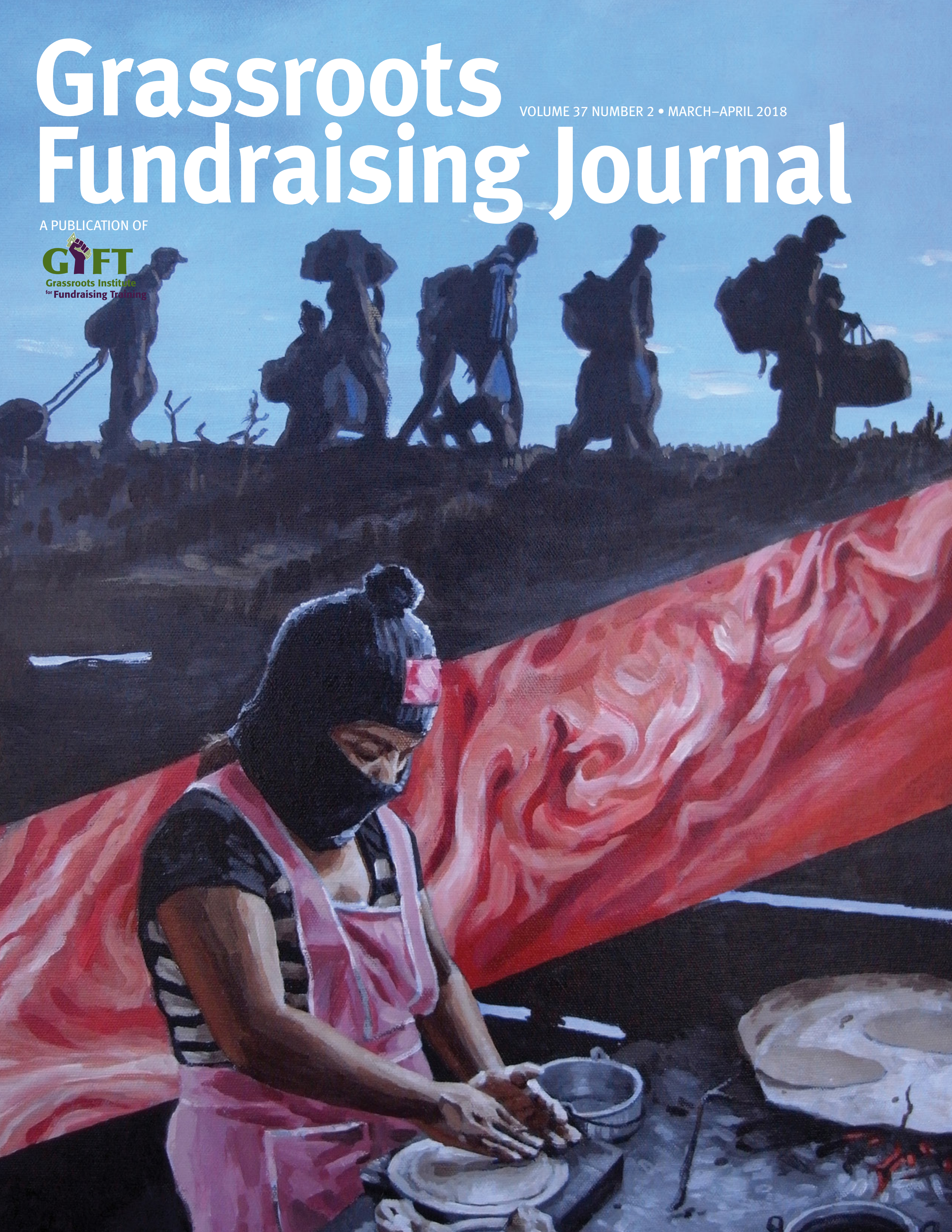
Grassroots Fundraising Journal

VOLUME 37 NUMBER 2 • MARCH–APRIL 2018

A PUBLICATION OF
GIFT
Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training



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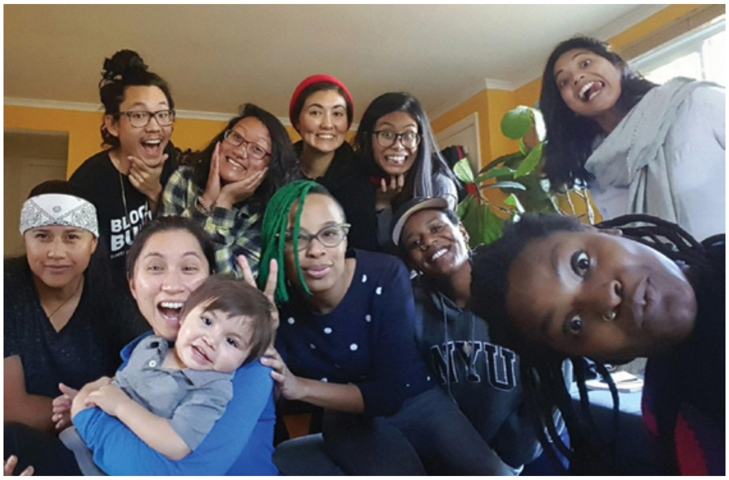
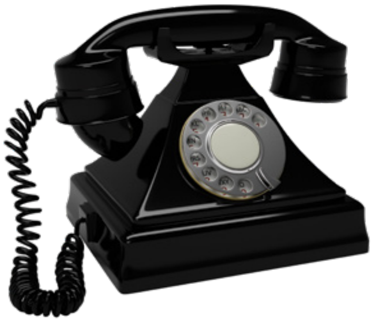
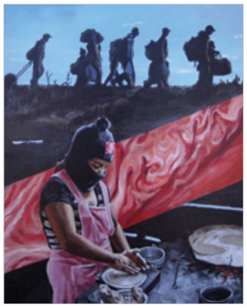




ON OUR COVER



"Made by Hand" by Henry Luke. Henry paints necessary narratives that uplift the dignity of historically oppressed communities. Direct participation in grassroots people's liberation movements has shaped their artistic practice, making their work inseparable from the great endeavor of creating a better world. Henry is a member of Queer the Land, a Seattle-based collective of Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (QTBIPOC) that is raising funds to purchase land in their rapidly gentrifying city. Learn more about their efforts in this issue's feature article and at queertheland.org.

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WE ARE SURVEYING *JOURNAL* READERS to get a better sense of how you're thanking your donors. Because we know that promptly thanking our supporters in meaningful ways increases the likelihood of them staying engaged and giving again, we want to understand what your current practices are and surface some of the most effective appreciations you've sent out and received. We've set up a simple, eight-question survey that will take five minutes (or less) to complete. Will you please visit http://bit.ly/GIFT_ThankYou today and share how your group expresses gratitude for your donors?

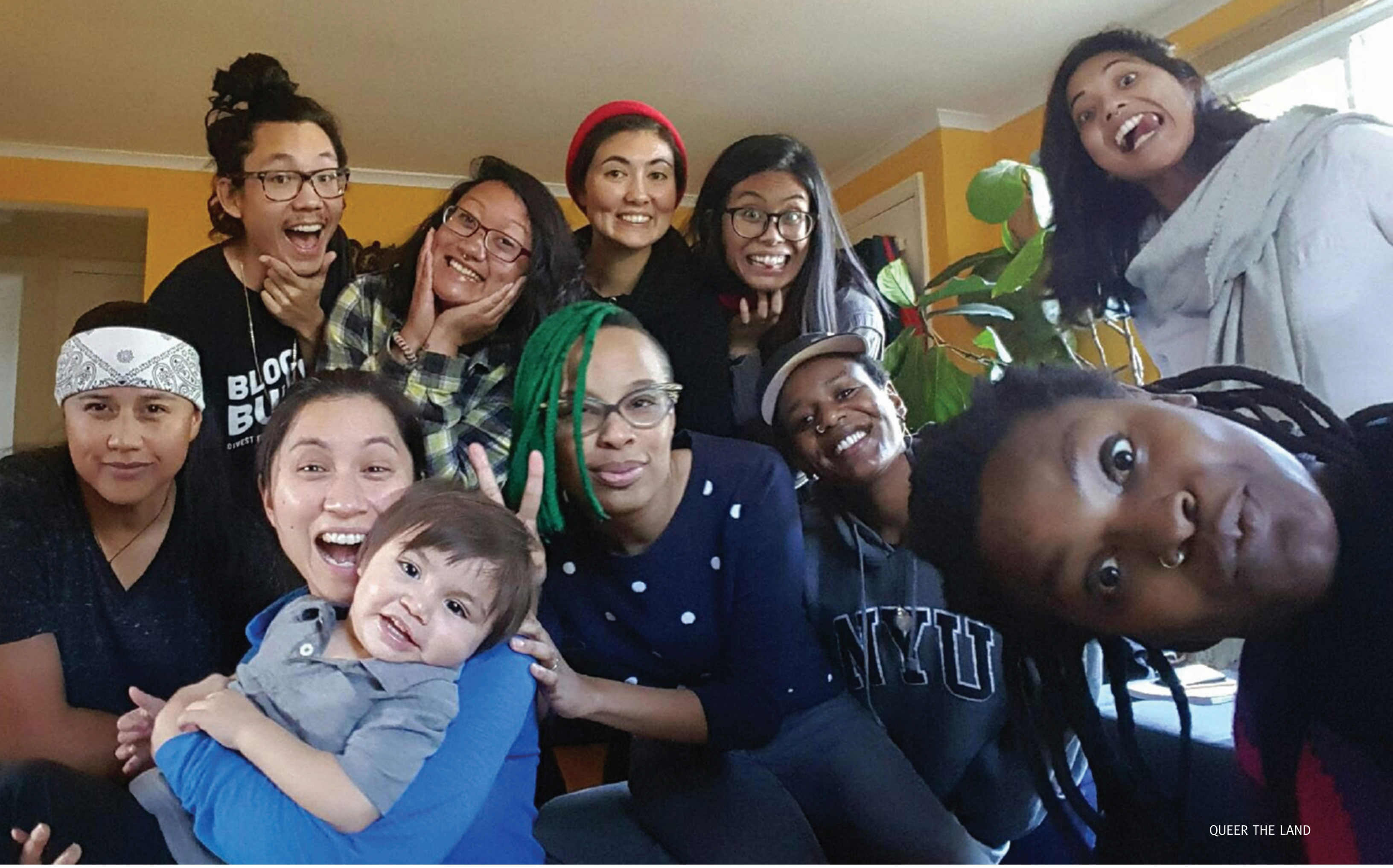
Speaking of gratitude, I want to send a special shout out to Henry Luke, who graciously granted us permission to feature their artwork on the cover of this issue. Henry is a member of Queer the Land, a Seattle-based collective of Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (QTBIPOC) that is raising funds to purchase land in their rapidly gentrifying city. In our feature article, Queer the Land cofounder and member Denechia Powell-Twagirumukiza reports out on their progress so far, and how QTBIPOC groups are organizing resources for land justice in other parts of the U.S.

