

# UNITED BLACK FUND

## A Vital New Vehicle For Blacks To Begin Leading Blacks

**“T**HE only people that can save us for us is us.” These familiar words of Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, founder and president of the United Black Fund, are more than sweet-sounding rhetoric. Every day in many ways the United Black Fund (UBF) is positively demonstrating the practical application of this truism as it carries out its mission of “meeting unmet needs” of the Black community in Washington, D.C. and by extension in many other cities across this nation.

Since its inception in 1969, the United Black Fund has assisted in the establishment of 30 United Black Funds in other areas of the country. An important part of UBF’s philosophy is to “insure that non-profit charitable agencies serving the poor, Black and minority [communities] receive an equitable share of the charity-dollar and continue to serve the needs of citizens in local communities.”

### The Birth of UBF

**T**HE idea of a United Black Fund was conceived from a need for self-help and self-determinism that became readily apparent in the 1960’s. The National Urban League, under the directorship of Whitney M. Young, had made a study of philanthropy and the Black community. This study revealed the startling fact that Black-oriented groups across the country were either being denied funds or were receiving a disproportionately-small share of funds from the United Givers Fund (predecessor of the United Way), the fund raising arm of the Health and Welfare Council (HWC). The study showed that Black-led groups were receiving less than 1½ cents out of each dollar received by the United Givers Fund (UGF).

A similar study, conducted in the



*Dr. Calvin W. Rolark, Founder and President*

Metropolitan Washington Area by Dr. Rolark, editor-publisher of the *Washington Informer* and prominent

leader in the Black community, confirmed the above findings. In fact, the figures were even less in the District of

Columbia where Blacks represent almost 75 percent of the population. The study showed that Black-oriented groups in the Washington area were receiving approximately one-half cent out of every UGF dollar.

The full impact of these facts hit home when a meager request for assistance by the Stoddard Baptist Home was rejected by UGF. Here was the case of a long-time, nonprofit organization clearly struggling to fulfill a community need being denied participation in charity funds while the “UGF funded some kind of emergency answering service” somewhere in the area.

The Black United Front (BUF), parent organization of the United Black Fund, attacked the United Givers Fund as a racist organization. BUF accused the traditional charity fund of being oriented toward and dominated by White middle-class groups and of being racist and irrelevant to Blacks in dispersing funds to needy organizations.

In an article entitled, “Givers Fund and HWC Should Examine Selves,” in the October 4, 1969 issue of the *Washington Afro-American*, the Black United Front raised some serious questions concerning racism in the UGF. Among the 14 points in a position paper distributed by BUF charging the UGF of Washington with employing discriminatory fund allocation policies to Black-oriented agencies and with having few, if any, Blacks involved in policy-making decisions, were the following:

- UGF deliberately practiced the most insidious White racism by denying funds to certain Black-administered agencies while allocating funds to identical White-controlled ones serving a majority of White people.

- Of 80 agencies funded by UGF, less than 10 percent had Black directors.

*(Continued on page 10.)*

**Pulling Ourselves Up By Our Own Bootstraps”...A Series**