



# SOUTHERN EQUALITY *Fund*

A Project of the Campaign for Southern Equality

## ANNUAL REPORT: 2017



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# WELCOME

## to the Southern Equality Fund

One-third of LGBTQ Americans live in the South. Every day we witness the resilience, creativity and resourcefulness of Southern LGBTQ grassroots organizers who are working to create equality in their hometowns. We believe that these organizers can help transform our region—but they need the funding and support to do so.

Through the Southern Equality Fund (SEF), we provide this direct funding and training and we're also creating a pipeline of resources to grassroots organizers. We prioritize groups and individual leaders whose access to funding and support is limited due to barriers such as not having 501(c)(3) status, or living in a rural area.

The SEF is a project of the Campaign for Southern Equality, an advocacy organization working for full lived and legal equality for LGBTQ Southerners.



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### In 2015, we dreamed up the Southern Equality Fund (SEF)

in response to what we had learned and heard from four years of traveling and organizing across the South. We'd witnessed both the incredible work that grassroots organizers were leading, and also significant inequity in how resources were distributed. In 2015, at the LGBT\* in the South conference, we launched a pilot of the SEF and began providing direct funding to grassroots organizers. At the heart of the fund was – and is – CSE's commitment to equity around issues of race, class, gender and geography.

In the first round of SEF funding, we gave out \$1,000 to four groups. We knew from our own start up experiences that sometimes \$250 is the difference between an idea becoming a reality or not. Beyond that, any grant is a vote of support and confidence.

Several grant rounds and thousands of dollars later, we kept hearing from grassroots organizers that beyond funding, they also needed training and support to sustain and grow their work. In September 2016, with a newly formed Advisory Council to lead the way, we set out to say "yes" to applicants as often as possible and to get as much funding as we could into the hands of the folks doing heroic work to promote the equality, safety and visibility of LGBTQ Southerners. This also marked the



transition from a pilot project to a full program that included larger grants, as well as more robust training and support.

This report tells the story of the Southern Equality Fund, the leadership that has shaped it over this past year, and the grassroots groups that are transforming the South. We hope you enjoy reading about this work as much as we enjoyed getting to do it.

Join us in celebrating grassroots power,

Britney Nesbit,  
Southern Equality Fund Coordinator

Chloe Stuber,  
Southern Equality Fund Director • 2015-2017





## OUR ANALYSIS

The South is home to more than one third of the country's LGBTQ population, a community that is diverse across race, gender and class. On the whole, LGBTQ people in the South remain second-class citizens under the law in areas like housing and employment protections, and are at an elevated risk of being poor and experiencing health inequities. While national funding to the LGBTQ South is increasing (it has grown from less than 8% to 25% in recent years), the majority goes to large metro areas and large organizations.

Starting in 2015, we began making micro-grants of up to \$500 through the Southern Equality Fund with the goal of building a pipeline of funding to grassroots organizers doing heroic frontline work. To date we have given 165 grants totaling more than \$96,848 to groups and individual organizers across 12 Southern states.

Systems and structures – in the South and in the LGBTQ movement – are changing.

The Out in the South Fund, a project of Funders for LGBTQ Issues, has embarked on a multi-year project to increase LGBTQ funding among Southern grantmakers and Southern funding among LGBTQ funders. Southern institutions from hospitals to public universities are building out work and programs around LGBTQ issues, breaking a long silence.

But there is still the urgency of today and tomorrow. Tragically, more than half of the trans women of color who were murdered in 2017 lived in the South. The prevalence of HIV rates among gay and bisexual men of color in the South dramatically outpaces other regions of the country. Across Southern school districts, transgender children live without district-level policies that protect their rights under Title IX. LGBTQ Southerners still lack basic protections from housing and employment discrimination. This list goes on.

Simply put, we need to get more funding into the hands of grassroots LGBTQ organizers across the South, and we need to do so as quickly as possible.

## OUR STRATEGY

Since we launched the Southern Equality Fund, our goal has been to increase our grantmaking to 10 percent of our organizational budget. In doing so, we are creating a practice of organizational tithing, drawing on the faith-based practice of giving away 10 percent of your wealth to support good works and acts of mercy. As CSE grows, our giving will also grow.

A quick glance at financials shows that if the six largest LGBTQ organizations in the region were to begin tithing at 10 percent to support grassroots work, it would release almost \$1 million into the region annually.

There's a moral case for doing so: Getting resources to where they are most urgently needed, to be used by those who are most impacted. There's a strategic reason as well: Creating legal and lived equality in the South requires that we do long-term organizing in every community, not just in large metro areas.

For CSE, funding grassroots work is a core strategy as we build a new model of Southern organizing, just like direct services and litigation. We learn from and build with our grassroots partners. In the shared work and mutuality of these relationships, there is also great joy.