Long-time fundraiser and aspiring accountant Leah Pillsbury follows with practical tips for overcoming a common fear we've all experienced: getting on the phone with our supporters. Lupine Reppert rounds out the issue with an inspirational account of how the California School Age Consortium (CalSAC) has grown their individual donor program by leaps and bounds since sending out their first-ever appeal back in 2015.

If you missed the early bird deadline for Money for Our Movements, you can still qualify for the $225 rate by registering with a group of five or more people at the same time. You don't have to be from the same organization. We also have a limited number of scholarships available for folks who work at organizations with budgets under $500,000—with priority given to people who identify as people of color; monolingual Spanish speakers; deaf or hard of hearing; immigrant; queer; trans; youth (under 25); and/or people with disabilities. Affordable on-campus housing and meals will also be available. I hope you can join us for an invigorating weekend of building our skills, community and strategies for resourcing our movements for the long-haul.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Jennifer



Members of Queer the Land pose at the end of the collective's first annual organizing retreat in 2016. QTL is comprised of Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in Seattle (Duwamish territory) working towards the vision of collectively owning land and labor.

Queering the Land

How Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color Are Fundraising for Land Justice

By Denechia Powell-Twagirumukiza

THIS LAND ISN'T MY LAND. In fact, I don't know where my land is exactly thanks to colonialism and white supremacy. While I know my ancestors are from the West Coast of Africa, I have no claim to that land.

I feel connected to both Georgia and North Carolina, states where I have ancestral ties, but that land ultimately belongs to Indigenous people. Although I'm distinctly African and American, I occupy a gray space in between both.

As a queer Black non-binary (NB) woman in America, it's easy to feel like I don't have a home and like I don't even deserve one. I've been evicted, I've been homeless, and many other Black women have experienced the same things, including my own wife. A 2014 MacArthur Foundation study found that Black women are being evicted at alarming rates due to factors such as low wages, familial status, and of course, gender and race.

Instead of feeling ashamed about being formerly homeless, I push back against housing injustices whenever I can. I'm proud to have been a part of organizing campaigns under the leadership of Black homeowners who saved their houses from foreclosure and East African immigrant public housing tenants who kept proposed rent increases at bay.

My commitment to housing my people persists. In the summer of 2016, I helped birth a collective in response to the rapid displacement of queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (QTBIPOC) from Seattle, naming it Queer the Land (QTL) in tribute to the longtime Black liberation demand "Free the Land."

QTL is collectively-led by queer and trans people of color (QTPOC[1]) community organizers and cultural workers who are raising money to acquire property in one of the world's most expensive cities.

This property will be a place where working-class QTBIPOC activists center our own needs in a city that isn't designed for us. Our plans for the property include cooperative housing, communal space, co-working space, and a community garden (lots of C's!). QTL members will make decisions together about the building(s) and the programs that are based there.

We don't want to profit off of land, nor do we want to extract from it. For us, queering the land means working towards the day where Indigenous people are honored as the rightful owners of this land.

QTL approaches ownership differently from most since we don't subscribe to capitalism. We use the term "property" for lack of a better one—many of us have a contentious history with it because our ancestors were sold into chattel slavery. Regardless, we owe any property that comes into our stewardship to Indigenous folks and enslaved Black people who built this country.

There's no blueprint for what we're doing, which is both frustrating and exciting. Most of us have been involved in grassroots social justice movements for years, but raising upwards of a million dollars to buy property is very new to us.

In the past, we've raised money to fight the bad guys since we're always playing defense in our movements, opposing inhumane policies. We're used to soliciting donations to stop terrible things from happening; now we need donations to create something that's life-affirming.

Fundraising towards a liberatory goal like this is uncharted territory for us, and it feels transformative. To guide us in developing and implementing our vision, we turn to ideas from fellow Black, Brown, trans, NB, and queer activists.

For example, transformative justice/community accountability (TJ/CA), which was largely founded by Women of Color (WOC), is one of our principles of unity.

generationFIVE, a volunteer collaborative working to end child sexual abuse within five generations, defines transformative justice as "a liberatory approach to violence…[which] seeks safety and accountability without relying on alienation, punishment, or state or systemic violence, including incarceration or policing."

According to INCITE!, a national organization dedicated to ending violence against WOC, trans and gender non-conforming People of Color (POC), community accountability is "a community-based strategy, rather than a police/prison-based strategy, to address violence within our communities."

TJ/CA is crucial to us because harm and violence within our communities are real and not to be ignored. Harm inevitably happens in our collective because we're all human; thus, we need concrete ways to deal with harm and try to prevent it. TJ/CA helps keep our relationships intact so we can build and sustain our movement together.

It's essential for us to not only be accountable to each other, but also to our QTBIPOC community and to the land we're stewarding. We strive to be the opposite of our colonizers, who have yet to be held accountable for the destruction they've wrought on Indigenous Black and Brown land.

IT'S ESSENTIAL FOR US TO NOT ONLY BE ACCOUNTABLE TO EACH OTHER, BUT ALSO TO OUR QTBIPOC COMMUNITY AND TO THE LAND WE'RE STEWARDING.

