



# 2021

**GRANTMAKING &  
PROGRAM REPORT**



# Introduction

It is often in the midst of great social, economic, and political turbulence and turmoil that we are called upon to reinvigorate and recommit to our work. This was certainly the case for Proteus Fund in 2021 while also coping with the unrelenting toll of the COVID pandemic. From January 6th on, it was crystal clear that the fight to protect our democracy—as the necessary first step to improving it—would not only need to be sustained, but intensified in ways that many of us could not have even imagined a decade ago. The insurrectionist attack on the Capitol, coupled with what we now know was a coordinated plan at a coup, brought into terrifying focus the immediate threat of creeping authoritarianism to the country.

Fortunately, Proteus Fund was better prepared than ever to meet this moment, having created and adopted a new three-year strategic plan which completely reimagined our work. The culmination of 18 months of thoughtful analysis and deep external and internal conversations, the strategic plan applies a completely updated and integrated theory of change to our work. It centers Proteus Fund's efforts explicitly on racial, gender, queer, and disability justice, and an inclusive, representative democracy, and does so in a way that acknowledges the intrinsically intersectional and mutually reinforcing nature of these goals. The result is a framework that promotes greater synergies across all aspects of our work, from our carefully coordinated and mission-aligned portfolio of fiscal sponsored projects (FSPs) to our world-class donor collaboratives. Through this deeper pursuit of multi-pronged strategies and grantmaking, our impact is expanding.

Part of the reimagining of the Proteus Fund includes embracing a new focus area for us—advancing disability justice. In 2021, we signed onto the **Disability Inclusion Pledge**. By doing so, we have committed to take substantive action, in both our work and structure and operations, to become an ally and partner in the disability justice movement, addressing the needs and advancing the interests of the millions of Americans living with disabilities, especially those living at the intersection of racial, gender, and queer justice.

In 2021, recognizing the increasing toll of the current toxic climate on social justice actors and organizations on the ground, we also introduced health and wellness support grants for Proteus Fund grantees through our existing **Grantee Safety and Security Fund**, which we launched in 2019 to initially address direct attacks on our grantees from cyberthreats to violence. As a sector, philanthropy needs to do more to directly protect and support frontline actors we rely on to create the change we want realized in the world.

Assessing the entirety of Proteus Fund's work in 2021, it is clear to us that this deeper pursuit of effective intersectional frames and strategies enabled us to have broader impact than ever before. Now several months into a new year, we have already been able to build significantly on the work in 2021, and will continue to do so to meet the urgent challenges at hand.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Di Donato".

**Paul Di Donato**  
*President and CEO*  
Proteus Fund and Proteus Action League



Washington, DC - January 6, 2021: Rioters clash with police trying to enter Capitol building through the front doors / Shutterstock.com

# 01 Piper Fund

## 2021 IN REVIEW

The nearly catastrophic events that occurred in the nation's Capitol in the first week of 2021 exposed the existential threat to our democracy and brought into even sharper focus the need to fight back against anti-democratic assaults. Against this backdrop, Piper Fund intensified its commitment to protecting our democracy and ensuring that every voice is heard and represented in it, particularly those which have been historically ignored or silenced, through its three initiatives, **Money in Politics**, **Judicial Independence**, and **Protecting the Right to Protest**. To help achieve that goal, we intentionally expanded grantmaking to community coalitions led by people of color in 2021, increasing the percentage of grants to these groups by 14%. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was prioritized in this effort, with more than half of all grants through our Protecting the Right Protest program going to BLM organizations. We also shifted the balance of grantmaking in 2021 toward more state-level advocacy, awarding almost twice as many grants to state-based groups as national ones.



The events of 2020 demanded a real-time response and nimble support to grantees, and in 2021, Piper Fund continued to increase the amount of rapid response funding available. At the same time, our focus shifted to more long-term strategic thinking and planning in how we work to break down silos, help build dynamic movements, and grow philanthropic awareness of the rising threat of authoritarianism in our country.

## MONEY IN POLITICS

Piper Fund's Money in Politics program continues to combat corporations and wealthy individuals who funnel millions of dollars into our political systems to sway elections and influence policy outcomes. One example of the many ways in which Piper Fund advances the democracy agenda is to hold or facilitate important convenings to assess current trends and help advocates and funders alike become ever more creative about effective strategic responses. In 2021, Piper Fund sponsored a two-part series of convenings with Reos Partners, bringing together field leaders and funders. Based on these findings, Piper Fund published a scenario report identifying sets of scenarios about potential futures for U.S. democracy, as well as an analysis of factors and indicators to help us understand the path we are currently on. The scenario report aims to help democracy funders and leaders working to strengthen U.S. democracy to identify gaps and opportunities in the field and develop more effective and resilient strategies and plans. The report identified four scenarios: **Polarization, Corporatism, Reform, and Transformation**. To address these scenarios, the following themes emerged:

- **The need to build a progressive vision and narrative** by breaking down silos within the democracy space and across the progressive community. Another critical need is investing in local and state media infrastructure to counter misinformation and disinformation.
- **The need to build leadership, grassroots organizing, and solidarity across communities.** This work includes state, local, and national policy and legislative strategies and corporate accountability campaigns.
- **The need to invest in state-based organizing infrastructure to ensure frontline communities are resourced to defend and strengthen democracy in the face of efforts to undermine it.** This would include heightened support for state and local policy and legislative strategies and corporate accountability campaigns.
- **Address real trauma and then move outwards.** Trauma within fields, among leaders and staff, keeps us from realizing the world we dream of. The work needs to start internally, within ourselves, and then outward towards social justice.



