



**RACHEL'S
NETWORK
CATALYST
ANNUAL
REPORT**

2024

In the Catalyst report last year, I talked about the importance of exercising hope as muscle. I did not realize how relevant that sentiment would end up being. In addition to hope, care also comes up a lot when members talk about Rachel's Network. Care was also a big impetus behind our inaugural wellness and restoration retreat for women of color environmental leaders, held in November. I encourage you to read more about our time there, and what the participants had to say.

As we wrap what feels like the most news-packed year in our history, I am fresh off a Rachel's Network community gathering in New York City- where funders, friends, and Catalyst community members gathered to watch the Tony Award-winning musical *Suffs*. *Suffs* brings to life a complicated chapter in the ongoing battle for the right to vote: the American women's suffrage movement. It also underscored how long the movement for justice is, the importance of community, building solidarity, and a reminder to never, ever give up the fight.

The gains will feel small and the losses too large
Keep marching, keep marching
You'll rarely agree with whoever's in charge
Keep marching, keep marching
'Cause your ancestors are all the proof you need
That progress is possible, not guaranteed
It will only be made if we keep marching
Keep marching on (Keep marching on)
Keep marching on (Keep marching on)

-Shaina Taub, *Suffs*

For our ancestors, our descendants, and for ourselves, I look forward to marching on with you in 2025 and beyond.

Yours in solidarity,
Shreya Durvasula
Catalyst Award Director



ABOUT RACHEL'S NETWORK

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 community's top issues include climate change, biodiversity and conservation, ocean health, air and water pollution, environmental health and justice, and regenerative agriculture, among others. We launched the Catalyst Award in 2019 to celebrate and support women of color who are building a healthier, safer, and more just world.

CATALYST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Catalyst Award was originally designed to honor five mid-career women each year with one-time \$10,000 prizes, networking opportunities, and public recognition. Since then, the Catalyst Award has grown to a multi-year gift of \$75,000 per awardee (\$10,000 unrestricted, \$5,000 wellness stipend, and if applicable, a \$10,000 organizational grant each year for three years), coaching services, and leadership support. Finalists also receive a gift of \$2,500 in recognition of their leadership.

Over the last six years, the Catalyst Award has:

- Built a mutually supportive community of over 90 awardees and finalists
- Engaged 1,100 environmental leaders from 42 states, Puerto Rico, and DC.
- Granted \$1.75 million to 120 individuals and their organizations.



CREATING A HEALTHIER, CLEANER, AND MORE JUST WORLD

The Catalyst Award provides much-needed support to mid-career leaders who are the backbones of their organizations and communities. This was our most competitive year, with nearly 200 applications, which is why you'll see 14 finalists instead of the usual 10. The sheer number of applications also demonstrates the immense need for awards like Catalyst, and for funding for women of color in the environmental space.

This year, the reviewers were encouraged to focus on the potential catalytic impact of the award for applicants, which means we prioritized the "mid-career" aspect of the award. We hope that this vibrant community of support they're now stepping into will help bolster them against the "glass cliff."

The recipients were selected through a six-month community process. Many board members, as well as our advisors, staff, and leaders in our broader community all powered this process. A group of our former awardees led the final rounds of our selection, aligning with and upholding participatory grantmaking principles.

We hosted our first ever live announcement of the recipients this year! Check out the recording to hear from the awardees directly: [2024 Catalyst Award Announcement Livestream](#).

"It has been an up and down year. This [award] means so much to me, just to get this affirmation. It's like a hug."

- Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, 2024 Catalyst Awardee



"In my view, Rachel's Network is a major contributor to the protection and preservation of movement leadership and has found an approach to a serious public health problem."

