LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & BOARD CHAIR

Anyone who has funded or worked for environmental protection or social justice has at one point or another probably been overwhelmed by the scale of it all. When the problems are so multi-faceted and the system so entrenched, where is the best place to put our time and resources?

A recent piece in Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR), “The Relational Work of Systems Change,” suggests an answer: it’s the connections between people and institutions that are capable of changing systems, not the parts in isolation. Building those deep connections requires us all to change from within, examining our assumptions and blind spots and practicing today the world we want to see tomorrow. As the authors say: “the process is the solution.”

As a network that connects women changemakers, we strive to embody this lesson. Our founding intention was to bring funders together to share ideas and friendship. Over twenty years later, we continue this mission. In 2021, we travelled to New Mexico to hear from local environmental leaders, hosted two book clubs (Braiding Sweetgrass and Farming While Black), held educational and conversational webinars on a variety of environmental and philanthropic issues, and combined our resources to fund grantee-partners doing important work (see page 8).

Our signature program, the Catalyst Award (see page 4), is building and strengthening relationships too. Apart from the award’s financial support for women environmental leaders of color, we’ve fostered community among the awardees, and provided a harbor for advice and support.

In addition to the awardees, the program engages our whole community of members, liaisons, advisors, former awardees, and friends. Our members who have participated in the Catalyst Award are funding more BIPOC-led organizations than they did before participating.

Progress can’t happen without the inner work described by the SSIR authors. That’s why we are dedicating resources to educate ourselves as funders and as an organization about systemic racism and how to combat it. You can read about our commitment to racial justice on our website: rachelsnetwork.org/about.

More is still needed to support the women leaders of our movement. So many across the country are doing vital work for the planet and their communities without adequate support or recognition. In the years ahead, we intend to provide more sustained and holistic support to Catalyst awardees and build deeper opportunities for connection and service among our members.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for joining with the terrific women across our country building a healthier, safer, and more just world.

With warmth and resolve,

Fern Shepard
President

Kef Kasdin
Board Chair
The Rachel’s Network Catalyst Award provides women environmental leaders of color support and recognition for their commitment to a healthy planet.

Since 2019, the Catalyst Award has:

- Granted over $500,000 dollars to 75 women environmental leaders of color and their organizations;
- Built a mutually supportive community of awardees, reviewers, advisors, members, and staff;
- Provided leadership support to women of color environmental leaders and their organizations; and
- Contributed to the growth of Rachel’s Network and the furtherance of our mission.

“It has been incredible to watch this award evolve from its inception to now. These stunning women around the country are putting their entire selves into environmental work and being recognized for the gifts, talents, and impact on their communities and the field at large.”

— Rachel’s Network Advisor and Raben Group Principal, Whitney Tome

2021 Catalyst Awardees

Huda Alkaff
Milwaukee, WI

Huda is an ecologist, environmental educator, and the founder and director of Wisconsin Green Muslims, a grassroots group she started in 2005 to connect faith, environmental justice, and sustainability through education and service.

Dr. Virginia Necochea
Albuquerque, NM

Virginia is the executive director of and the first woman of color to lead the New Mexico Environmental Law Center which protects New Mexico’s communities and their fundamental human rights to clean air, land, and water in the fight for environmental justice.

Dr. Na’Taki Osborne Jelks
Atlanta, GA

Na’Taki is an assistant professor in the Environmental and Health Sciences Program at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA, and co-founder of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, a community-based environmental justice organization that works to grow a healthier and more sustainable West Atlanta.
2021 Catalyst Awardees (cont.)

Vi Pangunnaaq Waghiyi
Anchorage, AK
Vi is a Sivuqaq Yupik Grandmother, Native Village of Savoonga Tribal Citizen. Since 2002, she has worked with Alaska Community Action on Toxics and serves as its environmental health and justice program director.

2021 Catalyst Finalists

Crystal Huang
Oakland, CA
Crystal is co-founder and CEO of People Power Solar Cooperative which is building a movement toward grassroots-led and community-owned solar.