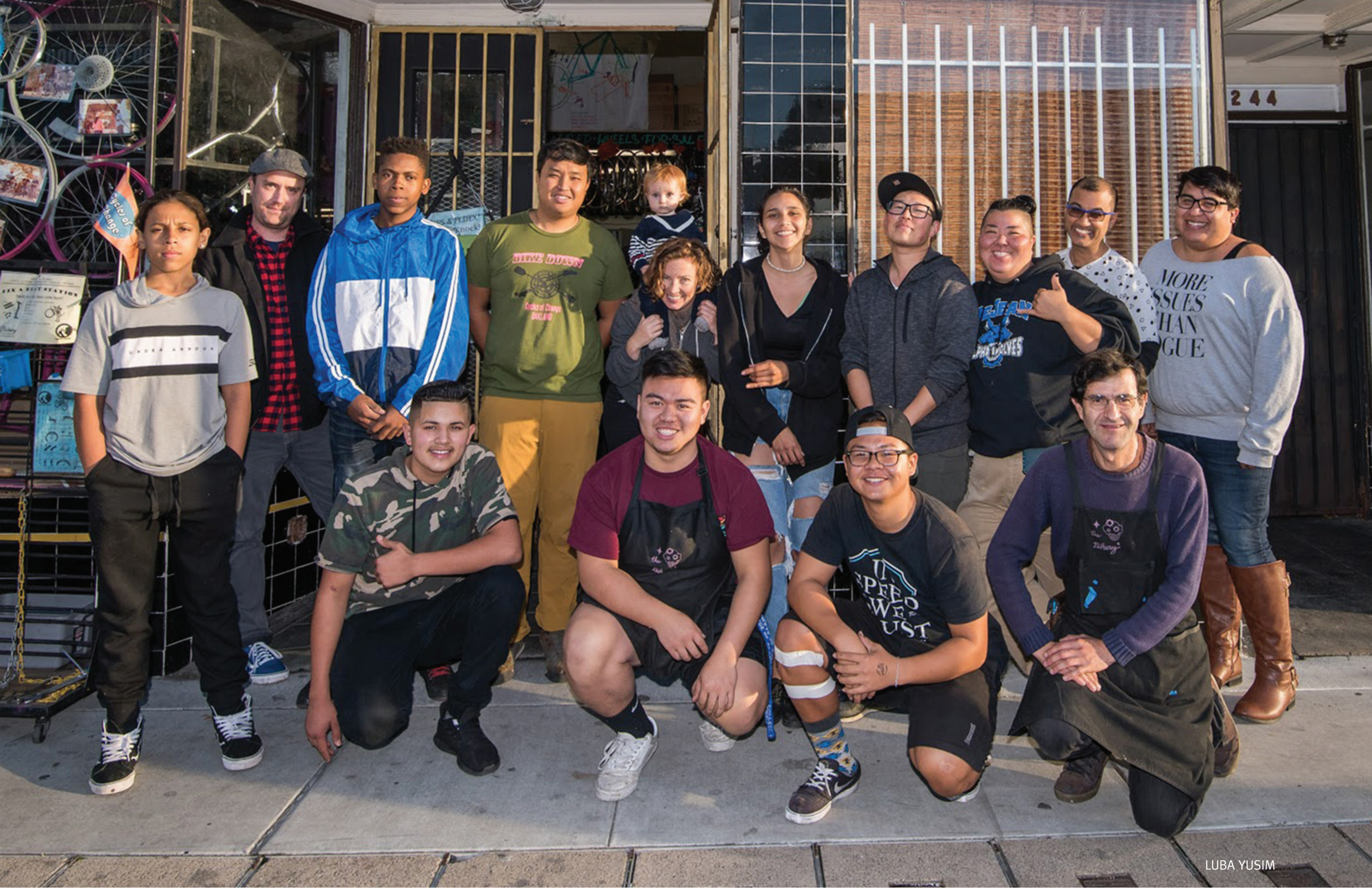
Our praxis is also grounded in emergent strategy, which Black queer activist, healer, and writer adrienne maree brown details in her recent book, *Emergent Strategy*. Emergent strategies are the outcomes of when groups prioritize adaptation, collaboration and experimentation in intentional ways.

Because we center collaboration in our practice, we've sought out QTBIPOC in other parts of the country who are also organizing for land justice, including in Oakland, Calif. and Spencer, W. Va. The QTPOC tenants of Oakland's 23rd Ave Community Building are in the process of owning their building, while a QTPOC-led multiracial collective is stewarding 65 acres of land in the mountains of W. Va.

Though our land projects aren't identical, I see common threads in our work, such as our desires to cultivate art, culture and healing. We're all dedicated to meeting the needs of QTPOC and to tilling the soil like our ancestors did. Despite all odds, our collectives are claiming permanent space for ourselves and for our communities to survive and thrive.

Claiming space costs money, so major fundraising is a must, especially since we lack generational wealth. There have been triumphs, growing pains, and plenty of lessons in our fundraising processes.

1 I use the terms QTBIPOC and QTPOC interchangeably in this article.



Some of the residents and members of the groups housed at the 23rd Ave Community Building. When the landlord told them she would put the building on the real estate market in 90 days unless they made an offer first, they rolled up their sleeves and raised $90,000 from 600 people to #Liberate23rdAve—as a queer and trans people of color-centered hybrid residential commercial land trust.

Queer the Land (QTL), Seattle

Most trans, NB, and queer POC can't afford to live in Seattle. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, we have the fifth highest rents in the country. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) folks who prosper in our city are white and sometimes make our "gayborhood," Capitol Hill, feel uninviting to QTPOC.

Communities of color are being displaced from Seattle to the suburbs, away from decent public transit and jobs. White-owned marijuana dispensaries and boxy overpriced apartments have thoroughly gentrified Seattle's historically Black Central District, which went from 70 percent Black in the 1970s to only 20 percent today.

Furthermore, it's unsafe for Black and Brown people to live in Seattle because of the police and other perpetrators of state violence. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) is currently in a consent decree with the Department of Justice (DOJ), who found that SPD had a pattern of excessive force that violated the Constitution and federal laws.

Despite reportedly being in compliance with the DOJ's consent decree, SPD is still devastating communities of color. For example, in June 2017 a SPD officer shot and killed Charleena Lyles, a 30-year-old pregnant Black mother who called the cops while in emotional distress. Lyles' murder hit way too close to home for me and other Black women in Seattle.

For these reasons and more, we conjured up QTL as a refuge for our healing, liberation and safety. During a living room conversation two summers ago, we decided that acquiring property was the best way to guarantee a space like this for ourselves. We began holding regular meetings and have grown to a membership of approximately 20 Black and Brown trans, NB, and queer organizers. Our primary objective right now is purchasing property within the next two years.

We have three committees: Membership, Operations & Development, and Property Acquisition. Membership recruits new members and ensures that current members have ongoing opportunities for political education and leadership development. Operations & Development makes sure that we have the resources we need and that we're operating in a financially and legally sound way. Property Acquisition scouts potential properties and manages the logistics of buying property. These committees are subject to adaptation and change.

Resources

We already have experience mobilizing people for social change, and now we're mobilizing money for our liberation. We lean on each other and our relationships within community to identify and locate the resources we need.

Many of our members have attended fundraising trainings, and we share what we've learned with the rest of the collective. Some of us have done giving projects at Social Justice Fund NW (SJFNW) in Seattle. A giving project is a months-long process where a cross-race, cross-class cohort gains hands-on experiences with donor organizing and grantmaking to social justice organizations.

WE ALREADY HAVE EXPERIENCE MOBILIZING PEOPLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, AND NOW WE'RE MOBILIZING MONEY FOR OUR LIBERATION.

Additionally, two of us attended the Reimagining Movement Resource Strategies Network Gathering at the 2017 Allied Media Conference (AMC). At the gathering, we learned from and with fellow LGBTQ and POC grassroots donor organizers, including staff from the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training (GIFT).

Our fundraising is never-ending, and fundraising best practices are always evolving, so we prioritize continuing education. This year, we're returning to the AMC to participate in the same gathering and the Resourcing and Sustaining Our Movements track. Another conference on our radar is GIFT's Money for Our Movements.

Also in 2018, we hope to tap into local assets that we haven't fully explored yet, such as community land trusts, to help guide us through complex technical issues that come up in our process.

Funding Sources

Over the past year and a half, we've raised approximately $45,000 towards our vision. We're proud to have received grants from foundations who value anti-racism, gender justice, and grassroots community organizing. Our grantors aren't merely benefactors—they're also our partners—so it's essential that we share common values.

Since we aren't a 501(c)(3) organization, we've been fiscally sponsored by local nonprofits to apply for grants. So far, we've received grants from SJFNW's Displaced Tenants Fund ($28,000), the Astraea Foundation Funding Queerly Circle ($10,000), and the Pride Foundation ($5,000). We hope to nurture our relationships with these foundations in hopes of future partnerships.

A group of white anti-racist organizers in Seattle with access to generational wealth have shown financial solidarity to us. We've received online contributions from donors who heard about us through the grapevine and gave simply because they believe in our vision. We're also dedicated to sustaining ourselves, which is why we have membership dues. Dues are currently $20 a month or one hour of labor a month in service of the collective.

Goals

We're pursuing big foundation and government grants to acquire property within the next two years. Since we need such a large amount, we're putting a lot of energy into applying for grants, but grassroots donors are especially precious to us. This is why we're launching a monthly donor drive this spring.

We don't want to appeal to just rich white donors—we want votes of confidence from our own people. Since we hail from POC, immigrant, and low-income communities, we know that we're capable of giving. We want QTBIPOC from all over to invest in us, as well as POC accomplices, because our liberation is intertwined.

Also, we're partnering with like-minded community groups to hold fundraising events, including a "rent party" this spring with Black & Tan Hall, a cooperatively-owned performance venue and restaurant in the historically POC neighborhood of Columbia City.

Challenges

It's no secret that 2017 was difficult for POC. For QTPOC, it was especially hard because we were oppressed in so many different ways.

Our members include folks who are poor, who are immigrants, who are disabled, so we're navigating multiple barriers that have only been worsened by our current president. Those of us who have steady jobs are overworked with limited capacity for movement-building.

We have members who are underemployed, who are exhausted from searching for work, and who are in precarious housing situations. Last year we found ourselves putting out a lot of fires, which ultimately slowed down our pace.

Another challenge is not having a home base yet. Currently we meet at member's houses, coffee shops, and public libraries, but our meetings and programs could be more consistent if we had a dedicated wheelchair-accessible space. We decided against renting office space because we'd rather hunker down on our fundraising than throw money away on sky-high rent.

