



## GK FUND AWARDS INAUGURAL \$10,000 MICROGRANTS TO SIX BIPOC AND WOMEN FOUNDED COMPANIES

*The GK Fund Raises \$600,000 in its first year of operation.*

November 20, 2021

**BOSTON** — The GK Fund, a racial equity nonprofit organization working to close the racial wealth gap by facilitating access to capital, mentorship and technology, has announced its inaugural round of microgrants to six innovative BIPOC, Women and LGBTQ founded companies. Grant funds will be used for technical assistance, product inventory, technology upgrades and digital marketing services. GK Fund cohort companies include: **Black Owned Bos, B. Royal Boutique, Must Watch, Our Village Initiative, So Zen Box,** and **sySTEMic Flow.**

The GK Fund was founded in December of 2019 and formally launched in 2020 by Colette Phillips, Michael Benezra, and Andre Porter with the goal to close the racial wealth gap by facilitating access to capital, technology and mentorship for startups and small businesses BIPOC, Women and LGBTQ founders. The fund is supported by a dedicated network of foundations, corporations and individuals. Through its portfolio of integrated programming and partnerships, the fund helps promising BIPOC, Women and LGBTQ founders build connections, secure loan capital, develop a digital footprint and connect with angel investors, family foundations and venture capital firms.

Companies in the GK Fund portfolio have launched and accelerated beyond the early-stage phase in the startup lifecycle, and identified market opportunities during the global pandemic to grow their brand, increase their market valuation, drive revenue growth while making a social impact.

President and Co-Founder, Colette Phillips stated “as an entrepreneur who has experienced the challenges of starting a business, I am delighted that GK Fund is able to support these promising and innovative businesses and BIPOC, Women and LGBTQ founders. We are ready to continue these efforts and build a pipeline for these innovative companies.”

The process of awarding grant funds was done through the deliberative discussions, research and application of best practice methods from prominent nonprofit organizations administering grants to for-profit corporations. In doing so, the fund evaluated companies based upon a non-weighted scoring scale from 0-5, reviewing company mission statements, pitch decks, sales and convertible notes (if applicable), governance structure, and plans for deployment of GK grant funding. GK Fund embarked upon new territory for non-profit organizations in the social impact space, and engaged in thoughtful discussions to ensure that grant process was equitable and not demonstrative of the existing barriers to access that too often prevent innovative companies from reaching their true potential.

## About The GK Fund:

The GK Fund works to close the racial wealth gap by facilitating access to capital, technology and mentorship for BIPOC, Women and LGBTQ entrepreneurs. The GK Fund is supported by a dedicated network of corporations, foundations, and individuals and its mission is to level the field and close the racial and gender wealth gap for the most promising BIPOC founded companies. Through its portfolio of integrated programming and helping underserved founders build connections between angel investors, venture capital firms, large banks, family offices and private equity investors, the GK Fund tackles the largest disparities facing underserved founders including, access to capital, mentorship, and exposure. To learn more about The GK Fund or donate to support its mission, go to [www.thegkfund.org](http://www.thegkfund.org).

## Founders:

Colette Phillips, President and Co – Founder

Michael Benezra, Vice President and Co-Founder

Andre Porter, Board Director and Co – Founder

## Board of Directors

Herby Duverné, CEO and Founder | RISE Together

Saskia Epstein, VP of Community Affairs | PNC Bank

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Susan Portin | Legal Counsel | Heartland Water Technologies

Sean Curran | Principal | Waterville Consulting

Please see the attached document for a list and descriptions of each grantee.

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## 2021 GK Fund Microgrant Award Winners

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Black Owned Bos

Jae'da Turner, Founder & Managing Director

Black Owned Bos. officially launched in March 2019 as a platform and resource to highlight and lift Black owned businesses, places, spaces and the people moving the culture forward. As a business services and consulting agency, Black Owned Bos. creates spaces to amplify, incubate, and support.

[www.blackownedbos.com](http://www.blackownedbos.com)



B. Royal Boutique

Tonya Smith Winston

B.Royal Boutique is currently working with Berkshire Bank Futures Fund to receive a loan to supplement their current brand expansion. Their e-commerce activity has been exceptional during the pandemic, giving customers a seamless virtual purchasing experience. At the same time, B.Royal has opened a new location in Newton Centre.

<https://broyalboutique.com/>



So Zen Box

Sarah Fox, CEO

So Zen Box is a mission-driven company focused on supporting the ecosystem of black business ownership by introducing customers to new black owned brands through our subscription box and marketplace. Our business offers a marketplace for purchasing from black owned businesses and a corresponding subscription box to make it easy for consumers to try products before they buy.

<https://www.sozenbox.com>



Systemic Flow

Jessica Sanon, CEO

sySTEMic flow emerged from the dedication to inspire and support young Black girls and women in furthering their love for Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM). Established in 2017, the organization saw that there was a need to support the number of black women who are invested in acquiring a STEM-related degree.

<https://www.systemicflow.com>



Our Village Initiative

Denisha McDonald \ | Founder and Change Agent

Our Village Initiative's mission is to increase the rate of homeownership in communities of color by creating and curating solutions to help residents learn how to save, invest and own their legacy. We host monthly financial literacy seminars addressing various barriers to wealth creation, we launched our official homebuyer program and are expanding our savings challenge footprint. <http://www.Ourvillageinitiative.com>



Must Watch

Chelinde Edouard, CEO

MustWatch lets you know who is watching what and what you should be watching next. MustWatch is an app that brings your friends and favorite shows together all in one place. The app makes it easy to find new shows on every platform, see what your friends are watching, and recommend great shows.

<https://mustwatch.com>