



THE ARC OF JUSTICE

SUPPORTING BALLOT INITIATIVES
FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

TOOLKIT

Over the past few years, Black, Indigenous, People of color (BIPOC)-led organizations have utilized ballot initiatives as a strategy to forward their generational work of safety and liberation for people of color.

In 2020, over one hundred BIPOC organizations came together to support Measure 110 making Oregon the first state to decriminalize the personal possession of drugs, and shift enforcement resources and marijuana sales to addiction treatment and recovery programs. However it's important to note that ballot measures have also been used to criminalize communities of color and increase the power and resources of policing and incarceration. In 2021, the Save Austin Now PAC tried and failed to pass Proposition A, a ballot measure requiring a minimum number of police per 1,000 residents. A broad grassroots coalition, No Way on Prop A, was successful in stopping that effort to expand the number and resources of police.

On November 18, 2021, Borealis Philanthropy's Black-Led Movement Fund, Communities Transforming Policing Fund, and Spark Justice Fund hosted the **Arc of Justice: Supporting Ballot Initiatives for Transformative Change**. The webinar

highlighted two recent ballot initiative campaigns, the Measure J Campaign by the Re-Imagine LA Coalition and the Yes on 2 Campaign by Yes 4 Minneapolis. The panel conversation was moderated by Andrea Ritchie, researcher at Interrupting Criminalization and featured Kandace Montgomery of Black Visions Collective, Corenia Smith of Yes 4 Minneapolis, and Brian Kaneda of Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB).

The briefing was grounded by a discussion of the power building framework in order to emphasize that funders should support this strategy as one of many strategies to build power in communities most impacted by interlocking systems of oppression. The power building framework image and chart below are from Advocacy That Builds Power: Transforming Policies and Systems for Health and Racial Equity (Coffman, Barsoum, Lopez, Brothe Gantz 2021).

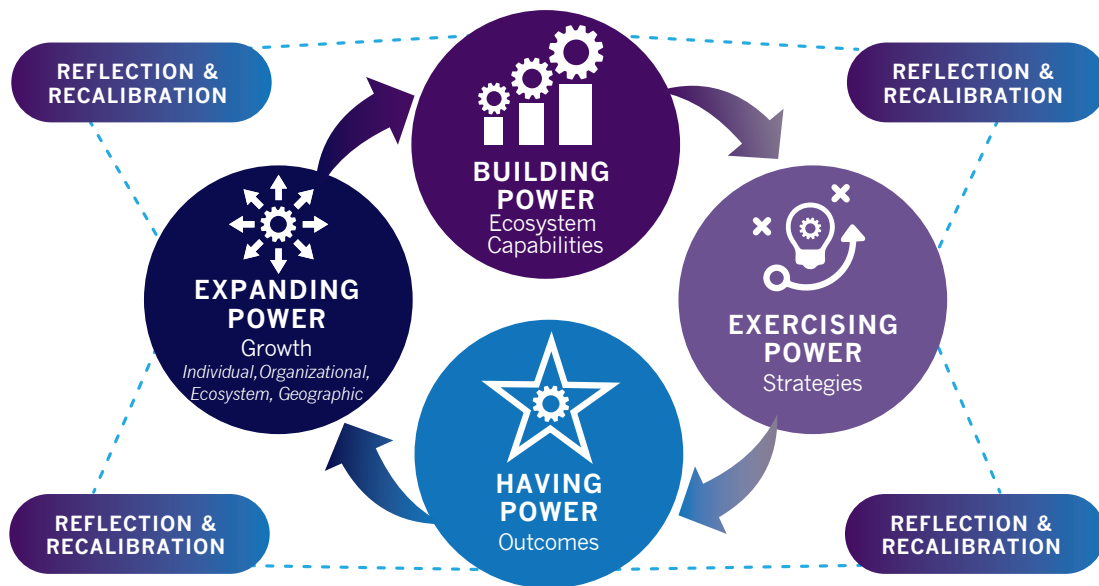


Communities
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THE POWER BUILDING FRAMEWORK



