

within our lifetime
Take action to end racism.



**SUMMARY
REPORT**

MOVEMENT MIC CHECK

RAPID RESPONSE TO
RACIAL DISASTERS



photo credit: Paul Sableman under creative commons license <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>

INTRODUCTION

As we finalized this report, armed police and US military personnel were occupying St. Louis in the aftermath of yet another crisis of racialized violence. By the time you read this, they may be occupying your city. These constant uprisings are **acute symptomatic manifestations of the enduring American crisis of structural racism**. The government response to these **man-made racial disasters** has always been to treat surface symptoms. In light of this, local community members and national partners can and must come together to implement root-cause solutions. **This report serves as a resource-building platform with 1) specific strategies for effective community response to crises of racialized violence, and 2) techniques for national and local partners to work together toward immediate and long-term structural shifts.**

When a racial crisis occurs in a community, we often see the same set of patterns emerge -- band-aid fixes are inexpertly applied by over-taxed community members. We have repeatedly seen local organizers scrambling for resources, struggling to fundraise, duplicating efforts around mobilizing supporters, tripping up over community defense and strategy development, and taking on multiple roles and functions until they burn out.

Without an established preparedness protocol and an assigned point person uniquely positioned to organize resources, local communities struggle to effectively bring about the long-term or short-term change they long for.

While treating symptoms is critically important, especially for those who are most vulnerable - structural shifts are also vital. Lessons from one crisis can help enhance the response of future communities. Additionally, the painful regularity of racial disasters can be mitigated by strategic capacity-building prior to and in the immediate aftermath of acute incidents. We believe that raising our capacity to respond to racial disasters also reduces their likelihood and impact into the future.


While racial crises are painfully repetitive on the national level, the lessons learned in individual communities are rarely shared because organizers are so over-taxed. The Within Our Lifetime network commissioned this report to address these significant gaps in order to **enhance the capacity of local and national organizers to respond quickly, effectively and strategically in crisis moments**. *For a list of the amazing local and national organizers we interviewed, see pages 16-17.* Additionally, our team field tested the initial set of recommendations offered by this report in our work supporting organizers in Charlottesville last summer. More information and a case study is available on our website at **MovementMicCheck.org**.

STRATEGIES

This report is aimed both at **national coalition-builders** and **funders** and also the **neighborhood watch captain** planning a front-line response to white supremacists. In the following pages, we offer specific resources that will:

- help organizers understand what type of racial disaster they are facing,
- fit their particular local context into a larger movement cycle, and
- identify concrete tools designed to help local organizers assess their own preparedness ahead of or immediately after a racial disaster.

.....

This report is intentionally unfinished. It is an invitation into this project of transforming our capacity and strategy when addressing racial disasters. Whenever you see the  symbol in this report, it means that more resources on this particular topic are available on our website **MovementMicCheck.org** or that this section is in development currently. At **MovementMicCheck.org** you can also sign up to join a community of practice, or volunteer your skills to enhance the tools that have already been created. Our movement growth relies on you.



NOT JUST FERGUSON
#BlackLivesMatter
JUSTICE FOR ALL

**SETTING THE CONTEXT:
UNDERSTANDING CRISES OF
RACIALIZED VIOLENCE**

SETTING THE CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING CRISES OF RACIALIZED VIOLENCE

Uprisings that require rapid response are most often triggered by an event that can be broadly characterized as a crisis of racialized violence.

Concept: “Crisis of Racialized Violence”

Definition: A time of intense danger where the burden of harm is strongly influenced or fully determined by the racial identity of the individual or individuals affected. The nature of the danger includes but is not limited to bodily harm of individuals or groups, economic, political and other forms of discrimination and repression.

Ferguson, Tulsa, Standing Rock, Charlottesville - these locations are often referred to together given that they all experienced crises of racialized violence within the last five years. Recognizing the distinct nature of the crises can be useful (for examples and definitions, please see next page). But we have found that regardless of the specific nature or the larger regional context, most of these crises unfold along the movement cycle (see next section) in relatively predictable ways, especially with regard to the needs of the community.

