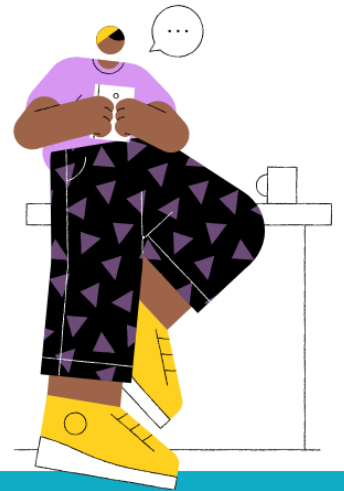


News Voices: Colorado  
*Designed by Orville Parker III*

# THE TIME IS RIGHT NOW

*A call to action for antiracist and just local news*



## What's Inside?

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	6
Recommendations	10
Call to Action	27
Resources	28



*“We want to be seen only as part of a chorus that has over decades demanded change in how local-news media portray the lives of Black Coloradans.”*

# Executive Summary

In early 2021, [News Voices: Colorado](#) — a collaboration among the [Colorado Media Project](#), the [Colorado News Collaborative \(COLab\)](#) and [Free Press](#) — convened the Black Voices Working Group. The group, made up of Black leaders, storytellers, journalists and funders, focused on how to improve access to trustworthy news and information for Black residents throughout the state.

The working group sought tangible ways for communities, philanthropy and newsrooms to acknowledge and address the harms — historic and ongoing — local-media coverage has inflicted on Black communities.

Over the course of three working-group sessions, the group explored how Colorado newsrooms and foundations can better serve and reflect the needs, realities and concerns of Black residents. We focused on identifying community strengths and resources and examined ways in which Black Coloradans can gain greater voice and more meaningful power in local coverage. We also considered how to increase and improve long-overdue access to critical information for Black Coloradans.

Our recommendations, summarized below, reflect these discussions and are aimed at creating opportunities for Black Coloradans to continue to build on the power of their communication networks:

## Recommendations

- 1. Name and acknowledge** how local-news coverage and media institutions have negatively impacted Black Colorado communities.
- 2. Use existing platforms to gather and amplify** the voices and perspectives of Black Coloradans.
- 3. Contribute to the growth** of a vibrant Black Colorado press corps and equally robust community of Black storytellers in other media.
- 4. Build power in Black communities** to hold news media accountable.
- 5. Dedicate more resources for reporting** that uncovers, examines and provides solutions for issues that disproportionately impact Black Coloradans.

We hope these recommendations help provide a path forward for communities and newsrooms alike — and that they invite more ideas and broader discussion. We acknowledge that the Black community in Colorado is diverse and this working group makes no claims to speak for all. We want to be seen only as part of a chorus that has over decades demanded change in how local-news media portray the lives of Black Coloradans.

We recognize that repairing generations of harm, unwinding longstanding practices and cultures within the journalism industry, and building new structures will take time. For that reason, this report includes in-depth action steps, examples and resource lists to help communities, newsrooms and funders ensure that Black Coloradans have better access to news and information that serve their communities. The report outlines tactics and strategies meant to promote news-media entrepreneurship and create cultures in mainstream newsrooms that welcome, include and raise Black voices.

“Those who have the **power** and **capacity** to change harmful systems within the news media **must** commit to taking action.”

It is both possible and necessary to move with intention and urgency. Those who have the power and capacity to change harmful systems within the news media must commit to taking action. As one working-group member said, “The time is right now.”

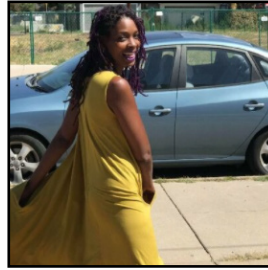
News Voices: Colorado would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Black Voices Working Group members. In a year where so many of us — especially those in the Black community — experienced hardship and trauma, the working group’s ideas, determination and joy demonstrated the need to center those who are most impacted by the news media in discussions of how to shape local journalism’s future.



Ammiee Brown



Brandon Bornes



Tiya Trent



Tashan Montgomery



Gloria Neal

## Working-Group Members

- **Ammiee Brown, AmeriCorps Vista, Open Media Foundation:** Brown (she, her, hers) is passionate about helping others reach their full potential. She graduated from Centenary College of Louisiana in 2016 with a major in mass communication: film/TV/video and a minor in psychology. Brown has a passion for community service and has served on various committees and boards. Her hobbies include theater, karaoke, photography and impromptu solo-dance parties in her living room.
- **Brandon Bornes, cofounder, My Black Colorado:** Bornes (he, him, his) is well-versed in public information and media relations. He is the cofounder of My Black Colorado, an online directory and a quarterly print magazine that “exists ... to facilitate and cultivate a cohesive ecosystem of the local black community to inspire, innovate and connect local areas together.”
- **Tiya Trent, Project VOYCE program facilitator:** Trent (she, her, hers) is a community activist, organizer, mentor and mother to two young men. She has a master’s degree in education and undergraduate degrees from the University of Colorado, Boulder in theater and ethnic studies as well as women and gender studies. In addition to working with young folks in the community, Trent has served on the organizing committee for the March for Black Women since its inception three years ago.
- **Tashan Montgomery, instructor, Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism (YAASPA):** Montgomery (he, him, his) is a recent graduate of the University of Denver. He has a BSBA in international business with a minor in political science. Montgomery also works on his own photography service, True Lenses Photography. Currently he is an instructor with Young Aspiring Americans for Social and Political Activism.
- **Gloria Neal, director of public affairs for the mayor of Denver:** Neal (she, her, hers) is a former TV-news anchor and a reporter, a columnist, a radio reporter on NewsRadio 850 KOA, a talk-show host, and the host of UC Health’s The EVRE Woman’s Podcast. She has been the director of public affairs for the office of Denver Mayor Michael B. Hancock since Dec. 2018.

