August 23, 2022

New York, NY — Today, 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 Isabelle Leighton as the organization’s new executive director. Under her leadership, Leighton will continue the organization’s mission of shifting the center of gravity in philanthropy towards racial, economic, and social justice.

Philanthropy has long failed to reflect the diversity and interests of people of color. This status quo leaves the most important voices — often the ones closest to the problems and solutions — out of the decision–making process. In her new role, Leighton continues DOCN’s commitment to upend philanthropy while prioritizing the growth of the organization and BIPOC donors’ knowledge and love for their communities.
"I am honored to lead the Donors of Color Network and our work to transform social institutions," said Isabelle Leighton. "Philanthropy has never looked like the communities of color they claim to support. Leaders of color must be empowered and uplifted across all positions in philanthropy so that we can create new systems of power that bring our communities to the decision-making table."

Leighton is taking over the executive director role previously held by DOCN co-founder Ashindi Maxton. Since late last year, Isabelle has served as DOCN's interim executive director, and she previously joined the organization as deputy director of membership and growth in August 2021.

Leighton has led the following initiatives during her tenure at DOCN:

**Climate Funders Justice Pledge** (CFJP): The CFJP is a world-changing climate justice campaign to encourage top funders to allocate at least 30% of their climate funding to BIPOC-led power building groups and commit to greater transparency. In just over a year, the CJFP has identified and secured a new $100 million funding baseline for BIPOC-led climate reports.

**Portrait Report and roadshow**: DOCN’s first-of-its-kind report, “Philanthropy Always Sounds Like Someone Else,” provides an analysis of BIPOC donors' funding preferences and transformational impact on racial and social issues. Leighton is amplifying the report as a recruitment tool for BIPOC donors with an ongoing roadshow across the U.S. to recruit more BIPOC donors to the network.

**Launching a new political giving strategy**: Ahead of the midterms, Leighton is spearheading efforts to move new money to support long-term power building that ensures the peace and safety of BIPOC communities.

Armando Castellano, DOCN Board chair, spoke on behalf of the board and noted that, “Isabelle is rooted in advocacy and community, two core building blocks of the solutions we work toward at DOCN; we are confident that her leadership will bolster the Board’s efforts and catalyze transformational change at the very core of philanthropy. Isabelle’s ability to align with movement goals while focusing on organized philanthropy allows her to strategize for the moment we are in, as well as the future we are building.”

Before joining DOCN, Leighton spent two decades breaking down barriers within the philanthropic sector. She raised more than $30 million through engagements with intergenerational, cross-class, and multi-ethnic donors during her previous roles. She has served as the founding director of Equality Fund – an advocacy project launched by Asian Americans for Equality to advance economic opportunity and create equitable,
sustainable communities in NYC — and as NYC co-chair of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. Isabelle currently sits on the Boards of Solidago Foundation, Open City Labs, and The Institute for Research on Male Supremacism. Among her many roles, her mission has remained the same — to bring the transformative, generous, and strategic contributions of people of color to the center of philanthropy.

To learn more about DOCN and Isabelle, please visit: https://www.donorsofcolor.org/

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For me, especially in leading staff, the second we listen and ask questions of people who aren’t usually seen as leaders, we are in a better place. We are going to need a lot of collaboration to turn around a lot of the problems that we’re seeing right now.

ISABELLE H. LEIGHTON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DONORS OF COLOR NETWORK

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Read more about Isabelle in a new Q&A in Inside Philanthropy

Read the Inside Philanthropy Article Here