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PHOTO CREDIT: MIKAALA SHACKELFORD / UNSPLASH.COM
A Letter from Black Public Media’s Executive Director, Leslie Fields-Cruz

When Black Public Media (BPM) was founded in 1979 as National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC), the main problems we were driven to solve were equity and access. At the time, Black stories and Black storytellers had little to no access, visibility, or equity behind the camera or on-screen. The challenges were great, so BPM focused on creating a pathway of access for talent, funding Black stories, and getting them to the public. Today, we’ve made progress by helping to realize films such as I Am Not Your Negro, Hip Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes, and Daughters of the Dust and supported the careers of award-winning filmmakers like Stanley Nelson, Julie Dash, Shukree Tilghman, Michele Stephenson, and Thomas Allen Harris. BPM’s mission to ensure the American public has access to rich and diverse stories about the Black experience is still relevant. Across genres, platforms, or subject matter, a scroll through BPM’s roster of funded programs demonstrates clearly that the Black experience is not and has never been monolithic. It is multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and filled with the nuances and complexities of day-to-day life. For nearly four decades, we have remained steadfast in our mission to ensure Black stories are made and presented to the public.

Over time, many figures in public media, commercial media, philanthropy, finance, technology, and social justice have done their part to address the challenges of storytelling equity and inclusion as content creators, distributors, executives, and the like. The change is evident across the industry, but if we want to keep the current gains and ensure ongoing advancement, a collective approach is required. Together, we can create a world where sharing the diversity of our experiences is less a unique proposition, but rather an expectation of inclusion. And true inclusion means everyone who participates remains accountable.

On April 6, 2018, Black Public Media intentionally convened nearly 100 people from various sectors of the media industry. We hosted the Black Media Story Summit because, much like our forefathers/mothers who understood the power of a collective voice, bringing about true change will not be done in silos. The Summit served as a catalyst for expanding the investment in Black stories and Black storytellers, and for opening the doors to others who are interested in participating in a collective effort toward change. This Black Paper highlights many of the important conversations held at The Summit and ends with calls to action for both BPM as well as for our colleagues. We must work together to distinctly address the issues of content investment, distribution, talent development, and career sustainability. We are energized and committed to ensuring that stories that tell the inherent truth about the Black experience, the contributions of African-Americans, and the nuances and richness of people of the African diaspora become not only tools for diversity, but also essential to understanding the breadth of the human experience.

My thanks to The Black Media Story Summit Planning Committee, speakers, attendees and sponsors. We could not have done this without your time, expertise, investment and intentional conversation. I look forward to gathering again in 2020!

Leslie Fields-Cruz
BPM convened the Black Media Story Summit on April 6, 2018 to assess and address deeper systemic challenges across the media industry with the ultimate goal of developing multi-sector partnerships and building a collective of professionals focused on creating an environment for Black content to grow and thrive. The diverse range of professionals included Black thought leaders, activists, commercial and public media professionals, financiers, philanthropic funders, and Black content makers. The sessions focused on everything from content production to financing and distribution and emerging media.

The following paper reviews the conversations and highlights the specific challenges discussed at the summit along: 1) the Content Pipeline, those factors that impact the types of stories and manner in which Black content gets produced; and 2) the Funding Pipeline, those factors that impact the types of financial support Black stories receive, plus opportunities for monetization. The paper concludes with a call to action to join BPM’s proposed collective of professionals and organizations committed to impacting, creating, distributing, and investing in Black stories and Black storytellers.

Over the next two years, BPM will conduct a road show to share this current Black Paper and collect additional information from diverse regions of the country. Interested partners can contribute information and research to the collective and propose partnerships to address the content and investment pipeline challenges highlighted in this paper. In 2020, BPM will convene the next Black Media Story Summit to share additional findings and provide updates on the action items established out of the first summit.

The summit was hosted at Google’s New York City Offices and generously sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Google, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with additional support from the Wyncote Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.
Black Public Media is a non-profit organization committed to a fully realized expression of democracy. We support diverse voices by investing in the professional development of Black content creators and by funding, developing, producing, and distributing innovative media about the Black global experience. Founded in 1979 as the National Black Programming Consortium, Black Public Media (BPM), began because Black stories and Black storytellers had little to no access, visibility, or storytelling equity behind the camera and on-screen.

For nearly forty years, we have dedicated ourselves to creating a pathway for funding and distribution for Black storytellers by providing seed money for media projects as well as opportunities for distribution through PBS and other public media outlets. With an expansion of funding to support content for the web in 2006 (Black Folk Don’t, Evoking the Mulatto, Ask A Muslim), BPM has engaged the public in necessary conversations about race, history, and social issues through short narratives and online avenues.

Through a thoughtful approach to selecting projects as well as dedication to excellence in Black storytelling, BPM’s work has garnered considerable industry recognition and resulted in nine Peabody Awards, eight Emmy-nominated projects, one Oscar-nominated project, and over twelve million dollars invested in iconic documentaries about the Black experience. Today, BPM continues to leverage its expertise by investing in innovative content creators and developing dynamic programs about the Black experience that provoke, educate, and entertain on and off the screen.
THE 360 INCUBATOR

360 is a development and fellowship program that builds a critical and holistic ecosystem of support for filmmakers and their projects. The program is designed for independent producers of non-fiction projects for broadcast and web, fiction projects for the web, and interactive or emerging media projects about the Black experience. Offering workshops, one-on-one mentoring from seasoned media makers, network building, and tools for a successful pitch, the 360 Incubator accelerates the preparation of a project for production and distribution opportunities. It allows a cohort of talented and often boundary-breaking content creators to effectively position innovative projects, as in the case with POPS and My Africa Is.

THE PITCH BLACK FORUM

The Pitch Black Forum is a dynamic and unique platform for both filmmakers and industry leaders to gain firsthand experience pitching their projects, and for industry professionals to forge new partnerships and preview exclusive, innovative content. Pitch Black is the culminating event for the 360 Incubator + Fund program and enables participants to compete for funding in a high-stakes, yet supportive environment.

AFROPoP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

AfroPoP is an anthology series featuring independent documentaries and short films about life, art and culture from the contemporary African Diaspora. The only series on US public television that focuses solely on stories from the African Diaspora, AfroPoP provides authentic and accurate representations of the many Black and African ethnic groups that reside in the United States and allows audiences to explore connections. The series profiles artists, explores social and human rights issues, and examines contemporary culture from several African Diaspora perspectives.

THE NONSO CHRISTIAN UGBODE DIGITAL MEDIA FELLOWSHIP

For ten years, Nonso Christian Ugbode served as the Director of Digital Initiatives before his untimely death in June 2016. In his role, he managed in house production and oversaw content and style for Black Public Media’s website. As a filmmaker and producer, his projects include the film Colored Frames, and the podcast (Mostly) Public Radio. Christian’s legacy includes his cultivation of a space for Black producers to work in digital media. This fellowship created in his name is a 6-12-month artist-residency which he envisioned to support innovative and talented young Black digital media makers. It provides infrastructure, resources, mentoring, and a stipend to support their work and projects.

