

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

CLARITY

COLLABORATION



CARE

Resourcing
grassroots leaders
and social justice
movements for
transformative
change.




Borealis
PHILANTHROPY

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Letter From Our President



Dear Community,

I'm writing this from a place of deep gratitude for all of our Borealis funders, grantees, and partners in the field. Thank you for helping us succeed in 2021. Borealis has made an incredible impact in the sector. And still, we've committed ourselves to doing the internal work to ensure that Borealis can be around for the long haul. I hope that this work gives us the solid bedrock needed to continue for six more years—and far into the future, we are helping co-conceive.

\$31.7M
GRANTED TO

329
GRANTEE
PARTNERS

BOREALIS IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF RESOURCING MOVEMENTS

In 2021, we granted \$31.7 million to 329 resilient and innovative grantee partners. We were also one of 286 organizations that received a record-breaking gift from

MacKenzie Scott in recognition of the work we do to uplift grassroots groups. We are proud to be resourcing Black-led movements, queer and trans organizing and leadership development, BIPOC-centered newsrooms, and so much more as we work to foster transformative change in our communities.

6
NEW BOARD
MEMBERS

But we are in no way waving a “mission accomplished” banner. Turning inward to do self-work—especially while keeping our commitment to our grantee partners, our board, and our funders—is an ongoing action. We've worked to operationalize our commitment to equity among our staff with new HR and compensation policies. We have six new board members, and we also created space for our talented team to act more strategically, thoughtfully, and intentionally by working more collaboratively and deconstructing the silos (all too common in the philanthropic sector) preventing us from resourcing our movements properly.

It was these small internal shifts that allowed us to more effectively support grantee partners across nine funds in this crucial moment for our society and our democracy. While mainstream news may have led audiences to believe the 2020 uprisings were spontaneous, we know better. We know that organizing for systemic change takes infrastructure. Organizations that many folks hadn't heard of until a year ago have long been doing the work to set the stage for the massive changes we are witnessing now. Our data shows that Borealis has been there with them, investing in their infrastructures years before the news cameras arrived. Our organizational mission and efforts are to ensure we will be there long after they leave. We know that transformation happens over time and requires us to hold the vision of a more just world close to our hearts and work in all moments, especially the tough ones.

BUILDING A NEW WAY FORWARD

One of our greatest assets as an organization is our stubborn commitment to the long haul. We do not subscribe to the boom-bust model of philanthropy. We offer consistent and flexible support to our grantees, even outside of grant cycles and election years.

One of our greatest assets as an organization is our stubborn commitment to the long haul.

As such, we thank the donors who have been with us from the beginning; none of this would have been possible without your support. And we thank our new donors who have quickly moved to action in the last two taxing years. We ask you to stay the course with us. Your continued support in 2022 will ensure that our grantee partners can do the necessary power building that sustains us all during and between flashpoints in our country's history.

We also thank our grantee partners. We celebrate the resilience and wisdom you bring every day to the movements you lead—even when the work is hard and isolating. Please remember we have your back. We do all of this in service of your long-term goals and actions, and our collective liberation. This year and every year coming, we are proud to be in this fight with you.

