

ZORA'S HOUSE

This IS OUR YEAR.

AUGUST 2021 - AUGUST 2022



ZORA'S HOUSE

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I THOUGHT ZORA'S HOUSE WAS MY DREAM. TURNS OUT IT WAS OURS.

In 2015, I was newly moved to Columbus and was yearning to connect with a community of like-minded and like-experienced women. Yearning for a space where I - a young Black woman - could be seen, loved, and supported, just as I am.

This is where the idea of Zora's House was born. In 2016, Zora's House was an informal meet-up group having pop-up coworking sessions, book clubs and wine nights. Our group got bigger and bigger and I started to dream up ways to take us to the next level.

That's when I found 1311 Summit Street...a vacant lot in a historically diverse, rapidly gentrifying neighborhood in Columbus. And I knew I had found the perfect home for Zora's House.

In 2018, we opened the doors to the house we had built on that vacant lot, and an early visitor to Zora's House described the space by saying, "Imagine your favorite coffee shop and your homegirl's house had a baby - and that's Zora's House."

I used to think that Zora's House was my dream. And yet, at every turn, "my" dream has gotten richer through the incorporation of other people's visions and perspectives, through opportunities to build **alongside** women of color, not just build for them.

Since opening our doors, Zora's House has become a well-known resource in Columbus for women of color to share their ideas, develop their leadership abilities, build skills, and work towards their creative dreams - all from a place of authenticity and wholeness.

We've supported thousands of women of color and gender expansive people of color attempting to create art, build movements, launch businesses, and innovate in their families, workplaces, and communities.

Along the way "my" dream has become a collective one - and that shared vision keeps getting bigger.

In 2022, we grew from one full-time and two part-time staff to six full-time staff members. We reached a peak of almost two hundred and fifty members and directly served more than one thousand women of color through our events and programs.

In this report, you'll hear - not from me - but from all the other women who have taken part in building, shaping, and growing Zora's House this year. Our staff. Our board. Our members. Our program participants. We wouldn't be who we are without them. We wouldn't be where we are without them. It seems only fitting to let them tell the story.

LC Johnson



LC JOHNSON
FOUNDER & CEO



WHO IS ZORA'S HOUSE?

A community. A movement. A workplace. A haven. A happy hour. An incubator.

Zora's House – the first and only community space and leadership incubator in Ohio created by and for women and non-binary people of color – is a safe space in our community where women of color can build relationships, connect to resources, and are provided the support they need successfully incubate their creativity, scholarship, entrepreneurship, activism, service, and leadership.

Zora's House is creating a world that recognizes the full humanity of Black, Latina Indigenous, AAPI and other women and gender expansive people of color - and creates space for these communities to thrive, not just survive. To feel safe. To have joy. To dream, create, and lead, free from the burden of patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of systemic oppression.

That world starts with women of color. Women who become members of Zora's House. Women who make use of our resources. Women who attend our events and programs.

WOMEN. JUST. LIKE. THESE.



Chrissy T

WHAT I'M UP TO Local sex educator with my own consulting company and 17+ years of experience almost exclusively educating in the Black community.

WHY I LOVE ZH Because there's no other place in the city where I am welcomed, supported, and loved as my authentic self. ZH is my family.



Erica

REVA IN A NUTSHELL Columbus native. Full-Time Account Manager. Part-Time student & DJ. Mother to a young black man. Sister to many.

SKILLS Blogging, Podcasting, Planning, Public Speaking

CURRENTLY WORKING ON Gaining skills such as marketing, business planning, etc. to help me boldly step into a career change with complete confidence.



Subathra

BELOVED IDENTITIES Daughter. Sister. Mother. Wife/Partner. A techie and foodie who loves to travel.

CURRENTLY ON MY MIND Building deep friendships with other WOC in Columbus



Reva



Fariha

FARIHA IN A NUTSHELL Daughter, Partner, Poet, Muslim, Second Generation Immigrant. Foster mom and advocate for hard-to-place Black and Brown foster kids.



