

Transcript for “Meeting the Moment: Nonprofit Security and Infrastructure” Webinar

Host: Building Movement Project, Emergent Fund, Women Donors Network

Record Date: January 30, 2025

View Recording: <https://bit.ly/bmp-security-webinar>

Janis Rosheuvel (00:01:58):

Welcome, welcome everyone. Thank you so much for being here and for joining us. I just want to extend a huge welcome to you all and thanks for being here to participate with us. We're really looking forward to this conversation and to hearing from these brilliant panelists. So we'd just love to jump right in. So just so you know, today's webinar is being recorded for our colleagues who signed up and are not able to attend. So you'll be getting a recording as well as additional resources from Building Movement Project and a follow-up email in about a week's time. If you have questions, please use the Q&A function in Zoom to send those questions to the panelists. And then if you have specific tech issues, you can use the Q&A function as well.

(00:03:01):

Wanted to just take the pulse of who's here with us in the room. So we're going to spend a little bit of time doing a very quick two-question poll and take a look at what's here. Which best describes you and your role? And just pop that ... Take a look at it and reply, and then we'll see what the results are. And folks are going to be, are going to be rolling in. We've just gotten started so welcome, welcome to those who are coming in right now. We have a good crew of about 375 folks who are with us. I haven't seen the poll result, but ... Oh, here we go. Thank you. So this will just show you who is with us. We have about ... Let's see, our biggest crew is 22% current leaders of color, 19% funders, 15% capacity builders, 11% white leaders, aspiring college leaders, aspiring white leaders. We got a lot of folks in the room. A really good crew. We'll go on to our second question, our second poll question, which really grounds us in why we're in this conversation today. So it's going to pop up in a second for y'all.

(00:04:43):

How do you assess philanthropy's support of organizations facing security issues? Take a look at that and do reply. We'll wait on the summary so we can see some of the trends that folks are using. All right. So in terms of how everybody in this conversation, we've had about 300 folks reply to the poll. 55% of you say the support is very limited. 31% say some support exists, but needs improvement, and then 13% say support is non-existent, and then 2% say support is excellent. So that really gives us a sense of where we're landing in this conversation today. Thank you all so much for showing us who you are and really beginning to grapple with us about the issues around safety and security for the nonprofit and movement sectors. My name is Janis Rosheuvel and I am the executive director at Building Movement Project. I want to welcome you all to ... Hopefully you all want to be in a conversation titled, Meeting the Moment, Nonprofit Security and Infrastructure. Want to just give a big shout-out to all of our supporters, funders and partners, particularly Emergent Fund, Women Donors Network, Solidair, Resource Generation, and Donors of Color Network. Thank you to all of you who have joined today who are participating with those folks and who are just ready to step into this moment in earnest together. Thank you. Thank you. So welcome.

(00:06:51):

We are going to hear from a couple of really brilliant community leaders. Shelby Chestnut from Transgender Law Center, Darakshan Raja from Muslims for Just Futures, and Rachel Leonidas from ProInspire. Some of you may know these folks and if you don't, you are about to know them and know they're brilliant. So thank you all. I'm going to get into a little bit of ground laying table setting for us as we get into the conversation. So Building Movement Project is, as we said, a nonprofit organization that really looks at supporting other organizations to catalyze change through cross-cutting research, through resources like our Solidarity Is practice guide and then through relationship building and leadership

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development work like our building Blocks for Change racial equity effort, and our Security to Wellbeing framework cohorts. So we're going to drop some links in the chat so you can learn more about BMP. If you want to learn all the things there are to know about BMP, you can go to our website, which is buildingmovement.org. So that's the 101 on BMP.

