



**Rachel's
Network**

**CATALYST
ANNUAL
REPORT
2025**



Thank You For Showing Up

After a summer of historic heatwaves, wildfires, rising energy costs, and policy rollbacks, reading about the persistent ways in which the environmental community is still showing up is a solace. I've been especially moved by the persistence of those in our Catalyst community—women of color environmental leaders who haven't given up in the face of efforts to suppress their voices and votes. These leaders continue the work for our communities and our planet, and we are doing our part by honoring them.

We can only do this work because of the generosity and belief of our Catalyst funder community. Our vision is one of empowerment, equality, and environmental stewardship, and you help make that happen. To the Rachel's Network members who invest in the Catalyst Award and Program: Thank You!

Your support does more than provide resources for the award, it creates the space, stability, and opportunity for visionary leaders to keep leading, building, and imagining a more just and regenerative future. At a moment when so much is working to diminish the voices and efforts of women of color, your decision to invest in their leadership is an act of profound trust and solidarity.

In the report ahead, you'll meet our amazing Catalyst Award recipients, as well as learn more about what our community was up to in 2025. We're still here, and we're still fighting. We're able to keep showing up because you are doing so too.



Shreya Durvasula
Catalyst Program Director



Why the Catalyst Program Matters

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.

The environmental challenges we face are urgent and complex, but very often the people most heavily impacted are not equally resourced to lead the solutions. Women of color, whose lived experience and leadership are essential to advancing solutions, receive a miniscule fraction of available resources. At a time when public funding for climate and environmental work is being dramatically cut and frontline communities are facing mounting threats, closing the funding gap is more urgent than ever.

At Rachel's Network we believe a stronger environmental movement is one that centers the work and perspectives of those most affected by environmental injustice, shifts power, and provides resources to their efforts. The Catalyst Program puts that belief into practice, providing women of color environmental leaders with flexible resources, community, care, connection, and support.



Catalyst recipient Helga Garcia Garza sharing her community altar item



Funder member Alice Lidell & Catalyst recipient Jhana Young enjoying New Orleans

The Rachel's Network Catalyst Program

Since its launch in 2019, the Catalyst Award has grown to a multi-year gift of \$75,000 per awardee (\$10,000 unrestricted, \$5,000 wellness stipend, and a \$10,000 organizational grant each year for three years), coaching services, and leadership support. Finalists also receive a gift of \$5,000 in recognition of their leadership.

The Catalyst Award provides much-needed support to mid-career leaders who are the backbones of their organizations and communities. 2025 was our most competitive year to date, with nearly 200 applications. The high number of applications demonstrates the immense need for awards like Catalyst, and for funding for women of color in the environmental space.

Every year, award recipients are selected through a six-month community process. Many people power this process: board members, advisors, staff, and leaders in our broader community. A group of our former awardees is compensated for leading the final rounds of our selection, aligning with participatory grantmaking principles.

Last October, our annual award announcement was one of Rachel's Network's most well attended events in 2025. You can watch the recording to hear from the awardees directly: **[2025 Catalyst Award Announcement Livestream](#)**.

Over the last seven years, the Catalyst Award has:

- Built a mutually supportive community of almost 100 awardees and finalists
- Engaged 1,200 environmental leaders from 42 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and DC.
- Granted over \$2.1 million to 142 individuals and their organizations.



2025 Awardees



LaTricea Adams, *she/her*, Memphis, Tennessee, is the founder and president of Young, Gifted & Green, a national environmental justice and civil rights organization which advocates against the crisis of lead exposure and environmental injustice in disadvantaged communities. LaTricea was the youngest African American woman appointed to the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council.



Tricia Cortez, *she/her/ella*, Laredo, Texas, is the executive director of Rio Grande International Study Center, where she oversees programs related to river restoration, water security, air quality, nature-based programming, and climate resilience. She believes that fusing cultural organizing with environmental advocacy can shift narratives, transform lives, restore nature, and promote pride of place and a vibrant bicultural heritage. She has led advocacy efforts involving the border wall, ethylene oxide, PM2.5, and single-use plastic bags and is committed to coalition building and grassroots organizing.



