

The legacy of BLACK FUNDRAISING

From Africa to the diaspora, Black communities have a deep-rooted history of fundraising and philanthropy, says **Carol Akiwumi MBE**

Guest **feature editor's** *message*



Carol Akiwumi MBE

Time to celebrate Black fundraising but acknowledge we still have a long way to go

The history of fundraising and philanthropy is a rich and diverse tapestry that spans centuries and cultures. From ancient civilizations to religious orders and the Enlightenment, which gave birth to foundations and professionalisation, it is a story of human compassion, generosity, and the desire to improve the lives of others. As it continues to evolve, it demonstrates humanity's capacity for compassion and collective action in addressing the pressing challenges of our time and creating a more just and equitable world for all.

In this month's issue of Fundraising Magazine, it is my honour and privilege to present a special features section that celebrates the history of Black fundraising and spotlights the incredible contributions of Black fundraisers in the UK.

Throughout history, Black fundraisers have worked tirelessly to support a wide range of initiatives, from civil rights and education to healthcare and the arts. They have not only raised funds but have also inspired change, mobilised communities, and built bridges of hope and opportunity.

In this section, you will find inspiring stories of Black fundraisers who have dedicated their lives to making a difference. From grassroots organisers who have ignited social movements to philanthropists who have generously given to causes close to their hearts, their stories remind us of the power of unity and the potential for transformation.

We also delve into the history of Black fundraising, tracing its roots to the earliest days of the African and Caribbean diaspora and exploring how it has evolved over time. It is a testament to the resilience and determination of Black individuals and communities that they have consistently found innovative ways to support the causes they care about, despite the unique challenges they face, particularly systemic racism and prejudice. Their stories serve as a testament to their unwavering commitment to justice and equity as well as the significant burden they often bear in leading the campaign for change.

As we honour the achievements of Black fundraisers, let us also recognise that there are still many challenges to confront and disparities to address. However, the stories shared in this magazine are a reminder that positive change is possible when individuals and communities come together with a common purpose.

I also hope to inspire readers to get involved, support often underfunded causes that serve the most underrepresented groups, and be part of the ongoing effort to create a more just and equitable world. Together, we can continue to build a brighter future for all.

In Black communities, philanthropy is an everyday occurrence; Black families give a higher proportion of their income away than any other racial group, despite earning less and facing structural barriers to accumulating wealth.

Black history and the history of the charity sector are deeply intertwined. Black History Month itself was founded in 1915 by a non-profit, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. After visiting America in the 1970s, Ghanaian-born Akyaaba Addai Sebo, a special projects officer at the Greater London Council, founded the UK's version of Black History Month in 1987.

The history of Black fundraising is a captivating journey that weaves together the vibrant tapestry of African heritage with the resilience and innovation of Black communities in the UK. This narrative unfolds over centuries, tracing its roots to African cultures, the era of the transatlantic slave trade, and subsequently to the earliest days of the African and Caribbean diaspora in the UK.

"In Black communities, philanthropy is an everyday occurrence"

African traditions

The origins of Black fundraising can be found in the diverse cultures of Africa. Across the continent, communal values and the ethos of shared responsibility have long been central to African societies. Practices such as "harambee" in East Africa, "susu" in West Africa, and "stokvels" in Southern Africa exemplify the collective efforts of communities pooling their resources to support one another.

These traditions reflect the African belief in Ubuntu, which emphasises interconnectedness and the idea that "I am because we are". In this context, fundraising was not a separate activity but an intrinsic part of community life.

Origins in the diaspora

The history of Black fundraising in the UK can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries when the transatlantic slave trade brought Africans and Afro-

Caribbean individuals to British shores. Despite the abhorrent conditions of slavery, these individuals demonstrated remarkable strength and solidarity.

In this challenging environment, acts of mutual aid and support began to emerge. Enslaved individuals would contribute small sums of money to mutual aid societies, which would then be used to purchase the freedom of enslaved family members or provide support in times of illness or hardship. These early forms of collective fundraising laid the foundation for a legacy of community solidarity that would endure for centuries.

Post-emancipation philanthropy

The 19th century brought the abolition of slavery and the beginning of a new chapter in Black fundraising history. With newfound freedoms, Black communities in the UK began to organise philanthropic efforts to uplift their members and advocate for social justice.

