

# THE 2021 CEO BLUEPRINT FOR RACIAL EQUITY: COMPANY PROFILE

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WITHIN THE COMPANY

WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

WITHIN SOCIETY



## Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield's Campaign to End Qualified Immunity

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, co-founders of Ben & Jerry's Homemade, are active voices in the fight against systemic racism and white supremacy. By practicing authenticity in their social impact work, reallocating resources toward social justice, and prioritizing trust and alignment in relationship building, Cohen and Greenfield are driving key policy change as champions of [The Campaign to End Qualified Immunity](#). The campaign – driven by a coalition of business leaders, artists, athletes, and other advocates – is utilizing the power of collective action to advance racial equity by increasing transparency and accountability for law enforcement, following numerous instances of police brutality, including the death of George Floyd in 2020.

[Qualified immunity](#) exists to provide protection from lawsuits for public officials, including law enforcement officers who perform their duties under stressful circumstances, often requiring split-second decision-making. While it is important that public officials receive protection from frivolous charges, qualified immunity prevents police officers from being held accountable for the use of excessive force, even when intentional or malicious. Cohen and Greenfield see this as a manifestation of the systemic racism embedded within the criminal justice system, which [disproportionately affects communities of color](#). An end to qualified immunity would be a significant step in the process to dismantle institutional racism, as victims of police misconduct would gain expanded ability to seek legal redress. Importantly, this could also pave the way for increased investment in improved law enforcement training, including racial bias training.

### How Cohen and Greenfield are taking action on racial inequality – and how you can too

**Ensuring authenticity.** Achieving racial justice is not about quick wins. Cohen and Greenfield have embarked on a long-term journey of learning when to wait and when to act, being patient and strategic, and managing the different expectations and priorities among communities and partners. As Greenfield explains, “The most important thing for any business or any company doing anything is that they have to

believe it...and they have to follow up on it.” Companies should have a clear purpose, aspiring for their actions to reflect their values. And while this often aligns with making the business case for advancing equity, this work should be motivated not by a desire for a reputational boost, but by a genuine and sustained commitment to racial justice. As a starting point, corporate leaders can reflect on whether they are articulating the connection between their company’s stated values and a commitment to racial equity.

**Leveraging corporate voice.** In this case, most signatories to the coalition are acting as individual business leaders rather than on behalf of the companies they lead. While it may be easier for individuals to take a stand, companies have enormous power they can leverage in support of social justice. Cohen and Greenfield are encouraging companies to capitalize on their corporate influence by speaking out against racial inequality and to amplify their efforts by redirecting lobbying resources toward social justice advocacy. Corporate leaders can start by identifying their companies’ areas of influence and refocusing their energy and resources toward them.

**Building relationships through corporate influence.** Cohen and Greenfield recognize that “pretty much anyone is willing to get on a call with [them]” – and they are taking advantage of this. A company’s convening power is yet another untapped resource to drive social change. This, coupled with efforts to build genuine connections and trust on common and shared values, is critical for the creation of robust relationships. As a result of its local and national partnership initiatives, Cohen and Greenfield’s large public awareness campaign on qualified immunity has gained traction through active involvement with the U.S. Department of Justice and a number of social and political advocacy groups, in addition to producing a forthcoming book, podcast, and documentary. Corporate leaders should consider which groups they have the ability to convene in order to join together forces for social good.



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