



## Legacy and Impact of Black Philanthropy

On August 19, 2022, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida hosted a Donors Forum to discuss the Legacy and Impact of Black Philanthropy. The program opened with introductions by Judge Brian Davis, Chair of TCF Board of Directors, and Foundation President Nina Waters. Foundation Board of Trustees member Velma Monteiro-Tribble then introduced guest speaker Susan Taylor Batten, President and CEO of ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities. ABFE, which promotes effective and responsive philanthropy, just celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The organization has nearly 2,000 members, and it advocates for policies and practices, provides technical assistance to Black civic organizations, and networks to share information to ensure better outcomes for Black communities.

### *Highlights from Susan Taylor Batten:*

- Black philanthropy is rooted in the culture and history of the Black people, tracing back to the African continent. ABFE often uses African terms to describe its work to honor this history and culture.
- Many examples of early giving date back to the 1800s and include cooperatives, saving clubs, and giving circles. Black giving is based on deeply held values of collective responsibility and self-help and often manifests as expressions of love to assist others.
- Black philanthropy is diverse and encompasses not only the typical Time, Talent, and Treasure, but also a fourth T – Testimony (or Truth). Research shows that African-American families give the largest proportion of wealth in the country and typically give 25 percent more of their discretionary income than White households.
- Trends in Black philanthropy include:
  - Growth of formally organized vehicles, including giving circles, donor-advised funds, and Black funds (of which almost 25 percent have been established in the last 10 years)
  - Increased diversity of donors; Black immigrants typically have higher income and education levels, and with 1 in 10 Americans of color being an immigrant, studies are just beginning about how this might affect Black philanthropy in the future
  - Growth of centers and programs of philanthropy at HBCUs in the U.S.; there are only two programs currently, with a third in the process of being launched, and the growth of these programs is a key strategy to understanding the history and true story of Black giving
  - Consistent themes of social transformation, as giving becomes a form of activism promoting social change and justice

Below are highlights from guest panelists who further discussed the legacy and impact of Black philanthropy:

*Dr. Johnnetta Cole, anthropologist, educator, and women/civil rights advocate who was the first woman president of Spelman College:*

- Black Americans brought with them their values and traditions, including many proverbs such as: “When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.”
- Philanthropy at its core is when one gives of one’s very being in opposition to injustice, and this has always been the root of Black giving. The Civil Rights Movement was the greatest philanthropic movement that has ever been organized.
- The issue is not how much to give – the issue is simply to give something.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

*Ms. Valerie Jenkins, Vice-President and Senior Community Development Consultant, Wells Fargo:*

- There is a misconception that Black Americans don't give, partly because they don't track giving in the comprehensive manner that other organizations and foundations do. Black giving is based on need, and a large part of this giving is in hours of service in communities and small community gifts. One important question is: "Had we not given, where would we be today?"
- It is vitally important for everyone to participate, large or small, and also to remove the ego from giving – for example, rather than starting a new organization, give to existing ones that need help.

*Rev. Dr. Christopher McKee, Jr., Senior Pastor of the historic First Baptist Church of Oakland:*

- Historically, Black Americans figured out not only how to pray, but also how to give together. The common thread throughout the Black legacy is that people with little material wealth have built the institutions and churches that sustain "benevolent societies" and create networks and safety nets.
- COVID reaffirmed what was already known about social fissures and opportunity gaps, but congregations and communities gave more generously than normal during an extraordinary time in history.
- To truly invest in the future, make space each week for Time, Talent, and Treasure, and utilize Testimony to influence others. Also, focus investments on Black organizations to perpetuate their longevity and sustainability.

*Mr. Marcus Rowe, Vice-President and Senior Resident Director, Merrill Lynch:*

- Life is a race, but not everyone starts at the same place in the race. Black philanthropy can provide the tools needed to run the race effectively.
- An answer to the question "How can we maintain unity?" can be to make others listen through Black philanthropy – by having some "skin in the game," sticking to a clear focused goal, and executing it extremely well.
- It is important to find causes and organizations that resonate with your own values and passions. This is easier to stick with and helps motivate the giver to influence others to do similar work – harnessing the power of collective giving.

*Ms. Susan Taylor Batten:*

- There's a struggle within the Black community with the label "philanthropist" because typically we are not looking for recognition. Giving is simply embedded in the culture, and this is not typically how we describe who we are.
- It's important to understand the stories and history because it helps the Black community see itself as givers.
- ABFE is currently conducting a campaign called "Endow Now" to increase understanding of giving platforms and educate about the impact that can be made with even a modest amount. Education of this sort is vital because Black organizations are currently under attack, which is expected to get even stronger, and they need to be endowed now to help sustain them for the future.

The program concluded with the announcement of the [A. L. Lewis Black Opportunity and Impact Fund](#), a collective giving fund established at TCF to advance equity and justice in healthcare, education, and economic development through strategic investments in Jacksonville's Black community. Grantmaking from the fund is expected to begin in 2023.

A.L. Lewis, Dr. Johnnetta Cole's great-grandfather, was a significant Black community leader and philanthropist who helped found the Afro-American Life Insurance Company, the Lincoln Golf and Country Club, American Beach, the Negro Business League, and National Negro Insurance Association, and he also contributed great time, talent, and treasure to a number of Black colleges and Mt. Olive A.M.E. Church.

Click [here](#) to learn more about The A.L. Lewis Black Opportunity and Impact Fund, or contact Wanda Willis, Vice President, Civic Leadership at [wwillis@jaxcf.org](mailto:wwillis@jaxcf.org).