CRISES OF RACIALIZED VIOLENCE

TYPE OF CRISIS	DEFINITION	CASES
Environmental disasters	Crises caused by natural forces (weather, tectonic plate movement, movement of bodies of water, etc.) but where the burden of harm is strongly influenced by institutional and individual racism	Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Sandy, Flint Water Crisis, Baton Rouge (Flooding)
Police violence	Crises caused by violent acts by police officers	Baton Rouge (Police Brutality), MPLS, Baltimore, Ferguson, Cleveland, Oakland, LA, Miami, Chicago, #NoDAPL, Detroit, Cincinnati, Boston, Milwaukee
White supremacist terror	Crises caused by violence perpetrated by white private citizens against people of color where the aggressors have the explicit motive of further values or aims of white societal domination	Charleston
Vigilante violence	Crises caused by violent acts by private citizens whose acts are facilitated and/or condoned by state actors without explicit motives of white supremacy	Sanford, FL
Intra-communal violence (gender)	Crises caused by inter-personal violence based on the gender, sexual orientation, or domestic relationship of the aggressor and victim	Orlando
Corporate violence	Violence caused by the actions of those employed by a corporation in furtherance of that firm's aims	#NoDAPL

Other types of racialized violence exist. To join our community of practice and learn more, visit our website MovementMicCheck.org. 



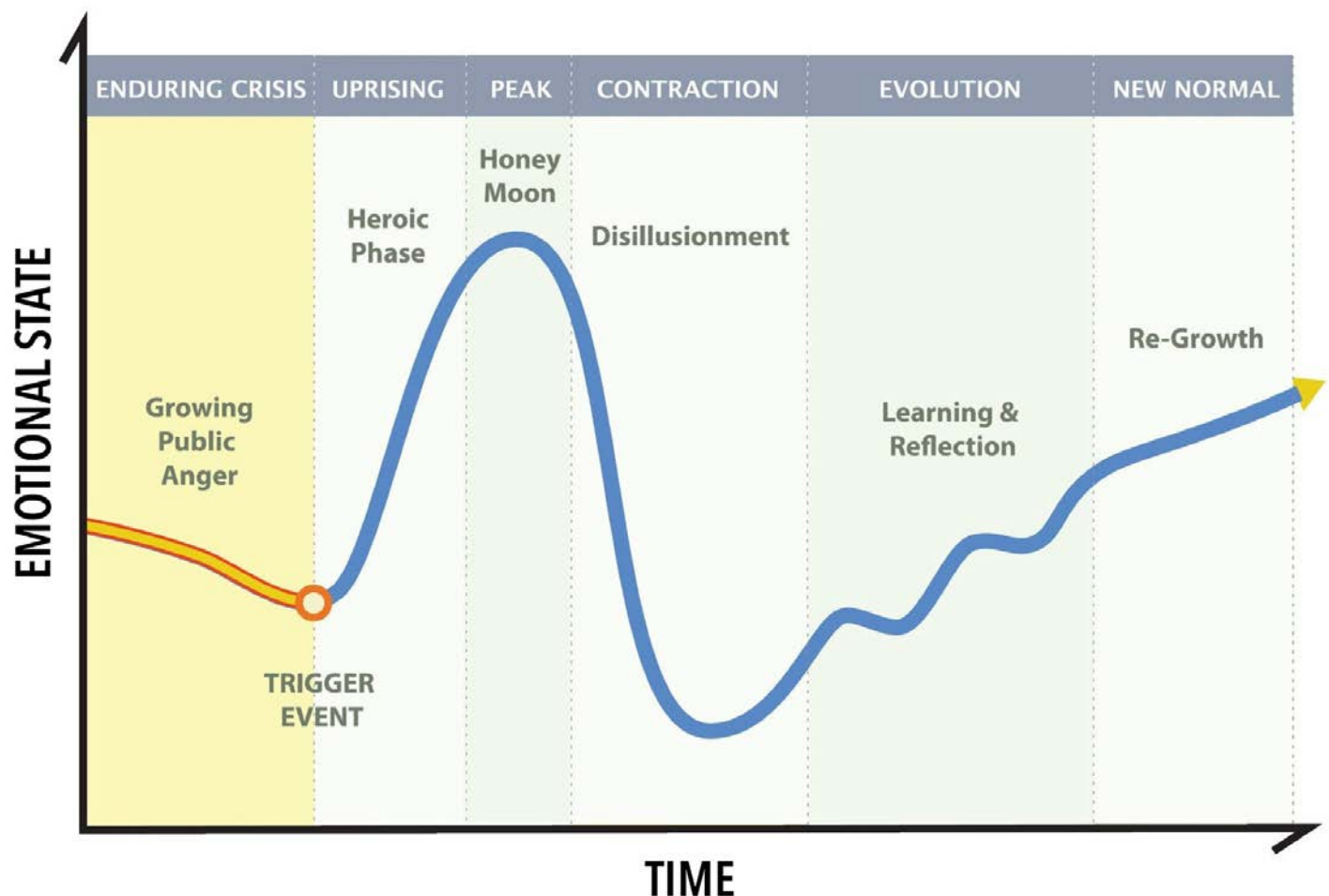
**SETTING THE CONTEXT:
THE MOVEMENT CYCLE**

SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE MOVEMENT CYCLE

by Movement Net Lab

Like all forms of change, Social Movements have cycles. We can think of them as waves, or bursts of collective human energy that move through society, that are raising up issues as they pass, and pushing new ideas and new policies forward as they go.

THE MOVEMENT CYCLE



For additional definitions and a Charlottesville Case Study of the movement cycle visit our website MovementMicCheck.org.





**RAPID RESPONSE:
MOST COMMONLY CITED
NEEDS DURING AN UPRISING**

The interviews we conducted with movement leaders across the country were mostly focused on the uprising, peak and contraction stages. This report provides context for evolution and fuel for the new normal so that we might shift the enduring crisis. Over the past 18 months our national team from Within Our Lifetime sought to engage in deep exploration to identify the needs and opportunities existing on the ground within communities that have responded to racial disasters within the past five years. We wanted to understand:

- what infrastructure already existed,
- what response(s) occurred,
- what resources the organizers and activists were able to employ,
- and what resources local organizers received from supporters in other communities.

By understanding the way response currently works and the ways in which different communities attempt to fill gaps in response infrastructure we hope to inform the emergence of a comprehensive resource framework, or objectives and elements of a response system. We also explored bright sparks -- response systems that have produced successful results as deemed by the communities most impacted by the racialized incidents.

.....

While preparedness is the goal, there will always be the need for rapid response during a crisis of racialized violence, and the experiences of the communities on the ground provide critical information to help us define the core elements of a robust plan.

The following is a distillation of the critical skills and challenges that were present for organizers across the country in the immediate aftermath of **trigger events**. Each of the following points represent multiple perspectives and significant nuances and complexities, both as they stand alone and in their interaction with each other.

It is our expectation that this list of needs serves as a checklist for organizers who find themselves in leadership in the immediate aftermath of a trigger event.

- **Leadership/Strategy/Vision**
 - Network building and coalition formation
 - Managing relationships/receiving people/assigning people to various roles/functions
 - Creating political campaigns/framing political demands

- **Leadership development**
 - Leadership development training
 - Absorption of new activists
 - Nonviolent Direct Action & Civil Resistance
 - Building/preparing for new organizational infrastructure

- **Healing**
 - Conflict Mediation
 - Healing and trauma informed work

- **Fundraising**
 - Setting up bank accounts and finding fiscal sponsorship
 - Emergency funding support and bail fund

- **Communications/Technology**
 - Media strategy and communications, narrative creation
 - Framing Immediate demands related to the incident

- **Infrastructure**
 - In-Kind Resource Flows (food, gas masks, clothing, sleeping bags, etc.)
 - Preparing and organizing meals
 - Jail Support & Legal Support
 - Securing Meeting spaces
 - Logistics/Tactical Support

Local organizers, for a useful prep checklist, an action planning design template and more, visit our website.





