

## Looking Back, Looking Forward: Nonprofit Leaders of Color on COVID-19, Equity, and Justice

24 March 2021 #OneYearLater #OnTheFrontlines

Presented by the [Building Movement Project](#) (BMP)

**Catherine Foley:** Hello everyone. Welcome. Thank you for joining us for today's webinar: *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Nonprofit Leaders of Color on COVID-19, Equity, and Justice*. My name is Catherine Foley. I'm the Communications and Operations Associate at the [Building Movement Project](#). Thank you everyone for dropping your names and where you're joining from.

Being we get started, we just wanted to share some tech logistics for today. Attendees are not visible. Please feel free to continue using the chat to send any questions or tech issues that you may have. This webinar is being recorded, and we'll share the link out along with additional materials. We're also providing closed captioning today. You can enable them on your own screen if you go to the bottom of the Zoom platform and click the little up arrow next to the closed captions button. From there, you can toggle the captions on or off.

Also, if you're on Twitter, please feel free to tweet along with #POCNonprofits and #OneYearLater. With that, I'll hand it over to our Director of Strategic Initiatives, Deepa Iyer.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Catherine. Hello again, everyone. We're so glad that you're here. I want to start off by telling you a little bit about the Building Movement Project. We are a national nonprofit organization that strengthens the nonprofit sector and movement leaders to advance social change through research, tools, training materials, guidance, and facilitation. So we're really excited that you all are here to have this conversation with us about one year later and examining what the effects are of the ongoing pandemic, as well as overlapping crises our communities are facing.

Before we get started, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the violence that claimed lives in Atlanta and Boulder. We send our care to the families of victims and to survivors. We are in solidarity with community advocates and frontline responders in those two states. We hope that you will be and you are following along in terms of providing support to various organizations who are really showing up for communities in those states. We'll pass along some links in that vein as well.

Moving on, as Catherine mentioned, this conversation is really going to focus on how systemic inequities that were revealed by COVID-19 are still ongoing. I'm grateful to our speakers for joining us, given that every single day they are doing tremendous work in their communities, and they're taking time to join us today to share their insights. So we will introduce them all later. You'll hear from them.

I wanted to have you please join me in welcoming Jorge Gutierrez, the executive director of Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement; Laura Harris, the executive director for Americans for Indian Opportunity; Angela Lang, the executive director of Black Leaders Organizing for Communities based in Milwaukee; Shaw San Liu, the executive director of the Chinese Progressive Association based in San Francisco.

We've gathered these leaders here because they are working with communities of color. They are dealing with systemic inequities, and they are also at the forefront of presenting bold solutions in their communities. We wanted to take a moment, now that you know who's here, to learn who you are. So we're going to put up a poll to just get a sense of where it is that you all are joining us from. So it should

be popping up on your screen. We'll take just a couple of seconds to get a sense of who's in our space today. Welcome again to all of you. So 77%, over three-quarters of you represent the nonprofit sector. We also have individuals representing philanthropy and other organizations. So again, thank you so much for being here and for learning along with us. In terms of what you can expect from our conversation today, I just wanted to go over the agenda and goals. We're going to have a chance to understand the current state of needs and challenges facing communities of color as well as organizations led by people of color.

We'll learn about some bold and workable practices and solutions and discuss ways to support nonprofit leaders of color. We will engage in three rounds of discussion interspersed with your questions, so I want to encourage you again to drop your questions into the chat. Just to begin the conversation, we wanted to start with a baseline. That baseline is related to a report that the Building Movement Project released last October. When the pandemic started in March of last year, we decided to conduct a survey because we wanted to learn how nonprofit leaders of color were experiencing the pandemic, and we wanted to understand the impact of the pandemic on their communities, their organizations, and their leadership.

We conducted a survey last spring. We also conducted in-depth interviews with many nonprofit leaders of color and released a report last October with recommendations and findings. So we're going to start there because we wanted to see where things are now. The findings that we had that you can see here are pretty much the ones that I think all of us know. We knew last October, because we heard from nonprofit leaders of color, that the crisis was going to get worse. We also knew that nonprofits led by people of color were pivoting.

They were making up for government inefficiencies. They were doing work that they didn't even anticipate doing. We also heard that this climate, the current climate was taking an immense toll on POC leaders, people of color leaders, but particularly women of color. and that one of their largest concerns was that their long-term financial stability of their organizations was ambiguous. Finally, we heard a really loud call to action around systemic change and solidarity.

So we're going to talk about a lot of these to understand from the folks that we've gathered today where things are when they are thinking about a lot of those findings today. First, just to get a little bit deeper into our data and analysis, nonprofit leaders of color told us that the crisis would get worse. That has definitely been the case, as you can see from the next slide. We knew that the people of color leaders we surveyed work with communities that are really bearing the brunt of the pandemic.

87% of the people of color-led nonprofits that we surveyed were already in communities hardest hit by one or more aspects of the economic crisis. You can see on this slide, that included the loss of jobs, health benefits, housing, and basic services. Native and Black communities continue to suffer higher rates of illnesses and deaths then and now while Asian and Latinx communities experienced high rates of economic uncertainty from joblessness and unsafe working conditions then and now.

Now, on top of that, we also had another finding, which I think is very relevant today. That is that communities of color were facing, in addition to those inequities that I just mentioned, racism, bigotry, Islamophobia, anti-Asian violence. 43% of organizations reported to us last spring that their community members were already facing an increased level of harassment and violence. This was most prominent among Asian American and Latinx-serving organizations.

We found that Asian Americans in particular were the most likely to report violence and harassment, and this has obviously continued as you look at today. We know from Stop AAPI Hate that about 3800 incidences of anti-Asian hate were reported just in the past year, so that trend has continued. And then finally, we asked POC leaders about what they could expect as they went into 2021. This is a range of what they told us. They said and predicted that there would be issues related to food insecurity, digital literacy, surge of illnesses, housing instability, small business closures, and the like.