*Wake Forest, NC: Voters wait in lines to cast their ballots on the first day of early voting / Shutterstock.com*



Both field and philanthropic leaders are now actively and consistently working to move forward the work and learnings described in the scenario report. In 2022, Proteus is working with field and philanthropy partners to develop actions plans based on the scenario report that over time intend to fill gaps in narrative, organizing, and philanthropic infrastructure.

Key victories occurred in Maryland and Oregon in 2021. In Baltimore County, an amended bill that imposes spending caps on candidates using the public financing program passed, and Oregon voters approved a constitutional amendment to laws and voter initiatives requiring the disclosure of political contributions, limiting campaign contributions, and requiring political ads to disclose who paid for them. These victories paved the way for additional reforms in those states and spurred momentum for similar efforts in others.

We also continued to advocate against systemic barriers to civic engagement that limit the voices of underrepresented communities in our political process. Public education around democracy voucher reform efforts is continuing in 2022 after seeing promise in 2021 in communities in several states. Piper also invested in understanding the impact of these democracy voucher programs. In 2021, we commissioned research by the Win/Win Network indicating that the democracy voucher program in Seattle has led to increased voter participation among communities of color. Also, with support from Piper, Georgetown University researchers are studying which public financing model(s) would be the most effective at increasing the participation of underrepresented communities. Their findings provide critical information for advocates in determining the types of policy reforms they should pursue.

## JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

State courts decide 95% of all cases in the U.S. and played a critical role in upholding the election results in 2020. The result was a record number of bills in over 30 states through which the other two branches of state government tried to consolidate power while reducing the authority of state courts. Attempts included proposals to create entirely new courts, allowing the governor to handpick cronies to be on the bench, “judge shopping” by gerrymandering judges off the bench, and limiting the authority of state courts to rule on specific types of cases. Had it not been for the hard work of Piper’s grantees, many of these proposals would have become law.

Piper Fund is the only donor collaborative that focuses on judicial independence and has included this in its work for nearly a decade. In 2021, we released a [multi-year, \\$25 million plan](#) on how to build power to push for long-term reform while also responding strategically to the ever-present and emerging threats to state courts. This plan includes:



*Fight for Fair Courts, Democracy North Carolina*



- **Leveraging game-changing, multi-year funding.** Multi-year funding to state groups will give them the space to build and implement long-term plans—setting the stage to push for reforms that will fulfill a vision of a democracy that works for all, which is difficult to achieve with one-year grants.
- **Ensuring a strong and nimble defensive game.** While it's important to create a blueprint for advancing reform, it's just as crucial to prevent power grabs that would destroy the separation of powers and give inappropriate authority to one branch of government.
- **Unleashing tactical information for rapid response and reform.** For advocates to successfully advance protections, they need to understand the landscape of players, including potential opposition along with strategies to neutralize or ward off any attacks. While opponents of judicial independence have successfully deployed this knowledge, the field has not had the resources to employ it themselves.
- **Jumpstarting research into the current state of judicial ethics and accountability.** While we have a clear understanding of reforms connected to ensuring judicial independence and separation of powers, there is limited research on how to advance judicial accountability and ethics reform. We know little about who is on accountability boards or how those boards function, including whether judges receive appropriate discipline or if whistleblower protections are in place for those who file complaints. Given that lower court judges are often part of a pipeline to becoming higher court or even federal judges, it is vital to ensure that they behave ethically.

Utilizing the guiding principles of this plan, Piper Fund provided critical resources to grantees in Alaska, Arkansas, and other often-overlooked states where there was an imminent threat to judicial independence. Justice Not Politics Alaska Civic Education Fund fought back against constitutional amendments introduced in the state legislature to alter Alaska's merit selection method of choosing and retaining judges, with our support of its operations and efforts to educate the public on Alaska's system of judicial selection and the importance of separation of powers. In Arkansas, state lawmakers have expressed continued frustration and, in one case, vague threats over state court rulings. Legislators introduced six bills in 2021 that would increase the legislature's power over the judicial branch.



*Judge Signing Papers / Photo by Ekaterina Bolovtsova, Pexels.com*

Piper Fund supported operations for the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP), a multi-issue, statewide organization that focuses on organizing, leadership development, and coalition building, as they worked to influence policy and inform the public about the importance of judicial independence and how court decisions impact rights and democracy.

In 2021, Piper Fund also continued to educate the philanthropic community on the importance of state courts and the current attacks state courts are facing. We hosted multiple webinars on this critical issue, including a conversation with former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and state advocates on ‘Why Independent State Courts are Critical to Holding Fair Elections.’

## PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

There was a sharp increase in attempts to criminalize protest in 2021. An unprecedented wave of over 89 anti-protest bills were introduced by legislators in 35 states in response to the ongoing racial justice protests and protests by Indigenous people against fossil fuel pipelines. Certain states considered multiple bills. For example, Oklahoma alone introduced 10 anti-protest bills. Among the worst of these bills were the so-called “anti-riot bills,” which target Black Lives Matter protesters—written so broadly that they encompass virtually all protest activity protected under the First Amendment, imposing severe criminal penalties and fines against protesters.

Piper Fund supported grantees fighting these attacks in states. We provided rapid response grants to 29 groups in 14 states. As these bills have targeted Black organizers and communities, our grantmaking prioritized funds to Black-led organizations. Piper Fund grantees were able to engage the public, and the bills did not move forward in 20 states. In Ohio, grantees were able to bring enough attention to the bills through public education that they stalled in the legislature. Similarly, North Carolina grantee leaders pointed to the clear motives of the anti-protest bill as attacking the Black Lives Matter movement. This galvanized opposition to the bill and eventually led to a veto. Arizona grantees strategically reached out to people across the political spectrum to let them know how these bills could be used to silence protest on both sides of the aisle. This animated people across the political spectrum to call out the harms of anti-protest bills and eventually led to the defeat of the legislation.



