Enhancing Minority Business Enterprise in Savannah is essential for racial parity.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

TRANSFORMED COMMUNITIES

SOCIAL IMPACT

+ =
“The best is truly yet to come, and we are beyond grateful that The Sapelo Foundation took a chance on us.”
Shaunae Motley, President & CEO, United Way of Southwest Georgia
SUMMARY

**Georgia Systemic Change Alliance**

During the summer of 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis that deepened existing racial, social, and environmental disparities, The Sapelo Foundation launched a special two-year, $800,000 grant initiative in Georgia. Through ongoing and new partnerships, The Sapelo Foundation, one statewide network based in Atlanta, and three local networks based in Savannah, Brunswick, and Albany, all united to launch the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance. Though each network was at a different stage in its lifecycle and had a unique history and vision, they were all bound by their commitments to make change, learn together, and advance three common goals for their communities:

- Recovering, rebuilding, and reimaging 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 included more than 100 social, environmental, and racial justice organizations across the state of Georgia. They also included leaders of faith, government, and business.

- **Albany Network** – “Reimagine Albany” – is a nonprofit network led by the United Way of Southwest Georgia.
- **Brunswick Network** – “Community First Planning Commission” – is faith-based network 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 in the wake of the murder of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery.
- **Savannah Network** – “Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force” – is a public-private partnership led by the Mayor’s Office. During the summer of 2020, Savannah Mayor, Van Johnson, announced the Task Force and appointed former Savannah Mayor, Dr. Otis Johnson, as chair.
- **Statewide Network** – “Just Georgia Coalition” – is an advocacy network 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.

In year one, concluding in summer 2021, all networks would complete a year of planning. Specifically, each of the three local networks would complete a Network Report, with recommendations for their given community. Additionally, all four networks would complete an Alliance Case Study about the work behind the scenes during a critical year with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. In year two, starting in summer 2021, all networks would implement their plans. Together, the four networks and The Sapelo Foundation collectively selected Georgia-based Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) to manage and coordinate activities, provide technical assistance, and help write the local Network Reports and Alliance Cases Study.

**Partnership for Southern Equity**

The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) advances policies and institutional actions that promote racial equity and shared prosperity in the American South. We are cultivating an equity ecosystem for the Southeast through four issue-based coalitions: Just Energy, Just Growth, Just Health and Just Opportunity. Their coalition structure ensures that all of their work, whether a research product, a corporate training or a regional coalition, is informed by, and elevates, the priorities of Black and Brown communities across the region. In addition to PSE’s four program areas which advance racial equity efforts in health, energy, the economy and the built environment, PSE has a consulting unit that supports municipal and county governments. Lastly, PSE’s team of seven seasoned community organizers is steadily growing a base of activated residents ready to lead on multiple fronts in the movement for racial justice in the southeast.

**METHODOLOGY**

One of PSE’s unique attributes has been phrased by its founder Nathaniel Smith as, “we don’t do campaigns.” This is Nathaniel’s way of making sure that communities who seek PSE’s assistance know that while there’s value in reforming policies and programs, the greater purpose is to cultivate understanding of the complex system of values, assumptions and processes that inform the institutions and individuals who in turn make those policies and programs we all seek to reform. More precisely, the premise of PSE’s methodology is that an understanding of how race is embedded in those values, assumptions and processes that shape our society is the most essential precursor to organizing for systemic change. Today, this construct is popularly referred to as structural racism. While PSE has successfully organized for policy wins through four program areas, its training, technical assistance and community organizing center on this vision of priming southern communities of color to lead in the dismantling of structural racism, a much longer-term proposition than institutional reform.