In fact, again, we have seen that those predictions have come true as we are one year into this pandemic. We know, on top of this, that there's also issues concerning vaccines and whether they're equitably provided, and we know that employment for women of color, particularly Black and Latinx women, are much higher now than they were a year ago. Beyond that finding about immediate need/survival need, we also found that a lot of POC leaders were talking about bold solutions around systemic change and solidarity, much of it stemming from the uprisings that we saw last summer.

The momentum for structural change was very palpable then, and I believe it continues to be, and we'll hear about that. As you'll see from the next slide, many of the people of color leaders that we talked about really focused on a desire to engage in solidarity to do some generative conversations with each other, learn about what their communities are moving through, and to push for bold solutions related to community safety, robust public health infrastructure, and more.

Finally, just a few quick findings before we move into our panel conversation. We also found, as I mentioned, that women leaders of color were really taking on an immense toll at this moment. In fact, 70% of our survey respondents were women of color. They said that as executive directors, they were balancing way too much, more than they usually do. As you can see from the next slide, they were also making changes to their workplaces in order to account for the current climate, so whether that was providing resources for staff wellbeing or even changing expectations about productivity.

These leaders of color, particularly women, again, were trying to make changes as much as they could in the workplace. Lastly, we found that ... Sorry, you could see some quotes here that I think are pretty poignant when it comes to what women of color are facing, leaders of color are facing about what they're balancing in this time of crisis. And then finally, one of the reasons for the anxiety that a lot of leaders of color talked about is because they weren't sure about their long-term financial stability.

Many leaders of color that we surveyed talked about how, because of the CARES Act and because of foundation rapid response funds, they felt okay for 2020 and perhaps even 2021, but they were really concerned about the long run. As you can see from the next slide, we captured some really vulnerable moments where executive directors talked about the deep anxiety that they were facing in terms of feeling worried that the money will run out or that because of philanthropic inequity, that the organizations that are really on the front lines of the pandemic would not be able to secure the funding they needed for the long run to do power building, to do community building for the long run.

So that is what we found. Those are our key findings. We'll drop the link to the [report](#) into the chat so that you can learn more about what we found. The reason we're having a conversation today is because we wanted to assess where are we now. Are some of these findings still relevant? What are nonprofit organizations led by people of color dealing with now? What are they predicting? We'd also love to hear from you because we know that, again, most of you are leading nonprofits.

So in the chat, we would love to hear from you bold solutions, best practices, what you need to sustain your leadership so that we can bring you into this space as well. But the conversation we're about to start now will really touch upon these questions. What is top of mind for nonprofit leaders of color right now in terms of community needs, and how is their organization planning to respond? What are some of the bold solutions and recommendations for philanthropy or policy or our own sector to address systemic racism and inequity?

Finally, as nonprofit leaders of color, what do we need to sustain our leadership for the long run? So those are the touchpoints for our conversation. With that, I want to go ahead and bring on our panelists, so if you can go ahead and put yourselves back on the screen. Thank you so much. Really, the big question is what do we need to not just recover but to rebuild a more just and equitable world? That is our really big question. I'm going to go ahead and get us started with our first question, which is what is top of mind for you right now when it comes to the survival needs of your communities, and how is your organization responding? It would be great to hear about specific needs that are coming up as well as specific ways that you all are pivoting. I'm going to actually start by hearing from Laura Harris, who is the executive director of Americans for Indian Opportunity. Then we'll move on to Angela, Shaw San, and Jorge. Laura, go ahead.

**Laura Harris:** Thank you, Deepa. [Greets in Comanche]. Thank you so much for doing this survey and having these panels. It's so important because, of course, to create systemic change, nonprofits are on the frontline of that and people of color nonprofits in particular. We pivoted a lot. We're a national advocacy organization. We engage in leader development, community engagement. But for the last four years or so, there's really been a vacuum of leadership and a vacuum of a coalition of Native-led organizations here in the city of Albuquerque.

I have a granddaughter, and my colleagues have small children, and so just selfishly, we wanted a place, central space where our kids, grandkids could go and get a little bit of culture. But also, the community really needed some kind of central space. So about four years ago we started building on that idea. We pivoted from doing our national work and leadership development to really using the coalition that we had created the year before, Native Leadership Collective of Albuquerque, made up of 21 nonprofit Native-led organizations that are headquartered in Albuquerque.

We were able to mobilize them. Native Americans make up about almost 10% of the Albuquerque population. And yet, they use 3% number when they gauge city budgets and that sort of thing. So we found there was a great need, a real gap in services for Native Americans that were living in the city of Albuquerque and the surrounding areas. So we were able to coordinate and provide some groceries, PPE, really be a service navigator, try to help families find the kind of help they needed, rental assistance, housing issues.

But we also at the national level, we were beginning at the beginning of the year to hold these national convenings around some of our key issues. Now we've moved those engagements online. It's really to look at this idea of build back better. So how do we replace these systems that are failing us versus just propping them up and getting them going again? We have such an opportunity, I think, to replace these failing systems, but we're all going to be so busy reacting while the rest of America begins to recover. I know for a fact that indigenous communities are going to still be in crisis.

There's even this fear that there's going to be rolling infections and that it's going to be in communities of color. Are we going to be so busy meeting the demands and the needs of the pandemic and the

resulting economic issues that we're not going to be able to be creative and proactive and take advantage of this call for systemic change because we're going to be so busy taking care of each other?

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Laura. Thank you so much. I think that question that you said is critical. How do we make sure we're not propping up systems that have failed and instead replacing them with systems that actually work and that are community-centered? I really appreciate that. Angela, turning to you, if you could talk a little bit about what are the current survival needs of communities that you all work with in Milwaukee, and how is your organization responding in this current moment a year into the pandemic?

