



Rachel's  
Network

In 2023, we asked women environmental leaders of color through the Catalyst Award about their dreams and what resources they needed to fulfill those dreams. Here are some of their responses...

The nonprofit world is a grind; I am dreaming about how to effectively lead social justice and change work from an alternate perspective.

Chanté Coleman,  
Senior Vice President of Equity and Justice, National Wildlife Federation

Land back would help us fulfill a repatriation plan. It would mean personal healing for Ohlone and those who now call Ohlone territory their home. Most of all, it would mean the opportunity to right a wrong that has a deep wound in the heart of Tribal members.

Charlene Eigen-Vasquez, Chair, Confederation of Ohlone People

I dream of Black, Brown, Indigenous children especially getting a fair chance at a healthy and safe childhood. I would like to see a systems approach to addressing protective policy, public health standards, and overall community wellness and design that includes placing children first in all that we do.

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, Executive Director, Children's Environmental Health Network

I would love to redesign our entire broken and racist energy system, starting by dismantling the entire for-profit utility system, replacing it with accountable public community systems, and providing every home with resilient and clean energy—starting with communities of color and low-income families who have for generations borne trauma and pain from the fossil fuel era.

Jean Su, Energy Justice Director and Senior Attorney, Center for Biological Diversity

My biggest dream is to honor my father's legacy by having the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary designated. I am deeply committed to seeing women supporting other women and have made lifelong friends doing this work together.

Violet Sage Walker, Chairwoman, Northern Chumash Tribal Council

# Rachel's Network

## 2023 Annual Report

*"We but mirror the world.  
All the tendencies present in the  
outer world are to be found in the  
world of our body. If we could  
change ourselves, the tendencies  
in the world would also change."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

In philanthropy, there is often a gulf—both literal and metaphorical—between grantmakers and grantees. In doing this work, it's important to hold a mirror to ourselves to look at the ways we can avoid working against our desire for a better world.

Some of the self-reflective practices we've adopted in our organization within the last few years include:

- 1) **Focused programming and funding where it's needed most.** Our mission calls us to "promote women" within the movement. That's why we feature women as speakers for all our events, and make grants to women and their organizations. We especially prioritize women of color as they are largely overlooked in philanthropy, and their work is essential for achieving a thriving and healthy planet. In 2023, 100% of our collective funding went to women and their initiatives, with the majority of that going to women of color.
- 2) **Providing multi-year unrestricted gifts.** Nonprofits spend an inordinate amount of time applying for grants. We provide three-year commitments to Catalyst Awardees so they have some predictable income, and we support movement leaders as individuals.
- 3) **Minimizing application requirements.** The "Fix the Form" campaign is encouraging funders to simplify their grant requirements so grantees can spend more time doing the work that makes a difference. We've iterated our Catalyst Award application each year to limit the burden on time-strapped candidates.
- 4) **Taking steps to create a board that's accountable to the community.** Boards have legal and financial requirements, but often aren't accountable to the mission or the community they serve. By changing our bylaws to allow those who aren't funder members to take part in governance, we've taken a first step to increase our accountability to our mission.

If you are a funder, we encourage you to adopt practices like these too. You can learn more at [trustbasedphilanthropy.org](https://trustbasedphilanthropy.org).

There's still so much more to do, but we're excited for the journey ahead. If you'd like to join us in this journey, reach out to us at [info@rachelsnetwork.org](mailto:info@rachelsnetwork.org) – we'd love to have you in our circle.

Sincerely,

**Fern Shepard**  
President

*Fern*



**Kef Kasdin**  
Board Chair

*Kef*



# Who We Are

*“Rachel’s Network has given me a network of support, resources, and relationships that allows me to be a better-informed funder.”*

— Josie Gabel

Named in honor of Rachel Carson, we are a community of women committed to a safer, healthier, and more just world for all. Our funder members serve on the boards of environmental organizations, and make grants in a variety of areas, ranging from regenerative 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 justice
  - Meets in person and virtually for conferences, excursions, webinars, and other events that bring together forward-thinking experts in environmental issues and philanthropy
  - Helps members become stronger funders and advocates through collective funding projects, educational programs, and connections to grassroots leaders
  - Helps connect nonprofits with women interested in board service
- For information about joining Rachel’s Network, visit [rachelsnetwork.org](http://rachelsnetwork.org) or email [sarah@rachelsnetwork.org](mailto:sarah@rachelsnetwork.org).



