

# **PIMENTO RELIEF SERVICES**

**2021 CONVENING REPORT**

## DEAR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS,

As a community, we have made a lot of progress since the dark days of the Minneapolis Uprising. We have come together. We see common problems. We share the same aims. The majority of people in our cities want to end systemic racism. All of our actions as organizations and individuals work towards this goal, and we are all working hard.

To be truly effective, we need to take the time to get to know each other, to understand what drives and motivates us. We all feel the same pain but we don't all experience it in the same way. Our actions need to be closely coordinated.

Working in silos costs more, achieves less, and may cause us to miss golden opportunities. Math is simple:  $1+1+1+1+1=5$ , but only if you include the plus signs. Without them, it's just scattered numbers that won't add up to real progress. If we don't convene with a purpose, and work closely together, the sum of our work will not total to the liberation of Black people from systemic racism.

One year ago at the first Pimento Summit, PRS was conceived as a convening organization. That was what our community asked for, and it has been underlined again at the second and third Pimento Summits. It brings me great joy to see so many organizations, funders, companies, academics,

artists, dreamers, thinkers, activists, and public servants working together tirelessly. Pimento remains a safe-space for all voices to be heard when solving the most serious issues affecting the Black community. We have provided a forum for high-level confidential discussions between parties, and mediated candid conversations that allow the participants to plan and act without barriers or the gaze of the media.

When we plan and strategize together effectively across sectors, we embrace the golden opportunity of true collaboration. When we convene together, we move faster, build more effectively, and achieve longer lasting results, stampeding as one unified, unstoppable herd of buffaloes charging towards liberation.

In the year ahead, using our convening model, we will build specific action-focused forums to achieve our vision of a flourishing Black community in Twin Cities. We hope you will all take a seat at the tables. Thank you for the love in your hearts and the calluses on your hands. Thank you for making space for each other and for convening together.

*"One Love!" —Tomme Beevas, Executive Director,  
Pimento Relief Services*



## ***THANK YOU TO OUR CONVENING PARTNERS***

African American Leadership Forum • Alana • American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota • Association for Black Economic Power • Backpocket Strategy • Benson Family Foundation • Black Pearl • Black Visions Collective • The BrandLab • Brasa Rotisserie • Brooklyn Center City Council • Brooklyn Center City Schools • Brooklyn Center Mayor's Office • Brown Venture Group • Carpe Diem by Jasmine • Caribbean Kitchen • Center for Economic Inclusion • Center for Healing Justice • Cheesecake Funk • Chef Andrew Zimmern • Children's Hospital of MN • Children's Theatre Company • Chris P. Lambe Consulting • City of Brooklyn Center • Cities Can B • City of Minneapolis Mayors Office City of Minneapolis Office of Resilience • City of St. Paul • Clockwork • Community Reinvestment Fund USA • Dakota County Commission District 3 • Davis Law Office • Edina Chamber of Commerce • Edina City Council • Cobble Social House • Eureka Recycling • Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis • FREE in Color • Friends of Minneapolis for Teqan • (Leaders of) George Floyd Square • Giant Steps GiveMN • Green Card Voices • Guaranteed America • Hands on Twin Cities • Hands Up Guns Down • Hennepin County Business Advisory Council • Healing Justice Foundation • Hollies Winston for Mayor • Howard University • Infinite Group • Institute for Sustainable Development • L.I.S.C. Twin Cities • McKnight Foundation • Main Street Alliance • Mission Partners • Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce • Minnesota Department of Health • Minnesota Freedom Fund • Minneapolis City Council • Main Street Alliance • Minnesota Center for Book Arts • Minnesota Housing • Memorialize the Movement • NAACP Minneapolis • Neo Partners • Next Stage MN • Nexus Community Partners • Northside Achievement Zone • Project DIVA International • Paw Paw Patisserie • Pimento Jamaican Kitchen • Pohlad Foundation • Racial Justice Network • Research in Action • Restaurant Alma • Social House • Social Impact Strategy Group • Second Harvest Heartland • Shiloh Temple • Stephen Cohen Law • The Coven • Tru Ruts • United Negro College Fund • University of Minnesota • Victor Jones Consulting • West Broadway Business and Area Coalition • Whittier Alliance • WCCO, CBS Minnesota • Wise Ink Creative Publishing • World Street Kitchen • Zeus Jones