Photo by Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash



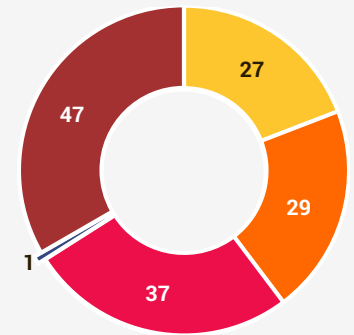
Alarming, 11 anti-protest bills in nine states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Montana, Tennessee, and Texas were signed into law. Advocates are now working on litigation efforts to repeal these laws in many states and have been successful in getting temporary injunctions on key provisions in Florida and Oklahoma.

The 23-member Protect Dissent Network, which Piper Fund coordinates, offered ongoing support to advocates, including legal analysis, communications, and strategic advice. We also contracted research to address the question of who is behind this new wave of anti-protest bills. The findings indicated that many police unions are lobbying in support of the bills and many of the sponsors of the bills themselves are former law enforcement officers. We shared the research with key leaders in the Protect Dissent Network, including the International Center for Non-Profit Law, the Movement for Black Lives, PEN America, and a number of state organizations who are helping to uplift this research in the media.

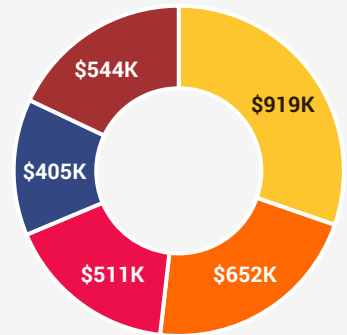


Philadelphia, PA, Photo by Chris Henry on Unsplash

## BY THE NUMBERS

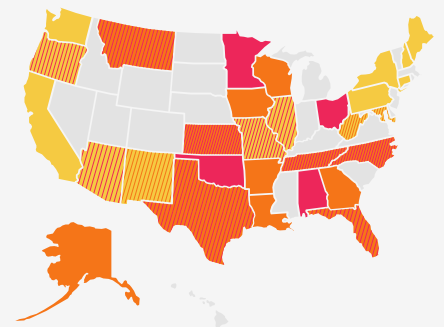


# 141 Grants



# \$3M

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



# 31 States

# 2021 Spotlight: The Black Collective and Community Justice Project



At George Floyd's Memorial,  
The Black Collective,  
Minneapolis, MN, 2021

## Joining Forces to Defend Protest Rights in Florida: *How Piper Fund Supported a Coalition of Movement Leaders and Legal Advocates*

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others at the hands of police officers sparked some of the largest protests in a generation in defense of Black Lives. Rather than heeding the calls for racial justice, lawmakers in over 30 states responded swiftly by aiming to criminalize protest itself. In Florida, fears that arose when Governor DeSantis pointed to protests as a top priority were realized when anti-protest legislation (previously known as “House Bill 1”) was introduced during the 2021 legislative session. One of the harshest anti-protest bills in the country, the bill makes an assembly that has been deemed by police to be an “aggravated riot” punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The bill’s language, which is exceptionally broad in what constitutes a riot and could trigger an arrest, was clearly intended to criminalize calls for police reform and discourage individuals from exercising their right to nonviolent protest.

As the proposed legislation progressed through the legislature, a clear and coordinated effort in opposition began to build through The Black Collective, a Piper Fund grantee, and other Black-led organizations in the state. They held public hearings and canvassed in neighborhoods to raise awareness of the bill as an intentional attack on Black communities for attempting to hold governments and police accountable for their actions. Piper Fund supported the coalition in conducting weekly calls to discuss strategies and prepare talking points for local and state officials speaking out against the act. Messaging focused on the historic role of the right to dissent, highlighting the civil rights movement and connecting the past to the present.

Environmental justice, reproductive justice, and women’s rights groups joined discussions on how to mitigate the effects of the anti-protest legislation, and as it became increasingly probable that it would pass, legal partners like the Community Justice Project, another Piper Fund grantee, started preparing for litigation. The bill was signed into law on April 19, 2021, and less than a month later, a federal lawsuit challenging the law was filed on behalf of The Black Collective and other coalition organizations. So far, the coalition has won a preliminary injunction that prohibits the state and other sheriff defendants from enforcing certain provisions of the law.



In the ruling, the judge highlighted that the broad definition of a riot in this bill could allow law enforcement to criminalize people gathering for a Juneteenth celebration. The case is ongoing, and the coalition has used the repeal effort in the 2022 legislative session as a communications tool to engage and educate Floridians through radio ads, printed flyers, and online conversations. One positive outcome was the defeat of HB 11, which would have made it legal to fine anyone approaching or remaining within 30 feet of a police officer after being warned to move away.



**The Piper Fund team has been incredible. They hold regular space for all of us to be able to connect across the country to be able to see the emerging threat. It's a space that allows us the opportunity to collaborate. They let us be creative in how we use the resources to do the work that we need to do in the community, to canvass and be able to talk to people in the way that we need to talk to people. Piper Fund provided us with the resources to reach out and communicate with our communities through the mediums that are the most accessible to them (Haitian Creole media outlets, including radio and TV, local Black newspapers, etc.)**

**FRANCESCA MENES**  
*Co-Founder, The Black Collective*

There is no doubt that more of these types of anti-protest bills will be introduced in Florida and around the country, but with the strong movement that has been built there and the support of Piper Fund, they will face significant opposition.