ADVOCACY TO ACHIEVE A WIN	ADVOCACY THAT BUILDS POWER
A “win” is the goal .	A “win” is a means .
Advocacy is done on behalf or for impacted communities.	Advocacy is done by and with impacted communities.
The policy solution may or may not be informed by impacted communities.	The policy solution is developed or informed by impacted communities.
Base building organizations and organizing may or may not be part of the strategy.	Base building organizations and organizing are centered in the strategy.
Strategy is based on a shared analysis driven by politics and the window of opportunity.	Strategy is based on a shared analysis grounded in root causes and inequity.
The advocacy campaign is the strategy, and organizing may be a tactic through which a win is achieved.	Organizing (a participant-centered power building approach to deal with upstream changes) is the strategy/approach and advocacy is the tactic/method through which power is built.
Advocacy mobilizes pundits, policy entrepreneurs, and other influentials as the drivers of change.	Advocacy based on organizing pays attention to the role of an authentic organized base as the primary driver of change.
The work is organized into a series of time-bound campaigns that may not relate or add up.	The work is continuous , and a series of campaigns expands the power and influence of participants within a field of action
Specific/time-bound capacity building is provided for the purpose of getting to the win.	Advocacy and campaigns are a leadership development opportunity to build power in a defined area.
Others drive narratives that tell stories of impacted communities, often within the dominant frame.	Impacted communities drive narratives that tell their stories and challenge dominant frames.



10 KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SPEAKERS

1

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO FUNDING

Consider how you can make your grantmaking process as easy on movement groups as possible. Whether it is utilizing phone calls and video calls instead of paper applications and reports or providing resources outside of your normal grant cycle.

2

USE YOUR POSITION AND PRIVILEGE AS A FUNDER TO OPEN DOORS AND SPACES TO MOVEMENT ORGANIZERS

Funders should utilize their positional power to help movement organizers expand their reach and network of support.

3

BELIEVE MOVEMENT GROUPS THE FIRST TIME THEY ASK FOR SUPPORT

Help movement organizers preserve their time and energy for the work of liberation. Do not require multiple calls and applications in order to believe in and support their work. Historically and currently, Black, Indigenous, and people of color-led groups bear the burden of philanthropy's incredulity. It is important to recognize how anti-Blackness and white supremacy culture shapes everyone's perspective about the abilities and effectiveness of Black and Brown-led groups in order to actively push back against that perspective and all of the ways it shows up in policies, practices, and procedures.

4

BE AUTHENTIC PARTNERS IN THE WORK – UTILIZE THE RESOURCES, TALKING POINTS, AND MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY GROUPS TO SHARE THE WORK

Instead of co-opting and changing the message of grassroots organizers, be authentic partners and collaborators. Utilize the incredible materials that have been created by organizers to explain what liberation, abolition, and safety could look like if resourced at the same levels as punishment, policing, and incarceration. For example, CURB released its [People's Plan for Prison Closure](#) and Black Visions has its [Minneapolis Without Policing Guide](#).

5

DON'T USE YOUR POWER TO DIRECT THE STRATEGY OF MOVEMENT GROUPS

In her 2019 article, [**The Price of Civil Rights: Black Lives, White Funding, and Movement Capture**](#), Dr. Megan Ming Francis coined the phrase **movement capture** to describe how “private philanthropy uses its influence to shape the agenda and strategies of vulnerable civil rights organizations.” While philanthropy is a partner in movement work and a part of the ecosystem, philanthropy should not direct or lead movement work.

6

C3 FUNDING CAN PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Don't shy away from supporting campaigns for safety and justice over concerns about whether campaigns can use C3 dollars. They can! Public education is critical to any campaign effort and C3 general operating dollars can support the critical education, polling, and focus group work that supports the campaign. To learn more about how to support this work review Bolder Advocacy's [**The Power of Collaboration: 501\(c\)\(3\) and 501\(c\)\(4\)s Working Together**](#) page seven includes recommendations for funders and [**Foundations and Ballot Measures**](#).