# Contributors

- **Risë Jones, owner of TeaLee’s Teahouse:** Jones owns TeaLee’s Teahouse, a Black-owned tea shop in Denver’s historic Five Points. She is passionate about creating spaces for Black communities to have conversations and speaks to the ways that gentrification has redefined how Black communities “commune” with one another.
- **Endale Getahun, KETO FM:** Getahun is one of the founders of KETO FM, a radio station that serves Aurora’s immigrant community, in particular its Ethiopian and Eritrean communities. Endale sees his radio station as an opportunity to connect communities and provide his community with the information they need.
- **Patrice Ravenscroft, former associate publisher of Southeast Express:** Ravenscroft was the associate publisher of *Southeast Express*, a “nonprofit newspaper of, for and by the remarkably diverse and vibrant, but economically redeveloping, southeast quadrant of Colorado Springs.”
- **Joshua Kalenga, co-editor-in-chief of The Catalyst:** Kalenga is a computer-science major at Colorado College. He serves as the co-editor-in-chief for *The Catalyst*, the independent student newspaper serving the school community. He describes himself as a “college student with a lifelong love for writing.” He shared that he hopes to think about innovative ways in which *The Catalyst* can better serve its surrounding community. He enjoys thinking about the intersections of data and journalism.
- **Tina Griego, reporter/editor, the Colorado News Collaborative (COLab):** Griego is a longtime reporter, columnist and editor whose coverage of urban poverty, housing, immigration and education has won multiple state and national awards.
- **Rachael Johnson:** Johnson is a Local Legal Initiative staff attorney based in Colorado. She joins the Reporters Committee with a decade of experience working in both the legal and media fields as a reporter, editor and producer.



# Introduction

The Black Voices Working Group did not come together in a vacuum.

We met in the wake of George Floyd's murder. We met in the aftermath of nationwide uprisings protesting the violence of policing, particularly against Black people. We met as newsrooms once again realized that their staffs did not represent the communities they covered. We met as these outlets began to [come to terms](#) with their roles in upholding white supremacy. They did so in part by reinforcing the myth of Black inferiority and other negative stereotypes that have fueled inequities in housing, education, criminal justice and civil rights. Journalists of color at outlets across the nation are organizing and calling out the [lack of internal diversity](#) and the [racial discrimination](#) they've faced over the course of their careers.

Outside of newsrooms, we're seeing discussions about how news coverage has [harmed](#) Black people through reporting that has endorsed violence against Black communities, through skewed crime reporting, through the incitement of racially motivated attacks and through the use of reporting as a surveillance tool. There has been a call to consider what role journalism institutions must play in [repairing those harms](#). The pandemic, with its [disproportionate impact](#) on Black lives, and the uprisings, with their demand to examine systemic racism, have underscored the need for robust news coverage that includes communities historically left out and left behind.

## The Foundation of the Working Group

Colorado has a [rich history of media activism](#) and, in recent months, we've seen journalists, foundations, community organizations and activists explore ways to address inequities in newsrooms and news coverage.

**June  
2020**

In June 2020, the Colorado Media Project, COLab and Rocky Mountain Public Media hosted journalists for a series of [Real Talk conversations](#) where participants discussed a lack of meaningful connection to BIPOC communities and the need to build trust and undo harm by telling these communities' stories. The Colorado Media Project has [spotlighted and supported](#) BIPOC-owned media outlets and the role they play in providing [critical information](#) to communities of color. News Voices: Colorado spoke with community members at [Reporting on Resistance: 2020 Uprisings](#) about the practices that have led to historical mistrust between Black communities and local media and also identified areas for growth and collaboration.

### January 2021

In January 2021, News Voices, COLab and the Colorado Media Project hosted the [Black Voices kick-off event](#) as a prelude to our working-group conversations. The meeting featured a conversation led by News Voices: Colorado Manager Diamond Hardiman and Free Press’ Joseph Torres, coauthor of *News for All the People* and [Media 2070](#) cofounder. The gathering included special comments from Polly Baca — COLab board member, Colorado Women’s Hall of Fame inductee, media champion and the first woman of color elected to the Colorado Senate. The group discussed journalism’s history of harm in Black communities and the need for newsrooms to take concrete steps toward equity and repair.

