THE 6TH ANNUAL

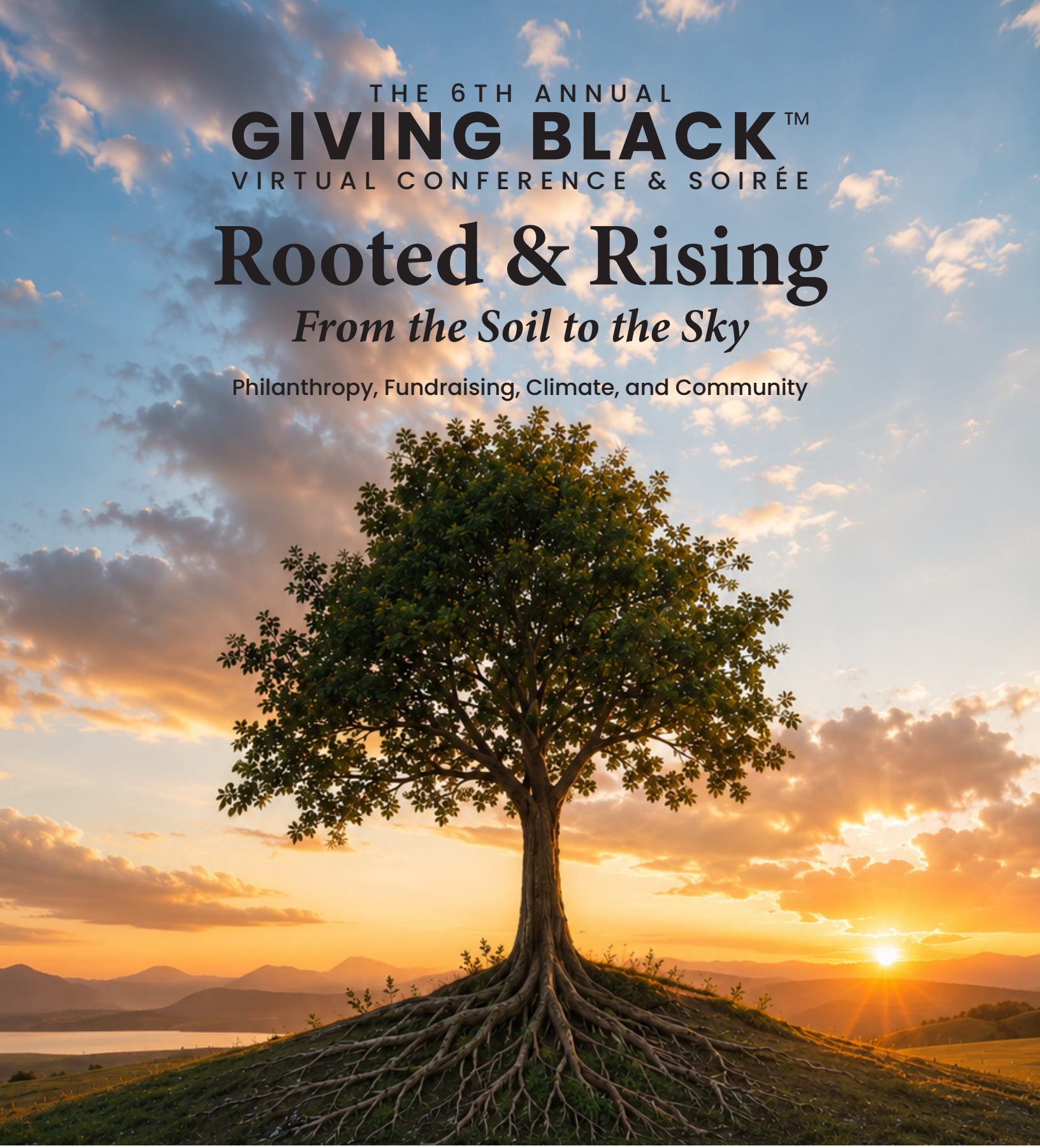
GIVING BLACK™

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE & SOIRÉE

Rooted & Rising

From the Soil to the Sky

Philanthropy, Fundraising, Climate, and Community



agentsC

Certified B Corporation

GIVING BLACK™ FEEL THE GOOD

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Thank You

To Our Professional Development Partners and Individual Ticket Holders

Your partnership helps make the Giving Black Conference possible and strengthens climate action in Black communities.

By investing in knowledge sharing, leadership development and cross-sector collaboration, you are helping to build the skills, connections and resources needed for a healthier, more just and sustainable future for our people and our planet.

Proudly hosted and presented by:

> *We are each other's harvest: we are each other's business: we are each other's magnitude and bond.*
>
> Gwendolyn Brooks

A Warm Giving Black Network Welcome.



Welcome to the Sixth Annual Giving Black Conference.

Whether you have been part of this Network for years or are meeting us for the first time, we are glad you are here.

The Giving Black Network is a global platform advancing Black philanthropy, Afrocentric fundraising, leadership, knowledge sharing and collective action toward social and environmental impact. We bring together philanthropists, fundraisers, nonprofit leaders, community builders, artists, knowledge holders and allies because some of the most important work happens when people who do not normally sit in the same rooms are brought into relationship with one another.

Giving Black is an expression of a larger ambition: to create spaces where Black generosity is visible, Black thought is shared broadly, Afrocentric knowledge and solutions are connected to resources, and people can learn from one another while remaining fully rooted in their personal and professional purpose.

This is why this year's theme, ***Rooted & Rising: From the Soil to the Sky***, matters. We are turning our attention to climate action because the more closely we look at the social issues affecting our communities, the harder it becomes to separate them from the environments in which we live.