# 2023 Programs At a Glance

In a survey, nearly 70% of funder members who attended at least one Rachel's Network event in 2023 said that the most valuable outcome was that it deepened their understanding of justice and equity in the environmental movement. A large majority also said they valued creating community with other women funders and leaders, and learned something that has helped them become a better or more informed funder.

As a result of their participation in Rachel's Network, 40% of funders indicated that they individually give more to women of color-led and/or frontline environmental initiatives.

In 2023, nineteen Rachel's Network events reached 360 participants, including funder members, grantee-partners, community members, and other environmental leaders.

Some of those events included:

- Webinars on timely topics like plastic pollution, public health, and addressing movement leader burnout
- A conference in California's central coast highlighting local women leaders in ocean and land conservation
- Virtual programs featuring Catalyst Awardees and their work on everything from regenerative agriculture to environmental justice
- A DC book launch party and virtual book club for Catalyst Awardee Heather McTeer Toney, author of *Before the Streetlights Come On: Black America's Call for Climate Solutions*
- A networking lunch for women executives of environmental organizations



# Catalyst Award

Each year, the Rachel's Network Catalyst Award provides mid-career women environmental leaders of color with: a personal prize (\$10,000); a well-being stipend (\$5,000); an organizational grant (\$10,000, if applicable); wraparound leadership services; and public recognition. Most of this support comes from our generous funder members, who are committed to a safer, healthier, and more just world for all.

## SINCE 2019, THE CATALYST AWARD HAS:

- Granted over \$1.3 million dollars to 101 women environmental leaders of color and their organizations from 42 states, Puerto Rico, and DC
- Supported critical frontline environmental initiatives and leaders
- Heightened the visibility of women of color-led environmental work
- Built a mutually supportive community of awardees, reviewers, funders, advisors, and staff

*"Traditionally, women of color have to provide 10 times more proof as to why we deserve funding, and we only get a fraction of what we need. Having an opportunity like the Rachel's Network [Catalyst Award] allowed me and my team to mobilize and think about strategies that can support our communities without restrictions."*

*— Daphany Rose Sanchez,  
Kinetic Communities  
Executive Director and  
2021 Catalyst Awardee*



**Erika Allen**  
Co-Founder and CEO of Strategic Development and Programs, Urban Growers Collective  
Chicago, Illinois

Erika's nonprofit supports health, economic development, healing, and creativity through urban agriculture. They operate eight community-based urban farms on 11 acres of land, predominantly on Chicago's South Side.



**Dr. Tiara Moore**  
Founder and CEO, Black in Marine Science  
Alpharetta, Georgia

Tiara's work connects Black marine scientists around the world, celebrates their contributions, and deepens understanding of climate change and ocean literacy.

**Helga Garcia Garza**  
Executive Director, Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

For the last 30 years, Helga has been dedicated to community health initiatives on both sides of the US/Mexico region, organizing and educating communities on water, land, and air contamination.



**Jacqueline Patterson**  
Founder and Executive Director, The Chisholm Legacy Project  
Burtonsville, Maryland

Rooted in a Just Transition Framework, Jacqueline (a 2024 Time Magazine "Woman of the Year") connects Black communities on the frontlines of climate justice with the resources to actualize visions.



**Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH**  
Executive Director, Children's Environmental Health Network  
Washington, DC

Nsedu is a key spokesperson on children's environmental health, and leads policy, education/training, and science-related programs with an equitable lens.