### March 2021

Additionally, journalists participating in a media-landscape [study](#) conducted in March 2021 by the Colorado Trust, Hearken and the University of Denver identified “important critical information needs that could use more media coverage, such as the environment and social justice.” Participants also noted “gaps in coverage of specific ethnic and racial communities across the state.” Insights from these conversations helped guide the report’s recommendations.

### Process

News Voices: Colorado also held one-on-one interviews with Black Coloradans to discuss what they hoped this working-group series would explore. We then gathered working-group members through word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals. Given the history of poor coverage and ensuing mistrust, some Black non-journalists were wary of participating — especially during such a tumultuous time for Black people globally — without a guarantee of change from newsrooms.

In the course of our discussions, we grappled with anger and frustration — but we also embraced hope for a future in which Black lives are depicted fairly and fully.

It isn’t easy to discuss how newsrooms can come to terms with past and present inequities — but it’s a necessary conversation that must follow the lead of the very communities that have historically been marginalized, maligned and excluded. At the same time, news organizations and the funders that support them bear the responsibility of carrying out the changes that communities are calling for.



**Over the course of three 90-minute sessions, the working group sought to chart several possible courses over three broad areas:**

## **Session 1: Information Needs & Gaps**

Session 1 focused on understanding the information needs of some Black Coloradan communities. The conversation was driven by three questions:

- 1. What issues are most important to the communities you serve?**
- 2. What information does your communities need about those issues?**
- 3. How could that information be more accessible?**

The responses: Black Coloradans want more reporting on basic needs such as housing, employment and other services and opportunities. People are also hungry for stories that reflect the Black experience and are more nuanced, more in-depth and more willing to challenge the “status quo” by breaking down bias and providing historical context.

## **Session 2: How Communities Share Information**

Session 2 focused on identifying community members, newsrooms, funders and policymakers who play critical roles in sharing information. We asked:

- 1. Who already supports your community in providing access to information about issues that people care about?**
- 2. What opportunities are there for other entities to play a larger role in contributing to Black information-sharing ecosystems?**

Group members repeatedly returned to the key role community and personal networks play in information sharing and the ways that white standards for journalism can disrupt those very networks. The group spoke about how the status quo hinders growth, collaboration and opportunity among Black storytellers by requiring Black initiatives to fit within what is already deemed possible and acceptable in the world of journalism.

### Session 3: What Change Looks Like

Session 3 focused on how to connect the identified information needs of Black Coloradans to Black journalists, storytellers and information providers with infrastructure, funding and support. In this final session, News Voices' Diamond Hardiman asked the group to consider the ideas from the previous conversations and imagine a near future in which those ideas have come to pass. Working-group members placed themselves in February 2022 and wrote headlines touting the progress made. For example: **“Investigative Team of Black Reporters to Cover Colorado Communities of Color.”** Those headlines also shaped the recommendations on p. 10 .



Investigative Team of Black Reporters to Cover  
Colorado Communities of Color

*Black Futures Colorado, February 2022*

It is important to note that the group started out as a mix of journalists and/or former journalists along with community members. Over the course of the working group's six weeks of meetings, community members played a larger role in visioning pathways to reconcile harm, which are reflected in the following recommendations.

Once the working-group sessions wrapped, Hardiman — with the support of News Voices: Colorado — crafted recommendations based on working-group conversations. After the recommendations were drafted, working-group members had the opportunity to review and edit recommendations to ensure they accurately reflected the essence of the discussions.

# Recommendations

**1** Name and acknowledge how local-news coverage and media institutions have negatively impacted Black Colorado communities.

**2** Use existing platforms to gather and amplify the voices and perspectives of Black Coloradans.

**3** Contribute to the growth of a vibrant Black Colorado press corps and equally robust community of Black storytellers in other media.

**4** Build power in Black communities to hold media accountable through durable two-way channels.

**5** Dedicate more resources for reporting that uncovers, examines and provides solutions for issues that disproportionately impact Black Coloradans.

# 1ST RECOMMENDATION

**Name and acknowledge how local-news coverage and media institutions have negatively impacted Black Colorado communities.**

### For:

Communities, newsrooms, funders

### What we heard:

When we invited Black Coloradans to join the working group, we received a lot of feedback about the ways that local news has harmed Black communities and eroded trust.

Multiple leaders shared specific examples where they have been targeted, ignored or maligned by local media. One participant has attempted to work with newsroom leaders to change their coverage of communities of color — but [sees similar problems](#) arising more than five years after their discussion.

In their registration forms for our Black Voices kick-off event, more than 90 participants shared specific ways that they have seen local-news institutions and coverage harm Black communities. One respondent pointed out that, in the first half of the 1900s, [The Grand Junction Daily Sentinel's publisher and editor was a member of the KKK](#).

