to-prison pipeline, representation within curriculum



Economic

Disparities in employment, unlivable wages, access to benefits



Food

Disparities in food insecurity and hunger, food swamps, food apartheid



Environment

Landfills, incinerators, and hazardous waste disposal being disproportionately placed in Black and Brown communities, artificial intelligence, disproportionate impact of climate change



Immigration

Discriminatory immigration and refugee policies



Media

Implicit/explicit bias, stereotypes, lack of representation



Digital/technology

Police surveillance technology, anti- Black AI, inequitable internet access, lack of access to technology resources

Why We Can't Pick One Issue

The Matrix of Domination

Structural

Domain of Power

Organization of interlocking, large-scale social institutions reproduce the subordination of people

Disciplinary

Domain of Power

Organizational practices of social institutions manage power relations and control certain subpopulations

Domains of
POWER

Hegemonic

Domain of Power

Through ideology, culture, and consciousness, the beliefs of the dominant group get normalized as common sense ideas that support their position

Interpersonal

Domain of Power

How our individual consciousness perpetuates the subordination of others through routinized daily practices of interaction at the microlevel

Based on the matrix of domination coined by Patricia Hill Collins

Dr. Melissa Brown,
The Matrix of Domination and
the Four Domains of Power



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How We Get There

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As grantmakers, we have a responsibility to confront the reality that philanthropy has often contributed to systemic inequities, both in the ways wealth is accumulated and in the ways its dissemination is controlled. While these discussions may be difficult, this type of self-reflection is fundamental to the work of trust-based philanthropy. As individuals and institutions, we must be willing to examine our own relationships to power and money, and be willing to give up some of that power and control in a spirit of service and collaboration with those who are closer to the issues at hand.

Trust Based Philanthropy Project



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art + photography by
Blu Murphy

The Current State

The U.S. often positions itself as a world leader in terms of equity. Yet philanthropy continues to divest in domestic communities of color. This dynamic engenders a lack of trust between community members and those in positions of power, causing them to question funders' commitment to long-term engagement and support. Despite movement over time, we are still working and living under conditions of white supremacy that continue to oppress and structurally extract from racialized people.

Philanthropic capital is/was built on the labor and exploitation of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color here in the U.S. and across the Global South. We fund these organizations in the United States to return the stolen wealth to those living in the imperial core. We have chosen to focus our initial efforts to resource this work with partners in Chicago, Atlanta, and the District of Columbia.

The priorities that guide our funding practice are:

Fostering Collaborative Power Sharing

Uplifting the voices of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, centering their visions, sharing decision-making power, and shifting resources to them.

Developing the Network

Organizing donors, funders, and organizations to increase funding, expand RJE partners, and strengthen the racial justice ecosystem.

Building Sustainability

Committing to multi-year general operations funding of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color's work, recognizing the nature of deep harms and realistic timelines to address them.

Supporting Leadership Development

Investing in the leadership, success, and wellbeing of Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

Acknowledgments

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And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet company
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea:

we are the ones we have been waiting for.

June Jordan



HUMANITY
UNITED