Washington, DC - December 1, 2021: Mini Timmaraju, President, NARAL Pro-Choice America, speaking at the abortion rights rally at the Supreme Court, Jackson Women's Health v. Dobbs / Shutterstock.com

## 02 Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative

### 2021 IN REVIEW

Despite 2021 being what LGBTQ and RHRJ advocates have called the worst year on record for state-level attacks on the autonomy, dignity, and freedom of our communities, Rights, Faith & Democracy Collaborative's (RFDC) grantees and partners have led the way in disrupting the harmful weaponization of religion. White Christian nationalists across the U.S. continue to use religion as a force of intolerance, including promoting bills that would exempt houses of worship from public health. RFDC understands the risk of these bills, blurring the separation between church and state. In 2021, we continued to keep a watchful eye on these measures and take the appropriate actions to ensure these bills are brought to the forefront.



On the national level, the polarizing stances and majority conservative seats on the Supreme Court have deeply impacted voting rights, reproductive rights, and recently, COVID regulations. With cases like *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* and *Carson v. Makin* being taken up in our nation's highest Court in 2021, the decades-long effort to privilege conservative Christian views under the law is on the precipice of achieving two significant wins, further crumbling the wall between church and state. As a post-Roe v. Wade reality became increasingly certain, RFDC began supporting state-based groups and faith allies in proactively preparing to respond and protect reproductive rights in their respective states.

With RFDC's support, grantees in several states worked jointly and independently to grow the impact of and support for their movements. In New Mexico, the New Mexico Entiende (NM Entiende) coalition experienced a landmark victory for reproductive rights in 2021 with the repeal of a state law which made it a felony to provide an abortion in the state. Coalition partners led a statewide advocacy campaign, organizing faith leaders, medical providers, and community members to provide testimony and working to ensure the repeal effort did not include a "conscience clause" amendment. The partner organizations also helped to defeat two discriminatory bills aimed at denying LGBTQ+ people health care and participation in sports.



New Mexico Entiende, 2021

In the wake of the 2020 election, during which efforts in Georgia to overcome voter suppression and encourage civic engagement gained national attention, grantee partners in the state built upon that momentum, expanding their presence and impact as a cross-issue movement. Vacation Justice School evolved from being a training and outreach tactic of Atlanta Jobs with Justice to a standalone project that will serve as a home for clergy who use their religious values to support social justice efforts. SisterSong led efforts to create and promote a Faith Justice Statement with Amplify GA partners, creating a larger table of organizations working to drive the message that reproductive justice movements are supported by people of faith. Equality Foundation of Georgia launched public campaigns focused on nondiscrimination policies and religious refusals, and increased engagement and mobilization of faith leaders to oppose anti-trans bills and advance nondiscrimination protections in 13 cities.



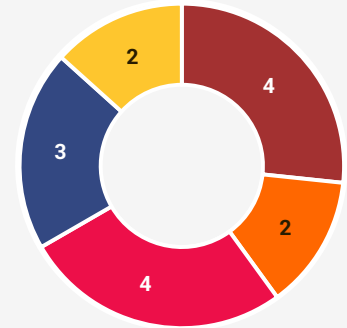
In Minnesota, our cohort of grantees made progress toward its shared goal of moving public opinion and the legal landscape in the state toward a more inclusive view of religious freedom. TakeAction Minnesota Education Fund (TAMEF) ran a successful nonpartisan voter outreach program, holding more than 5,000 deep canvass conversations with residents to help shift the narrative on the weaponization of religion. Gender Justice used transgender rights cases as a platform for education events and communications on how laws can impact people’s day-to-day lives. Jewish Community Action (JCA) worked with other Jewish social justice organizations to adapt and utilize their growing white Christian nationalism analysis and trainings, and OutFront Minnesota successfully advocated for the Governor’s executive order banning conversion therapy.

Recognizing the need to provide movement builders with communications resources to better articulate an inclusive vision of religion, RFDC partnered with Carolyn Davis, Ph.D., to complete a communications scan of the field and offer recommendations that help our movements learn from one another, authentically engage with the religious beliefs of key audiences, and assist leaders in creating a successful, sustained culture change movement. Her findings shed light on key messaging elements necessary to win audiences to our position, how to find messaging success across movements, and the frames or values sets that help knit our priorities together.

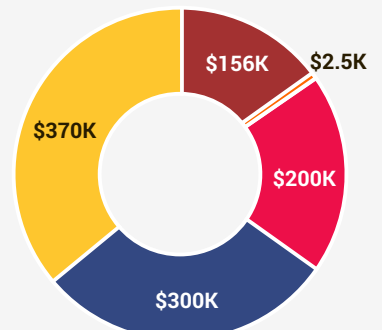


OutFront Minnesota, photo by Anne Hodson, 2019

## BY THE NUMBERS



# 15 Grants



# \$1M

- **National:** American Atheists, Vacation Justice School
- **Arizona:** Secular Communities for Arizona, Inc.
- **Georgia:** Equality Foundation of Georgia, SisterSong
- **Minnesota:** 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 NM, New Mexico Dream Team, New Mexico Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice



# 2021 Spotlight: Vacation Justice School



Sunrise Service at the Supreme Court, Vacation Justice School, December 2021

## **Giving Progressive Faith Leaders the Tools to Promote Social Justice: *New Organization That Trains Clergy Emerges from RFDC Cohort***

Vacation Justice School has a crystal-clear goal—getting progressive, faith-minded people in the United States to be as vocal as the country’s right-wing evangelical groups. Despite the latter only accounting for roughly a quarter of all Christian Americans, they have consistently been a loud minority with a clear agenda and narrative, something their progressive counterparts have often lacked. Vacation Justice School seeks to change that. The organization provides curriculum and training for progressive clergy and others in the faith community around a framework of five issue areas: reproductive justice, immigrant rights, LGBTQ rights, voting rights, and economic justice.