Lessons

Rome wasn't built in a day. At times it feels like things aren't moving fast enough, but that doesn't mean we should stop. Timelines may shift, members may leave. We're always ready to adapt because change is the only constant thing.

On a personal note, I've learned to believe in myself and my vision when fundraising. Privileged folks tend to be confident in their fundraising, and QTPOC should be just as secure in our abilities. We're survivors of violence and oppression, we're leading movements, we're creating art in a world that tells us we're not beautiful. We have superpowers that most folks don't, which is why we're more than capable of fundraising towards our liberation.

23rd Ave Community Building, Oakland, Calif.

For two decades, the 23rd Ave Community Building in East Oakland's Lower San Antonio district has been a haven for low-income and immigrant trans, NB, and queer POC. Shortly before Donald Trump's presidential inauguration, the building's commercial and residential tenants got an alarming email from the landlord: Their building would be put up for sale if the current renters couldn't put in a high enough bid.

The sale of the 23rd Ave Building stood to displace grassroots POC and QTPOC-led organizations, including a community bike shop run by Cycles of Change; Liberating Ourselves Locally, a POC-led maker/hacker space; Peacock Rebellion, a QTPOC arts and healing institute; Shaolin Life, a martial arts and self-defense studio; and Sustaining Ourselves Locally, a QTPOC collectively-run house and community garden.

These tenants immediately jumped into action upon receiving their landlord's email. With buy-in from the rest of the building, a core group of six organizers started a YouCaring crowdfunding page entitled "Liberate the 23rd Ave Community Building" with the goal of raising $75,000 by May 1 to put down an offer on the building. Their fundraising video ended up going viral, garnering them donations from around the world.

The group exceeded their goal, purchasing the building in partnership with the Oakland Community Land Trust (CLT) this past November. The land underneath the building will be owned by the CLT in perpetuity, with the goal of tenants buying the building from the trust within the next 15 years.

In the meantime, they've negotiated five-year leases with the CLT, with options to renew for up to two more five-year terms, all with stabilized rents. Their ultimate objective is for the 23rd Ave Building to be in the hands of POC and QTBIPOC individuals and organizations forever.

Resources

Tenants assembled a strong fundraising team quickly because of the deep relationships they had formed in the building over the years. They already knew how to work together in a democratic way because most of the groups in the building operate as collectives. Cycles of Change, the only 501(c)(3) organization in the building, leveraged their nonprofit status for the crowd fundraiser. Because of them, donations to the campaign are tax-deductible and not beholden to fiscal sponsorship fees.

The core fundraising team benefited from having three trained grassroots fundraisers in their ranks. One of them was Devi Peacock, the artistic and executive director of Peacock Rebellion, who attributes some of their fundraising prowess to their everyday hustle for survival as QTPOC. Other resources include the Oakland CLT and the Northern California Community Loan Fund, who have provided tenants with technical assistance in their process of acquiring a million-dollar-plus property.

THE #LIBERATE23RDAVE CAMPAIGN PRESENTED FOLKS WITH A PROACTIVE WAY TO COUNTER DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION IN THE BAY AREA.

Funding Sources

As of January 2018, the 23rd Ave building's YouCaring campaign was at more than $90,000 with approximately 600 unique donors. Because tenants received publicity for raising such a large sum of money so quickly, lenders were excited to be attached to their project. The group ended up choosing the Northern California Community Loan Fund for the bulk of their loan.

Oakland CLT put money towards the loan and also secured $300,000 from the City of Oakland's Small Sites Acquisition Program for it. The building also received a grant from Oakland's Community Arts Stabilization Trust pilot program, which is funding to preserve the city's arts and cultural assets.

Goals

The 23rd Ave building tenants' long-term goal is having the building controlled by tenants from communities who are being displaced from the Bay Area—people who are poor, immigrant, Black, Brown, trans, NB, and/or queer—for many generations to come. Their short-term goal is to raise approximately $320,000 for a costly earthquake retrofitting and a major plumbing job by the end of year to fulfill the terms of their mortgage agreement.

Challenges

Core organizers of the campaign feel burnt out because it became a full-time job. Calls and emails from all over the U.S. and Canada are coming from groups who want to learn from them. Audience members at a recent panel on which Peacock spoke accused the group of hoarding resources, which isn't their intention nor their truth.

Still, Peacock holds compassion for these folks because their anger is righteous. Too many people are being pushed out of Oakland, and their efforts to stay are often in vain. For instance, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Black people in Oakland dropped 10 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Peacock sees the city's housing crisis manifesting at the homeless encampment right outside of their window. 23rd Ave building tenants are currently working to be better accomplices to the encampment, such as training on how to use NARCAN, a spray that reverses overdoses.

Another challenge faced by tenants is deciding if and how to collaborate with government entities, which are notorious for diluting movements and taking credit for grassroots organizing wins. The tenants want to be able to fundraise without compromising their integrity or values.

Lessons

Eri Oura, the co-coordinator of Cycles of Change and a member of the building's core fundraising team, cites crafting a compelling narrative as a hugely effective part of their campaign. Donors clearly connected with the 23rd Ave building's story and vision. Their campaign presented folks with a proactive way to counter displacement and gentrification in the Bay Area. Also, regular email and social media updates from the campaign kept donors engaged and moved some of them to give even more.

Peacock advises getting clarity on the front end when fundraising in coalition with multiple groups. Some questions to consider include:

- Who's a part of the core fundraising team, and what are their roles?
- Will organizations have equal access to donor contacts?
- Are individual organizations allowed to solicit money from donors who give to the joint campaign?

EarthStar Co-op, Spencer, W. Va

I wasn't able to speak with EarthStar Co-op for this story because of their limited access to internet and phone reception up in the Appalachian Mountains. I look forward to connecting with them in the future to learn more about their work to achieve reparative justice for QTPOC through land access. Here is EarthStar's story via their YouCaring page:

We are QTPOCS healing from white supremacy and transphobia on our farm/homestead named "EarthStar."

We've come to learn that living in the modern ways of city lives has been draining, belittling of our potential as humxns in the world and on another hand it has put us QTPOCS in extreme dangers of exposure to racism and transphobia that have lead so many QTPOCS to be murdered or commit suicide.

EarthStar has and is HEALING QTPOCS in a way that allows them to find themselves through manual farm and homestead labor, communal living and spiritual practice. We live, work and heal together, recognizing that we are all that we've got and that the Land, our mother nature, has got our back in all that we do.

We are decolonizing and are in due of reparations, so we ask for support from all, but especially those with most privilege (Cis-Hetero-White-Men). Any variations of this also means that you are privileged enough to support us.

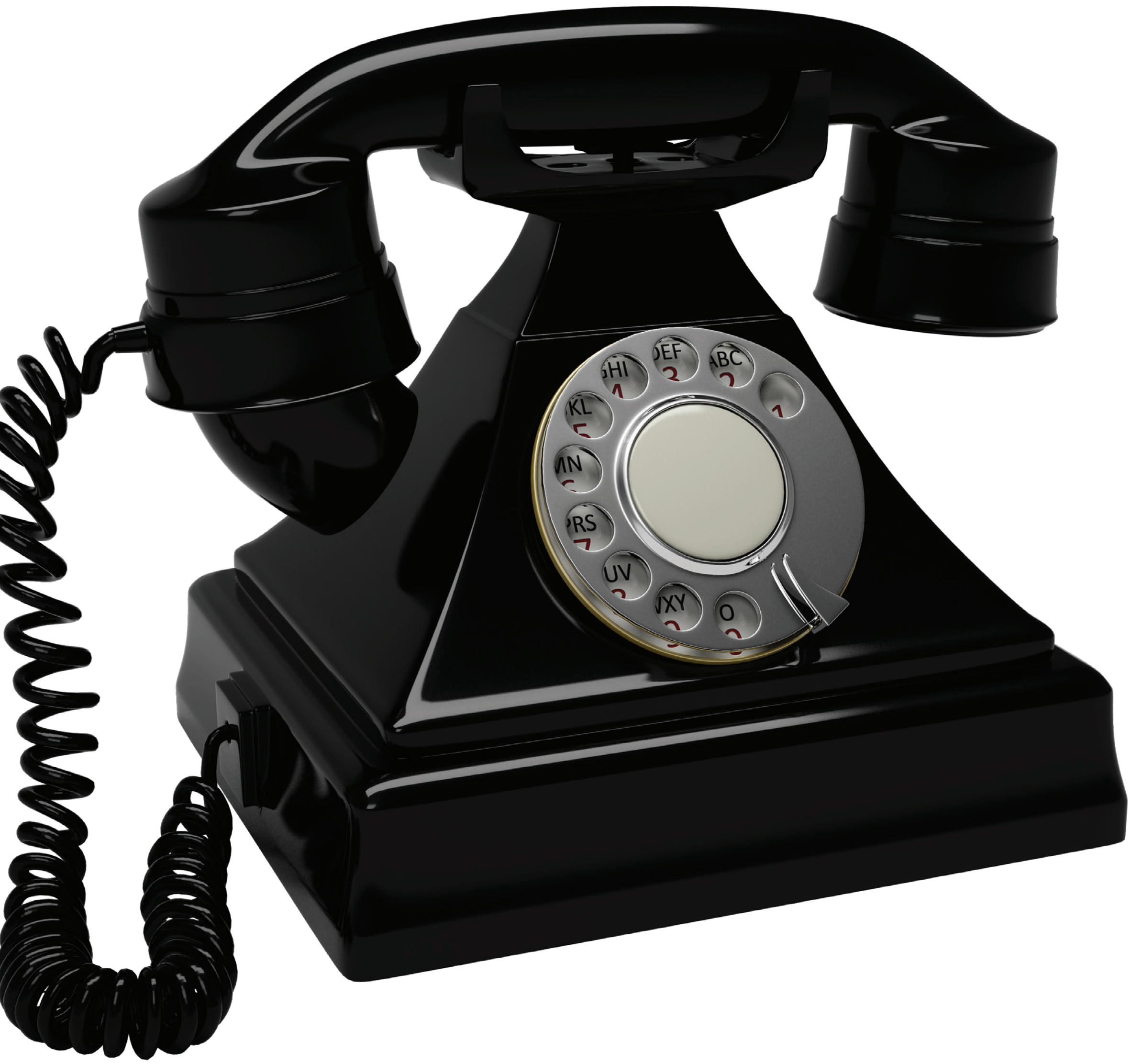
EarthStar is proving to have the ability to heal and decolonize many QTPOCS to come and you have the opportunity to help with funds for our folks and land to thrive. We need you, otherwise, us QTPOCS will continue risking our lives just for the sake of healing ourselves and each other. #SeventhGenerationRising

