



2020

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# Grantmaking & Program Report

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Cover:

People gather hands after emergency responders tended to a man that was presumably hit by a car during a Black Lives Matter protest in downtown on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 in Los Angeles, CA. (Dania Maxwell / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)



# Introduction

A fist raised in solidarity for George Floyd. (Clay Banks)

**IN A TRAGIC YEAR** that witnessed injustice and violence against communities of color and our democracy, along with an unprecedented global health pandemic, Proteus Fund focused our efforts on bringing people and communities together in the critical fight forward. Through our donor collaboratives—Piper Fund; Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative; and RISE Together Fund—we responded with:

- **Nimble grantmaking** that supported a critical coalition for judicial independence in Pennsylvania;
- **Consulting expertise and grantmaking** that created significant non-partisan civic engagement of Black, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian voters;
- **Funding for gender justice advocates** in New Mexico as neighboring states used the pandemic as an excuse to cut off access to abortion and other reproductive health services;
- **Proteus Fund's first-ever post-election convening** of funders and movement actors that assessed opportunities and challenges on social justice issues in light of November's elections. (You'll learn about many of these efforts in the pages that follow.)

In 2020, we worked hand-in-glove with activists and allies on the ground advancing social justice. Last year, Proteus Fund and Proteus Action League, our 501c4 affiliate, granted more than \$27 million—the largest amount of grantmaking our organizations have ever done in a single year—with funds going to 377 organizations.

In 2020, we welcomed four new fiscally sponsored projects to the Proteus ecosystem that are: nurturing progressive Jewish movement work, ensuring that philanthropy is effective and equitable, keeping philanthropy “safe from hate,” and funding research around the interpretation of “cruel and unusual punishment” in the courts under the Eighth Amendment.

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We are not losing, we are winning. Life in 2020 America looks better than in 1920, and because of our efforts, 2030 will look better than today. We owe it to those who came before us and to those who will come after us.

— ERIC WARD, *Proteus Board Chair*

Amidst all of this, Proteus Fund unveiled a new strategic plan to guide our organization through the next three years—a process that brought crystal clear focus to our work moving forward: racial, gender, and queer justice towards a more inclusive and representative democracy.

In spite of the progress we've made on many fronts, the last 12 months have left all of us weary and emotionally drained—and January's insurrection at the Capitol made it even harder to turn the page on 2020. But I've found some solace in the words of our new board chair Eric Ward, and I hope you can, too: "We are not losing, we are winning," Eric said. "Life in 2020 America looks better than in 1920, and because of our efforts, 2030 will look better than today. We owe it to those who came before us and to those who will come after us."



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Di Donato". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

**Paul Di Donato**

President and CEO

Proteus Fund and Proteus Action League



George Floyd protests in Uptown Charlotte. (Clay Banks)

DONOR COLLABORATIVE:

## Piper Fund

### | 2020 in Review

#### MONEY IN POLITICS

Money in politics advocates across the country entered 2020 with significant momentum for reform. Legislative measures and ballot initiatives in Arizona, Oregon, New Hampshire, New York, Maine, Chicago, and elsewhere, driven by BIPOC communities, signaled a meaningful shift toward a political future less encumbered by the influence of wealthy interests.

Unfortunately, as with so many issues, the COVID-19 pandemic forced several of these efforts to be temporarily sidelined as local, state and nonprofit leaders turned their focus to grappling with the impact of this public health crisis in their communities. Several legislative efforts were tabled for future deliberation, while signature gathering for ballot initiatives became nearly impossible to facilitate under new social distancing guidelines.

Yet, despite all of this, 2020 still saw the passage of multiple money in politics reforms. In April, the New York legislature passed an imperfect but meaningful statewide public financing program, which advocates will be able to build upon in the coming years. Organizers in Maryland passed a public financing system at the ballot in Baltimore County, the latest in a string of five local policy victories since 2014. Now, over half of the state's residents live in a jurisdiction that has approved public financing, which builds stronger momentum for statewide reform in the coming years. And in Oregon, voters approved a constitutional amendment to allow the creation of contribution limits to political giving.

In the midst of such a challenging year, we are grateful to be able to celebrate policy wins like these—and others—and recognize the many ways that our grantees are building a stronger and more sustainable movement for reform.

As we have written about previously, in the face of the pandemic, our grantees led efforts to raise funds for impacted families, share resources, and advocate for housing and healthcare protections, all while maintaining a focus on advancing structural democracy reforms, such as public financing of political campaigns, ethics and disclosure laws, and increasing voter participation. In doing so, our partners are building community power and ensuring that our resources are going directly to where they are needed most. Due to these efforts, local coalitions are well-positioned to continue building in 2021 and beyond. Several ballot initiative campaigns have pledged to resume in 2022 while others are considering their options to advance reforms even sooner.

In 2021, we are also pursuing a transformative scenario planning project that will engage key national and state actors to build alignment around ending corporate and oligarchic control of our democracy. With facilitation from Reos Partners, we are bringing together a set of diverse stakeholders to create a framework for strategic conversations about how to understand the potential futures we face, and develop a shared understanding of the interventions we may use to correct the course of our democracy. Following the scenario planning phase of this project, we will take our learnings and advance a coordinated set of strategies to build a stronger democracy movement.