One notable example is the work of Mary Seacole, a Jamaican-British nurse and businesswoman who provided medical care and support to British soldiers during the Crimean War.

Her fundraising efforts, including publishing her autobiography Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands, exemplified her determination to make a difference in the lives of those in need.

The rise of community organisations

The 20th century saw the emergence of Black-led community organisations dedicated to fundraising and advocacy. These organisations played a crucial role in supporting education, healthcare, and social services within Black communities.

"Black history and the history of the charity sector are deeply intertwined"

One such organisation was the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded by Marcus Garvey in the early 20th century. UNIA chapters in the UK organised fundraising events, promoted self-reliance, and advocated for the rights and empowerment of Black people.

Civil rights and beyond

The latter half of the 20th century marked a period of significant change and activism. Black fundraisers and activists in the UK were instrumental in advocating for civil rights, racial equality, and social justice.

Organisations such as the Black Panther Movement and the New Cross Massacre Action Committee mobilised resources to support victims of racial violence and campaigned for justice. These efforts highlighted the importance of fundraising as a tool for social change and equality.

Contemporary Black fundraising

Today, Black fundraising in the UK continues to evolve and adapt to the challenges of the times. Black-led charities and community organisations work tirelessly to address issues such as education disparities, healthcare access, and racial inequalities.

Events such as the Notting Hill Carnival, initially organised to celebrate Caribbean culture, have also become fundraising platforms for community initiatives. Black celebrities and philanthropists, including sports stars and artists, use their platforms to raise awareness and funds for a variety of charitable causes.

Celebrating a legacy of resilience and unity

The history of Black fundraising in the UK is a testament to the resilience, unity and unwavering commitment of African and Caribbean communities. It is a story that spans continents and centuries, rooted in African traditions of collective support and shared responsibility.

As we celebrate Black History Month, it is crucial to recognise and honour the enduring legacy of Black fundraising. This celebration is not just a reflection on the past; it is a call to action for a more equitable and inclusive future. It reminds us that communities can come together, draw upon their rich cultural heritage, and drive positive change through philanthropy and mutual support. By honouring this history, we pay homage to those who paved the way and inspire new generations to continue the legacy of making the world a better place for all.



AmickyCarol Akiwumi MBE
is a social entrepreneur and CEO and founder of Money4YOU
𝕏 @AmickyCarol



The person who inspires me

Camille St-Omer Donaldson

by ***Paul Amadi***

I had absolutely no intention of making a career out of fundraising; it is definitely something I fell into. But I'm so glad I did. Because of my career, I've been privileged to see at first-hand the amazing difference our sector makes to causes and communities that would otherwise be grossly underserved.

Throughout my career, I've been blessed to work with some incredibly talented and inspiring people from who I've learnt a great deal.

However, I'm not going to lie; as a fundraiser of colour, for the vast majority of my time, I've found it an incredibly isolating and frankly lonely experience, which has tested my resilience and commitment to my career. I recognise that may sound somewhat dramatic, but it does become incredibly wearing (and wearying!) to attend a conference of fundraisers and be one of just two or three attendees of colour, or to know that colleagues will limit your donor engagement because of your ethnicity. Or to attend events and be mistaken for a waiter!

These are just some of my experiences of being a fundraiser of colour and combined with microaggressions too many to list, the effect is attritional. Of course the irony is that because it's the product/outcome of a minority experience, there's very few people to speak to or from whom to draw inspiration.

So, when I come across inspirational fundraisers of colour they definitely stand out and one such person is Camille St-Omer Donaldson, who is currently leading on fundraising transformation at the British Red Cross (BRC).

Camille is one of the most energising colleagues I've had the pleasure of working with in any context. She's values driven, has an enviable ability to think strategically but also "does detail" and brings passion and commitment to any project with which she's involved.