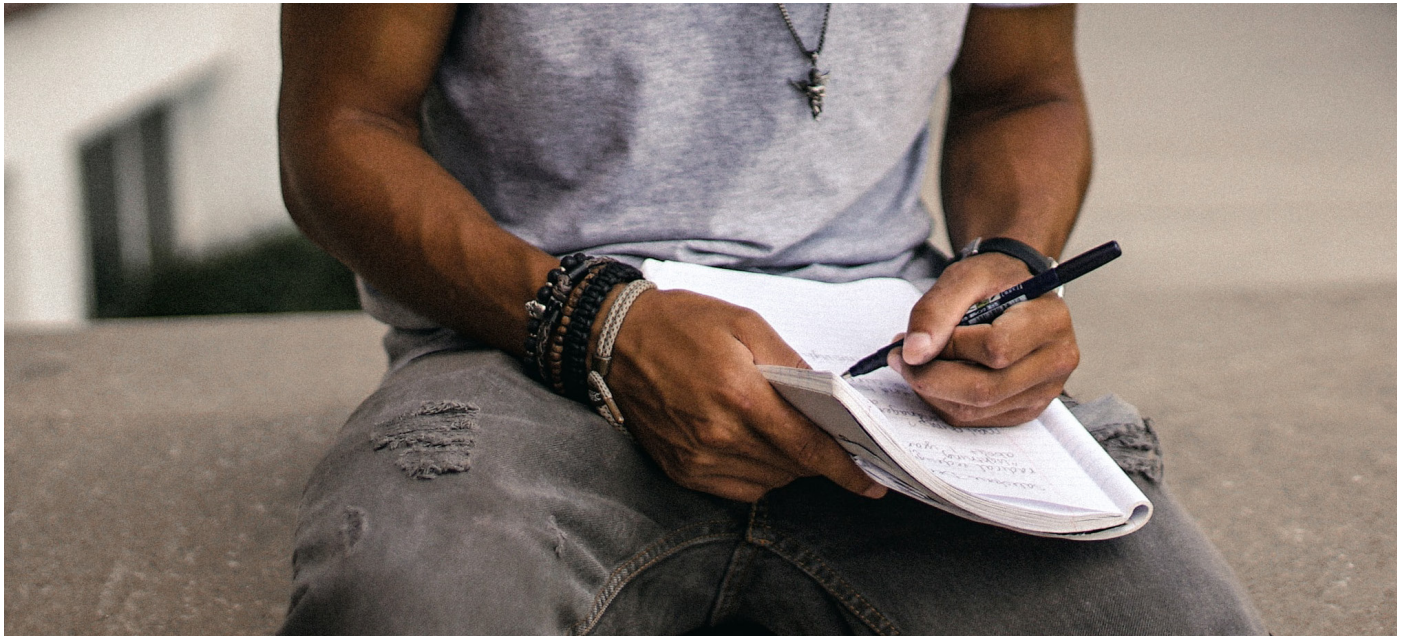
Our working-group members also expressed a hesitancy to collaborate with traditional and legacy media because of their [historic mistreatment](#) of Black communities. Brandon Bornes, cofounder of *My Black Colorado*, mentioned that some legacy institutions “might not be ready for change. They might have the resources, the access to data, but they might not have the capacity for change. A better question is what is the capacity for certain organizations for growth or change?”

Historical mistreatment of Black communities has [led to justified skepticism and mistrust](#) within some Black communities. COLab's Tina Griego noted that “public acknowledgment of harm may be a prerequisite for overcoming that skepticism and mistrust.”

For there to be any room to build, create and foster healthy, reciprocal and trusting relationships with Black communities, there must first be an [uncovering](#) of material harms and a commitment to addressing those harms.

### **How it could work in Colorado:**

Community members, newsrooms, storytellers and funders could create a project that gathers firsthand stories and specific examples of coverage that has impacted Black communities. Participants could look at coverage that resulted in material gains or losses in terms of community connections, exposure for Black businesses and access to critical information.



### **Communities:**

- 1. Build a collective of organizations** to source perspectives on local-journalism institutions and the impact of media coverage in their communities. Use interviews, written testimonials, community conversations, social-media campaigns and other forms of community sourcing.
  - Ask youth organizations to play a role in story collection through interviews, data collection and social-media management.
  - Create mentorship programs with newsrooms to assist in building and honing interview techniques and data-collection best practices to help with story collection and serve as an entry point for Black and Brown youth interested in the field of journalism.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### Newsrooms:

- 1. Conduct an audit** to see how often Black voices are featured and on what topics.
  - Publicize the results from independent audits and internal examination of past coverage and practices, and provide opportunities for community feedback.
  - Examine:
    - the frequency and use of Black sources in stories
    - which type(s) of stories Black people are featured in
    - reporting that resulted in material gains, such as: increased access to critical information, strengthened community connections and increased exposure for Black businesses and organizations
    - reporting that uncovered injustices that disproportionately impacted Black Coloradans
    - instances where coverage caused material harm such as the absence of relevant and timely access to critical information, inflammation of community discord and negative portrayals of Black businesses and organizations
    - instances where racial epithets were employed
    - reporting that perpetuated the myth of Black inferiority and/or the myth of white superiority
    - reporting that encouraged or incited violence against Black communities
- 2. Elevate Black voices and experiences** using a variety of listening sessions to understand how local newspapers' histories, practices and coverage have impacted Black communities.
  - Assist community-led sourcing projects by lending your pages, editorial space and digital platforms to publicize efforts of researchers looking to understand impact.
  - Enlist Black youth organizations to participate in this effort through data collection, story gathering and interviews.



