



# MOVEMENTS, MOMENTS & MOMENTUM



**Grassroots**  
**INTERNATIONAL**  
FUNDING GLOBAL MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

# THANK YOU!

**During 2020, in the face of unprecedented challenges, Grassroots International's network of supporters, partners, and allies redoubled its work and support. Through your efforts, together with those of millions of others around the world, our movement for justice continues to build momentum!**

*“We express our gratitude for the partnership and the pursuit of utopia always on the horizon, renewing our drive to build a new society.”*

*– Valdenildo Martins de Souza,  
Landless Workers Movement (MST) of Brazil*

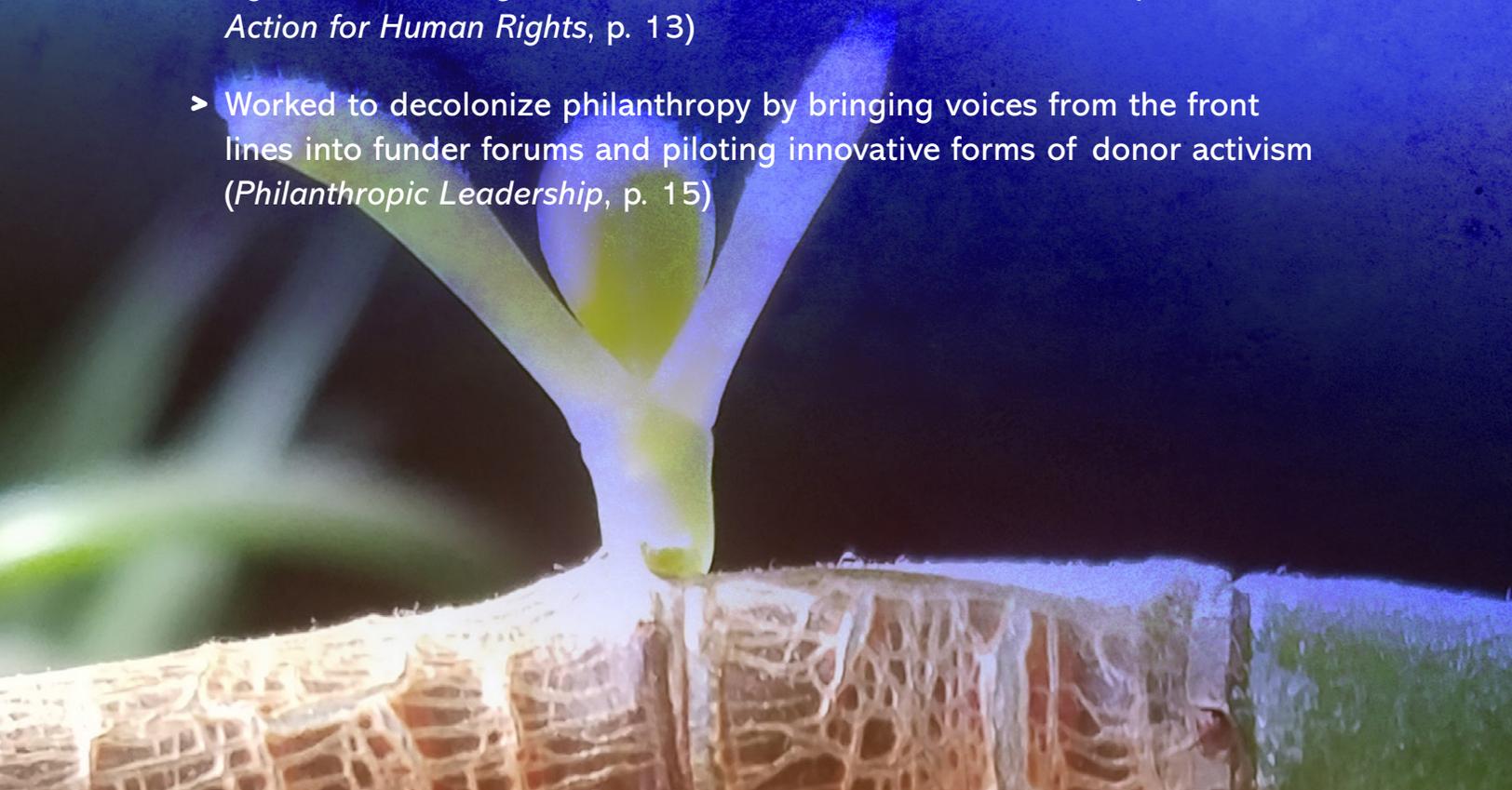
*“I consider myself to be a global citizen. I organize for change within my community, and through Grassroots International, I support movements working to challenge broader systems driving injustices.”*