**2015**  
Year One  
**1%** of CSE's budget awarded in grants  
**Total Awarded:**  
**\$6,000**  
**14 Grants**



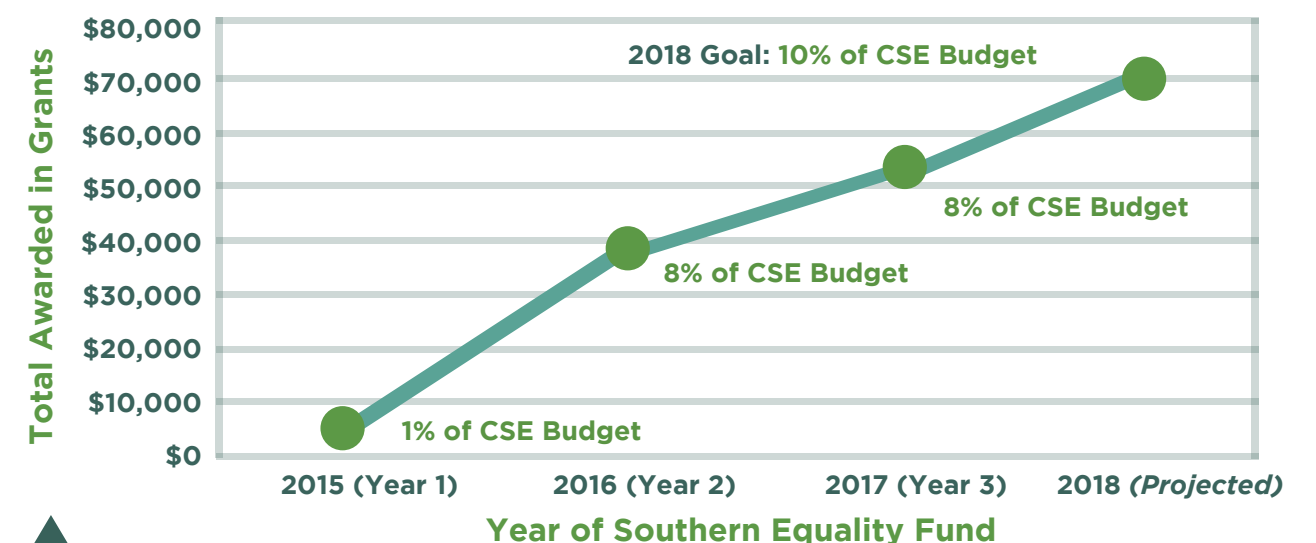
**2016**  
Year Two  
**8%** of CSE's budget awarded in grants  
**Total Awarded:**  
**\$37,526**  
**56 Grants**



**2017**  
Year Three  
**8%** of CSE's budget awarded in grants  
**Total Awarded:**  
**\$53,322**  
**95 Grants**



Growth in Grantmaking Through the Southern Equality Fund





# OVERVIEW

## OF THE SOUTHERN EQUALITY FUND



### Funding

CSE funds grassroots work through grassroots grants, including rapid response organizing grants, of up to \$500 awarded by an Advisory Council; crisis & opportunity grants to support emergency needs and time-sensitive opportunities for community members; and LGBTQ Rights Toolkit grants of up to \$10,000 to support LGBTQ-friendly direct-service providers that are developing innovative, replicable models of meeting direct service needs.



### Training & Support

Beyond funding, we also connect leaders with training and support by running grassroots training webinars and offering individualized support.



### Networking

Bringing leaders together to share skills, strategy and experience is essential to creating lasting change. Whether it's through hosting in-person gatherings or supporting grassroots gatherings led by our partners, we are committed to helping grassroots leaders build the relationships they need to sustain them in their work.

### Trans Leadership Initiative

The Trans Leadership Initiative (TLI) combines these three strategies to provide intensive support to a cohort of Southern grassroots trans leaders. During the first year of the initiative, TLI leaders received \$1,500 in funding, including a professional development stipend; one-on-one coaching and customized trainings; and opportunities to network with each other during cohort calls and an annual retreat.



## CAMPAIGN FOR SOUTHERN EQUALITY'S

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PRIORITIES

### Our Core Values & Beliefs

We feel deeply hopeful about what's possible in the South over the long term.

We believe that LGBTQ Southerners possess the courage and resilience to be the architects of our liberation.

We believe that there is a moral mandate to respond to acute needs – often for legal and health services – in the lives of LGBTQ individuals and families.

We believe that our work is inextricably bound to the legacy and future of racial equity and economic justice movements in the South.

We believe that every person – including those conflicted about or opposed to LGBTQ rights – can become an ally.

All of CSE's work is based upon empathic resistance, a new ethic that calls for 1) resisting persecuting systems through public actions that authentically express self and community and 2) approaching those who oppose you with empathy.

### Priorities of the Southern Equality Fund

Whether it's recruiting leadership of the fund, distributing funds, inviting leaders to participate in the Trans Leadership Initiative, or creating opportunities for training and support, we prioritize:

- ▶ Groups or individuals that face barriers to funding their work.
- ▶ Work by and for underserved and marginalized communities.
- ▶ Leadership committed to racial, economic and gender justice.
- ▶ Work that centers the voices and leadership of trans and GNC (Gender Non-Conforming) individuals and people of color within the LGBTQ community.
- ▶ Projects that respond to immediate and urgent community needs.
- ▶ Projects that work toward long-term change.