# 2023 Catalyst Awardees

**P. Qasimah Boston**

Tallahassee Food Network  
Tallahassee, Florida

**Chanté Coleman**

National Wildlife Federation  
San Diego, California

**Charlene Eigen-Vasquez (Ohlone)**

Confederation of Ohlone People  
Gilroy, California

**Dr. Shelley Francis**

EVHybridNoire/EVNoire  
Atlanta, Georgia

**Amyrose Foll  
(Penobscot/Abenaki)**

Virginia Free Farm  
Kents Store, Virginia

**Mariah Gladstone  
(Blackfeet, Cherokee)**

Indigikitchen  
Babb, Montana

**Rozina Kanchwala**

Eco.Logic  
Chicago, Illinois

**Dr. Suzanne Pierre**

Critical Ecology Lab  
Oakland, CA

**Jean Su**

Center for Biological Diversity  
Washington, DC

**Violet Sage Walker (Chumash)**

Northern Chumash Tribal Council  
Guadalupe, California

# 2023 Catalyst Finalists

## Our Impact: 2023 Grantee-Partners

*“And so, lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving, and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ‘ere long.”*

— Mary Church Terrell

Since 2000, our network has collectively granted over \$2.8 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 are held. In 2023, we provided grants totaling \$374,749 to the following organizations\*:

- Agri-Cultura Cooperative Network
- Amah Mutsun Land Trust
- Azul (via Multiplier)
- Barbareno Band of Chumash Indians
- Black in Marine Science
- Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living
- Children’s Environmental Health Network
- Climate Critical Earth
- Chisholm Legacy Project
- Critical Ecology Lab
- Emerge Puerto Rico
- FrontLine Farming
- Local Clean Energy Alliance
- Lupine Collaborative
- Movement Training Network
- New Mexico Environmental Law Center
- Onondaga Nation Sustainable Farm
- PLAN – The Post Landfill Action Network
- Rise to Thrive
- Soul Fire Farm Institute
- Taproot Earth
- Universal Access Project
- Urban Growers Collective
- West Virginia Rivers Coalition

\*Total doesn’t include individual member giving

# 2023 Grantee-Partner Highlights:

## Black Femme Leadership Fund



Whether they are at the frontlines, in the political arena, or working in big organizations; Black women regularly face working environments and organizing spaces hostile to their ideas, wellbeing, and safety. Rachel's Network provided grants to four burgeoning organizations led by and for Black women in the environmental movement: The Chisholm Legacy Project, Climate Critical, The Lupine Collaborative, and Rise to Thrive.

## West Virginia Rivers Coalition



The Ohio River Valley is the third largest producer of natural gas in the world, behind only Russia and the rest of the US. The region is also the likely source of more methane emissions than anywhere else in the country. In 2023, three Rachel's Network members toured the area during a funder event in Pittsburgh and decided to organize fellow members to pool funds through Rachel's Network to support the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. The organization is fighting to protect the region through advocacy, organizing, and job training.



Visit [rachelsnetwork.org/impact](https://rachelsnetwork.org/impact) to learn more about these organizations.





# Leadership

## Board of Directors

<b>Marcia Angle</b> (Treasurer)	<b>Kef Kasdin</b> (Board Chair)
<b>Martha Davis</b>	<b>Alice Liddell</b>
<b>Josie Gabel</b>	<b>Fa Liddell</b> (Secretary)
<b>Barbara Gonzalez-McIntosh</b>	<b>Elena Marszalek</b>
<b>Tacy Hahn</b>	<b>Kim Milligan</b>
<b>Lisa Holmes</b>	<b>Jan Montgomery</b>
<b>Ann Hunter-Welborn</b>	<b>Rosamond Pope-Meyer</b>
	<b>Molly Ross</b> (Vice Chair)



Board Chair Kef Kasdin dedicates 'Community' by artist Favianna Rodriguez at our office. Dedicated in loving memory of our colleague Casey Hansen in October 2023.