*– Louis Perwien, Grassroots International donor-activist*

# 2020 SNAPSHOT

## In 2020, Grassroots International:

- > Distributed upwards of \$5.8 million to our movement partners and allies — **\$3.5 million** to those based in the Global South and **\$2.3 million** to those based in the U.S. (*Financial Reports*, p. 16)
- > Responded to COVID-19 with **\$695,000** in emergency relief grants coupled with support for long-term efforts essential to recovery in the U.S. and the Global South (*Confronting Pandemic*, p. 7)
- > Nurtured grassroots feminist organizing through grantmaking and political accompaniment; supported the launch of the International Feminist Organizing School (*Advancing Grassroots Feminisms*, p. 9)
- > Defended Black lives globally through solidarity actions and **\$2.8 million** in grantmaking to Black and Afro-descendant movements (*Defending Black Lives Globally*, p. 11)
- > Activated our networks and mobilized resources in response to human rights violations against activists and frontline communities (*Social Action for Human Rights*, p. 13)
- > Worked to decolonize philanthropy by bringing voices from the front lines into funder forums and piloting innovative forms of donor activism (*Philanthropic Leadership*, p. 15)



# ***MOMENTS OF CRISIS, MOVEMENTS FOR CHANGE, MOMENTUM TOWARD JUSTICE***

Along with the tragedies and challenges of 2020 – in the US and globally – an inspiring groundswell of momentum toward social justice was palpable. Crisis moments became movement moments. The pandemic was met with powerful solidarity responses; abuses of power with strengthened resistance; economic devastation with demands for transformative economies; and anti-Black violence with uprisings for racial justice.

These grassroots responses had built up their power over years of organizing, endurance, and vision. For instance, while conventional supply chains experienced disruptions and delays in the early days of the pandemic, our partners ramped up initiatives to feed communities through vibrant peasant food webs. The success of these efforts was the product of years of organizing to advance bottom-up solutions (like agroecology grounded in food sovereignty) while resisting corporate control of food, land, and water.

As attention turns to recovery from COVID-19, it is clear that *the work necessary to recover from the pandemic is the work that our partners have been doing all along*. The pandemic has helped awaken society to systemic injustices and to the need for new ways of doing things. This offers an unprecedented opportunity to scale up the vital work led by social movements.

In step with our partners, solidarity donors have a critical role to play in paving a new way forward. Together, we are meeting moments of crisis with bold determination to create a better future for all of us.

In solidarity,



*Chung-Wha Hong*

Chung-Wha Hong  
Executive Director



*Maria Aguiar*

Maria Aguiar  
Board Chair

# MOVEMENT-LED RECOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION

**A**s the COVID-19 pandemic intersected with climate chaos and other system-wide crises over 2020, our partners did what they do best. They mobilized their vast community networks to reach those most vulnerable; they challenged the systems driving inequalities; and they advanced alternatives grounded in justice. Part of what made them so effective in their response to the pandemic is that they had long been working to confront the immediate threats facing their communities while building toward longer-term change.

A powerful example can be found in the projects supported by Grassroots International's new Puerto Rico program. Like the pandemic today, Hurricane Maria in 2017 made the deadly fragility of the archipelago's food and energy systems, the result of near-total dependence on imports imposed by US policies, glaringly obvious. Since then, Puerto Rican movements have deepened their efforts to forge a new and very different path out of such disasters.