# IMPACT OF FUNDING IN 2017

GRANTS  
AWARDED  
IN **12**  
SOUTHERN  
STATES



**\$53,322**  
TOTAL AWARDED



**95**  
GRANTS



## FOCUS OF GRANTS

**Community Building**

**Media/Arts/Culture**

**Immigrant Rights**

**Health/Wellness**

**Youth/Education**

**Economic Justice**

**Intersectional / Multi-Issue**

**Youth Education**

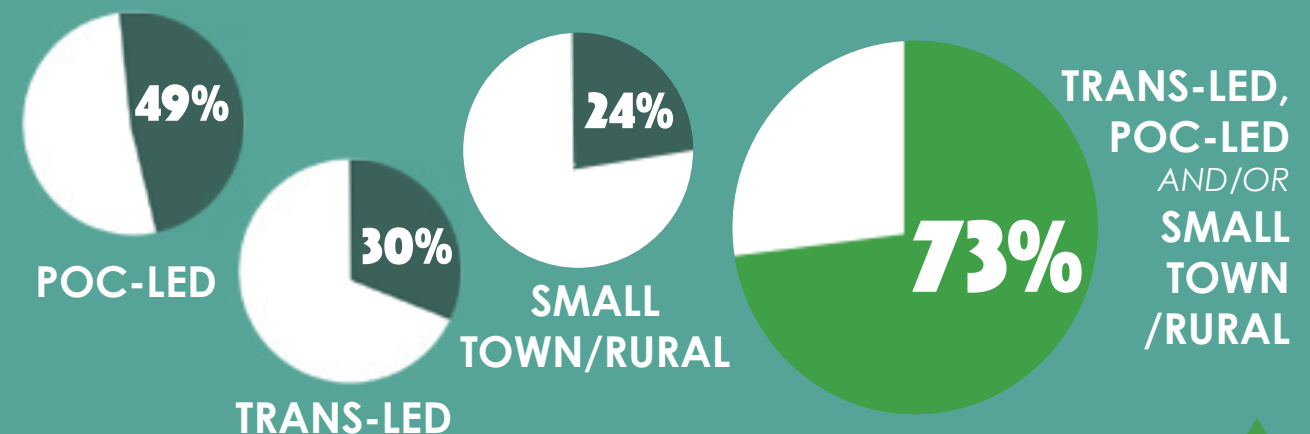
**Crisis Response Relief**

**Support Networks**

**Healing Justice**

**Language Justice**

## PERCENTAGE OF GRANTS AWARDED TO PRIORITY GROUPS



# LETTER FROM THE SOUTHERN EQUALITY FUND ADVISORY COUNCIL

The SEF Advisory Council reviewed and awarded all grassroots grants administered in 2017.

We are Southern, we are chicana, femme, masculine, trans, queer, same-gender loving, first generation citizens, white, black and brown, intergenerational. We are professors, youth educators, activists, community organizers, grassroots leaders.

From application questions, to funding priorities, to the review and notification processes, our unique perspectives informed the work from start to finish. Our highest priority for funding was work that centers the voices and leadership of trans and GNC (Gender Non-Conforming) individuals and people of color within the LGBTQ community. We know that more often than not, these are the people who find themselves on the margins when it comes to racial, economic, gender and language justice. Especially those in the rural South. As trusted servants and advocates of this important work, we made funding decisions with integrity, and with a fierce commitment to the growth of our grassroots partners.

This experience grew our leadership as well. Monthly decision-making conversations were challenging at times because many of us were participating in grantmaking for the first time. We challenged ourselves to move past the role of being “gatekeepers” to funding. Instead, we worked within a trust-based model where our goal was to say yes as much as possible with no strings attached. We put our trust in the people closest to the issues on the ground to build community and safety – how they saw fit.

In addition, we learned so much from each other’s unique, individual perspectives and opinions. Even though there were times of difference, we were able to share, be respected and exchange wisdom from each member of the group.



The SEF Advisory Council led a workshop at Creating Change about redistributing resources in the South, discussing current disparities and envisioning a future in which grassroots leaders have the resources and support they need to transform our region.

One of the biggest takeaways from this experience was learning how revolutionary our work as grassroots grantmakers with the Southern Equality Fund truly was. We were one of very few grant-making teams that intentionally focused on getting money to LGBTQ leaders without 501(c)(3) status! We were able to take the conversation on the road, expanding it to include more organizers and funders. Advisory Council members presented a workshop on grassroots funding strategies at the 2017 Creating Change Conference, attended the Out in the South convening hosted by Funders for LGBTQ Issues, and took part in other gatherings across the South. Decreasing obstacles to funding and increasing the amount of funding and resources for our Southern LGBTQ family was not just necessary work, but also became transformative for everyone involved.

We have so much gratitude for being part of this team and we look forward to seeing how the work of the Southern Equality Fund continues to grow.

In solidarity,  
Carter, Cecilia, Daroneshia,  
Femi, Mary and Nicole



# SOUTHERN EQUALITY FUND 2016-2017 ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Carter West**  
Taylors, SC



Carter West is a transgender male living in Taylors, SC. He is a junior Psychology major and Women's and Gender Studies minor at the University of South Carolina Upstate. Carter hopes to get his masters degree to become a therapist for LGBTQ youth. He is the Youth Director for the Gender Benders, a grassroots group based in Upstate, South Carolina. Outside of his passion for LGBTQ youth, Carter loves animals and currently has 8 dogs, 1 cat, and 1 rat.

**Cecilia Sáenz Becerra**  
Atlanta, GA



Cecilia Sáenz Becerra is a Mexican immigrant, queer, Xicana, ¡y desmadrosa! Somewhere between growing up undocumented in Phoenix, AZ combined with seeing her parents struggle to work three jobs between them – the catalyst for her politicization was born. What started as high school activism, evolved into a commitment of working alongside and centering people most affected by state violence, class, and racism – for their liberation and hers. Leading up to this day, Cecilia is more or less: pushing, experimenting, talking/listening and learning. She enjoys pushing her physical strength and endurance with the support of QueerFit. Experimenting, curating, and creating 'southern-mexican fixins' on a plate with her partner for #fixinsdeamor. Being a bridge via freelance interpreting, and learning to listen to the magic of the ancestors and the power, strength, and knowledge they bring to her/our life/lives/work.



**Daroneshia Duncan**  
Birmingham, AL



Ms. Duncan is an advocate for transgender women in Greater Birmingham. As a trans woman of color, she is all too familiar with the challenges the ladies face in the community. She founded the TAKE (Transgender Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering) Peer Group on April 27, 2013 to create a safe-space for transgender individuals. Ms. Duncan has experienced many highs and lows in life. She did survival sex work for over a year and during that time abused a number of substances to numb the pain of isolation that she faced. Ms. Duncan has overcome a number of obstacles and owns the Platinum International Icon Pageantry System in Birmingham, AL. She is committed to increasing her knowledge and building new opportunities to help transgender women and those who are often excluded and overlooked by society, who are not often reached through the usual service system and is passionate about making health services accessible to all.

**Mary Jamis**  
Winston-Salem, NC



Mary is the president of M Creative—a values-driven strategic communications firm that helps visionary organizations do more good for more people. Mary is one of the five founding members of The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem, a philanthropic community of over 800 female philanthropists who provide grants to local programs and initiatives that address the root causes of social issues impacting women and girls in Forsyth County. Mary has also been involved in local and statewide efforts around LGBTQ issues and is proud to have worked with the Campaign for Southern Equality since 2012 on community mobilization efforts around the WE DO campaign. She is co-founder of Equality Winston-Salem and has led efforts to award college monies over the last five years to local LGBTQ seniors and allies. She currently serves on the board of North Star LGBTQ community center and is a past board member of Equality NC.