Part of our work is closing the distance between climate action and the marginalization of global Black communities as stakeholders, thought leaders, funders and fundraisers in environmental issues. We want to make visible people whose leadership and pioneering solutions remain overlooked, while connecting dialogue with the philanthropy, fundraising and relationships needed to expand their ideas and actions. We are here to ask questions, gain knowledge and consider how we collectively use our wealth, power and influence to create the world we need today and the future we must build for our children. Everybody is a stakeholder in this situation.

Our program for the Giving Black Conference weaves these themes together through conversations addressing the essential questions of Black climate action: Who? What? Why? Where? When? How? And where do we go from here?

On behalf of our Conference Committee, we wish you a joyful, soulful and insightful Conference experience. I hope you leave inspired to continue the work of partnership and community building that brought you to the Giving Black Network and to Rooted & Rising: From the Soil to the Sky.

Olumide Akerewusi, Convenor
The Giving Black Network

> *You are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have.*
>
> **Desmond Tutu**

GIVING BLACK FEEL THE GOOD

Why We Do What We Do.

With a Network of 2,000 people, Giving Black creates ways to learn, connect, build capacity and convene around issues that impact us all. Our focus is community building and our strength is creating a platform where everybody belongs and can join in the conversation.

Through Giving Black, individuals and organizations can access market research, sector reports, thought leadership, training, coaching, philanthropic advisory services, fundraising expertise, public speaking, and an Afrocentric perspective.

Our platform includes the following offerings:

Giving Black Conference

An annual global learning and networking experience for developing new ideas, making connections and engaging in conversations shaping philanthropy, fundraising and issues affecting our world.

Giving Black Podcast

A podcast for global storytelling and learning that focuses on the people, ideas, traditions and lived experiences shaping Black philanthropy.

Giving Black Soirée

A lively in-person gathering where members of our network can relax, meet others doing meaningful work, enjoy good food and music, and strengthen relationships.

Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement

Our award to recognize those who make an exceptional contribution to the advancement of Black philanthropy.

Giving Black Community Education Fund

A donor-advised fund with GiveWise that enables us to make important philanthropic investments as we promote education, community and environmental impact.

Our work is focused on giving a voice to important issues and a platform to connect with the global Black community. This is where convening matters. Bringing people together creates opportunities to listen, exchange knowledge, ask questions and make connections across fields that do not always meet. Giving Black is creating a space for those conversations to happen through the lens of global Black communities and Black thought leadership and practice. Ultimately, we are seeing our world through a lens that is rich in perspective, yet often disregarded.

> *A person is a person because of other people.*
>
> Nguni proverb

Why Climate Action, and Why Giving Black?

When the conference committee gathered in April, the ambition was to create a climate conference with a distinctly Black, African, and Indigenous perspective. Vanessa Nakate would bring the voices of African youth and girls. Edgar Villanueva would contribute an Indigenous philanthropic perspective through his framing of money as medicine. Grassroots practitioners, philanthropists and fundraisers from across Africa and its diaspora would come together alongside poetry, wellness, learning, joy and community.

This is why climate action belongs within the Giving Black conversation. The work is about bringing climate action closer to the everyday realities of communities, increasing the visibility of Black climate leadership, and connecting dialogue with the philanthropy, fundraising and relationships needed to sustain that work. In doing so, we expand our understanding of Afro-Ecology as a practice that extends beyond our relationship with land into an Afro-Ecology that considers all the necessary factors for successful climate action.

> *I wanted to put presence into absence.*
>
> Bernardine Evaristo

Afro-Ecology: A Framework We Can Explore Together.

There is already use of Afro-Ecology in agriculture, food systems, conservation and the reclamation of Black relationships with land. Through Giving Black, we are exploring a broader frame that connects land and water, ancestral and Indigenous knowledge, food and health, culture and storytelling, community and wellbeing, philanthropy and capital, climate action, collective action and future generations.

One of the ideas emerging from our conference organizing journey is an Afro-Ecology that incorporates the holistic elements of climate action. Ancestral knowledge, contemporary practice and future innovations are as much a part of Afro-Ecology as our use of money and wealth and our ability to gather and direct investments. With philanthropy and fundraising as two sides of the same coin, money becomes inseparable from climate action because climate action needs money to support change.

For us, Afro-Ecology includes traditional and contemporary African artistry, storytelling, wellness and skills-sharing, alongside our relationships with land, sea, air, water and fire. It also includes the philanthropy and fundraising needed to support people, ideas and community action.

This is where the idea of symbiosis becomes useful. Fundraising and philanthropy give one another relevance. Philanthropy expresses generosity and intent. Fundraising helps organize the relationships and resources that allow generosity to support action. The same relationships can be seen across food, health, land, culture, storytelling and community wellbeing.

Afro-Ecology gives us a way to think about how these elements connect and support one another. It also creates space for traditional African and Indigenous knowledge to sit alongside contemporary practice.

Our theme, Rooted & Rising: From the Soil to the Sky, helps us carry this idea. Our roots connect us with ancestry, land, culture, knowledge and memory. Rising asks what we can build, strengthen and imagine for the future.

The journey from rooted to rising takes us from the soil to the sky and through the past, present and future.