[\(00:08:20\)](#):

Now to think about what brings us to this moment, and we really want to name some of the things that our sector is grappling with. What we really see and are experiencing, some of which you all are probably seeing and experiencing is really a convergence of mechanisms that are impacting our safety and security as a sector. One is the defunding, funding retraction, which many of us were really on tenterhooks about this week in particular. But this is an issue that has been ongoing for some time and that really leaves communities in a space of struggle, particularly in a moment when there is acute crisis, acute and ongoing crisis. We also see physical and digital violence and intimidation really meant to silence individuals in groups. We see narrative dominance. So repressive framing adopted by media outlets towards migrants, trans people, birthing people, and on and on. And those folks are really adopting that narrative. We also see administrative, legislative and lawfare attacks that really use these levers of power to suppress dissent and that this environment really emboldens vigilantes because they see that they will face very little or no consequences. And all of the fights that we are undertaking in our normal everyday work and life, in addition to fighting to keep ourselves and our community safe, result in burnout and exhaustion. Particularly because often this work goes underfunded. So that's part of the current context in which we're living and working in.

[\(00:10:11\)](#):

I'd also like to talk briefly about some work that Building Movement Project has done that helps to also lay the table for why we're in this conversation today. Over the last few years, we have released several reports around structure related to various communities and movements. Our most recent report is called Sounding the Alarm, and it was released in 2024 and again really sets the stage for this conversation today. And I'd like to talk briefly about some of the findings from that report. So in 2024 ... You can move to the next slide, please. We conducted a survey ... Thank you so much. Of 553 nonprofit leaders as well as focus groups and one-on-one interviews. And we focused on nonprofits that are working on issues often deemed as controversial or polarizing like diversity, equity, inclusion, migrant rights, abortion access, LGBTQIA rights, and then expressions of support on current issues such as Palestinian liberation. And we really found that those folks working on these issues are contending with the negative consequences of things like reputational damage, threats to organizational safety and funding reductions, which you all have named in the poll, and that we're going to get more fully into as we talk.

[\(00:11:48\)](#):

About 73% of the organizations that we surveyed have faced or are anticipating one or more of these negative consequences. So that's work that we're hearing. And we especially, which we're going to dig into with our panelists want to mention the ways in which threats to nonprofits include things like obviously doxing, physical attacks, threatening calls, and then all of the ways in which there's negative coverage in media, particularly on social media.

[\(00:12:19\)](#):

So one of the last things I'll say about this is that folks are really looking at what are all the ways in which they are having to grapple with and restrict their work, particularly on things like programmatic language. Shifting away from race explicit language in order to come into this moment. I really want to

name here the tension around staying true to our values and our work while also keeping the space safe for us to actually do the work. And I think that is going to be an ongoing tension. One that you all are coping with and that is just going to, I think in a lot of ways be part of our reality. So thank you so much.

(00:13:09):

I think we're going to scoot right on into our dialogue with our partners here. We're going to go into a deeper dive and then we're going to get to some questions as we go. Thank you so much folks for jumping on to the ... I don't know what this is. The stage. The stage, the online stage. I'll introduce folks one by one. Please welcome Shelby Chestnut, who is executive director at Transgender Law Center, Rachel Leonidas, who's director of communications and engagement at ProInspire, and Darakshan Raja, executive director at Muslims for Just Futures. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Welcome, all you brilliant people. I am just really super excited to have y'all here and to just be able to hear what you're grappling with. I think for those ... We have now 477 people here with us. Not everybody's going to be doing exactly what y'all are doing, but we want to be able to hear from y'all. And also what you have to teach us and tell us is really going to be instructive regardless of the areas in which we work. So would love to start out with the first question, which is what are the field's key needs at this moment from your vantage point as they are related to security and safety for nonprofits? And I will first turn it to Rachel and then we'll go through each person answering that.

