

FROM THE frontlines

the Bread & Roses community fund newsletter | 2014 | Issue 3



Demanding racial justice nationally and locally

After Michael Brown's death on August 9 in Ferguson, what was already clear to young black men and their families became clear to everyone: we are not living in a "postracial" society. Despite progress on many fronts, racial justice eludes us. Young black men are 21 times more likely than their white peers to be killed by police.¹ Sixty percent of incarcerated people are people of color despite the fact that they constitute only 30% of the population.² In 2012, American schools spent \$334 more on every white student than on every nonwhite student.³ Racism plays a significant role in America's deportation policies, which in 2013 forcibly removed 368,644 people, more than 95% of them originally from Central America.⁴

A particularly poignant response to Michael Brown's death came from Sybrina Fulton, Trayvon Martin's mother. In a public letter in August to Michael Brown's mother, Lesley McSpadden, Sybrina wrote:

"I wish I could say that it will be all right on a certain or specific day, but I can't.... But know this: Neither of [our sons'] lives shall be in vain. The galvanizations of our communities must be continued beyond the tragedies. While we fight injustice, we will also hold ourselves to an appropriate level of intelligent advocacy. If they refuse to hear us, we will make them feel us."

Sybrina Fulton, and thousands like her, are channeling their outrage and pain into action. Here in Philadelphia, the fight for racial justice is being waged on many fronts: reversing the trauma of mass incarceration, ending the deportation crisis, building a quality public education system, and more. Bread & Roses grantees are leading — and winning — these fights.



MEDIA MOBILIZING PROJECT

These movements are different now. They're paying attention to intersectionality, and they're refusing to make gains at the expense of others. *Racial & Economic Justice Fund* grantee DreamActivist PA, a group of undocumented youth, recently supported the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers in their contract negotiations. *Racial & Economic Justice Fund* grantee Philadelphia Student Union and *Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative* grantee Youth United for Change are demanding that the broken criminal justice system be fixed in tandem with the dismantling of mass incarceration.

In another example, the movement to end unjust deportations in Philadelphia won a huge victory in March. As members of the Philadelphia Family Unity Network, *Racial & Economic Justice Fund* grantee 1Love

Movement and *Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative* grantee New Sanctuary Movement ended collaboration between Philadelphia police and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

Their statement celebrating this historic victory illuminated the real strength and promise of new movements for racial justice:

"Built on years of prior work together in our communities, and through an intentional undertaking of creating shared principles and accountability processes within our coalition, we were able to stand together in unity in the face of social and political divisions that pressure us to throw each other under the bus.... The fact that we refuse to be divided and instead stand with each other as people and families deserving of dignity, respect, and justice — period — is victory in itself."

¹ProPublica, October 2014, www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white

²The Sentencing Project, <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=122>

³Spatig,Amerikaner, A. (2012). Unequal Education: Federal Loophole Enables Lower Spending on Students of Color. Center for American Progress.

⁴TRAC Immigration, <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/350/>

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

What a busy year it's been at Bread & Roses. In March, we awarded 17 grants for criminal justice reform activism through our *Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative*. I enjoyed

seeing many of you at our *Tribute to Change* in June. In July, we awarded four grants to emerging groups in our *Future Fund*, eight grants to direct action campaigns in our *Racial & Economic Justice Fund*, and a grant to POWER in our *One Percent Fund*. In September, we awarded scholarships to four amazing young gay men at our annual Jonathan Lax Scholarship reception, and we celebrated all of our 2014 grantees at On the Rise for Real Change. We have also supported emerging needs throughout the year via our *Opportunity Fund*.

We've emphasized Bread & Roses' commitment to racial and economic justice in this newsletter. Our cover story examines new racial justice movements. In our grantee profile, you'll learn about a group of formerly incarcerated women who are transforming

the criminal justice system. On page 3, members of Resource Generation Philadelphia invite you to join their bold giving pledge for racial justice. And, with great sadness, we say goodbye to Gloria Casarez, Bread & Roses board member, exceptional champion for change, and one of my dearest friends. We will think of her often as we enjoy the rights she helped us win and forge ahead in new battles.