JACQUIE JONES MEMORIAL FUND

In honor of pioneering filmmaker Jacquie Jones who served as executive director from 2005-2014 of the National Black Programming Consortium, BPM administers a $300,000 fund provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help aspiring diverse filmmakers produce content for public media. The fund awards scholarship grants that range from $20,000 to $100,000 and supports the production of multi-platform content for public media distribution. Eligible projects include nonfiction shorts, feature-length films, web series, 360-VR and podcasts.

BPM+

Black Public Media recognizes the power of immersive storytelling, and we are focused on increasing the number of Black creatives making forays into the emergent 360 and virtual reality film spaces. In June 2018, BPM launched the BPM+ screening series to raise awareness around opportunities in emerging media amongst Black filmmakers and artists.

DISTRIBUTION AND OUTREACH

The unifying thread throughout all of BPM’s programming is our goal of supporting stories about the Black experience in three distinct ways: supplying content creators with tools to prepare projects for distribution, providing funding towards project completion, and creating a pipeline and network of distribution outlets serving domestic and international audiences across multiple platforms. In addition, the organization actively curates audience engagement activities in select communities where the content can be used as a tool for generating public dialogue beyond the big screen. This work includes partnership cultivation at every level for screenings, panel discussions, educational lectures and civic participation.

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REJUVENATING OUR PURPOSE & MISSION

In the fall of 2016, Black Public Media began a process of institutional review and strategic planning. Our goal was to revitalize our mission and recalibrate our programming, messaging, and fundraising in accordance with our current socio-political context as well as shifting trends and needs within the media industry, philanthropy, and the Black community. While we have committed ourselves to achieving impact on both a micro and macro level over the past four decades, there is still a lot of work to be done on the systemic level in order to achieve the storytelling equity we envisioned in 1979.

We have been successful at effecting change by investing in the professional development, mentorship, and creation of industry opportunities for both emerging indie filmmakers and established creators of color working within the public media system. We have sought to transform their lives by ensuring they have the knowledge and tools they need to actively participate in the industry and to actualize their long-term visions for creating and sharing stories critical to our communities. We have invested extensive resources because we fundamentally believe in the importance of color working within the public media system. We have sought to transform their lives by ensuring they have the knowledge and tools they need to actively participate in the industry and to actualize their long-term visions for creating and sharing stories critical to our communities. We have invested extensive resources because we fundamentally believe in the importance of color working within the public media system.

Yet on a systemic level, we understand that assisting the careers of talented individual filmmakers only addresses part of the equation. The trajectories of Black producers and their content have been circumscribed by larger industry issues, and many of our issues in 1979 are the same barriers to entry we face today. Storytelling equity and our ability to help diverse, well-rounded stories reach the public is also contingent upon relationship cultivation and critical conversations with colleagues about the state of Black media production. The idea of a bi-annual Black Media Story Summit (BMSS) emerged from this realization. We convened a diverse array of professionals to identify current challenges and forge partnerships that will bring attention to untold Black stories, attract investments for Black storytellers, and yield cutting edge media strategies for presenting Black stories to the world-at-large.

The summit also drew from BPM’s rich history of similar gatherings, to assess the field and guide our organization’s content and policy development. Our first conference took place in 1981 in Columbus, Ohio where the National Black Programming Consortium was founded. It focused on filmmaking throughout the African world, including such esteemed African American filmmakers and directors as Charles Burnett, Ivan Dixon, Michael Schultz, and Bill Greaves; Sarah Maldoror, then the most well-known director in the Caribbean world; Safi Faye, one of the first female directors in Senegal and Africa more broadly; and national PBS representatives. In 1983, we hosted another conference in Atlanta, centered around the politics, economics and aesthetics of producing for public television. Andrew Young, mayor at that time, declared it NBPC Day in Atlanta with a formal proclamation. In the mid-1990’s, NBPC organized its most ambitious gathering to date. In conjunction with WGBH television in Boston, it united community activists and Black media professionals in senior positions at public television stations, such as Tamora Robinson, Juanita Anderson, George Miles, Kevin Harris, Don Marbury, Jennifer Lawson, Davis Lacy, and Bob Gore. Clyde Taylor and his partners facilitated the event and produced a stellar white paper which served as a blueprint for NBPC’s work over the next decade. Finally, in November 2006, following the resignation of Founding Director Mabel Haddock, NBPC’s new Director Jackie Jones resolved to usher the organization into the digital era. To facilitate this transition, BPM hosted a summit once more at WGBH in Boston where over 100 producers and public media executives gathered to plan the transition from analog to digital and determine the training and reorientation needed for producers, directors, and audiences alike.

The Black Media Story Summit convened in April 2018 was a natural outgrowth of this work and continued a proud tradition of community outreach and commitment to working with fellow cultural workers of color. As in previous decades, we used the convening as an opportunity to identify funding and content priorities, acknowledge systemic challenges, and generate ideas for creating an eco-system that will allow Black content to grow and thrive. Yet, as outlined in the following sections, there are some critical differences between the summits convened then and now, and many related to the critical changes in the media field itself. This Black Paper is intended to document our thinking around these changes, reflect on conversations at the summit, and lay out a plan of action for collective impact and systemic change. This will inform our institutional priorities over the next two years, as well as our next steps in developing a formal collective of Black content creators, media professionals, and other stakeholders empowered to advocate for richer and more balanced representations of the Black experience.
“Film, television, and media have the power to shape the empathetic lens and the cultural context that Americans have when they approach the great issues of our time,” proclaimed Jesse Moore at the start of the summit. As the former White House Associate Director for Public Engagement and President Obama’s primary liaison to the entertainment community, he reminded us that indeed, media has been crucial to the formation of public opinion and mass education around various social issues.

MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT

Since the 1920s and perhaps earlier, people across the United States have launched public radio broadcasting services in their own communities to deliver programming responsive to local community needs. However, it was not until the founding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) in 1967, that the American federal government assumed a comprehensive approach and strategy toward supporting public media as a tool for the education and betterment of the American people.

Part of the shift to support public media was inspired by the government’s growing awareness of the critical role media could play in the eventual success or failure of democracy building, especially with the proliferation of television and its ability to transmit powerful visual imagery into living rooms across the country. Shortly after the 1968 Race Revolution that swept cities across the United States in the wake of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President Lyndon B. Johnson’s National Advisory Commission issued the Kerner Report in which they asserted that “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal” and that mass media was partly responsible for exacerbating racial tensions through imbalanced coverage of American life, and in particular lack of reportage “on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and on the underlying problems of race relations”. (Kerner 1968)

PART OF THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED:

- Expansion of coverage of the Negro community and of race problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with urban and racial affairs, and through establishment of better links with the Negro community.