Two examples are Casa Pueblo's Community Solar Energy Association of Adjuntas (ACESA) and Comedores Sociales. ACESA provides community-controlled energy, serving as a model of energy sovereignty to carry Puerto Rico



*A leader of the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP) in Haiti shares reflections on agroecology. (photo: MPP)*

into the future. Comedores Sociales is a movement of Puerto Rican community kitchens combining democratically managed food distribution with political education, organizing, and training. Initiatives like these have enabled communities to build back from Maria and face the pandemic while advancing their visions of food and energy sovereignty over the long term.

From West Africa to Palestine, similar efforts supported by Grassroots International are demonstrating how popular power and self-determination – not technocratic fixes imposed from the outside – are keys to a just recovery and a better future.

*“As attention turns to recovery from COVID-19, it is clear that the work necessary to recover from the pandemic is the work that our partners have been doing all along.”*

# CONFRONTING PANDEMIC



*“Let us transform the windows,  
the terraces, the gardens and fields  
into our demonstration squares, turn  
our pots and pans into drums of  
resistance.”*

*- La Vía Campesina, #StayHomeButNotSilent*

*Grassroots International has supported our partners to confront the COVID-19 pandemic through combining emergency response and transformative solutions.*

**W**hile COVID-19 has impacted us all, it has taken the greatest toll on the communities – of peasants, Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples, and others – already on the front lines of climate chaos, land grabs, and related assaults on human rights. From the start of the pandemic, we realized that any effective COVID response would need to combine emergency relief with ongoing efforts to tackle the overlapping crises facing frontline communities. This is why we launched the Solidarity Amid Pandemic COVID-19 rapid response fund while bolstering our general grantmaking.

Our community responded generously to the Solidarity Amid Pandemic campaign. By May 2020, more than \$350,000 in emergency grants were already at work. By the end of the year, we had raised and distributed \$695,000 emergency funding to 93 movement partners and allies. Life-saving efforts supported by the fund include:

- In Brazil, rapid conversion of a training center for landless workers into a field hospital for COVID patients
- In Haiti, virus prevention education via peasant-run radio and mobile sound systems in hard-to-reach rural communities, along with mass distribution of sanitation products
- In Palestine, mobile emergency clinics and training of cohorts of community health workers
- In West Africa, women-run radio programs on virus prevention and



*The Palestinian Medical Relief Society has been providing critical COVID prevention and treatment through 50 community clinics and eight mobile clinics. (photo: PMRS)*

agroecology, conducted in local languages and dialects

- In Honduras, ancestral healing centers in Afro-Indigenous communities.

These and many other efforts supported by our emergency fund enabled social movements to serve as first responders to the pandemic in communities largely bypassed by government support. And each was part of a broader set of strategies aimed at longer-term change.

More recently, as the Global North returns to some semblance of “normalcy” while the pandemic rages on in the Global South, we continue to support our partners in pandemic response. This includes pushing for equitable access to vaccines in the face of vaccine hoarding by rich countries and disparities in access based on race, class, and gender within many countries. ■

*Opposite page: Members of Comedores Sociales harvesting food for distribution in Puerto Rico. Photo by Comedores Sociales.*

# ADVANCING GRASSROOTS FEMINISMS



*“Today we build by making visible, naming and putting in front those of us who have been cast aside throughout our history. The future we’re building has Black people front and center.”*

*- Shariana Ferrer Núñez, co-founder of La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción, Puerto Rico*

*As the pandemic sheds light on the critical yet largely invisible role of women as food producers, care workers, and other essential/frontline workers, Grassroots International has supported grassroots feminist organizing in response to multiple crises.*

**G**rassroots International is proud to support the growth of a global network of movements advancing feminist solutions that center the leadership of women and gender-nonconforming people of color. In 2020, we saw the strengthening of this network in response to the challenges of the pandemic.

