

# Recommendations & Strategies that Further Women of Color's Advancement

In order to address white supremacy and racism, movement leadership must recognize the historical contributions of women of color, create supportive equitable work environments that emphasize anti-racist practices, and maintain accountability structures.

We recommend the following data-driven strategies that further women of color's advancement.

## Recommendation 1 **Reframe the issue of women of color in GBV movement leadership from the underrepresentation of women of color to the overrepresentation of white women.**



How organizations choose to frame this issue matters both internally and externally to the GBV movement. There is a need to use language that reflects the root cause of racial disparities – the overrepresentation of white women in leadership positions rather than the underrepresentation of women of color. A shift in focus will put the onus on white supremacy rather than the perceived deficits of women of color. In many cases, it may

be difficult to talk directly about white supremacy and racism as root causes to major social issues, especially to funders. Therefore, shifting the frame to an overrepresentation of white women in power positions can be a way address the root cause without explicitly using white supremacy/racism terminology.

**Create flexible funding opportunities to support current or aspiring leaders of color.** We recommend variable and flexible funding to increase leadership and opportunities for women of color. For example, women of color could choose what type of leadership development programs they want to participate in, and funds could take care of upfront costs to attend that program. Another way to support funding is to provide grants for women of color to carry out grassroots projects in their communities. Coalitions could also pay for university tuition credits or provide fellowships for women of color. However, the latter recommendation does not respond to the fact that even highly educated and skilled women of color are still not gaining access to positions of power within organizations. Supporting the attainment of professional degrees while also engaging in anti-racism organizational work is necessary.

## Recommendation 2



## Recommendation 3 **Increase opportunities for women of color in positions "on the ground" to meaningfully participate in strategic planning and decision making within institutions and the larger movement.**



Given that women of color are often systematically regulated to "doer" roles within the organization, we recommend integrating more strategic thinking opportunities and institutional power into the roles lower in the leadership hierarchy. Organizations can also



develop more participatory, non-hierarchical structures to ensure that all members have equal opportunity to engage in organizational decision making. This would allow women of color to then talk about these experiences when they apply for leadership positions.

## Recommendation



### **Learn from and collaborate with other radical social movements.**

The GBV movement is not unique with its issues of racism and white supremacy given how deeply ingrained these issues are within the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of the United States. Making a concerted effort to connect with other movements and gather ideas and strategies about how they have appraised and responded to the overrepresentation of white women in leadership positions would advance the GBV movement.

### **Develop succession plans for all GBV movement leaders, but especially white women.**

The GBV movement and coalitions in particular should require that people in leadership positions develop succession plans. The movement should begin to place term limits on leadership positions and implement co-leadership models. The recommendation could extend to all leaders in the movement who have been in their positions for multiple years. However, given that the majority of current leaders in this movement are white women, this predominantly means that white women need to move towards shorter leadership positions as this will provide more opportunities for women of color to take on these roles.

## Recommendation



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### **Develop an independent accountability structure within the movement for organizations.**

Long-term institutional change for anti-racist practice needs to be considered and continuously implemented and people need to be held accountable to these standards. At a movement-wide level, it would be important to identify: who is the "human resources department"? Who implements and holds others accountable in the movement and is not tied to funders? What kind of formalized systems can we put in place to ensure that practices of white superiority are not pervading the GBV movement?

**Invest in a sustainable self-definition process.** Coalitions and other institutions within the GBV movement define leadership by white normative standards which create exclusionary policies and practices that disproportionately impact women of color. There is a need for women of color to define, on their own terms, what leadership is outside of whiteness, and get specific about how to train people within their organizations. It would be important to have an explicit conversation about: Who does the movement consider to be a leader? What norms drive these beliefs?

## Recommendation



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**Develop and engage in ongoing accountability processes and practices to address racism and white supremacy.** Organizations should be deeply invested in developing organizational anti-racist practices and support individual advancement. It is essential to hire an organizational development consultant that specializes in anti-racist practices to support people emotionally while bringing them into greater alignment with the movement's values. At an individual level, the organization can invest in coaching services for women of color to support them through working in predominantly white institutions. White women can also engage in caucusing and coaching around their internalized racial dominance.

**Ensure comprehensive employee benefits.** These benefits are foundational to racial equity, addressing disproportionate health impacts, and responding to structural inequity. There are also many ways to be creative and innovative about what benefits are offered. For example, organizations could provide a stipend for culturally relevant therapists/mental health providers who tend to not take insurance.

## Recommendation



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**Encourage trauma stewardship.** This model, which centers and cultivates a deep awareness of the toll trauma has on the individual and the collective, offers opportunities to create conditions that encourages wellness. For example, staff could be allowed four hours of flexible trauma stewardship time each week.

**Ensure board transparency.** Given that boards are one of the most critical accountability structures within a nonprofit, they should reflect the communities they serve. There should be transparency in recruitment, how they are run, what is prioritized, and who attend Board of Director meetings.

## Recommendation



This study illuminated how deep cultural and structural changes are needed in order to address the underlying role that white supremacy and racism play in creating and maintaining racial disparities in movement leadership.

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