You and I both know that the grants and technical assistance Bread & Roses provides are essential resources for grassroots groups in our region. Together, we can do more to support movements for real change. Will you please make a generous year-end gift to fund committed, grassroots organizing in the Philadelphia region?

As always, thank you for your support. Have a safe and joyful holiday season.

Warm regards,

Casey Cook
 executive director

GRANTEE PROFILE

Formerly incarcerated women lead the way at Why Not Prosper

On October 1, *Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative* grantee Why Not Prosper launched a new pilot program called Breaking the Cycle. The program provides housing and job training to women released from the Philadelphia prison system who have been trafficked for sex. This program will track and study these women for three years, addressing mental health issues and building skills needed to earn sustainable wages.

This new program is just one piece in Why Not Prosper's comprehensive approach to building power for formerly incarcerated women. "We want to empower women to advocate for themselves and work for themselves after incarceration," said Why Not Prosper director Reverend Michelle Simmons.

Rev. Simmons, herself formerly incarcerated, founded Why Not Prosper in 2000 to serve the unmet needs of women both in the prison system and upon reentry. "Why Not Prosper transforms the criminal legal system in a fundamental way," she said, "by reducing the recidivism rate, advocating for the rights of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women, and by empowering those women."



WHY NOT PROSPER

Why Not Prosper is currently building their organization to increase their ability to make change. They launched an annual appeal drive to grow their donor base, recently got their building licensed as a transitional living facility, and obtained a 15-passenger van to transport women to work, appointments, and school.

"The most meaningful part of our work is empowering these women, helping to change their mindsets, and helping them become positive contributors to society," Rev. Simmons said.

Giving to Long-Haul Racial and Economic Justice Work

Below, we're printing an open invitation from the Philadelphia chapter of Resource Generation, a group Bread & Roses honored in June at the *Tribute to Change* for their pioneering work in social change philanthropy.

Resource Generation organizes young people with wealth or class privilege to become transformative leaders working toward the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power.

Dear Philadelphia social justice community,

We invite you to join us in our commitment to give in response to unfolding events in Ferguson. Collectively, we have committed to giving \$12,000 each year for three years, half to organizing work in Missouri and half to organizing work in Philadelphia. We hope others will join us with commitments at any level in this fight for racial and economic justice.

Events in Ferguson this summer touched a national nerve. While we are sad and angry, we are not surprised. We know that the institutionalized racism seen in Mike Brown's killing is pervasive across the country; we especially know it's pervasive in Philadelphia. What happens in Ferguson and Philadelphia is at the intersection of race and class and did not develop overnight. It is born out of generations of oppression and the gutting of resources from Black communities.

We also know that powerful organizing will lead us toward racial and economic justice: one-on-one conversations in the streets, political education over pizza, and events and rallies that bring communities together. And we know that people and organizations in Philly and Ferguson are doing the daily, slow, and steady work of forming relationships, developing leaders, building collective power, envisioning a more just society, and struggling toward transformation.

Finally, we know that racial and economic justice organizing is a long-haul project. We know that it will take a commitment that continues long after Ferguson is out of the headlines, long after its immediacy is not animating our urgency.

So what if now we take this opportunity to make a powerful impact together? Resource Generation Philadelphia members are acting and giving together because the events in Ferguson are connected to our support for the struggle for quality education and safe environments for youth of color in Philadelphia. Collectively, we are giving \$12,000 each year for the next three years. Please join us, to see a contribution in Ferguson's aftermath as intersecting with your own vision and commitment to social justice.

Giving together, we'll give more; we'll feel the power of collective action; we'll fuel the work of others; and we'll renew our own commitment to the struggle for racial and economic justice.

In Missouri, we will support the work of the Organization for Black Struggle (OBS), a national organization working to build political empowerment and economic justice in African American communities, especially in Ferguson.

In Philadelphia, we will support Bread & Roses' Racial & Economic Justice Fund, which funds groups engaged in direct-action community organizing to promote racial and economic justice in the Philadelphia region.