A highlight at the regional level has been the growth of the We Are the Solution (WAS) campaign. Led largely by women food producers, WAS has been expanding its organizing across seven countries of West Africa. As the pandemic drives up rates of hunger, WAS has been bolstering communities' capacity to feed themselves through agroecology. It has also been countering false solutions such as land grabs masked as agricultural investment and the imposition of harmful industrial agricultural practices across Africa. WAS has strengthened its community media capacity over the past year, with a focus on reaching young people, and especially young women, as the next generation of leaders.

As women across the globe are asserting greater leadership, they are coming under intensified attacks, particularly from authoritarian regimes. Our ongoing collaboration with Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Indigenous Environmental Network, and the World March of Women strengthens and advances grassroots feminist movements as they struggle against right-wing backlash targeting



*Zoán Tanís Dávila Roldán of La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción leads a Black Lives Matter (Vidas Negras Importan) march in Puerto Rico. (photo: Claudia Carbonell Perico)*

women, gender-oppressed peoples, and communities of color.

Through this collaboration, the new Berta Cáceres International Feminist Organizing School is being developed to strengthen collective knowledge, share experiences and expand grassroots feminist movements worldwide. Following a successful online pilot in 2020 attended by 75 leaders from 25 countries and 45 organizations, the school launched more formally on March 4, 2021. This date is the birthday of our close friend and ally, Berta Cáceres, for whom the school is named. In 2016, Berta was murdered for her courageous work organizing with our partner organization COPINH to defend Indigenous territory against megaprojects in Honduras. ■

*Opposite page: Women leaders of the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles - West Africa*

# DEFENDING BLACK LIVES GLOBALLY



*“Grassroots International helped us make the connection between Black liberation struggles in the United States and the Black-led Honduran movement to confront US imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy.”*

*- Rajasvini Bhansali, Executive Director, Solidaire Network*

## *Grassroots International links the struggle to defend Black lives in the US with the struggles of Black and Afro-descendant peoples around the world.*

**T**he brutal assaults on Black communities and movements in the US are part of larger systems of corporate and militarized powers confronting Black communities and movements globally. Worldwide, white supremacy is expressed as neo-colonial influence in Black nations, as land grabs and exploitation in areas occupied by Black and Afro-Indigenous peoples, and as violent backlash against Black resistance everywhere.

In June of 2020, Grassroots International endorsed “A Global Black Call to Action” from the Movement for Black Lives, a powerful case for the global defense of Black lives. We matched this political commitment with financial resources, increasing our support for Black and Afro-descendant movements to more than \$2.8 million in 2020.

We also stepped up our solidarity with Black human rights defenders. To highlight the links between movements for Black lives in the US and around the world, we held virtual encounters featuring Afro-descendant partners from Puerto Rico, Honduras and Haiti.

Through our work in Honduras, we demanded justice for Edwin Fernandez, an activist with our partner OFRANEH (the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) who was assassinated last year, and the release of four more OFRANEH activists



*Edwin Fernández, an activist with OFRANEH, was assassinated for his work in defense of human rights in Honduras.*

who were kidnapped and have still not been returned.

Through our work in West Africa, we stood with Massa Kone, spokesperson for the Malian Convergence Against Land Grabbing (CMAT), a Grassroots International grantee. Massa’s home was invaded and his family terrorized by uniformed thugs after he denounced the murders of Malian farmers connected to massive land grabs.

Through our work in Haiti, we joined our partners, Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development (PAPDA), Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH), Tet Kole, and the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP), in condemning corrupt officials in the northeastern part of the country for their roles in the massacres of local farmers. ■

*Opposite page: Grassroots International partners in Brazil have joined the defense of the Afro-descendant Quilombola people, whose territory is under ongoing threat.*

# ***SOCIAL ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS***



*“Now more than ever, social mobilization is necessary for the defense of individual and collective human rights.”*

*- Peasant Unity Committee (CUC), Guatemala*

*As frontline communities and movements face multiple assaults — from the pandemic and climate chaos to resource grabs and authoritarian regimes — Grassroots International joins them in advocacy and organizing.*

**G**rassroots International takes part in advocacy campaigns, participates in alliances and networks to strengthen movement building, and takes other forms of coordinated social action in support of human rights. This work became all the more important in 2020 as the pandemic served as a pretext for further restrictions of human rights across the globe.