**Other core concepts that undergird PSE’s training and technical assistance**

- **“Equity ecosystem.”** We must build an ecosystem of institutions and individuals to replace the current system. For this reason, most of our work is led by coalitions of community stakeholders that we are activating through training, capacity building grants and advocacy.
- **“Racism hurts everybody.”** While our issues work is keenly focused on shifting racial disparities, we believe that everyone has a stake in dismantling systemic racism, so our methods are also designed to illustrate how racism hurts everyone, not just people of color.
- **“Equity is a way, not a what.”** Our tools are designed to help communities articulate their values, then apply those values wholistically to their work. Our framework allows organizations to integrate racial equity principles into their culture, decision-making and in all of their work, avoiding the common pitfall of creating new “equity” initiatives in isolation.
Case Study of Four Interconnected Networks

Georgia Systemic Change Alliance

May – July 2021

- Report generation, which required a series of discussions, informational interviews and gathering of documents. Each network took a co-editing approach with PSE to finalize reports.
- Exit interviews to help PSE understand what each network did get and did not get out of the process. Interviews were conducted with three members of each network.

Agendas from GSCA training sessions and monthly meetings are linked below

Meetings
- November 19, 2020
- December 3, 2020
- December 10, 2020
- January 28, 2021
- February 25, 2021
- March 25, 2021
- April 22, 2021
- May 27, 2021
- June 24, 2021
- July 22, 2021

Trainings
- Racial Equity 101 Training
- Racial Equity 102 Training

“Change moves at the speed of trust.” PSE enters every contractual relationship with a commitment to first build trust with the communities that we engage. This often means that we will continue to build trust with those communities beyond our contractual obligations.

These catch phrases run through the course of PSE facilitations for the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance, in service to two primary goals:
- Generate a common understanding of the core concepts of race, racism, structural racism, systems change and racial equity across all networks; and
- Provide practical tools to help networks develop a work plan of goals and strategies for change.

With these goals and the initiative’s timeframe in mind, PSE designed the activities described below.

PLANNING PROCESS

Technical assistance to the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance was organized by monthly meetings. Meetings with Brunswick (Community First Planning Commission), Albany (Reimagine Albany) and NAACP (JUST GA) networks were held at least twice a month. The REAL Task force held three meetings each month- one for the steering committee, one for the whole REAL Task force network, and in the second half of the planning timeline, each of its six issue-based committees also met monthly.

Each monthly Georgia Systemic Change Alliance meeting consisted of the following activities:
- Group discussions on systems change, grounded by readings with PSE founder and Chief Equity Officer Nathaniel Smith.
- Regular updates from each network to the Alliance on its progress and technical support needs.
- Alliance Learning Lab, a 30-minute segment dedicated to cohort-building and troubleshooting and guest speakers who presented on real examples or tools that can help the networks ground their work in racial equity systemic change.

In addition to providing technical assistance through monthly meetings, PSE facilitated the following trainings, made available to all Alliance members, their network members and even the general public:

September – December 2020
- Discovery interviews to help participants understand what each network wanted to achieve through the process. These interviews were conducted with 13 key leaders from all the Networks.
- “Headlines” exercise to help each Network formulate and institutionalize its vision and values.

January – April 2021
- Racial Equity 101, each network was trained on what racial equity is and why it matters. Data from each network’s city was used to substantiate concepts and provide a historical framework from which the networks could more effectively address current issues.
- Racial Equity 102, each Network then received a training that unravels myths behind structurally racist decisions, clarifies the distinction between social change and systems change and helps networks develop an alternative vision for their communities. REAL Task force of Savannah and Community First Planning Commission of Brunswick completed this training.
- Issue Determination, each network was provided technical assistance on how to prioritize the most pressing social justice issues they identified.
- Systems Change Retreat, a series of practical exercises from PSE’s toolbox to help the networks conduct an analysis of their priority issues and understand the power dynamics of those issues at a local level. The retreat included workshops on data collection and interpretation, issue analysis and power mapping including environmental scans and asset mapping. This retreat was specifically for Reimagine Albany and leaders from other coalitions were able to attend.
- March 2021 Learning Lab session on the Youth Power Model featuring youth leaders from PSE’s Yes! For Equity. The discussion featured Katie Warner, Equity Consultant for YES! for Equity, Jasmin Benas, Youth Organizer and Cris Campos, Youth Organizer from YES! for Equity.
- April 2021 Learning Lab session on systems change work on the ground from PSE’s network. The discussion featured Chandra Farley, Director of PSE’s Just Energy portfolio and Rebecca Schmidt, Director of Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives for the State of Virginia Department of Health.
OVERARCHING LEARNINGS

The following reflections were developed from observations shared in Partnership for Southern Equity team meetings throughout the planning process.