**Femi Shittu**  
Durham, NC



Femi Shittu is a black queer woman troublemaker from the rural south. Raised in Yanceyville, North Carolina, she ventured off to Greensboro for college and has recently relocated to Durham, NC to work with Ignite NC. She plans to go to grad school for Social Work and eventually open up a wellness center with her community. She is committed to spreading LGBTQ history and claiming the queer legacy in the struggle for liberation. A writer always and a DJ by night. An extrovert who enjoys ice cold beer, smoking lavender, and traveling across the U.S. consistently. Femi is absolutely and completely in love with the South.

**Dr. S. Nicole Cathey**  
Jackson, MS



Dr. S. Nicole Cathey is a professor, minister and community advocate from Jackson, MS. She received her doctorate in Political Science from Howard University in Washington, D.C. Her research interests encompass political behavior, public opinion and political participation, with an emphasis in the intersectionality of race, gender and sexuality. She is the founder of the Inner Light Community and a part of PATHWAYS, the Regional Theological Education program sponsored by the United Church of Christ (UCC). She serves as the Co-Chair of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) LGBTQ Caucus. As a scholar-activist, she works to integrate applied research with social justice issues. In her spare time, she uses community gardening as a means of teaching young people about growing food, healthy eating, and food distribution in her home state of Mississippi.



# 2017 GRASSROOTS GRANT ROUNDS



## General Fund

Through the General Fund, we accepted and reviewed applications on an ongoing basis for projects based in the South that promote equality, safety, and/or visibility of Southern LGBTQ people, supporting work throughout the region and across issues and strategic approaches.



## HB2 Rapid Response

The HB2 Rapid Response round provided direct support for grassroots efforts across North Carolina to oppose HB2, to keep people informed and to offer support.



## Post-Election Rapid Response

Through the Post-Election Rapid Response round, we awarded grants to groups that were responding to increased needs for support, services and resources in their community; and/or were implementing organizing strategies to respond to anti-LGBTQ legislation and the projected roll-back of current legal protections.



## Safe Schools Safe Communities

Through the Safe Schools Safe Communities Fund, we supported efforts to promote safety in schools and communities across the South; and protect and defend anyone who is targeted based on race, age, gender identity, immigration status, religious beliefs, ability and/or sexual orientation.



## #QueerTheVote

Limited legislative power and a lack of elected representation are two classic symptoms of political powerlessness. LGBTQ Southerners face both. Through the #QueerTheVote Fund, we gave direct support to grassroots groups' non-partisan voter registration and turnout efforts.



## Crisis & Opportunity

These discretionary grants support LGBTQ individuals, families and communities in times of crisis (such as the days after a hurricane) and of unique opportunity (such as scholarship support to attend a training).

### PARTNER SPOTLIGHT!

#### Coffee House Poets • Madison, AL

Creating LGBTQ Healing spaces through spoken word and writing



"Some of these kids have NEVER experienced anything like our workshop. Many of the children we work with aren't out and don't feel as if they can express themselves in our usual settings. You all have provided us with workshop materials and a safe space away from school."— TC Caldwell



# LGBT rights TOOLKIT

# LGBTQ RIGHTS TOOLKIT GRANTS

Every LGBTQ person in the South should be able to access LGBTQ-friendly legal services and health care in their hometowns. Right now, the hostile climate that persists in many parts of the South means people must take extra steps or travel hours to protect their rights and access basic health care. The Campaign for Southern Equality is working to change this through our LGBTQ Rights Toolkit programming, including free direct service clinics,

an online toolkit, the Trans in the South Resource Guide and trainings for direct service providers. Through the SEF, we also provide LGBTQ Rights Toolkit grants to LGBTQ-friendly direct-service providers and community groups creating innovative models that 1) ensure that LGBTQ people can access the care they need and 2) can be easily replicated across the South.



## SOUTHERN LGBTQ HEALTH INITIATIVE LAUNCHES IN ASHEVILLE TO PROMOTE INNOVATION

WNCCHS and CSE are joining together to form a new LGBTQ Health Initiative to improve access to primary health care and support services for LGBTQ people across the 18 counties of Western North Carolina. The partnership will also collaborate on developing resources and trainings to support other Southern community health centers in offering LGBTQ-friendly primary health care and support services.

community health centers a best practice model for vulnerable LGBTQ populations. CSE brings such high quality expertise to this collaboration, and we are honored to work with them. Their continued financial support of our transgender and HIV programs are very critical for low income LGBTQ patients,” says Scott Parker, Director of Development and Collaboration, WNCCHS.

“WNCCHS is delighted to continue our collaboration with Campaign for Southern Equality in our efforts to improve access to high quality, culturally competent health care for our diverse LGBTQ population in western North Carolina. Stigma is still a very potent barrier to care for many in rural areas of the mountains. As our collaboration expands, CSE and WNCCHS hope to offer other Southern com-



## Gender Benders - Peer Health Counseling Initiative, 2017 Camp Gender Benders • Upstate SC



**Total Funds  
Received: \$2,000**

The Gender Benders serve a diverse community of trans and GNC people, the majority of whom live below the poverty line and in rural areas. Camp Gender Benders is an annual four-day, three-night retreat that provides workshops focused on health care; self-care and personal wellness; peer-to-peer support; coping skills; mindfulness and meditation; personal reflection and journaling; spiritual reconciliation; art therapy; and more. The leadership of Gender Benders knows first hand that social ties are a strong protector against suicide, and have designed a Peer Health Counseling Initiative at camp to create the conditions under which members can form strong bonds with their peers that carry them through difficult experiences. In 2017, 68 trans folks from across the South attended Camp Gender Benders and participated in this programming.