- Integration of Negroes and Negro activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programs that recognize the existence and activities of Negroes as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community.

- Recruitment of more Negroes into journalism and broadcasting and the promotion of those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.

THE BIRTH OF BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA

In many ways, the founding of Black Public Media in 1979 in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, was the result of this public-wide call to create a more equitable media industry that would reflect the diversity of our country. In this environment, BPM has enjoyed generous decades-long support from CPB and other public institutions, while simultaneously maintaining a commitment to our founding social justice mandate to diversify Black representation within the national media landscape. From this position, we have been successful at facilitating the production and distribution of award-winning content series and films that explore the Black experience from different perspectives. They offer a unique opportunity for all audiences to view the world through a richer lens. We have been privileged to assist notable filmmakers like Stanley Nelson, Michelle Stephenson, and Thomas Allen Harris in the development of their careers and in the production of untold stories.
Why does BPM invest in early career Black talent AND untold stories? Because the combination of the two has a long lasting effect!

**STANLEY NELSON**

**BPM INVESTMENTS:**
- A Place of Our Own (2004)
- Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice (2005)
- Freedom Riders (2010)
- Tell Them We are Rising (2017)

**Where Are They Now?** Nelson is the owner of Firelight Media, an award-winning production company that has produced over 25 hours of primetime programming for public television, and through its nonprofit Doc Lab is cultivating a new generation of documentary producers of color. Nelson has earned three Primetime Emmys for his work and is a MacArthur Genius Fellow, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and a recipient of the NEH National Humanities Medal presented by President Obama in 2014.

**MICHELE STEPHENSON**

**BPM INVESTMENTS:**
- Faces of Change (2006)
- Pawn Chronicles Web Series (2008)
- American Promise (2014)
- Hispaniola (In Production)

**Where Are They Now?** Stephenson is co-owner of the Rada Film Group, an award-winning production company that has produced for NYTimes OpDocs, TIAA, and the CMBA (Campaign for Black Male Achievement). Her work has appeared on PBS, Showtime and MTV. Her most recent film, “American Promise”, was nominated for three Emmys and won the Jury Prize at Sundance. Stephenson was recently awarded the Chicken & Egg Pictures Filmmaker Breakthrough Award and is a 2016 Guggenheim Fellow. She is currently in production on two documentaries: Going to Mars: The Nikki Giovanni Story and Hispaniola. Stephenson has served as a mentor for BPM’s 360 Incubator+.

**THOMAS ALLEN HARRIS**

**BPM INVESTMENTS:**
- 12 Disciples of Nelson Mandela (2006)
- Digital Diaspora Family Reunion (2009)
- Through A Lens Darkly (2015)
- Family Pictures, USA (In Production)

**Where Are They Now?** Harris is co-owner of Chimpanzee Productions, LLC, an award-winning production company. He has received critical acclaim at International film festivals such as Sundance, Berlin, Toronto, FESPACO, Outfest, Flaherty and Cape Town and have been broadcast on PBS, the Sundance Channel, ARTE, as well as CBC, Swedish Broadcasting Network and New Zealand Television. In addition, Harris’ videos and installations have been featured at prestigious museums and galleries including the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Biennial, Corcoran Gallery, Reina Sophia, London Institute of the Arts and the Gwangju Biennale. Harris has served as a mentor for BPM’s 360 Incubator+.

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**MEDIA DIVERSITY PROGRAMS**

*Several diversity programs have emerged across the country over the past four decades to help support training for media professionals and content makers of color. Many of these programs have made a significant impact on the landscape and have resulted in the professional advancement of key people within industry networks and corporate ranks. There are significantly more Black corporate executives and producers today than there were even 20 years ago.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Organization</th>
<th>Year Started</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third World Newsreel</td>
<td>1967 (Org Founded)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET Television Training School (Prior to becoming WNET)</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of MultiEthnics in Communication (formerly Nat’l Assoc. Of MINORITIES in Cable)</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Independent Diversity Program</td>
<td>1981 (Org Founded)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spike Lee’s Unofficial Training Program (With release of the book She’s Gotta Have It as required reading and PAing as on the job training)</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma L. Bowen Foundation for Minorities in Media</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundance Institute Native American and Indigenous Film Program</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Association of Independent Latino Producers</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC/Universal Writers on the Verge Diversity Program</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firelight Media</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Orleans Film Society Diverse Voices Program</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPB/PBS Public Media Executive Leadership Program</td>
<td>2014-2017</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Asian American Media</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Public Broadcasting</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islanders in Communication</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision Maker Media</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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CURRENT REPRESENTATION AND INEQUITY

Yet, exactly fifty years after the Kerner Report, the media industry as a whole still grapples with persisting inequities. Representation within American newsrooms for instance has not grown at the same pace as the diversity of the actual population (Walker 2018). People of color account for 38.7% of the US population yet accounted for only 13.9% and 20.2% of the leads in top films and cable scripted shows respectively, and 12.6% and 10% of the directors of top films and cable scripted shows respectively in 2016 (Hunt et al. 2018). NYC news stations report that Black people are involved in murder, assault, and theft an average of 75% of the time, which exceeds the actual arrest rates of Blacks for those crimes by 24 percentage points (Color of Change 2015). News and opinion media are almost 1.5 times more likely to represent a White family as an illustration of social stability than a Black family, and consistently overrepresent the incidence of Black family poverty by 32%. While Black families represent 59% of the poor in news and opinion media, they only make up 27% of the nation’s poor, according to government reports (Dixon 2017).

Even public media provides no reprieve from these social ails. As highlighted in a recent Knight Foundation white paper on the future of public media, the ascendance of audience research in the 1980’s and 90’s and the growing dependency on public donations in the face of uncertain Congressional support has resulted in public media programming and advertising strategies that cater to middle-aged, college-educated, affluent, white listeners and viewers. This has inadvertently eclipsed public broadcasting’s original social and cultural imperative and resulted in programming that is less representative of the nation’s socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity as intended (Kramer et al. 2017). In response to this enduring inequity within our national media, Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation has urged that we “push media companies to be more transparent about the makeup of their staff, and work to hold them accountable on issues of diversity, inclusion, and harassment” while also “recognizing the ways in which a healthy, thriving, independent media is necessary for the survival of our democracy” (Walker 2018).

CURRENT INITIATIVES AND NEW PLATFORMS

With conversations on race, ethnicity, and immigration reaching a fever pitch in the United States since Obama’s election in 2008, a new wave of media activists and social change agents have emerged to pick up the mantle of media justice outside of traditional public media. Color of Change, founded as a digital civil rights nonprofit organization, utilizes online social justice campaigns, media report cards, and direct engagement with allied celebrities and social activists to build awareness and fight inaccurate and dehumanizing portrayals in media and entertainment. Similarly, the Center for Media and Social Impact at American University’s School of Communication in Washington, D.C., the Media Impact Project at USC’s Norman Lear Center, and the Hollywood Advancement Project at UCLA’s Ralph Bunche Center for African American Studies research the media’s influence on people’s thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and actions and also identify and disseminate best practices for increasing the pipeline of underrepresented groups into the media and entertainment industries. These centers are committed to sharing their findings beyond the academy with media makers, news organizations, and the general public, and so have become important hubs of knowledge production. Finally, the Pop Culture Collaborative (#PopJustice), which originated as a philanthropic initiative funded by Unbound Philanthropy and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, has established itself as an innovator in catalyzing and funding high-impact entertainment industry, philanthropy, and social justice partnerships that raise public consciousness, spark debates, and shift media narratives on a grand scale.