Alliance-wide Themes

Strong relationship capital. It is not coincidental, but rather intentional, that each network was initiated by at least one individual with strong local legitimacy and trust with both residents and decision-makers. For example, as a former mayor, Dr. Otis Johnson not only assembled a powerful network of local leaders but kept them engaged throughout the planning phase. As President of the United Way of Southwest Georgia, Shaunaee Motley has a proven track record of supporting the same communities that Reimagine Albany seeks to empower. And as elected officials, Dr. Felicia Harris and Commissioner Allen Booker are moving reforms forward swiftly and skillfully with broad community support. Beyond the leadership, network members were also selected for their social capital with communities of color in each city. Combining leaders with topical experience with influencers who can generate buy-in for each network’s final recommendations seems to be a winning model.

Limited internal capacity. Careful consideration will be needed in devising the operational structure of each network as it phases into implementation. For the planning phase, the leadership relied on its personal staff to provide logistical and administrative support. PSE also provided extensive logistical coordination. In Savannah, the REAL Task force will become a permanent advisory resource for the City of Savannah, so perhaps it will receive administrative support from city staff. In Albany, the network will also become a permanent body housed at United Way of Southwest Georgia, so perhaps it will continue to rely on the organization’s staff as well. As a community-based organization, Community First Planning Commission may need more internal capacity building (beyond the Mayor’s Office of Savannah or United Way of Southwest Georgia) to support its network on an ongoing basis.

Varying partnership models. Although every network has a core leadership group and a larger body of participants, they operated differently. Albany only engaged its steering committee (fewer than ten members) in the planning process, but its leadership has been deliberative about forming strategic partnerships for the network with key external stakeholders. This was also the case in Brunswick; Community First Planning Commission (CFPC) is generating a lot of support from external partners, but CFPC does not plan to formalize these partnerships into a separate network. REAL Task force of Savannah engaged its entire body in the planning process and thus has a significantly larger number of stakeholders at the table. It will be instructive for future investments of The Sapelo Foundation in coalition-building to learn how these varying models affect each network’s ability to move the needle to advance their goals.

Key Successes

Stronger command of the issues. Every network in the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance (GSCA) has seasoned subject matter experts, ensuring that its work is evidence-driven. However, the planning process and PSE’s facilitation provided the space and support that the networks needed to take a step back and look at the big data picture so that all members were operating from a similar understanding of the issues. A significant portion of the participants’ time together was used to aggregate data and then share findings back with their peers.

Better understanding of terminology from the racial equity field. To be certain, no member of a GSCA network came into the planning process moved slower with REAL Task Force, they also maintained a much higher level of participation and Reimagine Albany each had fewer than ten participants. Conversely, while the decision-making diet. Albany only engaged its steering committee (fewer than ten members) in the planning process, but its leadership has been deliberative about forming strategic partnerships for the network with key external stakeholders. This was also the case in Brunswick; Community First Planning Commission (CFPC) is generating a lot of support from external partners, but CFPC does not plan to formalize these partnerships into a separate network. REAL Task force of Savannah engaged its entire body in the planning process and thus has a significantly larger number of stakeholders at the table. It will be instructive for future investments of The Sapelo Foundation in coalition-building to learn how these varying models affect each network’s ability to move the needle to advance their goals.

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Strong attrition. Impressively, every citywide network in GSCA is still very engaged in the ongoing development of the Alliance. This is an exceptional demonstration of commitment given that the entire planning process occurred under quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that all GSCA meetings, and monthly meetings with networks were virtual. Even more remarkable, REAL Task force achieved a high level of attrition of its large number of over 10 participants. Every one of their network meetings had at least 20 participants, some had many more. This success can be attributed to the Task force's leadership- their ability to keep participants compelled by their vision. In Albany and Brunswick, where only network leaders participated, the smaller scope of issues and number of participants made the process much more manageable over the one-year period.