### ***A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PATRONS***



*and to the 2000+ members of our community who personally donated,  
even though many of you could least afford to. Our sincere Thanks!*

# **THIRD PIMENTO SUMMIT JUNE 2021**

The third Pimento Summit on June 12th 2021, invited strategic partners across sectors, to dream, reflect, and map a futuristic model for Black liberation in the Twin Cities. We held eight roundtable discussions focused on our three pillars of action; Social, Economic, and Political Liberation, and one plenary session focused on reimagining the Twin Cities without prejudice, in partnership with the global 'Cities Can B' movement.

# SUMMIT KEY TAKEAWAYS

**MANY LEADERS,  
ONE COLLECTIVE VOICE**

## REIMAGINING LIBERATION

Four cities in the Twin Cities Metro; Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Brooklyn Center, and Edina will convene to reimagine what our region can truly be, following the global 'Cities Can B' model, and share best practices with cities around the world facing many of the same social, environmental, economic, and political challenges.

## SOCIAL LIBERATION

We will heal ourselves, help heal each other, and together heal our communities. There is mistrust between Black people and the organizations that hold influence and power over them. Healing will only come with purposeful dialog and open lines of communication between all parties. We will mobilize young people to join our efforts, create alliances between longer tenured nonprofits, and newer organizations from the street, break down silos, and share ideas and resources.

## ECONOMIC LIBERATION

We will de-risk 'racial cognitive bias' in finance and banking and develop Black banking systems. We will create access to capital for Black businesses, develop a culturally grounded space where Black people can build relationships with capital-rich entities, invite Black entrepreneurs into business support groups and chambers of commerce where they can network and build relationships, create an ecosystem of Black professionals to support growing businesses, build incubators to create cultural residency and support peer learning among Black entrepreneurs, strengthen the Black construction and development communities, and encourage Black people to acquire real estate to create intergenerational wealth.

## POLITICAL LIBERATION

We will educate the Black community on political and policy-making structures, how these structures impact their daily lives, and the importance of maintaining access to the ballot for Black people. We will increase Black personal participation in the political system, support a pipeline of Black political candidates, and provide an ecosystem of training, staffing, and funding to support their campaigns.



## **PLENARY SESSION: REIMAGINING LIBERATION (TWIN CITIES CAN B)**

Cities CAN B is a global movement that promotes and reimagines a more sustainable and equitable city life. It seeks to create places for people, business, and institutions to live, work, and thrive together equitably. Cities CAN B mobilizes millions of people and thousands of companies and organizations to collaborate in pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The movement promotes a cultural shift that redefines how we take responsibility for our communities through multistakeholder convening and decentralized governance. As of June 2021, participating cities are Santiago, Mendoza, Rio de Janeiro, Barcelona, Edinburgh, Cordoba, and Asuncion.

# REIMAGINING LIBERATION (TWIN CITIES CAN B)

## TWIN CITIES CAN B GOALS:

### Cultivate collaborative *global* networks

Share experiences, knowledge, and best practices with a network of global cities.

### Cultivate collaborative *local* networks

Mobilize citizens, organizations, and companies to be active agents of change for the sustainable development of the Twin Cities.

### Build action teams

Work in an articulated and permanent way towards a more inclusive, resilient, prosperous, and sustainable Twin Cities.

### Engage the private sector in the city's challenges

Redefine business and community engagement models to contribute to the sustainable development challenges the city faces, economic, social, environmental, and governance.