**Funders:**

1. **Fund independent audits** of the coverage of newsrooms throughout the state, with a specific focus on coverage that has impacted Black Coloradans.
2. **Fund community-led efforts** that gather information, data and stories about Black Coloradans' perspectives on local-journalism institutions, and the impact of media coverage in their communities (including instances where coverage caused material loss, incited violence or perpetuated the myth of Black inferiority).

**examples**

Throughout the country — both historically and recently — various newspapers have acknowledged their role in marginalizing Black, Indigenous and other people of color. [The Kansas City Star](#) and [The Los Angeles Times](#) have both issued apologies for how their coverage has upheld and contributed to oppression.

II. The Washington Post and APM Reports joined together to create the [Historically Black](#) podcast, which features stories about objects submitted by Black readers that “make up their own lived experiences of black history.”

III. The Philadelphia Inquirer [commissioned an audit](#) conducted by researchers at Temple University that found that the paper “has an overwhelmingly white newsroom and fails to retain journalists of color, resulting in news coverage that overrepresents people who are white and male.”

## 2<sup>ND</sup> RECOMMENDATION

### Use existing platforms to gather and amplify the voices and perspectives of Black Coloradans

#### For:

Communities, newsrooms, funders

#### What we heard:

Black Voices working-group members discussed how newsrooms fail to [represent the range of Black voices](#). Member Tashan Montgomery suggested “community spotlights as a way of healing.” Other members agreed that there’s a need to increase the number of Black voices and capture the complexity of experiences. “The portrayal of communities of color gears toward the extremes,” Griego said. “Super positive or super negative — the stuff of life is not there.”

Other working-group members also grappled with the high number of Black sources available to share stories, information and content when building the community maps discussed in the process section. Although newsrooms don’t represent enough Black voices, working-group members acknowledged how many Black people play critical roles in sharing information. Bornes reminded the group how building connections with Black communities has helped him source his entire magazine with content from Black writers, noting that “once you celebrate one, you find more.”

Precisely because there’s a wealth of sources and experiences that journalists can draw on, group member Gloria Neal declared that “Black history and Black stories need to exist outside of Black History Month. [True] Black history is to take siloed stories out of Black History Month.” Bornes hopes magazines like *My Black Colorado* can “open doors up for different partnerships in the community with news organizations.”

Group members also noted that although many Black leaders are creating and sharing information, it is sometimes difficult to keep up with different newsletters and publications.



Montgomery said that leaders who share information should — whenever possible — collaborate more to boost capacity and consider linking to other organizations' news blasts, social-media updates and newsletters. Group members believe this could help Black Coloradans more easily access local information.

Media fragmentation and digital overwhelm are also common across the board. Mainstream media can help by curating various information streams that include a broad range of local news and information that is created by, about and for Black Coloradans.

### **How it could work in Colorado:**

Communities, newsrooms and funders could use existing assets such as columns and newsletters to uplift Black voices and increase accessibility to other resources that share information for Black Coloradans.

#### **Communities:**

1. **Black-serving community** organizations, leaders and media platforms can share and amplify each other's work to create stronger information-sharing networks.

#### **Newsrooms:**

1. **Dedicate a column in your paper** to Black voices, with content from Black-led organizations and community members on a rotating basis. Partner with cultural centers at universities, Black-serving youth organizations and Black high-school students to participate in this column.
2. **Through relationship building**, community sourcing and other mediums, newsrooms should connect with Black-led organizations and Black content creators to establish content-sharing agreements for work they're already producing in their magazines, newsletters and social-media pages.
3. **Create a statewide resource guide** for newsrooms of Black community leaders, organizers and experts.
4. **Create a Black freelancers' database** to increase accessibility for Black journalists, photographers and other content creators to secure opportunities for both contract work and employment.
5. **Use newsletters and other information-sharing platforms** for Black readers to easily navigate and find content that pertains to their communities.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Funders:

1. **Fund organizations** that provide resources, platforms and support to Black creators and freelancers.
2. **Fund content-sharing partnerships** between Black community organizations and newsrooms.

### examples

WHYY's [News and Information Community Exchange \(N.I.C.E\) program](#) works with content creators throughout Philadelphia to share content, cultivate grassroots content creators and keep local residents informed.

II. The Dallas Morning News created a [content-sharing partnership](#) with Black-owned publication [Texas Metro News](#) to increase coverage of Dallas' communities of color.