Amee Raval
Oakland, CA
Amee is the policy and research director at Asian Pacific Environmental Network, an environmental justice organization with deep roots in California’s Asian immigrant and refugee communities.

Dr. Katia Avilés Vázquez
San Juan, PR
Katia is the director of Instituto para la Agroecología which supports agroecological initiatives in Puerto Rico through services, financing, physical resources, and training.

Atiya Wells
Baltimore, MD
Atiya founded Backyard Basecamp to introduce, educate, and connect families in Baltimore, especially BIPOC, to outdoor spaces.

Dr. Nikki Traylor-Knowles
Miami, FL
Nikki is an assistant professor in Marine Biology and Ecology at University of Miami, Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences. She is also the founder and director of Black Women in Ecology, Evolution and Marine Science, a nonprofit that helps combat the isolation and abuse in STEM against Black women.

Daphany Sanchez
Brooklyn, NY
Daphany founded Kinetic Communities in 2017 after seeing the representation gap in the energy sector. Her organization ensures frontline communities and people of color are a priority in a just clean energy transition.
“This year, I really valued the members and staff and their ability to expose me to new people, new ideas, and new people to fund.”
— Member Carolyn Fine Friedman

Our Impact: 2021 Grantee-Partners

Since 2000, our network has collectively granted over $2.5 million to organizations that grow healthy communities and promote women’s leadership. We also provide selective place-based grants to organizations located where our events our held. In 2021, we provided grants totaling $245,642 to the following organizations*:

- Agri-Cultura Network
- Alabama A&M University Small Farm Research Center Foundation
- Alaska Community Action on Toxics
- Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- Backyard Basecamp
- Black In Marine Science
- Black Women in Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Science
- Center for Food Safety
- Center for Heirs’ Property Preservation
- Climate Resolve
- Emerald Cities Collaboration
- Empowering a Green Environment & Economy
- F.A.R.M.S.
- Flowering Tree Permaculture Institute
- GCV Education Fund
- Ginew Collective
- Instituto para la Agroecología
- Local Clean Energy Alliance
- LULAC of Iowa
- Milkweed Editions
- National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
- Native Movement
- Northeast Farmers Of Color Land Trust
- New Mexico Environmental Law Center
- People Over Petro Coalition / Center for Coalfield Justice
- People Power Solar Cooperative
- Philanos
- Quivira Coalition
- REACT – Rubbertown Emergency ACTion
- Ridges to Riffles Conservation Fund
- Soul Fire Farm Land Stewardship Collective
- South Ward Environmental Alliance
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- Stop Line 3 Campaign
- Tewa Women United
- The EcoWomanist Institute
- #ToxicFreeFoodFDA/Environmental Working Group
- United Tribes of Bristol Bay
- Universal Access Project
- Urban Tilth
- West Atlanta Watershed Alliance
- White Earth Land Recovery Project
- Wisconsin Green Muslims

*Total doesn’t include individual member giving.

Supporting the Frontline Communities Fighting Line 3 in Minnesota

Enbridge runs a tangled network of oil and gas pipelines across Canada and the central US including the 6B in Michigan that resulted in one of the largest inland oil spills in US history. Native organizers in Minnesota led on-the-ground resistance to urge President Biden to revoke permits and halt construction of Enbridge’s Line 3, provide legal support to water protectors, and communicate the threat posed by the pipeline. Rachel’s Network provided a grant through the Equation Campaign to support the coalition.

Supporting a Community Food Hub in Richmond, CA

Six years ago, Urban Tilth took a neglected three-acre plot of land in North Richmond and turned it into a flourishing community farm. They recently purchased the land they’ve been leasing and are expanding programming and infrastructure. Rachel’s Network provided a grant to Urban Tilth to help make this vision a reality.

Learn more at rachelsnetwork.org/impact
Who We Are

Named in honor of Rachel Carson, we are a community of women funders committed to a safer, healthier, and more just world for all. Our members serve on the boards of major environmental organizations, and fund solutions in a variety of areas, ranging from sustainable agriculture and health, to conservation and climate change.

Rachel’s Network...

Introduces members to lifelong friends and colleagues who share a commitment to sustainable change, women’s leadership, and environmental protection.

