

Reproductive & Gender Justice

Ford's Gender, Racial and Ethnic Justice program supports courageous people and organizations addressing critical issues that exacerbate inequality in the United States and Global South: the over-policing and mass incarceration of people of color, the demonization of immigrants and migrants, appalling levels of violence targeting women and girls, and the dramatic increase in laws curtailing reproductive rights.

We believe gender justice and reproductive justice are critical to achieving equality for all people. The ability to choose whether to have a child and when; to give birth safely; and to raise children in a healthy, thriving environment is central to the opportunities, freedoms and equality of women and gender nonconforming people. We strengthen equitable access to quality reproductive care to ensure pregnant people are supported regardless of their decision to give birth or seek an abortion. We also work to end gender-based discrimination in health care, the workplace, and communities at large, and support organizations that build the power of women and gender nonconforming people.

Portfolio Snapshot

Budget
\$7.5 million

Grantees
25

BUILD Budget
\$31.5 million

BUILD Grantees
1

The Challenge

Despite decades of gains in women's rights and opportunities, there has been a simultaneous and intense backlash against access to reproductive health care in the United States. Threats to reproductive rights are escalating in number and scope. In 2019, state legislators in the Midwest and South introduced an unprecedented number of abortion restrictions; by the end of the year, 25 new abortion bans had been signed into law. These include laws that defund reproductive healthcare providers and restrict coverage under public and private insurance programs, and a proliferation of crippling requirements on abortion providers.

These restrictions disproportionately affect rural and low-income women, including many women of color who are less likely to have alternate options for care, or the ability to walk away from harmful or discriminatory workplaces.

The Opportunity

Against the backdrop of this adverse legislative environment, the majority of Americans continue to support access to legal, safe and affordable contraception, abortion and maternal health care. A series of women's marches, starting in 2017 in the wake of a contentious presidential election, demonstrated that racially and economically diverse coalitions have real organizing power, but broader support is needed. Those most affected—rural, low-income women and women of color—are in a position to shape arguments and advance political and social change to reflect their priorities.

We see an opportunity to translate this momentum into visible gains, including full reproductive health coverage for women and gender nonconforming people that allows them to make choices right for them. We also see opportunities to push for policies that ensure race and class no longer determine one's risk of dying from complications in childbirth, and reflect the priorities of women of color, low-income women, and gender nonconforming people.

Our Aim and Approach

Our aim is to build the power of women and gender nonconforming people to secure and exercise their rights over their bodies and reproduction. We support policy advocacy, litigation, voter engagement and grassroots organizing. We connect organizations focused on gender and reproductive justice with the broader fields of civic engagement and social justice, religious communities, and the corporate sector to foster collaboration and increase their impact.

We also work to hold the line against restrictive federal policies, supporting work in states where there are opportunities to strengthen reproductive and gender justice and testing new models of advocacy in under-resourced regions of the United States, like the South, where the political climate for reproductive and gender equity has been hostile. We focus on:

- **National advocacy.** We support organizations and coalitions working to combat federal policies that roll back funding and legal protections for reproductive and gender equity.
- **State-level organizing.** We fund organizations centered on reproductive justice that have the ability to work across issues and constituencies to support movements at a state level.
- **Building alliances.** We bring together advocates for gender and reproductive justice with racial, economic, and other social justice advocates to increase their collective impact.
- **Communications research.** We help organizations integrate strategic messaging, communications, and audience research to demonstrate and amplify the broad support for gender and reproductive justice.
- **Strategic litigation and policy advocacy.** We build the capacity of organizations to engage in strategic litigation, policy advocacy, and integrated engagement with affected communities.

- **Increasing support.** We work across the philanthropic sector to help donors focused on gender and reproductive rights see the intersections with other social justice issues to broaden their support.

Our Impact

Our aim is to see women, particularly rural, low-income women and women of color, realize their full rights and achieve reproductive and gender justice as a result of increased, consistent, and diverse support from advocates and policy makers. We work toward four critical outcomes:

- **Stronger advocacy at the federal level.** Key organizations will align to safeguard gender justice and reproductive rights against harmful federal regulations and rollbacks.
- **More just state laws and policies.** In critical states, strategic alliances will advance laws and policies that strengthen reproductive and sexual rights.
- **A broader base of support.** Organizations and networks that have not historically incorporated gender and reproductive justice issues into their work will become allies and bolster movements across the country.
- **A more representative movement.** Women of color, low-income women, and gender nonconforming people will increasingly hold leadership positions at the forefront of gender and reproductive justice to influence the movement's agenda.

Grantee Snapshot

Expanding access to reproductive health

With Ford's support, reproductive justice organizations have advanced the rights of women and gender nonconforming people in California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, New York, Vermont, and Connecticut. Organizations like Forward Together and All* Above All have leveraged Reproductive Health Equity Acts in Oregon and Illinois to expand access and broaden the definition of reproductive health to go beyond abortion and also include pregnancy care, breastfeeding support, and reproductive health care. These organizations have made strides in expanding access for more people, including undocumented immigrants and transgender people. By building strong alliances with different players working on immigrant rights, labor and economic justice, these groups have successfully blocked harmful legislation in several states.

Photo: All* Above All

