



CASE STUDY

Black Visions invests in building grassroots power with Bonterra Development and Digital.





CASE STUDY

Black Visions invests in building grassroots power with Bonterra Development and Digital

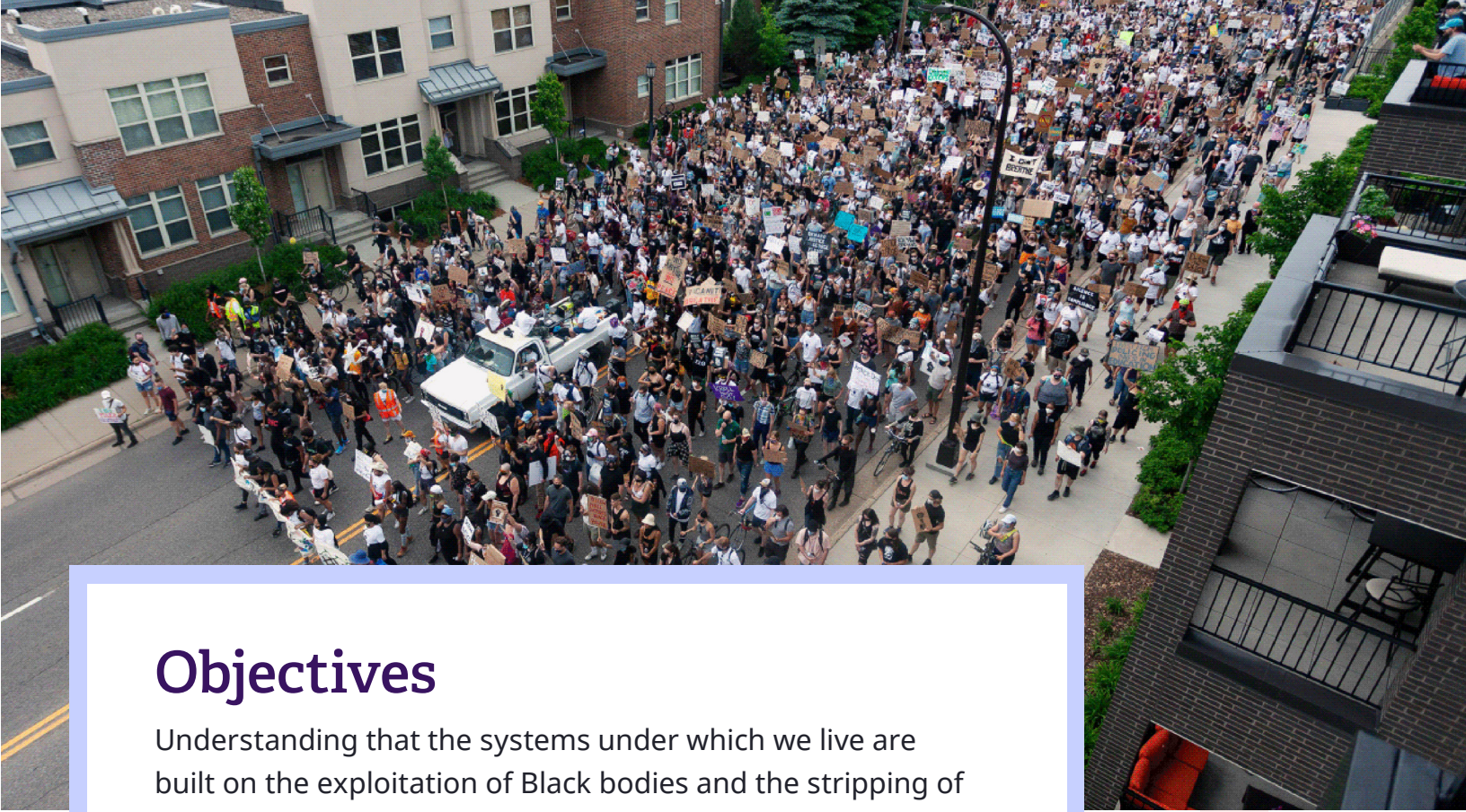
ABOUT

Black Visions is a Black-led, queer- and trans-centering organization that works to build connected Black communities and dismantle systems of violence. They are currently working toward building a police-free future and a healthy, environmentally just planet, alongside other front-line communities directly impacted by these structures.