...we must look at expanding the definition of public media in an unregulated digital world, and ensure that the duty to educate, inform and empower extends into new platforms and new technologies. - Eric Easter
What is interesting about this current movement is the way in which social activists, philanthropists, and academics are calling on producers of commercial and public media alike to tell stories that impact the public good and reflect a more accurate portrayal of Black people. The focus has been on pop culture assets, Hollywood films, and primetime television shows and occurs at a time when years of funding cutbacks and political backlash have resulted in public media taking a more cautious, conservative approach to programming. Additionally, as public media platforms have skewed towards a white, affluent, and middle-aged demographic, new digital platforms and technologies, including social media, have enabled the production and delivery of content to multiple highly segmented niche markets. The Black public and younger demographics have migrated to sundry platforms where content speaks more directly to their cultural interests.

Access and back to independent outlets, and new online and new platforms. However, there is a qualitative difference in the current trends. Black content in decades past always had fewer options due in part to the limitations of technology and production requirements. In the new media landscape, Black content that speaks to the important social issues of our times may find funding and distribution across a range of industry spaces and platforms.
This does not mean that the challenges of producing Black content have completely dissolved. Rather, these factors beg the question of what constitutes “the public” and opens the door for a broader and more critical approach to defining “public media” and strategies for social change. Whereas LBJ’s presidential commission and the initial CPB cohort envisioned the advancement of democratic principles via specific mass media institutions such as radio, television, and national news broadcasts, the new focus of public education is storytelling, wherever that storytelling might be taking place. Jesse Moore brilliantly highlighted in his keynote address at our BMSS Summit, “the x-factor in the modern social justice movement is the ‘storytelling industry’ not just the entertainment industry” or the public media industry for that matter.

**BPM’S FOCUS**

Amidst these blurred lines between the commercial and public media spheres, Black Public Media’s core mission and commitment remains investing in visionary Black creators and bringing their stories to the public—particularly non-fiction and documentary content that address historical, contemporary, and systemic challenges around the Black global experience. Yet we find great promise in the current #popjustice movement and the idea that storytelling in all its forms should be the real focus of media activism. We are observing these conversations closely as they hold the potential to reinvigorate our collective work across the media industry. Moreover, we agree that the imperative to serve Black storytelling, equity, and inclusion, we must continue to engage each other, learn from each other, and establish common ground beyond the one-day Summit. BPM proposes that our collective of diverse media professionals and stakeholders be the vehicle for doing just that, for sharing research amongst ourselves and iterating new media strategies around presenting Black stories to the world-at-large. After reviewing content and funding pipeline challenges in Sections Three and Four, we will turn our attention in Section Five to what we envision this collective looking like, how we propose to take action, and how other stakeholders can join us in effecting change.

**PHILOSOPHY OF THE BLACK MEDIA STORY SUMMIT**

As our Board Chair Eric Easter affirmed in our summit program, “we must look at expanding the definition of public media in an unregulated digital world, and ensure that the duty to educate, inform, and empower extends into new platforms and new technologies.” Above all, the current climate requires us assess and address deeper systemic issues across the media industry through the development of multi-sector partnerships.

And herein lays the principle difference between previous summits and this one. While we have always been attentive to hosting a diversity of voices—even international voices—we have previously convened stakeholders functioning in the public media field. The Black Media Story Summit and its focus on storytelling across diverse platforms constitutes our first attempt to engage people from the commercial, for-profit world and so develop cross-sector relationships in an ever-shifting field. In the wake of the numerous diversity training and leadership programs highlighted above, the presence of more Black writers, producers, directors, executives, and financiers in positions of power on the commercial side has enabled this type of cross-sector discussion in ways previously unimaginable. This is a very important step in BPM’s adaptation to the changing terrain amid our continued commitment to understanding all the spaces in which meaningful Black stories are being told.

However, it is important to recognize that in expanding summit participation, we are no longer talking to colleagues down the hallway, so to speak. Many of us operate within vastly different business spaces, and if we are to coordinate multi-sector partnerships that catalyze systemic change with regard to Black storytelling, equity, and inclusion, we must continue to engage each other, learn from each other, and establish common ground beyond the one-day Summit. BPM proposes that our collective of diverse media professionals and stakeholders be the vehicle for doing just that, for sharing research amongst ourselves and iterating new media strategies around presenting Black stories to the world-at-large. After reviewing content and funding pipeline challenges in Sections Three and Four, we will turn our attention in Section Five to what we envision this collective looking like, how we propose to take action, and how other stakeholders can join us in effecting change.

The Black Media Story Summit and its focus on impactful storytelling across diverse platforms constitutes our first attempt to engage people from the commercial, for-profit world and thereby foster cross-sector relationships in what we recognize as a shapeshifting field.
OVERVIEW OF THE SUMMIT

The sessions ranged from content production to financing and distribution as well as emerging media. We live streamed select presentations to allow public participation, but the summit was primarily conceptualized and executed as a gathering where seasoned media industry professionals and colleagues could share reflections on current challenges create new strategies for supporting diverse Black stories, and forge partnerships that offer new direction in the production and distribution of Black stories that matter. The summit brought together a diverse range of professionals, including Black thought leaders from across the nation and an array of social issues (i.e. mental health, women's health, immigration, environment, mass incarceration, technology, diversity, LGBTQ viewpoints etc.) to draw critical connections between powerful Black storytelling and the ability of media professionals to address community concerns in ways connected to work being carried out on the ground.

The Summit was unique in offering an open space where funders and others could discuss systemic problems freely without being solicited for financial and other support. Panels were able to move beyond the typical focus on the empowerment of individual content makers (i.e. advancing their careers, professional development for entry-level creators) to sharing ideas that could lead to systemic change through collective action. By inviting a unique mix of stakeholders, BPM has returned to its organizational roots by looking to community to build consensus, solutions, moral imperative, and blueprints for the future. The fact that we and others have been laboring tirelessly for decades only to confront similar structural challenges in 2018 is indicative of how the issues that circumscribe Black storytelling in the media are deeply entrenched and complexly constituted.