> *"Until you dig a hole, you plant a tree, you water it and make it survive, you haven't done a thing. You are just talking."*
>
> **Wangari Maathai**

Your Giving Black Program Guide

The Giving Black Virtual Conference 2026 Agenda

Time (EDT)	Session	Speakers / Hosts	Format
9:30–10:00 AM	**Rooted & Rising:** Welcome, Opening & Setting The Stage	**Elder Opening:** Pamela Grant **Afro-Indigenous Opening:** Carolynne Crawley **Co-Host Welcome:** Mide Akerewusi, Atlegang Matlala & Jade Nikolaou	The Gathering
10:00–10:45 AM	**Rising In Africa:** Continental Climate Leadership, Youth & Girls	**Opening Keynote:** Vanessa Nakate **Host:** Naolo Charles	Opening Keynote
10:45–10:50 AM	**From The Soil:** Black Climate Action – Stories From Around The World	Naolo Charles, Carolynne Crawley & Julius Lindsay	Concurrent Sessions Overview
10:50–11:15 AM	**Panel A:** Land, Water & Life: Afro-Indigenous Ecology – Protecting What Sustains Us	**Host:** Carolynne Crawley **Panellists:** Zamani Ra & James Kambaki	Concurrent Climate Action Conversation
10:50–11:15 AM	**Panel B:** Funding The Frontlines: Funding & Sustaining The Black Climate Agenda	**Host:** Carolynne Crawley **Panellists:** Zamani Ra & James Kambaki	Concurrent Climate Action Conversation
10:50–11:15 AM	**Panel C:** Imagining Tomorrow – Afrofuturism: Storytelling, Culture & Climate Futures	**Host:** Julius Lindsay **Panellists:** Lorna Okeng & Aura Balanta Carreño	Concurrent Climate Action Conversation
11:15–11:35 AM	**From Three Groups To One Conversation:** What Have We Learned And What Will We Do?	Carolynne Crawley, Naolo Charles & Julius Lindsay	Panel Host Regroup
11:35–11:50 AM	**Restore:** Poetry, Wellness, Prizes & Community	Kimmel Alcide **Live Poetry:** Nat Nye	Restorative Interlude
11:50 AM–12:35 PM	Who Funds The Future? Black Philanthropy & Climate Capital	**Host:** Patricia Hamzahee **Panellists:** Gosbert Chagula & Lauren E. Graham	Philanthropy Panel
12:35–1:20 PM	Money As Medicine: Indigenous Philanthropy, Healing & The Power Of Wealth	**Fireside Keynote**: Edgar Villanueva **Host:** Mide Akerewusi	Fireside Keynote
1:20–2:00 PM	**To The Sky:** Fund The Work. Build The Network. Take Action.	**Host:** Atlegang Matlala **Panellists:** Queen Jade & Mide	Closing Panel / Call to Action
From 2:00 PM	The Giving Black Networking Zone	**Hosts:** Tracy Deans & Christopher Beck **Poetry:** Nat Nye	Optional Post-Conference Networking

Your Conference Experience

We want you to have an exceptional conference experience. As much as we possibly can we are aiming to create an interactive setting where you can share your voice, and guide our work to elevate climate action. Here are some ways you can prepare and be involved:

1. Our conference intersects with breakfast in Pacific Daylight Time, lunch in Eastern Daylight Time, dinner in African and European time zones, and bedtime in Australian Eastern Time. Please prepare a meal and/or a nightcap prior to joining the conference so you do not miss out on our program.
2. Please use the conference chat function as soon as you log in and anytime you want to share a point. We also encourage you to use this Miro Link to share your perspectives using the stickies. Miro is an **online collaborative whiteboard** that lets us work together visually in the same digital space, for example by adding our thoughts to conversations that are taking place.
3. Our team will moderate chats and Miro submissions and share the highlights of what is being expressed. We want to know what you think.
4. Our Virtual Conference officially ends at 2:00 PM EDT. Afterwards we'll transition into a breakout for The Networking Zone where we can gather to celebrate, get to know each other and have a chance to win prizes.

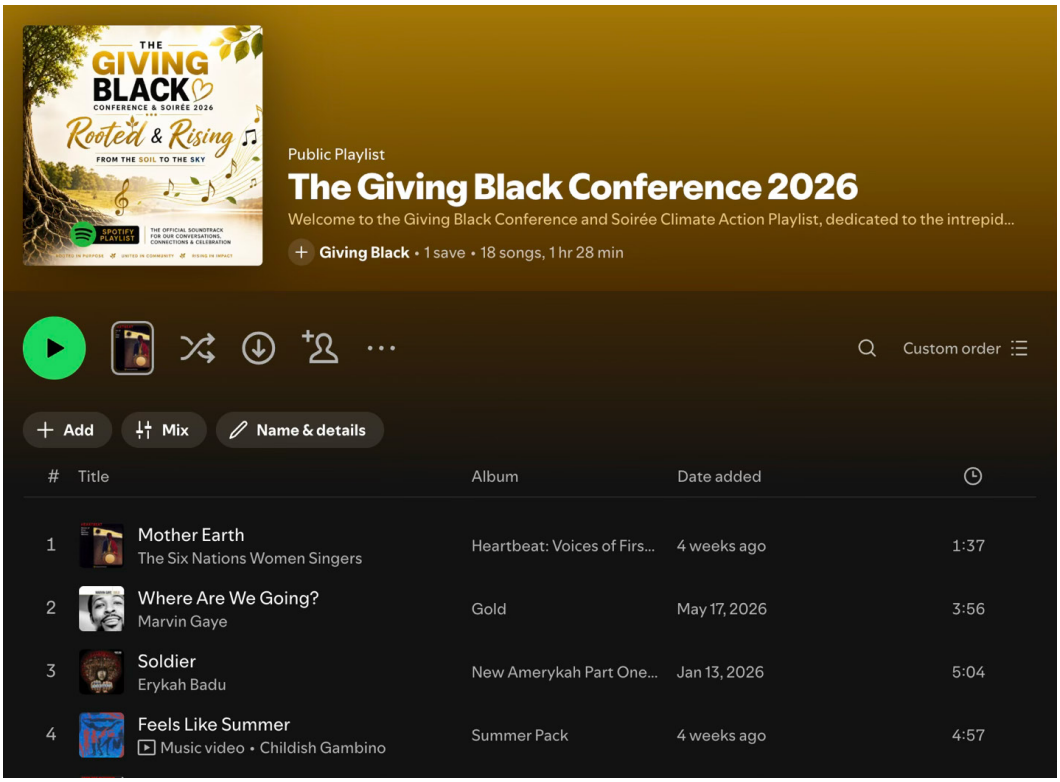
You can begin sharing your thoughts on Miro, now.