Viviana Moreno, *she/they/ella*, Chicago, Illinois, is senior food justice organizer with the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO). She is the co-founder of LVEJO's La Villita Farm, located in La Villita Park, a former superfund site transformed into a park after 15 years of community organizing. Viviana is also a founding co-owner of Catatumbo Cooperative Farm, a worker-owned immigrant and LGBTQ-led farm on the Southside of Chicago that provided Mesoamerican and South American crops to Greater Chicago.

2025 Awardees continued



Maria Hernandez May, *she/her*, Tamuning, Guam, is a mother of three and a community organizer tackling issues at the intersection of indigenous rights, environmental justice, and decolonization in Guam. Born and raised in the Mariana Islands, Maria is co-executive director of Micronesia Climate Change Alliance, and co-founder of Hita Litekyan, a coalition of CHamoru families advocating for environmental preservation and CHamoru land rights. Grounded in grassroots activism, Maria engages with Indigenous communities across the world, respecting their diverse perspectives and incorporating their voices into the broader discourse.



Healani Sonoda-Pale, *she/her*, Honolulu, Hawai'i, is a Native Hawaiian activist, educator, and community leader. She serves as spokesperson for Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, a grassroots initiative for Native Hawaiian self-determination and self-governance. She is also as the lead community organizer with the O'ahu Water Protectors, successfully calling for the shutdown and defueling of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage facility. Her advocacy spans topics such as the commodification of Hawaiian culture, women's safety, protecting traditional burials, climate change, environmental justice, and the ongoing impacts of military presence in Hawai'i.



Candice Youngblood, *she/her*, Los Angeles, California, is an environmental justice activist and senior attorney at Earthjustice. Growing up asthmatic in “diesel death zones,” Candice experienced firsthand the devastating effects of environmental injustice on low-income communities and communities of color which led her to found Youth on Root (YoR). YoR empowers frontline youth in California to advocate for their communities through an innovative environmental justice leadership program and creates an accessible community in which underserved youth can conceptualize, contextualize, and combat environmental racism.

2025 Finalists



Jo Banner, *she/her*, Vacherie, Louisiana, founded The Descendants Project, where she works to gain recognition of the burial grounds of the enslaved as sacred sites and aims to protect communities from degradation caused by heavy industry and petrochemicals.



Keisha Cameron, *she/her*, Grayson, Georgia, is a farmer, artist, educator, and advocate deeply committed to cultural conservation, preservation, and social justice. As co-owner and shepherdess of High Hog Farm, a fiber and natural dye farm in Grayson, Georgia, she and her family steward the land using regenerative and Indigenous practices.



Crystal A. Cavalier-Keck, *she/her*, Mebane, North Carolina, is a citizen of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation and co-founder of 7 Directions of Service, an Indigenous grassroots environmental nonprofit based in Mebane, North Carolina.



Shilpi Chhotray, *she/her*, Oakland, California, is the Co-Founder and President of Counterstream Media and host of A People's Climate for The Nation. Shilpi has led global campaigns on plastic pollution, challenged corporate greenwashing, and built platforms that shift power back to communities most impacted by pollution and the climate crisis.



Deseree Fontenot, *she/they*, Oakland, California, is co-director of Movement Generation: Justice and Ecology Project (MG), where she leads on land justice movement building, regenerative land stewardship, curriculum design and ecological education. In 2022, Deseree co-led the process of MG partnering with Sogorea Te' Land Trust to rematriate 43 acres of land in the East Bay.



Marnese Jackson, *she/her*, Pontiac, Michigan, is an environmental and climate justice activist, advocate, trainer, educator and mother of two children. She is the inaugural and first Black woman executive director of Midwest Building Decarbonization Coalition. Marnese is on the board of USCAN, and a chairperson of the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition.

An Impactful Community

Catalyst recipients 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. And their impact is undeniable.

Here are just a few highlights from the broader Catalyst Community.