**Angela Lang:** Yeah. There's actually a really disturbing article that just came up a couple minutes ago while we've been on this call from our local newspaper talking about how domestic violence in 2020 has been staggering, especially with the stay-at-home orders. There was a point where if you were not an essential worker and you were caught outside, you were getting a fine. So there's a class element there. There's a racial element there as we see that people get racially profiled, and there's disparities with tickets.

But then the opposite, you're trying to be a law-abiding resident but that may not be a safe place for you to be and you're at home. So we've seen domestic violence issues on the rise. Unfortunately, earlier today we did a staff or ambassador check-in and one of our ambassadors just lost her uncle this morning, not necessarily due to COVID, but just the amount of tremendous loss and grief that's constant has been really, really troubling and kind of hard to process sometimes. So we've had to make some adjustments in our workweek, for example.

We moved to four-day workweeks because of everything that's happening in the world, understanding that it's not just the pandemic and the economic insecurities, the fear of catching the virus itself, but there's so many other challenges of mental health, both visible. I think there's the real tangible things that we see of loss and the healthcare system and those disparities. But again, things like the mental health crisis or domestic violence issues, those are things that sometimes are invisible in this pandemic, and those are things that are real and are constantly traumatizing our community.

Communities of color, we have generational trauma that we carry with us every day. And then we're being traumatized in real time. Then for us as organizers, sometimes when we're having those phone calls, those can be also traumatizing conversations as well. What does it mean to be working in a community where you're a part of and then you're seeing your own people being traumatized in real time? There's that secondary trauma, and it's hard. It's really challenging.

I think for us, we're very flexible. We're fiscally-sponsored, so we have our policies and procedures. We have our handbook. But we want to be really flexible with our policies, and we really just try to figure out what do we need? When we first moved to four-day workweeks, it was actually the night. It was a really bad night with the protests in Minneapolis. I happened to wake up at 3:00 in the morning. I had tweets turned on for the former president. He had tweeted, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts." A lot of us, we've been familiar with his tweets and his rhetoric, but this just hit different. So I woke up at about 3:00 in the morning. I don't think I went back to sleep. I ended up texting the senior team at the time and didn't expect them to respond so early in the morning. We all agreed that we were having a really tough time with everything going on, whether it was this racial reckoning, everything that COVID and this pandemic has brought on. We said, "Mental health day?" Everyone was like, "Yes

please." And then we realized it was something that we needed. We couldn't act as if business was usual.

**Deepa Iyer:** Yeah. Yeah. Thank you, Angela. Thank you for bringing up the domestic violence and mental health concerns. We also saw that in our report last year, and that continues, as you said, and for pointing out some of those best practices around what needs to happen within organizations, like four-day workweeks. Again, would love to hear from folks who are here with us. What are you doing in your organizations as well?

Shaw San, can I turn to you next to share a little bit as well? I think Shaw San has her beautiful baby with her. I think this is an example of what executive directors are often dealing with and balancing. We'll get to that question later. But welcome to your baby and welcome to you. The question really for you is, the survival needs of Asian communities were already hard to deal with when the pandemic started. And then, on top of that, there has been anti-Asian hate. So could you share a little bit about what is top of mind for you and how the organization is responding?

**Shaw San Liu:** Yes. Thanks, Deepa. Hi everyone. Just an honor to be with other powerful leaders and organizers of color talking about and marking a year of pandemic. It's a year of her life. She just had her birthday a week ago. So it's been a big year. I also just want to recognize that for the Asian American community at large, I think this has been a really tough period of time.

For the community that I work with, the Chinese immigrant community in San Francisco Bay Area, there's just so much hurt and devastation right now around the rise in attacks against Asian Americans, from the Thai grandfather who was pushed to his death about a month ago to the shootings in Georgia to just it's actually it is nonstop there. The coverage of attacks, robberies, muggings, an 11-year-old girl was locked in a bathroom just a few days ago as her house was burglarized.

So it's happening and it's getting a lot of attention. So I would say that for our community, the first and foremost concern they have ... The first concern they have right now is safety, is personal safety and the sense that on top of a pandemic where Chinatown and Asian businesses were impacted first ... Sorry, give me one second.

**Deepa Iyer:** No worries. If you want to come back, you can, Shaw San. Do what you need to do. We all understand what you're balancing.

**Shaw San Liu:** Let's try. She might just need to walk around. Just walk with me. We'll go by the window. I think physical safety and the anti-Asian discrimination is really high on our community's mind right now on top of all ... Okay.

**Deepa Iyer:** Let's come back to you. We'll come back to you. Thank you, everyone, for also understanding and for recognizing that this is reality for people who are leading organizations and also dealing with childcare. Jorge, I'm going to turn it to you. In terms of your organization, Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, what are top-of-mind challenges that are coming up for communities?

**Jorge Gutierrez:** Hi everyone. Good to be on this panel with amazing, brilliant organizers. My name is Jorge Gutierrez. I'm with Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement. We're a national grassroots cultural and political and organizing home for the trans and queer Latinx and immigrant folks across the

country. I just wanted to share. I'm based here in LA, and I wanted to share some statistics just to give us, I think, a glimpse of what's happening in the Latinx community at large.

Almost 26,000 Latinx people in California have died from the virus. We represent 46% of all deaths in the state, and we only account for 39% of the population. We're 2.6 times more likely to contract the virus than white folks. So that just gives you what we're thinking. These are numbers from California, but I think that these can be put on any Latinx community living across the country. And then also last fall in September, the Human Rights Campaign released a report saying that LGBTQ Latinx people are more likely to decrease their hours at work, lose their jobs than the general population.