Organizers in Maryland passed a public financing system at the ballot in Baltimore County. (Baltimore Fair Elections)

In the wake of what has been a tumultuous and politically scandalous year for our nation, our grantees are charting a path toward building a more inclusive democracy, and ensuring that elected officials are prioritizing the voices of communities most impacted—not just during a pandemic but all along the way.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

We ended 2020 with a reminder of the importance of independent state courts, as case after case seeking to invalidate the Presidential election results was heard—and rejected—by state supreme courts. The impact of Piper’s grantees in ensuring that these courts remained impartial, and not subject to political winds, was critical in protecting our democracy.

This year, state courts will play an important role in redistricting; 30 states have some form of constitutional requirement that elections be “free”—18 of these states require that elections be either “equal” or “open” in addition to being free. These can be the basis for redistricting rulings, and the US Supreme Court abdicated federal judiciary responsibility for partisan gerrymandering cases in *Rucho v. Common Cause*. Thus, we expect more cases to be filed solely in state courts.



Piper Fund awarded rapid-response grants to the Pennsylvania chapter of the League of Women Voters, with sub-grants to Why Courts Matter-PA and Common Cause-PA. (League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania)

As noted in our 2019 blog post, [Protecting Our State Courts to Fight Gerrymandering](#), we expect efforts to either pressure judges or attack them for unpopular redistricting rulings. This was already underway in Pennsylvania in 2020, through an effort to change the Pennsylvania Constitution to create judicial districts for the state supreme court. Piper’s Pennsylvania grantees have all been actively working to educate the public on the nature of these deceptive tactics, and the long-term loss of both resources and equitable justice to their communities that could result if these tactics succeed. See the “2020 Spotlight: Preserving Judicial Independence In The Keystone State” on page 10 to learn more.

The assault on the Pennsylvania’s courts is not an exception: [the Brennan Center reported that “In 2020, legislators in at least 17 states considered at least 42 bills to diminish the role or independence of state courts”](#), including cherry-picking of specific judges to hear cases and numerous bills to hyper-politicize judicial selection processes, restrict judicial control of their own resources, and allow legislative overrides of judicial decisions.

In addition to grantmaking, Piper continues to build infrastructure for the field. We continue to lead the Fair Courts Working Group, a network of national organizations, to monitor proposed bills and rhetoric to ensure that state-based groups have the needed resources to respond to proposed measures. To enhance this effort in 2020, Piper contracted [Goodwin Simon Strategic Research](#) to conduct polling and message testing in Iowa, Kansas, and Alaska—where methods of selecting judges have been under attack by the religious right which often points towards abortion rights rulings as reasons to change the system. Piper also contracted with [Bending the Arc Strategies](#) to lead three five-hour long virtual workshops for advocates in ten states to provide support for groups to create long-term strategic plans. These plans will both prepare groups for long-term success and help Piper better understand the resources needed to pivot towards positive reforms.

Piper is also expanding our work to begin focusing on ties between campaign donations and a racist criminal justice system. In response to overwhelming evidence of structural racism in policing and criminal justice nationwide, there have been appeals to address these injustices. Piper’s grantees in Texas and Louisiana have been researching connections between judicial campaign contributions and how companies that make them are rewarded during sentencing, and how they also seek to block progressive reforms (specifically in bail bonds) that threaten their bottom line. Additionally, Piper’s grantees in Ohio have created a long-term plan that applies a holistic approach to their judicial independence work, including improved disclosure, recusal, sentencing reform, and eliminating cash bail.

While challenges will remain numerous, Piper is honored to support its grantees in the struggle to defend and strengthen judicial independence across the country, and is poised to continue to support the field as it evolves to confront new challenges and expand both equity and justice in the years ahead.

## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Protests were a defining feature of 2020. In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the many other black people killed by police, more people took to the streets than ever before, making Black Lives Matter the [largest movement in US history](#). Despite protests being [overwhelmingly peaceful](#), law enforcement and federal agents teargassed protesters in over 100 cities, blinded and maimed protesters, and kidnapped protesters in Portland.

As organizations and leaders on the ground responded by leading know your rights and de-escalation trainings, and drawing attention to the disproportionate policing against protesters of color, Piper expanded its grantmaking to support black led organizations who were leading efforts to keep their communities safe while protesting for racial justice including the BlackOUT Collective, BYP100, and the Movement for Black Lives.

Piper also responded in 2020 to continued efforts to criminalize the right to protest at the state level. Despite COVID-19 stalling or canceling many legislative sessions, legislators still managed to introduce 27 anti-protest bills and pass 6 into law. Piper Fund and Piper Action Fund grantees successfully defended the right to protest in Minnesota, Louisiana, and Alabama. Grantees in Kentucky were able to work with legislators to remove the most harmful provisions of the anti-protest bill and grantees in South Dakota and Ohio put in valiant efforts to defend the right to protest in their states.

Over the course of 2020, Piper and the Protect Dissent Network monitored emerging threats to be able to provide support to state organizations. The network prepared for various scenarios during the post-election period, compiled key resources on de-escalation and know your rights trainings, and disseminated resources with state and local organizers. Piper also funded public opinion polling, a media audit, and the creation of a messaging guide focused on protecting the right to protest during the post-election period which were disseminated to over 300 organizations. Rapid response infrastructure was established for the period as well.