Globally, about half of all human rights activists killed each year are those engaged in environmental, land, and Indigenous rights struggles. Yet only five percent of already meager human rights defense support reaches these leaders in the countryside. To address this deficiency, we have joined with our global partners and allies including La Via Campesina, Friends of the Earth International, the World Forum of Fisher Peoples, and the World March of Women in an international alliance for Solidarity, Resistance, and Hope.

This alliance seeks to create a movement-based response to increased repression facing those who defend land, water, and other forms of territory. In 2020, we began the process of building an international network of movement lawyers, starting with a virtual exchange focused on the Americas. In the coming year, we will do similar exchanges in other regions, culminating in a Global Gathering of Movement Lawyers in Defense of the Rights of the People of the Countryside, the Forests, and the Waters.



*International Women's Day march in Brazil attended by staff of Grassroots International during our last in-person country visit of 2020.*

Grassroots International is also engaged in a variety of area-specific organizing efforts – e.g., around Haiti, Palestine, Honduras, and Brazil – in which we collaborate with our partners and allies to create coordinated responses to increased attacks on communities and movements. In 2020, we supported our partner Rede Social in co-producing an influential report exposing the links of Harvard University and pension fund manager TIAA to land grabbing in Brazil.

Additionally, through our involvement in US-based alliances like Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, US Food Sovereignty Alliance, and Climate Justice Alliance, we work to shape policies impacting frontline communities both in the US and internationally while deepening bonds of solidarity and internationalism. ■

*Opposite page: In Guatemala, popular movements mobilized to resist a corrupt and ineffective government response to COVID, natural disasters and the needs of the people.*

# PHILANTHROPIC LEADERSHIP



*“Some of us are on the front lines, others raise money, some write and others teach, but the most valuable thing we can give for social change is time, which can make all the difference.”*

*- Nicholas Harold Johnson, Donor-Activist  
Engagement Group member*

*Grassroots International's approach to solidarity philanthropy decolonizes traditional charity by building meaningful connections and transformative partnerships among donors, funders, activists, and movement organizations.*

**W**e see resource mobilization as a key part of political organizing. This is embodied by our Donor-Activist Engagement Group model of organizing. Last year, in collaboration with Jewish Voice for Peace and 1for3.org, we launched a Donor-Activist Engagement Group in Solidarity with Palestine. Over six months, this intentionally multi-ethnic, cross-class, multigenerational team engaged in deep learning and reflection on Palestine while raising \$75,000 for Palestinian-led organizations in Palestine and the US.

Through the CLIMA Fund, we partner with Global Greengrants Fund, Thousand Currents, and Urgent Action Fund for Women's Rights to uplift and shift capital towards grassroots climate justice solutions. As part of our work to transform philanthropy, the CLIMA Fund produced cutting-edge reports on climate defenders, launched videos on community-led solutions, and engaged large global funders in grassroots grantmaking. Our goal is to dramatically change the ways philanthropy approaches climate change.

Through the Building Equity and Alignment for Impact (BEAI) Fund, we provided \$1.9 million in general grants and COVID relief funds to environmental justice organizations across the US and Puerto Rico. From defense of Indigenous territory in Hawai'i to environmental justice policy work in Michigan, the BEAI Fund (which as of 2021 has transitioned to be under the full management and implementation of the BEA Initiative) has supported the growth of a more powerful environmental justice movement.



*Decolonizing philanthropy means building genuine connections between US donors and frontline movements everywhere.*

Collective wellbeing is another important aspect of our solidarity philanthropy. In response to the tremendous psychological violence faced by many communities on the frontlines of resistance, the Martín-Baró Initiative at Grassroots International funds community-based programs for psycho-social wellbeing and human rights.

