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Media Contact: Jess Montejano, jess@riffcitystrategies.com

Donors of Color Network Releases First-of-Its-Kind Report Highlighting High Net Worth Donors of Color

The report presents the largest qualitative analysis of high net worth Black, Indigenous, People Of Color donors – and provides the most comprehensive picture of these historically overlooked people

New York, NY — The Donors of Color Network (DOCN) — the first-ever cross-racial community of donors and movement leaders committed to building the collective power of people of color to achieve racial equity — announced today the release of their groundbreaking report: Philanthropy Always Sounds Like Someone Else: A Portrait of High Net Worth Donors of Color. This first-of-its-kind report analyzes the experiences and funding preferences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) donors with high net wealth across the United States. The report, co-authored by Hali Lee of Radiant Strategies, Urvashi Vaid of Vaid Group, and Ashindi Maxton of Donors of Color Network, is meant to be a resource and call to action that pushes philanthropy to address our most pressing issues equitably.

“Philanthropy is largely a white-dominated space and we need all people and perspectives better represented to make the changes we want to see in the world,” said Isabelle Leighton, Interim Executive Director of the Donors of Color Network. “It is imperative that we lead the philanthropic sector towards a future that truly reflects the diversity of our country and one that is more representative of the growing influence and affluence in our communities. We have seen the power of BIPOC-led work over the decades, especially in just the last few years. However, philanthropy as it stands is all statements and very little action. If we want to move our goals forward with the full force of our collective power, we must prioritize the perspectives and assets that donors of color bring to the table.”

The story of BIPOC donors has rarely been told and race is a defining factor when looking at which organizations and issue areas get funded and how much they receive. For example, research shows that 80 percent of funding goes to white-led organizations with only 20 percent given to BIPOC-led organizations leading to a gross inequity that philanthropy has a responsibility to fix.

DOCN is aiming to change these inequities. Fresh off the one-year anniversary of their world-changing climate justice campaign, which aims to shift hundreds of millions in new
resources to BIPOC-led organizations, this comprehensive report furthers DOCN’s mission to shift the center of gravity in philanthropy towards racial and social justice.

The report paints a portrait of a historically overlooked demographic and features data from interviews of 113 high net worth BIPOC donors from across the country while diving into the impact and changes these donors are helping to shift. Key findings include:

- **HNW donors of color interviewed were mostly first-generation wealth creators and often the people in their families of origin who had crossed into a new socio-economic class.**
  - Over 65% of the donors interviewed earned their wealth, 15% earned their wealth and benefitted from marriages, 10% inherited their wealth, and 7% attributed their wealth to marriage.
  - Over 80% of the donors interviewed gave significant resources back to their families and stressed the value of increasing opportunity for people like them.

- **Nearly every single HNW donor of color interviewed personally experienced racial or ethnic bias.**
  - These experiences motivated many to seek systemic change through philanthropic or political giving, although many expressed not knowing how best to affect the changes they wished to see.

- **The donors interviewed gave generously to a range of issues and causes and utilized varied practices of giving.**
  - Donors’ total annual giving reached $56 million, with the median annual gift at $87,500.
  - 30% reported annual giving of up to $50,000, 25% gave between $50,000 and $100,000, 15% gave between $150,000 and $300,000, 20% gave more than $300,000, and 55% gave more than $1 million.
  - Over 50% of interviewees explicitly ranked their top five donor priority causes. 44.4% prioritized social justice, 39.7% women’s and gender rights, 36% racial justice, and 34.9% health.

- **HNW donors of color reinforced the importance of learned cultures of giving that shaped their approach to money, generosity, and the sharing of resources.**

- **Interviewees participated in many networks and viewed these as important to their giving practices.**

“This report reveals that Donors of Color are a vibrant, committed set of individuals whose life experience shapes their giving,” said Urvashi Vaid, co-author of the Portrait report, and advisor to the Donors of Color Network. “High net worth donors of color are a powerful and emerging community interested in making an impact to advance opportunity and equity. We are very
grateful to the donors who shared their life experiences and giving journeys to deepen our understanding of philanthropy in this country.

The time for action and change in philanthropy is now. BIPOC donors represent a transformational force in social change philanthropy. To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive data and research of HNW donors of color published to date, providing key and previously unknown insight into a historically ignored, powerful donor base. BIPOC donors are wealth-earners, have all experienced racism and discrimination firsthand, possess diverse values and philanthropic priorities, and care about connecting with fellow donors of color. HNW donors of color give to more issue-focused, social, racial, and economic justice causes, representing an additional, long-term potential source of funding for organizations and movements compared to their white counterparts.

“The report highlights differences in motivations for giving among donors of color and the rich traditions of giving in diverse forms that reinforce that generosity is present across all races and ethnic groups,” said Una Osili, Ph.D., Efroymson Chair in Philanthropy and Associate Dean for Research and International Programs at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at IUPUI.

In the coming months, DOCN will take the report on roadshows in cities across the country to present the research and findings to parties that need to hear it, as well as, to recruit more members to join their powerful, growing network. Donors of color stories deserve to be told, in large part because transparency around donors of color and our work is how we drive systems to change within a philanthropic space still dominated and informed by a culture built on white supremacy.

To read the full research report, please visit donorsofcolor.org/research-reports.

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**ABOUT DONORS OF COLOR NETWORK:** The Donors of Color Network is the first-ever cross-racial community of donors of color and movement leaders committed to building the collective power of people of color to achieve racial equity. The Donors of Color Network officially launched with their Inaugural Convening in March of 2019, building on three years of in-depth research, writing, and interviews. To learn more about Donors of Color Network, please visit https://www.donorsofcolor.org/.