



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 19, 2020

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Innovative Black-led and focused initiative commits to raise \$100 million to transform the educational experience for all students

The 1954 Project seeks to realize the promise of Brown v. Board, investing in and supporting Black educators and leaders to transform education for all.

CHICAGO, IL – The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education (CAFÉ), a Chicago-based 501c3, today announced the launch of The 1954 Project, a new philanthropic initiative focused on embracing Black leadership to fulfill the promise of an excellent education for ALL. The unique Black-led focused and funded initiative has committed to raising at least \$100 million in grants to support Black educators and education leaders across the country over the next five years.

Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education founder and philanthropist Liz Thompson believes, “The 1954 Project is an investment in the genius and deep reservoir of Black talent and the understanding that our schools are better – and more complete – when

Black educators are an integral part of the education experience. It is our focus to identify, cultivate, and elevate those leaders so that all students may thrive.”

The 1954 Project will focus its support on three domains: investing in innovative and culturally affirming approaches to teaching and learning, expanding educator and leader diversity, and increasing economic mobility for students of color. Through focusing on these areas, The 1954 Project will drive innovation and lasting change.

Our systems’ deficits are well documented, however, the assets of education leaders are not. Few efforts have focused on funding, supporting, and expanding the positive impact of Black leaders in the education sector. The 1954 Project seeks to reverse that trend, in part, by informing and recruiting a new generation of philanthropists interested in providing the ample and flexible support Black educators need to thrive – without constraints.

The 1954 Project will launch with seed funding from the Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education and the Walton Family Foundation.

Musician and education advocate Pharrell Williams supports the 1954 Project’s unique mission saying, “Liz and the Walton Family Foundation have been incredible partners to my education focused foundation, Yellow. I have seen, firsthand, their passion for evening the odds for Black students. The 1954 project will increase the chances that Black students get to experience incredible Black teachers and that those teachers are part of a larger Black-led movement for progress and change. I’m proud to be part of the 1954 Project network of Black philanthropists.”

“All students benefit from diverse leadership,” said Walton Family Foundation senior program officer Melinda Wright. “For Black students, especially, having an educator who looks like them can make all the difference. The Walton Family Foundation is proud to support The 1954 Project in its efforts to energize and strengthen Black philanthropy and education.”

The 1954 Project will work with organizations across the country. For more information, visit 1954Project.org.

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ABOUT THE CLEVELAND AVENUE FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

The Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education, The CAFE – a (501c3), was founded in 2014 by Liz and Don Thompson. The CAFÉ is committed to supporting and mentoring students and professionals as they progress through various stages in life and to broadening the landscape of African-American philanthropy. For more information, visit thecafe.org, and follow us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Twitter](#).

ABOUT THE 1954 PROJECT

The 1954 Project is a philanthropic initiative focused on embracing Black leadership in the education sector in order to fulfill the promise of education for ALL. Led by the Black community with a goal of raising \$100 million, in partnership with allies, the 1954 project exists at the intersection of education, leadership, and giving. Learn more at 1954project.org