We need all hands on deck to transform this world into one where all QTBIPOC have place and space to lead joyful lives free from harm. Will you fight alongside us for land justice?

Learn more about our movements:

- Queer the Land | queertheland.org
- 23rd Ave Community Building | peacockrebellion.org/liberated
- EarthStar | instagram.com/earthstarcoop ■

Denechia Powell-Twagirumukiza (they & she pronouns) identifies as a womanist, intersectional feminist, writer, community organizer, facilitator, dancer, freedom fighter, wife, and cat mama. They're constantly conspiring in the name of liberated Black futures, Queer and Trans Black, Indigenous, and People of Color power, solidarity economics, and transformative justice/community accountability and is currently based in a suburb south of Seattle, where they live, love and create with chosen family.



Call Time

What Grassroots Fundraisers Can Learn From Political Candidates

By Leah Pillsbury

GOOD FUNDRAISERS KNOW THAT CALLING THEIR DONORS is one of the most effective and efficient ways to raise money. This is especially true in grassroots fundraising, which relies on small donations from a broad base of donors. Asking for money over the phone works because it is cheap, personable, and can be adapted to any size organization.

The only trouble with phone calls is that you actually have to make them.

Fundraisers who happily hop on the phone to call donors are the exception. For most, it is the item on the to-do list that keeps getting pushed until tomorrow. Even fundraisers with many years of experience have trouble getting on the phone. Bryan Mercer, executive director of Media Mobilizing Project, a grassroots organization working to amplify the voices of communities in the Philadelphia area fighting for justice, equity and human rights, admits to procrastinating beginning his fundraising phone calls. "Sometimes it's the last thing I want to do. But when I finally make the calls, my conversations with supporters reaffirms the work for me." While Media Mobilizing Project has built an impressive individual donor program, Bryan still finds himself supporting the fundraising of his staff and board, while putting his own donor outreach on the back burner. He's not the only one.

For six years, Erika Niz Almirón has been the executive director of Juntos, an organization that fights for the rights of the Latino immigrant community in the Philadelphia area. It has taken that long for her to get comfortable making fundraising calls. "Calling donors has gotten easier for me over the past six years because I better understand the value of having a pool of grassroots money and because I just know more people. But I'd be lying if I said I set a weekly time slot for making calls." Erika had to build Juntos' individual fundraising program from scratch, but now individual donations make up 20 percent of their budget. Still, for Juntos, the most successful fundraising calls happen when there is an urgent need or deadline. Otherwise, it is hard to find a way to make individual donor outreach a daily, or even a weekly, occurrence.

Bryan and Erika are not alone in their struggle. Nonprofit fundraisers across the industry— especially those leading small organizations—have a difficult time prioritizing individual donor outreach, and they are not the only ones who resist getting on the phone. Both sitting politicians and those running for office must fundraise over the phone in order to run a successful campaign.

Aubrey Montgomery, a principal at Rittenhouse Political Partners, founded her own fundraising firm after more than a decade spent raising millions of dollars in more than a dozen states. She estimates the average political candidate relies on fundraising over the phone to generate 65 percent of their campaign budget. "The amount of hours a candidate spends on the phone can mean the difference between winning or losing the election. But even the best candidates don't always like it." That is why for decades, successful political candidates have relied on a strict discipline known as "call time."

Call time works like this: campaign staff, usually the finance director (the political term for lead fundraiser on a campaign), works with the candidate to prepare lists of potential donors. For a new candidate, they start with their personal and professional networks. Seasoned politicians may have an extensive donor base to whom they reach out during every election. Those lists are then translated onto "call sheets," which is a single page for each potential donor and includes their name, contact information and relevant background information. The candidate makes their way through the list, one sheet and one call at a time.

FUNDRAISERS WHO HAPPILY HOP ON THE PHONE TO CALL DONORS ARE THE EXCEPTION.

Call time is not a solo task. The candidate is joined by her finance director, campaign manager, or on bigger campaigns, a designated call time manager. When facing down a list of calls, especially to people a candidate does not know, the temptation is to procrastinate. To maintain focus, candidates use a campaign phone and make calls one call sheet at a time. The staff person should also keep the room free from distractions. (This might mean temporarily confiscating a candidate's personal cell phone and computer or keeping visitors and other staff out.)

In addition to keeping a candidate focused and motivated during call time, the staff person is also in charge of tracking calls and

Call Time Comes to Summer Camp

From 2014–2016, I led a successful $5.5 million capital campaign for Farm & Wilderness (F&W), a group of six summer camps in Vermont. I worked closely with F&W's president at the time, Pieter Bohen, who made the majority of the large asks in the early stages of the campaign. Pieter was an experienced leader and skillful fundraiser, but he didn't like getting on the phone.

"We were used to more passive fundraising, sending out letters, making stewardship visits or thank you calls to donors," recalls Pieter, "but the campaign required us to step it up."

In the first few months of the Campaign, I assembled lists of F&W donors for Pieter to call or email. Together we would review that week's list. And then Pieter, left to make the calls later that week, would procrastinate.

"When you are a nonprofit executive and you have a lot of priorities, the tendency can be to avoid fundraising phone calls because it's the scariest thing," Pieter reflects, "it took getting into a ritual to motivate me to do the serious donor outreach the campaign required."

Within a few months, I introduced Pieter to call time. I had volunteered on several political campaigns and thought that call time might help Pieter make faster progress on his list. It did.

Early on we decided that call time would include not only phone calls, but emails, texts and even handwritten notes. Pieter blocked three to four hours (sometimes more) a week for donor outreach. I still prepared Pieter's call list, but now we would review the background and strategy for a particular donor together, Pieter would make the call or send an email (often both), and then we would move on to the next donor.

"For me the two things that worked about call time were the one-at-a-time preparation and the accountability of it." Peter recalls. "During call time, I only had to focus on one donor at a time. That was helpful, especially in the beginning, because every ask was different and strategic. So call time, I think, helped with the quality of my outreach, as much as the quantity. And I knew as soon as I hung up, Leah would be waiting on the other line to debrief."

That's right. Pieter and I did call time almost entirely remotely. I was based in Philadelphia and Pieter at F&W's main office in Plymouth, Vermont. Sitting in our respective offices wearing headsets connected to cell phones, we both logged on to Pieter's call list in a shared file and one by one made our way down the list. Pieter would put me on hold when he made his calls. While he was on the other line making a call, I updated the database based on his progress. Sometimes, I drafted follow up emails for him or we worked on them together.

As the campaign picked up speed and more staff and board were making asks, we adapted call time to support their outreach efforts. By the end of 2017, F&W had met its $5.5 million goal to fund building projects and "camperships" (camper scholarships), with gifts from over 2,400 alumni, campers, staff, and camp families. This wouldn't have happened without call time, which allowed the small staff to reach over 350 individual donor contacts a month at the height of the campaign.

following up with donor commitments. Any sophisticated campaign will use a database that tracks fundraising work. After each call, the staff person records the results of the call in the database along with the next steps for follow-up. Sometimes, the follow-up is done right away via text or email; at others, the calls are moving so quickly that data entry and next steps are completed later that day.