(Cherise Eldridge)

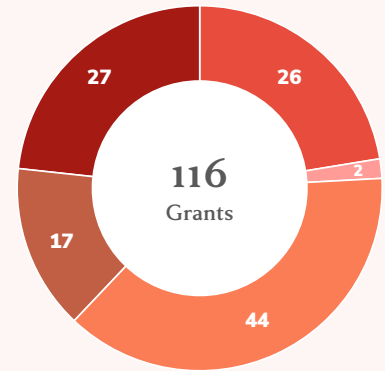


When a violent mob attacked the Capitol on January 6, the network was able to quickly mobilize this infrastructure to respond. Within 24 hours, the Protect Dissent Network held an emergency call to analyze the implications of the attack on the right to protest and determine key messages. Piper’s consultant reactivated the rapid response communication’s list, sending daily clips highlighting the disparate police response to the racial justice protests and the insurrection at the Capitol. The network disseminated key messages, pitched spokespeople, and authored and published many letters to the editor to ensure this attack wouldn’t encourage greater crackdowns on peaceful protest.

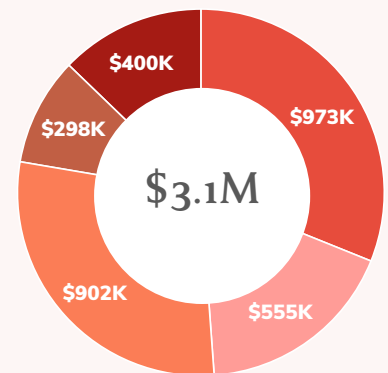
We know that threats to the right to protest will continue, particularly those targeted toward protests for environmental justice and racial justice. Since the beginning of this year, lawmakers have already introduced over 81 anti-protest bills in 32 states, including [a bill that has been signed into law in Florida](#) where protesters who block traffic could face up to 15 years in prison. A Missouri bill would expand the state’s ‘Stand Your Ground’ law and would allow someone to use deadly force against someone who is participating in an ‘unlawful assembly’ and attempts to enter private property, increasing the risk of violence directed toward protesters. Protecting freedom of assembly will continue to require a multifaceted response, from grantmaking, to convening, to messaging and narrative.

However, one thing we learned from 2020 is that when communities work together, we can build resilient movements, defend democracy, and uphold the right to protest. We are deeply grateful for the partnership with our grantees, donors, and partner organizations and look forward to working together in 2021.

## 2020 by the Numbers

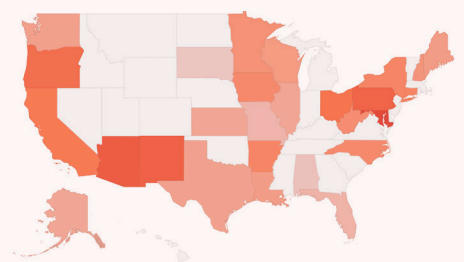


- Money in Politics
- Cross-program
- Judicial Independence
- Right to Protest
- Piper Action Fund



In 2020, grants were awarded to local organizations working across

**27**  
states



## | 2020 Spotlight:

### Preserving Judicial Independence in the Keystone State

*How Piper Fund has helped advocates in Pennsylvania in the battle against judicial gerrymandering.*

**ON FEBRUARY 7, 2018**, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that the state’s congressional districts violated the Pennsylvania Constitution, finding that lawmakers had unlawfully drawn maps to favor one political party over the other. After the US Supreme Court refused to get involved, the state’s legislature moved to impeach the five justices who ruled against their interests.

At that point Piper Fund reached out to Pennsylvania activists and awarded rapid-response grants to the Pennsylvania chapter of the League of Women Voters, with sub-grants to Why Courts Matter-PA and Common Cause-PA. Thanks to those efforts, the impeachment attempt failed. But it was a warning shot that would hint at the battles yet to come—and one that guaranteed this small coalition would be prepared for what followed.

In January 2019, members of Pennsylvania’s House of Representatives introduced legislation to create judicial voting districts, with the hope of handpicking the people who vote for judges, so they can get back to handpicking their own voters. Environmental advocates saw it as a path toward increased fracking. Women’s groups saw it as a play to demolish reproductive health care. And activists all along the political spectrum saw it as a cynical attempt to wrest power from a co-equal branch of government. Kathy Bonnifield, Senior Program Officer with the Piper Fund, reached out to Why Courts Matter-PA and Common Cause-PA again, offering financial support and connecting the organizations to experts in the field.

“We did such a great job on the impeachment attempt that we figured we’d bring the crew back together again,” says Kadida Kenner, former Director of Campaigns for the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, which houses Why Courts Matter-PA. “This time, Kathy encouraged us to bring in Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts, along with Common Cause-PA and Why Courts Matter-PA—three groups that don’t always agree. But we all saw that House Bill 38 was problematic, and we came together to fight from every angle, with organizations that are left of center, right of center, and straight down the middle.” Collaboration started with the grant request itself, which was teed up by Piper and quickly approved.

The proposal to create judicial districts would amend the constitution, which means it must pass both houses of the legislature in two consecutive sessions, then be approved by voters. Why Courts Matter-PA led an aggressive digital campaign on Facebook and urged citizens and political leaders to submit op-eds to local papers, although the bill passed both houses once in spite of the opposition. But things changed when the groups successfully advocated for a public hearing that would bring the deal out of the shadows. Although the proposal will remain active through the 2021-22 session, Kenner calls it a “zombie bill” that’s unlikely to pass unless circumstances change dramatically.



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The funding from Piper was helpful, but it was really secondary to the support they offered. From the invitations I received to meet with different groups to the introductions to other funders and communications consultants like ReThink Media, to the new partners I’ve connected with in Wisconsin and North Carolina—Piper brought us all together and connected us around this whole judicial independence fight.