New relationships forged. GSCA was seeded on the idea that because South Georgia communities have overlapping history, culture and operate in the same state policymaking environment, they can benefit from an alliance- to exchange ideas, learn from their respective experiences and support one another. Indeed, network leaders did form camaraderie, providing feedback, information and encouragement with each other. They have even committed to coming together on a road trip to visit all three cities and continue building on the relationships that have been fostered.

Network reports to be leveraged for ongoing support. Each network produced a final report which can be leveraged to educate and attract new funders, decision-makers and community stakeholders to each network and the greater Alliance. Trust built with PSE and The Sapelo Foundation. Last, it is worth noting that the planning process helped build trust for a fruitful three-way partnership between The Sapelo Foundation, the networks and their members, and PSE. The networks’ contributions of time, energy and knowledge made for productive and deliberative discussions.

Comparative Challenges and Lessons

Pre-existing relationships and groundwork. The Brunswick network CFPC coincidentally had completed two PSE trainings in person prior to the formation of the Alliance. The groundwork that laid in these sessions made for more efficient communication during the planning process and enabled a more effortless working relationship. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the other networks did not have the benefit of establishing a foundation with PSE as the technical assistance provider through in person trainings.

Working with leadership vs. full body. Except for REAL Task force, which its full membership body, PSE only worked with the leadership of each network. Each arrangement has trade-offs. For a one-year timeline with a sizeable scope of work, working exclusively with the leadership made for a clearer process because communication was limited to a smaller number of people, but it does not achieve the goal of building capacity beyond the network’s leadership among community stakeholders to carry more of the work on the ground. A good compromise may be to designate a relatively small group for the planning process that can be made up of representatives of all levels of leadership, and then extend training opportunities to the communities that each networks serves, as was done with the Racial Equity 101 training.

Network size. Similarly, the number of participants in the planning process also affected how quickly the networks could move from one step to the next. REAL Task force of Savannah was by far the biggest group with over 30 participants, while Community First Planning Commission of Brunswick and Reimagine Albany each had fewer than ten participants. Conversely, while the decision-making process moved slower with REAL Task Force, they also maintained a much higher level of participation throughout the process.
Limited time. Community First Planning Commission of Brunswick succeeded in setting clear, time-bound, actionable goals, and even implemented some of them during the planning process. This success can be attributed in great part to the fact that they were established well before the other two citywide networks. Reimagine Albany also successfully finalized its one-year and three-year goals, and REAL Task Force set near-final goals for its six issue areas.

Scope of issues. Each network set out to develop a work plan consisting of an analysis and core strategies on two issues. Community First Planning Commission of Brunswick had already established three issue areas but selected two of them to develop further through GSCA. As a startup, Reimagine Albany did not have any pre-existing scope but settled on three issue areas through the GSCA process. REAL Task force is also a new body but had already committed to covering a large scope of issues as the mayor’s designated advisory body and as such, proceeded with developing six issue areas through GSCA. That said, two issue areas still seem like an appropriate scope for a one-year process. Completing a full work plan for two issue areas is still ambitious but achievable in the given timeframe.

Varying levels of understanding among participants. Training was central to the GSCA planning process, as shifting systems requires a shift within individuals first. However, training groups with varying levels of exposure to concepts of structural racism and system change, tied to a planning process with specified deliverables, proved difficult. For certain, the Racial Equity 101 & 102 trainings deepened the collective understanding that each network holds, but it was difficult to achieve a common baseline of understanding from which networks can produce one cohesive work plan with participants. Instead, core concepts from trainings were revisited throughout the development of issues analyses and final recommendations. With more time, the process could accommodate a wider range of trainings and allow participants to choose which ones they were best suited for.

Virtual meeting fatigue. It goes without saying that the global pandemic complicated the planning process, primarily by constraining networks to only meet by phone and video conference. Despite these less-than-optimal circumstances, most participants continued showing up to the end. However, there was a noticeable shift in the energy of all networks towards the end that is simply attributable to an over-extension of everyone’s attention, caused by too much virtual interaction.