> *Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.*
>
> Bondei proverb

It Wouldn't Be Giving Black If We Didn't Have A Soundtrack!

The Giving Black Conference 2026 playlist brings rhythm, energy and joy to our Rooted & Rising journey.

Enjoy the soundtrack before, during and after the Conference.



These songs will be played on repeat at the Giving Black Soirée, our in-person celebration in Toronto.

> *One good thing about music is,*
> *When it hits you, You feel no pain.*
>
> Bob Marley

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The Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement

The Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement celebrates people whose work is changing philanthropy and fundraising in meaningful ways.

It honours those who have broken new ground, opened doors for others, and used generosity, leadership and care to help Black communities thrive.



In 2024, we introduced The Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement. Our inaugural recipient was Mark Beckles LLD, ICD.D, one of Canada's leading Black Social Impact advocates. Mark was Vice President, Social Impact & Innovation at Royal Bank of Canada, where he led pioneering initiatives such as RBC Future Launch and RBC Tech for Nature, and championed programs supporting Black student success, Black entrepreneurship, and broader Black community advancement in Canada. For decades, Mark has been involved in groundbreaking projects such as serving as CEO of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.



In 2025, we honoured Birgit Smith Burton with The Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement. As an African American woman fundraising leader, Birgit has broken barriers, created pathways for countless others and chaired the Association of Fundraising Professionals through one of the most challenging periods in its history. Over a 30-year career, she raised hundreds of millions of dollars, including leading her Georgia Tech team to raise $309 million toward a $1.8 billion capital campaign. Birgit is also the founder of the African American Development Officers Network (AADO), advancing, supporting and connecting fundraisers of colour across the profession globally and beyond.

Fundraisers and philanthropic leaders often do some of their most important work behind the scenes. They build relationships, inspire giving, create opportunities and help move resources toward the people and causes that need them. This year, we will honour another inspiring leader with a remarkable track record of elevating Black communities through their work. We can't wait to reveal who that special person is. Stay tuned for the announcement.

> *In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.*
>
> **Thurgood Marshall**

Why Your Support Counts

Going From Free-to-Fee feels important if we are to continue to create a virtual conference experience that is unique and unrivalled.

Since 2020, the Giving Black Conference has been offered free of charge. As the Conference and Network have grown, sustaining this work has required a new approach to pricing and participation.

We are now considering what happens beyond the day of the Conference, how we continue moving forward with the Giving Black Network. We are forming a set of objectives that include the following: :

1. Create a Giving Black Climate Action Conference Report

We will bring together the perspectives, ideas and experiences shared by attendees and our speakers, and compile this into a Giving Black Climate Action Report. Our report will express what members of the Giving Black Network want to see in relation to climate action and will be widely shared as a resource for our community. We want our conference report to become a practical advocacy tool that members of the Giving Black Network can use to inspire change within their communities, organizations, professional networks and with decision-makers.

2. Establish the Giving Black Community Education Fund

We have set up the Giving Black Community Education Fund, beginning with a $1,000 investment which we hope to double through a matching ask to support advancements in climate action education within grassroots organizations in Canada. Our ambition is to grow the Fund to $25,000 and expand our giving globally through our own Donor Advised Fund. The Fund gives members of the Giving Black Network a direct way to turn generosity into resources for organizations doing climate-action work in their communities.

3. Build a Giving Black Knowledge Resource

We are compiling tools and resources on the Giving Black website for members of our Network. This will include reports, thought-leadership articles, and other useful materials that help members of our Network deepen their knowledge, share ideas and continue learning beyond the Conference. Our aim is to create an accessible knowledge-sharing, fundraising and philanthropic resource that grows with the Giving Black Network.

4. Expand Giving Black Services and Learning

We're launching a range of services including philanthropic advisory support, coaching and mentorship, public speaking, and team facilitation. We are also developing a new Afrocentric Fundraising course designed to help organizations expand their fundraising approaches beyond the old and sometimes dated methods of donor engagement used by many organizations.

These services will provide additional ways for individuals and organizations to learn from Giving Black, strengthen their practice and engage more deeply with diverse donors.

> *People have to have a language to speak about where they are and what other possible futures are available to them.*
>
> Stuart Hall

The Giving Black Conference Producers, Presenters, and Speakers

Meet the 2026 Speakers

Twenty-one incredible speakers of diverse backgrounds from across the world. We are so proud to have such a team of talented knowledge-holders and Black and Indigenous thought leaders in this year's conference. Here is the stellar roster of people you will connect with in the Giving Black Conference 2026.



Atlegang Matlala (South Africa)

Global Development & Philanthropy Professional

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Atlegang Matlala is a global development and philanthropy professional with extensive experience in fundraising, partnerships and resource mobilization. He has held senior roles with Transparency International, ActionAid, Save the Children South Africa and Médecins Sans Frontières, working across Africa and with international donors and institutions. His work focuses on building strategic partnerships, strengthening nonprofit sustainability and mobilizing resources for social change.