Through this summit, we have re-ignited cross-industry conversations and planted the seeds for an intentional collective. The culture and infrastructure of how Black stories are told must change in order to effect real change, which was an important theme at the summit. It is also something that Rashad Robinson, President of Color Of Change, reminds us in a recent Haas Institute Research Report that good content means nothing within the context of social justice if it does not have what he terms as "narrative power"—"the power to not only "change [the] hearts and minds" of masses of people, but also "limit the influence of false and dangerous narratives propagated by the right wing and others." He highlights the need for powerful narrative infrastructure, on par with or better than the messaging infrastructure which corporations, religious organizations and right-wing activists deploy to sway public opinion with frightening consequences. In short, "narrative infrastructure is singularly about equipping a tight network of people organizing on the ground and working within various sectors to enduringly change hearts, minds, behaviors, and relationships." (Robinson 2018)
We organized a representative sample of stakeholders from each of these fields into carefully curated panels, with an eye toward generating conversations that would reveal varied perspectives across a range of such issues as:

**DIVERSIFYING BLACKNESS**: Getting the Untold Stories Told*. This panel looked at the importance of providing space for diverse stories and voices within the Black community as a way to genuinely address social justice concerns and bring attention to the issues often overlooked in film, television, and digital platforms.

*Lana Garland, Southern Documentary Fund (Facilitator)*

*Mauri Holmes, Executive Director of ARRAY*

*DeShuna Spencer, CEO of Kweli TV Alliance*

*Shukree Tilghman, Co-Producer/Writer of NBC’s This Is Us*

*Angela Tucker, Founder of TuckerGurl LLC and Director of Black Folk Don’t*

**PAVING NEW PATHWAYS IN EMERGING MEDIA**: Media makers of color are navigating emerging content industries that are hunting for viable business models at the same time that they are navigating emerging content industries, inventing tools, and building new audiences. Leading content execs on this panel discussed their work, the type of content being greenlit, the kind of content that is missing from the marketplace and offered advice for Black filmmakers and funders who would like to enter the field.

*Leshawnda Larkin, Senior Manager, Samsung Electronics*

*Guy Primus, CEO of the Virtual Reality Company*

*Jake Sally, Director of Immersive Development at RYOT*

*Amanda Shelby, VR Producer at Produced By*

**FORGING NEW BONDS: AMPLIFYING ACTIVISM**: Thought leaders and activists leading the fight on a range of social justice issues from mass incarceration to women’s health shared their work and challenges with a roundtable of creatives, technologists, philanthropists, and distributors. Each group brainstormed a media treatment to increase community engagement around a particular topic and then shared their ideas for distribution platforms and potential impact.

*Kimberly Seales Aller, Black Women’s Health*

*Lumumba Bandele, Community Safety vs. Policing*

*Monifa Bandele, Mass Incarceration*

*Clayton Banks, Technology & Diversity*

*Majora Carter, Environment*

*Carl Lipscombe, Immigration*

*Iyazunde Oshunade Foloyan, LGBTQ Rights*

*Malcolm Woodland, Black Mental Health*

**AN INTENTIONAL NARRATIVE SPACE**: Stories have the ability to engage and transform, and imagery matters. Activists, community leaders, content creators, and broadcasters on this panel discussed media projects and how simple representations on both traditional platforms and emerging media have produced results, especially in areas resistant to change.

*Monifa Bandele, SVP of MomsRising.org*

*Andrew Coles, Founder and CEO of Mission Entertainment (Facilitator)*

*Mariel Nelson, VP of News and Public Affairs at PBS*

*Michele Stephenson, Co-Founder at Rada Film Group*

**TELLING IMMERSIVE STORIES: A VIRTUAL REALITY SHOWCASE**: Three filmmakers, whose virtual reality films have screened at Sundance and Tribeca discussed the process of developing their 360 and immersive films.

*Ashley Baccus-Clark, Dir. of Research at Hyphen Labs*

*Yasmin Elayat, Co-Founder & Creative Director at Scatter*

*Opeyemi Olukemi, POV Digital Production & Innovation (Facilitator)*

*Richard Parsons, Partner at Imagination Capital*

**MONEY MATTERS**: Fueling the Pipeline: Venture capitalists, philanthropists and public funders analyzed the funding structures and ideas for new funding models specifically built to sustain a pipeline of Black content.

*Sylvia Bugg, VP of Diversity and Television Content at CPB*

*Clifton Dawson, Founder & CEO of Greenlight Insights*

*Lauren Pabst, Senior Program Officer at MacArthur Foundation*

*Opeyemi Olukemi, POV Digital Production & Innovation (Facilitator)*

*Richard Parsons, Partner at Imagination Capital*
WE’RE LISTENING: THIS IS WHAT WE HEARD

We are cognizant of the ways corporate narratives and commercial finance models still influence and dominate the resources around much of the public consumption of Black stories. Those interested in shifting public opinion, challenging hegemonic narratives of the Black experience, and defining what “public media” will mean going forward must understand and contend with the corporate status quo. The conversations at the summit included a diversity of perspectives on this issue, and it is our opinion that the different voices are necessary in order to build and effect change within the media ecosystem. Part of our objective in creating this Black Paper is to lay out a map of needs and opportunities, articulate the part we envision ourselves playing, and offer areas where other social actors can contribute to collective impact.

1 THE CONTENT PIPELINE

The past year has been a very exciting time for Black content in the media and entertainment industry. With the record-breaking global box office earnings of the Disney/Marvel movie Black Panther as well as the success and mainstream visibility of other Black-created content such as Issa Rae’s series Insecure on HBO which began as self-produced YouTube content; Raoul Peck’s I Am Not Your Negro, Ava Duvernay’s A Wrinkle In Time, Yance Ford’s Oscar-nominated Strong Island, and Shonda Rhimes’ new multi-year production deal with Netflix, many have begun touting a “tectonic shift” with respect to Black content in the American media industry. Richard Parsons, Partner at Imagination Capital and former CEO of Time Warner/AOL, concluded his remarks at the summit by asserting that, “Hollywood always said we couldn’t succeed overseas. And these guys are all about money. Now that they see Black Panther is a success, they will start chasing Black projects.”

THESE ACHIEVEMENTS ARE SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF DEMONSTRATING

1. The earning power of Black content;
2. The broad social appeal of content created from Black perspectives; and
3. The new methods and platforms available for distribution of Black content with social messaging and impact.

In fact, summit participants commonly cited Ryan Coogler’s work from Fruitvale Station to Black Panther as well as the grassroots community organizing that Black Panther inspired around the world as compelling examples of activist storytelling in action. At the same time, they recognized these types of successes as deceptive in that they are often limited to a few select people. What we heard from the overwhelming majority of content creators and thought leaders is that there are still significant barriers to overcome in developing effective pipelines for the production of a range of Black content.

CONNECTING TO THOSE IN THE FIELD

The social justice thought leaders who presented during our lunch hour roundtable discussions variously expressed powerful, nuanced perspectives on social issues that have been poorly prioritized in media. Producing content that incorporates their perspectives would explode hegemonic narratives and completely shift public discussion of these issues. Participants emphasized the need to connect social justice thought leaders directly to interested media makers. Additionally, they cited the need to shift funding priorities at the level of philanthropic institutions and financiers. Organizations like BPM could facilitate connections between these grassroots thought leaders and the program officers and executives determining priority content areas.