### Actively look for synergies

Work collaboratively towards a common goal, using the strength of business and the market as a catalyst for positive changes.

### Engage the young entrepreneurs of the city

Mobilize young agents of change and their entrepreneurial and innovative capacity to accelerate the changes that each city requires.



LEONARDO MALONADO OF CITIES CAN B ADDRESSES  
THE THIRD PIMENTO SUMMIT

## HOW DO WE GET MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TO COLLABORATE







## REIMAGINING LIBERATION (TWIN CITIES CAN B)

**Poverty** is a systemic, man-made state that creates dormant intellectual property and stagnates growth and prosperity, not just for the poor, but also for the community as a whole. Job creation, job training, and education are pathways out of poverty, but there is a distinct lack of coordination of effort between the three disciplines. There is also a lack of cultural awareness in program design that alienates many of the most deserving and those most in need among us.

**Health and Wellbeing:** Our Twin Cities are known nationally as places where the health and wellbeing of our citizens are actively promoted. Our Parks and Recreation systems in Minneapolis and Saint Paul are frequently featured as number one and number two nationally on the annual 'best of' lists. But these benefits are disproportionately bestowed on the non-Black community. Decades of redlining and discriminatory urban planning have deprived the Black community of social, environmental, political, and economic parity. This paradigm, combined with a lack of wellness programs aimed at the Black populace, nationally unaffordable healthcare, and the generational trauma that runs deep in the Black community, means that health and wellness outcomes for Black people fall far below those that the community at-large enjoys.

**Education:** In the Twin Cities, Black and Brown children, and low-income whites experience educational outcomes far below those of their middle class white peers. These education

achievement gaps are more pronounced in the Twin Cities than most other large urban centers in the country. These achievement gaps exist across standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness indicators. The Twin Cities are graduating an increasing number of students who are unprepared for college.

*"The importance of convening to create more coordinated action cannot be overstated. None of us can do this on our own. The problems are simply too large and attitudes too engrained. It is only when we take the time to sit around a table and talk with each other, that we realize we may not fully agree in as many areas as we thought, but we also discover that we don't disagree on as many issues as we thought. Convening is humbling, bonding, and it ensures that we find the most productive and efficient ways to move forward together as a community. Convening helps build power by ensuring that the loudest voices aren't the only voices. The problems we face require our best ideas, and our best ideas will emerge by way of collaboration."*

— Ron Harris,  
Chief Resilience Officer City of Minneapolis





# **SOCIAL LIBERATION CONVENINGS**

Social Justice  
George Floyd Square  
Brooklyn Center Community Schools Next Steps

## SOCIAL LIBERATION CONVENINGS

**Break Silos:** There is a lack of connectedness in the current approach of Black organizations. We are all working in the same spaces, with the same people, and towards the same goals, but we are not working together in sync, which limits our effectiveness. The Covid-19 pandemic helped break down some of the silos that afflict our efforts. Moving to video conferencing when in-person meetings were compromised allowed us to invite organizations to the table that had been previously excluded due to lack of resources, time, or the complexities of travel. Post-pandemic, we need to continue to engage together in meaningful dialog in structured and unstructured convening spaces, in person, or via videoconference. There is a palatable hunger to convene and to create community.

During a crisis, we discover how siloed we are as a community, but also how our reactions to the crisis can bring us together. We need a new way of thinking going forward, where we intentionally collaborate and align our collective missions for the greater good of our community as a whole. We cannot grow as a community unless we grow collaboratively.

**Cross Pollinate Ideas:** Diversity of thought and experience, clustered around the same table can lead to the breakthroughs our communities need and deserve. The energy and hunger are there. We need the forums to harness this energy. The cross-pollination of each other's ideas is a critical step in achieving scale. Being transparent with each

other and sharing resources when appropriate is essential. Longer tenured organizations have access to resources that newer groups simply don't have. But new organizations often have deeper community roots, are closer to the problems afflicting the Black community, and are more willing to take the risks necessary for success. We need to bridge these gaps.