— KADIDA KENNER, *former Director, Campaigns for the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center*

“The courts are the least ‘sexy’ subject there is, but as the final arbiters of the policies we want to see, they represent the last line of defense,” says Kenner. “We know how important the courts are to Pennsylvania, and we’re not only working hard to save democracy in our state—we’re setting an example for the rest of the country.”



DONOR COLLABORATIVE:

# Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative

Reproductive Freedom Lobby Day. (Unrestrict Minnesota)

## 2020 in Review

IN THE MIDST OF A GLOBAL HEALTH PANDEMIC, racial-justice uprisings, and political upheaval, RFDC grantees and partners across the country were able to quickly pivot and reimagine their work under constantly changing conditions.

In Georgia, all of our grantee partners were deeply engaged in the civic-engagement efforts that were spotlighted across the world. In the face of the pandemic and rampant voter-suppression efforts, Atlanta Jobs with Justice, Equality Foundation of Georgia, SisterSong, and Women Engaged reached tens of thousands of voters and decision makers, educating people across the state on issues relevant to reproductive justice, LGBTQ equality, and the misuse of religious refusals; the groups' nonpartisan voter guide alone reached more than 15,000 Georgia voters across the state.

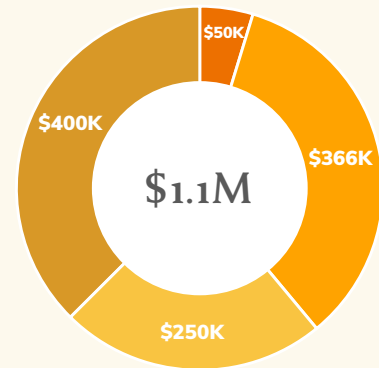
As our partners in New Mexico saw sharp increases in requests from people seeking abortions in neighboring states, they revealed the many ways that access to reproductive health care has been limited during the pandemic. [The NM Entiende coalition members](#) conducted public outreach and educated elected officials to ensure New Mexicans had access to the full range of reproductive health services. [They also continued to produce videos that highlight the ways that a faith perspective can support people seeking abortions during this challenging time.](#)

Our Minnesota partners—Gender Justice, Outfront MN, TakeAction MN Education, and Jewish Community Action—were able to leverage their collaboration with the [Unrestrict MN campaign](#) to show how cross-issue messaging can be used to counter the dominant conservative notions of religious freedom, while also drawing a connection between White Nationalism and those who seek to abuse religion for political gain.

In addition to our long-term place-based grantmaking, the RFDC embarked on two new initiatives this year: resourcing Narrative Development efforts and launching the Rights, Faith, & Democracy Network.

Because many grantees are looking to strengthen their messaging efforts and better integrate their multiple issue areas around religious refusals, the RFDC formed a partnership with ReFrame, a Proteus fiscally sponsored project (FSP) that builds “grassroots infrastructure that links people across campaigns, sectors and regions to build narrative power.” ReFrame trained staff from each of our grantee organizations through their nine-week boot camp. Using the skills and models shared by ReFrame, participants are now forming working groups in each state to elevate stories that illustrate the need to advance more inclusive policies and disrupt efforts to use religion as a political weapon.

## 2020 by the Numbers



- National Grantees
  - Reframe
- Georgia Grantees
  - Atlanta Jobs with Justice
  - Equality Foundation of Georgia
  - Sister Song
  - Women Engaged
- Minnesota Grantees
  - Gender Justice
  - Jewish Community Action
  - OutFront Minnesota Community Services
  - TakeAction Minnesota Education Fund
- New Mexico Grantees
  - American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico Foundation
  - Bold Futures
  - New Mexico Dream Team
  - New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

For instance, grantees coordinated a swift response to the SCOTUS nomination of Amy Coney Barrett, highlighting concerns that she would vote to expand religious exemptions that roll back queer and reproductive rights.

To expand our role as a convener of a learning community for both donors and field practitioners, the RFDC responded to our grantees' request to establish the RFD Network. In our initial outreach to over 40 organizations and stakeholders, we repeatedly heard there was interest in advancing opportunities for strategic collaboration at the intersection of LGBTQ equality, reproductive justice, and religious freedom issues, but there was limited capacity and funding for this work. Because of this, rather than create a formal structure or closely cultivated working group, the agenda and actions of the RFD Network have been led by the community itself based on the emerging needs of the field. The network is open to a broad range of national and state-based allies, and activities are focused on facilitating peer-led learning, information sharing, and networking opportunities in service of broader field building, as well as providing a space to strategize around fast-moving threats and opportunities. In less than one year, the network has grown from 12 members to a list of nearly 100 representatives from various movement areas and faith traditions.