Need for additional data support. PSE’s team provided much more data support than expected to keep each network’s analysis moving towards final recommendations. In future endeavors, The Sapelo Foundation should anticipate that participants’ availability and ability to do research in addition to regular meetings may be limited, and that more resources may need to be allocated for support in this area.

LEARNINGS FROM GEORGIA SYSTEMIC CHANGE ALLIANCE NETWORKS

The following reflections were generated through a virtual survey distributed to all participants, meeting notes and exit interviews with three participants from each network.

Racial Equity and Leadership Task force (REAL Task Force) in Savannah, GA
The Alliance allows the REAL Savannah Task Force to inform and learn from the social change efforts of Albany, Brunswick, and the NAACP of Georgia. Together we are learning how to identify common goals and how systemic change is achieved. Members of the Alliance are participating in a learning lab about how to identify and analyze values, policies, strategies, tactics, and practices that lead to real systemic change. Each network is benefiting by learning about both the common and unique experiences of Alliance members. This will be shared in a case study developed by PSE. Each member of the Alliance will be stronger as a result of this collaboration.

—Dr. Otis Johnson, former Mayor of Savannah & REAL Task force Lead

Timeline-to-goals misalignment. PSE’s support for REAL Task force would have been more successful under two-year time frame. In this scenario, the first year would be spent building relationships, building a foundation of understanding in core concepts and establishing priority issues. The second year would focus on the analyses the development of optimal policy alternatives for the City of Savannah pursue, then set up the best structure for implementing those alternatives. However, given the task force’s one-year timeframe and large scope of work, PSE’s approach was mis-aligned with the network’s goals.

Disjointed process for some. Some participants felt that they were not given enough guidance to follow the process from beginning to end. Though the process moved along, everyone was not clear that it was leading to the production of a work plan. Others were aware of the final product but felt that trainings should have been more directly tied to the development of the work plan.

Engagement among participants wavered. Although most participants continued to attend planning sessions, the knowledge, familiarity with planning processes and experience of each participant was a factor in their level of engagement in the process. In other words, some participants contributed more than others. Perhaps the technical assistance could have been more focused on certain participants to maximize their contributions. In the case of REAL Task force, the large number of participants made it more challenging to engage each participant more substantively.

PSE’s role too directive. For the REAL Task force, which had established its own planning process prior to the engagement of PSE, PSE’s facilitation may have been too directive, rather than complimentary to the process that was already in motion. One participant reflected that it would have been more helpful if PSE simply presented the network with a range of planning approaches that they could choose from and facilitate themselves.

Lack of focus on fundamental concepts in training. Many participants had little to no previous exposure to fundamental concepts, like “theory of change” or “asset-based community development” that trainings did not delve into, but that were referred to because they were relevant to the planning process. PSE could have provided more training in these concepts so that those individuals could engage more in the planning process. Alternatively, REAL Task force committees spent time on educating participants before they could develop issues analyses.

“It goes without saying that the global pandemic complicated the planning process, primarily by constraining networks to only meet by phone and video conference. Despite these less-than-optimal circumstances, most participants kept showing up to the end.”
There is a historical precedent for mayoral task forces in Savannah. The REAL Task force is led by Dr. Otis Johnson who, during his tenure as mayor (2003-2012), created a task force on poverty that resulted in the creation of Step Up Savannah, a highly active anchor organization for the city. Another task force he created resulted in the Savannah Impact Program. The “task force” model is to bring subject matter experts together with civic leaders who hold influence on the issues that the Task force will address, so that there is thoughtful analysis informing the work and the relationships needed to implement the work. Many participants from the planning process are expected to stay involved as the Task force transitions into a permanent oversight body for implementation.

Albany has many Task forces- citywide arranged through its partnership with Emory Prevention Initiative, was a powerful step toward building citywide cooperation around Albany members an opportunity to engage residents in its work. This training, along with other community trainings that United Way and publicized by United Way of Southwest Georgia, providing Reimagine Community training was powerful. As we’ve worked with PSE in finalizing our final report, I personally didn’t misunderstand. Equity work is indeed a journey and we are only in the beginning phases.