**Culturally Appropriate Communication:** Funders need to communicate differently with community-based organizations, and their stakeholders within the Black community in a more culturally appropriate way. They need to embrace risk and be willing to take chances. The traditional ways of funding and approaching the Black communities problems are not sufficient to drive meaningful change.

*"Our engagements with each other as leaders of community organizations are largely transactional. The time is ripe to engage more honestly and holistically as people first, and build intimacy and trust through sharing the focus of our work and our resources with each other. It is only then that we can fully address the trauma our community experiences and heal together on the path towards a more equitable society."*

*— Elizer Darris,  
Executive Director, MN Freedom Fund*





## SOCIAL LIBERATION CONVENINGS

**Mobilize Young People:** We must mobilize young people to join our efforts, and learn to see the world through their eyes. They have the vision, commitment, and desire to break the chains of suffering that have engulfed the Black community for centuries. They want complete equity, and won't settle for less.

**End Food Deserts:** We must engage seriously in ending food deserts, and providing adequate nutrition for the Black Community. Minneapolis and St. Paul are the headquarter cities of one of the primary food producing regions in the world. Despite this, many of our neighbors rely on mutual aid to meet their basic nutritional needs. This is unacceptable. Food justice

is an essential component of Black Liberation, and without it, the healing the Black community deserves cannot begin to manifest.

**Build Trust:** There is mistrust between the people in our communities and the organizations that hold influence and power over them. Healing will only come with purposeful dialog and open lines of communication. We must incorporate our 'smaller identities,' what we each do for our organizations, into the larger identity of our community. By working together, we can achieve liberation, not just for ourselves but also for our community as a whole.

*"Healing the divisions in our community can only come though collective action, with the right people around the table, aligning our missions, goals, and daily work so that the sum of all of our efforts creates a new, vibrant, and equitable society."*

*— Josh Fraser,  
Principal, Brooklyn Center High School*





# **ECONOMIC LIBERATION CONVENINGS**

Black Business Program  
Construction Contractors & Developers  
Capital Liberation



# ECONOMIC LIBERATION CONVENINGS

**Entrepreneurship** can be a path out of poverty for many in the Black community. But Black entrepreneurs face the often insurmountable hurdles of having no time to dedicate towards their ideas, no seed capital of their own to work with, no peer group to learn from, a smaller support network to lean on, and fewer friends and family with resources to borrow from. Even if these hurdles are cleared, lack of access to working capital and credit, and the difficulties in securing a property lease (landlords are often reluctant to rent/ lease to Black people) can quickly stunt any progress made, making business growth a constant challenge.

**Capital** is always convenient for the lender, not for the entrepreneur. Black people are often intentionally uninvited to where capital resides. There is no map of where to find capital. The concept of evaluating 'management quality' often points directly to prejudice in lending scenarios. When bankers and funders gravitate towards what they know and trust, they fund people who look and act like them. This makes capital homogenous, and fuels the prejudice of familiarity in lending situations. The fact that many successful white entrepreneurs often raise their first tranche of capital from friends and family underline the racial disparities that exist in generational wealth. We have to understand as a community that it costs more to perpetuate prejudice and poverty than it does to solve it. Despite all of this, the fastest growing cohorts of entrepreneurs are Black and Brown women between the ages of 35 and 50.

**Assumed Risk:** There is almost always an immediate assumed risk when a Black person opens the door at a financial institution, because of their skin color and their heritage. If financiers are choosing to assume risk when they see a Black person, then they should underwrite it. The financial industry has been able to find ways to underwrite others forms of assumed risk. Why not this one? De-risking this 'racial cognitive bias' in finance is an immediate imperative. If we can't achieve this, it will remain highly unlikely that Black entrepreneurs can secure the capital they need at favorable terms.