## We Are Family - Charleston YOUth Count • Charleston, SC



**WE ARE FAMILY**  
a safe space for LGBTQ and straight ally youth

**Total Funds  
Received: \$3,000**

We Are Family has been providing support, resources, and leadership development opportunities to LGBTQ and straight ally youth since 1995. It is estimated that thousands of young people under the age of 25 in Charleston lack access to adequate housing and nutrition, but accurate city-wide data does not exist. To respond to this lack of data, We Are Family is conducting the Charleston YOUth Count, the first ever assessment of youth housing instability and food insecurity in Charleston. The data produced by the study will inform the development of resources and services specifically designed for youth in Charleston.

## Western North Carolina Community Health Services (WNCCHS) - Transgender Health Program and HIV/AIDS Services • Asheville, NC



**Total Funds  
Received: \$10,000**

WNCCHS provides primary health care to about 16,000 patients annually, 95 percent of those patients are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, with a high number of those having no insurance at all. Since its founding in 1994 at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis, WNCCHS has been responding to LGBTQ health-care needs and now runs the only Transgender Health Program in the region, serving more than 250 patients from across 18 Western NC counties. They offer accessible, integrated services and, just as critically, treat people with dignity, respect and affirmation from the time they walk in the door. The need for these services could not be more urgent.



# TRANS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Trans individuals, and more specifically trans women of color, have historically been on the frontlines of our country's LGBTQ movement – Marsha Johnson, Miss Major, and Sylvia Rivera were key leaders of the Stonewall Riots, the foundation of Pride celebrations that take place today. Trans individuals continue to be on the front lines in the fight for racial justice, immigrant rights, economic justice and LGBTQ rights. This is true across the country and especially here in the South.

At the same time, trans individuals and especially trans people of color, live with many risks. Trans people live with heightened risks for suicide (41 percent of trans individuals attempt suicide versus 4.6 percent of the overall U.S. population), sexual assault, hate crimes, HIV/AIDS, poverty, employment discrimination and incarceration. Beyond

this, transphobia is on the rise in Southern politics – through the wave of “bathroom bills” and anti-LGBTQ legislation introduced across the South, including Mississippi law HB1523, which allows for discrimination against trans people in any sector under the guise of religious freedom.

For all these reasons and many more, the Campaign for Southern Equality launched the Trans Leadership Initiative (TLI) in fall of 2016 to provide intensive support to an incredible group of trans leaders from across the South. During the pilot year of the initiative, CSE offered leadership coaching, funding, and technical assistance to grow the leadership of four trans leaders and to help strengthen the vital work they are doing in their local communities.



## SUPPORT

CSE helped each leader to reach their own unique leadership and organizational development goals through one-on-one coaching, professional development support and group trainings.



## RELATIONSHIPS

The cohort of four trans leaders met virtually on a bi-monthly basis and at an in-person retreat which took place at the 2017 Camp Gender Benders.



## RESOURCES

Each leader received \$1,500 in direct funding and professional development support; and assistance with fundraising and grant-writing efforts, resulting in all groups at least doubling their annual budgets.

## Trans Leadership Initiative Retreat at 2017 Camp Gender Benders

In June 2017, the leaders participating in the Trans Leadership Initiative (TLI) all came together in person for the first time in Toccoa, GA, at Camp Gender Benders, a regional gathering that drew 68 trans folks and allies from across the South. TLI leaders participated in a panel to discuss their work and leadership and led small groups to support others who are interested in organizing in their communities. A mini-retreat on Saturday provided a space for TLI leaders and other Southern trans leaders to reflect on their personal leadership, share their accomplishments and dreams with each other, and find community and rejuvenation with each other through movement songs.

“Being with the rest of the TLI group, how can I describe it? It was incredible. We didn’t know each other so well before, but now much moreso after living alongside each other for several days. Thanks to this type of event, we’re becoming stronger, and we’re making more connections.” - Suzy Geronimo, Founder of Fuerza y Union Multiple and 2016-2017 TLI Leader.



An award ceremony was held for the leaders of the Trans Leadership Initiative, where they were each awarded a sash naming the unique beauty and strengths they bring to their work. Pictured: TLI members LB Bell, Daroneshia Duncan, Suzy Geronimo, and Fletcher Page.

## #WeAintFree Train the Trainer • December 2016, Piedmont, SC



In the winter of 2016, the first #WeAintFree Train the Trainer event convened eighteen grassroots organizers, majority trans and GNC, to support each other, workshop the training and education content that each participant is using when providing trainings on transgender issues, and develop skills and strategies to ensure that organizers are being compensated for their expertise and time when they offer these trainings. Two leaders with the Trans Leadership Initiative, Fletcher Page and Suzy Geronimo, took part.

“For far too long there has been a spirit of competitiveness among non-profit organizations and leaders driven by the belief that there aren’t enough resources for us to be able to help each other. In reality we can’t afford not to help each other. The need for trans and queer educators is vast, and each of us deserves compensation for our work,” said Ivy Gibson-Hill, Director of Gender Benders in Upstate SC and LGBTQ Rights Toolkit Coordinator, Campaign for Southern Equality.



# 2016-2017 TRANS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE COHORT

## Daroneshia Duncan - TAKE (Trans Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering) • Birmingham, AL

Ms. Duncan is an advocate for transgender women in Greater Birmingham. As a trans woman of color, she is all too familiar with the challenges the ladies face in the community. She founded the TAKE (Transgender Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering) Peer Group on April 27, 2013 to create a safe-space for transgender individuals. Ms. Duncan has experienced many highs and lows in life. She did survival sex work for over a year and during that time abused a number of substances to numb the pain of isolation that she faced. Ms. Duncan has overcome a number of obstacles and owns the Platinum International Icon Pageantry System in Birmingham, AL. She is committed to increasing her knowledge and building new opportunities to help transgender women and those who are often excluded and overlooked by society, who are not often reached through the usual service system and is passionate about making health services accessible to all.