Reimagine Albany, Albany, GA

Equity work is indeed a journey and we are only in the beginning phases. As we’ve worked with PSE in finalizing our final report, I personally didn’t realize how far we’ve come! Through this process, we’ve acknowledged that successful outcomes will manifest in different forms, including better internal policies, stronger community results, and improved relationships and processes.

–Shauna Motley, President & CEO, United Way of Southwest Georgia

Community training was powerful. Racial Equity 101 was open to the public and publicized by United Way of Southwest Georgia, providing Reimagine Albany members an opportunity to engage residents in its work. This training, along with other community trainings that United Way arranged through its partnership with Emory Prevention Initiative, was a powerful step toward building citywide cooperation around racial equity, a central goal in the creation of Reimagine Albany. One member of Reimagine Albany's leadership felt the content was relevant and well aligned with the community's needs.

Process lacked clarity. Until the last three months of the planning process, technical assistance focused on coalition-building, not on the production of work plans. However, some committee members were expressly focused on the production of a report and thus felt that the process was unclear in sessions that were not focused on the report.

Technical assistance misaligned with experience of some steering committee. Because some of Reimagine Albany steering committee members have been in conversation with one another long before Reimagine Albany formed, they already shared a strong common understanding of the core concepts that PSE's trainings covered, and an understanding of the nuances of systemic racism in Albany. For those participants, some of the material felt redundant. They may have benefitted from more advanced training, or more open dialogue rather than exercises.

Lack of cohesion within steering committee. While several committee members had strong rapport with one another, others did not agree that the work should center on racial equity. Shared principles are the building blocks of successful coalitions; Reimagine Albany's leadership will need to address this dissonance as it grows the network.

Task force may not be ideal structure. Albany has many Task forces- citywide representational bodies convened by a large institution working on common goals. For at least one participant, this may have made the Reimagine Albany process feel more procedural and less geared toward tangible change. A smaller committee composed of stakeholders with shared values and a similar level of investment may have better suited Reimagine Albany to develop a work plan that a larger network of stakeholders could then respond to and implement.

United Way of Southwest Georgia leadership is in a powerful role. Because it is viewed as a gatekeeper institution with not only financial capital but regional influence, it is powerful for United Way of Southwest Georgia to lead this effort. As Reimagine Albany becomes even more public facing, it will be impactful for the broader community to see United Way at the helm of Albany's movement for racial justice. There is also great potential to disrupt paternalistic norms in Southwest Georgia’s philanthropic community by engaging all grantees of United Way in a critical analysis of structural racism and systems change in their work through the Reimagine Albany network.

Patient and flexible funding and facilitation is critical to success. One Reimagine Albany leader observed about the overarching GSCA experience that it’s important for funders and facilitators of social change work and coalition building to adapt their support, timeline and expectations to the unique strengths and needs of each community to ensure they achieve their goals on the community’s terms.
Although NAACP of Georgia was enlisted to join GSCA, it became apparent early in the planning process that the exceptional circumstances of 2020 and 2021 challenged the organization’s capacity to participate consistently. Chief among these circumstances was the Presidential election of 2020, which in Georgia led into a highly charged runoff election in January 2021, which called for NAACP to operate one of the state’s largest voter engagement campaigns, particularly among African American voters. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic severely constrained these civic activities, which in turn also affected the organization’s capacity to fully engage in the Alliance. That said, the following information about this network’s progress in growing its Just Georgia racial equity-centered coalition was gathered through several meetings between PSE and the statewide network.

With its focus on state violence, The Just Georgia Coalition is employing a “solidarity committee” structure organized by cases of police brutality and other forms of state-sanctioned violence, including the cases of Matthew Zadok Williams in DeKalb County, Oscar Cain in Atlanta, Julian Lewis in Screven County and Ahmaud Arbery in Glynn County. They have also organized around the Stand Your Ground case of Marc Wilson in Bulloch County.