A longstanding contributor to conversations on African philanthropy, Atlegang brings a practical perspective on how organizations can build stronger funding relationships and translate resources into meaningful community impact.



Aura Balanta Carreño (Colombia)

Filmmaker, Performer & Storyteller

Aura Balanta (Aura Jineth Carreño Caicedo): born in Colombia and rematriated to Ghana, is a strategic director, performing artist, and researcher focused on Afro-diasporic memory, gender justice, and community-led sustainable transitions. With extensive experience in multilateral cooperation grounded in solidarity and internationalism, she leads climate justice initiatives spanning Canada, Colombia, and the Global South, such as A World of Wahkohtowin and Energía Renovable Originaria (Indigenous-Led Renewable Energy). A specialist in Public Policy and Gender Justice (CLACSO) and a graduate in Performing Arts (UPN), Aura integrates Afrofuturism, audiovisual creation, and decolonial activism, positioning herself as a key bridge between emerging pathways for the sustainable and equitable development of ethnic communities, ancestral knowledge systems, and international cultural sovereignty.



Carolynne Crawley (Canada)

Founder, Msit No'kmaq & Co-Founder of Turtle Protectors

Carolynne Crawley, founder of Msit No'kmaq and cofounder of Turtle Protectors, is a woman of Mi'kmaw, Black and Irish ancestry and is from Mi'kma'ki territory, also known today as Nova Scotia. But Tkaronto has been her home since childhood. She grew up with a deep relationship with Mother Earth that was fostered through her Mother. As a child she would bring home orphaned and injured animals to receive care from wildlife rehabbers or reunite lost animal companions with their humans. Carolynne still honours this commitment today. She is dedicated to social and environmental justice and is passionate about reconnecting people with the land, waters, and all beings as there is no separation between us. She leads walks and facilitates webinars about the responsibility to reconcile with Mother Earth and shares ways to deepen one's relationship with all beings. She is a Forest Therapy Guide/Mentor and Trainer, Blanket Exercise Facilitator, a Holistic Nutritionist, Storyteller and Educator, Public Speaker, a Co-Producer of a documentary and a member of the Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle. Carolynne has also worked in food security for 12 years and previously worked as a Child & Youth Worker for two decades.



Christopher Beck, CAP®, IPA (USA)

Lead Director of Planned Giving at Emory University

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Christopher Beck is the Lead Director of Gift Planning at Emory University, bringing more than 20 years of experience in philanthropy, fundraising, and donor engagement.

Throughout his career, he has served organizations including Emory University, the High Museum of Art, ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and the Boy Scouts of America, helping donors align their values and passions with meaningful philanthropic impact.

A collaborative leader and relationship builder, Christopher is passionate about advancing philanthropy through partnership, innovation, and inclusive engagement. He is recognized for developing donor-centred strategies, creating opportunities for underrepresented communities, and fostering meaningful connections across the nonprofit sector.

Christopher holds a degree in Education from Rust College, a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Certificate from the University of South Florida, and an Impact Philanthropy Advisor (IPA) designation through the Daylight Advisor Network. He is also a Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy® (CAP®), a graduate of the inaugural AFP Leadership Academy Cohort One, and has completed certificate programs in donor-advised funds and collaborative fundraising.

An active leader within the profession, Christopher serves on the Georgia Planned Giving Council Board and works closely with AFP Global. He is an AADO Board Member and Vice-Chair of Men of Color in Development (MOCID), as well as Treasurer and Board Member with DayLight Advisors.

Christopher is committed to strengthening the fundraising profession through mentorship, volunteer leadership, and collaboration. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and son, reading, visiting aquariums, listening to jazz, walking by the water, and staying active. His approach to philanthropy goes beyond financial contributions and reflects a deep commitment to improving humanity.



Edgar Villanueva (United States of America)

Founder & CEO, Decolonizing Wealth Project

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Edgar Villanueva (Lumbee) is an award-winning author, speaker, and strategist working at the intersection of wealth and spirituality. He is the author of *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance and its companion journal, Money As Medicine*.

Through his writing and leadership of the Decolonizing Wealth Project (DWP), which he founded and leads as CEO, Villanueva has reshaped how foundations, nonprofits, and individuals think about money, power, and healing - work recognized on Fast Company's 2026 World Changing Ideas list, the 2025 TIME100 Climate list, and by The New York Times, Forbes, and PBS.

In 2018, he coined the term "reparative philanthropy" and created DWP's Reparative Philanthropy™ Framework, rooted in Indigenous wisdom, trauma-informed practice, and spirituality, to transform how people relate to money, one another, and the world.

Through this Money as Medicine approach, Villanueva has mobilized more than $1 billion in philanthropic capital toward reparative initiatives, including over $30 million granted through DWP's Liberated Capital, an intergenerational, multiracial, cross-wealth-giving community. In 2025, DWP launched Moonshot, a 10-year strategy to unlock $1 trillion in reparative giving. Villanueva advises national and global philanthropies, Fortune 500 companies, entertainment organizations, and individuals on investment and giving strategies, bringing an Indigenous lens to questions of humanity, capital, power, and repair.



Gosbert Chagula, MBE (United Kingdom)

Co-founder & Head of Programmes, Startup Discovery School

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Gosbert Chagula MBE is co-founder and Head of Programmes at the Startup Discovery School, building accelerator and incubator programmes for early-stage, climate-focused founders across Europe, Africa, and now Asia. In Ghana, he played a key role at the Africa Technology Business Network launching "Her Future Africa," an Accra-based innovation camp opening access to under-served communities. He now extends that work through Startup Discovery Asia, a Nepal-based climate-tech venture-building partnership designed as a launchpad for scaling innovation across emerging economies. He also leads the UK's Just Transition programme and advises government on SME policy.