These five areas were identified through an engagement in the Rights, Faith, and Democracy Collaborative’s Georgia cohort, which brought together grantees in the state working on the different issues. It was during this collaboration across organizations and focuses that Vacation Justice School was founded. The organization’s principal, Shannan Reaze, was participating in RFDC’s Georgia grantee cohort through her role with Atlanta Jobs with Justice. Reaze acknowledges that these five issues can be difficult ones for faith leaders to wrestle with and admit that they don’t have all the answers. Vacation Justice School hosts quarterly convenings to give clergy and activists a safe space to have hard conversations, work through their emotions, and adopt new tools and language to connect their spirituality and values with the social justice movement. As a result of the pandemic, these convenings became smaller group meetings which had an unexpected positive effect of enabling deeper discussions.

With 2021 being Vacation Justice School’s first year as an independent organization, Reaze says RFDC’s support was critical. The resources provided made it possible to begin leadership work with seminary students who want to go into social justice ministry. They also supported an update to VJS’s workbook with sections on each of the five issue areas that include citations to scripture, information on related policy battles and organizing efforts, and a menu of actions that can be taken.



Not only was the physical workbook revised for a broader distribution with new literature and case studies, but Vacation Justice School was also able to produce a short film series to accompany it.

Additionally, in December, Vacation Justice School mobilized progressive faith leaders to Washington, DC as the nation's highest court began to hear oral arguments on *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization*, an abortion rights case. The group held a sunrise service outside of the Supreme Court Building and planned to return in June 2022 when a decision is announced. Vacation Justice School stands poised to help significantly disrupt the status quo narrative about faith and human rights.



**We wouldn't be able to exist without the support of RFDC. Also, their role in creating needed but not necessarily natural connections is important. Without that nudge, that push from the grantee cohort position, our organizations just exist in our natural silos. It's a necessary alignment in order to effectively fight back.**

**SHANNAN REAZE**

*Principal, Vacation Justice School*







Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee  
Rights Coalition

## 03

# RISE Together Fund

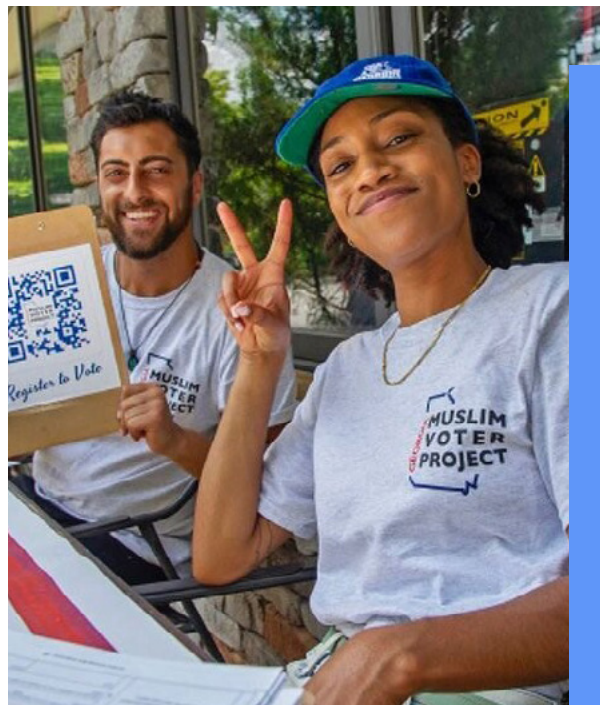
### 2021 IN REVIEW

The RISE Together Fund was founded in 2008 to challenge the unceasing criminalization and dehumanization of Black, African, Arab, Muslim, Middle Eastern, Sikh, and South Asian communities in the post-9/11 era. Guided by our values—Rights, Inclusion, Solidarity, and Equity—RTF, alongside our funders and grantees, have been fighting the Muslim and African bans and their lingering impacts, hate crimes, ongoing federal, state, and a local surveillance programs, and many more threats directly targeting our communities, sustaining a legacy of discrimination that dates back decades. RTF recognizes that a strong antidote to the anti-Muslim, racist, xenophobic, and white nationalist forces at play is an inclusive democracy—one with the full participation of Black, African, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (BAMEMSA) communities



The mobilization of funders to support BAMEMSA-led organizations throughout the country is central to RTF's work. As the 20-year commemoration of 9/11 approached in 2021, RTF asked funders to join in our commitment to supporting BAMEMSA communities during this critical year and beyond. BAMEMSA communities are growing quickly but are still underinvested in and excluded from broader conversations and philanthropic opportunities. RTF, in partnership with Democracy Fund, Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and 20 other signatories, committed to collectively raising \$50 million over the next five years to support BAMEMSA communities and urged other funders to join us.

RTF has a rich history of identifying gaps and designing fieldwide interventions to bolster connection, communication, education, and infrastructure. Our field partners consistently ask for stronger data about BAMEMSA communities, particularly immigrant communities, that can supercharge organizational nonpartisan civic engagement work, mobilize and build community powerbuilding opportunities, and increase language access to participate in democratic processes. In 2021, encouraged by the results of a voter data partnership with Dr. Tom Wong we piloted during the 2020 election, we developed a three-year plan to grow our infrastructure to sustain data and analytics support for our field, with additional support from RTF grantees ReThink Media and Equality Labs on media messaging and data security enhancements. We support grantees like Georgia Muslim Voter Project, who after working with Dr. Wong, increased their voter list from 800 to 74,000.