## Advisors

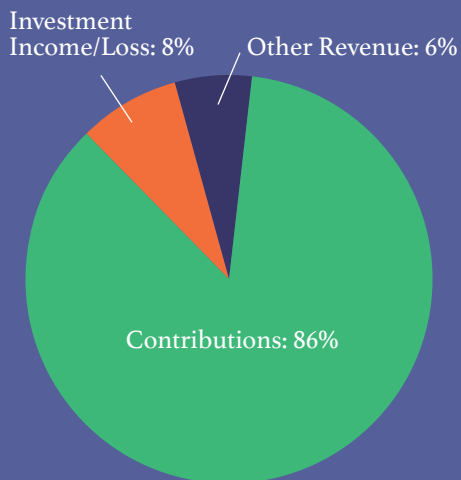
**Maite Arce**, President & CEO, Hispanic Access Foundation  
**Abigail Dillen**, President, Earthjustice  
**Angelou Ezeilo**, CEO & Founder, Greening Youth Foundation  
**Jennifer Dianto Kemmerly**, Vice President, Global Ocean Conservation, Monterey Bay Aquarium  
**Ebony Twilley Martin**, Executive Director, Greenpeace USA  
**Theresa Pierno**, President & CEO, National Parks Conservation Association  
**Kathleen Rogers**, President, earthday.org  
**Janis Searles Jones**, CEO, Ocean Conservancy  
**Dilly Severin**, Executive Director, Universal Access Project  
**Whitney Tome**, Principal, Raben Group

## Staff

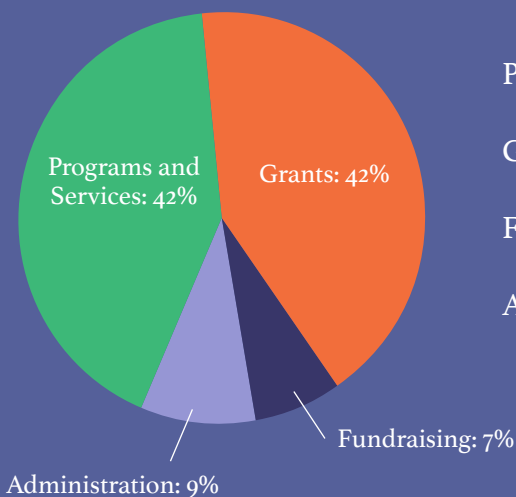
**Jamie Boese**, Program Director  
**Shreya Durvasula**, Catalyst Award Director  
**Erica Flock**, Communications and Advocacy Director  
**Hannan Sheikh**, Finance & Membership Director  
**Fern Shepard**, President  
**Sarah Walker**, Membership & Development Director



# Financials



Contributions	1,719,514	86%
Investment Income/Loss	156,674	8%
Other Revenue (event fees, etc.)	112,852	6%
	<hr/>	
	1,989,040	100%



Programs and Services	896,087	42%
Grants	882,025	42%
Fundraising	140,246	7%
Administration	192,524	9%
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	2,110,882	100%

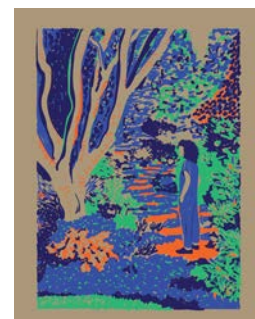
Change in Net Assets (121,842)

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# About the Annual Report Designers



Cover illustrator **Simone Martin-Newberry** is a graphic designer and award-winning illustrator based in Chicago. The piece, entitled *The Tree and Me*, is available for purchase at [heysimone.com](https://heysimone.com).



Cover illustration description:  
She pauses on the stone steps to gaze at the forked tree, nestled within the shaded garden.



Graphic Designer **Monique Meyer** is principal at the design firm Studio South + Shore. She is also the founder of the School of Graphic Design where she teaches beginner to advanced courses that empower people to “create their own wow.”

Find her at [southandshore.design](https://southandshore.design).



# Rachel's Network

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## 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.