

within our lifetime
Take action to end racism.



**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

MOVEMENT MIC CHECK

RAPID RESPONSE TO
RACIAL DISASTERS

Ferguson. Flint. St. Louis. Standing Rock. Charlotte. Charlottesville. Baltimore. Brooklyn. Minneapolis. And on and on. Every few months, a major US city experiences a **crisis of racialized violence** - *a time of intense danger where the burden of harm is strongly influenced or fully determined by the racial identity of the individuals affected.*

Within Our Lifetime network (WOL) has captured key trends by interviewing frontline organizers from the cities above and has paired the results with top-level national movement theory. The resulting strategic recommendations are designed to support:

- **Organizers and activists** on the ground (before, during, and after trigger moments)
- **Regional and national partners** who are supporting local racial disasters
- **Funders and donors** who are investing in local, regional and national movement building infrastructure

We offer clear descriptions of what is working well *and* some of the key challenges and tensions when doing rapid response work. The tools in this report are paired with our companion website **MovementMicCheck.org** and our national Community of Practice, which invites all racial justice actors into shared reflection/growth/practice space to iterate effective tactics and spread them broadly.

Key findings include:

Local organizers face significant challenges whether they are focused on strengthening and supporting their community or responding directly to a crisis of racialized violence. The report includes a checklist of the types of racialized violence that can lead to trigger moments (see the report or website for a graph which places trigger moments in the context of a larger Movement Cycle). These include: Environmental disasters (Katrina); Police violence (countless examples); White supremacist terror (Charleston); Intra-communal violence (Orlando); Vigilante violence (Sanford); and Corporate violence (#NoDAPL).

Respondents repeatedly identified 6 core areas of urgent focus for local organizers:

Leadership/Vision/Strategy; Leadership Development; Healing; Fundraising; Communications/Technology; and Infrastructure. These are the 6 areas where friction was most likely to prevent effective organizing. For a more detailed listing of each of these areas as well as a checklist for local organizers, read the full report or visit our website **MovementMicCheck.org**.

We heard many stories of ways **National Organizers** missed their mark in supporting local communities and we share some recommendations from frontline organizers aimed at enhancing Collaborative Solidarity - *valuing interdependence and decentralization with people who are at the periphery/margins of our communities*. National organizers can be more effective if they center local organizers, create broader and intentionally collaborative networks, and foster clusters of connections. Some of the recommendations include:

- Make time to support basic and immediate needs, regardless of your long term goals.
- Encourage organizers to be in collaborative solidarity with marginalized people in their own communities.
- Make space for reflection and building a bigger picture.
- Help local organizers build capacity.

We reiterate that national players must understand local context if they wish to have a measurable *positive* impact in crisis moments. Local organizers must spend some time establishing their own readiness and protocols around rapid response.

Funders and Donors at the local and national level struggle to clearly understand our movement ecosystem. This limits their capacity to invest in communities facing racial disasters. From our interviews with frontline organizers many of them talked about the challenge of coordinating responses from local crises while navigating what resources are at their disposal and how they can be used to build and expand their capacity. The insights from the report offer some possible pathways for funders to consider when supporting local groups in building their capacity to address deep inequities that are at the root of the racial disasters they are experiencing. For instance:

- Doing due diligence to understand the roles and functions of organizations, groups and individuals in the ecosystem is well worth the time - even in rapid response moments.
- When resources start flowing, they should go initially to the organizations and individuals who play the role and function the funding is intended for, not just to new leadership with the assumption that new is better.

Our Community of Practice is designing a checklist for funders based on the recommendations of the organizers we interviewed.

Putting it into Practice

Members of our Within Our Lifetime team were invited to support local organizers in Charlottesville, Virginia starting in June 2017. We relied on some of the key learnings from the Within Our Lifetime report to shape our participation and support leading up to, during and after the August 11-12th white supremacist rally. Our website includes a case study which highlights our findings. The Charlottesville organizers were extremely generous in allowing us to share what did and *did not* work so that others around the country can be more effective. Please consider donating directly to support their continued important work on the ground in C'ville.

Finally, we invite everyone to join us in our **Community of Practice**, a loose gathering of individuals and organizations focused on applying the theory and lessons of the report to their local organizing efforts in order ***to deepen our collective capacity to transform our communities***. Join on our website **MovementMicCheck.org** to help shape the future of local Rapid Response efforts.