So these are, for us, we've seen this. The pandemic has only made these issues more visible to the mainstream communities and society. Our base is working-class. Our base is folks that are engaging in sex work. Our base are folks that are poor. One of the top issues for our communities right now is housing. We get so many calls and emails around folks, "Hey, I need X amount of money. If not, I'm going to get kicked out." "Hey, I don't have nowhere to live."

So we're seeing part of the work that Familia did was shift, put the brakes on some of the organizing work we were doing to do the rapid response, to look for funding, to hit up our funders and be able to say, "We need unrestricted money right now to be able to answer some needs in our communities." I think that that's a role we had to play. There was no other way. So I think housing is one. The other one is lack of access to healthcare, particularly for trans and queer folks, affirming healthcare.

We know that even when our folks even do have access to healthcare, they're still dealing with discrimination and racism and transphobia in these institutions. So that's another one. And then just the loss of jobs, of unemployment. We're in a pandemic and our government is still debating whether our folks deserve a \$15 minimum wage. I think that that's just very telling of how the working-class and poor people are suffering in this moment and will continue to do so.

So I think part of the work that Familia's trying to do is, one, do the rapid response, but also not lose sight of our long-term work because we know that we need to be able to change all these things systematically to be able to have our folks not just survive, but also thrive and have more opportunities to dream and to do the things that they want to do and feel protected in their communities. And then another big chunk of our base is undocumented trans and queer folks who are still having to face the criminalization of racist institutions, like ICE and the police. So that hasn't stopped. Deportations haven't stopped. Police brutality hasn't stopped even during a pandemic. So I think those are the issues that are very, very important to our communities and that they want us to continue to work on.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Jorge. I think all of you, I really appreciated what you talked about in terms of what are the current survival needs? We heard about personal safety. We heard about housing, obviously, mental health, physical health, domestic violence. We also heard about the economic toll that it's going to continue to have. I think this point that all of you made and, Jorge, you really brought it home when you said there are vulnerable communities within our communities.

Working-class folks, undocumented folks, limited English proficient people, the unhoused are all facing additional challenges. And then we've heard about how your organizations have pivoted. So you've had to either put a pause on the work that you do. You've had to go into rapid response mode. You've had to change internal policies. We are hearing from some folks in the chat as well about some of those

practices internally. Because, as Angela said, there is direct and vicarious trauma that staff hold also in terms of what's happening right now.

But this piece around not just surviving, but thriving is really important. That's kind of the lead-in that I want us to start with for our second round of questions. Again, for folks joining us and here with us, please share your feedback in the chat as well as you can put your questions in as well. We'll get to that after this round. But I want to go to this question around not just thriving, but surviving and really pick up on something Laura said at the beginning, which is that if we're constantly in the state of reacting to all of these needs, these kind of compounding needs, how do we actually bring forth those bold solutions?

So that's the question that I want to ask each of you. Yes, we have the American Rescue Plan, and it's absolutely important and vital to all of our communities. But in addition, what are some bold solutions that are required, whether it's for policy makers or for philanthropy or for our movements that we need to be putting into place to address systemic racism and inequity? So I'm going to start with Angela and then I'll go to Shaw San and then Jorge and Laura. I'll prompt you. Go ahead, Angela.

**Angela Lang:** Thank you. Yeah. That really resonated when I heard Laura say that because I actually wrote in my notes while prepping for this, "Proactive versus reactive." We are not a direct service organization. So we had to figure out how do we respond in this moment while doing the organizing as well? Choices have to be made, and you have to figure that out and understanding that there is an opening. I think there is very tangible short-term solutions. This pandemic is hopefully, fingers crossed, not going to last forever, although it feels like it.

It's going to be over at some point. But people need that short-term relief to make sure that they don't get evicted, that they can put food on the table, that people can eat, things like that. But then there's also an opening. I think there's discussions about more long-term and more systemic changes. What I think that's interesting and that I noticed very early on in the pandemic is that there were conversations around paid sick days. People were like, "We need to give people time off, paid sick days." You would have never, outside of a pandemic, heard some of these people say these things because that's not typically what they stand for. But think about what if we already had paid sick days before the pandemic hit? What we already institutionalized some of these things before? Would the impact be as drastic? So I think right now people are understanding that there's an opening and opportunities to really put into practice and to make permanent these solutions.

I think one that is being talked about that is becoming more and more mainstream is raising the minimum wage. People are talking about \$15 an hour. I'll admit, while I'm glad that we're having these conversations on a federal level in a really big way, I had a conversation with actually my state senator yesterday. We were like, "All these people that are for raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, great. Welcome to 2013 when the Fight for 15 first kicked off." Now, we're probably way behind and \$15 is not enough. But there's still even debate to this day around raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, so making sure that people have equitable paid time off. I think of my mother who had a terminal illness, and there would be times she would go to treatment. And then the next day, she would be at work and she would still say, "Well, I may be sick, but these bills don't stop." I think there's a lot of sentiment with that. What does it look like if you were paid a living wage that you could afford to take the day off when you didn't feel well, whether it's due to the pandemic or you just not feeling well mentally today?



We talk about wellness in a lot of terms of safety and physical wellness, but there's also emotional wellness as well. The other thing that I would mention as a policy thing is voting rights. H.R. 1 right now is being talked about, understanding we had a historic election last year, and take historic in as many ways as you want. It was a challenging year. We had an election in the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of these really racially charged incidences and attempted murders of Black and brown people and Asian folks and AAPI folks. It's difficult and it's challenging.

And then immediately, there's a visceral reaction when we respond and demand dignity and to say, "We deserve our lives to matter." There's a visceral response, and suddenly people want to change the rules. So I think being able to talk about voting rights because that also includes so many other things as well.

**Deepa Iyer:** Yeah. Thank you so much, Angela. Those are really important policy suggestions that folks need to keep in mind as we think about these bolder solutions. Shaw San, I'm going to ask you, how do you feel about going next in terms of bold solutions, either policy, philanthropy, or movement from your vantage point at CPA San Francisco? I'm assuming you'll be right back. Okay.