Brianna

BELOVED IDENTITIES Daughter, Sister, Student, LGBTQAI+, Differently-Abled

CURRENTLY ON MY MIND Creating a safe space & forever family that I can be unapologetically black and carefree with

WOMEN OF COLOR WEALTH BUILDERS

WoC *Wealth Builders* is a first-of-its-kind financial literacy program targeted towards women of color (WOC) who identify as “first generation wealth builders.” A trauma-informed, culturally relevant financial education program created by us for us, *WoC Wealth Builders* meets the needs of WOC who want to shift the trajectory of their lives, their families and communities they belong to. This program creates space for folks to invite more joy, abundance and freedom to live life on their own terms.

This journey towards financial healing and generational wealth encompasses a full year of education, support and community, centering the unique needs and experiences of women and gender expansive people of color. Participants of *WoC Wealth Builders* experience a 3-day kickoff retreat, two 1:1 financial planning sessions, socio-emotional support to uncover and address past financial trauma, and monthly culturally competent financial education workshops.

As a first generation wealth builder myself, I have already begun to witness the impact of my increased financial literacy with my own family. From working with my partner to set our 13-month-old daughter up for success to helping my parents develop a retirement plan, change has already begun to happen. I am excited to be a part of the change and ultimately shift the financial narratives for women and gender expansive people of color in Columbus and beyond!



Ivory Levert

IVORY LEVERT
PROGRAMS &
PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER

IN DIAMOND'S WORDS:

"We are a diverse group of women with unique lived experiences, professions, and dreams who all desire to be better with our money and contribute on a greater scale financially to our families and communities."



MEET DIAMOND

I joined Zora's House as a member this year with the hopes to find support with my personal finance journey and get help with my goal to become a Money Coach for Black women. I applied to the *WOC Wealth Builders* program thinking that it would be a wonderful opportunity to learn about wealth management through the lens of women of color. I attended the 3-day retreat this summer which provided me the opportunity to bond with other ladies at Zora's House and learn about other people's financial challenges, commonalities, and victories.

This program is important because our community has dealt with tremendous financial setbacks due to systemic racism and so many of us grew up without having financial education or stability. This program affords us the opportunity to make what we once thought was impossible - truly possible. Understanding my money story and my emotions around it really helped me to understand my financial literacy is so important. Knowing our why and arming ourselves with resources and knowledge will enable us to gain control of our finances, build wealth and ultimately change our family trees.



MEET NAVYA

The start of my relationship with Zora's House started in 2018 when I saw LC Johnson who dreamed of having a safe space for women of color. We had dinner there for a program I was in and it instantly made me feel comforted and safe. Since then I regularly attended programming but it was not until 2022 that I became an Ambassador. I joined because I had several friends who were already a part of the program and wanted to see me in it. Since becoming a Fellow, I regularly volunteer and get opportunities to be in programs such as the WOC Wealth Builders program.

This program is impactful because now more than ever people are isolated or think that personal growth comes from isolated grinding or hustling, however, the Fellowship program shows you that is not the case and that there's power in a community. I've gained so much power from being in a women-led program and I think many others will as well.

IN NAVYA'S WORDS:

"The ambassador program allowed me to make connections and a sisterhood with the other ambassadors while working on my own projects. It also allowed me to feel motivated in creative work and my career as I worked and volunteered alongside other powerful women."

LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

FORMERLY THE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

The *Leadership Fellows* program is a six-month learning, growth, and service experience for women of color in Central Ohio. Fellows are given the opportunity to collaborate with staff and their cohort of 10 other women of color, participate in programs, co-work, and engage with our network and resources to help them achieve their personal and professional goals. This program gives them a behind the scenes look at the development of a women of color led nonprofit organization - from marketing to operations to fundraising - our fellows are learning skills to help them become the future leaders of this city.