Georgia Muslim Voter Project

Uplifting gender justice and ensuring women, queer, and non-binary leaders have the support, mentorship, and capacity to succeed were key goals of our work in 2021. Women constitute 80% of our grantee executive directors and are often the unsung heroes of our social movements. Since 2017, RTF has funded resilience and leadership development resources for cohorts of women in our field. In 2021, RTF built a virtual, individualized coaching program for 20 women-identifying leaders in our space, with most of the coaches identifying as members of BAMEMSA communities. We support gender justice activism of our field actors, including Queer Crescent, Desis Rising Up & Moving, and Jahajee Sisters, sharing their stories and successes and lifting up their bold ideas for how we can achieve a thriving, inclusive democracy.

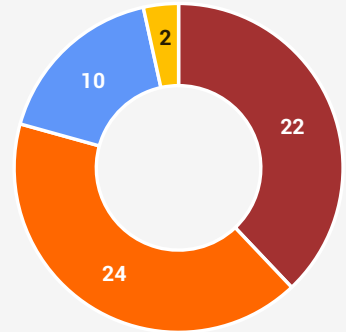


While growing our impact externally, RTF brought fresh energy to its work in the form of new leadership. Rana Elmir was selected as RTF's new Program Director, bringing with her 16 years of experience at ACLU of Michigan as Communications Director, then Deputy Director, and ending her time as Interim Executive Director. Under her leadership, RTF is engaging in a dynamic strategic planning process to create a transparent, collaborative, and responsive theory of change. With the help of our funder and field partners, we will define our path ahead: an RTF that is dogged and purposeful in its pursuit of protecting and strengthening the collective power of the BAMEMSA field.

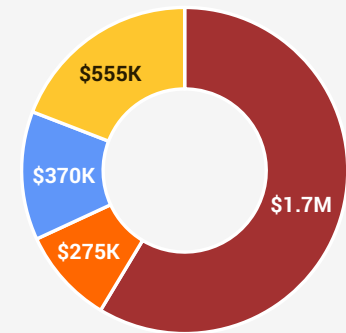


RISE Together Fund Grantee Convening, photo by Les Talusan

## BY THE NUMBERS

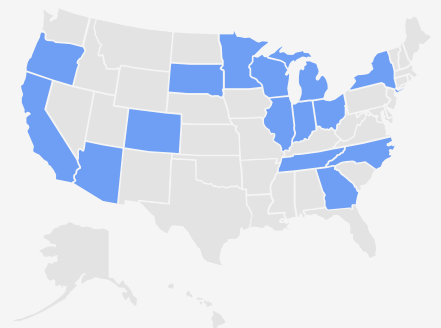


# 58 Grants



# \$2.9M

- Field Building
- Rapid Response Fund
- Rise Together Action Fund
- Communications



# 15 States

## 2021 Spotlight: Unite Oregon



Unite Oregon's Black Existence March - Portland (2020)

### **Empowering Immigrant, Refugee, and BIPOC Voices In Oregon: RTF's Longstanding Support of a Multiracial Justice Movement Helps to Sustain It**

The product of two decades of multiracial grassroots organizing, Unite Oregon's (UO) 22,000-strong membership is focused on addressing racial justice and human rights issues for immigrants, refugees, people of color, and low-income Oregonians. While Oregon is perceived to be a liberal state, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Black sentiments and factions are more prevalent than outsiders might expect. Unite Oregon's four chapters span urban, suburban, and rural parts of the state providing connection to a population that has diverse cultural, ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds.

Relationships are the key ingredient of Unite Oregon's work and what drives its impact. The communities UO serves are represented in both its membership and its staff, many of whom were hired after taking part in its leadership development programs. The community-embedded nature of the organization is valuable to its efforts to build relationships and gain a deeper understanding of the specific priorities, so that those priorities can be centered in its policy work. Rather than speaking on behalf of people, Unite Oregon seeks to empower them to advocate for themselves, creating a space for their voices at the decision-making table. This approach has been instrumental in UO's wins, the most significant of which was the passage of the strongest hate crime bill in the country. The stories of hundreds of people who showed up and told their stories at a listening session had a profound impact on the state's attorney general and, consequently, the outcome of the legislation.

2021 resulted in a confluence of crises for the state and Unite Oregon, perhaps more than at any one time in its 20-year history. With members still dealing with the effects of the pandemic, the racial uprising and resulting backlash, and the devastating wildfires that swept through Oregon in 2020, a massive heatwave broke historical records, as temperatures reached 119 degrees and more than 100 people died. In addition to helping support immediate needs in communities due to the extreme weather event, Unite Oregon has deepened its commitment to climate justice and is developing a long-term vision for community shelters that can also serve as community organizing centers.



Despite all of the challenges, as well as a leadership transition, Unite Oregon not only survived but thrived, increasing its staff by 50 percent. This growth includes more communications capacity to help influence policy shifts through storytelling. With the support of RISE Together Fund, UO has also continued the Pan-Immigrant Leadership and Organizing Training or PILOT, one of its longest-held leadership development programs, and began putting plans in place for a small business incubator and other new initiatives that will strengthen their impact for years to come.