In community,



PRESIDENT, BOREALIS PHILANTHROPY

Our Impact in 2021



\$31.7M

TOTAL
GRANTMAKING*

*Does not include
grantee benefits



\$2.1M

IN RAPID
RESPONSE GRANTS



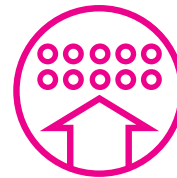
70%

UNRESTRICTED
GRANTS



329

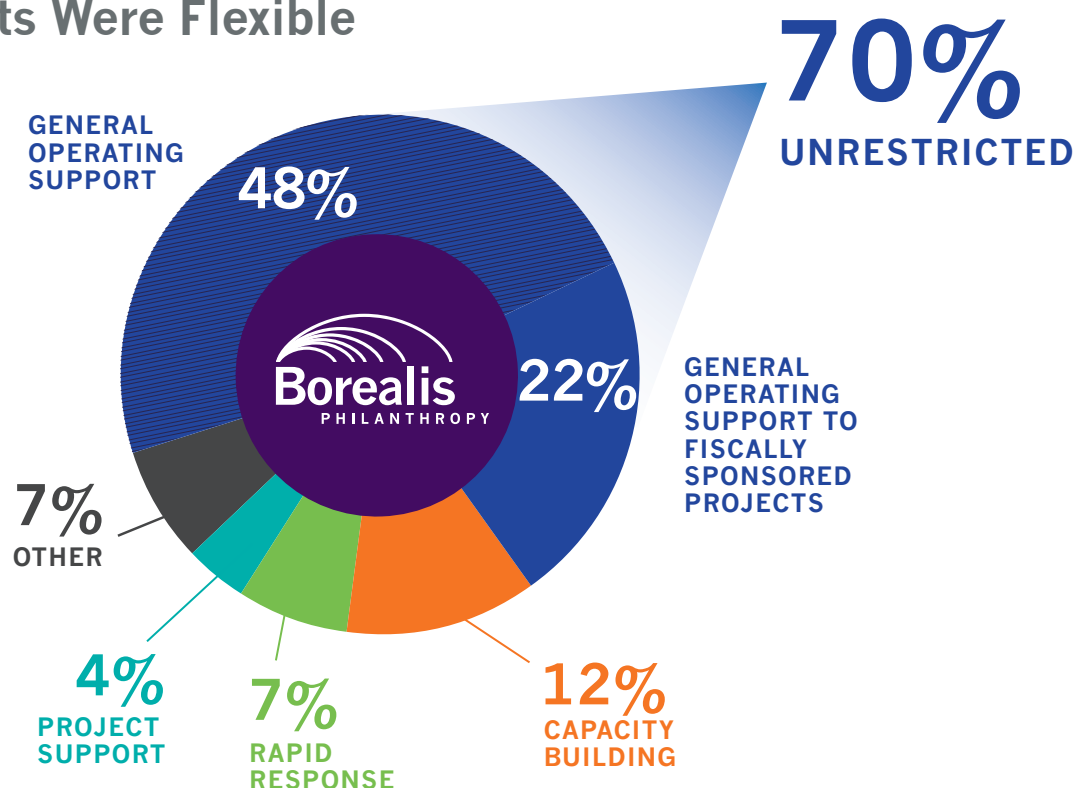
GRANTEE
PARTNERS



392

GRANTS

Our Grants Were Flexible

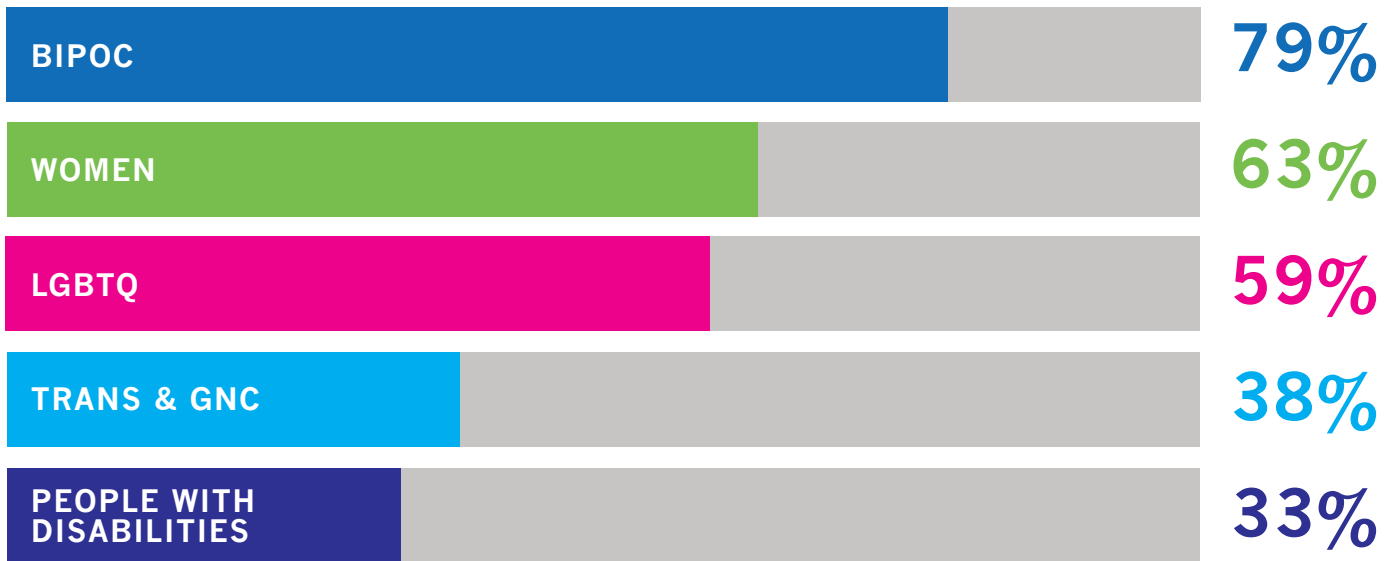


Total Raised in 2021: \$82.3 Million*

*\$44 million restricted for future use

59% of Grantee Budgets Were Under \$1 Million

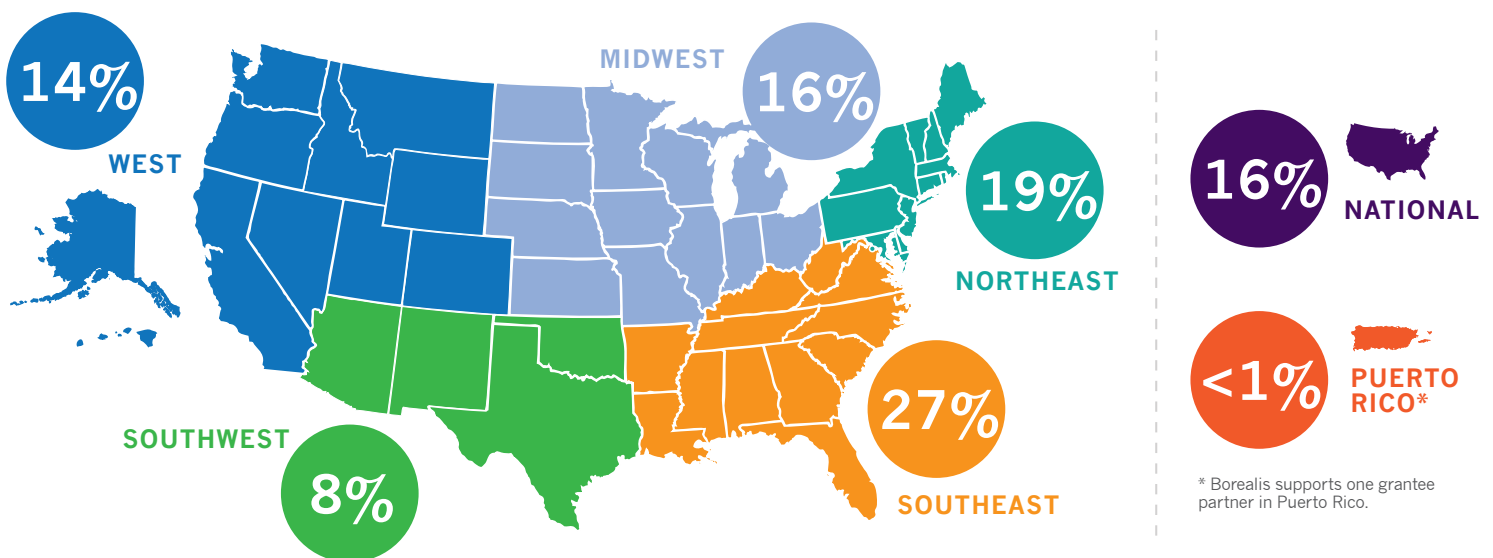
Grantee Leadership



Black is the largest share of **BIPOC** (Black Indigenous People of Color)

Trans & Gender Non-Conforming is the largest share of **LGBTQ**

We Supported Grassroots Groups in Every Region



2021 IMPACT REPORT

Borealis Funds in Review

Borealis is home to **nine funds** that work collaboratively to enhance our collective impact within movements and sectors across the country.

We offer funders an opportunity to work together on central issues to exponentially increase their collective impact with knowledge, support, and leadership from Borealis' staff of experts. We also invest in leaders, organizations, and movements using diverse and innovative strategies to pursue transformational change.

Black-Led Movement Fund

The **Black-Led Movement Fund (BLMF)** supports the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) so that it can better shape policy agendas for Black communities, create alternatives to institutions that have been harmful to Black people, and build local Black community power.