**Shaw San Liu:** Yes, I'm here. Thank you. Let's try. Yeah. I love this question, and I love what everyone said already. I just think that it is so clear that we have an unprecedented moment, a window of opportunity really to redefine normal. We don't want to go back to normal. There's a lot that needs to be changed. There's more people. A greater percentage of the population in this country understand that than ever before. So I think we really have to move in this moment to look at what does a post-vaccine, post-Breonna Taylor, post-Georgia, post-Trump reality look like?

What does the normal look like? I think part of what's very real is that there's a lot of pain everywhere. No community feels like their needs are adequately met, except for the 1% maybe. But most communities don't feel like their needs are adequately met. Actually, most communities don't feel like they're heard enough in the broader society. So there's both a moment of great risk because communities get pit against each other where there's oppression Olympics going on or what have you.

But there's also an opening to say, "This is the time to build the bigger we. This is the time to build this sense of we all need good jobs." We all need stable housing, and that's a public health issue. We all need healthcare. We need mental health, but I think the issue of mental health being part of health is something that more people understand than ever before given what we've all experienced with the pandemic. So this is a time for big demands that say, "We've never been through a pandemic before. We've never seen this kind of situation happen ever in our lifetimes."

The scale of the solutions has to match the scale of the problems. We need to ask for the things that our communities actually need. In San Francisco, for example, we're talking about making big, bold demands around jobs, not just any kind of job. We want quality jobs, empowered jobs, jobs that give workers both pay and say and that we're asking for those jobs to be jobs that build the community resilience, so Green New Deal and a really broad definition. It's not just about energy efficiency.

It's about healthcare and education and childcare, what our communities need to actually be resilient and weather through the next time wildfires send smoke through our entire city and people can't breathe. Folks who are low-income and working are the ones who are impacted the most and that we want to have equitable schools where they can be resource hubs for all of our communities to access

the needs that they have and that we really have a moment to center workers' rights as essential. If workers are essential, their rights are essential too.

How do we really move with the energy and, again, a different consciousness around the need? I totally echo everything that Angela said around the Fight for 15. I mean we passed that in 2015 in San Francisco and it's just like, "That was six years ago and it was not enough then in San Francisco." So I think the other thing I want to just flag is that our movement also needs to be ... In order for us to do all this work and to build the power on the ground to win these changes, our movement needs to be more sustainable. That's everything from the funding to our practices as an organization.

How are we trauma-informed? I mean we all have been through trauma, no matter what. Some folks have been through a lot of trauma. So how do we become more trauma-informed and defy, defy the drive of capitalism for us to keep driving ourselves to the death? Which is what a lot of folks, let's be real, in this sector, in organizations, we are doing because we're trying to save our communities. So I think we need to really think about how we work as well as what we're doing.

**Deepa Iyer:** That's great, Shaw San. The word that's sticking with me is pay and say. I think that's a tremendous phrase and also not returning to whatever that normal was because it didn't work for us. I do want to lift up some of the pieces in the chat. I will do that because there's a lot of great resources there. I'll do that when we break for Q&A in just a bit. But please keep sending questions, your practices, your recommendations, your bold solutions also.

Let me turn to Jorge and maybe start where Shaw San ended, which is we need a sustainable movement. We need sustainable organizations. So Jorge, as you think about these bold solutions, we talked a lot about policy. Also want to hear about what you think are some recommendations for philanthropy.

**Jorge Gutierrez:** Yeah. I mean echo to everything that everyone has said. I think that for philanthropy and funders, I think that they need to understand that what we're trying to do here is we're trying to dismantle white supremacy, patriarchy, and that grassroots organizing and political work needs to be funded. They need to trust Black and people of color leadership in communities. They need to give multiyear grants and unrestricted funds so that we can have the room to dream and envision because we are the experts of our communities.

It's not Ivy League schools. It's not the government. We are experts of our communities. So I think that that's what funders need to understand, that the philanthropy can't do business as usual moving forward. I hope that all these issues that we're talking about also don't leave the mainstream arena when there's a light at the end of the tunnel with COVID. We need all of our people to get vaccinated. There's money to take away from the police and ICE and invest the money in schools and jobs and healthcare for our community. So the money is there.

We need bold leadership from our leaders, and we need to vote and put people in power who are really are down for the community, that they understand and are grounded in ... [inaudible 00:43:14] is also healthcare. I think of my mom who's a domestic worker who has diabetes and who has been struggling with her health in the last couple of years. Every time she has to ask herself, "Do I have money to be able to pay for this visit, for the medication that I'm going to need?" So I think healthcare is another policy that we need to pass ASAP.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you so much, Jorge. Yeah, just lifting up that statement about the solutions have to match the scale of the problems and your recommendations for philanthropy. It struck me that some of those recommendations, philanthropy has pledged to do in the short term. I think the real question is, is that going to be a long-term strategy or is it just for this moment? Because it's not just rapid response for our communities is not going to be over when everyone potentially gets the vaccine.

So Laura, to you, when you think about Native communities that you work with and the bold solutions, what is it that is front-of-mind that you all are advocating for either policy-wise or with philanthropy?

**Laura Harris:** Well, for many years we've been talking about the failure of these Euro-American systems on people of color and oppressed people. The pandemic has just highlighted those problems. I mean from college athletics to our healthcare system, we've seen how these systems just don't serve. Our organization is organized around a set of core cultural values we affectionately call the four Rs or [Comanche 00:45:09] is a Comanche word. I'm a Comanche citizen with the Comanche nation.

I don't speak Comanche fluently, but I do know a few words and can introduce myself. But the four Rs, [Comanche 00:45:23] means just right and the number four. But we talk about these in a way of we have something to offer while these systems are failing, criminal justice system, education system, health system. We're polluting Mother Earth. Poor people are getting poorer. So we have to think differently. We have to embrace other worldviews and other values.