On a strong campaign, call time is scheduled daily and fiercely protected. Aubrey estimates that during the early stages of a campaign at least half of the candidate's time should be devoted to fundraising calls, meaning upwards of thirty hours on the phone each week. Call time is the majority of a candidate's schedule until the last eight weeks of the campaign, when more time can be dedicated to community engagement.

LIKE GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING AT NONPROFITS, POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS RELY HEAVILY ON LARGE NUMBERS OF SMALL AND MID-SIZED DONATIONS.

Call time is not just for candidates. Elected politicians must fundraise while in office to fund their reelection. More senior politicians are required to raise money for their political party to support less experienced candidates or candidates in more competitive races. Jonathan Lipman has spent his career both working for members of Congress and nonprofit organizations and is now launching his own strategic communications firm. "I've never met a politician who likes call time. It's the antithesis of why they are there," Jonathan says. "Most would rather spend time legislating." Politicians do call time because they have to raise the money to be reelected. "Of course, the fundraising is in their self interest," he admits, "but that doesn't make it fun. Call time is like making them eat their vegetables."

If you are not a regular political donor, campaign volunteer, or staff person, you have likely only experienced campaign outreach on a large scale through the mail or online. However, from what Jonathan has seen, "the only way enough money is raised is if candidates stick to a strict regimen of call time. For every Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren, who are able to raise large amounts of money with viral online campaigns, there are dozens of candidates and politicians you've never heard of who raise almost [all of] their money one phone call at a time."

Indeed, many political campaigns, especially those for state or local offices, are scrappy organizations. It usually starts with a candidate who raises enough money to hire themselves a campaign director. Maybe they raise enough to bring on a finance director. The team then recruits a large base of volunteers to help get the word out. In many ways, a grassroots political campaign mirrors the structure of small community organizations who get by with a small staff and rely on a large volunteer base.

Beyond their structure, the fundraising approach of political campaigns and grassroots organizations are notably similar. Like grassroots fundraising at nonprofits, political campaigns rely heavily on large numbers of small and mid-sized donations, in part due to various campaign finance laws at the federal, state or local levels that limit the amount an individual can contribute to a political campaign. Additionally, both kinds of fundraising rely on the personal networks of the candidates, staff and volunteers to build a donor base.

Donors mean more than just money, however: extensive donor outreach helps to build a large committed coalition of supporters. "Some candidates are able to self-fund their campaigns," says Aubrey. "It seems like it might be easier at first, but then they get into office and they don't have a strong a base of support. On the other hand, even someone who made a $25 donation to a campaign is now invested in that candidate's vision." And just as nonprofit organizations that rely on the limited funding stream of a few large donors, a self-funded politician has a weaker foundation of support.

With so many common challenges, shouldn't nonprofit grassroots fundraisers benefit from implementing campaign-style call time? Leanne Krueger-Braneky, a state representative for Pennsylvania's Delaware County, just outside of Philadelphia, certainly thinks so. Leanne started her first campaign spending about fifteen hours a week on the phone. When she was able to hire staff that call time increased to upwards of thirty hours a week. After she lost that first election, she returned to her job as development director for a national nonprofit. "The fundraising skills are absolutely transferable. I lost my first race, but I brought those skills back to my nonprofit work." That first fall back at her nonprofit job, Leanne implemented call time for their annual giving campaign with much success.

Want to get started on call time? Here are some tips to make call time effective:

Be prepared: Set aside a block of time and have your call lists ready. During the early months of her first campaign, Leanne did the prep work of identifying and researching donors herself. Within a few months, however, she had dedicated staff doing this work for her. She estimates it takes three or four hours of staff time to generate one hour of good calls. In addition to a good list, you want to establish a clear and concise phone script. Scripts ensure that you stay on message, even when you have to leave a voice mail. (The majority of the calls will end in voice mails.)

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE PARTS OF CALL TIME IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROVIDED BY THE STAFF PERSON ACCOMPANYING THE CANDIDATE TO ENSURE THEY STAY FOCUSED AND MEET THEIR OUTREACH GOALS.

Set goals and track progress: Like all good fundraising practices, call time works when you set realistic goals and expectations. "People think of fundraising as an art, but it's also a science. Before I started doing call time, I had never done anything so formulaic," says Leanne. Diligently track how many calls can be made in an hour and how many people you reach. Also track how much money is raised. Over time you will gain a sense of how much call time is needed to accomplish your goals.

Buddy up: Perhaps the most effective element of call time is the accountability provided by having another person in the room with you. In a campaign, the staff person managing call time is there to make sure calls are properly prepared and to help chase down pledges after the candidate hangs up. This way the candidate can focus just on the call. However, they're also there to make sure the calls are made.

It won't always be easy for a staff person to hold a candidate or executive director—their boss—to the task. Good call time managers will use a combination of motivational words to help the caller focus on the big picture of the work they are funding and small rewards, such as a cookie or coffee after the first twenty calls.

Set the scene: Make sure the calling is done in a quiet, comfortable room, away from interruptions. This might mean taking away laptops or cell phones to avoid distractions or leaving the office and working from someone's home. "My call time room was just off the campaign office," explained Leanne, "and I would always try to go back out and talk to volunteers or people that stopped by. But my campaign staff would give me only a few minutes break and drag me back in. If I got distracted during call time, sometimes they took away my phone."

Make it a habit: Call time works if you work it. And the best way to make it happen is to make it a regular part of every day or every week. If call time is part of an expected routine it will be easier to jump into each time and easier to stick with it. Block call time off on the calendar and protect it. Also be sure to block times at different times of day. Some people can be reached in the morning, but others might be more easily reached in the afternoons or on weekends.

Track your work and follow-up: It is important to set up a tracking and follow-up strategy. After each call, whether or not someone was reached, do a short debrief and determine next steps. Perhaps the next step is a text, an email, or another phone call next week. When done well, all data entry and follow-up happens during call time by the call time manager, while the caller moves onto their next call.

Make it work for you: Finally, call time can and should be adapted to fit your organization's fundraising needs. While political call time is used almost exclusively for calling to ask for donations, call time could also be used to call donors to thank them or invite them to an event. Call time could also be expanded into a more broadly defined "donor time," used not only for calls, but texts, emails and even hand-written notes. Call time could also be used for volunteer outreach. As long as there is strong preparation, time reserved, and specific goals, call time could be adapted to work to achieve a wide-variety of outreach objectives.

Julien Terrell was an organizer for over a decade and is currently the executive director of Philadelphia Student Union, an organization building the power of young people to demand a high-quality education in the Philadelphia public school system. When he became executive director, he knew he had to prioritize fundraising. "For me fundraising isn't nearly as much fun as other parts of the work, but it is a necessary part of the work," Julien relayed. In order to guard against procrastination, Julien sets aside Fridays for fundraising. Usually between two to three hours of that day are spent on the phone. "It is a challenge sticking to just fundraising work on Fridays, but it is a helpful discipline."

One of the most effective parts of call time is the accountability provided by the staff person accompanying the candidate to ensure they stay focused and meet their outreach goals. But what if your organization doesn't have a traditional development department or even any dedicated development staff? At Media Mobilizing Project, all staff—not just Bryan—are responsible for donor outreach and last year they did a staff phone banking day. "It works," he says. "When we're together people make their calls. The hurdle is getting everyone together." Elements of call time can be adapted like this for all-volunteer organizations or for supporting a board of directors or volunteers to make calls.

At small grassroots organizations with no dedicated fundraising staff, it is difficult for an executive director to find that accountability. "There is a real challenge where nonprofit executive directors have to make their own accountability structures when there is no development director pushing us along," Bryan reflects. One of those accountability structures could be call time, but instead of enlisting staff, recruit a volunteer or a board member to sit with you as you make calls.

Similarly, fundraisers at any level might find it beneficial to reach outside of their organization for call time help. For example, two development directors or two executive directors from different organizations could get together and commit to twenty calls each before going out for a celebratory beer together. Call time can even work remotely. Two colleagues working in different states might set up a video call on their computers and while making phone calls, checking in along the way. Once you make the commitment to call time, you can carry it out with an approach that works for you.

"In political call time you literally get locked in a small dark room," says Leanne, "but the discipline of it also can be liberating, because there's no more ending up in the cycle of procrastination and guilt for not making my calls." Certainly, most grassroots fundraisers at nonprofits are unlikely to be able work up to thirty hours a week of call time, but try starting with two or three hours a week for dedicated donor outreach. You may find that your fundraising gets better, your confidence grows, and more money rolls in. And you can enjoy the rest of the week knowing those calls are behind you. ■

Leah Pillsbury has been a fundraiser in Philadelphia for the past decade, specializing in capital campaigns. She is now pursuing a career as an accountant in Portland, Maine.

