

**NINA MOINI:** A Minnesota organization formed in the wake of the police killings of Jamar Clark and Philando Castile nearly a decade ago has announced it will close its doors at the end of this year. Black Visions became a nationally recognized voice, leading efforts to advance social and racial justice. Notably it was behind the Yes on Two campaign, you may remember, to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department and establish a Department of Safety following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Yolanda Roth is director of communications with Black Visions and joins me now to talk more about this decision. Thank you for your time this afternoon, Yolanda.

**YOLANDA** Thank you. I appreciate being here.

**ROTH:**

**NINA MOINI:** This had to have been a tough decision, and I'm sure there was a lot that went into it. How are you feeling and-- as you and your staff prepare to wrap up this particular work?

**YOLANDA** Well, well, there's definitely a little bit of sadness. It's a little bittersweet. We are excited though about the work we still have to do. We're excited about the individuals that will continue this work after we're gone and excited about being able to put resources, both financial and human capital, back into the movement to use our experience and learn from us as we learn from them.

**NINA MOINI:** Yeah, the work doesn't end. It will I'm sure take different forms. But if you want to just take us back if you would to when this was all formed, what was the need at the time, and what were you all feeling when Black Visions first came together?

**YOLANDA** So Black Visions, our founders really were coming on the heels of the murders as you mentioned of Philando  
**ROTH:** Castile and others and the just wanting to put an end to that kind of pain and injustice and came together to really think of a better way for us to think about community safety and take care of ourselves and our communities.

**NINA MOINI:** And so in the last 10 years or so, I feel like there have been a lot of changes. There have been policy changes, administration changes, changes in social media and even the ways that people communicate. What has it been growing in this way with the changes that happen in the world?

**YOLANDA** I think it's been really a lesson for us in what reform is and what true system change is, what abolition means  
**ROTH:** tearing down oppressive systems and rebuilding these systems and the image of humanity and the image of love and the image of true justice. As we keep learning, what reform-- the many, many ways that reform can look and the many different phrases and terms given to reform, we understand that reform is never going to be enough. It might be the pathway and part of abolition, but it will never truly get us past all of the deceptive, painful practices that our current systems use against us.

**NINA MOINI:** How do you feel like attitudes have changed or progressed around talking about abolition? We mentioned the ballot measure, the Yes on Two ballot measure, that ultimately did not pass, but how do you feel like over the years that has evolved?

**YOLANDA**

**ROTH:**

We were really honored to have gotten more than 60,000 people to understand and appreciate and support the idea that we could reimagine the way that we think about community safety, that we could think differently about policing our community and an armed response to situations that don't require them. That was an amazing accomplishment, so that in and of itself was a huge change, I would say a historic change.

Now with more time having gone by, I feel like people may have forgotten a little bit of what we learned in 2020, but I think Metro Surge brought it all back for everyone, the understanding that we are the best people to keep us safe.

**NINA MOINI:**

Will you tell us a little bit about some of the decision making? I understand the plan is to sunset at the end of the year. What can you tell us about how the transition will unfold over the next few months, and what is your funding situation? Are there funds left, and how might those be useful?

**YOLANDA**

**ROTH:**

So we plan to keep working. We have some political education coming up, some at the end of the month actually honoring Black August and the freedom fighters who have been imprisoned on behalf of Black liberation. We also are supporting other organizations both with human capital and financial capital. So Blackbird tomorrow actually has a revolutionary teach in, and our own comms manager, DA Bullock, will be presenting a session there on narrative strategy to get to abolition that we're very excited about.

Yeah, so we still have quite a bit of work to go. You can expect more information from us on how we will be dispersing the remaining funds. We anticipate it being approximately 4 million back into community. Those plans are being made now. So we-- yeah, we're excited to be able to fund the movement and make sure that the fights that are happening with some of the great organizations that are continuing this work can have some help doing so.

**NINA MOINI:**

Yeah, what lessons have you gained or things that you've learned over the years that you hope in addition to funding but to leave other organizations with?

**YOLANDA**

**ROTH:**

I think I can say that as an organization, we've learned a lot about principled struggle. And things that seem very open and shut can have very different meanings even to those of us who are in the movement. So words like abolition, what does abolition actually mean? What does it mean to you? What does it mean to me?

Is that a frightening word? Should it be? A lot of people are doing abolition work, and they're just not calling it that. And ultimately I believe most everyone wants abolition.

We don't want to need police officers. We don't want to feel like there's-- we have to call them. We don't-- abolition, when we think about all of the systems connected to it, all of the systems that feed the injustice that we face today, they're all meant to feed one another. So abolition has to be more than policing. Abolition has to be-- has to think about education, and it has to think about, great jobs.

Abolition has to think about where do unions fit in. Where-- abolitionist has to think about do we have access to good health care. It has to think about the design of streets. It has to-- there's so much that needs to be tied into that. I think there are so many other words like diversity and inclusion.

What does diversity and inclusion actually mean when it was brought to us? What does it mean to have-- equality versus equity. The words equity and equality are used interchangeably right now, and they don't mean the same thing. And the understanding of what it actually has been lost sadly.

**NINA MOINI:** I think from what you're describing, I can hear that the work very much will continue on your behalf and on behalf of those you work with even as a Black Visions may be coming to an end. And we thank you for stopping by the show and sharing with us, Yolanda.

**YOLANDA** Thank you. Have a great day.

**ROTH:**

**NINA MOINI:** You, too. Yolanda Roth is with the Black Visions.