Our Fellows are the first face that you'll see when they walk into the House. In their vital roles, they represent Zora's House by engaging with the community and other members, and giving tours to visitors. Over the years, this program has incubated PhD students, organizational leaders, thriving entrepreneurs, artists, activists - the list goes on and on.

This program has been important to me because I started as an Ambassador. Once I became the House Manager and then the Operations Manager, I was able to use my previous experience to improve the program. I made lifelong friends, cultivated professional connections and developed skills that will carry me through my entire life.

Jami Niane



JAMI NIANE
OPERATIONS
MANAGER

HER WAY

BUSINESS BUILDERS

The *Her Way Business Builder* is a partnership between Aveni Enterprises, Rev1, and Zora's House to incubate women of color entrepreneurs through a 9-week intensive program. Let's be honest, being an entrepreneur is hard and can be especially challenging for women of color. When you feel like the resources necessary to thrive as a business are too far out of reach and no one understands the struggles of owning and operating a business, that is where *Her Way* stands in the gap!

This program aspires to create and develop a pipeline of women of color owned businesses that have the resources they need to build the infrastructure to have a profitable, tech-enabled business through weekly educational workshops. At the end of each cohort, participants that complete the program have the opportunity to be awarded \$1,000 to be invested into their business. This is a transformative experience for women of color because this kind of education typically costs thousands of dollars and is offered to women of color in our community free of charge upon application approval. We are changing the game for women of color owned businesses in this community and are excited to continue creating spaces for women of color to thrive.

I am a former participant in this program and can honestly say that it completely changed my perspective on what it means to own a business, crunch numbers, and plan to expand! I look forward to continuing this program and learning more about the women of color entrepreneurs in our community!



Tasha Lomo

TASHA LOMO
PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS
COORDINATOR

IN AVA'S WORDS:

*"I gained
confidence
and a better
understanding
on running an
effective
business."*



MEET AVA

I am the proud founder of *SE Gardens and Urban Farm*, a non-profit which started as a community garden in 2017 and has now expanded into an organization that offers educational programming on agricultural practices and increases access to fresh, organic produce to the community.

When I joined Zora's House in 2021, one of the Zora's House programs I was most drawn to was the *Her Way Business Builders*. I was interested because I wanted my farm and e-commerce business to grow and knew I needed help in understanding my costs and over development of my business plan.

The impact of *Her Way* is immeasurable. It gives entrepreneurs the tools need to run an effective business and gives each participant the opportunity to meet other dynamic women of color entrepreneurs while honing our individual skills.



MEET KHADIJA

There are so many parts of my identity that drew me to Zora's House - mother, Black woman, storyteller, breastfeeding advocate, entrepreneur. I joined because I believed deeply in the vision and found a community of women of color that share these identities with me. I first connected with Zora's House through the Writers' Circle, a place where I found the community that helped me develop a blog post that eventually became my 2019 TEDx Talk. Ever since then, Zora's House has provided me with endless opportunities ranging from bringing me many new customers at the WOCO Markets to getting me featured in The Columbus Dispatch three times.

My business, *Deez Cookies*, centers my own identity as a Black woman and seeks to highlight the stories of underrepresented and historically oppressed groups through food. I jumped at the opportunity to participate in *WOCO Markets* because they promote my business to customers who want to put their money where their hearts and values are and they allow me to let my cookies tell stories to the Zora's House community and beyond.

IN KHADIJA'S
WORDS:

*"WOCO
markets give
us access to
customers
who are
looking to
intentionally
support
businesses like
ours and give
customers
access to
businesses
that align
with their
values."*

WOCO MARKET

There's a beautiful energy at Zora's House. You feel it the moment you step through that purple door. The *Women of Color Owned (WoCO) Markets* take the energy that lives in Zora's House, and makes it a party.

We laugh, we dance, we commune, and we SHOP! There's something so amazing about seeing that many women of color vendors all in one place. It reminds you of the grand possibilities we possess; the richness is on full display, and there is no shortage of dope merchandise.

The *WoCO Market* aims to provide a space for WoC business owners to put their goods in front of a larger audience than they might otherwise have access to.