IDEAS OVER INCOME

Overall, lack of attention to certain social justice stories and perspectives is indicative of the broader social milieu in which fantasy and escapism are treated as premium content. While superhero stories such as Black Panther can be a powerful introduction of new representations of Blackness to mass audiences, it is often difficult to translate that momentum to nonfiction forms of storytelling more directly connected to social change agendas. Filmmaking in general is considered a risky investment by those in the financial sector, and documentaries are even less appealing as they have never demonstrated the same financial return as action thrillers, fiction dramas, and comedies. Moreover, many documentary filmmakers directly resist demands to articulate the value of their work solely in terms of financial return because it runs contrary to the social values that inform their content and artistry. Given the close relationship between nonfiction work and oral history, community legacy, and social justice, many view documentary films as part of an effort to...
WE'RE LISTENING: THIS IS WHAT WE HEARD

SECTION 4

Alliance and Philadelphia's Black Star Film Festival

community engagement. Maori Holmes of the ARRAY for Black content creators and deeper forms of sector rarely results in the creation of pipelines Yet this engagement with the commercial media of new media technologies.

Shelby noted that Black pop icons have frequently campaigns. Similarly, virtual reality guru Amanda influencers can help drive global sales through viral release box office sales undeniably proved that Black people are trendsetters and influencers across multiple media formats. While the onus has traditionally been placed on Black content producers to meet the standards of industry gatekeepers, what may be needed instead is a series of peer-to-peer conversations in which decision-makers and executives are forced to confront how their implicit biases influence what gets greenlit, ultimately hurting their own bottom line. Finally, several cited the need to continue developing and patronizing programs that recruit, train, and position qualified Black youth to climb the ladder at existing media companies, so they can change mainstream institutions from within.

INCLUSION VS. RESISTANCE

On the other hand, even where Black content has demonstrated commercial viability, Black inclusion is still met with trepidation and special qualifications. Throughout the day, panelists cited examples of the ways the marketing departments of major corporations are clearly aware of the marketability of Black culture. At the very least, Black Panther’s pre-release box office sales undeniably proved that Black people are trendsetters and that Black social media influencers can help drive global sales through viral campaigns. Similarly, virtual reality guru Amanda Shelby noted that Black pop icons have frequently been recruited for early adoption and endorsement of new media technologies.

Yet this engagement with the commercial media sector rarely results in the creation of pipelines for Black content creators and deeper forms of community engagement. Maori Holmes of the ARRAY Alliance and Philadelphia’s Black Star Film Festival suggests the commercial viability of Black content is wholly disconnected from any conversation around social change or a more equitable distribution of power within the media industry. “People are always asking in meetings how they can reach Black audiences. How they can diversify their audience. But when they reach out to Black Festivals and organizations, it’s always very transactional,” she explains. Independent news producer and host Imara Jones noted that even after Girls Trip made $115,171,585, “there is still a negotiation for people of color programs. When you come in with a well presented deck, your presentation goes to a human being who has a lens... Black content is always met with some excuse, even when we show that we can be profitable.” As journalist and Ford Foundation program officer Farai Chideya emphasized, “the data shows that investing is more profitable when it is more diverse, yet we still see a monoculture emerging...When metrics do not move behavior, how do you create the diverse leadership in content production and companies?”

EXAMINING BIAS

Embedded in these comments is a subaltern awareness of the implicit biases and double standards that circumscribe the reception of Black work, compared to work that conforms to hegemonic representations of whiteness. For many participants, marketing their films (and other content) to broader audiences beyond the Black community has always implied relinquishing their original, core audience. Some cited the example of Shea Moisture and the company’s controversial attempts to switch up its Black advertising aesthetic in order to court multicultural audiences. Content makers at the summit called for critical examination of the contradictory, underlying assumption that non-Black people cannot relate to Black content, especially when we have data that proves Black people are trendsetters and influencers across multiple media formats. While the onus has traditionally been placed on Black content producers to meet the standards of industry gatekeepers, what may be needed instead is a series of peer-to-peer conversations in which decision-makers and executives are forced to confront how their implicit biases influence what gets greenlit, ultimately hurting their own bottom line. Finally, several cited the need to continue developing and patronizing programs that recruit, train, and position qualified Black youth to climb the ladder at existing media companies, so they can change mainstream institutions from within.

A SPACE OF OUR OWN

Other participants encouraged a more disruptive, alternative approach to achieving storytelling equity within the industry by actively creating our own spaces and building our own ladders to success outside mainstream institutions. With the proliferation of ancillary platforms, we now have the opportunity to discover and connect with emerging talent who are independently producing authentic stories about their communities. They are bypassing traditional distribution outlets by delivering content directly to their audiences via digital platforms. In the words of panelist and Academy Award-nominated documentary filmmaker Yance Ford, “we need to actively curate from those ancillary platforms and blind spots and bring talent from there into our own pipelines because those are the people creating some of the most disruptive content.”

In addition, we may need to look beyond documentaries to discover diverse content forms with powerful impact, such as short video that can easily be distributed via social media platforms; television and news broadcasts with sustained engagement and opportunity to shift public opinion week-after-week; and virtual reality and immersive media formats which offer new ways of viewing, experiencing content, and inspiring action. Those in the virtual reality and immersive media fields especially emphasized that Black content makers should not be afraid to try out new media formats. Precisely because VR is a new space, it holds more democratic potential and offers opportunities for leadership and impact in ways that deeply entrenched media forms cannot: Amanda Shelby noted, “if we can get a foothold in these industries from the ground up, we won’t have to beg to have our content created later on. This will also have implications beyond the immediate media industry because much of the emergent technologies employ artificial intelligence. This is our opportunity for ensuring that emergent AI will not contain implicit bias against Black people because we were there from the ground up.”
WE'RE LISTENING: THIS IS WHAT WE HEARD

2 FUNDING PIPELINE

If this past year was an exciting time for Black content with the mega box office success of Black Panther, it was also a frightening time in public media as the Trump administration threatened to eliminate the Corporation for Public Broadcasting by phasing out its funding, as well as that of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. These threats compounded the already precarious situation in which many non-commercial content producers find themselves. It underscored the need for reevaluating existing financing and funding structures for Black content.

CHALLENGES WITH FOUNDATIONS

At the summit, media producers and funders alike lamented the lack of consistent opportunities in the funding pipeline and cited money as the primary cause of filmmaker attrition, i.e. the phenomenon of first-time producers never returning to make a second film, and/or experiencing lengthy gaps between content production. In addition, creatives expressed fatigue around having to submit several applications to different foundations, often times answering the same questions over and over again with little guarantee of success. Funders such as Lauren Pabst of the John T. and Catherine S. MacArthur Foundation concurred that there is a need to create systems for more equitable distribution of philanthropic funds and new entryways, so that the same seasoned media producers do not receive the bulk of funding every time. She used the example of the MacArthur Foundation, realizing that their rolling media grants resulted in the same grantees year in and year out, revised their grant making process. They first included an open call for applications and broader publicity of their media grants and later settled on a partnership methodology wherein regional media organizations identify and redistribute funds to promising content producers on the ground.