*"Venture Capital firms should be experiencing FOMO, the fear of missing out on the trillions of dollars in earnings that Black entrepreneurs will generate this decade. To gain access to these returns, VC's need to meet Black entrepreneurs where they are 'at', and co-create together. Don't work 'for' us; work 'with' us."*

— Dr. Paul Campbell,  
Founder and Partner, Brown Venture Group

**A Supportive Ecosystem:** Understanding the licensing and regulatory processes and applying for grants and loans can be very intimidating. Black entrepreneurs don't often enjoy a connected network of friends and family who have been through the process before, and can offer guidance and support. A formal ecosystem of supporting professionals, accountants, bankers, lawyers, and marketers would help ease the growing pains. Being part of a community of entrepreneurs in

an incubator setting would provide the support of a peer group facing the same challenges together.

**Contractors:** The Construction Industry is an economically lucrative and socially vital part of the fabric of any city. But Black contractors have traditionally been excluded from the sector due to the high cost of entry into the space. Securing the loans and lines of credit necessary to participate is arduous and often fruitless, due to lack of credit history, banking relationships, and industry experience. Furthermore, a concept as simple as bonding poses a challenge for Black contractors to be able to compete for larger government-funded infrastructure projects. The Federal Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program is designed to remedy ongoing discrimination and the continuing effects of past discrimination in the construction sector. It mandates that a percentage of the contractor pool be awarded to traditionally marginalized communities. While this is progress, one of the most obvious outcomes of the program is that Black contractors may be considered as a subcontractor on a large construction project, but almost assuredly the general contractor will not be Black. How do we create the environment that allows a Black contractor to one day be considered as not just a subcontractor, but a general contractor taking the lead on a construction project of scale?

## ECONOMIC LIBERATION CONVENINGS

*"Helping Black contactors establish close working relationships with community banks, may be one of the paths forward to helping them secure the working capital necessary to take their businesses to scale. Being able to share their story directly with a decision-maker could be key in building trust and helping underwriters to better understand why their application and project history may look different than a traditional white applicant- which could help Black contractors meet the equity, bonding, and credit requirements of larger and more lucrative projects."*

— Lee Hall,  
CEO Next Stage MN

**Property ownership** is a major generational wealth-building tool. Establishing opportunities for community ownership of investment properties could lower the barriers to entry for Black people, allow them to combine their resources, and build wealth together.

**How can we best get capital into the hands of Black people?** Create a culturally grounded space where Black people can build relationships with capital rich entities; invite Black entrepreneurs into business support groups and chambers of commerce, where they can network and build relationships; build incubators to create cultural residency, support peer learning, and reduce the fears of failure, of saying something wrong, and of the unknown.

*"In a country so grounded in the principles of freedom, self-determination, and capitalism, providing everyone fair and equal access to the instruments, including institutions, for achieving economic wellbeing is the American ideal. The American reality is much different than this ideal but institutions, including economic and political, are "made". As such they can be "unmade" or "remade" through people working together with purpose."*