To participate, please write a check to Bread & Roses Community Fund and label it "Resources for Racial Justice in Philly and Ferguson." Half of your contribution will be sent to OBS in Missouri, and the other half will go into the Racial & Economic Justice Fund at Bread and Roses. With our giving, we show that we believe organizing leads us toward a just society. We show that we believe in the inspiring work already being done for racial and economic justice, and that we are here in solidarity and action to support this work for the long haul.

Members of Resource Generation, Philadelphia Chapter



Bread & Roses mourns the loss of board member Gloria Casarez

Gloria Casarez, lifelong activist and Bread & Roses board member, passed away on October 19 after a long battle with breast cancer. She worked tirelessly to end poverty, create access to housing and health care, and advance human rights.

In 2001, Gloria joined the Jonathan Lax Scholarship Committee at Bread & Roses. "Gloria enhanced the committee with her dynamic energy, inquisitive mind, and deep commitment to the LGBT community," recalled Polly Hill O'Keefe, committee chair.

Gloria joined the Bread & Roses board of directors in 2003. "She will be remembered at Bread & Roses as an extraordinary organizer, a brilliant strategist, and a committed board member," said Denise Brown, Bread & Roses board co-chair. "Gloria embodied the mission and intention of this organization with equal parts fierceness and humility."

Bread & Roses executive director Casey Cook recalled Gloria as a formidable agent for change: "Bread & Roses is just one among many communities enriched by Gloria's leadership, courage, and strength."

Gloria was a leader for several Bread & Roses grantees in her early career, including Kensington Welfare Rights Union and ACT UP Philadelphia. She was the executive director of GALAEI, a queer Latino social justice organization, for 10 years before being appointed the first director of the Mayor's Office of LGBT Affairs, a position she held from 2008 until her passing.

Our thoughts are with Gloria's wife, Tricia Dressel, the rest of her family, and her many friends. She will be sorely missed and frequently remembered. ✍️

CHRIS CRISMAN



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frontlines

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FUNDS AND PROGRAMS

Racial & Economic Justice Fund • Future Fund • Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative • Opportunity Fund
One Percent Fund • Donor-Advised Programs • Jonathan Lax Scholarship Fund • Barbara Smith Community School

GRANTS IN ACTION

PASSAGES

Corbitt Banks, folk artist and community activist, died in June. Mr. Banks served on Bread & Roses' Community Funding Board from 1997 to 1999 and from 2001 to 2003.

Dr. Michael Katz, professor of urban studies at the University of Pennsylvania, died in August. Dr. Katz advocated for the rights of the urban poor and immigrants through his scholarly work. He was a longtime donor to Bread & Roses.

Gloria Casarez, Bread & Roses board member and civil rights leader, died in October. See page 3 for remembrances from the Bread & Roses community.



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After the School Reform Commission's decision to cancel the teachers' union contract, *Racial & Economic Justice Fund* grantee **Philadelphia Student Union** successfully shut down the SRC screening of an anti-union film through peaceful protest. Following many similar protests, the SRC's decision was temporarily overturned with a court order.



PHILADELPHIA STUDENT UNION

Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative grantee **Youth United for Change** engaged in numerous protests for education at this time of crisis for Philadelphia public schools. After members of the group were physically removed from an SRC meeting at the Philadelphia School District

building on October 16, Youth United for Change sent an open letter to the Philadelphia School District Police to expose these violations of the respect and safety of young people.

Parents United for Public Education, a *Future Fund* grantee, filed a lawsuit in September against the Pennsylvania Department of Education for failing to investigate more than 800 formal complaints over the past year involving dire school conditions.

In October, **New Sanctuary Movement**, a *Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative* grantee, moved immigrant families with final deportation orders into three of their member congregations to provide physical sanctuary.

Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee **POWER** led a pray-in with over 100 leaders for public schools on October 1 outside of Governor Corbett and candidate Tom Wolf's gubernatorial debate. The group held get-out-the-vote phone banks and visited Harrisburg on October 6 to launch a campaign for fair education funding.