**OPPORTUNITIES FOR
COLLABORATIVE SOLIDARITY:
LESSONS LEARNED ON HOW
NATIONAL GROUPS CAN SHOW UP**

As noted earlier, on-the-ground organizers and activists are often under-resourced and pressed into many roles while trying to function on limited sleep and with incredible urgency. Those individuals that can manage to lift their heads up even briefly are often seeking additional support from anywhere they can get it. National groups are a ready source of resources, but lack of forethought and conflicting motives can lead to increased stress for front-line responders if not managed well. On the other hand, when national groups do show up with clarity, humility, and readiness to serve as a resource, the results can be transformative - both during the uprising and in terms of shifting the **enduring crisis**. In other words, **how national organizations show up is just as important as what they provide.**

Collaborative Solidarity is a concept created by Elle Hearn, Aaryn Lang and J Mase, from the Black trans community, about valuing interdependence and decentralization with people who are at the periphery/margins of our communities. The purpose is to build collective economic and political power in our social networks. Who is at the periphery and being centered shifts and changes depending upon who has established power and influence to do so. Therefore, it is also about orchestrating intentional collaboration with networks of people, and **not single individuals or organizations**. It makes obsolete the belief and practice of meritocracy and individualism. **Collaborative Solidarity** requires an intersectional analysis that recognizes the collective power of those who are most impacted by the issues, by centering their leadership in our communities. **Collaborative Solidarity** goes beyond diversity and inclusion. It is about building community and camaraderie despite people's differing lived experiences and identity politics. It's about fostering clusters of connections, not cliques.

The following is a list of twenty recommendations pulled directly from frontline organizers. We believe these items are relevant for local organizers but are especially important considerations for nationally focused organizations, coalitions and funders:

Make time to support basic and immediate needs, regardless of your mission/vision.

1. Do the work on the ground to meet the actual needs of the affected community by building relationships and trust.
2. Sometimes the most important work is keeping people safe and fed.
3. Pay special attention to taking care of the needs of people with warrants and those who are otherwise impacted by state violence.

Encourage organizers to be in collaborative solidarity with marginalized people in their own communities.

4. Ensure a balance between experienced organizers and new organizers; affiliated people and unaffiliated people.
5. Not everybody listens to the Black Women and Femmes. Actively disrupt that norm.
6. Cultivate intersectional leadership by those most impacted (e.g. queer/trans/black/femme/poor).
7. Pay attention to the ways in which we might be replicating dynamics of oppression, patriarchy, misogyny, classism, etc. regardless of our own identities.

Make space for reflection and building a bigger picture.

8. Make time for healing. Burnout has set in and PTSD is real. People may begin to self-medicate or lash out, relationships may begin to frazzle and break under the stress.
9. Use the opportunity to show the intersectionality of the issues.
10. Remember that oppression is at play within the community involved in the action and outside of it.
11. Create opportunities to tell the story of the action and be able to reflect, and make meaning together.
12. The key thing is to get everyone mapped, follow the money, advocate for different leverage points and focus points.
13. Get ready to be doing political education in the moment.
14. Develop and maintain good relationships with folks; they help mobilize future actions.
15. Remember to dedicate enough resources to keep people sustained for the longer haul. People are often run down by the conclusion of the Disillusionment phase.

Help local organizers build capacity.

16. People are often managing stuff they aren't prepared for. No one teaches you how to handle an uprising, how to sustain it, the externalities and collateral damage, or the support that you need. Get/provide support around this.
17. Extend trust beyond your circle to increase capacity.
18. If able, use moments effectively and not just to hoard power. Ensure that you are able to train people and give pieces of the work away, especially as a way of growing the movement's capacity and participants; investing in the capacity of your people.
19. Make use of a variety of technologies: mass texting, social media, database development/management, etc.
20. You need a variety of skills in the movement. People with social currency, de-escalators, people who make decisions on the fly, people who can delegate quickly.
21. People on the street (who are dealing with day to day violence), just kicking it, not involved in an organization: if given the resources and support, they can often be more resourceful than the traditional hierarchy of leaders. 📣



**NEXT STEPS: TOWARD A
STRONGER FUTURE TOGETHER**

NEXT STEPS: TOWARD A STRONGER FUTURE TOGETHER

This report was designed to provide both frontline organizers and national actors with some key tools and tactics to deepen their effectiveness in the aftermath of racial disasters. Additional context and resources are available in our Community of Practice, which will be launched in March 2018 with our network partners in this work. This is an invitation to join us in building out tools and frameworks for the areas that are under construction. Please visit MovementMicCheck.org for more!

We want to reiterate that national players *must* understand local context if they wish to have a measurable impact in crisis moments. Local organizers *must* spend some time establishing their own readiness and protocols around rapid response. Together we can be more effective in our collective work to end white supremacy.