The four Rs are, just to name them, relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, and redistribution. I don't have time to talk about them in detail, but we're finding ways. Our leadership program really is based on how do you implement these traditional concepts, these traditional values in a modern context to address issues? We certainly can do that because they're good ideas. Communal attitude, if we weren't such individualists in the United States and had more of a communal worldview, a lot of these issues around the pandemic wouldn't have been issues.

We have to provide opportunity for all people. These sweeping changes will affect everybody and create a different kind of attitude, I think, universal healthcare, free college education. These things are fundamental in addressing systemic racism. Also, we've been talking about the trauma-informed systems too. I mean we talk a lot about trauma and how it affects the individual. But if we're a collective of traumatized people trying to help other traumatized people, how does that impact our work? How does our board of directors, our staff, our leadership, every aspect? We may be all traumatized people.

So how do we think of that and include that? We also have to build trusted relationships. I did work with President Clinton's initiative on race. We tried to create through another organization, Renewal of Democracy, create a system of anti-racism training centers. One of the things we really found out about community organizing and building solidarity is we have to have these trusted relationships built on information. We have to understand where each of our communities are coming from.

What is our history? That way we find our shared history. What are our values, so that we can find our common values? What is our experience of oppression? We talk about the oppression Olympics. We need to deeply understand each other's oppression in order to move forward together. If we don't do that fundamentally at the beginning, then later it's going to cause problems because we need to build this trust. So we're all products of the US education system.

So we hold onto these Euro-American ideas that a baby shouldn't be present in a meeting. Oh my God, we should all feel uncomfortable. And then we make the mother feel-

**Deepa Iyer:** Not in ours.

**Laura Harris:** That's just silly. Women have been bringing their babies to work with them for eons. It's just a weird Western concept that that's unacceptable.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Laura. No, thank you. Folks in the chat have been asking about your four Rs, which I think are ... I think there's this piece of we need to return to ancestral, indigenous knowledge because it's there. The four Rs around redistribution, relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility can really be, as you said, a framework for understanding all these bold solutions. They come so naturally out of them.

I want to just take a moment to pause and take a breath because there's been a lot of information that we've heard around these bold solutions for both philanthropy as well as for policy and, as Laura mentioned, the movement around solidarity, which is also something here at the Building Movement Project we do quite a lot of, thinking about how to build multiracial solidarity that is actually about transformative practice rather than the transactional that often happens.

We can put a link into the chat about that work too. But I wanted to just grab a couple of the thoughts that are coming up in the chat before I go into one audience question that I got. So folks are putting into the chat really great practices about what you're doing internally to pivot and to respond to the moment, so whether that is being creative in terms of practices for staff, challenging boards, something else that Laura mentioned at the end there, and challenging funders to step away from a charity framework to a social justice framework, for example, for funding.

We also heard about hazard pay, bilingual pay, weekly trauma-informed debriefing sessions with staff to process frontline trauma. So those are a couple of pieces that folks are doing and already implementing and hopefully will last. I want to just pick up someone's saying that, "This is such a kick-ass panel. Thank you all for being so real, present, and compassionate." Want to lift that up because you all are and I appreciate that. So the question I want to ask you all from someone in the audience is, and I think we can take two people to respond.

I know Shaw San already pinged me to say that she would like to respond. Let me know if someone else is interested. We've talking about a lot of challenges and pivots, but what about some highlights that emerged over the past year, particularly around movement-building, whether it's new partnerships, new coalitions that will enable us, enable you to really reach for these bold solutions? So Shaw San, I'll go to you first to quickly respond to that, and if someone else on the panel would like to, just please raise your hand or ping me. Go ahead.

**Shaw San Liu:** Yeah. Highlights, I think that a lot of organizations I'm sure have experienced this, just the new opportunities of being able to organize digitally, the fact some people who maybe have dropped out of our orbits or who just couldn't come because their lives are so busy with work and childcare are actually able to engage in our organizations. For us, we were able to do our first ever virtual canvassing for the census last year that we were able to lead with how are you doing with the pandemic?

This is March and April of last year, and be able to direct people not only let them know about the census, but redirect them to resources that they needed around unemployment and food and other things that they might need. I think that also seeing the opportunities to really organize around the issues that people are facing, the school closures, the lack of benefit that folks had, being able to really see across our organizations, across communities of color in San Francisco that there was opportunity to come together.

There was a cross-section of grassroots organizations and labor unions who came together as San Francisco United in Crisis to really quickly develop a platform calling on city government to attend to the needs of the communities most excluded from services and programs and who were going to be most impacted by the pandemic. That couldn't have happened if it wasn't for the many years of building work that we've done to develop those relationships and those alliances.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you. That's really the key, it seems, for that solidarity building, the relationships, and to build them deeply. Jorge, would you like to also answer this question around anything new that has emerged that will help in terms of building solidarity and understanding for the future?

**Jorge Gutierrez:** Sure. Yeah. Two things that come up for me, I think one, I think particularly for the immigrant rights movement, I think that we're starting to catch up. Of course, there's a lot of work around rights. At the same time we say, "Abolish ICE," we got to say, "Defund the police," and understand how connected these two systems are and how they're going after Black folks and people of color. I think that opens up for so much coalition and organizing to happen at the local and national level.

And then, two, some of the work that we also do and other organizations do too is around transformative justice. How are we transforming the violence that's happening to us and that's also happening within our own communities? What are the models that we're thinking of that don't rely on the police, don't rely on the state, but rely on each other? Because at the end of the day, we could protect each other.

**Deepa Iyer:** Right, right. Thank you. I'm hearing what has happened in the past year is a clearer understanding of how issues are interconnected and communities are interconnected and also the reliance on community-based solutions, community-centered solutions and, of course, the partnerships and relationships that need to be built in order for people to actually dream together, as you said, Jorge, earlier on. So thank you for that.