To influence philanthropy more broadly, we bring grassroots voices into influential funding forums. A highlight among many in 2020 was a virtual gathering of the Environmental Grantmakers Association, where we introduced the powerful voices of Chief Ninawá Huni Kui (pictured on prior page) and his community from the Brazilian Amazon. Explaining how carbon pricing schemes are linked to land grabbing in Indigenous territory, they spoke out against this false solution to climate change and shared effective grassroots responses. ■

*Opposite page: Grassroots International works to connect donors with activists on the front lines of climate change, like Chief Ninawá pictured here.*

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

November 1, 2019 through October 31, 2020

In the face of a global pandemic, Grassroots International increased funding to crucial frontline movements, delivering \$5.8M in direct support - by far the largest amount ever in a year. While that included more than \$550K in emergency support to organizations serving communities hard-hit by Covid-19, the bulk of funding went toward long-term efforts in movement building and environmental justice. In addition, Grassroots increased support to movements defending themselves from right-wing attacks, which intensified through the health emergency.

Grassroots' ability to sustain and nurture global movements through adversity depends on the shared vision and commitment of our supporters. Their solidarity at a time of crisis allowed Grassroots to keep the focus on the work of movements. It also allowed us to direct a high proportion of spending toward grants, education, and program activities. Grassroots plans to build on the strength of this past year to remain a steady source of support to movements in the years to come.

## Statement of Support, Revenues and Expenses

For the year ended October 31, 2020

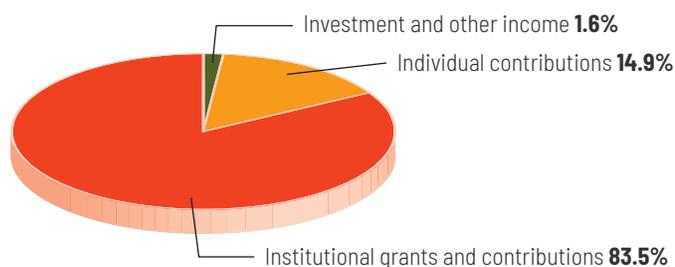
	Without Donor Restrictions		With Donor Restrictions	FY 2020 Total
	Undesignated	Board-designated		
<b>Support and Revenues</b>				
Institutional grants and contributions	\$3,842,555	-	5,338,867	\$9,181,423
Individual contributions	1,380,892		256,828	1,637,720
Investment and other income	171,416		9,247	180,663
	5,394,863	-	5,604,942	10,999,805
Net assets released from program restrictions	6,544,099	-	(6,544,099)	-
<b>Total support and revenues</b>	<b>11,938,962</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(939,157)</b>	<b>10,999,805</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
<b>Program Services</b>				
Grants	5,813,214			5,813,214
Humanitarian/social justice program	882,235			882,235
Education	328,341			328,341
<i>Total program services</i>	<i>7,023,790</i>			<i>7,023,790</i>
<b>Support Services</b>				
Management and general	588,887			588,887
Fundraising	645,715			645,715
<i>Total support services</i>	<i>1,234,602</i>			<i>1,234,602</i>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>8,258,392</b>			<b>8,258,392</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	3,680,570	-	(939,157)	<b>2,741,413</b>
<b>Net Assets, beginning of year</b>	955,127	1,220,738	3,212,378	5,388,243
Board designation of assets	(2,590,000)	2,590,000	-	-
<b>Net Assets, end of year</b>	<b>\$2,045,697</b>	<b>\$3,810,738</b>	<b>\$2,273,221</b>	<b>\$8,129,656</b>