In 2021, BLMF worked to ensure that grassroots Black-led organizations had the resources, decision-making power, and capacity to create safe and vibrant Black communities. More specifically, BLMF drastically increased its grantmaking to prioritize organizations and leaders from smaller and emergent grassroots organizations led by Black women and LGBTQ folk building power in the South and Midwest. BLMF is committed to supporting organizations combating state violence and anti-Black racism to achieve transformative and lasting change. In addition to multi-year general operating grants, BLMF provides rapid response funding for urgent community needs and generous special opportunity grants to support the experimentation and innovation of frontline organizations in the Black movement ecosystem. BLMF also offers grantee partners financing, fundraising, and executive coaching for the staff and leaders of movement groups.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



BLMF grantee partner **Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative** launched the SNAPCo Freedom School, which is a direct action and organizing training program focused on building a Black trans feminist framework for practical abolition through community-designed curriculum.

BLACK-LED MOVEMENT FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$2.4 million
in organizational
development grants to
33 grantee partners

\$400,000
in special opportunity
grants to four grantee
partners

\$1 million +
in rapid response
grants to 43 grantee
partners

The Communities Transforming Policing Fund (CTPF)

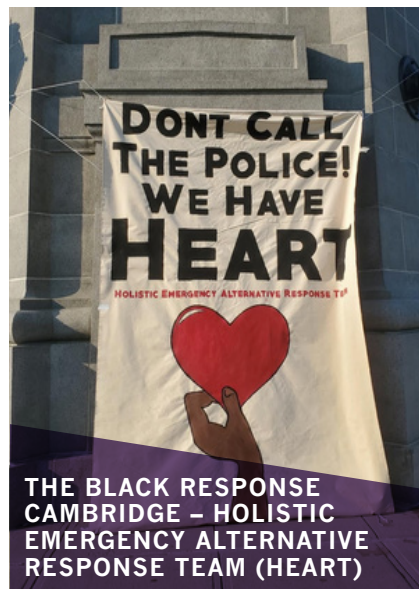
is dedicated to supporting small and emerging grassroots organizing groups led by people most impacted by policing in creating collective narrative and energy to shift power and resources from police to communities to create safety for all.



Communities Transforming Policing Fund

CTPF grantee partners are leading the way in developing transformative community-based safety strategies. They are working to implement their visions for investment in community and divestment from policing and carceral systems. CTPF grantee partners support and advocate for healing and reparations for police torture survivors and family members whose loved ones have been lost to police violence. CTPF grantee partners also continue to push for the decriminalization of poverty, drugs, sex work, and other acts that have been used to criminalized Black and Brown communities and sustain systems of oppression. In 2021, CTPF also launched a participatory grantmaking process.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



The Black Response is a group of young Black Cambridge residents who are committed to implementing transformative practices and policies in the City of Cambridge. In the summer of 2021, the **Cambridge City Council** approved the development of a community-created alternative public safety program as a result of The Black Response's advocacy following the 2020 uprisings. The Black

Response developed a proposal for a **Holistic Emergency Alternative Response Team (HEART)**. HEART aims to address root causes of harm in impacted communities such as houselessness, food/financial insecurity, domestic/neighborhood conflict, drug abuse, and emergency medical support. It is also designed to build a proactive approach to community cohesion and involvement in order to create stronger community and neighborhood ties.

COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMING POLICING FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$5.2 million

in grants, including multi-year commitments

55

grantee partners in 21 states, DC, and Puerto Rico

The Disability Inclusion Fund (DIF) is a five-year fund that supports groups led by people with disabilities to achieve disability justice, inclusion, and rights. Its principles and practices are drawn from disabled-led movements to build power and a society that is free of ableism and other discriminatory barriers. The DIF is the first and only fund of this kind.



In the DIF's second year, the fund focused on deepening its grantmaking and collaboration within the disability rights and justice movements.

The DIF supports an incredible range of grantee organizations pushing disability justice forward, including artists, advocates, and organizers working to lift up disability narratives and grassroots disability community ingenuity. Their work is critical, and together underscores an essential fact: disability justice and inclusion must be disabled-led.