**We're often neglected by other national organizations. We're a blue state, and people don't really believe that we have a critical mass of immigrants, refugees, and BIPOC. We can't compete. RTF has been wonderful about funding our leadership development and organizing work. They've always been flexible on the use of funds, and it's been really wonderful to have their annual support. That's what nonprofits really need.**

**CLAUDIA ARANA COHEN**  
*Development Director, Unite Oregon*





*The Prevention Collaborative team in Atlanta /  
Facebook.com*

# 04 Fiscally-Sponsored Projects

## 2021 IN REVIEW

Our specialized approach to fiscal sponsorship centers partnership while providing excellent operational, organizational, and governance infrastructure to social-change initiatives, enabling leaders to focus on growing their impact with the support of a trusted partner. While many of our fiscally sponsored projects are philanthropic in nature, our portfolio has a full range of social justice initiatives. Our fiscally sponsored projects are:

- **Shifting philanthropic practice with a focus on equity and impact;**
- **Advancing electoral reforms and government accountability and transparency;**
- **Elevating the leadership of women, queer, and transgender youth of color;**
- **Supporting organizing and advocacy led by and for communities of color and LGBTQ communities;**



- **Defending reproductive rights and preventing violence against women and children;**
- **Building progressive narrative power and critical movement messaging; and**
- **Engaging impacted communities in the grantmaking decision process and equipping donors with the tools necessary to center justice and equity in their giving.**

Our new strategic plan has brought into sharp focus how our portfolio of fiscally sponsored projects supports Proteus Fund’s mission and integrated theory of change. In 2021, our FSPs invested in building capacity, community power, and movement infrastructure, areas that will significantly enhance their impact.

Proteus Fund was excited to welcome Contigo Fund as part of the portfolio to continue to expand queer and racial justice work. This new partnership with Contigo is a natural fit for Proteus Fund and our expanding ecosystem of initiatives. Our [fiscally sponsored projects](#) support organizers and advocates, experienced and emerging leaders, and dynamic organizations on the frontlines of advancing racial, gender, queer, and disability justice and inclusive democracy.

## 2021 FISCALLY SPONSORED PROJECTS:



**Bridges** is a hub for strategic progressive initiatives dedicated to exploring innovative tactics to engage diverse audiences, foster strategic thinking, and encourage alignment across movements, geographies, and disciplines.



**Contigo Fund** is the first and only LGBTQ+ Latinx fund in the United States, a top funder of LGBTQ+ Latinx communities in the nation, and the largest LGBTQ+ participatory and grantmaking organization supporting LGBTQ+ communities of color in the U.S. South.



Raising a generation of children who are thoughtful, informed, and brave about race, **EmbraceRace** is a multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges faced by those raising children in a world where race matters.



The **Horizon Forum** provides a research based convening space for stakeholders in the grant-making community to address this shared public challenge of charitable dollars, often in the form of Donor Advised Funds, inadvertently being directed to dangerous and xenophobic activity.



The **Impact-Driven Philanthropy Collaborative (IDPC)** promotes thoughtful and intentional giving practices by convening representatives from the donor support ecosystem to strengthen the overall field.





The **Jewish Liberation Fund (JLF)** mobilizes resources to sustain and grow a progressive Jewish movement for justice and liberation.



**More Equitable Democracy (MED) / More Equitable Democracy Action\*** is an intermediary focused on strengthening democracy at the state and local levels. It engages with organizations working in underrepresented communities, particularly people of color and young people, to develop their own democracy reform agendas.



The **Prevention Collaborative** works to reduce violence against women and their children by strengthening the capacity of key actors to deliver effective prevention programs, based on feminist principles and evidence-and practice-based knowledge.



**ReFrame / ReFrame Action\*** builds narrative power to win, investing in people—strategists, creatives, leaders, and dreamers—developing the skills, acumen, and networks needed to advance just narratives at scale.



**State Law Research Initiative's** mission is to help build a body of legal research on the state constitutional law of the right to be free of cruel and unusual punishment



The **Transparency, Accountability & Participation (TAP) Network** is a broad network of CSOs that works to ensure that open, inclusive, accountable, effective governance and peaceful societies are at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**Third Wave Fund / Third Wave Action Fund\*** resources youth-led, intersectional, gender justice movements to advance the community power, well-being, and self-determination of young Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC). These movements are supported through the rapid response, capacity-building, multi-year, and community-based accountability funds.



**Transparency & Accountability Initiative (TAI)** is a donor collaborative working toward a world where citizens are informed and empowered; governments are open and responsive; and collective action advances the public good.

*\*at Proteus Action League ("PAL"), Proteus Fund's affiliated 501(c)(4) organization*

## BY THE NUMBERS

**\$3.35M**

awarded through

**125 grants**

1 new project started, bringing our total to

**13 FSPs**

**57**

total staff members at fiscally sponsored projects





## 2021 Spotlight: Horizon Forum

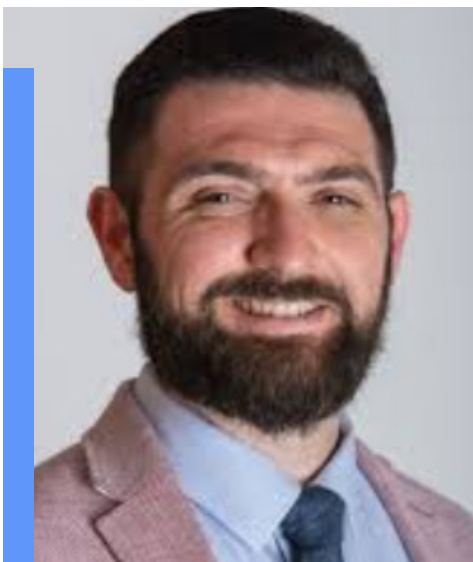


Washington: The Muslim Women's contingent at the 2019 Women's March demonstrating against the Muslim Ban and for women's rights / Shutterstock.com

### “ *Protecting Philanthropy From Hate Funding* ”

I wouldn't have had the confidence to even start Horizon Forum if we didn't have this kind of structure. We wanted a fiscal sponsor that could help provide access to this ecosystem and the kind of operational support we needed so that we can concentrate on our actual mission. It feels like we can overcome some of the learning curve and uphill battles a new nonprofit faces.