Meets in person and virtually for conferences, excursions, webinars, and other events that bring together forward-thinking funders and experts in environmental issues and philanthropy.

Helps connect nonprofits with members interested in board service.

Helps members become stronger funders and advocates through exposure to a wealth of curated information and connections to grassroots activists.

Serves as a fiscal sponsor for worthy nonprofits launched by our members.

“Rachel’s Network has deepened my approach to funding and, in fact, made me enjoy it more. Without the JEDI work and the two books we read together, I doubt that the organizations I funded this year would ever have crossed my radar screen.”

– Member Ann Hunter-Welborn
Board of Directors

Marcia Angle, Treasurer
Kim Bendheim
Martha Davis
Barbara Gonzalez-McIntosh
Lisa Holmes
Ann Hunter-Welborn
Kef Kasdin, Board Chair
Anna Lawson
Alice Liddell
Fa Liddell, Secretary
Elena Marszalek
Janet Miller
Kim Milligan
Jan Montgomery
Rosamond Pope-Meyer
Molly Ross, Vice Chair

Staff

Fern Shepard, President
Mit Allenby, Operations Director
Claire Barnwell, Community Manager
Jamie Boese, Program Director
Ariana Carella, Network Engagement Director
Erica Flock, Communications and Advocacy Director
Casey Hansen, Membership and Development Director
Hannan Sheikh, Membership and Grants Manager

Advisors

Maite Arce, President & CEO
Hispanic Access Foundation
Rev. Sally Bingham, President & Founder, Interfaith Power & Light
Dr. Helen Caldicott, Founder Physicians for Social Responsibility
Paula DiPerna, Special Advisor Carbon Disclosure Project – North America
Dr. Sylvia A. Earle, Oceanographer and Explorer-in-Residence, National Geographic Society
Angelou Ezeilo, CEO & Founder, Greening Youth Foundation
Hazel Henderson, Founder, Ethical Markets Media, LLC
L. Hunter Lovins, Founder & President, Natural Capitalism Solutions
Julia Olson, Esq., Executive Director & Chief Legal Counsel, Our Children’s Trust

Liaisons

May Boeve, Executive Director, 350.org
Keya Chatterjee, Executive Director US Climate Action Network
Jamie Rappaport Clark, President & CEO Defenders of Wildlife
Abigail Dillen, President, Earthjustice
Katie Frohardt, Executive Director Wild Earth Allies
Seema Jalan, Executive Director Universal Access Project

Janis Searles Jones, CEO
Ocean Conservancy
Annie Leonard, Executive Director Greenpeace USA
Stephanie Meeks, President & CEO Student Conservation Association
Theresa Pierro, President & CEO National Parks Conservation Association
Kathleen Rogers, President, EARTHDAY.ORG
Nicole Silk, President, River Network

Janelle Orsi, Esq. Executive Director & Co-Founder, Sustainable Economies Law Center
Nora Pouillon, Author, Chef and Founder, Restaurant Nora
Carolyn Raffensberger, Executive Director, Science and Environmental Health Network
Vicki Spruill, President & CEO, New England Aquarium
Whitney Tome, Principal, Raben Group
Debbie Walsh, Director, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University
Alice Waters, Author; Chef and Owner, Chez Panisse Restaurant
Terry Tempest Williams, Author, Naturalist, and Conservationist
2021 Financials

Revenue
Total: $1,573,323
- Contributions: $1,245,602
- Other Revenue (event fees, etc.): $187,857
- Investment Income/Loss: $139,864
- Program Services: $628,294
- Administration: $157,703
- Fundraising: $108,119

Expense
Total: $1,073,078
- Program Services: $628,294
- Grants: $178,962
- Fundraising: $108,119
- Administration: $157,703

Change in Net Assets
$500,245
Our Mission
Rachel’s Network is a community of women at the intersection of environmental advocacy, philanthropy, and leadership. Our mission is to promote women as impassioned leaders and agents of change dedicated to the stewardship of the earth.

Our Vision
Catalyzing our collective power, Rachel’s Network influences social, political, and economic systems to advance a healthy, thriving world.