7

RESOURCE THE GENERATIONAL WORK OF POWER BUILDING AND NOT JUST ADVOCACY FOR A WIN

In the 2021 report, [**Advocacy that Builds Power**](#), authors Coffman, Barsoum, Lopez, and Gantz write about the difference between advocacy to achieve a win versus advocacy that builds power. They highlight how advocacy that builds power centers the most impacted communities, is focused on addressing the root causes of oppression, and is continuous. If philanthropy wants to resource transformative change then it must resource advocacy that builds power.

8

HOLISTIC AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR POWER BUILDING

Power building is a cycle and there is funding needed to support every part of that cycle from the development of strategy, to organizing, communications, legal support, implementation, leadership development, etc. There is also a real need to fund rest, sabbaticals, healing justice, and movement defense to address external and internal threats to the health and safety of organizers.

9

FUND THE ECOSYSTEM OF FRONTLINE ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY BASED SAFETY STRATEGIES

Frontline organizations are unfunded or underfunded to develop community based safety strategies. They also face attacks from those who see them as a threat to their funding and legitimacy. It is critical to fund the safety strategies we want to see used in our communities. The local and state government will not fund these programs in the way they are funding police and incarceration without significant financial support from other sources. It is important to note that different groups play a number of different roles. No single program can create public safety. That is why it's important to support an ecosystem of groups supporting the needs of lots of different community members. For more examples of these groups across the country, visit Project Nia and Interrupting Criminalization's millionexperiments.com and listen to their podcast. You can also check out dontcallthepolice.com.

10

FUNDING IN OPPOSITION TO THE STATUS QUO REQUIRES CRITICAL AND CAREFUL THINKING ABOUT STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT PHILANTHROPY DOES NOT FUND OR LEGITIMIZE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION THAT MOVEMENTS ARE ADVOCATING AGAINST

It is important to remember that our current system of state violence with qualified immunity and little to no accountability is the status quo. Movement organizers and funders pushing back against the status quo will experience backlash in the form of direct attacks, negative narratives, and co-option. It's important for funders to study this work and resource those that are pushing back against systems of oppression instead of legitimizing them. To learn more on this topic, check out Borealis' [Fund Safe Futures Toolkit](#) and join a community of funders focused on this work, like Funders for Justice's [Eroding the Power of Police Unions Strategy Group](#). Pledge to resource the end of police violence, sign on the Marguerite Casey Foundation's [Answering the Uprisings: Closing the Say/Do Gap in Philanthropy](#).



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SPARK JUSTICE FUND sparkjustice@borealisphilanthropy.org



VIDEO RECAPS FROM OUR NOVEMBER 18TH CONVERSATION



WATCH: Kandace Montgomery & Andrea J. Ritchie explain how ballot initiatives fit into broader organizing strategies

Interrupting Criminalization
Support Interrupting Criminalization's Work



WATCH: Corenia Smith & Kandace Montgomery unpack their lessons and successes at the ballot box

Black Visions Collective
Support Black Visions Collective's Work



WATCH: Corenia Smith shares how C3 funding can support ballot initiatives

Yes 4 Minneapolis



WATCH: Brian Kaneda on mobilizing supporters to overcome a well-organized opposition

Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB)
Support CURB's Work



ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

Ballot measure related to public safety

- **Ballotpedia** — [Local police-related ballot measures following the killing of and protests about George Floyd](#) (November 2020)
- **Ballotpedia** — [Notable local police-related ballot measures \(2021\)](#)

Re-Imagine LA's Coalition

- [Care First Budget 2021-2022](#)
- [Measure J Reimagine LA Advisory Committee: Spending Plan Recommendations](#)

Californians United for a Responsible Budget

- [CURB's October 2021 Funder Update](#)

Other Resources

- **MPD 150** — [Enough is Enough: A 150 Year Performance Review of the Minneapolis Police Department](#)
- **Andrea J. Ritchie and Beth E. Richie** — [The Crisis of Criminalization: A Call for a Comprehensive Philanthropic Response](#)
- **Megan Ming Francis and Erica Kohl-Arenas** — [Here We Go Again: Philanthropy and Movement Capture](#)