Giving Ambassador team Power Players strike their team pose during training for the 2017 year-end campaign.

Taking the Leap

The Growth and Evolution of the California School-Age Consortium's (CalSAC's) Individual Giving Program

By Lupine Reppert

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Ruth, CalSAC's executive director and I jumped out of an airplane at 13,000 feet—hurtling through the air, side by side—me stone-faced in horror; her laughing the whole way down (not an unfamiliar dynamic between us). Getting on the plane and out those cabin doors was no small feat for me–at moments I must have resembled that cartoon cat who, no matter how hard you try to drag them out the door, they find a way to contort and flatten their body every which way to keep from passing through. Yet, we took the leap. Then, at about 3,000 feet our parachutes opened, and we were suddenly floating, bobbing through the air, looking far off onto the horizon at all the possibility below.

You may be wondering how Ruth and I ended up taking this extreme leap of faith. As a youth-development organization, we have enjoyed celebrating the spirit of youth and youth programming through a vibrant and fun campaign for Giving Tuesday. Our first year participating in 2016, staff completed challenges when specific fundraising milestones had been met—we took the ice bucket challenge, got pied in the face, and shaved a side of our heads. Our community loved celebrating the campaign with us through these challenges—and our social media presence grew exponentially in the days surrounding Giving Tuesday. Ruth skydiving was the final challenge for 2017—it was our 35th anniversary and a clear turning point for the organization, as we launched a new brand and embarked on a multi-year strategy to grow our voice, programs and impact. Ruth was "leaping forward toward the next 35 years" after we met our 2017 $100,000 individual giving goal. I jumped in solidarity.

Little did I know that this experience would feel so familiar. Only two years before in 2015, we launched the first individual giving campaign in the history of the organization. And each year thereafter, we have increased our giving goals by 30-50 percent. Every year, the goal seems impossible—by November, it feels like we're careening through the air at 100 miles an hour—and yet, each time the parachute opens, and we land safely on our feet, with the goal at hand. This is certainly not by accident—getting to this point in time took careful consideration and planning and full commitment from our board and staff to embrace this new way of work. It has also not been easy—there have been a ton of challenges and lessons along way. Yet, I've been pleased and relieved to find that because I'm working with a team where everyone feels responsible and takes ownership for the work, together, we meet every challenge head-on.

Modeling a Culture of Giving

CalSAC's intention for creating an individual giving program was not just about developing a new revenue stream. It was also designed to model and cultivate a culture of giving in the community we serve: the out-of-school time field (i.e., before school, afterschool and summer learning programs and professionals). This was no small feat—with a base largely comprised of young, often part-time, hourly workers, many on the ground didn't identify themselves as people who could or should be donors. It was important to us that we challenged the notion that only certain types of people are donors, championing the message that every person, regardless of income, race, or zip code can take action. Our intention was to create opportunity for every person to contribute to and take ownership for the things that are most important to them—to feel their power to make change. We also valued this new means for engaging our constituency and the opportunity to deepen their commitment and connection to CalSAC.

OUR INTENTION WAS TO CREATE OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY PERSON TO CONTRIBUTE TO AND TAKE OWNERSHIP FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM—TO FEEL THEIR POWER TO MAKE CHANGE.

Another goal was to model, teach and empower individuals in the field to become fundraisers—to build their skills to support their own programs or other organizations that they cared about. We sought to challenge the perception that fundraising is a skill held only by a select few, successful for only certain types of people. Instead, we believe that anyone can fundraise with guidance and support, using their own unique strengths. We also hoped for our constituents to experience fundraising in a new way—not a slog, but an exciting, fun and rewarding experience. We've found that the work can be incredibly empowering, especially when in community with others and when connected to the end goal of creating change. We saw our individual giving program as an incredible opportunity to build power in and for the out-of-school time field, alongside every person in the community.

Analysis and Planning

With these values in mind, CalSAC got to work. The project began in 2013 with a fundraising analysis including market research, constituent feedback, an assessment of field and funding trends and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, resulting in a multi-year development strategy and roadmap. Another important action at the start of the project was seeking the investment of foundations. The S.H. Cowell Foundation and The David and Lucile Packard Foundation each provided a $25,000 match to support the first two years of the giving program. The matching grants were key motivators for donors to give—and a great tool for fundraisers to use as they approached prospects.

Building Board Buy In

Board members were active participants in the shaping of the development strategy, helping to identify key long-term goals for the organization as well as strategizing short-term actions for the board to support the plan. Recruitment for new board members shifted to include interview questions around fundraising experience and willingness as well as provided a clear expectation that all board members give and fundraise. An external committee was also added to the board structure, with the charge of leading the board in meeting its fundraising responsibility. Board members were committed and excited about the individual giving program—as we geared up for the first year's launch, board members practiced making a fundraising pitch, identified prospects from their personal and professional contacts, and the first board house party was planned to coincide with the campaign.

Board engagement yielded big lessons as we shifted towards becoming a fundraising board. Early on, I focused my attention on creating resources to support the board in its fundraising work—prospecting worksheets, fundraising "how to" tip sheets, phone and email scripts, CalSAC collateral, and one-on-one coaching. While these resources are valuable and moved some board members, it wasn't enough—I had appealed to the head while bypassing the heart. We've since shifted our approach to fundraising training so that board members spend more of their time exploring CalSAC's mission and their own personal mission, philosophy and connection to the work, yielding a deeper commitment and willingness in board members to take on fundraising.

Acknowledging the need for this shift from head to heart has been gradual and is still a work in progress. Much of the change in my perspective and understanding came from having conversations with board members. Some of these discussions were in response to difficult or uncomfortable moments around fundraising while others were centered around developing board fundraising training. It has been very beneficial to ask in collaboration with board members: "What does the board need in this moment?" As someone who has a very distinct personality and perspective (as we all do), it has been incredibly helpful to have other voices—and specifically board voices—contributing to the development of our board training and engagement plans.

CUSTOMIZATION HAS ALSO BEEN INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT FOR THE BOARD, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT EACH PERSON HAS DIFFERING CAPACITIES TO GIVE AND GET DONATIONS, AND FUNDRAISING METHODS ARE NOT "ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL."

One of the most memorable activities that reflects this shift in approach was a "What is your why?" activity. The idea behind the session is that we often talk about what we do, but not why we do it—both as an organization and as individuals. Yet, our why reflects our deepest values—it is what drives us and motivates us to take action. During the session, each individual explored their personal why and then shared with a partner. Next, they connected their why to CalSAC—identifying how their personal why is honored and fueled through their role as a CalSAC board member. While simple, this exercise brought forward new meaning for many participants—deepening each board member's connection to their role and purpose.

Customization has also been incredibly important for the board, acknowledging that each person has differing capacities to give and get donations, and fundraising methods are not "one-size-fits-all." In 2017, every board member set their own fundraising goals (a minimum was also still in place) as well as identified their approach to fundraising for the year—using a range of options and resources, such as a house party, peer-to-peer campaign, and online auction. We've also learned to coach board members differently to support this customization and to encourage individuals to be self-led. Instead of dictating a specific rigid plan, communicating: "This is your next step to move your fundraising work forward" we now ask, "What's your next step to move your fundraising work forward?"

In 2017, 80 percent of board members met their personal fundraising goals, a growth from 38 percent the previous year. As we've continued to listen, adjust and encourage open dialogue about the work, together we've begun to settle into a process that supports an active fundraising board. Ultimately, change takes time—a lesson my impatient past-self had not yet learned. Approaching the shift to a fundraising board more directly as change management would have likely made the process smoother for all involved.

Staff: Stumbling Into a Distributed Fundraising Model

In 2015, just as the first campaign was launching, I was hired as the director of development, after an over five-year hiatus from having fundraising staff. Before this, program staff were working closely with our executive director to drive fundraising for their respective programs. This dynamic created the perfect starting point for a unique and strong staff culture around fundraising. Program staff participated in the interviewing, hiring and training of my development position and continued, once I was on board, to consult around fundraising for their programs, as they had the deepest knowledge and strongest relationships with the people we had planned to engage as donors. This established a partnership between program and development staff, where we co-created fundraising campaigns and efforts. I was also brought into program meetings to help consult on topics where I held expertise, which created a wonderful reciprocal relationship, building trust and ownership across our staff team.

CalSAC has also intentionally kept the lines between development and program blurred, ensuring that we have opportunities to collaborate and innovate together. For example, program staff continue to write and design their own email newsletters and make website updates for their projects, with support from development and communications staff. In turn, development staff work all major program events, which not only connects the team, but also gives development staff a chance to interact with constituents, a rare and valuable opportunity. Our annual plan is also developed together, so that we all have knowledge of each other's projects and timelines, making space for us to find conflicts between departments as well as opportunities to work together. This interdependence supports collaboration and maintains knowledge, expertise and appreciation across the staff team.