Jade Nikolaou (USA)

Founder, Gleaux, and Events & Marketing Manager, Los Angeles Magazine.

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Jade Nikolaou is a strategic advisor and impact strategist working at the intersection of philanthropy, capital, and culture. A Forbes-published contributor and Nasdaq-featured entrepreneur, she has helped mobilize more than $120 million across philanthropic, corporate, and venture ecosystems.

Known for bringing leaders, investors, founders, and communities together, Jade creates strategic partnerships that connect capital, culture, and purpose to drive lasting impact.

She is the founder of Gleaux, a platform focused on philanthropy, leadership, culture, and impact. For Giving Black, Jade serves as a committee member and event host.



James Kambaki (Kenya)

Founder & Executive Chairman, Accelerate Africa Development (AAD)

As Founder and Executive Chairman of Accelerate Africa Development (AAD), James Kambaki works with community-based organisations, technical institutions and private-sector partners to develop practical, locally led responses to Africa's climate and development challenges.

Accelerate Africa's current work includes climate-smart agriculture, regenerative aquaculture, clean cooking, renewable energy, agroforestry, sustainable bioenergy and green livelihood development.

Among their initiatives are a climate-smart aquaculture and integrated farming programme supporting smallholder farmers in Kenya; solar-powered clean-cooking solutions for schools in refugee-hosting communities; inclusive agricultural programmes for women, young people and persons with disabilities in South Africa; and bioenergy and renewable-energy projects that combine environmental sustainability with enterprise development and job creation.



Julius Lindsay (Canada)

Co-lead, The Prismatic Project, 2026 Committee Member

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Julius Lindsay is a futurist and leader in the environmental field in Canada with twenty years of experience in the areas of climate change, sustainability, and energy. He has led award-winning climate action and community engagement initiatives in cities and NGOs across the place now known as Canada. Julius is the co-lead for the Prismatic Project, which seeks to centre Indigenous and Black perspectives through the lens of Indigenous futurist and Afrofuturist art, community engagement and futures games to shift the conversation about and composition of climate action in Canada.



Kendria Ferguson, MA, LEED, GA (The Bahamas)

Environmental Specialist, Bahamas

Kendria Ferguson is a sustainability and climate resilience specialist with over a decade of experience across the Caribbean. She holds a Master's in Global Sustainability, Sustainable Energy and is a PhD Candidate at the Institute of Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies. Her work spans disaster risk reduction, renewable energy, environmental management, and sustainable tourism—supporting governments, international agencies, and NGOs on policy development, project implementation, and capacity building.



Kimmel Alcide (Canada)

Founder & Wellness Expert, The Everyday Yogi Inc.

Kimmel Alcide is a Toronto-based yoga instructor, meditation facilitator, and founder of The Everyday Yogi Inc. With a background in kinesiology and athletic coaching, she teaches with an approach that honours each individual body and its temporary limitations, facilitating wellbeing workshops for teens, seniors, and adults alike. She has held roles as a Meditation Facilitator at Hoame and Yoga Teacher Trainer at Life Time, and is a lululemon ambassador known for community-focused classes such as a Mother's Day Vinyasa Flow supporting
Girls Inc. of Durham Region.

Her mission: peace through empowerment, one posture at a time.



Lauren E. Graham (USA)

Founder, Velvet Frame, and Daily Acts of Democracy

Lauren E. Graham is an educator and ecosystems strategist for planetary and democratic futures. She is the founder of Velvet Frame, a bespoke impact philanthropy advisory that guides next-gen philanthropists in funding systems change with clarity, courage, and care.

Lauren is also launching Daily Acts of Democracy, a civic tech platform that connects democracy to the issues you care about through gamified media, personalized actions, and a points-to-rewards system you can redeem for values-aligned goods, services, and experiences in the real world.

Lauren is an adjunct professor teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in nonprofit management, entrepreneurship, resilience, and sustainability at the University of Pennsylvania, CUNY, FIT, Bard College MBA in Sustainability, and The Carbonauts. She has a TEDx talk titled The fight for democracy and the planet begins in the classroom, and a new talk, How to rebuild a broken world with tenderness and imagination.

Lauren has a B.A. in International Relations and M.A. in Sociology from Stanford University, an M.E.M. from Yale School of the Environment, and an M.S. in Nonprofit Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice. She is a Certified Impact Philanthropy Advisor through Daylight Advisors, and holds a Certificate in Advising for Impact from the Center for High Impact Philanthropy at The University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice.



Lorna Okeng (Uganda)

Co-Creator & Co-Director, Keepers of the Forest: The Batwa Legacy

Lorna Okeng is a Pan-African innovation advisor, creative & digital economy consultant focused on African and emerging markets, an emerging technology generalist and strategic foresight practitioner, converging tech, society and alternative and climate futures: driven by a very personal philosophy to be a Good Ancestor and bridge-builder for Africa's collective sovereignty. A trained electrical and computer engineer with over ten years' experience across internet and emerging technology spaces, including Google, Vodafone and Electric South, her work explores new frontiers of storytelling across immersive media, speculative design and machine-mediated societies. She is interested in the ethical stewardship of emerging technologies, their long-term governance and their implications for imagination, creativity and future human experience. Beyond this, Lorna has provided technical advisory and led innovation programmes, financing facilities and digital economy initiatives in 14 African countries, including South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, working with organisations such as UNDP Uganda, Enabel, Somali Arts Foundation and Future Females South Africa.