A WORD ON METHODOLOGY

We focused on organizers from ten cities that faced acts of racialized state violence in the past five years and mounted a rapid response effort as a result. We know that the contexts are complex and that a more full picture of what happened in each location will be gained by speaking with more people AND we believe this report offers valuable insight into critical learnings that must be shared more broadly. We are planning a process for engaging additional voices as this project continues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to the local organizers without whose insights this report would not have been possible. We are also grateful to our co-designers - **Intelligent Mischief** and **Movement Net Lab** - who brought their wisdom, expertise, and critical framing to this report. Special thanks to our report and website designer, **Phillis Kwentoh**. Thank you to the dozens of volunteers who offered support and feedback, as well as the design team and the extended Within Our Lifetime national network. Thank you also to the local organizers in Charlottesville (and around the country) who are on the front lines every day fighting tirelessly for racial justice.

SOME OF THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN THE SERVICE OF THIS REPORT

ALICIA BELL, CHARLOTTE, NC

On September 20, 2016, Keith Lamont Scott, an unarmed black man, was shot while sitting in his car reading a book waiting to pick up his children from school. Alicia was involved in the response that followed.

Alicia is originally from Charlotte and moved back recently. She has been organizing with #SayHerName and prior to returning to Charlotte had been living in Oakland where she had been organizing around housing and prison abolition.

ANGELA PEOPLES, WASHINGTON, DC/BALTIMORE, MD

On April 19, 2015 Freddie Gray died from spinal cord injuries sustained after being wrongfully and brutally arrested and thrown in a steel can of a vehicle that was intentionally driven recklessly in order to cause harm. Angela was involved in the response that followed.

Angela has been organizing for the last ten years and currently lives in Washington D.C. She is the Executive Director of GetEqual and is part of the BYP100 DC Chapter.

ANTHONINE PIERRE, BROOKLYN, NY

The Brooklyn Movement Center (BMC) has focused on mobilizing people in central Brooklyn in response to larger mobilizations such as those that took place in protest to the verdicts in the cases of Trayvon Martin's murder, Eric Garner's murder, as well as during the JFK airport mobilizations following the Executive Order banning travel from certain muslim countries.

Anthonine is a member of the BMC.

MICHAEL SCOTT, BALTIMORE, MD

On April 19, 2015 Freddie Gray died from spinal cord injuries sustained after being wrongfully and brutally arrested and thrown in a vehicle that was intentionally driven recklessly in order to cause harm. Michael was involved in the response that followed.

Michael Scott wears many hats. He is the Founder and Chief Equity Officer of Equity Matters and a member of the Within Our Lifetime Network.

SOME OF THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED IN THE SERVICE OF THIS REPORT

MISKI NOOR, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

In November 2015, Minneapolis resident Jamar Clark was shot by police while handcuffed. Miski was involved in the response that followed.

Miski Noor was the local coordinator for the pivotal POC-only Momentum training offered to local organizers in November 2015. Miski Noor has been an organizer with BLM Minneapolis for two years and is a staff member working on Communications Strategies for the BLM Global Network.

MONTAGUE SIMMONS, ST. LOUIS, MO

On August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Michael Brown Jr. was murdered by police and his body was left in the street for hours. Montague was involved in the response that followed.

Montague Simmons is a member of the Movement 4 Black Lives policy table and sits on leadership team that generated the Vision for Black Lives. During the uprising he was the Chairperson and then Executive Director of the Organization for Black Struggle (OBS- STL). He currently works for the AFL-CIO in St. Louis.

SANDY NURSE, BROOKLYN, NY

Sandy Nurse helped co-found the May Day space in Brooklyn, NY where she works as a staff member. She also is a co-founder and co-facilitator of BKrot.org. Over the last 4-5 years she has participated in the response to racialized violence that happened locally in NYC and nationally.

MAMA LILA CABBIL, DETROIT, MI

Government officials in Flint, MI choose cost-cutting measures which endanger residents' health. Longer-term impacts are still emerging.

Mama Lila works for the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute and has been a fighter for justice for more than 7 decades. Most recently, she has been a Water Warrior fighting for equity and justice for all Michiganans.