Even with these reforms in philanthropy, however, panelists and audience participants agreed that foundation support has inherent shortcomings. Farai Chideya highlighted there simply is not enough money in philanthropy to support all the content-worthy projects in the capital-intensive film and media industries. Foundation endowments only account for $800 billion of the US economy (Callahan 2018). Within this, foundations are only required to give away 5% of their endowments every year, an estimated $40 billion dollars. The majority of these funds go toward religion (32%), education (16%), human services (12%), and health causes (9%) (National Philanthropic Trust 2018). In fact, media projects are the least funded area, receiving only $518 million in foundation grants every year (Manne 2016). In addition, the US Government provides $444 million in funding for public media via the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with the majority allocated toward the operation of public media stations rather than specific content. Within this context, funds delivered to Black content makers and Black stories is even less, as they are now competing with other producers of color, white producers, and diverse storytellers for already limited resources. The data alone indicates the need to explore other sources of support if we truly wish to build sustainable funding streams for Black content makers.

DIVERSIFIED FUNDING MODEL

One of the recommendations made by the “Money Matters” panel is that public media organizations such as BPM explore ways to coordinate diversified funding pipelines, through which independent producers can access different types of support at various points in their career. In this scenario, philanthropic institutions could provide the initial risk investment for startup projects, and private venture capital could play a larger role once the content creator has proven the market viability of his or her work.

There are a few challenges to establishing this type of funding pipeline, however. For one, this model is more suited for content creators who, once having achieved a certain amount of philanthropic support, can then advance to a phase in which their work turns a profit. This is not always the case, especially for nonfiction, social cause-driven content. Even when this type of content can produce returns, the profit margin is never as high as action thrillers and dramas. Therefore, this type of pipeline would require financiers who are just as committed and personally compelled by potential social justice outcomes, as they are by commercial success.

MONEY AND MOTIVATION

We might expect that Black financiers would be the most committed to supporting and standing behind these types of projects. But unfortunately, Deshuna Spencer explained after searching for financial backing for her Black content platform Kweli TV, many Black investors often encouraged her to change the social purpose mission of her business by tapping into hip hop content, which they believed to be more commercially lucrative.

The root of this problem might be the incompatibility of 501c3 nonprofit law and commercial logics as well as a lack of education around the critical importance of supporting nuanced stories of the Black experience. As mentioned, private venture capitalists typically prioritize return on investment above all other outcomes. Part of this is driven by factors that removed from the actual context of creation. Richard Parsons provided a very straightforward explanation.
Capital and was nominated for an Academy Award. This, in turn, has made it difficult for filmmakers like Ford to measure and prove the commercial viability of their work when attempting to secure financing outside of philanthropy for future projects. Although highly successful, they are trapped at an impasse between philanthropic and commercial logic.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DISTRIBUTION

For those on the programming and business side of media, one way to navigate this impasse is to educate at the outset about the ways financing is inextricably linked to distribution. Distribution is where one can make money through both the primary and ancillary assets of a project. In turn, understanding projected channels of distribution and sources of income, should inform the type of funding sought for a project. Yet a range of participants—including philanthropic partners, non-profit distributors, and commercial financiers—expressed the belief that the majority of content makers do not have enough knowledge of distribution to effectively monetize their work.

Parsons’s own venture capital fund is focused on supporting women and people of color as content producers, and he is typically willing to invest $250,000 to $500,000 in a project with a minimum of 3-5 times the return on investment over a 2-4 year period.

CHALLENGES OF IMPACT INVESTING

If we look at the philanthropic side, only 30% of foundation CEOs surveyed in 2016 felt impact investing held a lot of promise (Callahan 2018), and the majority of foundations who have made forays into the impact investing space have yet to support media projects. Instead, the principle form of foundation support for media projects are charitable grants, all of which have stipulations around the commercial and profit-making use of the final content. The end result is that many highly successful social justice films are unable to turn a profit due to the type of philanthropic support that they initially received, for example, Yance Ford’s Strong Island, which received funding from the MacArthur, Ford, Sundance Institute, and Creative Capital Foundations and was nominated for an Academy Award. This, in turn, has made it difficult for filmmakers like Ford to measure and prove the commercial viability of their work when attempting to secure financing outside of philanthropy for future projects. Although highly successful, they are trapped at an impasse between philanthropic and commercial logic.

You cannot quantify what it’s worth to our community, especially to communities in schools...we need to dismantle systems that say that the only way our stories get told is if they make money.

– Summit participant Gina Belafonte

Thus, it seems that as technologists continue to innovate and invent new media platforms, content makers may need less technical assistance writing traditional grant applications, and more assistance conceptualizing ways to monetize their content in step with new innovations. Thinking forward to these new spaces—their rapid emergence and iteration, and the notoriously tight networks and intellectual property laws that govern the circulation and monetization of new ideas and technologies—really brings into relief the dire need to invest in developing the knowledge and social capital of promising Black content creators. This would require a shift from supporting projects through one-off grants to supporting the holistic development of creators and their career trajectories within these newly developing arenas. It would require considerable investment in ongoing training and the development of horizontal and vertical networks of knowledge exchange. This is perhaps another area in which a model of joint philanthropic and commercial support could be groundbreaking, not only in financing projects at different stages but toward mitigating knowledge barriers and cultivating more dynamic and inclusive social networks.
SO HOW DO WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

BPM was thrilled to convene this first Black Media Story Summit and hear from a range of colleagues and allies. As part of our commitment to our collective action and addressing the challenges discussed at the summit, we have summarized objectives for improving the content and funding pipelines respectively.

We are keenly aware that action items can remain mere lists without some greater vision for collective mobilization. The change we seek to catalyze in the industry with Black content makers is monumental and could never be addressed alone. Moreover, conversations about systemic change within the media industry become insular, and therefore disconnected from solutions to broader societal problems that we had originally hoped to transform through the very storytelling work we do. We thus see change as a long-term, collaborative process that necessitates the coordinated efforts of several players, including but not limited to the diverse range of professionals whom we intentionally convened at the summit.

BUILDING A BLACK STORIES COLLECTIVE

These ideas must become a bridge to a strategic plan with identifiable goals for impact on an industry and societal level. We envision a collective of like-minded partners that will house and be a catalyst for improving content and funding pipelines. Our work as a collective will be through programming as well as collaborative research and development, continued conversations, and new initiatives where necessary. This group will be comprised of people deeply invested in Black Stories and Black storytellers, including but not limited to media professionals/filmmakers, funders & financiers, public media professionals, social justice leaders, and technologists. We’ll start with the local, regional, national, and global organizations and people invited to the summit and build over the next two years. The goal is to draw on our individual work and build a movement capable of addressing content and funding issues to ensure that diverse Black stories are told. But more importantly, this collective will allow us to think holistically and strategically about the impact our work has at multiple levels within the media industry and our society.