Rachel Leonidas (00:14:48):

Thank you, Janis. It's certainly pleasure to meet the moment and be here in space with everyone and a fellow panelists. As ProInspire thinks about our role in this sector as a bridge between philanthropy and community-based organizations the biggest concern that we are hearing right now is on personal wellbeing and around sustainability of the work. And when we think about sustainability, we think about personal wellbeing. Being able to pursue our missions with confidence and not to be deflated. Not to be deflated in this moment, but to be able to pursue our missions with confidence. Our missions are important and so some of the things that we think about is can we say and name the things without a personal threat to our lives, to our livelihoods, to the professional wellbeing of the leaders that we work with. And then finally, certainty and financial resourcing. In times like these, there's a moment with security where you have to reallocate funds towards issues and sometimes that reallocation of funds makes a shift into a deficit framework around scarcity mindset around what is out there. And so resources can feel scarce in this moment, especially when you have to redirect it towards infrastructure and away from the important work of our organizations. And so that's what we're seeing right now as some of the key concerns from our vantage point with working with leaders, especially with community-based organizations.

Janis Rosheuvel (00:16:40):

Thank you so much, Rachel. I feel like yeah, you've set the table for us in a really beautiful way. I appreciate you naming all those things. I'll turn it to Darakshan now to address this same question.

Darakshan Raja (00:16:53):

Yeah. Thank you so much to BNP for having us here. And I know UyenThi, if you could put my slides up. But I do want to caveat this with, for us as a Muslim organization, our communities have been facing these attacks for over 20 years. And so what we're just seeing in this current moment is really an escalation of what has already been in place for decades. So I am going to really ground us in the work that MJF has done in the last two months because for me, the way I'm grounding myself is to focus on the work rather than the deluge of attacks that we are facing. And just in the last week, as you have seen the deluge of executive orders, it can feel quite overwhelming and unground us. And so first I want to start with, well, what are the things that we are hearing?

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[\(00:17:35\)](#):

So this is all based upon the hundreds of calls that we did and conversations with organizations, our convergences on building community defense and economic defense just in the last year, including around scenario planning that we're doing for a Trump administration. And so six things came up of what are the issues that our grassroots organizations simultaneously are facing, which is multi-sectoral attacks vis-a-vis lawfare, right-wing groups, federal government and state-level targeting, law enforcement AGs targeting our work, media private sector challenges, which is private law firms also filing lawsuits. We have developed a resource for you all. It is a grassroots guide that is available that includes tons of resources for folks to really engage in conversation and your boards, with your staff, with your coalitions and your ecosystems. There are two tables in there that actually help you map these threats and what are potential ways you can intervene to fortify your organizations from not just an individual institutional vantage point, but also coalition, movement, community and ecosystems.

[\(00:18:40\)](#):

UyenThi, if you could go to the next slide. I also would love to share with you all this virtual community defense hub that we created because of the massive need we were hearing from both organizations and also community members. This has within it multitude of resources. Want to give a shout-out to our wonderful friends at BNP, particularly Deepa Iyer and Priti, that we have been really working with to develop a weekly situation room where at this point our listserv is over 120 organizations and individuals on it. Out of that, we have developed two working groups that are going to meet for the first 100 days. One is a nonprofit and movement defense. So invite any of you if you're looking for a community of nonprofits and movements who are actually going to build with you to think about the current moment we invite you to join and then state level community defense.

[\(00:19:30\)](#):

Over the last two months we have also been doing briefings with nonprofits and movement groups at this point to really inform them about things like the nonprofit killer bill and what is predicated upon. These resources, we're very lucky, have been now accessed just in the last two months over 15,000 times. And then UyenThi, if you could take me to the last slide that I want to share with you about the incredible work that our pro bono MJF legal network has actually been doing, which I believe my colleague Bina Ahmed is actually on this call. Just in the last two months. We have done multiple KYRs because the nonprofit killer bill is predicated upon the war on terror apparatus, particularly material support for terrorism, FTOs and SDN lists. That is a very specific, very complex area of litigation and law that requires a certain expertise. We're very fortunate that some of her attorneys, including Bina, have created resources around how to tackle federal prosecutions.