— Victor Jones,  
Chair Pimento Foundation Board

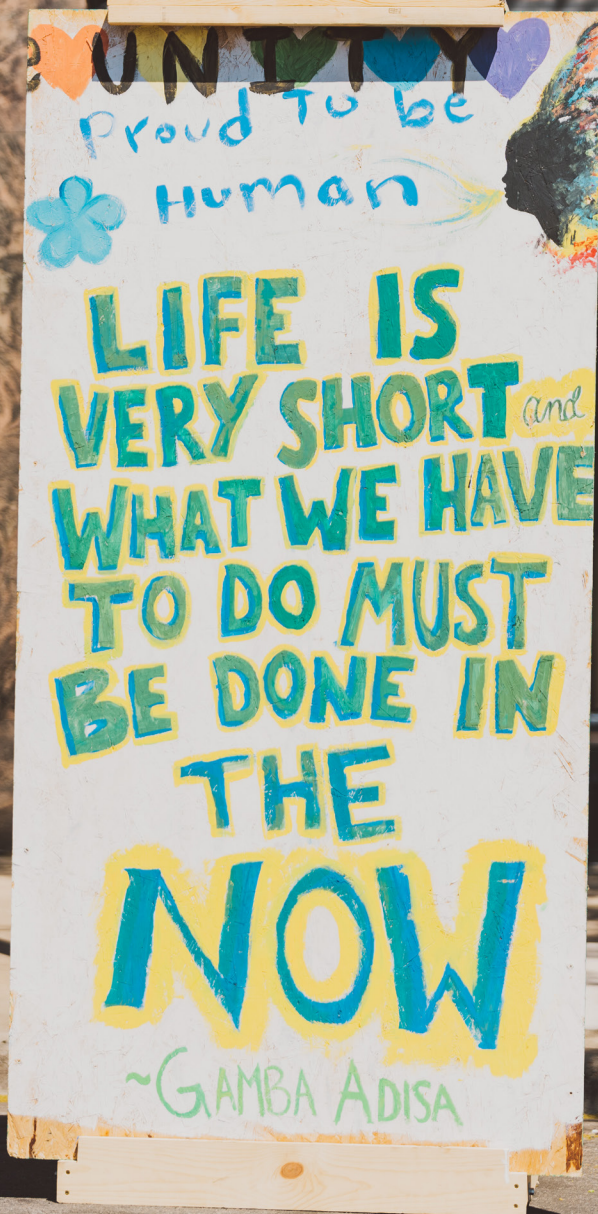




# **POLITICAL LIBERATION CONVENINGS**

Black Political Candidate Pipeline  
Political Action Committee (PAC)





## POLITICAL LIBERATION CONVENINGS

**Education & Participation:** Due to systemic exclusion, Black people are still learning how to become personally involved in the political process. Communitywide, there is limited understanding of how policy is made, what the policy engines in the community are, or how the outcomes of local elections can impact our daily lives. These factors put the Black community at a severe political disadvantage compared to other stakeholder groups. There is a glaring need to educate the Black community on the basic political and policy-making structures that exist in the community, and how these structures impact us. The Pimento PAC will focus on building the necessary understanding and awareness within the community to encourage Black participation in the political system.

**Candidate Pipeline:** In addition to activating and mobilizing Black voters who play an increasingly vital role in determining the outcomes of elections, we must work to engage and educate the community on ways they can select and fund political candidates. Potential candidates are not fully immersed in the realities of what it takes to win an election. Oftentimes Black candidates enter political races against well-funded, establishment candidates, are often out-spent, and eventually out-voted. To support a pipeline of Black political candidates, we have built a toolkit with resources and methodologies for planning a successful campaign. We will also build an ecosystem of volunteers and staffers with access to services ranging from marketing to fundraising.

**Black Policy:** We have a system-wide need for more and better-funded Black policy think tanks. Too many proposed solutions to the problems the Black community faces come from progressive think tanks with no direct experience of Blackness in America. Their proposals are often not vetted within our community. A Black ecosystem of political institutions and policy-focused think tanks would allow future Black leadership to create solutions that are grounded in what our community actually needs.

*"We need to create a pipeline of Black political candidates and a system that supports them, so that they can raise the necessary monies to run an election campaign without being compromised by special interests. We also need to educate the Black community on how the political system works, and the importance of their participation in it."*

*— Hollies Winston,  
Political Candidate and CEO, Guaranteed America*



## NEXT STEPS

In addition to our twice annual Pimento Summits and Monthly Town Halls, PRS will formally convene four work streams in 2021/22:

**Twin Cities Can B:** In partnership with Minneapolis, St. Paul, Edina, Brooklyn Center, and the Global Cities Can B movement, we will reimagine the Twin Cities as an equitable, healthy, and prosperous metropolis, using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a benchmark.