III. In 1957–58, Martin Luther King Jr. shared general life advice in a [monthly column](#) for *Ebony*.

IV. As part of the Center for Community Media's (CCM) Black Media Initiative, a [national map](#) and directory lists 300 media outlets across the United States that primarily serve Black communities.

V. [My Black Colorado](#) is a magazine and directory created to "facilitate and cultivate a cohesive ecosystem of the local black community to inspire, innovate and connect local areas together."

## 3<sup>RD</sup> RECOMMENDATION

**Contribute to the growth of a vibrant Black Colorado press corps, especially its future journalists and equally robust community of Black storytellers in other media.**

### **For:**

Newsrooms, funders

### **What we heard:**

When discussing what's needed to address the critical information needs of Black communities, many working-group members like Bornes pointed out the [need for more Black reporters throughout the state](#). Ammiee Brown wondered how we can get “more BIPOC people in high-level positions within media organizations.”

Group members also highlighted the importance of creating space for youth to shadow people in different fields, including journalism. “We always talk about [how] children are our future,” said Tiya Trent, “but don't ever really give them a platform to take over or learn different skills.” Trent wondered about the possibility of following people in certain positions so that they are “training up youth to take over.”

When discussing barriers that keep Black creators from more widely sharing information, our group discussed structural barriers that Montgomery describes as “systemic racism, financial barriers and the requirement to adhere to the status quo.” The group discussed how these structures [serve as barriers](#) for Black content creators, institutions and journalists who want to share critical information and stories with Black communities.

At our kick-off event, one group discussed creating a media-reparations fund for local media to help repair relationships with Black communities. The group noted how a media-reparations fund could address the ways that current and historical anti-Blackness within the media have excluded and [driven away Black reporters, BIPOC people within management](#) and [Black youth from mentorship and pipeline conversations](#).

## RECOMMENDATION 3



### **How it could work in Colorado:**

Newsrooms and funders could create a fund to support the growth of Black storytellers in other media by offering development opportunities, supplementing the costs of mental-health services, creating safer work environments and fostering equitable opportunities for training for young and aspiring journalists.

### **Newsrooms:**

- 1. Review how your newsroom** allocates funds to have an ongoing and well-resourced commitment to building and maintaining partnerships with organizations that can ensure diverse talent pipelines.
  - Publicize the results from independent audits and internal examination of past coverage and practices, and provide opportunities for community feedback.
- 2. Building on existing research,** host internal and external listening sessions with Black Colorado journalists to hear what supports are necessary to ensure the continued growth and development of Black storytellers in other media.
  - Consider:
    - Hosting internal sessions between current and former employees with the assistance of human-resource departments, editors and/or outside consultants. Allow participants to offer specific and actionable feedback.
    - Hosting external sessions with current and aspiring Black journalists and storytellers in other media. Include processes that allow participants to provide specific and actionable feedback.
    - Sharing insights and progress on the creation and bolstering of those stated supports with participants and the broader public.

3. **Analyze internal practices** and examine the history of your organizational structures. Consider how certain policies have excluded Black voices.
  - Examine:
    - What pipelines does your newsroom use to hire new reporters?
    - What are the retention rates for Black journalists?
    - How often are Black journalists promoted and given leadership opportunities?
    - How many Black people have held leadership positions within your organization?
    - If you partner, buy from or provide advertising for local businesses and community organizations, how many of those are Black-led?
4. **Support community-led sourcing projects** by creating mentorship programs with Black-serving youth organizations. Include workshops on interviewing techniques and data collection, opportunities to shadow journalists, internship pipelines and other mechanisms to provide ongoing support for youth interested in entering the field of journalism.
5. **Be transparent when sharing** internal diversity efforts with the broader community.

## Fundors:

1. **Dedicate funding to** supporting the growth and development of Black journalists and media entrepreneurs, which could include:
  - providing living-wage internships for Black youth
  - fostering local-news mentorship programs for youth organizations
  - supporting organizations that are already (or are looking to) provide equipment, programs and classes for Black Coloradans who want to learn more about how to produce journalism
  - providing access to mental-health services for Black journalists
  - providing professional-development opportunities
  - covering the costs of leadership training and conferences that connect people to larger entities of Black journalists, such as the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and the Allied Media Conference
  - investing in start-up and sustainability funds to stimulate Black-owned media and Black-media entrepreneurship

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### examples

In November 2019, the Evanston City Council in Illinois established a [reparations fund](#) as a response to the ways that wealth and opportunities have been extracted from local Black communities. The fund, supported by revenue from the city's tax on recreational marijuana, will address housing inequities.

II. [The Black Journalists Therapy Fund](#), founded by Sonia Weiser in May 2020, was created to provide support for journalists who are facing financial barriers to receiving mental-health services. The fund is supported by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF).

III. Ten Black-owned media organizations partnered with the Local Media Association to launch the [Fund for Black Journalism](#), an initiative to reimagine and support the Black press.