The DIF is supported by the Presidents' Council on Disability Inclusion in Philanthropy, which is convened by the Presidents of the Ford and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations and consists of 17 foundations who have committed to work together to advance inclusion. The DIF continues to see a rise of interest from grassroots disability justice organizations, and also from grantmakers who increasingly understand the importance of funding this work—including grants in 2021 from MacKenzie Scott and a \$5 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



“Since we disrupted the traditional philanthropic approach by bringing together funders and community members nationally, I was able to truly understand how regionally unique our roads toward disability justice are. It cannot be a one size fits all approach. There’s a lot of work ahead for all, but this opportunity solidified that a truly just future depends on collective approaches like this.”

— **RISA JAZ RIFKIND, DISABILITY LEAD**

DISABILITY INCLUSION FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$2.6 million
in grants

34
grantee partners

100%
of DIF's grantee partners
are disability-led
organizations.

The Emerging LGBTQ Leaders of Color Fund (ELLC; *formerly Transforming Movements Fund*) supports the role that young trans and queer leaders play to support pro-LGBTQ, racial justice movements in becoming more connected, inclusive, and thus more powerful.

The Fund invests in leaders and organizations who approach liberation work from a place of inclusion, and understand that issues like community safety, reproductive justice, and immigrant rights do not exist in isolation from each other.



As Borealis Philanthropy's longest-running fund, the ELLC Fund has learned that being responsive to grantee needs means being flexible as they navigate shifting political and organizing terrain.

This is why it's critical to not only provide rapid response support in years like this one, but also to build flexibility into general operating, leadership development, and organizational development support grants empowering grantees to define their needs in the moment. The ELLC Fund is committed to providing support to young LGBTQ leaders of color across the country, with an emphasis on young trans women of color movement leaders. In 2021, the ELLC fund also prioritized rapid response support for mutual aid, policing alternatives, and responses to climate crises for trans and queer BIPOC communities. The ELLC Fund believes in its unique model of scaffolding support for organizations and leaders because it aims to not only fight for causes but to also invest in these young organizers as the leaders we need to steward us into a liberated future.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



"I think the fund really demonstrated its commitment to supporting, in particular, trans women through professional development in a very open and generous way ... [T]here was room to shift. There was room to interpret, and there was room to explore."

— **ISA NOYOLA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR.**
MIJENTE

EMERGING LGBTQ LEADERS OF COLOR FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$2.15 million
in grants

38
grantee partners

\$140,000
in rapid response
funding

The Fund for Trans Generations (FTG) invests in trans-led organizing to support a future where transgender, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary people live with freedom, safety, and self-determination.

Fund for Trans Generations



FTG plays an important role in providing significant resources to emerging trans-led groups that have had limited access to national funding streams. Over 80% of FTG's grantee partners have budgets of \$300,000 or less with 22 organizations reporting a budget of under \$100,000. FTG is committed to growing with organizations and increasing their capacity and leadership development as they meet the needs of transgender, gender non-conforming and nonbinary communities. FTG does this by providing both general support grants and organizational development grants to their grantee partners. Additionally, FTG continues to engage a TGNC-led advisory committee in its participatory grantmaking process. This committee consists of five trans and nonbinary leaders who inform and play a key part in decision-making and the direction of the Fund.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



“FTG was one of our first funders. It was nice to feel like someone cared about what we cared about. And so we were able to not just get funded, but get funded to do the work that we needed to do, which is emergency assistance funds, which was helping girls get out of jail or put money on their books, [and attend to] day-to-day survival needs.”

— LILIANNA ANGEL REYES,
TRANS SISTAS OF COLOR PROJECT

FUND FOR TRANS GENERATIONS 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$1.88 million

in grants to 56
trans-led grantee
partners

\$236,000

in COVID-19 grants to
25 grantee partners

\$300,000

in rapid response
grants to 36 grantee
partners

The REACH Fund (REACH) invests in racial equity practitioners with expertise in working with the nonprofit sector on internal organizational racial equity transformation. Grant partners deepen and scale their practices to support organizational development work with nonprofits of their choosing.

Racial Equity to Accelerate Change Fund



REACH remains steadfast in its unique commitment to support racial equity practitioners as organizations, staff, and communities continue to reckon with the legacy and ongoing effects of racial injustice and white supremacy in this country.