These markets have generated over one hundred thousand dollars for our vendors, and provided attendees with an opportunity to support a myriad of local entrepreneurs, all in one spot.

As an entrepreneur myself, I recognize the importance of being in community with folks who know your journey. Like me, most of our vendors maintain a 9 to 5 while building their dream 5 to 9. Having a place to bring your products to market, without fighting for a seat at the vendor table, makes it that much easier to turn dreams into reality.

J'Hanna the Great



J'HANNA THE GREAT
MARKETING &
COMMUNICATIONS
MANAGER

MAKING SPACE FOR US

In 2021, we made the important decision to invest in, not just ourselves, but the future of women of color in Central Ohio. Zora's House is building a 10,000 sq ft facility that will be the first of its kind - a community hub that will serve as a center for innovation, empowerment, and economic recovery for Black, Latina, Indigenous, AAPI and other women of color.

To make this a reality, we've launched the *Making Space* comprehensive campaign that will raise \$5 million for the new facility and \$1 million in sustainable capacity building. But *Making Space* is about more than just a building...It's about creating a transformative movement in philanthropy that will center women of color as donors, leaders, and beneficiaries of the work - while being supported with a community of allies who want to see us thrive.

From our collaborative community design process to our launch of our Making Space website to our Jump at the Sun Society women of color-led leadership team, this campaign has not and will not follow the standard path because we are blazing our own. We strive to disrupt the status quo by catalyzing programming that prioritizes the dreams, leadership, and radical imagination of women of color. We invite you - our donors, funders, supporters and allies - to disrupt the status quo and uproot oppressive systems with us.



Tamaliyapo Mphande

TAMALIYAPO MPHANDE
DIRECTOR OF
DEVELOPMENT

IN CHRISTINA'S WORDS:

"The impact ZH and its team makes is a reflection of how they show up and their commitment to making central Ohio a place for women of color to dream, build, and thrive. I knew I could fully trust this organization to value and utilize my knowledge, expertise, and financial support with respect and compassion."



MEET CHRISTINA

I experienced the magic of Zora's House and the joy that comes from being around women of color with like and unlike experiences. As a WoC development professional, I was honored and excited to join the ZH board earlier this year as the entire team speaks and lives its organizational mission and values in so many authentic and honorable ways. Central Ohio is rapidly diversifying, however, typical practices associated with philanthropy and community building remain rooted in methods created and/or driven by white people, alienating the many leaders, community members, and donors who are not.

ZH approaches this work by and for women of color. There is clear understanding that WoC are not all the same as they program, support, acknowledge, celebrate, and fundraise for us in ways that align with our interests and values. The Making Space campaign is necessary and life-changing. There is a rational case that can be made as women of color will eventually be the majority of all women in the U.S. As this transition takes place, more and more women of color are entering the space of innovation and entrepreneurship and in Ohio, supporting all aspects of this movement must be about intentionality. There is also a case for compassion and awareness. Spaces that are safe and supportive for WoC are limited, so having access to spaces that are created by women of color is necessary for us to thrive.