**ABBAS BARZEGAR**  
*Founder, Horizon Forum*



Before founding Horizon Forum, Abbas Barzegar's research and policy role at the Council on American-Islamic Relations led him to work on a report about a national network of institutions that promote anti-muslim bigotry, contributing to unprecedented levels of Islamophobia across the nation. A look into the funding flows of these organizations revealed a very disturbing fact: a lot of the money was coming through charitable institutions such as family foundations and even community foundations in the form of donor-advised funds (DAFs). In short, these donors were using the foundations as cover to push money to specific channels and fund hate.

By highlighting this astonishing misuse of DAFs in the report, momentum began to build around finding ways to stop it—and Horizon Forum was born. Not strictly focused on Islamophobia, Horizon Fund helps community foundations immunize themselves against the risk that they might be unknowingly and unintentionally supporting hate funding. Horizon Fund also seeks to educate about the cultural and systemic issues that have made it possible for money that supports Islamophobia, antisemitism, and other sources of hate to be funded through philanthropy. While hate speech and threats of violence are illegal, the legal threshold to prove a group is engaged in these activities is exceptionally high. Additionally, the IRS's definition of a charitable organization is so broad that there's very little these groups can't do under the banner of charity or advocacy.

When founding Horizon Forum in 2020, Barzegar says Proteus Fund was a natural fit for a fiscal sponsor, due to its mission alignment, its tremendous level of credibility, and the selective nature with which it approaches its fiscal projects. By the end of this year, the organization, Horizon Forum will have supported close to 75 community foundations in going through its Anti-Hate Policy and Protocol Training developing anti-hate policies. Barzegar credits working in tandem with Proteus Fund and being part of its progressive ecosystem with giving Horizon Fund a cutting edge to help accelerate impact.



## 2021 Spotlight: EmbraceRace



Andrew Grant-Thomas and Melissa Giraud  
of EmbraceRace with family

### *Supporting a Movement to Improve Racial Learning for Young Children*

Melissa Giraud and Andrew Grant-Thomas founded EmbraceRace in 2016 after realizing that their own struggles to find resources to support their two children in developing healthy racial sensibilities was a challenge shared by many others. With the backlash to the Obama presidency, the murder of Michael Brown, and other racially-motivated incidents bringing race to the forefront of the national consciousness, the couple knew a lot of parents and educators who wanted to move beyond teaching kids to be colorblind but needed practical support to do that work.

EmbraceRace provides action guides, articles, books, and other resources for parents, family members, educators, and other caregivers who want to raise young children who are thoughtful, informed, and brave about race. Andrew and Melissa collaborate with researchers and other child-facing professionals to create the resources, while also lifting up strong existing content from other sources. EmbraceRace also seeks to create a color-brave community through its webinar series, social groups, and other opportunities to connect, share, and learn with and from others.



**Proteus is more than the sum of its programmatic parts. With multiracial democracy in the United States not fully realized, and the gains we've made under serious attack, we really appreciate having a partner in Proteus whose values and aspirations for the country and world align with ours—and are willing to talk and walk those values and aspirations publicly.**

**ANDREW GRANT-THOMAS**  
*Co-Founder, EmbraceRace*



With the death of George Floyd and the racial justice protests that followed in 2020, the small, still relatively new organization experienced a huge increase in its online community. In one week, more than 15,000 people registered for webinars, up from a previous average registration of about 1,000 people. Melissa described that period of catching up to demand as “a bit of a scramble,” but says they were well positioned thanks to an already fully online presence that included 40 archived webinars.

As partners to EmbraceRace, Proteus Fund supported the organization through this growth period in multiple ways, including financial management for the unexpected influx in new funding, establishing a one-time grantmaking process, and creating job descriptions and advising on processes and policies for new hires. EmbraceRace now has five core employees and a team of consultants. With this organizational support, Andrew and Melissa are able to focus on working toward their long-term vision of building a field of racial learning, brightening the future of multiracial democracy in the United States one child at a time.



**Proteus took us on when we were an idea and didn't have much money, and I would say they genuinely seemed more like allies, super excited about the work. They were there for the early struggles and, now, for the capacity-building wins and ongoing challenges.**

**MELISSA GIRAUD**

*Co-Founder, EmbraceRace*





Sacramento, CA, October 9, 2021: Two members of the Shadden family, mother and child, march with Proud Mom and Trans Rights are Human Rights signs during the National Trans Visibility March / Shutterstock.com

# 05

## Donor-Advised Funds

### 2021 IN REVIEW

Proteus Fund's donor-advised funds (DAFs) are dedicated grantmaking funds that act as a streamlined alternative to establishing a private foundation, allowing philanthropists aligned with our vision, mission, and values to shape their grantmaking while benefiting from the institutional knowledge and capacity of a trusted partner. With over two decades of experience, we are a leader in rapid response grant-making and have particular expertise in making grants to new and grassroots groups. We streamline requirements and processes to lessen the burden on grantees, allowing us to move funds quickly.

### BY THE NUMBERS

**\$8.87M**

awarded through

**93  
grants**

Grants were awarded  
to local organizations  
working across

**18  
states**





# 2021

**GRANTMAKING &  
PROGRAM REPORT**

[PROTEUSFUND.ORG](https://proteusfund.org)