This collaborative culture laid the groundwork for what has become a distributed fundraising model across the staff team. The model was solidified at the end of the year in 2016, when we were facing a major problem with our year-end campaign. Our efforts had not raised the funds we anticipated for the year–and with the present plan, we didn't expect to get close to our goal. Our solution was to create a big splash for Giving Tuesday—recognizing that we needed all hands on deck to be successful. With about a month's notice, our full staff team prepared for Giving Tuesday. Staff gave input into the fun challenges we'd complete when fundraising milestones were met (e.g., pies in the face, shaved heads, etc.), and committed to phone banking throughout the day to drive donations. Staff also attended two training sessions to dig deeper into perceptions and barriers to fundraising, and reviewed resources such as call scripts and prospecting lists to facilitate the work. Staff joined phone banking teams, equipped with a team leader (experienced fundraiser) who provided day-of support and troubleshooting. Organically, staff started to reach out to their own contacts asking them to give, and excitement for Giving Tuesday grew.

We tracked donations on a thermometer and instituted what is now a CalSAC fundraising tradition: the celebration bell. Any time a staff member receives a donation, they ring the bell, which prompts the rest of the team to celebrate. Now, for every campaign, the bell hangs in our office so that staff, board and volunteers can share in the practice. The day of Giving Tuesday, the office was pulsing with excitement—each time a milestone was met, a new staff person was stepping up to do a silly challenge and the rest of the team was celebrating them for their courage; the bell was ringing with the team cheering; and our thermometer was filling up, each action promoting the next. The result was miraculous—we met our goal and our full team made it happen together. A new fundraising model for CalSAC was born.

THE DISTRIBUTED FUNDRAISING MODEL WORKS ACROSS CALSAC'S STAFF BECAUSE OF SHARED VALUES, SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY, AND A DEEP BELIEF IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION.

Since the "Great Giving Tuesday of 2016," we continue to look for ways to deepen and strengthen the distributed fundraising model across our staff team. Staff are key contributors to fundraising planning—the full staff team is engaged around development on a bimonthly basis and director staff are consulted on fundraising projects on an ongoing basis. All staff give and fundraise for the organization, and director-level program staff have begun to step in as leads for fundraising projects and campaigns. Maintaining this collaborative atmosphere is hard work and often takes more time and patience than if it had been done within one department. Yet, the benefits far outweigh the costs, as the result is more effective, creative and relevant campaigns with deeper buy-in and support from the staff team. The distributed fundraising model works across CalSAC's staff because of shared values, shared accountability, and a deep belief in the transformative work of the organization. True cultivation of staff as fundraisers means maintaining and growing the culture that supports this unique approach to the work.

Expanding Our Circle

A new addition in 2017 was the Giving Ambassador program. The program was designed for CalSAC constituents to become peer-to-peer fundraisers for the organization, fulfilling our intention to model, teach and empower individuals in the out-of-school time field to fundraise. Many staff and board members were also Giving Ambassadors and joined teams, which provided a great opportunity for different organizational stakeholders to work alongside each other. In our inaugural year, four board members, eight staff and 13 constituents became Giving Ambassadors.

Giving Ambassadors participated in a full day of training and joined fundraising teams to work toward a collective team fundraising goal as well as individual giving goals. Each individual and team set their own goals based on their prospect lists, time available, and experience with the work. Throughout the month of the campaign, Giving Ambassadors held check-ins with their teams, promoting peer support, feedback and spirit as well as keeping a focus on the work at hand. Captains were identified by their teammates to help drive the work and encourage ongoing communication. Expectations of Giving Ambassadors were communicated as follows:

Giving Ambassador Profile:

- Excited to learn about fundraising best practices.
- Motivated to support CalSAC's year-end campaign.
- Willing to try on the role of fundraiser, reaching out to friends, family and colleagues to ask them to give.
- Eager to support their team towards a collective fundraising goal through check-ins, troubleshooting and cheerleading.

Training was a much simpler process than expected. We designed sessions to slowly acclimate Giving Ambassadors and help them get comfortable with fundraising. Yet, we found that participants were fundraising ready—they were excited to receive the professional development and motivated by the opportunity to give back.

As simple as it was to onboard Giving Ambassadors, recruiting was a different story. Initially, we had intended to bring on 35 Giving Ambassadors for our inaugural year, but only ended up with 25 fundraisers. I'd hypothesize that the resistance I expected during training didn't happen because this reluctance was expressed through the recruiting process. Moving forward, we plan to expand our message around our giving philosophy and the impact and opportunity of becoming a Giving Ambassador. We also intend to involve Giving Ambassadors in planning for the upcoming year, which also provides an opportunity to engage these individuals in recruiting.

Capacity to move this new work is also a strain and concern. It takes considerable effort to build and grow a peer-to-peer giving program. Providing effective technical assistance to Giving Ambassadors is the most prevalent need, which will only grow as more Giving Ambassadors get involved. In the 2017 year-end campaign, it was challenging to balance the Giving Ambassador program and general campaign, which resulted in lower donor retention numbers as well as reduced time developing other revenue streams. To support continued growth and success, we plan to hire an additional development staff person to increase capacity

CalSAC's Individual Fundraising Program Development Timeline

2013

Organizational effectiveness funding from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation supports the development of the CalSAC Board of Directors; a fundraising audit begins.

2014 – August

CalSAC Board of Directors adopts an individual giving strategy for the organization and meets their first 100 percent board giving goal.

2015 – July

Launches the first individual giving campaign in the 33-year history of the organization.

2015 – September

Invests in fundraising by hiring a development director, the first in over 5 years.

2015 – December

Raises over $50,000 in 2015, including a $25K matching grant from the S.H. Cowell Foundation.

2016 – January

Board members develop personal fundraising plans, increasing their give/get contribution by 67 percent over the prior year.

2016 – November

All staff members are trained and empowered to fundraise for the organization by inviting constituents, friends and family to give. Staff voluntarily initiates 100 percent staff giving.

2016 – December

Raises over $75,000 in 2016 including a $25K matching grant from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, doubling the amount raised in individual donations over the prior year and growing donors by 63 percent.

2017 – March

Distributed fundraising model expanded to include director-level program staff as leads for fundraising projects and campaigns.

2017 – April

222 percent increase in recurring donations in 2017 through a recurring donor campaign.

2017 – October

25 Giving Ambassadors come together for the End of Year Campaign Kick-Off and Giving Ambassador Training.

2017 – December

Raises over $100,000 in 2017 including a $35K matching grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. Giving Ambassadors account for 53 percent of the amount raised during the end-of-year campaign (total raised in campaign: $38,190).

for our individual giving program as well as expand other revenue sources and strategies.

Ultimately, Giving Ambassador fundraising accounted for 53 percent of the funds raised during our year-end campaign, an effort well worth the return. It was also incredibly powerful to work in partnership with these individuals to support the organization—to hear their stories of CalSAC's impact, to share impressions and interpretations of philanthropic work and to feel our collective power as a group driving change. It is also important to note that 73 percent of CalSAC's Giving Ambassadors were people of color. Considering the development field is predominately white, it is meaningful to be bring forward new diverse voices into our development work. Whether the Giving Ambassador experience brings new skills to an individual who can better support their own organization, or someone finds a new career path, we see it as a win, and a means for actively meeting our mission.

Taking the Leap

Over the past two years, there have been many moments when I was reluctant to take the risk necessary to move our fundraising work. It is in my nature to want to have everything all planned and perfect before launching—yet, a perfect plan not implemented raises no funds. By necessity, we have had to leap into the individual giving space and "build the plane while flying." What I've found is that while messy, our biggest opportunities and greatest successes have come to pass when things were the most messy—and often, the most dire. Fear can be a strong driver in these moments (for better or worse)—and for me, the CalSAC community has been the antidote to the fear. Standing in community with others has a grounding effect for me, reawakening innovation, creativity and fun. It is incredibly powerful to be driving toward an important goal, knowing that every person on my team has the same fire and commitment to get to the finish line. This is teamwork at its best—and many times over has been the parachute in my "sky jump."

Next time I go skydiving (if that ever happens again), my goal will be to embrace all that comes with that leap of faith—the fear, the leap, the bliss. Until then, I will stick with a close second to that thrill, embracing the magic of individual giving fundraising, with all its imperfection and messiness…and all its community, connection and impact. I will also celebrate everything that comes with that leap of faith—the fear, the many leaps, the bliss. Looking ahead, I see a ton of potential—while the goal for 2018 is that much more bold and ambitious, there is something special about this individual giving work that I'm not sure I get to experience in any other part of my job. This is where as development professionals we get a chance to feel the work, to connect to the people and the mission. This is where I hear the call of our mission, witness the depth of our impact, and feel the vibration of a movement. ■

Lupine Reppert is the director of development for the California School-Age Consortium (CalSAC), committed to building a future where every child in California—regardless of income, race or zip code—has access to high quality, affordable out-of-school time programs.

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