REACH grantees are racial equity practitioners who have been part of a deep history of providing the necessary tools and strategies to support long-term racial justice change in the nonprofit sector. In 2021, REACH provided multi-year grants for its existing cohort of 14 grantees, while also adding 5 new grantee partners with the intent to lean into the leading edges of racial justice approaches. REACH prioritized shared learning externally with the philanthropic and nonprofit fields through a Donor Learning series and monthly Storyletters, and internally through deepening the REACH Fund grantee community of practice, which includes hosting capacity-building opportunities and monthly peer learning sessions. Each of these offerings served to share grantee experiences, approaches, practices, and work with both external and internal communities.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



“I’ve just enjoyed being in space with other race equity practitioners, and I don’t know of any other space like the REACH Fund. It’s a bit unique. The fact that we get to join the network and be around the folks that do what we do and learn from them and see what that looks like is incredibly powerful and supportive.”

— **KIMBERLY JONES MERCHANT, RACIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTE OF THE SHRIVER CENTER ON POVERTY LAW**

RACIAL EQUITY TO ACCELERATE CHANGE FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$1.44 million
in grants

19
grantee partners



Racial Equity in Journalism Fund (REJ) invests in news organizations led by and for people of color. The Fund bolsters a strong, diverse, and independent local media sector that increases civic engagement for communities of color by reaching them with vital, relevant information.

With the support of REJ, grantee partners have been able to determine where to focus their growth and impact to bring critical news to their communities. This has looked a lot of different ways, from investing in organizational development, to building knowledge and connections with other news organizations and media funders, to audience experimentation and growth. Additionally, REJ focused on offering grantee partners increased sustainability and stability through COVID-19 as news publishers faced dwindling advertising sales. REJ provided capacity building training and technical assistance through REJ Fund's webinar series. Topics have included fundraising, audience development, data analytics, and membership training.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



ENLACE LATINO

"Thanks to the REJ Fund, earlier this year we were able to hire consultants to advise us on how to optimize our WhatsApp platform, with the larger objective of better understanding our audience and developing products around that in mind. We are also able to finally start defining the role of audience editor, which we hope to fill in early 2022; this will positively impact our engagement. Finally, the REJ Fund grant support allowed us to further secure the role of Development Director so we can continue to develop and roll out a revenue strategy. In short, the grant has helped us secure the roles that will be key to our newsroom's path towards sustainability in the coming years."

— **PAOLA JARAMILLO AND LUPITA RUIZ,**
ENLACE LATINO

RACIAL EQUITY IN JOURNALISM FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$3.6 million
in grants

28
POC-led and serving
news organizations

Racial Equity in Philanthropy Fund (REP) invests in philanthropy-serving organizations to inform, educate, and equip funders to integrate racial equity policies and practices into their grantmaking and programs.



Racial Equity in Philanthropy Fund

REP believes that advancing racial equity in philanthropy requires a significant investment in time, and resources. In 2021, REP invested in multi-year support to philanthropic-serving organizations that are leading transformation in the field of philanthropy. REP was able to invest in year-long coaching support for select executive directors/CEOs and program staff leads to strengthen their organizational leadership around racial equity. Additionally, as a result of a series of listening, learning, and evaluation processes, the REP Fund decided to intentionally pause in the last half of 2021, empowering grantees to focus on their critical work while the fund processed and applied critical learnings.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



PEAK GRANTMAKING

“Racial equity work is both inside and outside work. The organization has learned that we have to do the internal work, and that includes our board work around racial equity, while not losing what the community is asking of us at the same time. ‘Are you truly living what you’re saying?’ That’s the key question.”

— **SATONYA FAIR, PRESIDENT AND CEO, PEAK GRANTMAKING**

RACIAL EQUITY IN PHILANTHROPY FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$4.3 million
in grants

25
grantee partners

The **Spark Justice Fund** is a donor collaborative that supports efforts to end the correctional control of people of color and the harms inflicted by the criminal legal system on families and communities in the United States.



In 2021, SJF refined its vision to support grassroots organizing and campaigns at the local and state levels aiming to reduce the number of people under pretrial supervision or detention, close jails, and advance transformative visions of pretrial justice led by communities most impacted by incarceration. Spark Justice continues to support 1) decarcerative policy reform and policy implementation efforts to end cash bail, electronic monitoring, risk assessment instruments, and other key policy drivers of jail populations, 2) campaigns to close jails or stop jail expansion and increase investments in the communities most impacted by incarceration, and 3) invest in innovative, community-driven solutions and alternatives to pretrial detention.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



In 2021, La Defensa released [RateMyJudge.la](https://ratemyjudge.la) in an effort to hold judges accountable and provide a space for community members to learn from their experiences in court. This website allows community members to rate their past and current judicial interactions based on fairness, demeanor, neutrality, sensitivity, etc., in order to create more transparency and accountability within the legal system. La Defensa was also instrumental in supporting Los Angeles' ballot Measure J, which diverts funds from incarceration into community based systems of care and support through the ReImagine LA coalition.