[\(00:20:25\)](#):

And so that is some of the work that we've been doing. We've been able to now give these resources to over 197 organizations and individuals and we plan to continue to give this resource in case studies. How did in the past Muslim communities who dealt with the material support for terrorism charges, literally as conspiracy over a hundred institutions that were targeted cases like the Holy Land Five? Our communities have directly faced the evisceration of our apparatus and infrastructure and orgs like MJF are a reminder that even when our people and our movements get destroyed, there's always going to be something on the horizon where new institutions and entities will be formed. So thank you so much.

Janis Rosheuvel [\(00:21:05\)](#):

Amazing Darakshan. I so, so, so appreciate you. And I love the historical context of these kinds of attacks are based on infrastructure, repressive infrastructure that has been built over decades so none of this is

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new to us. I love that you're grounding us there so that we don't think that these are things that are out of nowhere. And tracing that history, I think to your point, just helps us have real ways to respond and learning from the folks who came before our elders and ancestors. So appreciate you so much for that. I'll lead you to the same question, Shelby, let us know what you think.

Shelby Chestnut (00:21:53):

Yeah. I have to say, I'm like, can I plug into the Muslims for Just Futures because y'all's work is just tremendous and I think the framing of how we all need to be thinking about safety and resiliency is where we're at. I think similarly for trans community. My name's Shelby, I'm with the Transgender Law Center. I'm just super grateful to be here with all of you and shout out to y'all for getting nearly 500 people on a webinar conversation because I think our people are hungry and it's cross-sectional. So for us, I think the ways that we are navigating this moment is twofold. We're having to think about the organizational safety both for our own TLC, but then organizations around the country. There's small grassroots trans organizations. There's only two national trans groups. They're under attack. They don't have the resources and frankly they don't have the infrastructure built to meet the safety and security needs to keep the staff, but then individuals on staff as well as the broader communities, safe as they need to be. I don't want to limit though what our communities have been enduring for decades with little to no resource that we have community safety planning on lock. We have community underground networks of things. But I think what's happening is the rest of this country is waking up to how terrible and how vicious the attacks are to trans people.

(00:23:18):

We represent ultimately a fairly small population in the US population, but there has been five executive orders that have targeted our communities since Trump's taken office that are explicitly for trans people. So I think it's both educating all communities around the severity of this moment, but then also looking at what are we going to do to keep people accessing healthcare, to keep organizations running? We have spent, I will say probably half of my time in the last nine months working on securing our organization's safety, but thinking about then what are we doing with staff who are going to be traveling the country doing their jobs day in, day out. They might be detained, it might be questioned because of their passport. It's a hard reality to be in this moment of, well, we used to really lean into like, well, these are your legal rights and yes, we can fight these things, we can litigate these things. People do have rights. I don't want to say that they don't. But this government is showing very clearly that rights don't matter and the law does not matter.

(00:24:21):

So we saw on Monday with federal funding freeze. It created a complete disaster and what ended up happening was Medicaid got frozen. Well, Medicaid wasn't impacted, but anyone trying to access their Medicaid benefits, which are poor people, low income people, fixed income people we're trying to go pick up insulin or trying to just go to their doctor's appointments and we're told you don't have insurance for a period of time. We've all probably fielded those calls where our insurance doesn't work and it's destabilizing and you spend your whole day dealing with it. But imagine thinking that that's just gone. So I think for us, how do we lean into that community care and just understanding that care is our legacy. Trans people have not, for the most part, had protections in state or local or federal governments. So we've relied heavily on our own communities to meet these ongoing attacks. But I will say the first calls I made when Trump got elected was to some of our private funders. And I said, "What is private philanthropy going to do to protect us? Because I know you all have deep pockets, you have general counsel yourselves who are advising you on what to do and how to keep your money safe. I need

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you to keep us safe and I need you to extend that to us." And oddly, a couple folks actually answered the call and said, "Okay. Let's work on this."