> *"Cam personifies a preparedness to speak truth to power"*

But what I feel defines Cam, and is the trait that I find most meaningful, is her absolute unwillingness to just accept the status quo, particularly about matters relating to inclusion. Her approach is not about lamenting the way things are, but to do something to improve it; for example by founding the Race and Ethnicity Equality Network at BRC, initiating and chairing BRC's Anti-Racism Working Group on Inclusivity and delivering zoom calls on allyship attended by hundreds of staff and volunteers. Through these, and multiple other instances, Cam personifies a preparedness to speak truth to power, so I add bravery to her many attributes.

What's particularly impressive for me about Cam is that as well as seeking to drive change at an organisational level, she has also focused on driving sectoral change, as evidenced by her recent co-hosting of the #BAMEOnline Conference which is all about nurturing and growing fundraisers of colour.

The fundraising profession is blessed with talented, passionate and committed people. I feel honoured to be a part of it and in so doing to meet people such as Cam who, apart from all the qualities I have listed, is also incredibly modest, so ironically, doesn't know how inspirational she is to people like me.



Paul Amadi is chief supporter officer at British Red Cross
𝕏 @BritishRedCross



The person who inspires me

Tom Ilube

by Patricia Hamzahee

When commissioning GiveBLACK's research on Black Philanthropy in Britain last year, I had in mind a community of committed and generous supporters of social changemaking and racial equity. One of the standout champions of this type of intentional philanthropy has been Tom Ilube CBE. It is why I nominated this inspirational British Nigerian for the 2017 Beacon Award for Innovation. There was almost no recognition of Black leadership in the world of philanthropy at that time.

Tom is a successful serial entrepreneur, philanthropist and civic leader. His impact as a role model and mentor to young people is another example of his generosity.

As CEO and founder of London-based Crossword Cybersecurity plc, he has successfully raised millions in investment funding to grow his AIM-listed business. Such business-building skills were evident early on when in 1998 he launched Egg, the UK's first and one of the world's first internet banks. Successful fundraising has always been key to Tom's success – honed by a career that included Goldman Sachs, PwC and the London Stock Exchange – and this skill has successfully transferred to his philanthropic endeavours where he has raised even more millions.

As he did in his tech career, Tom has created and launched several educational institutions which transformed the landscape. From an idea sketched on a napkin, he led a team to establish Hammersmith Academy, a state secondary school in West London which opened in 2011 and is now one of the most innovative technology schools in the country. He also chaired ADA, the National College for Digital Skills, which opened in 2016 as the first new UK further education college in 23 years.

Tom was named Britain's most influential Black person on the 2017 Powerlist and was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2018 Birthday Honours for services to technology and philanthropy. He is currently chair of the Rugby Football Union, making him the first Black chair of a major sport in England.

> *"Tom is an easy-going soul who resounds with a deep sense of justice "*

But for me, Tom's most stellar achievement is his creation of the education charity African Gifted Foundation and the launch of the African Science Academy, the first science and technology school for 16 to 19-year-old girls on the African continent. His vision to bring girls from low-income backgrounds from across Africa on full scholarships to study Cambridge International A-levels in advanced level mathematics and science has grown from 24 girls in 2016 to 50 now and hundreds planned in the next few years. These girls go on to study at leading universities around the world and return home to share their talents and experience with their communities. This is how you create systemic change.

Despite the fierce discipline he has needed to overcome many challenges to succeed, Tom is an easy-going soul who resounds with a deep sense of justice, fairness, generosity and humanity. No wonder he is known by the affectionate nom de plume Mr Bojangles.

One of the most unforgettable gifts I received from Tom was an invitation to his 2018 inaugural address as a Fellow of St Anne's College, University of Oxford which took place during Black History Month. I still remember the trainload of fantastic Black people parading through the streets of Oxford to hear Tom's wise words. It was a sight to behold and one I will never forget.

His favourite song from his 2021 Desert Island Discs appearance demonstrates his balance of sadness and happiness. As Mr Bojangles, he talked of life.



Patricia Hamzahee is co-founder of Black Funding Network and GiveBLACK
𝕏 @Black FundingNet

Leading *the* way

Carol Akiwumi MBE and **Stephen Cotterill** talk to some of the key figures in fundraising and philanthropy in the UK

Over the generations, there have been many great Black leaders in the charity sector, who have helped shape civil society and the philanthropic landscape. In this article, we get the thoughts of some of the prominent and inspiring Black leaders in fundraising and philanthropy in the UK today, and ask them why they became involved in the sector and how they raise funds and awareness for the causes they are passionate about.