## Balance Sheet

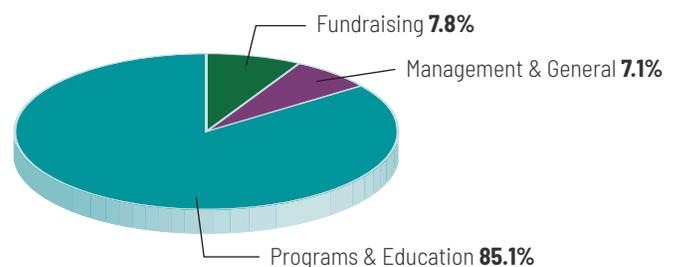
As of October 31, 2020

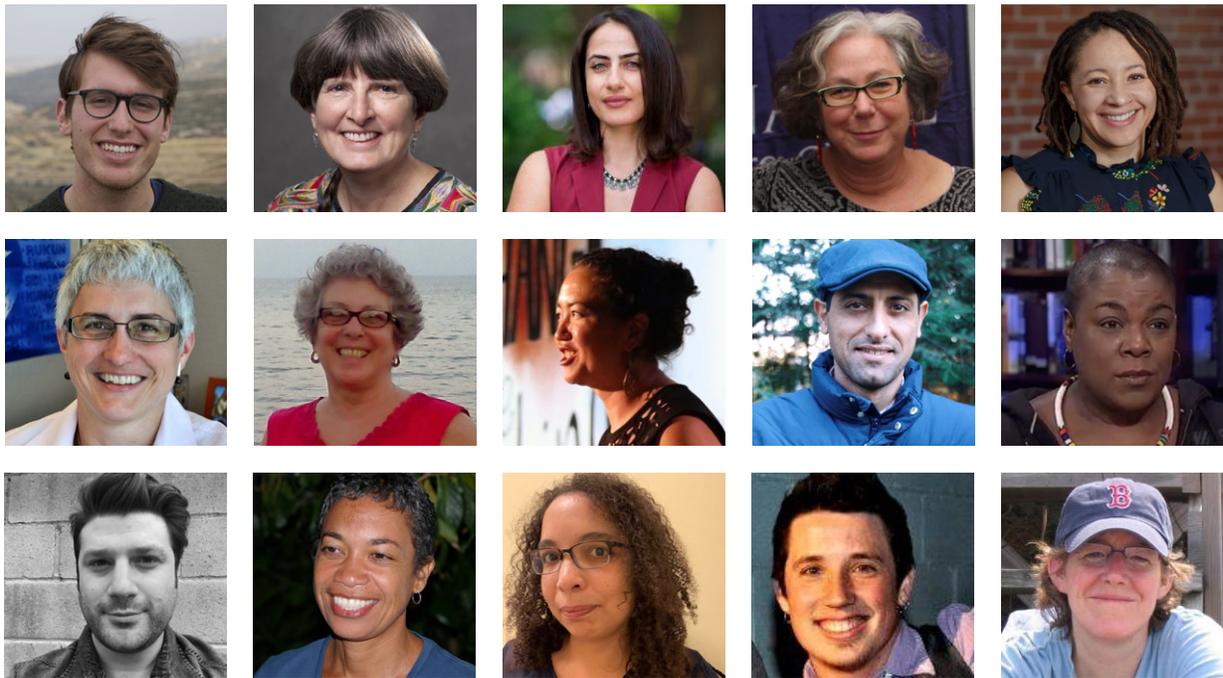
<b>Assets</b>	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,181,665
Grants and pledges receivable	326,009
Certificate of deposit	27,570
Investments - securities	4,564,904
Prepaid expenses and other	44,052
Cash and cash equivalents, restricted for program fund	3,741,146
Fixed and other assets, net	34,871
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>9,920,217</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
Grants Payable	1,340,404
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	198,074
Note payable to bank	252,083
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1,790,561</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
Without donor restrictions	
Undesignated	2,045,697
Board-designated	3,810,738
With donor restrictions	2,273,221
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>8,129,656</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$9,920,217</b>

### Support & Revenues



### Expenses





## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Members who served on the Board of Directors during all or part of the 2020 Fiscal Year*