- **Crystal Huang's** organization People Power Solar Cooperative received the Sunny Awards for Equitable Community Solar from the U.S. Department of Energy for their Dividends Return Commons Model project. The program engages people to build, co-own, and steward renewable energy projects in their neighborhoods.
- **Alannah Hurley** (United Tribes of Bristol Bay) won the 2025 Goldman Prize for her work that stopped the proposed Pebble Mine megaproject in Alaska's Bristol Bay region. The victory safeguards Bristol Bay and its greater watershed—encompassing 25 million acres of wilderness, rivers, and wetlands and home to the largest wild salmon runs in the world—from the construction of what would have been North America's largest open-pit mine.
- **Elizabeth Yeampierre** (UPROSE) celebrated the completion of Sunset Park Solar—a rooftop solar project at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. The 725-kilowatt rooftop solar installation is the culmination of nearly eight years of planning, partnerships, and community advocacy. The installation is expected to lower energy costs by 20 percent for participating residents.



Building Community in New Orleans

Through the Catalyst program, Rachel's Network creates spaces for leaders and funders in this sector to connect, learn, and build partnerships with each other in a supportive environment. In spring 2025, Rachel's Network hosted our annual Spring meeting, bringing together women leaders who are at the forefront of a new resilient and just vision for the Gulf South, a vibrant region facing many environmental challenges including petrochemical pollution, rising sea levels, and extreme weather.

Newly awarded Catalyst awardees joined a group of Rachel's Network board and funder members for a community building and learning program. Together, participants shared moving testimonies from participants about their reasons for getting involved in environmental work as they collectively built a community altar. They heard rousing keynotes from Catalyst recipients **Colette Pichon Battle** and **Heather McTeer Toney** on ways to make progress in the current political environment and they took a field trip to "Cancer Alley" to learn from local leaders about the legacy of slavery and petrochemical development in the Gulf Coast. It was a heartening week together that emphasized the importance of community and collective action during this time.

These moments of connection are central to our approach: stronger movements are built not only through funding, but through trust, shared learning, and relationships that allow people to see new possibilities and act together.



Learning & Connecting

In June 2025, Rachel's Network visited Urban Growers Collective (led by Catalyst recipient **Erika Allen**) for a two-day program featuring community-building activities, meetings with Chicago-area environmental funders and leaders, and tours of both the Green Era Campus (including the Midwest's only community led-anaerobic digester) and the South Chicago Farm, the largest of the UGC owned farms.

A day of walking the land, eating incredible food, and connecting with amazing like-minded leaders felt like a much needed and welcome balm amidst the current political landscape. It was a reminder that when women come together to learn and share ideas, we will thrive, and the world will be better for it.



Honoring Legacy

In 2025, Rachel's Network celebrated its 25th anniversary by announcing a new program to support women leaders of color with long experience in and deep dedication to the environmental movement: the Legacy Award. Through this award, four longtime movement leaders were sponsored to participate in the Teranga Experience, a restorative seven-day journey in Senegal, West Africa.

The Teranga Experience was designed to give movement leaders the time and space to rest, reflect, and reconnect with themselves and their work. One Legacy Awardee, **Kolu Zigbi**, shared that the experience “renewed my energy and creativity. I am not only excited to continue ongoing work, but the award was also a catalyst for a new collaborative project.”



Budget

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 2025, we received 61 gifts, ranging from \$88 to \$100,000, with an average gift of \$22,483, and raising over a million dollars for the first time in Catalyst Program history. Shifting our fundraising to a three-year gift cycle allows us to both align with the Catalyst award cycle, as well as plan our leadership development programming earlier and more efficiently.

Below are the 2025 expenditures of the Catalyst Award program, 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, digital infrastructure, and other operational costs which are borne by Rachel's Network's general operating budget.

Monetary Prizes (\$15,000 for 16 awardees, \$5,000 for 6 finalists, \$750 for 8 semifinalists)	\$276,000
Awardee Organizational Grants (\$10,000 for 16 awardee organizations)	\$160,000
Honoraria for selection committee, reviewers, and Catalyzing Conversations webinars	\$21,550
Community Resilience Rapid Response Funds	\$1050
Total amount distributed to Catalyst Awardees	\$458,600
Community Building Programs and Events	\$29,608
Leadership Development	\$1881
Legacy Award	\$32,000
Total Amount for Community Building & Leadership Support	\$63,489
Award Software	\$9133
Administrative & Banking Fees	\$776
Total Amount for Program Infrastructure	\$9,909
Total:	\$531,998