IV. Each year, [NABJ](#) awards scholarships to support students pursuing careers in journalism, media and communications. There are multiple national groups that support the development of young Black journalists, including [NABJ](#), the [Emma Bowen Foundation](#) and the [Maynard Institute for Journalism Education](#).

V. [The Racial Equity in Journalism Fund](#) with Borealis Philanthropy invests in news organizations led by and for people of color.

# 4<sup>TH</sup> RECOMMENDATION

## Build power in Black communities to hold media accountable through durable two-way channels.

### For:

Communities, newsrooms, funders

### What we heard:

Black Coloradans are interested in organizing and building power to hold news organizations accountable for their relationships, coverage and promises of doing better for Black communities. People are frustrated with the [lack of accountability](#) when it comes to creating more equitable local news.

When discussing organizations that claim they want to address systemic racism, group members like Bornes recall that leaders “say what [they] want until it gets hard and then save [themselves].” Risë Jones, who was unable to join group meetings due to time constraints, questioned “do we need watchdogs on these papers? Do we need to embed people in places to hold organizations accountable?”



At our Black Voices kick-off event, attendees asked similar questions, pondering if it was possible to “hold news organizations accountable for racially biased coverage.” [Because of this lack of trust, justifiable fear and cynicism](#), working-group members crave sustainable infrastructures to build what Neal calls the “continued pressure [that] will be necessary to make change.”

### How it could work in Colorado:

In Colorado, community members, newsrooms and funders could gather their resources to seat and fund a group of Black residents. This group would serve as an independent body that offers recommendations to newsrooms and responds to reports or stories that use racist tropes, project the myth of Black inferiority and/or erase Black Coloradans. Newsrooms can also implement other processes to create open communication and feedback loops with Black Coloradans.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### Communities:

1. **Organize a collective** of community leaders and/or organizations to form an advisory council focused on the media's portrayal of Black Coloradans. The group could serve as an independent body that helps craft responses and recommendations to newsrooms in the wake of coverage that uses racist tropes, projects the myth of Black inferiority and/or erases Black voices.
2. **Sign up to join** advisory committees in your local newsroom.



### Newsrooms:

1. **Document and publicly** share what commitments and action steps your organization is taking to address anti-Black racism in your newsroom.
2. **Host community conversations** with Black community members to provide transparency and accountability to the people most impacted by anti-Black practices and/or coverage.
3. **Create pathways for community** feedback on your commitments and provide continuous updates for how you're making progress on those commitments. This could look like text-message campaigns, office hours, community events, comment boxes, Google docs, town halls, etc.
4. **Provide timely and formal** updates on newsroom progress on different antiracist initiatives.
5. **Create advisory committees** of Black community members to examine anti-Black coverage within your newsroom. Committees should have specific powers to hold newsrooms accountable and address concerns.

### Funders:

1. **Allocate resources** to help fund Black community members looking to assist news organizations by offering feedback and responses to anti-Black coverage.
2. **Provide stipends** for advisory-committee members and fund independent collectives that monitor local-news coverage.



**examples**

As a result of the [Parity Project](#), the now-defunct Rocky Mountain News created a Hispanic advisory committee in Colorado to assist Latinx students who were interested in attending journalism programs and pursuing journalism careers. The board also met regularly with the editor/publisher to discuss coverage and issues of concern within the community.

II. The Denver Newspapers Guild recently [pinned an article](#) from *The Denver Post*'s union documenting what internal shifts have been made to improve the paper's relationship to communities of color.

III. The [Shift the Narrative Project](#) is a group of Philadelphia organizations that seek to center communities impacted by police violence in prevailing media narratives.

IV. The [MediaJustice Network](#) "includes over 100 social justice, media, and arts organizations collaborating for communication rights, access, and fair representation."

V. [Community-advisory boards](#), which several newsrooms across the country have implemented, enable outlets to listen to the perspectives of local residents, collaborate and share editorial power.

## 5<sup>TH</sup> RECOMMENDATION

**Dedicate more resources for reporting that uncovers, examines and provides solutions for issues that disproportionately impact Black Coloradans.**

### For:

Newsrooms, funders

### What we heard:

[Investigative reporters are crucial to uncovering inequity and social injustice.](#) Black working-group members like Montgomery say it's important to highlight “how we can use our resources to fight against the status quo of institutions that are constantly perpetuating oppression in America.”

Group member Rachael Johnson raised the need for a team of Black investigative journalists. “One of the things I come across from a legal perspective and one of the things I think has really helped with transparency in a community is having an investigative team of journalists,” she said. “... Black journalists that are connected with community have the ability to [dig deeper](#) because of their connections and the use of different resources.” Johnson noted how important funding would be for a project like this because investigative teams in newsrooms are already struggling to gather resources.



A team of Black investigative journalists would address the suggestion of many group members, including Neal, who argued that to create equitable content, “[it's helpful to point out problems, solutions and resources.](#)”

### How it could work in Colorado:

With the support of philanthropy, newsrooms could fund investigative teams of Black journalists.