Two clergy members hold a sign at a rally in the aftermath of the Masterpiece Cakeshop Supreme Court decision. (NMEntiende)

## 2020 Spotlight: The Fight for Reproductive Justice

*The Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative's longstanding support of advocates in New Mexico helped several groups secure reproductive healthcare that was threatened during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

WHEN COVID-19 SHUT DOWN THE COUNTRY, a number of states shut down access to reproductive healthcare along with it, insisting the work was not “essential.” That move not only limited access to abortion, but also made it harder for women to get birth control and invite their doulas into the hospital during childbirth. Policies designed to bar access to abortion are nearly always grounded in conservative Christian beliefs, and as a [Guttmacher Institute survey](#) revealed, the impact was measurably greater among groups already experiencing systemic health and social inequalities, including women of color and queer people. Moves such as these ultimately put pressure on states like New Mexico, home to a coalition of RFDC grantees that includes ACLU of New Mexico, Bold Futures, New Mexico Dream Team, and New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

“Elected officials in Arkansas, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas used the pandemic as an excuse to deny people abortion care—and we wanted to make sure that that didn’t happen here,” says Katie Hoepfner at the ACLU of New Mexico. Utah and Oklahoma also tried to pass similar restrictions. Rather than waiting to file a lawsuit, the reproductive rights attorney in ACLU’s New Mexico affiliate wrote letters to mayors in Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe; the governor; and the state’s congressional delegation. “We wanted to make sure not only that New Mexicans will be able to access abortion care throughout the COVID-19, but that all forms of birth control, STD testing and treatment, vaginal health and treatment, prenatal and postnatal care—all essential health services—would remain available to all New Mexicans,” says Hoepfner.

Given the long distances many New Mexicans already have to travel for health care - including Native Americans who live on Pueblo and Tribal lands - the ACLU-NM was deeply invested in the national ACLU lawsuit which would allow people to receive abortion medication via mail without being forced to go into an office just to get one pill. This option was blocked and opposed by President Trump's Food and Drug Administration. Under the Biden administration, this option has been restored, allowing people to safely access reproductive medication without putting their health at risk.

Meanwhile ACLU-NM advanced a “Know Your Rights” campaign around the holidays, with billboards featuring catchy headlines like Follow the La La La Law, and Santa arguing that religious refusals and other forms of discrimination could land folks on the naughty list. “Often people don't even know they've been discriminated against until they see a story illustrating that it happened to someone else — and that's what prompts them to reach out,” says Hoepfner.

For instance, Lovelace hospital in Albuquerque began to separate Native American mothers from their newborns, based solely on assumptions about their race and disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 on reservation lands. These separations were conducted as part of an unwritten hospital policy, and were carried out without positive COVID-19 tests, without informed consent, and without any other evidence to suggest that separation would be warranted. This harmful and racist practice is yet another instance of Native women and families having healthcare decisions taken from them based on the beliefs of others.

That's where Bold Futures stepped up.



“

**We brought together several of the organizations we'd worked with over the years, including Midwives of Color, Doulas of Color, birth workers, and other advocates and asked 'What do we do to fix this?'**

— CHARLENE BENCOMO,  
*Executive Director, Bold Futures*

Over the course of six weeks, Bold Futures convened virtual group meetings and created a document with emergency perinatal recommendations, which were shared with the state legislature's Health and Human Services committee, birth clinics, and the organization Breastfeeding Task Force, all of which helped spread the word. “Regardless of COVID, there are certain things that must be done in these circumstances simply because it's the humane, professional thing to do,” says Bencomo. Based on the group's recommendations, at least three hospitals began allowing doulas to join pregnant mothers during the delivery, reversing a previous policy.



In the wake of the appointment of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, Bold Futures refocused its attention on an antiquated 1969 law still on the books in New Mexico that banned abortion in almost all circumstances. If Roe v. Wade were to be dismantled or completely overturned, this statute could have been taken into effect. “The appointment to the Supreme Court made it clear that things could change really quickly,” says Bencomo. “We needed to make sure that our state was protected so that we're not at the mercy of federal law.” The abortion ban repeal was attempted in 2019, and one of the main points of contention was an amendment to retain the conscience clause allowing medical providers to deny services to patients based on their own religious beliefs. In 2021 Bold Futures, the ACLU of New Mexico and their partners in the RFDC work fought (both conservative opponents and some progressive allies) to ensure that this amendment was not included as part of the legislation. As a result of years of advocacy led by women and people of color, LGBTQ people, and spanning various movements, the law was ultimately repealed thus protecting safe and legal abortion care in the state.



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**RFDC has always been there to support our work under the banner of NM Entiende. They’ve shown that they defer to our expertise, that they value our relationships, and that they trust us to do the work that matters most to our communities.**

— *KATIE HOEPPNER, ACLU of New Mexico*



DONOR COLLABORATIVE:

# RISE Together Fund

Activists at a protest against the Muslim Ban. (Les Talusan Photography)

## 2020 in Review

IN EARLY 2021, the RISE Together Fund (RTF) celebrated President Biden’s [executive order](#) rescinding the Muslim and African Ban, after four years of supporting grassroots organizations in their efforts to end the discriminatory policies put forth by the previous administration. This notable proclamation came after an especially tumultuous year where RTF pivoted to meet the needs of our communities—responding to the pandemic, racial-justice uprisings, and an incredibly divisive presidential election.

Although we have always been intentional about [supporting groups that center or are led by directly impacted communities](#), we leaned even further into this practice by increasing our funding and programming opportunities for Black-led organizations and communities in 2020. We joined forces with Pillars Fund to kick off a series of funder briefings that provide context on the diversity of Black Muslim communities and their work around policy, arts, and culture, and we offered recommendations to funders looking to support these communities over the long term. RTF is also digging deeper into building relationships with Black immigrant and Black Muslim community leaders and uplifting their voices within our networks.

