



Campaign for Southern Equality

Annual Report 2020

May 15, 2021

For so many of us, 2020 was a painful and deeply challenging year. The COVID-19 pandemic claimed millions of lives and transformed our lives and systems in myriad ways as our world was forced to respond to an unprecedented crisis. And in June, a long overdue national reckoning about racial injustice gripped our country, stirring historic protests and conversations about race and white supremacy.

Life and work also shifted significantly for our team at the Campaign for Southern Equality (CSE). But fundamentally, our approach to achieving lived and legal equality for LGBTQ Southerners has remained steady. Toggling between rapid response work and long-haul strategies is the nature of organizing for social justice in the South.

Much of our work this year was markedly somber. We supported LGBTQ folks through economic and existential hardship, created virtual space for community members grappling with isolation, and intensely reflected on the scourge of racism in the South. But while I ache for the necessity of this work, I am honored that the CSE team was able to be there for our community during this time. **I'm proud of how our team, our partners, and our networks, showed up this year.**

In the pages of this Annual Report you'll see stories about a time of challenge and struggle, yes – but you will also see resilience, innovation, and compassion. I also hope you'll see our gratitude for you and for your support, which kept us going - not only functionally, but also spiritually. We are energized to do this work every day because of donors like you who have stepped up in big ways.

Thank you,



Rev. Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
Executive Director, CSE



The COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program

from the Southern Equality Fund

“The \$2 trillion COVID-19 Stimulus Bill has yet to reach people in need and the Campaign for Southern Equality is not waiting,” *Color Lines* wrote when we announced in March that we were pivoting our grantmaking arm, the Southern Equality Fund, into a rapid response fund focused on LGBTQ Southerners impacted by the pandemic. We funded more than 35 community response projects, routed \$20,000 to frontline direct service organizations, and created an Emergency Assistance Grant program to provide immediate financial support of \$100 to individuals and families impacted by the pandemic. Throughout 2020 we distributed more than **\$300,000** through the COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program alone and **quadrupled our total grantmaking goal, thanks to the generosity of so many donors and foundations.**



“On top of organizing my basic survival, I also have to contemplate how to navigate this world as a Black and trans person. The day-to-day has been draining, so help from organizations like Campaign for Southern Equality has quite literally saved me.” – **Dandelion, Georgia**

“I’ve become homeless due to not being able to work and the prejudice of my family. The Emergency Assistance Grant was what fed me after days of hunger and worrying about how I was going to survive. I was able to feed myself for a couple of weeks with the money.” –

Jason, Georgia



Key Program Data:

We awarded a total of **\$340,950** in grants through our Southern Equality Fund to support LGBTQ Southerners and grassroots organizers. 80% of these funds were COVID-19 Rapid Response grants.

In 2020, we distributed **2,350** Emergency Assistance Grants to LGBTQ Southerners – \$100 grants to support people with basic needs like rent, groceries, and medical supplies.

Emergency Assistance Grant recipients represented a broad diversity of racial and gender identities: **69%** identified as people of color, and **73%** identified as a gender identity other than cisgender.



Responding to the Pandemic

The Front Porch: Virtual Gatherings for the #LGBTQSouth

Launched at the onset of the pandemic, The Front Porch program brought virtual connection and resources to hundreds of CSE community members. Over the course of 2020 we offered 64 webinars, including sessions on resilience and finance; Queer Artist Meet-Ups; cooking classes; and more. **More than 650 LGBTQ and allied Southerners attended Front Porch webinars**, and more than 6,000 more watched content later. We also engaged in in-depth conversations with activists and advocates about racial justice, disability justice, and how intersecting identities impact our perspectives on America.

A Sample of Gatherings on The Front Porch:

J. Chong Eats: A Cooking Show for These Times

Southern Equality Studios' Queer Artist Meet-Up Goes Virtual

Trans Health in the South: A Listening & Resource Sharing Session

Paycheck Protection Program: A Q&A with a CPA

Keeping Your Hair on Point in a Pandemic: At-Home Hair and Grooming Tips

Supporting Trans Students Through Virtual Learning

In April, we submitted a letter on behalf of 300 educators, administrators, parents, and students in North Carolina urging the NC Department of Public Instruction to protect the privacy and safety of transgender students. This built upon several years of work advocating for an **update to PowerSchool**, the state's student information system, to ensure that students' dead names and gender identity would not be revealed without students' consent. The outdated tool has long been a problem but became especially urgent in the era of at-home learning. We're proud to share the news that this change was finally made at the state level in April 2021.



Supporting BIPOC LGBTQ Southerners

SEF Grant Rounds for BIPOC Activists & Artists

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, especially our partners at East Fork Pottery, we distributed more than \$35,000 in grants to BIPOC LGBTQ Southerners to support art and activism. Through three special grant rounds, we received nominations and accepted applications from BIPOC queer photographers, painters, ceramicists, and writers – as well as folks doing transformative organizing work for Black queer people.



