Movements for change build power across lines of difference

The 2016 campaign season was one of the most rancorous in recent memory. With the election now behind us, deep currents of frustration and anger continue to surface throughout the country, but issues of racial and economic justice have become central to the political conversation.

“Every time an election is coming, there’s hand-wringing: We only have these two choices,” says Nijmie Dzurinko, co-founder and co-coordinator of Put People First! PA, a Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee. “Everyone who’s working on the election says, ‘Yeah, we’ll figure that out afterwards.’ Then the election is over and everything goes back to usual, and four years later [everyone] has the same conversation.” Put People First! PA and other grassroots organizations aim to interrupt this narrative by creating spaces for people to come together and identify commonalities.

Electoral politics always creates polarization — emphasizing divides between rural and urban areas, with fearmongering in both directions. These divisions are precisely what movements for real change are dismantling in order to build power across difference. Movements that were formerly focused on single-issue campaigns are recognizing that joining together is the clearest path to collective liberation.

Intersectionality has become the default lens for organizing.

Breaking down traditional political divides was a core goal when Put People First! PA began in 2012. “It was founded to change what’s politically possible, and the only way to do that is to break down barriers between people and build a statewide movement,” says Dzurinko. “That’s why health care is such a powerful issue. It impacts immigrants and citizens, people of all genders, people of color, and all poor and working-class people throughout the state.”

This summer, ACT UP Philadelphia, a Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee, stepped out of its traditional organizing strategies to join in the fight for racial justice. “We’ve always worked strictly on HIV and AIDS issues,” says Jose de Marco, an ACT UP Philadelphia community organizer for more than 20 years. “But there’s no way we can ignore the social structures that are causing HIV and AIDS in our community. Depriving people of medications, making them jump through hoops, black and brown people being stopped by the police in the gayborhood — all of that ties in together.” ACT UP Philadelphia has joined forces with the Black and Brown Workers Collective to carry out several direct actions this year.

“It’s really important that we get together,” says Teresa Hill, an organizer who has worked with ACTION United, a Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee, and One PA. With ACTION United, Hill organized in Southwest Philadelphia around the environmental and health effects of the oil refinery, calling out environmental racism — the confluence of racial, economic, and environmental justice. “It doesn’t matter what organization you’re from. It’s the same cause,” says Hill. “We’re trying to get the message out so they stop killing our children. We want to have a chance to live a life that we all deserve.”

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— Teresa Hill

Put People First! PA members calling out Independence Blue Cross on their predatory business practices and poor customer treatment in November after news of nearly 30% premium increases
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

The new year brings a big milestone: Bread & Roses Community Fund’s 40th anniversary! We’ll be honoring our history and looking toward our next chapter of moving even more money to movements for change.

Keep an eye out for opportunities to join the celebration. Also, mark your calendars for our winter town hall the evening of March 28, when we’ll examine what organizing looks like today and how it has evolved over the last four years.

In this newsletter, you’ll hear stories of smart, creative organizing from wise leaders of all ages. Generations of changemakers are coming together to build coalitions and alliances across issues, recognizing that our individual liberation and collective liberation are deeply interwoven. As this year comes to a close, I draw tremendous inspiration from stories like these. Our movements have energy and urgency. We have brilliant strategists and committed organizers. I know that we have the will and the tools to create real change.

But I also know that we need every one of you to give deeply of your time, talents, and resources to reach our vision of racial and economic justice. If you want to fight racism and build long-term economic justice, I urge you to make a generous year-end gift to Bread & Roses so we can continue to support movements for real change right here in our community.

With gratitude,

Casey Cook
Executive director

DONOR PROFILE

Katie Monroe

“The more you look at the entrenched inequalities in our city, the more you realize you need to join with folks who are already working to make social justice happen,” says new Bread & Roses donor Katie Monroe. Monroe became involved with Bread & Roses through this year’s Change Ride, which raised $13,826 for racial and economic justice in the Philadelphia region. Ride participants visited Bread & Roses grantees around the city and heard stories about their movements for change. Monroe volunteered as a ride leader.

As founder of the Women Bike PHL campaign, Monroe knew that group bike rides are a powerful tool to bring people together and learn about local issues. She was motivated to raise money to support her participation in the Change Ride. “Bread & Roses is so thoughtful and intentional about how it does the work in terms of who is involved with decision-making, which I think is very awesome,” she says.

Learning about the grantee groups on the Change Ride impressed Monroe. “What I appreciate about Bread & Roses is that it helps me connect to these other movements to learn about them and support them in meaningful ways,” she says. “Bread & Roses serves an important role helping educate people who might not have a strong background in grassroots organizing on what’s going on and how they can get involved.”