Challenging the false narratives



"I am a Ghanaian diaspora," says Dilys K Winterkorn, adviser and researcher in African and African diaspora philanthropy. "Growing up in the UK, I was always reminded of the negative depictions of Africa and the false narratives of Africa's growth and development. I wanted to challenge that."

After studying geography and development studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Winterkorn interned at Ghana's Ministry of Education and a private foundation. "But I fell into fundraising on my return to the UK. I don't think many fundraisers choose their profession; however, I saw the value of resource mobilisation and distribution, which was a huge benefit when I started to work in programme development because it equipped me with an enterprising mindset and the ability to communicate the work to different audiences."

Those talents have driven Winterkorn's 17 years of impactful fundraising, raising significant capital for and with communities and enterprises across the African continent and the UK through working with trusts, foundations, major donors, businesses and governments. At Comic Relief, while leading a very small team, she had a return on investment of 73:1, raising over £18m. Her most recent venture is an impact investment fund called the Pathway Fund, which is an initiative founded in 2022 to catalyse opportunities for Black and minoritised communities across England through social investment. With £1.6m already raised, Winterkorn is working to raise at least £65m over coming years. But she is not complacent about the challenges this poses. "You have to have realistic expectations about what income can be generated, from which source, and the timeline of when you expect it to come in. And have a clear, viable proposition. Does it make sense? Is it achievable? Is it ambitious?"

Among the wider challenges facing the sector, Winterkorn cites the ongoing economic crisis and uncertainty; increasing competition for limited funds; the perception that non-profits should have low overhead costs; and the need for fundraising to adapt to changing demographics. "Charities need to adopt strategic approaches that focus on building strong relationships with their supporters, ensuring transparency in their operations, embracing technological innovations, and continuously assessing and adapting their fundraising strategies," she says. "Collaboration and networking is key."

> *"It is vital to always keep an eye on technology, demographics, and societal trends"*

Winterkorn also sees many opportunities. "Blockchain and cryptocurrency, peer-to-peer fundraising, virtual events, donor-advised funds and impact investing all present future opportunities," she says. "Online platforms, crowdfunding websites, and social media campaigns will remain essential tools. It is vital to always keep an eye on technology, demographics, and societal trends.

"That is where the potential fundraising opportunities will be in the coming years."

A very personal cause

Lady Adele Sewell MBE was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1999 and then in 2007, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. With the breast cancer, in the space of six months from the first symptom, she was diagnosed and had completed all treatment. However, with the ovarian cancer, it took 18 months to even get a diagnosis.

Since then, the main objectives of Lady Sewell's charitable work have been to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer and to raise funds for Ovacome, the national ovarian cancer support charity. "Recognising the difference in public knowledge about ovarian cancer versus breast cancer, both of which I had experienced, motivated me to do something about it," she says.

As part of her fundraising efforts, Lady Sewell founded the annual Touch of Teal champagne afternoon tea and fashion show in Central London. The first event was in March 2010, and there have been 14 events since. All the models in the fashion show are women who have had, or are living with, ovarian cancer. "We go to great lengths to ensure that the women who take part in the annual Touch of Teal fashion show have a wonderful and memorable experience. We do this while still focusing on raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer and raising funds for Ovacome."

The events have directly raised £168,325, which averages more than £12,000 per event, while also introducing other organisations to the work of Ovacome, such as Apricot which has donated £180,000 since 2014. The Touch of Teal organising team has also raised funds for other cancer charities, namely the Royal Marsden Hospital, Penny Brohn UK, Target Ovarian Cancer, Ovarian Cancer Action, and the Eve Appeal.

"I recommend starting small, learning from mistakes, but building on your successes"

"As the founder of Touch of Teal, it is heartwarming to see how it has grown over the years – the number of models that have been involved, the amount of awareness raised through newspapers and TV, the positivity of the event and the fact that the models create lasting friendships."

Lady Sewell sees the cost-of-living crisis as being the main challenge facing fundraising in coming months. "People's financial situations can make it harder to donate, plus the costs of running events like mine have substantially increased, which ultimately means less funds are raised."