### About TAKE (Trans Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering)

After almost four years of strategic planning, Daroneshia founded TAKE (Transgender Advocates Knowledgeable EMPOWERING). Since 2013, TAKE has provided support services primarily focused on trans women in the South.

“TAKE is a support service. TAKE provides any and everything to meet the needs of trans people, especially trans women that are especially trans women of color. We help them on the job hunt, find housing, get HIV testing, get an ID, help them with name changes. Whatever we can do to help improve the quality of life of trans people, we want to play a major role in it,” said Daroneshia in an interview with Southern Equality Fund Coordinator Britney Nesbit.



This summer, Daroneshia reached her goal of opening TAKE Resource Home, the first physical center in Alabama focused on serving trans women of color. The resource center primarily serves transgender women of color (TWOC) and provides a drop-in safe space where TWOC can come to access services, navigate the Greater Birmingham area, and connect with culturally competent service providers, job readiness training, GED prep, general and transition-related health information, and re-entry programs for sex workers and trans people aging out of the Department of Human Services or the judicial system.

The Grand Opening of the center took place during Trans Awareness Week in November 2017.



## Suzy Geronimo - Fuerza y Unión Múltiple (FUM) • Henderson, NC

My name is Suzy Geronimo. I am a native of Michoacán, México and I've made my home in Henderson, NC. I consider myself to be a very fortunate person because of my capacity as a great activist that hopes to be someone that shows others what can be done when you come together with others that have similar strengths. I'm a cheerful person and I like to dance. My priority is respect, I hate injustice and my favorite color is purple.

### About Fuerza y Unión Múltiple (FUM)

Suzy has worked as an activist in many areas since 2009, including immigration reform advocacy, worker's rights, and education. In the last few years she began to notice a need to focus more on supporting LGBTQ individuals, especially within the trans community. In 2015, she founded Fuerza y Union Multiple (FUM), to focus specifically on communities living in greater need. FUM's mission is to create a unified community in Henderson, NC—crossing racial, nationalistic and gender barriers—where everyone shares equal rights and a better quality of life; via education, activism and resources.

“We are an organization that works with all that we have to do everything that we can, as much as we can, and as a transgender woman, specifically focusing on the LGBTQ community. And from there you can ask me what you want and what your needs are and we're here, that FUM is here for that,” said Suzy in a recent interview with former Southern Equality Fund Director Chloe Stuber.

This year FUM succeeded in securing a fiscal sponsor and being awarded their first major grant from the Fund for Trans Generations, as well as a small grant from the Trans Justice Funding Project. This additional capacity has enabled Suzy to move closer to her vision for FUM, that it will grow, ignite other leaders, and provide resources and support within the Latino and immigrant community for LGBTQ and transgender people that aren't being provided anywhere else.





# 2016-2017 TRANS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE COHORT

## LB Bell - The Spectrum Center • Hattiesburg, MS

L.B. Bell is a Mississippi farmer, physician, and father. L.B. works closely with members of the local LGBTQ community toward building acceptance and equality in his community and throughout the region. In 2014, he opened Hattiesburg's first LGBTQ center, The Spectrum Center (TSC) and a year later planned Hattiesburg's first Pride celebration, Hattiesburg Unified Southern Fried Pride. LB was also instrumental in CSE's marriage advocacy efforts through the "WE DO" Campaign. Prior to becoming a physician, Dr. Bell was a nurse for over 10 years. He is board-certified by the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the American Board of Independent Medical Examiners. Dr. Bell is a member of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and the American Pain Society, which recently awarded him the President's Distinguished Service Award for outstanding and dedicated service to the organization.



### About The Spectrum Center

"I know what it's like to be displaced from your home when you're a teenager for being gay. That's just a hard thing to forget. If you can relate, you don't want anyone else to have to go through that. Just knowing that out of all the homeless youth, 40% are LGBT. That is pretty staggering. And kids and teenagers are one of the most vulnerable populations," LB said in an interview with Southern Equality Fund Coordinator Britney Nesbit.

What began as a plan to help homeless LGBTQ teens, eventually developed into a community center in order to be able to reach more people. In May 2014, the Spectrum Center was founded, Mississippi's only LGBTQ center with a physical location. In the first year of operation, TSC produced Hattiesburg's first LGBTQ Pride celebration, Hattiesburg Unified Southern Fried Pride,



with an emphasis on finding unity in diversity. TSC offers a variety of programs to serve the diverse LGBTQ community within a 100 mile radius. They collaborate with a number of local, regional and national partners to address the root causes of homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, racism and classism.

Over the past year, the Spectrum Center received their first major grant from the Fund for Trans Generations, as well as a small grant from the Trans Justice Funding Project, allowing them to hire their first paid staff position. With this additional capacity, they've been able to increase their advocacy efforts – they've launched a state-wide campaign to create a pathway for individuals in Mississippi to get their gender marker changed, and are working with Hattiesburg city council to get a non-discrimination ordinance passed.

## Fletcher Page - The Gender Benders • Greenville, SC

Fletcher Page serves as the Assistant Director of the Gender Benders and has been involved in the group since 2013. Fletcher's greatest passion is bringing people together and making them feel loved, and he hopes that everyone that comes in contact with the Gender Benders experiences that. His second greatest passion is advocacy, and he has presented at numerous colleges, universities, businesses, community groups, and agencies as he advocates for the trans\* community. Fletcher has worked closely with the Campaign for Southern Equality for several years serving in a variety of roles and has recently joined the CSE staff as a LGBTQ Resources Navigator.