- Dr. P Qasimah Boston, 2023 Catalyst Finalist

2024 AWARDEES & FINALISTS



Awardees (Click through for more information):

- Joy Gary, [Boston Farms Community Land Trust](#); Boston, MA
- Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, [Bayou City Waterkeeper](#); Houston, TX
- Marissa Mercurieff, [Aleut Community of St. Paul Island](#), St. Paul, AK
- Renae Reynolds, [Tri-State Transportation Campaign](#); North Bergen, NJ
- Jhana Young, [Conservation International Hawaii](#); Honolulu, HI

Finalists:

- Sylvia Chi, Just Solutions Collective, Oakland, CA
- Patricia Garcia-Nelson, GreenLatinos, Greeley, CO
- Marsha Jackson, Southern Sector Rising, Dallas, TX
- Adriann Killsnight (He'heenóhká'e), Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Charging Buffalo, LLC, Hot Springs, MT
- Natalie Mebane, Rise to Thrive, Washington, DC
- Tessine Murji, Sierra Club, Chicago, IL
- Shimekia Nichols, Soulardarity, Detroit, MI
- Jacquelyn Omosunbo Omotalade, Dream.Org, Pittsburgh, PA
- Portia Shepherd, Blackbelt Women Rising, Uniontown, AL
- Gwen Smith, CHARRS (Community Health Aligning Revitalization Resilience & Sustainability), Atlanta, GA
- Isabel Solorio, Community United, Vallejo, CA
- Diamond Spratling, Girl Plus Environment, Atlanta, GA
- Amy Stelly, Claiborne Avenue Alliance Design Studio, New Orleans, LA
- Candice Youngblood, Youth on Root, Los Angeles, CA

CATALYST COMMUNITY IMPACT

Catalyst awardees work across the country to steward land and water, establish just and regenerative food systems, fight polluters, influence policy and guard democracy, protect marginalized communities from climate impacts, and support other environmental leaders. They can dedicate more time and energy to the environmental movement because of the Catalyst Award. And their impact is undeniable. Here are just a few highlights from the broader Catalyst Community.

Holding Polluters Accountable

-2022 Awardee Zulene Mayfield was invited to testify before Germany's parliament about the negative impact of a planned liquefied natural gas export terminal in Chester, PA.

-2020 Awardee Doria Robinson helped negotiate a monumental settlement for Chevron to pay the city of Richmond, CA half a billion dollars. Chevron has used litigation and political influence to evade taxes and avoid responsibility for its environmental impacts in the community where Doria serves as a city councilmember.

-2023 Finalist Jean Su is assisting in a lawsuit against Duke Energy on behalf of the town of Carrboro, NC. The lawsuit seeks to hold Duke Energy accountable for its deceptive campaigns on climate change. Town of Carrboro News Conference December 4, 2024

Growing a Green Future

-2023 Finalist Charlene Eigen-Vasquez's organization Four Directions Consulting and the Confederation of Ohlone People were awarded \$1.7 million from NOAA to increase Indigenous engagement around climate resiliency.

2019 Awardee and USDA Rural Development California State Director Maria Gallegos Herrera announced a \$1.3 million investment to rehabilitate affordable housing for farmworkers in Monterey County.



CATALYST COMMUNITY IMPACT

Growing a Green Future continued

-2023 Finalist Violet Sage Walker successfully lobbied on behalf of the Northern Chumash Tribal Council to create the new Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, which will protect 4,543 square miles of the Pacific Ocean near Santa Barbara.

-2020 Finalist Venice Williams is a partner in Milwaukee's new FEED MKE initiative which is utilizing a \$400,000 USDA grant to help families experiencing food insecurity and to reduce food waste in the city.

-2022 Finalist Elizabeth Yeampierre celebrated the announcement of Sunset Park Solar, a community-led initiative in Brooklyn aimed at providing clean, affordable energy to the neighborhood. Elizabeth's organization UPROSE will co-own the solar array, ensuring community control and governance.

Environmental Art and Media

-2024 Awardee Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud's art exhibit "New Suns" was on view at the Cecily E. Horton Gallery in Houston. The exhibit explored space, geography, mapping, and land/waterscapes, especially of the African diaspora.

-2020 Awardee Leah Penniman is featured in a new film based on her book *Farming While Black* and the rising generation of young black farmers

-2024 Finalist Amy Stelly appears in Wasted: Overtourism & The French Quarter, a new film that explores overtourism in the French Quarter and explores a more sustainable path for the city.