## Newsrooms:

1. **Support the hiring of** an investigative journalist at your organization to add capacity and expertise to investigative studies of topics that disproportionately impact Black Coloradans.
2. **Hire more Black newsroom staff** by partnering with universities, fellowship programs and community and youth organizations that serve Black Coloradans.
3. **Adopt a solutions-journalism approach** to meet the information needs of Black communities and lift up community-led solutions.

## Funders:

1. **Fund Black-led organizations** working to uncover and report on racial disparities throughout Colorado.
2. **Dedicate resources** to the training and cultivation of Black investigative reporters in Colorado's newsrooms.
3. **Support solutions-journalism** collaboratives that pool newsroom resources to cover issues impacting Black communities.

### examples

[Broke in Philly](#) and the [Charlotte Journalism Collaborative](#) are both collaborative initiatives that use solutions-oriented journalism to focus on community problems like economic mobility and poverty in Philadelphia and affordable housing in Charlotte, North Carolina.

II. [The Ida B. Wells Society For Investigative Reporting](#) is a news-trade organization dedicated to increasing and retaining reporters and editors of color in the field of investigative reporting.

III. ProPublica and [The Texas Tribune](#) created an [11-member investigative-reporting unit](#) headed by Manny Garcia.

*Through this process, we have learned incredible lessons about what Black Coloradans dream is possible for the future of local news. Honest conversations, creative visions for the future and consideration of the interconnectedness of our communities led to recommendations that seek to honor the stories, safety and information needs of Black Coloradans throughout the state. We ask that you think of and use this report as a starting point toward needed change.*

*Join News Voices: Colorado, the Colorado Media Project and COLab on this journey to create and support an ecosystem that affirms the expertise, power and stories of Black Coloradans.*

## Acknowledging Harm

---

### [How the Media System Fuels Anti-Black Racism](#)

Collette Watson, Joseph Torres and Malkia-Devich Cyril

### [Is Movement Journalism What's Needed During this Reckoning Over Race and Inequality?](#)

Tina Vasquez

### [Listening Post Collective Playbook](#)

Listening Post

### [Defining Restorative Justice](#)

TransformHarm.org

## Building Power & Accountability

---

### [Journalism Must Be an Act of Community-Building](#)

Cierra Hinton, Lewis Raven Wallace, Magnolia Charlotin

### [The Problem with Inclusion](#)

Laurenellen McCann

### [Is Your Journalism a Luxury or Necessity?](#)

City Bureau

## Collaborating With Community

---

### [Don't Just Engage, Equip](#)

City Bureau

### [Embodying Key Principles and Ethics of Deep Listening](#)

Cole Goins

### [Listening Is a Revolutionary Act \(Parts 1 & 2\)](#)

Jesse Hardman

### [Gather](#)

Agora Journalism Center

### [Community Engagement Guidelines](#)

City Bureau

# September 2021



[News Voices](#) is a project of Free Press, a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan organization fighting for your rights to connect and communicate. News Voices was launched in 2015 to build power with communities so residents have a stronger voice in how local journalism can be revived, strengthened and transformed. We've held dozens of public forums that brought together community members and journalists, launched creative community-led journalism collaborations, partnered with newsrooms to work more closely with their audiences, co-facilitated workshops to train reporters on how to use organizing strategies in their newsgathering, developed resources for the public to amplify news coverage of untold stories, and campaigned for legislation to invest in innovative news and information projects. Contact us at [info@freepress.net](mailto:info@freepress.net) for more information, or follow us online at [freepress.net](http://freepress.net), on Facebook at [facebook.com/freepress](https://www.facebook.com/freepress) or on Twitter at [@freepress](https://twitter.com/freepress) with the hashtag [#NewsVoices](https://twitter.com/NewsVoices).

[Colorado Media Project](#) is a community-driven, multi-funder initiative housed at the Rose Community Foundation. We support people, projects and organizations working to build a healthier civic news and information ecosystem for all Coloradans. We envision a future where all Coloradans can make well-informed decisions about important issues facing their families, local communities, and the state, with access to high-quality local news and information that they trust and inclusive opportunities to participate in a healthy, robust public square. Learn more about how you can support a healthy news ecosystem in Colorado at <https://coloradomediaproject.com/ways-to-support>.

## COLORADO MEDIA PROJECT



[Colorado News Collaborative \(COLAB\)](#) is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit that supports journalists and communities statewide to bring “Better News for All Coloradans.” We do so in three ways: *Better news. More trust. Faster evolution.* We help the 150+ media outlets who've signed up as COLAB partners to produce better news — that is, higher-quality journalism that makes an impact in their communities — through collaboration, coaching and training. We help partners build more trust through community engagement. And we help partners achieve faster evolution through innovating new business models, products and practices. Together, we increase the quantity and quality of civic news — holding power to account and helping Coloradans participate in healthy communities and a responsive democracy. To learn more about our work and how you can get involved, please visit our [website](#) or reach out to us directly at

[info@colabnews.co](mailto:info@colabnews.co).

[Click here](#) to join the Colorado Black Voices Working Group or to receive more information about this work.