Our vision for the collective is to look at three specific social issues affecting Black communities that are created, cultivated, or exacerbated in media:

1. Lack of recognition and understanding of black culture, history, and contributions to civil society.
2. Black people are stereotyped and are targets of implicit bias in ways that severely limit socio-economic power, life expectancy and mobility.
3. Wealth gaps are correlated to racial gaps.

Together, our goal will be to improve our ability to draw clear correlations on how our work and activities (separately and as a collective) can identify challenges and gaps, and lead to better and desired outcomes both in our media industry and society as a whole. Black Public Media has already outlined inaugural impact charts on these three issues, how they show up in media, along with potential desired outcomes. We will share these with the collective as the catalyst for beginning this strategic work together.
CALL TO ACTION

BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA’S ROLE
Over the next two years, BPM has a clear set of activities to support our organization’s mission and overall goal to impact these key issues and implement what we heard as challenges and needs from the summit. We’re expanding partnerships on enhancing our programming, particularly our 360 and Pitch Black Forum. We plan to take this current Black Paper on a national road show for feedback and input from Black content makers and media organizations across different regions. We will also develop new programming, some housed within our organization, or in partnership with experts or allied institutions who may already be engaged in this work.

BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA + COLLECTIVE
We also commit to leading the initial work needed to activate and engage this collective. Our intention is to utilize the next Black Media Story Summit, in 2020, to discuss partnerships that have been established and outline the work needed to accomplish intended outcomes. Over the next two years we will work to create a robust roster of people, work, and organizations who serve Black content makers and inform the field. We also, by that time, will have an updated vision for ways to address challenges that Black content makers face in the media industry. Our impact charts will be a grounding document, but we intend to tap into the wisdom and work of the collective and be equipped to discuss the partnerships that have been established and the work to accomplish around intended outcomes.

JOIN THE COLLECTIVE
Our key call to action is to those who belong in this collective. If your vision, mission, work and activities support telling of Black stories and Black storytellers, it is critical that you join us for all of the reason outlined at the summit and in this paper. The time is now for us to work together and there are three key activities for you to take now.

Our collective partners will work together in many ways, but particularly as stakeholders interested in impacting the content and funding pipelines for Black stories and Black Storytellers. As we build the collective, we are interested in hearing more of your suggestions and solutions, but here are some key ideas that started post-summit.

SHARE RESEARCH ON BLACK FILMMAKERS AND SOCIAL ISSUES
We want to be impacted by Black stories. We want to make sure the collective stays informed. You can email links or info to: BPResearch@Blackpublicmedia.org

The following is a list of upcoming programming through which you can partner with us include:

- 2018: 360 Fellowship and Pitch Black Competition
- 2019: 40th Anniversary Activities
- 2020: 2nd Bi-annual Black Media Story Summit
- 2018 - 2020: Media Fund created specifically to fund Black non-fiction content creators.

JOIN US
We want to know who you are, what you are doing, and how you support Black content creators and any other information you are willing to share about your work. We also want to ensure that you receive critical information shared amongst the collective and are included in directory that outlines the contributions of the collective, to be published in 2020.

You can join by visiting us here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BMSSSurvey

PARTNER WITH BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA
Email us at partnerships@blackpublicmedia.org

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- 2020: 2nd Bi-annual Black Media Story Summit
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## Content Pipeline

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connect social justice thought leaders directly to interested media makers so they can better inform and educate those engaged in storytelling.</td>
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<td>Facilitate connections between grassroots social justice thought leaders and foundation program officers and media executives determining priority content areas on the funding and finance side.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create media pipelines for deeper forms of community engagement that moves beyond a superficial, transactional relationship with Black communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue developing and patronizing programs that recruit, train and position qualified Black youth to climb the ladder at existing media companies, so they can change mainstream institutions from within.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue pushing for diverse leadership at the content production and media executive level.</td>
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<td>Foster a series of peer-to-peer conversations in which decision-makers and executives examine how implicit biases influence what gets greenlit.</td>
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<td>Actively curate from ancillary platforms (i.e. YouTube, Vimeo) and bring talent from there into our own pipelines.</td>
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<td>Look beyond the traditional documentary broadcast/feature model to discover diverse content forms that are better suited toward effecting impact, such as short video, television and news broadcasts, and virtual reality and immersive media formats.</td>
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<td>Embrace new media formats like VR that offer opportunities for leadership and impact in ways that deeply entrenched media forms do not.</td>
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<td>Explore ways to ensure more equitable distribution of philanthropic funds (i.e. open calls for applications, broader publicity of media grants, and partnerships with regional media organizations).</td>
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## Funding Pipeline

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<tr>
<td>Coordinate diversified funding pipelines whereby content makers can access a range of funding and financing from philanthropic support to private venture capital, according to the needs of their media project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand opportunities for commercial investment in Black media by identifying financiers who are just as committed and personally compelled by potential social justice outcomes of good Black content, as they are by commercial success.</td>
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<td>Educate financiers and philanthropic partners about the critical social importance of having diverse, nuanced stories of Black life. (i.e. create a campaign around why Black storytelling deserves attention and support above other priorities, what is the social return vs. the financial return).</td>
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<td>Develop and engage a cohort of philanthropic partners committed to making impact investments in Black media (as opposed to grants which by law carry restrictive stipulations. around the commercial and profit-making use of final content).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expand programs for educating content makers about the relationship between financing and distribution, possible opportunities for monetizing their work, and ways they can go about developing relationships with distributors and other partners early on in their production process.</td>
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| Expose Black content makers to new technologies and platforms, and educate them about ways they can use these technologies to unlock new ways of monetizing, evaluating, and 
REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Christopher Francis
Nikeshia Hamilton
Samantha Handy
Nagli Johnson
Christian Olugbemide
Karl Richards
Kelly Thomas
Johnny Waite
Samantha Worrall Johnson
Tashia Williams

BLACK MEDIA STORY SUMMIT ATTENDEES
Abiola Oke
Adara Udoji
Alexis Aggrey
Allie Norris
Amanda Shelby
Andrew Coles
Angel Manuel Soto
Angela Tucker
Ari Bennett
Antonette Iama
Asia Tealamar
Artemis Fannin
Ashley Baccus-Clark
Ashley Sanders
Brad Lichtenstein
Bryan Carter
Carl Lipscombe
Carol Bash
Cheryl Duncan
Christian Olugbemide
Clayton Banks
Clifton Dawson
Clint Bowie
Crystal Emery
Damon Colpohun
Denise Greene
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Derrick Thompson
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THE BLACK PAPER
Funded by Wyncote Foundation