INAUGURAL WELLNESS & RESTORATION RETREAT

In November, Rachel's Network hosted the first of its kind retreat for women of color leaders at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Awardees, finalists, and staff members Catalyst Award Director Shreya Durvasula and Finance and Membership Director Hannan Sheikh were joined by grantees of the Tides Foundation's Women's Environmental Leadership (WE LEAD) fund for a gathering focused on care and restoration for women environmental leaders of color.

With news of the election results still fresh, the retreat served as a vital gathering space for 14 leaders to process their emotions and fears in a supportive space. The agenda included shared meals, a guided hike, yoga classes, and reflective time in nature. Gatherings like these will be vital over the next four years as women leaders face increased threats to their wellbeing and communities. We hope to continue creating spaces for these leaders to come together, rest, and connect to each other.



“What I valued most about this retreat was the way I was truly seen and heard, without the need to explain too much. It was comforting to be in a space where everyone in the room understood the struggles and barriers we face as women of color. While cultivating relationships is important, it's even more crucial to feel valued as human beings first—rather than always feeling as though our stories are being extracted for the benefit of others” - Retreat Attendee

BUDGET & FUNDING

Below are the 2024 expenditures of the Catalyst Award program through November 2024, which directly supports the leadership, community, and investment in the Catalyst Awardees. These costs do not include the indirect expenses of running the Catalyst Award program, including staff time, which are borne by the Rachel's Network general operating budget.

Monetary Prizes (\$15, 000 for 15 awardees, \$2500 for 14 finalists)	\$260,000
Awardee Organizational Grants (\$10,000 for 14 awardee organizations)	\$140,000
Honoraria for selection committee, reviewers, and Catalyzing Conversations	\$22,300
Community Resilience Grants	\$1,050
Total amount distributed to Catalyst Awardees	\$423,350
Wellness & Restoration Retreat	\$40,761
Leadership Development Programs and Events	\$451
Total Amount for Community Building & Leadership Support	\$41,212
Award Software	\$8,622
Marketing & Promotion	\$139
Staff travel	\$1,236
Banking Fees	\$160
Total Amount for Program Infrastructure	\$10,157
Total:	\$474,719

Current Sources of Funding

Funding for the Catalyst program comes primarily from generous gifts from Rachel's Network members, with a growing percentage from non-member foundation grants. In 2024, we received 26 gifts, ranging from \$1,500 to \$55,000, with an average gift of \$25,300. We have \$258,750 in expected grants and pledges in 2025. To help ensure we have ongoing funding support for each 3-year cohort, many partners have made multi-year pledges, and we are working to shift Catalyst funding to this structure where possible.

DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS

This year, we also explored a partnership with values-aligned foundations. The Women's Environmental Leadership Fund (WE LEAD) is a Tides Foundation environmental grantmaking initiative that elevates and invests in women and nonbinary leaders who are addressing the root causes of the climate crisis in communities of color. We received a grant from the Tides Foundation to include their WE LEAD grantees in the Wellness & Restoration retreat. This was an impactful collaboration, and one we hope to build on next year. With the support of our new Development director, Sarah Walker, we also hope to expand our partnerships with other foundations in 2025.

In early 2024, Rachel's Network also became an official nominator for the Goldman Environmental Prize, allowing us to continue to amplify these incredible environmental leaders.

LOOKING FORWARD

Increasing our collective giving: Thanks in large part to the Catalyst Award, Rachel's Network collective giving program grew by over 600% between 2014 and 2024, with nearly \$425k given in 2024. In response to urgent climate and biodiversity crises facing communities, we aspire to grow our grantmaking so that it exceeds \$1 million annually by 2026 with a continued focus on the resource needs of marginalized environmental leaders.

Building on our unique programs: We will continue to offer programs that highlight environmental issues, direct funding to women-led solutions, and build the skills and understanding needed for allies to bridge different backgrounds and experiences. We will provide more unique learning opportunities and spaces for distinct audiences. This strategy is reflected in Rachel's Network 25th anniversary annual meeting and celebration, taking place in New Orleans in March 2025. We're excited to bring together funder members and Catalyst community members for a few days of relationship and community building.

