

This past year, myself and the Racialized Leaders team have had the privilege of operating with an additional \$5000 budget for our community-fostering and solidarity-building events we had in store through the Ontario Community Changemakers grant and the support of 880 Cities. The ability to organize without solely relying on donation and the kindness of community members we try to support has been incredibly freeing, supportive and surreal. This grant gave my team and I the opportunity to not only fund joyous and wholesome events allowing folks to connect, but also gave us the wonderful honour of being able to pay our co-collaborators and beloved community supporters well for their time and labour.

In the beginning of the grant period, we were able to use the grant to pay Indigenous, Black, Queer, Muslim and collaborators from other historically vulnerable and unsupported communities for their time and efforts in solidarity events, strategic planning sessions, and sessions holding space for communal grief. Later on, throughout the year, we were able to pay Black Muslim women collaborators to support us in our Black History Month programming in a way that was not only thoughtful of accessibility, but as well to the capacities of both the organizing team as well as the collaborators themselves. This funding and the accessible way in which it is offered allowed us to support racialized, disabled, queer, and other vulnerable people including our brilliant collaborators. These are also folks that funding systems often let fall through the cracks through institutional barriers which is why having access to this type of grant felt like the most extreme relief in comparison.

In May, my team and I were able to use the funding to not only pay the collaborating individuals their dues for creating and executing thoughtful programming, but we were able to use these funds to support several Asian local businesses, organizations, community members, and individual artists and performers from various parts of the continent. This funding allowed us the opportunity to collaborate with folks from LiberAsian London and host both an online event discussing colonial violence against and within pan-Asian communities, and an in-person celebration of Asian talent, heritage and community. The former was an open discussion and allowed many folks to deeply investigate and share as well as connect to each other on such vulnerable experiences.

The latter was the largest event I had ever hosted and managed as we used a significant portion of our budget on this event. The Racialized Leaders team and LiberAsian London team worked intensely for months to create a joy-based celebration of Asian life, love and culture from the venue, the DJ, the photographer, down to the catering and the performances. We collaborated with storytellers, poets, dancers, small businesses, restaurants, and organizers in the city with connections to Nepal, China, Afghanistan, Palestine, India, Sri Lanka, Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia and more. We were able to invite folks **at no cost** to enjoy the food, music, poetry, performances, and community experience at this event. We had over 75 registered participants through our Eventbrite and an extra Google Form, over 40 participants at any given point and needed to increase our catering options as well to ensure everyone from the planners to last-minute attendees were able to eat! It cost over \$2000, however, OCC funding allowed us the opportunity to pay dozens of collaborators individually and small businesses around the city for supporting our event. Without the funding OCC offered, this event would not have been able to occur in the capacity that it did and we would not have had the ability to compensate anywhere near as many local talents and organizers or to the capacity that we did. I am incredibly grateful for

the ability to be part of such a historic event in London, Ontario's landscape, as well as such a thoughtful and intentionally inclusive event celebrating folks and communities often swept under the rug in the social-advocacy spaces in our cities.