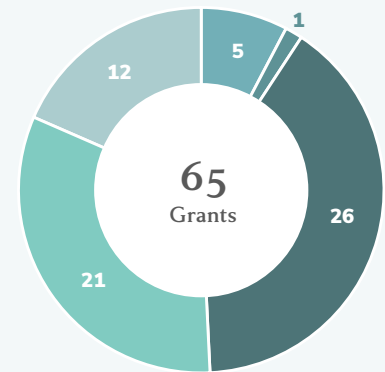
To meet the needs that emerged with the pandemic, we provided [rapid-response funding](#) to the Arab American Association of New York to offer shelter and programming to community members experiencing domestic violence, to the Coalition of Civil Freedoms to support their Coronavirus Prisoner Release Project, and to The Family and Youth Institute to develop resources around mental health and well-being in the midst of the crisis. RTF also shifted project support grants to general operating support grants, and relaxed reporting requirements to give organizations greater flexibility as they allocate funds for urgent needs. In addition, we repurposed the convening fund we co-managed with Open Society Foundations to support the digital and tech needs of our grantees as the work shifted to online platforms.

Finally, as the 2020 election approached, we made sure that our field had sustained support for civic engagement work. After working with experts in our space to identify civic-engagement gaps faced by our community organizations, we moved forward on three key recommendations:

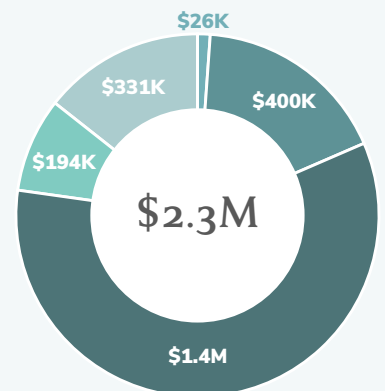
1. Increase dedicated funding for nonpartisan voter engagement;
2. Increase training/technical assistance support; and
3. Strengthen access to voter data and establish a data hub with a culturally competent data-management team.

We increased our existing core grants to support nonpartisan voter engagement, invited new organizations focused on civic engagement in key states to join our grantmaking portfolio, and lifted up this work to other funders. Most critically, we improved our grantees' access to voter data and provided technical assistance to tailor their outreach to newly identified voters through our partnership with Dr. Tom Wong of the University of California-San Diego and his team of research assistants. We organized an online data training for 24 grantees with Dr. Wong, who developed an algorithm to identify Muslim, Arab and South Asian voters and worked individually with grantees to tailor their civic engagement outreach lists.

## 2020 by the Numbers

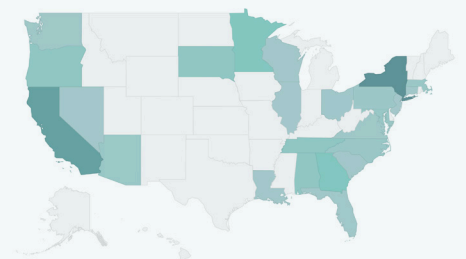


- Advocate Travel & Convening Fund
- Communications
- Field Building
- Rapid Response Fund
- RISE Together Action Fund



In 2020, grants were awarded to local organizations working across

**25**  
states



Dr. Wong supplied voter data to 20 grantees and worked one-on-one with a handful of groups in the following ways: 1) Non-partisan voter targeting support; 2) Support surveying voters/ message testing; 3) Technical support with phone or text banking; and 4) Creating, commenting on, or editing scripts for non-partisan voter outreach. Organizations were able to extend their reach far beyond previous engagement and we eagerly anticipate unpacking this impact even further.

As the year came to a close, we were honored to win the American Muslim Community Foundation Award for Outstanding Grantmaker in November. Although 2021 has already brought new challenges, we look forward to expanding our work with advocates in support of Black/ African, Arab, Middle Eastern Muslim and South Asian communities.



Georgia Muslim Voter Project volunteers. (Georgia Muslim Voter Project)

## | 2020 Spotlight: Data for Democracy

*With help from RTF, the Georgia Muslim Voter Project and 20 other civic-engagement organizations increased voter turnout in the most crucial elections of our lifetime.*

IN 2015, the Georgia Muslim Voter Project (GAMVP) was created for two reasons: The growing rhetoric coming out of the presidential campaign, and the fact that surprisingly few members of the Muslim community were voting or registered to vote—and many wondered if they had any role in politics at all. Four years later, as GAMVP ramped up its nonpartisan efforts for 2020, COVID-19 made it impossible to canvas at mosques and other sites frequented by Muslims. That put a bigger burden on digital communications, social-media posts, and good old-fashioned phone calls, which made things difficult.

“Data around Muslims is very hard to come by,” says Umer Rupani, the group’s executive director at the time. “The census doesn’t ask questions about religion and there are no surveys that do a good job of identifying Muslims in certain states or regions—so rather than making data-driven decisions, we were making assumptions based on people’s surnames, which generated a lot of false positives and a lot of false negatives.”

Enter Dr. Tom Wong, an associate professor of political science at the University of California, San Diego. In 2019, RISE Together Fund (RTF) had recognized the need to increase support for grantees focused on nonpartisan voter engagement, so RTF partnered with Wong and his team of research assistants to create an algorithm that would identify Muslim, Arab, and South Asian voters, and then help grantees make the most of that data.

“Dr. Wong took a cross-section of data points looking at race, ethnicity, nation of origin, language spoken, census information, and other surveys conducted by the Census Bureau, and gave us a list with 74,000 people across Georgia,” says Rupani. That work increased the number of times a prospective voter actually picked up the phone to speak to a GAMVP representative from 25% to 34%.