Why she gives:
“I support Bread & Roses because no one else is doing this work, and because they challenge me to think in terms of activism and systemic change in a way that I need to be challenged. I appreciate that.”
Racial & Economic Justice Fund

The Racial & Economic Justice Fund supports groups that are engaged in direct-action community organizing in the Philadelphia region to promote racial and economic justice at the local, state, national, or international policy levels.

15 Now Philly is the local chapter of the national movement for a $15-an-hour living wage and addresses wider equity issues, including fighting construction of Temple’s new stadium in North Philadelphia.

ACT UP Philadelphia is working to end the AIDS crisis in Philadelphia, using direct action to address social inequities that impact people living with HIV/AIDS and those at risk of infection.

ACTION United organizes Pennsylvanians with low and moderate incomes to fight for 100% renewable energy, green jobs, and an end to oil and gas industry expansion in Philadelphia.

Asian Americans United’s Chinatown Youth Organizing Project nurtures and trains Philadelphia’s rapidly growing population of immigrant youth in a culturally and linguistically supportive space to collectively address the injustices they face.

Earth Quaker Action Team is a grassroots group of Quakers and people of diverse beliefs working to build a just and sustainable economy through nonviolent direct action.

Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition brings together community stakeholders to plan and advocate for an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable future for Eastwick residents.

Juntos is a Latinx community organization fighting for human rights for workers, parents, youth, and immigrants.

National Institute for Healthy Human Spaces promotes healthy environments and advocates for measures to reduce illness and disabilities and foster clean, sustainable cities.

New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia is fighting anti-immigrant initiatives, pushing for driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants, developing leaders in immigrant communities, and building community across faith, ethnicity, and class to end injustice against immigrants.

Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities unites community, disability, faith, labor, and urban agriculture organizations to promote legislation that prevents Philadelphians with low incomes from getting displaced by gentrification.

Put People First! PA organizes poor and working-class residents throughout Pennsylvania to push for universality, participation, equity, transparency, and accountability in the health care system through transformative organizing, base building, and direct action.

Reconstruction Inc. cultivates individuals who were formerly incarcerated into an organized community of leaders working together to transform the criminal justice system, their communities, and themselves.

Urban Creators is a grassroots organization that empowers neighborhoods to transform neglected landscapes into dynamic, safe spaces that foster connectivity, self-sufficiency, and innovation.

Youth United for Change is a youth-led, democratic organization of youth of color and working-class communities committed to ensuring a high-quality education system for all young people.
FUTURE FUND

The Future Fund supports organizations that are working on emerging issues or developing new approaches to social justice activism. These groups may employ a variety of strategies, including cultural work, media advocacy, and political education.

Girls Justice League is a girls’ rights organization dedicated to taking action for social, political, educational, and economic justice for girls and young women.

Philadelphia Coalition for Racial Economic and Legal (REAL) Justice works to end the epidemic of state violence disproportionately faced by communities of color.

PhilaPOSH, the Philadelphia Area Project on Occupational Safety and Health, is made up of unions, health professionals, and legal professionals working together to ensure safe, protected workplaces and rights for injured workers.

Soil Generation is a coalition of Philadelphia organizations and individuals who support equity and social justice for community-managed green space, gardens, and farms through advocacy, grassroots organizing, and community education.

Spiral Q builds strong and equitable communities characterized by creativity, joy, can-do attitudes, and the courage to act on their convictions, and holds the annual Peoplehood Parade to challenge discrimination in all its harmful forms.

PHOEBUS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

A partnership with the Phoebus Fund family foundation, the Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative provides grants for criminal justice reform activism. Grantees target issues that include police accountability, racially biased sentencing, the growth of the for-profit prison industry, criminalization of youth, and the death penalty.

1Love Movement, a community network of grassroots organizers working to unite Southeast Asian communities, is running an #EndDisplacement campaign to spotlight criminal deportation in the U.S. and propose a solution.

Ardella’s House is a transitional program that addresses pressing issues for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and aims to change the circumstances of women’s lives one by one while also changing the systems that create barriers.

Books Through Bars’ Address This! project aims to provide innovative, radical, educational courses by mail to individuals currently incarcerated throughout Pennsylvania.

The Elevation Project is a re-entry program that works to discover and meet the unique needs of people returning to society from a lengthy prison sentence through therapeutic groups, job readiness training, and job placement.

Hearts on a Wire Collective is a group of trans and gender-variant people and those working in solidarity with them both inside and outside of prisons that publishes quarterly zines and provides needs-responsive support.

MOVE is republishing its book 25 Years on the MOVE and training young people in home renovation skills while also teaching them about social justice issues.