On the piece on solidarity, and thank you to Catherine for putting this link into the chat, here in the Building Movement Project, we do have a program that's really focused on building transformative solidarity practice called Solidarity Is. We are actually today kicking off a five-week online training for young people who are aged 18 to 25 to understand in this moment of overlapping crises where young people are ready to respond and to actually build the world that we need, what are the transformative solidarity practices that they can be building?

It's a free training. It'll be online. The link Catherine put into the chat. So we hope you can join us for the Solidarity Semester or pass it on to the young people in your lives who are really interested in responding to this moment and feeling this call to action. So one poll that we're going to put up now to

get everyone's input on before we transition to the last question is what are the two top equity issues related to the pandemic that your organization is working on?

A lot of what we've heard from our panel is here. Of course, there might be other issues you're working on that we don't have on this list, and you can feel free to include those into the chat. But if folks could just respond to that, the top two equity issues. Okay. So Catherine, I'll let you tell us what the responses are, if you've got over the 50%. As you do that, also just wanted to thank Brenda for your note into the chat about, "Thank you, Jorge, for sharing the stats on LA and also the panelists for this conversation."

Brenda's the first woman of color to lead her legal services organization, and these conversations are essential resources. So yes, we're in it together. So thank you, Brenda. It looks like the top two equity issues that folks are focused on, at least in this particular context in our space, is discrimination and hate at almost 50%, and access to basic social services, followed by housing needs, public health infrastructure building, and vaccine distribution.

So again, showing us that these issues are interlinked and these issues can't really be separated from one another. So thank you for that. We're going to go to our last question which, honestly, is I think something that is really near and dear to all of our hearts, which is sustaining, and this goes to Brenda's comment in the chat, sustaining leaders of color. You'll note that when I was doing the quick presentation about our findings from our report that we found that leaders of color are talking about the disproportionate toll that the climate, not just the pandemic but all of these overlapping crises are having on them in a way that they haven't experienced before.

I think Angela talked about this. I mean there's been a lot, the election. There's been the pandemic. There was the insurrection. There was anti-Asian violence. There were the uprisings. There are a lot of different pieces that we're holding. So the question here is as a nonprofit leader of color, as an executive director, how are you being affected by the crisis personally and vis-a-vis your leadership, and what do you need to sustain your leadership in the long run? What do you need? I'm going to ask Shaw San to go first and then Laura and then Jorge and then Angela. If you have any best practices yourselves or people listening, please put them in as to what nonprofit leaders of color need to sustain themselves. Go ahead, Shaw San.

**Shaw San Liu:** As an Asian American woman, this moment sucks. It's hard. It's really personal. I think it's also just the opportunity feels so important to not miss, and then we're exhausted. I think that other thing that's really hard about this moment is that the conversations happening in the English-speaking world is very different from the conversations happening in the Chinese-speaking world. The level of disinformation, the level of anti-Blackness, the level of misinformation and just misunderstandings that exist between communities is very heavy on those of us who ...

**Deepa Iyer:** Also, Shaw San, I think for leaders of color, the importance of understanding all that people are balancing in terms of being a leader, attending to what the community needs are and also our kids. I think that's real.

**Shaw San Liu:** My answer is not in talking, it's just like you see it. It's really hard. It's hard to work with a baby. I feel very privileged in many ways. I have a roof over my head. We have food. My partner and I are employed. I mean we are extremely privileged, especially in relation to many of the folks that I work

with who are trying to survive a pandemic in an SRO with 70 square feet and a shared bathroom and kitchen, risking their life every day to go to work.

So I don't feel like I can complain, and I think that we need to do more. We need to really support organizations. Some of the things I've seen happen that have been very helpful is when funders just see that there's crisis and they offer resources and don't ask us to go through a complicated process to get those resources. I will just end it here and pass it on to the next person.

**Deepa Iyer:** Thank you, Shaw San. Thank you so much. Yes, those funder responses to understanding what movement leaders, community leaders, nonprofit leaders need are critical. I want to ask Laura next to talk a little bit about how is this moment affecting you? It's not just a moment, as we've said. What do you need to sustain your leadership? What are you putting in place?

**Laura Harris:** Well, I too am very lucky and privileged because our organization's still alive. I'm very grateful in that it provided a livelihood for a handful of people that we could still keep working. I remember filling out the survey at the height of freak-out, like what does this mean personally, professionally for our community? It was a cathartic experience because I didn't realize what level of stress I was working under. I mean I'm always working under stress. I'm one of those people.

Give me a deadline and I'll wait until the day before to freak out and work on it and do my best work in crisis. You know how some of us try to say that. But you had to recognize your staff was having all of these same feelings, your friends, your family, everybody had their family obligations that just became so much more complex and figuring out how to work became complex. So just filling out the survey alone really helped me. We've done very well, I think, at recognizing each other's place. I think that was the most important.

And then our weekly staff groupings on Zoom, we allowed time to kind of talk about what's happening in your life? Is your mother driving you crazy? Is your husband carrying his weight of the domestic chores? Those kinds of things we really allowed ourselves time to recognize. I agree with what everybody said so far too about what we need. Philanthropy's going to be philanthropy. I've never looked for change in my many years of working in the nonprofit sector.

I mean they change constantly, and we have to figure out where we fit into them after their change in leadership or their revamping every five years or so. So I think being cognizant of the stress has been the most helpful to me because I don't see a relief anywhere coming or anywhere coming soon or coming from the outside. So somehow being okay with what's going on and allowing yourself to say, "These steps that I'm taking are impactful to the community." We're solving all the world's problems at this very moment. We're just trying to get through today.