“That information forced us to think in a new way,” says Rupani. “For instance, if data shows that 23% of the people on our list are African-American but only 5% of the people that we’re registering are African American or only 5% of the places we’re canvassing are Black-owned or Black mosques, we have to re-think where we’re directing our attention.”

Rupani's team reached out to restaurants that cater to Muslims and persuaded them to include QR codes on their carry-out bags, which led to GAMVP's site and linked to voter-registration pages. They also increased their social-media efforts and engaged in more "relational organizing" thanks to training sponsored by RTF.

And it worked: Leading up to the general election, GAMVP's nonpartisan outreach efforts connected volunteers to nearly 140,000 voters (93% of whom were people of color) and 59% of them voted; leading up to the 2021 Senate runoff, GAMVP contacted 132,000 voters (89% of whom were people of color), and 43% of them cast a ballot.

Follow-up surveys with GAMVP and other grantees revealed that 100% of the participants who worked with Dr. Wong reported they were better able to develop nonpartisan voter-engagement plans and 67% reported they were better able to train staff and volunteers to conduct more targeted outreach.



“

In this day and age, if you aren't making strategic decisions based on data, you won't be around very long. As a small organization, GAMVP never had the capacity to collect data and run these kinds of sophisticated studies, so the resources provided by RTF really helped us punch above our weight.

— UMER RUPANI, *Former Executive Director,  
Georgia Muslim Voter Project*



Protesters hold up a banner above Nathan Phillips Square. (Michael Swan/Flickr)

## Fiscally Sponsored Projects

**STARTING A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION** is time-consuming, costly, and complex. Fiscal sponsorship gives social-change initiatives the flexibility to pursue their vision, while relying on a trusted partner to provide organizational infrastructure and governance. Proteus provides a strong operational foundation, rooted in deep partnership, so project staff can focus on their programmatic impact.

Fiscal sponsorship of progressive initiatives remains an essential element of our model. Proteus Fund is home to a [rich portfolio](#) of projects aligned with our vision, mission, and values, addressing, among other issues:

- supporting the leadership of women, queer, and trans youth of color;
- defending reproductive rights and preventing violence against women;
- creating tools and community that help children be more thoughtful and informed about race;
- advancing electoral reforms and government accountability;
- building progressive narrative power and movement messaging;
- mobilizing resources for a progressive Jewish movement for justice and liberation; and
- shifting philanthropic practice with a focus on equity and impact.

By incubating and sustaining the growth and impact of such critical social justice initiatives over time, we deepen our work at the intersections of democracy and racial justice, gender justice, and queer justice while simultaneously helping to build more powerful movements.

## | 2020 in Review

Given our experience as a public foundation and philanthropic intermediary, Proteus focuses on philanthropic projects that align with our mission and values, and reflect a commitment to evolving the practice of philanthropy. Of the more than \$254 million Proteus Fund and its aligned organizations have invested in public education, grassroots organizing, advocacy, leadership development, communications, and research, more than \$26 million has been through fiscally sponsored projects. In 2020, Proteus Funds' fiscally sponsored projects awarded more than \$3.5 million in grants for their ongoing work as well as to support COVID-19 rapid response, racial justice advocacy, and nonpartisan civic engagement.

In 2020, we also welcomed four innovative new projects to the Proteus ecosystem. These initiatives are aligned with Proteus Fund's efforts to ensure philanthropy is guided by communities feeling the greatest impacts across the nation and to continue to evolve the practice of philanthropy.



**Jewish Liberation Fund** aims to nurture a proudly progressive Jewish movement composed of people of diverse experiences and identities, leveraging a multitude of tactics, and committed to sustaining and growing the work of intersectional justice and liberation.



Jawanza Williams, Organizing Director for VOCAL NY, addressing a crowd at a rally for the Fair Elections for NY campaign.



**Impact-Driven Philanthropy Collaborative** is working to ensure that donors give in ways that center equity, focus on effectiveness, and support systems change, resulting in real progress on issues and in communities.



**Horizon Forum** promotes responsible giving practices to “keep philanthropy safe from hate” and ensure charitable dollars, often in the form of Donor Advised Funds, are not directed to dangerous and xenophobic activities by bringing funders and stakeholders together to identify best practices and develop practical solutions grounded in data.



**State Law Research Initiative** seeks to facilitate and fund research on both the legislative history of state constitutional clauses banning cruel and unusual punishment and state supreme courts' interpretations of those clauses, and to make this research widely available to the legal community.



For these projects and every other fiscally sponsored project we support, Proteus works to forge deep relationships and develop a firm understanding of the culture and the operating models that shape critical decisions, so they can be more nimble. Because our goal isn't simply to help projects operate day to day, but to serve as a trusted partner in support of long-term movements that advance racial, gender, and queer justice and inclusive democracy.

## 2020 FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS

Bridges  
EmbraceRace  
Horizon Forum  
Human Rights Funders Network  
Impact-Driven Philanthropy Collaborative  
Jewish Liberation Fund  
JustFund  
More Equitable Democracy /  
More Equitable Democracy Action\*  
Our Story  
Prevention Collaborative  
ReFrame / ReFrame Action\*  
State Law Research Initiative  
Third Wave Fund / Third Wave Action Fund\*  
Transparency & Accountability Initiative  
TAP Network

*\*at Proteus Action League*

## 2020 by the Numbers

# \$3.55M

awarded through 133 grants in 2020

# 4

new projects started in 2020, bringing our total to 15 FSPs

# \$2M

in grants awarded by Third Wave Fund, nearly doubling its 2019 grantmaking

## | 2020 Spotlight: Rapid Response Through Third Wave Fund's Mobilize Power Fund

*Fiscally sponsored project Third Wave Fund confronted the intersectional crises of 2020 by drastically increasing rapid response funding for young women of color, trans, gender non-conforming, queer, and intersex youth.*

**AFTER SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDERS WERE ISSUED ACROSS THE US**, the Mobilize Power Fund (MPF) experienced a 350% increase in applicants in its March cycle. This swift and significant increase in applicants highlighted what we already knew to be true: that young women, trans, intersex, queer, and gender-nonconforming people of color need increased rapid philanthropic support, and this was especially so during a recession and a pandemic that disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, People of Color.