But, she says, there are always opportunities. "There are many ways that one can fundraise for a charitable cause. I recommend starting small, learning from mistakes, but building on your successes. I believe that a key reason for the success of Touch of Teal is that we started, from the outset, to make it a fun event, even though it is about something as difficult and challenging as ovarian cancer."

Nurturing the next generation

Founder of Beyond Our Youth (B.O.Y) Veronica Martin OBE became involved in supporting young people in 1999 through working as a full-time fundraiser with the National Association of Clubs for Young People. Since then, she has dedicated her life to philanthropy and recognising and supporting the potential of youth in making positive changes in society.

The idea for B.O.Y was conceived in 2011 and launched online a decade later in 2021. The company limited by guarantee aims to empower young people by providing them with various resources, opportunities, and support systems to nurture their potential and enable them to contribute meaningfully to society. The organisation promotes collaboration between young people, philanthropists, businesses and entrepreneurs. It aims to bring these groups together and facilitate partnerships that can lead to positive outcomes and initiatives. This is achieved by enabling access to information, events, recommendations, and connections with senior leaders which form the membership.

"As younger generations become a larger part of the donor pool, their preferences and giving patterns may differ"

Over the past two years, B.O.Y has grown from 30 members (predominantly young philanthropists

under the age of 30) to 220 multi-generational leaders. "The challenge that B.O.Y faces is whether to accept new members, which is a common dilemma for many organisations, particularly those focused on youth development or social groups," says Martin. "Ultimately, the decision of whether to accept new members is based on a careful evaluation of various factors, taking into account the unique circumstances and goals of B.O.Y. Engaging in thorough discussions and seeking input from current members, leadership and stakeholders can help ensure a well-informed decision that aligns with the organisation's values and objectives."

With a passion for youth development, it is not surprising that Martin sees one of the main challenges facing fundraising and the charity sector as being changing demographics and giving patterns. "As younger generations become a larger part of the donor pool, their preferences and giving patterns may differ from previous generations," she says. "Charities must adapt their fundraising strategies to effectively engage and motivate these donors."

One solution to wider challenges might be collaborative fundraising, suggests Martin. "Charities might join forces to create collaborative fundraising campaigns, pooling their resources and networks to amplify their impact."



Seeking true representation

For Kemar Walford, senior consultant and director of KN Walford Consultancy, his passion to help and support Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals and organisations to thrive has driven his work for nearly two decades. "The industry has progressed over that time," he says, "but we need more people of colour in this sector at all levels and better representation among the donors, funders and senior-level management."



Walford's career in fundraising began as intern with the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) some 17 years ago where he "fell in love" with the work of charities and non-profits. "All those years at the NLCF allowed me to gain a vast knowledge of projects, grant management, finances, budgeting, assessment, and training and advising groups and institutions. This training was the bedrock of my approach to raising funds for the causes I support."

"The real question is: can charities keep up with the pace of change?"

Over the last six years, Walford's fundraising has helped those charities raise over £4m through various approaches and initiatives. "I predominantly raise funds through my work with clients to access trusts and foundations, with some work with corporates and, more recently, commissioning activities. However, at its core, I work to understand the project, service or programme and then translate that to the funders to which the group wishes to apply."

The most successful fundraising campaign has been 18 months of support provided to a charity in north London, helping it to secure close to £1m from three funders and two local commissioners. "This work wasn't all me, but by working collaboratively, we secured the most they had ever secured in a single fundraising period," Walford adds.

Against a backdrop of increased demand for services and increasing costs, the challenges facing the BAME-led charities Walford works with are "vast and numerous".

"For as long as I have been in the sector, the problem faced by most charities and non-profits is having and maintaining the required resources to keep pace with the demand for services. These past 10 years have not made that issue go away. We have seen a sharp decline in the numbers of charities and non-profits, and many have been unable to face the headwind and continue to move forward."

As for the future of fundraising, no one knows, says Walford. "AI and the wider digital world has already been a big game-changer, but there is so much more to come. As technology continues to grow, learn and adapt, it will become better at supporting our industry. But the real question shouldn't be "What are the future fundraising opportunities?", but "Can all charities keep up with the pace of change?" ■