LET'S RUN THE NUMBERS

250

ACTIVE MEMBERS

17

CORPORATE &
FOUNDATION
FUNDERS

227

HOURS OF COMMUNITY-LED
PROGRAMMING

29

COMMUNITY &
PROGRAM
PARTNERS

incubated

30

women of color
owned businesses

supported
2500+

women of color and allies via virtual and
in-person workshops and events

\$594K

OPERATING
BUDGET

*which
created*

\$270K

POSITIVE
FINANCIAL
IMPACT

new jobs | promotions |
contracts | funding

11

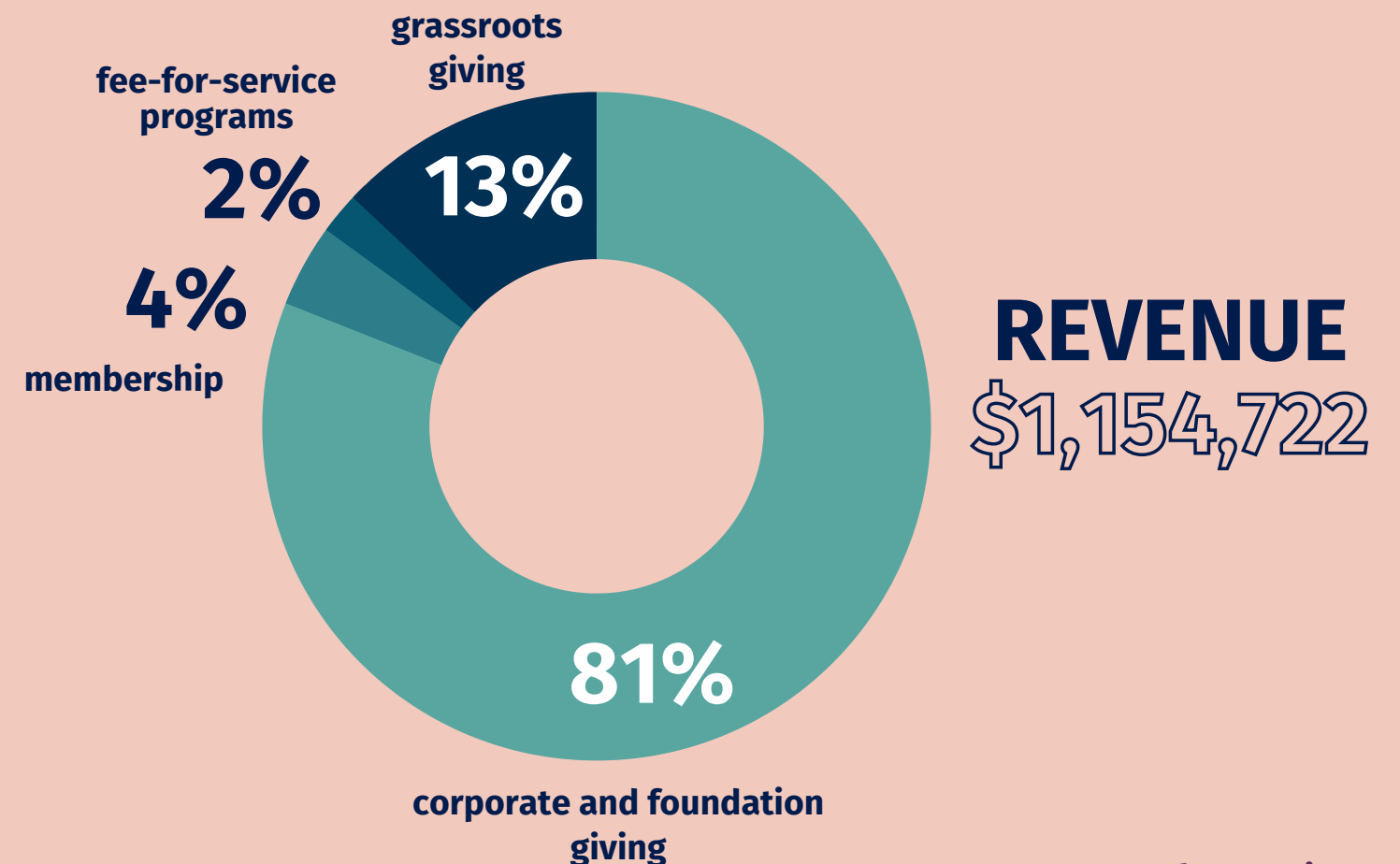
PRESS MENTIONS

EXPENSES

\$594,627

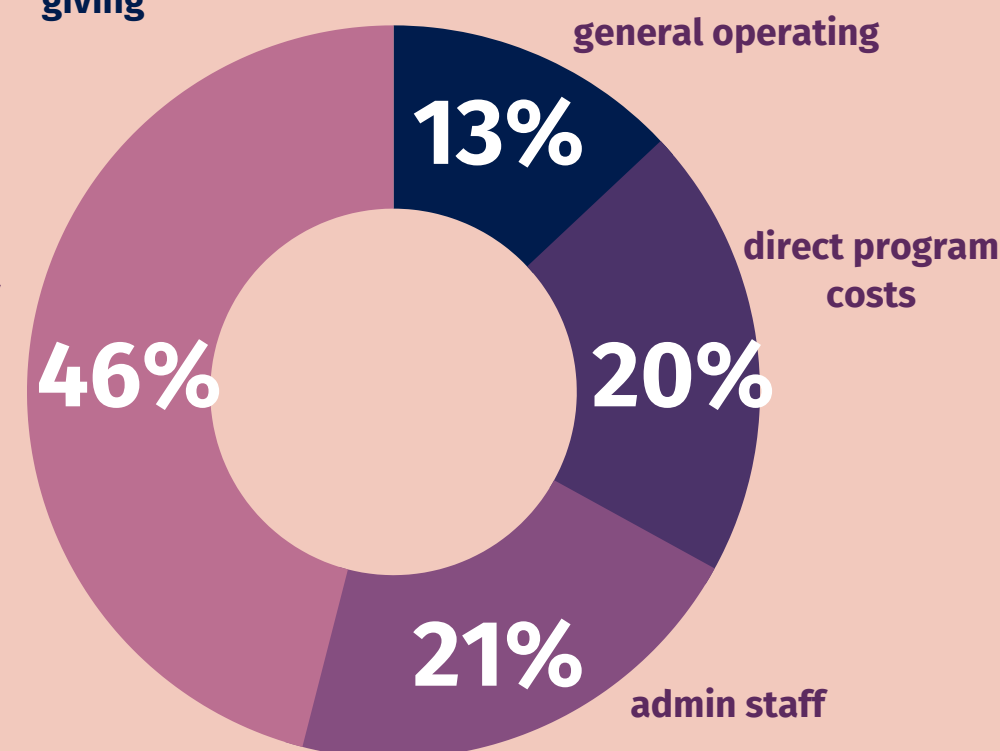
REVENUE

\$1,154,642



EXPENSES

\$594,627



WE CAN'T DO WHAT WE DO... WITHOUT YOU.

As the Zora's House Board Chair, I've had the privilege to watch the growth and impact of Zora's House over the past three years. In that time, I've seen women build support systems for survivors of sexual and domestic abuse through Zora's House. I've watched my own children play in the halls of Zora's House then ask me about the late Zora Neale Hurston and what she was like.

I have had friends and colleagues participate in any one of our programs and then call me in tears because not only did they learn so much, but they also felt so good. Zora's House is like removing weight. It's like carving out a little space only to find out that you have permission to carve out an even bigger space and make yourself at home.

And none of it would be possible without YOU. Because of you - our members, donors, advisors, cheerleaders, and volunteers - more than 3,000 women of color in our community have received the resources, connections, skill building, opportunities, and - perhaps more importantly - the permission they needed to start taking up all the space their dreams, creativity, scholarship, leadership, and entrepreneurship deserve.

On behalf of myself and the entire Zora's House Board of Directors, thank you for being a part of our work and our journey.



Jennifer Walton

JENNIFER WALTON
CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



ASHLEY INGRAM
(BOARD TREASURER)
Thomas Ingram Law Group



CHRISTINA PATEL
OSU Department of Engineering



CHRISTINA RATLEFF
City of Columbus



LILIAN MORALES-LASTER
United Midwest Savings Bank



ERIN UPCHURCH
Kaleidoscope Youth Center



TYIESHA RADFORD-SHORTS
OSU College of Arts & Sciences

A SHOUTOUT TO YOU!



SCAN ME!

Or visit bit.ly/zhsupport22

Thanks to everyone who has supported Zora's House - Members, Donors, Volunteers, Allies, Community Partners - all your contributions are what make our mission possible.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?



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VOLUNTEER



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