Lorna is also the co-producer and co-director of Uganda's first virtual reality climate futures film, Keepers of the Forest: The Batwa Legacy, that captures ancestral intelligences as a climate futures technology and an Advisor on the Great African Arts Project and a TEDx Speaker. Lorna is a member of the World Metaverse Council, a Lifeboat Foundation Art and Media Advisory Board member, Focal Point of the Alternative and Indigenous Futures Hub at the School of International Futures and an Afterlives of Return Visiting Fellow on the African Collections Futures Project at the University of Cambridge.



Naolo Charles (Canada)

Founder & Executive Director, Black Environmental Initiative (BEI)

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Naolo Charles is the Founder and Executive Director of the Black Environmental Initiative (BEI), an organization dedicated to advancing the recognition of Black communities and their ancestral role as stewards of nature and community builders. Since 2019, BEI has engaged Black and other equity-denied communities in environmental action through education, environmental stewardship, leadership development, and community building.

Naolo is also a co-founder of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice, which helped mobilize civil society efforts that contributed to the adoption of Canada's first environmental justice legislation in 2024.

An environmental justice advocate and movement builder, Naolo organized the first delegation of Black youth from Canada to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and continues to mentor, train, and support a generation of emerging Black environmental leaders who now work across environmental organizations, governments, private firms, and community initiatives. Fully bilingual in English and French, he has delivered workshops, keynote presentations, and public talks across North America and has served on a federal advisory table informing Canada's National Adaptation Strategy. His contributions have been recognized with a Clean50 Award.

Naolo is a speaker, strategist, storyteller, and lifelong student of Black history whose work explores the intersections of climate justice, racial equity, community resilience, and systems change. Through land-based education, community building and collective action, he seeks to reconnect Black communities to nature while advancing a vision of environmentalism rooted in social justice, multi-racial unity, community energy and healing from colonial history.



Nat Nye The Lyrical Alkhemist (United Kingdom)

Co-Founder Mansa hArtsy

Noble and numinous, Nat Nye The Lyrical Alkhemist is a Custodian of Culture who uses his gifts in spoken word poetry to enchant, enlighten, and empower diverse audiences — evoking the power of poetry to transform reality by turning words into worlds. Whether on stage, over the airwaves, on video or on record, with music or a cappella, his lyrical alkhemy makes each performance a transcendental experience.

He is co-founder and Director of Mansa hArts Ltd and co-founder of Poetic Temple, held in monthly residency at The Africa Centre, where he is an Ambassador. His practice is rooted in Pan-African consciousness, esoteric inquiry, and the custodianship of culture across generations. He writes for the people in the room and for the ones who come after them.

A charming, witty, and philosophical MC and presenter, his hosting credits include D&AD, the British Library, Sankofa Day on Trafalgar Square, the Reparations March on Windrush Square in Brixton.

From his days as a Roundhouse poet performing at the Roundhouse, Nat Nye TLA has wowed crowds with electrifying delivery of poetic mastery — at a Royal Reception honouring HRH Princess Anne at the Olympic Park, the British Museum, the U.S. Embassy London, the V&A, Tate Modern, Tate Britain, BFI Southbank, Ronnie Scott's, Black Cultural Archives, Battersea Arts Centre, The Africa Centre, Soho House, Shoreditch House, h Club, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Wilderness Festival, Camp Bestival, the Queen Afua London Show, and across UCL, SOAS, and UAL. Broadcast credits include BBC London Radio's The Scene and the BBC Dotun Adebayo Sunday Show.



Olumide Akerewusi (Canada)

Philanthropist & Founder, The Giving Black Network

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Mide believes in the power of philanthropy to transform the world. He believes in our capacity to be generous, build community, and create a fairer and more just society. This belief shapes both his work and his relationships in community.

A father, friend, lover of music and film, and lifelong advocate for social justice, Mide is as comfortable in a community hall as he is in a corporate boardroom. His warm, direct, and passionate approach is driven by a vision of a generous society where more people give generously and collectively. Drawing on Afrocentric giving traditions, he views philanthropy as a reciprocal exchange of generosity and encourages more personal and engaged approaches to giving.

Throughout an extensive career across several continents, Mide has worked alongside philanthropists, foundations, corporations, and philanthropic families to develop equitable programs and sustainable fundraising capacity. He is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of agentsC Inc., an international philanthropy, fundraising, and social change advisory firm. He is also the Founder of the Giving Black Network, Giving Black Conference, and Giving Black Podcast, a global platform advancing Black philanthropy and Afrocentric fundraising.

Mide is co-author of Collecting Courage: Joy, Pain, Freedom, Love and an accomplished researcher and thought leader. His publications explore African philanthropy, equity in corporate social investment, emerging donor trends, and the experiences of Black fundraising professionals.

He has taught and spoken globally at institutions including the University of Toronto, Toronto Metropolitan University, the University of Melbourne, University of Victoria, Humber College, and George Brown Polytechnic. He is also a Certified Corporate Social Responsibility Practitioner and trained Dialogue Education facilitator.

At the heart of Mide's work is a commitment to meaningful conversation, ensuring people feel valued and heard while using philanthropy as a powerful tool for lasting social change.



Pamela Grant (Canada)

Retired Executive Leader, and Giving Black Conference Elder

Pamela is a seasoned executive leader and community advocate with an eclectic professional and volunteer background in Canada and internationally. Her career spans over 4 decades in a diversity of leadership roles in the private, public and social service sectors.