Protest and Projections

On 8 separate nights, CSE's Southern Equality Studios team displayed public art projections in downtown Asheville. The projections – centered on racial equity, voting, and LGBTQ history – were created by a network of local LGBTQ artists and helped to illuminate buildings and make a call for change in the public square.



Pushing Toward LGBTQ Legal Equality

Fighting for Justice in Court

We served as plaintiffs in two lawsuits – one led to the end of South Carolina’s anti-LGBTQ curriculum law in February, and another teamed us up with an inspiring cadre of organizations to challenge the Trump Administration’s rollback of trans-inclusive healthcare protections.

Movement Building in the States

In South Carolina we helped convene 30+ LGBTQ and allied organizations in the state to create a new coalition to defeat anti-transgender legislation and build LGBTQ political voice and power in the state. And in North Carolina, we partnered with Equality NC for the launch of NC is Ready, a statewide campaign pushing for local nondiscrimination ordinances.

Celebrating Major Breakthroughs

In hopeful steps forward, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed employment protections for LGBTQ workers – and Virginia became the first Southern state to pass comprehensive nondiscrimination protections and ban anti-LGBTQ “conversion therapy.”

CSE in the News

NPR:

“LGBTQ Youth Fight For Equality In Sex Ed In South Carolina Classrooms”

The Atlantic:

“A New Day for Queer People in the South: North Carolina’s ban on local protections for LGBTQ people expires”

BuzzFeed:

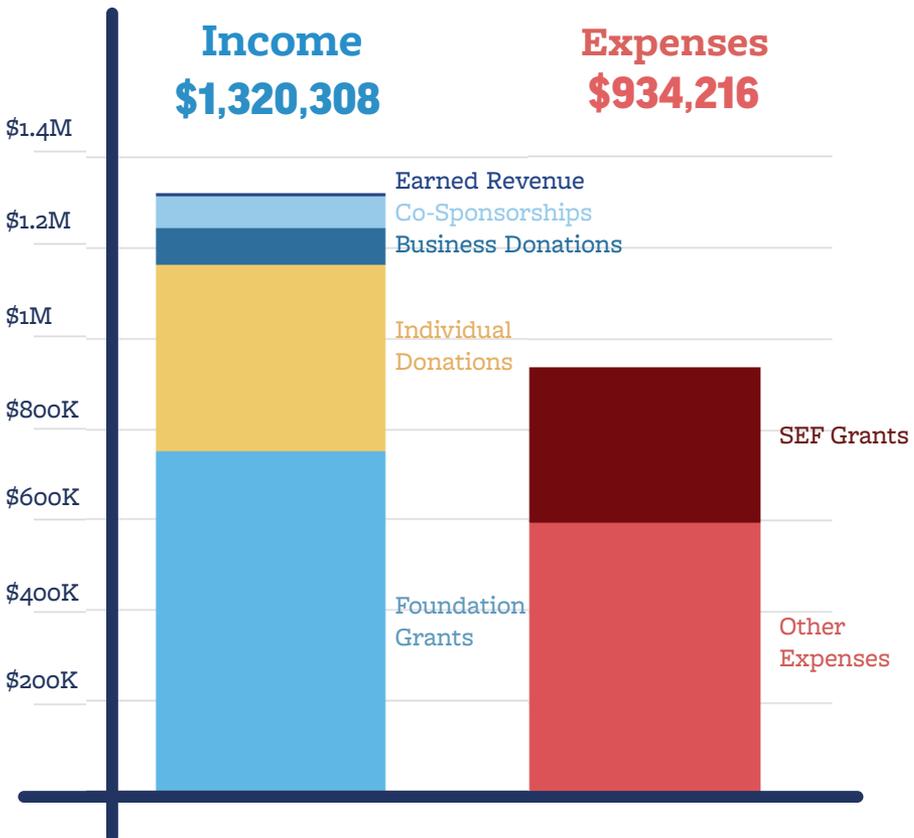
“The Supreme Court’s LGBTQ Decision Will Have Huge Impacts For Those In States With No Prior Protections”

Vox:

“This Could Be the Blueprint for LGBTQ Protections in the South”

Finances

NOTE: 2020 was no ordinary year and in March we worked quickly to do two things: pivot our programming and our budget to respond to urgent community needs and an uncertain fundraising landscape. As a result, we significantly increased the amount of money we were giving out through Southern Equality Fund grassroots grants, more than quadrupling our original goal for the year. We distributed \$340,829 in SEF grants to individuals in need and to frontlines grassroots groups and service providers, constituting more than 36% of our total expenses for 2020. We also ran CSE on as lean an operational budget as we could while also prioritizing rapid response work and our equity initiatives. We are grateful to everyone who stepped up to support our work during this year and ensure we had the resources in hand to be as responsive and impactful as possible.



THANK YOU.



We are so grateful to everyone who is a part of the CSE community – for your courage, your belief in this work, and the tangible ways you support us, whether it's donating or all the other ways you find to show up for LGBTQ Southerners. From all of us, thank you.

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