The coalition meets weekly in virtual grounding sessions to discuss ongoing campaigns, brainstorm ideas, legal updates on cases, legislative reports, and updates on the work of solidarity committees. Though the coalition has been challenged in building internal capacity, many partners have prior working relationships which has helped to move plans forward and to leverage members’ extensive relationships in operationalizing goals. The pandemic poses additional challenges to engaging communities, but virtual organizing like the digital campaign to recall former District Attorney Jackie Johnson, who has since been replaced through an election by Keith Higgins, have proven successful.

**Mission**

Just Georgia calls for solutions that meet the immediate and long-term needs of Georgians impacted by state violence, and that reduces the power of racially oppressive systems.

**Just Georgia Partners**

- Southern Center for Human Rights: Tiffany Williams-Robert, Micah Herskind
- Georgia NAACP: James Woodall (outgoing), Jasmine Younge
- Working Families Party: Casey Jenkins
- Black Voters Matter: Wanda Mosely, Fenika Miller
- New Georgia Project: Francys Johnson, Nsè Ufot, Kanneer King, Nicole Henderson
- Malcolm X Grassroots Movement: Taliba Obyya
- Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights: Mawuli Davis
- Unaffiliated Partner: Tamika Middleton

**Current Goals**

- Achieve prosecutorial accountability and full application of due process in cases of state violence.
- Build the capacity of grassroots leaders and organizations, beyond institutional capacity.

**Advocacy Targets**

- Voter education and engagement in issues of state violence.
- Transparent, Independent Investigations of Law Enforcement Misconduct.
- Generate popular support for criminal law reforms and stave off attempts to repeal those reforms.
- Invest in local movement infrastructure.
- Improve prosecutor accountability.
Success to Date

Repealing of citizens arrest law: the coalition led the effort to fully repeal the citizens arrest statute immediately following the murder of Ahmaud Arbery. The repeal was signed into law in Summer 2021.

Solidarity committees: Successfully engaging and fully supporting families impacted by state violence is at the core of Just Georgia’s work. After these cases conclude, the families and communities are often forgotten and the media turns its attention elsewhere. However, through the coalition’s solidarity committees, the families stay connected to the advocacy and receive media and organizing training.

Garrison Fellowship: In summer 2020, Just Georgia hosted the inaugural Garrison Fellowship, an opportunity for middle and high school students from across the state to convene around the coalition’s issues of focus. Fellows explored power dynamics in their homes, schools and communities. Fellows participated in a virtual trek through Georgia’s powerful human rights organizing history, hearing firsthand accounts of experiences from seasoned activists. Identifying heroes and analyzing their power, fellows were able to connect their personal journeys with historical figures they admire. Fellows also learned about systems transformation, created social justice campaigns with local demands for their respective communities and studied the state’s legal landscape.

Funding

Just Georgia has been able to secure $365,000 in funding from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Donor of Color Network, Circle for Justice Innovations, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Solidaire Fund and an anonymous donor.

JUST GEORGIA LEADERSHIP BIOS

James Woodall, Georgia NAACP State President

James is an 8-year veteran of the United States Army. He ran for State Representative in 2016 and served on the State Committee of the Democratic Party of Georgia and State Vice President of the Georgia Clients Council. He also sits on the Georgia Chamber’s Board of Governors. Woodall has served as NAACP State President of the Georgia Youth & College Division, Vice President of its Bulloch County branch and State Chairman of the Young Adults Committee. He is an Associate Minister at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia. He has been named to Georgia Southern’s “40 under 40” and “Alumnus of the Year” in 2020 and was named a 2021 #Atlanta500 Leader by Atlanta Magazine. James is a native of Riverdale, Georgia and an alumnus of Georgia Southern University with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He is in his final year at the Morehouse School of Religion pursuing a Master of Divinity from the Interdenominational Theological Center.

Tiffany Williams Roberts, Southern Center for Human Rights

Tiffany has practiced criminal defense since 2008 with the Atlanta Judicial Circuit Public Defender and later as a solo practitioner. As a public defender, Tiffany represented hundreds of indigent clients facing felony prosecution and graduated from the Gideon’s Promise trial advocacy training program. She expanded her private practice to include civil rights litigation for victims of police abuse.