She is known for her expertise in and passion for transforming systems, through collaboration and partnerships, to bring about positive outcomes for racialized communities, women, youth, newcomers and other equity-seeking groups. As a Management Consultant, Pamela has served as Interim Executive Director at Canada's Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF). Prior to that she had the privilege of working with Justice Michael Tulloch on his Independent Police Oversight Review for the province of Ontario; after returning to her native Guyana as a Cuso International volunteer advisor to the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry, local LGBTQ+, women's and youth groups and Cuso Guyana on youth entrepreneurship.

Pamela lives in Toronto with her husband, Carl. They are the proud parents of Daniel and Gillian and grandparents to Malcolm. Recently retired, Pamela enjoys long-standing volunteer commitments, time with her family, actively pursuing the arts and her lifelong passion for travelling the world...



Patricia Keiko Hamzahee OBE FRSA (United Kingdom)

Co-Founder, Black Funding Network, and GiveBLACK UK

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member and Recipient of The Giving Black Award for Philanthropic Achievement

After some 20 years in investment banking and financial communications, Patricia now helps social enterprises attract private capital and advises private capital providers on their responsible investment strategies.

As co-founder of Extend Ventures, she has worked to diversify access to funding for Black and minoritised ethnic businesses and is promoting similar access to funding for Black-led nonprofit community organisations after co-founding Black Funding Network and advancing Black philanthropy as co-founder of GiveBLACK in the UK.

She is a Board Director of Responsible Finance, on the Investment Committee of Better Society Capital and New Philanthropy Capital as well as a Trustee of Runnymede Trust, Ballet Black and Stratford East. She is also a member of the Steering Group for Women in Social Finance and the Diversity Forum.



Tracy Deans (Canada)

Founder, Bamboo Consulting & Business Development

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

For the past 16 years, Tracy has worked with some of North America's most diverse non-profit and charitable organizations, supporting them to grow and pursue strategic opportunities that directly meet their business aspirations.

Tracy's experience in the sector led her to develop Bamboo Consulting and Business Development, an organization steeped in supporting businesses focused on resiliency, integrity and aspirational growth. At Bamboo, we believe:

1. **Resiliency is Crucial:** Like bamboo shoots, institutions in our sector must be grounded in a certain rigor or toughness to withstand and recover from challenges. Key to remaining resilient is the ability to be flexible, and move or adapt to change.
2. **Integrity is Central:** While being resilient means being open to change, an organization should identify its strong moral principles that do not shift or change.
3. **Growth is Optional:** Growth is maintaining your moral principles while achieving new opportunities or overcoming challenges.

Specializing in business development, Tracy's core skills are fundraising, facilitating conversations, and relationship building. She invests time and effort into understanding the strengths and challenges of an organization by actively listening, curious inquiry and fostering deep connections.

Tracy has worked with numerous national and international clients, ranging from hospitals, animal welfare, community shelters and health organizations. She is an experienced and dedicated leader, with a strong knowledge of complex, integrated campaigns. She strives to maximize results and provide personalized strategic solutions for all of her clients.



Vanessa Nakate (Uganda)

Environmentalist, Author & UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Vanessa Nakate is a globally recognized environmentalist, author, and a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. She has contributed to advancing climate narratives through advocacy and policy. As the author of the critically acclaimed book "A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring a New African Voice to the Climate Crisis," Vanessa brings an indispensable perspective to environmental protection. Her work serves as a powerful reminder that every community has a story to tell and every story has a solution to give and every solution has a life to change.

Her strategic vision further drives global impact through her board memberships at the Malala Fund and Global Witness where she champions girls' education, human rights, and environmental accountability. She has been recognized internationally for her advocacy, and she is a recipient of the Helmut Schmidt Future Prize and the Haub Law Environmental Award.



Zamani Ra (Canada)

Founder, Executive Director of CEED Canada, Winner - Women4ClimateTO 2022, Climate Advisory Group (CAG)

Giving Black Conference 2026 Committee Member

Zamani Ra is an internationally recognized award-winning professional leading an

innovative environmental education and engagement organization. She is the Founder and Executive Director of CEED Canada, a registered charity that amplifies environmental and climate action in Toronto's housing communities with specific focus in the underrepresented areas. CEED's work is multi-pronged: education for community transformation; advocacy for climate equity; and influencing policy.

She is co-founder of the Black Environmentalist Alliance and a member of the City of Toronto's Climate Advisory Group. In 2022 she was the overall winner of Women4ClimateTO – A mentorship program for women who focus on environmental causes - for her work with CEED Canada. Zamani is a Goddess of Inspiration, Warrior of Words, Sharer of Voices, Creator of Curated Content, Builder of Communities, Paradigm Shape Shifter, and Promoter of People Power

"All of my relations"

Indigenous context showing that we are all interconnected through relationship with land, waters, animals and the wider natural world.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who helped bring the Giving Black Conference to life this year.

To our Conference Committee, speakers, hosts, moderators, poets, wellness contributors, Professional Development Partners, partners, ticket purchasers and attendees: we are deeply grateful for your time, ideas, generosity and belief in what we are trying to build.

What began as an idea became possible because so many people chose to contribute.

A special thank you to Tawa, Fatou Jammeh, Jermaine Ingram, Mark Tenaglia and the Oaks Revitalization Team, Jessica Rayne, and Quincy Wiele. Your behind-the-scenes work is an integral part of this year's Conference.

Thank you for helping us make Giving Black possible.

> *Our gratitude is difficult to express. But the love and peace we feel give yet more life to the simple 'thank you!'*
>
> Graça Machel

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