(00:25:47):

I will share and hear a link for some funding and safety resources that is being put out by folks. And you don't have to be a grantee of the different groups that are pooling these funds. So I'll put that here to get put in the chat because folks that are grassroots groups particularly that don't have that infrastructure, should apply for those funds and start to get that in motion.

Janis Rosheuvel (00:26:10):

Yeah. I love this. I love y'all's straight up practicality. We are here to do work. And yeah, Shelby, just love what you said about we have safety on lock and that care is our legacy. We know how to be in this time. We don't want to be here, we don't want to face these threats, but we have the infrastructure. We may need to improve, we may need to expand the infrastructure but it exists and we can build on it. So I love the practicality of it and the storm of resources that hopefully we start to share here. I want to go to the next question, which is how must philanthropy meet these needs that you all have named? Some of which you've started to talk about, but I would encourage y'all to get real explicit. Because I think this is a different moment and requires different things. Thank you Shelby, for sharing that. So yeah, I will turn it to Darakshan to start us off with this question.

Darakshan Raja (00:27:24):

Yeah. No. Thank you for that question and thank you also, Shelby, for being very clear around philanthropy. I think a couple of ... We have three set of recommendations from MJF and UyenThi whenever you want to put up the slides. The first recommendation from MJF is really about we need philanthropy to just fund the current existing work and meet us in the moment. For example, even at MJF, our legal network is pro bono. A lot of this work we don't have funding for, but we are doing it is because it is necessary. So one, philanthropy just needs to even meet the existing work that we all are doing day and night and we're working extremely hard. I am worried about the sustainability of this if we don't get the accurate and a proper resourcing now because we're already starting to see the burn and how extended we are and understanding that our opposition this time is extremely well resourced and well coordinated.

(00:28:15):

The second thing is we need the resourcing to resource our experts. We can't have novices coming in and a moment where we need people with both rigor, passion, commitment to the community, but also expertise and experience. That is going to be critical in this moment. That means we need our tax lawyers, we need the accountants. We need people who are versed both in the language of state power and also movement so that we can figure out best ways to use that to fortify our communities in this moment. Second, this is for my lovely folks within philanthropy right now who are program officers. As much as I'm hearing about risk and scarcity, we are about to enter a moment over the next 20 years that the largest wealth transfer in history is about to happen. That is over 80 trillion in assets that are about to move. That means philanthropy is actually going to come into more wealth over the next 20 years, not actually have less money.

(00:29:08):

Second from grant making and investment strategies have to be integrated. A lot of times the power in philanthropy sits within the investment committees who talk about their endowments and rates of return. We are in a moment where capital is going to expand, meaning your returns are probably going to expand. So I need the grant making teams to talk to their investment committees to say extra money

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coming in those rate of returns or alpha every single year, we need more money to move to community immediately. That is not money that should be sitting around to be invested into more asset allocations into the market. It is money that needs to go into our community and you can move towards impact investing where even the investing ways you move are actually in integrity with community power building. Last, we talk about people power, organizing power that we are taking care of. We talk about governance power. Philanthropy has capital power that it needs to be moving in this current moment.

[\(00:30:01\)](#):

And then the last thing as I am here today, we are releasing with 50 organizations a call for philanthropy to meet the current moment and support us in both developing a pooled fund, legal defense and resilience diversified organizational structure. What do I mean by that? In this moment, we are going to get into a moment where privatization is taking over. So organizations whose budgets and assets are in the millions are going to build a for-profit structure to be able to support themselves. That is going to move us on the front lines out because we don't have that capacity. And so in this moment to address that resourcing need that we have, we need philanthropy to think about ecosystem investment so that some of us can collaborate together to explore structure in a way that helps us get to our goal of collective liberation and defense.