A significant portion of Tiffany’s practice is dedicated to pro bono representation of activists and organizers. She has been recognized by the Atlanta NAACP, DeXbAl Funders Network, and Southern Center for Human Rights for movement lawyering and social justice activism.

Tiffany volunteered with Building Locally to Organize for Community Safety (BLOCs), advocating successfully for legislative improvements to the Atlanta Citizen Review Board. In 2015, Tiffany co-founded United for a New Atlanta (ULNA) in response to calls for criminal justice reforms in Atlanta courtrooms. She is also a founding member of the Atlanta chapter of the global Black Lives Matter network and was featured as a Best Citizen Activist by Creative Loafing.

Tiffany joined the Atlanta Fulton County Pre-Arrest Diversion Program (PAD) Design Team in 2017 and continues her work on its Advisory Board. Tiffany is a member of Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms’ Progressive Agenda Working Group (PAWG), and as chairperson of the Ebenezer Baptist Church Social Justice Ministry. Tiffany works to build bridges between grassroots social justice organizations, the legal community and faith-based institutions. She is Deputy Director of the National Institute for Teaching Ethics and Professionalism (NIFTEP) and Adjunct Professor of Law at the Georgia State University College of Law.

Lericia Harris, Community First Planning Commission Board Member

Lericia Harris is broadcaster/reporter covering athletics. She has worked for ESPN, ACC Network, Raycom Sports, Entercom Radio Atlanta, and Rolling Out Magazine. Her versatility was once heard across Entercom Radio Atlanta platforms. Lericia is the former host of the Sunday morning show Sports in the City on Sports Radio 92.9 The Game where she could be heard interviewing and discussing all things Atlanta sports. She also formally served as the weekday mornings drive news anchor, and co-host of the weekly show, HBCU Play on WAOK 1380AM. Rolling Out Magazine provided an avenue for Lericia to deliver quick-turn stories about compelling news, sports, political happenings, and other cultural phenomena from across the nation.

A proud graduate of Bethune-Cookman University, Lericia obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications - Broadcasting Journalism in 2013 and her Master’s in Advertising from the University of Florida in 2015. Lericia planned, coordinated, and executed the March on Georgia for The Georgia NAACP in Atlanta, Georgia. She is an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., the National Association for Black Journalists, serves as a board member of the nonprofit The Flourish Foundation, Inc., operates as the Field Director for Just Georgia, and serves as the Coordinator for the nonprofit Community First Planning Commission.

Case Study of Four Interconnected Networks

Georgia Systemic Change Alliance
NEXT STEPS

Savannah- REAL Task force
The REAL Task force is currently completing its report to Mayor Otis Johnson. The Task force’s goals for the remainder of the year are to secure approval of its final recommendations from the City of Savannah, engage the community in their proposed plans through a town hall event and other outreach activities, and transition the Task force into a permanent body.

Brunswick- Community First Planning Commission
CFPC will likely complete a significant portion of its goals by the end of the year, which includes planning the Environmental Justice Academy through 2026, continuing to grow its youth programs, distributing public education materials on green infrastructure, establishing the Justice Center and the District Attorney Citizen Review Panel.

Albany- Reimagine Albany
Reimagine Albany will likely continue to finalize its work plan for the remainder of 2021, and then leverage its diverse partnerships to share its plans widely in the community. No final decisions have been made about what Reimagine Albany’s permanent structure or decision-making process will look like in the future.
Community First Planning Commission
P.O. Box 2574 Brunswick, GA 31521
(912) 398-9923
https://www.facebook.com/community1st912

Reimagine Albany
an initiative of United Way of Southwest Georgia
112 N Westover Blvd.
Albany, GA 31707
(404) 513-7668
https://www.unitedwayswga.org/

Georgia NAACP
2001 M.L.K. Jr Dr SW, Atlanta, GA 30310
(404) 577-8977
https://www.naacpga.org

The Sapelo Foundation
2 E Bryan St #1150, Savannah, GA 31401
(912) 298-0222
https://sapelofoundation.org/

Partnership for Southern Equity
55 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd., NW
Atlanta GA 30308
(678) 383-7774
info@psequity.org
www.psequity.org