Pennsylvania Innocence Project is a nonprofit law firm working to exonerate the convicted innocent and prevent innocent people from being convicted.

Pennsylvania Prison Society, a social justice organization advocating on behalf of prisoners, their families, and formerly incarcerated individuals, is starting a peer support group for returning citizens to promote collective activism.

Prison Radio seeks to protect, defend, and amplify the uncensored voices of prisoners in Philadelphia and across Pennsylvania by recording and distributing essays and interviews with incarcerated people.

Sisters Returning Home brings prisoners and their loved ones together and educates the community about the impact of the criminal justice system on families and communities, also working to change unjust policies in the criminal legal system.

Urban Creators is a grassroots organization that empowers neighborhoods to transform neglected landscapes into dynamic, safe spaces that foster connectivity, self-sufficiency, and innovation.

Veterans Legal Foundation is a coalition advocating for expansion of legal and social services and treatment intervention for incarcerated military veterans.

Why Not Prosper is a faith-based grassroots organization founded by a formerly incarcerated woman to help other formerly incarcerated women find employment and housing, reunite with their children, and not return to prison.

X-Offenders for Community Empowerment—which organizes formerly convicted people to reduce recidivism, prevent violent crime, and access essential services—is hosting Pardon Me clinics to teach people how to get convictions cleared from their permanent records.

Youth Art & Self-empowerment Project holds art and poetry workshops for youth incarcerated in adult jails and is raising awareness about the school-to-prison pipeline and building a youth movement to resist and dismantle it.

Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project works to transform the experiences of children prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system and to eliminate the practice of sentencing children as adults.

OPPORTUNITY FUND

Offered monthly, Opportunity Fund grants are intended for unforeseen projects that are not part of an organization’s ongoing work, such as demonstrations and rallies, coalition activities, conferences and forums, and outreach materials. To see the list of 2016 Opportunity Fund grantees, visit www.breadrosesfund.org/grants-scholarships/opportunity-fund.
Meet our new director of development, Amanda Morales Pratt

We are excited to welcome Amanda Morales Pratt, who joined Bread & Roses as director of development this fall. Amanda will be expanding Bread & Roses’ fundraising programs and supporting donor organizing that moves more money to advance racial and economic justice.

Amanda is a skilled fundraiser who has worked in arts administration, cultural preservation, and workforce development organizations throughout the city. Most recently, they worked as the development and marketing manager at Norris Square Neighborhood Project.

Amanda has a master’s degree in nonprofit leadership from La Salle University and is passionate about racial and economic justice, environmental justice, LGBTQIA liberation, and the political status of Puerto Rico. They live in West Philadelphia with their spouse, Caitlin, and two rescue Chihuahuas, Butch and Declan.

Youth United for Change (YUC) believes that young people who know how to advocate for themselves have the power to change their own situations and influence history. “Since our work centers Black liberation as fundamental to any struggle for societal reconfiguration, human development and power are always components of our campaigns to improve education in the city of Philadelphia,” says Rapheal Randall, executive director of YUC, a Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee.

YUC was founded in 1991 in response to the School Board of Philadelphia’s unwillingness to include students in school district policy decisions. YUC now organizes young people in schools and communities to identify common concerns and act collectively to create strategies for reform that meet the needs of youth of color and working-class communities. Concerned about lead-contaminated water, YUC and its allies won a commitment this year from the School District of Philadelphia to conduct a full inventory of water fountains to ensure that there is clean and safe drinking water throughout the public schools.

To win the reforms it wants, Randall says, “YUC will have to train young people and their families to take on more decision-making power and responsibility, and provide spaces where these folks can be protagonistic — guiding and bolstering their desire to create new approaches and spaces based on their organic understanding of what needs to happen.”

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Youth United for Change

GRANTEE PROFILE
Erick Perez, an organizer with Racial & Economic Justice Fund grantee Juntos, received the Youth Leader of the Year Award from Pennsylvania immigrant leaders and allies at the Pennsylvania Immigration & Citizenship Coalition 2016 celebration in October.

Also in October, the Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project, a Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative grantee, created a new working group in partnership with the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office to address reentry for people sentenced as juveniles to life without parole.

In November, a delegation of 21 organizers and advocates representing Southeast Asian, Latino, and Black immigrant communities across the country traveled to Cambodia to stand in solidarity with the Khmer-American deportee community in the movement for human rights and the #Right2Return. Juntos and Phoebus Criminal Justice Initiative grantee 1Love Movement were part of the delegation, which aims to work with 1Love Cambodia and the deportee community to build a global movement for family unity and human rights across borders.