**Economic Liberation:** We will encourage better coordination between active economically focused organizations, bridge the cultural and experience gap between small Black businesses and current funding and support opportunities, establish an ecosystem of Black professionals to help Black businesses, and establish a venture capital pipeline to support Black entrepreneurship across the Twin Cities.

**Social Liberation:** We will promote inter-organizational coordination and cooperation to better support healing from trauma in the Black community. We will encourage the sharing of ideas and resources, and the creation of action plans to link traditionally active organizations with new initiatives and ideas that are percolating up from the streets in our communities.

**Political Liberation:** We will establish a PAC to better support the Black community and promote the importance of personal political action, create a Black political candidate pipeline and ecosystem of political volunteers and staffers, and work with think tanks to create more culturally meaningful and impactful policy positions for the special interest group we call Black people.

# PIMENTO RELIEF SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS 2020-2021

3

## New organizations

**created.** The Pimento Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit agency, Pimento Relief Services, a Social Impact B-Corporation, and the Pimento PAC, a political action committee to support political candidates advocating for Black liberation.

3

## Convening Summits

with leaders from all sectors of our cities: June 2020, December 2020, and June 2021.

4

## Cities agreed to use the UN Sustainable Development Goals

to reimagine our region: Twin Cities Can B!

2

## Get out the vote drives

in the lowest voting precincts in Minneapolis and St. Paul: October 2020.

4

## Healing Events including:

Healing the Streets, Whittier June 2021, and Juneteenth Celebration, North Minneapolis, June 2021.

11

## Days of immediate action

in Brooklyn Center after the murder of Daunte Wright in April 2021: 20,000 families received food and home essentials, 2,000 Covid-19 vaccines were administered, and 1,000 volunteers and activists were fed.

10

## Virtual Town Halls

with local, national, and global representation.

91

## Partner organizations

convening together towards Black liberation.

\$1.5M+

**In food donations and home essentials** as mutual aid between neighbors in the food deserts of the Twin Cities.

2274

Individual private **donors.**

## OUR CONVENING APPROACH

We work closely with activists, community organizers, nonprofit agencies, the business community, local and federal government, funders, investors, academics, dreamers, and visionaries from all backgrounds, to build an inclusive society where everyone can prosper together.

We convene with a purpose to create action and sustain momentum. Each convening has measurable goals and clear outcomes in mind.

We work with existing agencies to adjust their delivery models for greater impact and reach.

We assist funders and investors in targeting their interventions in a more culturally intelligent way.

We draw attention to the gaps in existing models and are a voice for those suffering in silence.

We are the catalyst for new ideas to reimagine what's possible, and the structure for those who want to rebuild for a better tomorrow.

*"Take advantage of every opportunity; where there is none, make it for yourself." —Marcus Garvey*

## OUTCOMES & MEASUREMENT

Pimento Relief Services calibrates our convenings through a framework that measures our progress towards these eight goals:

**Aligning efforts** as a united movement.

**Achieving economies of scale** by combining resources.

**Reducing duplication across programs**, to save resources.

**Cross-pollinating strategies** to ensure all great ideas find a home.

**Incubating cross-sectoral initiatives** to maximize progress.

**Building new sector specific partnerships** with an eye towards innovation.

**Formally advocating together** with one voice.

**Mapping the big picture** to ensure long-term success.

# MISSION

To convene a community coalition  
to reach our goal of Economic  
Liberation, Social Liberation, and  
Political Liberation for all  
Black people.

# VISION

To have Black people safely  
participate and thrive holistically in  
all facets of American society, with  
the freedom to contribute their  
skills and express their passions in  
a truly equitable world.





**PimentoReliefServices.org | Follow us on Instagram and Facebook**

*Our brand's mark comes from the Adinkra symbol of Fawohodie originating in West Africa. Fawohodie represents independence, freedom, emancipation, and a new beginning in which we all can come together and create positive change within our community, here in the Twin Cities and eventually throughout the world.*