**Maria Aguiar, Chair**

*Solidarity and Movement Organizer*

**Nidal Al-Azraq**

*1for3.org*

**Janet Axelrod**

*Wealth and Philanthropic Advisor*

**Kalila Barnett, Treasurer**

*Community and Environmental Organizing*

**Sha Grogan-Brown**

*Grassroots Global Justice Alliance*

**Mijo Lee, Secretary**

*Philanthropic Consultant*

**Sam Jacobs**

*Donor Organizer*

**M. Brinton Lykes**

*Center for Human Rights and International Justice*

**Kathryn Mulvey**

*Climate Accountability Campaigner and Advocate*

**Denise Perry**

*Black Organization for Leadership & Dignity*

**Ninaj Raoul**

*Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees*

**Jesenia Santana**

*Solidaire Network*

**Diala Shamas**

*Center for Constitutional Rights*

**Meredith Smith, Treasurer (outgoing)**

*Streamlined Accounting Strategies LLC*

**Sam Vinal**

*Filmmaker & Radical Imagination Family Foundation*

**Chung-Wha Hong, Ex-officio**

*Executive Director*



## STAFF MEMBERS

**Diana Alonzo Watkins** – Interim Director of Development and Solidarity Philanthropy

**Kathy Asuncion** – Project Manager for Donor Engagement

**Malkah B. Feldman** – Strategic Philanthropy Manager

**Jovanna Garcia Soto** – Senior Solidarity Program Officer - Latin America

**Chung-Wha Hong** – Executive Director

**Trina Jackson** – Senior Solidarity Program Officer - US Internationalist Program

**Jonathan Leaning** – Institutional Giving and Communications Coordinator

**Sara Mersha** – Director of Grantmaking and Advocacy

**Opal Mita** – Administrative Coordinator

**Orson Moon** – Director of Administration and Finance

**Chris Morrill** – Donor and Online Communications Coordinator

**Emily Rose Navarro** – Advancement Associate

**Ayman Nijim** – Solidarity Program Officer for the Middle East

**Jhenny Saint-surin** – Solidarity Program Officer for West Africa and Haiti

**Carol Schachet** – Director of Planning and Special Initiatives

**Christina M. Schiavoni** – Senior Communications Coordinator

**Lydia Simas** – Solidarity Program Officer for Special Projects

**Salena Tramel** – Senior Global Learning Coordinator

**Diana Villa** – Grants Administrator and Solidarity Program Officer

**Sam Yoon** – Administrative and Executive Associate

**Ivan Yung** – Finance Coordinator

## OUR VOLUNTEERS

*With thanks for all you've done during this challenging year.*

Sam Bayat

John Valinch

Nicholas Harold Johnson

Shira Breen

Aidan Orly

Mimi Budnick

Ollie Schwartz

Talia Baurer

Aisha Morgan

Miranda Cleland

Rachel Kerstein

Daniel Segal

Sara Sargent

## **WHO WE ARE**

*Grassroots International partners with, funds, and works in solidarity with movements and organizations around the world in order to nurture sustainable and equitable relationships between people, with the earth and all its living systems.*

## **OUR MISSION**

Our mission is to connect people in the US with global movements that defend land, territory, water, food, seeds, and the earth. Together, we address the root causes of injustice and oppression, and build alternatives that nurture human rights, ecological justice, and liberation. We do this through grantmaking, social action, and philanthropic leadership.

## **GLOBALIZING JUSTICE: OUR VISION**

Grassroots International envisions a world in which a universal commitment to the health and well-being of the earth and all its peoples, fueled by successful global movements for economic and climate justice, has transformed production practices, consumption patterns, and economic and social relations to ones based on sustainability, equity, and dignity. Our partnerships recognize that change is successful only when people in their own communities organize to confront the root causes of their problems.

## **THROUGH OUR APPROACH OF SOLIDARITY PHILANTHROPY, WE:**

- *focus on funding social movements;*
- *accompany social movements through long-term partnerships;*
- *work to make our own organizational practices consistent with social justice values;*
- *form partnerships with our funders to decolonize philanthropy, promote funder-activism, and move financial resources toward social movements; and*
- *participate in alliances, campaigns and other forms of social action.*



*Palestinians on a beach in the Gaza Strip.*



**Grassroots**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

FUNDING GLOBAL MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

**Grassroots International**  
**Funding global movements for social change**

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**GrassrootsOnline.org**