BACKGROUND

A small, Minneapolis-based organization with just one operations staff employed at the time, they gained a viral following in summer 2020, during the nationwide protests to defund the police following the murder of George Floyd by Minnesota Police. In 30 days, the organization grew from a list of around 1,200 supporters to 800,000 and raised over \$20 million.





Objectives

Understanding that the systems under which we live are built on the exploitation of Black bodies and the stripping of indigenous land, Black Visions approaches both organizing and fundraising with an eye toward integrity and alignment with their values, and has intentionally focused on building funding through individual donors within the community rather than solely pursuing grants from foundations.

After seeing a huge influx of individual donors in June 2020, they had three clear initiatives. First, they needed to immediately scale operations in order to meet the exponential growth they had experienced. Second, they would need to build a strategy for engaging these new donors to build long-term support. Third, they would need to figure out ways to use their platform and resources to support other organizations.

“Bonterra Development isn't the lowest priced option, but we knew investing in technology that made work easy and could grow with us was important.”

- Kandace Montgomery,
Co-Executive Director

Outcomes

SCALING FOR RAPID GROWTH

With Bonterra Digital already in place, Black Visions worked with the Bonterra team to ensure that they were equipped with the tools needed to manage the influx of new donors. During this period, Bonterra saw some of the highest number of transactions per second in company history, and support staff worked around the clock to ensure that Black Visions and other clients working in the racial justice space did not experience downtime and were able to scale reliably.

For a grassroots activist organization, the technology and infrastructure for donation processing and security was particularly important. Montgomery noted that, “while many small grassroots organizations might be using Venmo, Paypal, or Cashapp to accept online donations from individuals, particularly when it comes to movement work, the IRS is very curious about that money.”



At the close of 2019, sending out year-end gift acknowledgments was a process that could have been done by manual outreach to about 150 people. A year later, using Bonterra Donor Engagement’s Development solution, Black Visions’ finance coordinator was able to send out thousands of end-of-year gift acknowledgments within a few days, a legal requirement that would have been impossible to do manually at the scale now required. Particularly as an activist organization with increased likelihood of facing political and financial scrutiny, “having an external infrastructure and technology allows us to be more secure as an organization that has a lot of liability,” notes Montgomery.



FUTURE PLANNING

After rapid growth during the summer of 2020, Black Visions has nearly achieved their initial goal of being able to raise their annual budget through grassroots sustaining donors—so what comes next?

According to Montgomery, a robust advocacy email program is at the top of the list. While social media helped them go viral, Montgomery believes that email has the ability to create a more transformative and less transactional relationship, because the longer-form style of content allows an organization to not only make simple fundraising asks, but educate on and offer tangible ways to get involved and support the work. Organizing and advocating for change in Minneapolis remains a priority, and with an expansive list of local supporters, Black Visions is prepared to flex their newly expanded grassroots power to push for change at the city council level.

For nonprofits that find themselves in a similar position of rapid growth, Montgomery recommends that an organization invest time and resources in thinking intentionally about how to follow up with new supporters, understand why they are giving, and build strategies to continue to engage them. As Black Visions embarks on the process of cultivating their new supporters for long-term engagement, Bonterra is proud to partner with them by offering solutions to increase efficiency and optimize outreach at every stage of growth.

“ We invested in Bonterra Development as a tool for individuals to be able to support the work really easily, and with this expanded base we now have that actual potential to manage the budget of a multi-million-dollar organization, just from the individuals who are giving money to us...that’s the kind of power and the kind of work that we want to move towards.”

Solutions made for building grassroots movements, empowering individual donors, and optimizing powerful organizing and advocacy campaigns.

[Learn more.](#)