

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2020

**Four Networks Launch Georgia Systemic Change Alliance with \$800,000
To Advance Meaningful, Place-Based Change for COVID Crisis and Racial Justice**

SAVANNAH, GA – In response to the COVID-19 crisis that has deepened existing racial, social, and environmental disparities, four place-based networks emerged and united to launch the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance. The networks share three critical goals:

- Recovering, rebuilding, and reimagining systems and policies post-COVID.
- Advancing the movement for black lives and broader racial justice across systems and policies.
- Building internal muscle and infrastructure of networks for the short-term and long-term.

Together, the four place-based networks include more than 100 social, environmental, and racial justice organizations across the state of Georgia. They also include leaders of faith, government, and business. By summer 2021, each local network will complete a Network Report with recommendations for a given community, and all networks will complete an Alliance Case Study about the work behind the scenes.

Albany Network – “Reimagine Albany” – is led by the United Way of Southwest Georgia. Southwest Georgia Project, a 51-year-old grassroots organization that trailblazed civil rights in Albany, is a formal partner. In the spring, Albany, Georgia, had the fourth-highest concentration of COVID globally.

Brunswick Network – “Community First Planning Commission” – is led by a long-standing collaboration of 18 black churches and allies called Community First. They have been convening for over a decade and deepened their efforts over the summer in the wake of the murder of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery.

Savannah Network – “Racial Equity and Leadership [REAL] Task Force” – is led by the Mayor’s Office. This summer, Savannah Mayor, Van Johnson, announced the Task Force and appointed former Savannah Mayor, Dr. Otis Johnson, as chair. [Over 30 cross-sector members already launched the work.](#)

Statewide Network – “Just Georgia Coalition” – is led by the NAACP of Georgia and includes formal partnerships with Black Voters Matter, New Georgia Project, Southern Center for Human Rights, Working Families, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and Black Male Voter Project. Leaders and partners have already developed a website (www.just-georgia.org) with plans and demands.

As a grant-making partner, The Sapelo Foundation committed \$800,000 to support this work. It built relationships with leaders from all four networks, helped identify common goals and needs, and approved two-year grants to all four networks in the Alliance. A matching grant is included in the second year, to help each network fundraise and implement recommendations.

The Sapelo Foundation and the four networks collectively selected Georgia-based Partnership for Southern Equity to manage and coordinate activities.

“Our desire to move forward and do something to help can be paralyzed by too many options or not knowing where to start,” stated Shaunae Motley, president and CEO of United Way of Southwest Georgia. “The coronavirus pandemic taken together with the recent incidents of social injustice brings

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into sharp focus how racism manifests itself in the daily lives of black and brown communities. No single leader, corporation, or organization has all the explanations, ideas or solutions. Our community needs people of all ages, ethnicities, and sectors to clear the path for learning, listening, getting involved, and taking action together. We're excited to launch this effort and look forward to reimagining equity together.”

“Real work requires real commitment, real faith, and real courage,” said Pastor Craig Campbell, chair of Community First out of Brunswick. “And we believe that this is a divine appointment for this time.”

About The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE)

PSE (www.psequity.org) is an Atlanta-based nonprofit that advances policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South. Through forums, research, and organizing efforts, PSE brings together the regional community to lift up and encourage just, sustainable, and civic practices for balanced growth and opportunity.

About The Sapelo Foundation

The Sapelo Foundation (www.sapelofoundation.org) is based in Savannah, Georgia and works statewide, with a mission to strive for a just Georgia, through partnerships and solutions that increase environmental protection, social prosperity, and civic power.

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