**Deepa Iyer:** Yeah, yeah. I think that's so important, being both trauma-informed and trauma-responsive and to recognize that this is a moment of trauma can sometimes be the first step. So let me ask you, Jorge, how are you being affected in terms of your leadership, and what do you need to sustain it?

**Jorge Gutierrez:** Yeah. For us, we're relatively a new-ish organization. We're about to celebrate our seventh year this May. So I think one of the first things that I was stressing a lot about was the funding. Are we going to survive this pandemic in this organization? There's people who depend on my fundraising for their salaries and their healthcare. So that definitely felt very lonesome at the beginning

of all of this. Then I think then we moved into changing digitally, being more flexible, sort of taking it day by day, week by week.

Now, going into 2021, there's definitely more assurance from our funders around our money. So I think that that just all gives us that room, again, to think outside the box a little bit more in terms of what we can do, also being flexible with how we, as we're getting funds to support direct folks, how to ... I think Angela said they're under a fiscal sponsorship. We are too. Sometimes I get screamed at for doing things that just ... I just want to make it easier for folks to get money. I'm okay with getting screamed at by our fiscal sponsors, so just being able to be flexible in responding to the needs to our people.

**Deepa Iyer:** Yeah, absolutely. The nimbleness, flexibility is critical. Angela, you've got the last word on either best practices that you've seen that have been put into place to deal with what nonprofit leaders are going through.

**Angela Lang:** Yeah. I think the two biggest things that I learned out of 2020 that we try to extend as an organization is grace and boundaries. There are times when after the attempted murder of Jacob Blake just 40 miles from where I'm sitting, we were canceling our meetings. We were like, "I can't today." I had to tell our team, "You can't get the grace if you don't ask for it." Extend grace to yourself as well, and establish those boundaries. If I say I'm not going to check my email after 8:00, people start to move differently. If I have an out-of-office email every Thursday night before I go to bed for the weekend so people know I'm not going to be responding to you, people start to adjust and shift. There are ways. I saw some chatter in the Zoom chat about how difficult it could be to move to four-day workweeks. But one of the things I noticed and had to learn very quickly is that you have to teach people how to treat you, and that includes establishing very clear boundaries with staff, with yourself, with colleagues.

Another thing that we appreciate and we want to be able to continue as we kind of started thinking about these practices was we are part of a wellness cohort now, which we're very excited about. Singer Camila Cabello and the Movement Voter Project teamed up and I believe there's 10 organizations a part of this cohort where we actually got funding to put towards our wellness models at each of our organizations. We're going to be meeting, I believe, three or four times over the course of April as a cohort to talk about best practices, to talk about how we can learn from each other, but then also how can we heal as well too.

I'm excited. There's going to be some healing medical kind of stuff where we talk about herbs and how are we actually sustaining ourselves in that way as well in a mental status, but also making sure people don't always have to pop aspirin. Let's just drink water and stay hydrated and do those basic things as well, learning how to breathe. We're bringing someone in to do structured breathing because, as organizers, we even forget to breathe sometimes. So it's things like that, being able to slow down and to center yourself.

What my coach, I have a professional coach actually, an assignment she gave me this week is to really think about and prioritize not just the sustainability and health of the community, but the sustainability of myself as well that I think a lot of organizers often put to the side.

**Deepa Iyer:** Absolutely. That's a great practice, those Healing Justice grants that you mentioned, the cohort that you mentioned for so many funders to do. So I am going to thank each and every one of you, Jorge Gutierrez, Shaw San Liu, Laura Harris, and Angela Lang for giving us your wisdom and your time



and your insights. I want to, as we pull into the last couple of slides of our deck, I want to bring up a couple of the statements that you made that have sat with me that I think really synthesize what we're talking about here.

Jorge really made it clear that the issues affecting communities because of the pandemic and the compounding issues on top of that are going to continue, but that vulnerable communities in our communities are going to face the brunt even more, that it's going to take some time for them to come back and that it is not just about surviving, but it's about dreaming and thriving. And then Shaw San reminded us that the scale of the solutions, the boldness of the solutions, that there is an opportunity but they must match the scale of the problems and the issues and the challenges.

Laura gave us a framework for that, a framework that's around reciprocity, relationships, redistribution, and responsibility that really talks about solidarity, that really talks about changing the values and the frameworks that we've been working under. And then finally, Angela reminded us that internally extending grace and setting boundaries can be a way of sustaining ourselves as people working in these movements as well. So as we close, I want to talk really quickly about some of the recommendations that we wanted to bring up.

These are ones that you all have already talked about. But when it comes to systemic and policy changes, I'm not going to read through all of these, but it's really about a robust social safety net, and it's really about infrastructure that goes along with that as well. On the next slide, we are talking about some recommendations related to philanthropy which, again, folks talked about, making sure that there's a commitment to supporting Black and people of color-led organizations to do the grassroots organizing and power-building, the investments in sustainability and really balancing this rapid response funding with a decades-long strategy.

And then finally, there are some recommendations for ourselves, creating cultures of wellbeing. I think we really talked about some best practices around that, recognizing and responding that we are actually in this moment and that we're dealing with this current climate and really listening and following the knowledge and experiences and expertise of people of color leaders. So thank you so much for all of the recommendations and all of the information in the chat.

You can find our report [here](#). Please also take a look at our website for [Building Movement Project](#) where you can sign up for our listserv. You can see what we have going on. We have a couple of events coming up around the [Solidarity Semester](#) and the [Social Change Ecosystem framework](#) that everyone is welcome to. We'll continue curating these conversations because they are so important for us to learn and be in space with one another.

So with that, thank you so much, Jorge, Shaw San. Love your baby. Thank you, Angela. Thank you, Laura, and thank you, Catherine, for pulling all of this together for us. Of course, a big thank you to all of you who are here who do the work every single day. We look forward to being in touch and send our very best to all of you. Take care, everyone. Bye-bye.