### About The Gender Benders

Gender Benders is a volunteer-led grassroots support and advocacy group for trans and gender non-conforming (GNC) people and their families and allies. Founded in 2011, the Gender Benders serves the trans community primarily in Upstate, SC by connecting trans and GNC people with the resources needed to live full and healthy lives; engaging in education and advocacy work to help address the disparities trans and GNC people face in everyday life; providing direct support to trans and GNC people; and hosting Camp Gender Benders, an intergenerational space for deep spiritual healing and reconciliation work, improving coping skills, art therapy, training in facilitation techniques, peer to peer support, and so much more.



"A friend of mine introduced me to the GBs early on in 2013. I had no idea what the GBs were. I got added to the secret Facebook group and it just so happened that my friend of 20 years, Ivy, is the director. They saw my name and reached out. That solidified that family piece for me. I had found my family," said Fletcher in a recent interview. Fletcher is now the Assistant Director of Gender Benders.

In the last year, the Gender Benders applied and received their 501(c)(3) status, allowing them to apply for more grant opportunities, had their most successful year of grassroots fundraising to date, and launched a peer health initiative at the fifth year of Camp Gender Benders, which had the largest attendance, including representatives from the other three groups participating in the Trans Leadership Initiative.



# 2017 GRASSROOTS TRAINING WEBINARS

All webinars are recorded and can be downloaded, along with webinar materials, from

<https://lgbtinthesouth.org/resources/>

## Applying for 501(c)(3) Status

February 21, 2017

### Co-Panelists:

Que Bell, The Knights & Orchids Society • Craig White, Consultant – Asheville, NC

When it comes to seeking funding, one of the most common barriers grassroots leaders face is the lack of 501(c)(3) status. Having 501(c)(3) status isn't necessarily the end-all-be-all for many grassroots groups, neither is it the best vehicle for much of the incredible work happening across the South. But for many groups, especially groups that are working toward becoming a sustainable and long-term resource for their community, it's a logical next step. The webinar gives an overview of what it means to have 501(c)(3) status, what other options are available, and the steps to apply.

## LGBTQ in the South - Telling Your Story with Data

May 18, 2017

### Co-Panelists:

Christy Mallory, The Williams Institute • Aaron Sarver, CSE • Ivy Gibson-Hill, Gender Benders and CSE • Fletcher Page, Gender Benders and CSE

Data can be a powerful storytelling tool, yet historically there has been a lack of reliable statistics about LGBTQ Southerners. Thanks to the Williams Institute, we now have a growing body of data telling an important and multi-layered story about LGBTQ Southerners. The webinar provided grassroots leaders with an overview of who LGBTQ Southerners are, the issues they face; how to find specific data about their local communities using The Williams Institute online resources; and how to effectively use data in your communications strategy and to tell the story of your work to funders and supporters.



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT!

### Nationz Foundation T-Gurlz Rock, Richmond, VA

Night of testing, fashion and networking with community to erase stigma related to HIV testing within the transgender community, and highlight the talent and resiliency of the trans community.

"Everyone had an awesome time. Community partners such as Virginia Anti-Violence Project, Health Brigade and Virginia League of Planned Parenthood were there that day and Nationz Foundation provided STI Testing! We tested 6 individuals that evening and connected individuals to much needed resources in our community. We had an amazing fashion show that showcased eyewear and fashion by local LGBTQ designers and ended the night with performances from some of the ladies from the T-Gurlz Rock support group!"  
- Zakia McKensey, Director



## Funding for Grassroots Change

June 21, 2017

### Co-Panelists:

Chantelle Fisher-Borne, Out in the South Initiative, Funders for LGBTQ Issues • Que Bell, Trans Justice Funding Project • Joy Messenger, Third Wave Fund • Miabi Chatterji, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice • Ryan Li Dahlstrom, Fund for Trans Generations, Borealis Philanthropy

Some of the most visionary work in the South is often planned at the dinner table and funded out-of-pocket by grassroots leaders. These leaders sacrifice their time, money, health and safety to make change in their hometowns. Grassroots LGBTQ leadership is crucial to achieving lived and legal equality in the South, but it is also severely underfunded and undervalued. The webinar provided LGBTQ grassroots organizers across the South with the opportunity to directly connect with a panel of funders that prioritize Southern LGBTQ grassroots leadership, and to learn how to access more funding for their work.



# GRASSROOTS PARTNER DIRECTORY



## ALABAMA

**Athens Pride Coalition**  
Athens, AL  
**Coffee House Poets**  
Madison, AL  
**Equality March, Birmingham**  
Birmingham, AL  
**Equality Shoals**  
Florence, AL  
**Equality March, North Alabama**  
Florence, AL  
**Safe Zone for All**  
Enterprise, AL  
**TAKE (Trans Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering)**  
Birmingham, AL  
**The Change Project: Equality March**  
Birmingham, AL  
**The Knights and Orchid Society**  
Selma, AL

## ARKANSAS

**Arkansas RAPPS**  
Little Rock, AR

## FLORIDA

**Emerge Adventures**  
Palm Bay, FL  
**LGBTQ Freedom Fund**  
Tampa, FL  
**Pioneer Winter Collective**  
Miami, FL

## GEORGIA

**Atlanta Women of Color Language Justice Crew**  
College Park, GA  
**Black Magic Lab**  
Atlanta, GA  
**FTM Foundation**  
Decatur, GA  
**Savannah LGBT Center: Equality March**  
Savannah, GA  
**Southern Fried Queer Pride**  
Atlanta, GA  
**Wussy Mag**  
Atlanta, GA

## KENTUCKY

**Lexington Fairness: Equality March, KY**  
Lexington, KY

## LOUISIANA

**Louisiana Cooperative Development Project**  
Alexandria, LA  
**NAMI New Orleans**  
New Orleans, LA  
**Radical Manners**  
New Orleans, LA  
**Southern Organizer Academy**  
New Orleans, LA  
**Transitions Louisiana**  
New Orleans, LA

## MISSISSIPPI

**Mississippi Rising Coalition**  
Ocean Springs, MS  
**Sigma Nu Psi, Inc. - Jackson, MS**  
Jackson, MS  
**The FreeZoneWith Podcast**  
Gulfport, MS  
**The Spectrum Center**  
Hattiesburg, MS

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT!