SPARK JUSTICE FUND 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

\$2 million
in grants

15
grantee partners

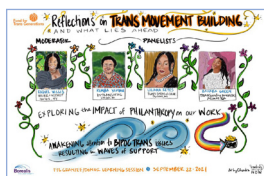
Resources for Funders

Throughout 2021, Borealis' nine funds gathered powerful lessons from our many grantee partners to share with the philanthropic community. We recognize our grantee partners as innovative experts in community organizing and power building, and we often learn so much from their successes and obstacles. We invite you to explore some of the learnings shared by grantee partners, as well as select Borealis team members.



Fund Safe Futures: Lessons from Organizing Since the 2020 Uprisings

KEY TAKEAWAY: Now is the time for philanthropy to deepen its education on abolition, place more trust in grantees on the ground to use resources strategically, and think critically about how our institutions might be standing in the way of more effective organizing for justice.



BIPOC Trans Leaders Reflect on Philanthropy's Role in Trusting Trans Leadership

KEY TAKEAWAY: Trans grantee partners are ready for philanthropy to look beyond best practices and work with people to fund their ideas.



Meet the Disability Inclusion Fund's Grantmaking Advocates

KEY TAKEAWAY: Participatory grantmaking models are one way to ensure that policies and progress are informed and led by those affected by injustice.



Free the Future: The ELLC Fund Celebrates Visionary LGBTQ Leaders of Color

KEY TAKEAWAY: Long-term investment from funders like the ELLC Fund is why young queer and trans movement leaders have been able to make unprecedented strides in the fight for abolishing policing systems, such as the closure of immigrant detention centers and city jails, and the removal of cops from schools.

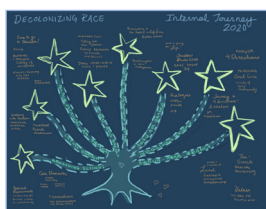
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REJ Fund Field Report: Indigenous Media

KEY TAKEAWAY: Indigenous media is THE place for Indigenous people to get accurate news about their community and issues affecting them. They need our funding now.

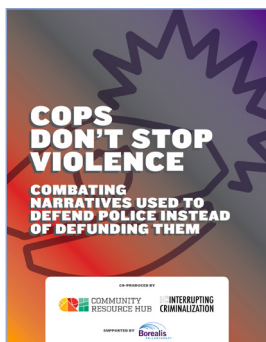
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An Everyday Practice of Decolonization: Lessons from a Racial Equity Practitioner

KEY TAKEAWAY: Decolonizing ourselves out of anti-Blackness is not something that we can do once a month. It's something we must do every day, and courageous vulnerability is the practice that can get us there.

.....



Cops Don't Stop Violence: Combatting Narratives Used to Defend Police Instead of Defunding Them

KEY TAKEAWAY: Cops Don't Stop Violence tackles law enforcement-driven fear mongering by offering evidence-based strategies to stop violence, nuanced reasoning for defunding police (since cops are more likely to increase violence rather than safety), and the immense value of refunding our communities.

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Inside the Push for More Equitable Boards: How BoardSource Leads with Intent

KEY TAKEAWAY: Leading with Intent is a study that is about trend mapping across the nonprofit sector and looking at what's happening in boardrooms. It's a survey of nonprofit CEOs or executive directors and board chairs. It's used to capture a snapshot in time on what leaders are saying about their boards' composition, about their boards' performance in key areas, and about board culture.



The Arc of Justice: What We Learned About Supporting Ballot Initiatives for Transformative Change

KEY TAKEAWAY: An exploration of how organizers in Los Angeles and Minneapolis built the community power to challenge the status quo of policing and incarceration with ballot initiatives focused on community care and community safety. Includes lessons learned from combating negative narratives, legal challenges, and well-resourced opponents committed to the status quo.

If you're interested in supporting Borealis' work resourcing movements, please email development@borealisphilanthropy.org

Visit borealisphilanthropy.org to learn more.

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