

Equity Insights | Innovative Models to Disrupt the Racial Wealth Gap and Invest in Black Women Leadership

March 20, 2024



**Gabrielle Wyatt, Founder,
The Highland Project**

Gabrielle founded The Highland Project in October 2020, an organization focused on building and sustaining a pipeline of Black women leading communities, institutions, and systems, resulting in the creation of multi-generational wealth and change in their communities.

Prior to founding The Highland Project, Gabrielle led major change initiatives in our nation's largest and most complex school systems and

shaped the investment strategy of leading national philanthropic initiatives. Most recently, she was a Partner at The City Fund, founded by leading national philanthropists to support local education leaders to build local movements for systemic change in education. Gabrielle supported local education leaders across the nation to expand opportunities for students in public schools through strategic advising, board service, and philanthropic investments. During her tenure, Wyatt launched the City Leadership Fellowship, an executive leadership development program focused on empowering Black and Latinx leaders pursuing bold education visions. Before joining The City Fund, Gabrielle was the Chief Strategy Officer at Civic Builders. A non-profit focused on solving the facilities challenge for high quality charter schools. Gabrielle led partnerships with the Walton Family Foundation and Laura and John Arnold Foundation to launch three national facilities funds to support growing high performing public schools.

Gabrielle is the former Executive Director of Strategy for Newark Public Schools, New Jersey's largest school district. She led the district's efforts to increase access to high-quality public schools, enrollment, and financial strategy. As a result of the district's focus on increasing students' opportunities in public schools, a recent study by CREDO at Stanford found Newark students are posting learning gains that outpace the state's

best-in-the-nation public school system. Previously, Gabrielle was the Associate Director of Portfolio Planning at the NYCDOE.

As a Baltimore native, Gabrielle began her career as a Baltimore County Public Schools Board of Education member. Gabrielle is a graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and the Harvard Kennedy School. Gabrielle Wyatt is the proud daughter of two Baltimore educators, Mary Alice Thomas and Quentin Wyatt.



Rhonda J. Broussard
Founder, CEO: [Beloved Community](#)
Author, [One Good Question: How Countries Prepare Youth to Lead](#)
[LinkedIn](#)

Rhonda J. Broussard (she/her/hers) is an author, entrepreneur, and futurist. As the Founder & CEO of Beloved Community, Rhonda works at the nexus of Equity in Schools, Equity at Work, and Equity at Home. Rhonda founded Beloved Community to create sustainable paths to regional racial and economic equity. Her vision for Beloved Community is informed by her leadership in education and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s goal "to create

a beloved community" that would "require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives."

Rhonda has been a change-agent in diversity, equity, inclusion and international education throughout her career. Previously, she founded a network of language immersion and International Baccalaureate world authorized schools, was a National Board Certified Teacher and taught in public schools in drop-out recovery, college access, working class, immigrant, and affluent school communities. She has served on the board of the Missouri's Charter Public School Association, PROMO - Missouri's Statewide LGBTQ Advocacy Organization, Agile Learning Center of New Orleans, and Washington University in St. Louis YMCA-YWCA.

Rhonda is steadfast in her commitment to community engagement and leadership as a Highland Leader, a Tulane Mellon Fellow, a Pahara-Aspen Fellow and an Eisenhower Fellow. She currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors of EdNavigator, Director of Diverse Charter Schools Coalition and Director of New Orleans African

American Museum. Rhonda has earned a Bachelor of Arts in French and Secondary Education from Washington University in St. Louis, a Masters of Arts in French Studies from The Institute of French Studies at New York University, and has studied in Cameroon, Martinique, Finland, New Zealand and metropolitan France. Rhonda is the author of *One Good Question: How Countries Prepare Youth to Lead*. You can find Rhonda, her partner Kim, and her bilingual family living on native Bulbancha land also known as New Orleans, Louisiana where she studies, performs, and teaches dances from the African diaspora.



Velvet Bryant (Moderator)
Carolinas Regional Program Officer
Asset Funders Network

Velvet Bryant serves as the Regional Program Officer for the Carolinas at Asset Funders Network (AFN). In this role, she engages funders focused on asset building in North and South Carolina and leads collaborative efforts to promote racial equity and economic justice nationally. Prior to joining AFN, Velvet served as Program Associate in the Center for Economic Opportunity at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In this role, she

advanced philanthropic strategies to promote household savings, debt reduction, asset building and consumer financial protection for families, older youth and young adults. Velvet also codesigned the Southern Partnership to Reduce Debt (SPRD), a multistate, multiyear initiative aimed to address the racial-ethnic wealth gap.

Previously, Velvet served as the Assistant Director of the Institute for Public Engagement at Wake Forest University, where she led university/community partnerships and service-learning opportunities for undergraduate students. She also chaired the Inclusiveness Committee of The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem, which advances economic security for women and girls in Forsyth County. Additionally, Velvet served as a case manager with the BJC Behavioral Health Deaf Services Team, where she coordinated mental health and community support services for adults and young people. Velvet has also led collaborative community efforts to support language accessibility with individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Velvet holds a BA degree in Psychology and Women and Gender Studies from Wake Forest University and a MSW in Social and Economic Development from Washington University in St. Louis. She resides in North Carolina.