Ana Conner



Kiyomi Fujikawa

“

This led us to expand the MPF budget from \$375,000 to \$915,000. We moved over a year's worth of grants in 9 weeks, in addition to honoring our commitment to resourcing groups beyond this moment. By the end of May 2020, Third Wave Fund had moved \$565,000 in rapid response funding to MPF grantees. Those resources went towards groups responding to the intersectional crises of COVID-19, economic turmoil, global uprisings against white supremacy, anti-Black racism, and police violence.

— ANA CONNER & KIYOMI FUJIKAWA,  
Co-Directors, Third Wave Fund

Read [Third Wave Fund's annual report](#) to learn more about their monumental impact in 2020.

## | 2020 Spotlight:

### A Cross-Program Partnership Strengthens Efforts to Combat the Weaponization of Religion

*Fiscally sponsored project ReFrame partnered with the Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative to provide grantees with the tools and perspectives needed to wield the power of narrative and communications to promote a more inclusive vision of religious freedom.*

**FIFTEEN LEADERS FROM RIGHTS, FAITH & DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE** grantee organizations participated in ReFrame's first ever Virtual Academy where they were trained in strategic communications and narrative power building. Throughout the nine-week program, participants honed concrete skills and developed the higher-level strategic thinking needed to craft new, more compelling narratives in support of their efforts to combat the weaponization of religion. For some, this required an organizational reframing of the role of communications, recognizing that this work must be a core facet of all their organizing efforts rather than a discrete task to be handled by one member of the organization or outsourced to a consultant.

Following the academy, participants have continued to receive valuable support as part of the ReFrame network.



“

We build relationships with strategists, communicators, and other leaders to deploy messages, stories, and narratives that work to make justice, equity, and liberation common sense to more and more people.

— JOSEPH PHELAN, Executive Director,  
ReFrame



Activists and family members memorialize COVID-19 victims that have died while incarcerated or detained by ICE. (Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

# Donor Advised Funds

*A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is a dedicated grantmaking fund that is a streamlined alternative to establishing a private foundation. A DAF at Proteus Fund allows philanthropists aligned with our mission and vision the ability to shape the programmatic and strategic direction of their grantmaking while benefiting from the institutional knowledge and capacity of a trusted partner.*

*Our advised fund donors are values-aligned philanthropists pursuing strategies that benefit from our expertise advancing racial, gender, and queer justice and an inclusive democracy. Advised funds are an important part of pursuing our mission, allowing Proteus to expand our impact beyond the issue areas addressed by our other efforts. The program allows us to employ our full toolkit in pursuit of results, including our rapid-response capability and expertise in awarding grants to new and grassroots groups.*

## | 2020 in Review

In 2020, our advised fund grantmaking saw record-breaking levels of funding in response to urgent needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, racial-justice advocacy, and nonpartisan civic engagement. Advised funds also supported grassroots groups in a wide range of efforts, including helping Native organizers build public support for climate action, stopping judicial gerrymandering, advocating for police accountability, decriminalizing homelessness, documenting the harms of our criminal justice system and supporting the rights of incarcerated individuals, supporting LGBTQ rights, and organizing for economic justice and healthcare.

## | 2020 Spotlight: Vital Projects Fund

THROUGH THEIR DONOR ADVISED FUND AT PROTEUS, the Vital Projects Fund quickly pivoted to provide much needed support to those advocating for the health and safety of incarcerated people amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

**\$2.4M**

through 59 grants  
in 2020

“

As COVID-19 spread through our nation's prisons and jails, the DAF gave us the freedom and flexibility to support a variety of people and projects addressing some of the most pressing issues related to the pandemic. Thanks to the DAF at Proteus, we were able to provide crucial funding to groups advocating for the release of incarcerated people and documenting the spread of the virus in prisons and jails. Without Proteus, we would not have been able to provide these important funds nearly as quickly or efficiently.

— DAVID MENSCHER, SOPHIE CULL,  
& MARLENA WILLIAMS, *Vital Projects Fund*

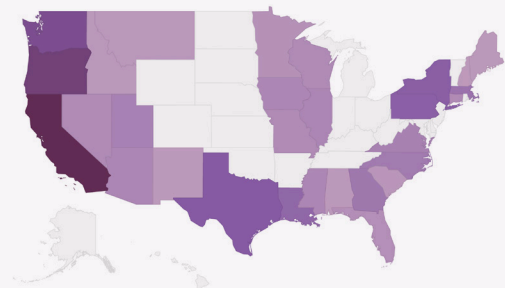
## | 2020 by the Numbers

**\$17M**

awarded through  
148 grants  
in 2020

In 2020, grants  
were awarded to  
local organizations  
working across

**31**  
states





2020

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# Grantmaking & Program Report

[proteusfund.org](http://proteusfund.org)