### Wussy Mag • Atlanta, GA

An online magazine covering queer nightlife, art and culture in Atlanta and the greater southeast.



“WUSSY was able to release 3 months of our printed alt-rag called Wussy Rag! In the Rag, we interviewed queer musicians such as Perfume Genius, Mykki Blanco, Princess Nokia, and more! As a southern queer zine, it can be difficult to find the necessary monetary support to support the projects our community craves. Thank you SEF for supporting WUSSY and queer artists in the Southeast!” Jon Dean, Founder



NORTH CAROLINA

**AC Reynolds High School GSA**  
Asheville, NC  
**Beauty Endowment Project**  
Asheville, NC  
**BeLoved Asheville**  
Asheville, NC  
**Bilingual Self-Defense Clinic**  
Asheville, NC  
**Black Lesbian Literary Collective**  
Clayton, NC  
**BTIPS “Carolinas” - Winston-Salem**  
Winston-Salem, NC  
**BTIPS “Carolinas” - Charlotte**  
Charlotte, NC  
**Carolinas Pride Theater Ensemble**  
Charlotte, NC  
**Catawba Valley Pride, Inc.**  
Hickory, NC  
**Charlotte Uprising**  
Charlotte, NC  
**CIMA (Compañeros Inmigrantes de la Montañas en Acción)**  
Asheville, NC  
**Cis-Ed 101 Education Series**  
Hillsborough, NC  
**Equality March Charlotte**  
Charlotte, NC  
**Equality March, Elizabeth City**  
Elizabeth City, NC  
**Fuerza y Unión Múltiple (FUM)**  
Henderson, NC

**League of Women Voters, Gerrymander 5K**  
Asheville, NC  
**Guilford College Teach-in**  
Greensboro, NC  
**Hola Latino**  
Durham, NC  
**Ministries Beyond Welcome**  
Winston Salem, NC  
**MotherLove, YWCA**  
Asheville, NC  
**OUT in the High Country**  
Boone, NC  
**Piedmont-Triad LGBTQ Youth Educators Conference**  
Winston-Salem, NC  
**PRISM (People Representing Sexual Minorities)**  
Flat Rock, NC  
**Radical Outdoor Healing Collective**  
Durham, NC  
**Rev. Debra J. Hopkins**  
Charlotte, NC  
**Safe Schools NC**  
Durham, NC  
**Trans Empowerment Action**  
Charlotte, NC  
**Transgender Health Program, WNCCHS**  
Asheville, NC  
**El Centro Hispano LGBTQ Program Documentary**  
Durham, NC

SOUTH CAROLINA

**Gender Benders**  
Piedmont, SC  
**Hoechella**  
Columbia, SC  
**Rally for Trans Women of Color**  
Charleston, SC  
**Southern Queer Podcast**  
Chesnee, SC  
**Sugar in the Grits**  
Charleston, SC  
**We Are Family**  
Charleston, SC

TENNESSEE

**Equality March, Chattanooga**  
Chattanooga, TN  
**Mature Empowered Networking (M.E.N.)**  
Memphis, TN  
**Relationship Unleashed**  
Memphis, TN  
**The P.A.I.G.E.**  
Memphis, TN  
**Transcend Memphis**  
Memphis, TN  
**Tri-State Black Pride**  
Memphis, TN

TEXAS

**Organización Latina de Trans en Texas**  
Houston, TX  
**Hurricane Harvey Relief**  
Houston, TX  
**Transform Houston**  
Houston, TX

VIRGINIA

**Nationz Foundation**  
Richmond, VA  
**Southwest VA LGBTQIA History Project**  
Project Queer Youth Brigade  
Roanoke, VA  
**#StandWithGavin**  
Gloucester County, VA  
**Twin Oaks**  
Louisa, VA

REGIONAL

- America in Transition Documentary
- Queer Appalachia
- Equality Case Files
- Black August Bail Out Action, Southerners on New Ground

Why We Use “Grassroots Partner”

We use the term “grassroots partner” instead of “grantee” to more accurately describe the collaborative relationship that we strive to create with those groups and individuals that receive funding through the SEF.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT!

Rally for Trans Women of Color, Charleston, SC

Rally to respond to the national call-to-action to celebrate, affirm, and protect trans women of color.



(L-R) Vanity, Cayden and Diamond were speakers and co-organizers of the rally.



# THANK YOU

The Southern Equality Fund is possible because of the support of individual donors and the following foundations:

Amy Mandel and Katina Rodis Fund  
Freeman Foundation  
Fund 4 Democratic Communities  
Fund for Trans Generations  
Groundswell Fund  
Laughing Gull Foundation  
Oak Foundation  
Out in the South Fund  
Rockefeller Foundation  
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT!

### The FreeZoneWith Podcast , Gulfport, MS

Live broadcast show with three LGBTQ leaders from the Mississippi Gulf Coast to discuss issues regarding race, sexuality and gender.



(L-R) Petra Ehlers, TNathan Fairly, Melinda Medina

“I really want to thank the Southern Equality Fund. Because of them the FreeZoneWith has been able to help local immigrants receive help, and also report on local police profiling.”  
- Petra Ehlers, President

# CONNECT

## with the Campaign for Southern Equality

### Read More About Us

**Southern Equality Fund**



[www.lgbtinthesouth.org](http://www.lgbtinthesouth.org)

**Campaign for Southern Equality**



[www.southernequality.org](http://www.southernequality.org)

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# CAMPAIGN FOR SOUTHERN EQUALITY

The Southern Equality Fund is a project of the Campaign for Southern Equality.  
Learn more at [www.lgbtinthesouth.org](http://www.lgbtinthesouth.org) and [www.southernequality.org](http://www.southernequality.org).