[\(00:30:49\)](#):

Just like when we want to get to a travel destination, sometimes you take a car, sometimes you walk. Maybe the C3 structure is not where we need to be putting all our investment. Maybe it's time to think about laying structure so that we can get our people through for the next four years. And as that close out, the most important thing I want to say, in philanthropy the amount of times for board of trustees and people who are decision makers who talk about risk that somehow investing in our movements is risky, I invite you to think about the risk in this particular moment where literally it is the obliteration of our civil society and our movements. Once those are destroyed for anyone who has grown under dictatorships, it is much harder to build than to protect and defend our people. Thank you.

Janis Rosheuvel [\(00:31:33\)](#):

Listen, if you're telling me you're listening right now and you aren't extremely clear about the mandate, then maybe we have different ears. I don't know. I think the mandate is just so super clear, super, super clear. Thank you so much Darakshan. I really appreciate just the practicality again. I feel like y'all came to really let this audience know exactly where folks in philanthropy need to be showing up. And so if there's a question about how it's really clear through what you said. I could go down a lot of rabbit holes, but I won't because I want to hear from Rachel next in answer to this question in terms of how philanthropy needs to show up in this moment.

Rachel Leonidas [\(00:32:22\)](#):

Yes. I don't even know how you come behind that. Double click everything that just was said. And I was thinking about what can I add differently? And I would say to philanthropy, we still need support for capacity building spaces. ProInspire hosts fellowship and holds space for leaders to do exactly what we're doing today. How do we not freeze in the moment and continue to cross-collaborate, share resources, gain access to futurists, forecasters, translators. All right. Where I'm from, a lot of these terminologies we love to share within our spaces. They're different for community-based organizations and sometimes that makes a lot of our grassroots community-based organizations feel afraid for their security because they don't know how to navigate in this moment. But imagine if we continue to fuel spaces for people who know what's happening, who can deploy resources in ways that are really quick.

[\(00:33:28\)](#):

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The other thing I think about philanthropy is like whatever safety net philanthropy has is the same safety net that a lot of community-based grassroots organizations also need. So how do we think about those safety nets to bolster their ability to execute on their missions? And how do we expand that into their grant making. Just recently ProInspire release their Thriving Leaders and Communities report. And it was recommendations from nonprofit leaders, community-based across the country. And in that report there are recommendations for philanthropy. And one of them was expanded access to resources. And sometimes resources is not just money, it's tools, it's ready-made tools, it's legal support, it's things that we can deploy immediately and finally. How do we make it okay for the creative resources that doesn't fit in a standard box that a lot of our organizations will need? How do philanthropy make room for loopholes or different ways? What are the above ground solutions and below ground solutions. This private-public partnership, where are there safe spaces for us to have conversations like this and keep the work moving even if the climate is not reticent for what we're trying to do? And I will share that link to that report shortly.

Janis Rosheuvel (00:34:58):

Brilliant. Thank you so much. I appreciate that, Rachel. I love the idea that capacity builders need support. Capacity ... Sorry. Security is a capacity question. So when we talk about the infrastructure that we need, we need that support. And I think from what y'all are saying, really security is really holistic. It's not just what you can do to steel reinforce the front door of our organization. Yes, we need that, but we need long-term resourcing. We need the stuff that helps us not burn out. We need to pay for people's healthcare. We need actual infrastructure that makes a safe overall so I love that. And I love the idea of it's time for our comrades within the philanthropic sector to think about how they move money creatively. Different things are required right now. And so I know there's folks inside of philanthropy organizing. I know there's folks inside of philanthropy pushing their boards. How can we be the wind under your sails to make that work continue in earnest and expand? Shelby, tell us what you think about this specific question around how philanthropy could show up.

Shelby Chestnut (00:36:23):

Yeah. I have two things to just do some framing. So if you combine the top three LGBT organizations taking out the Trevor Project because they get a ton of federal grants, which to be fair, they likely will not continue to get, their budgets total about \$250 million, which is not nothing. But if you look at where the Christian nationalist movement spent money in 2020 researching anti-trans legislation. Just researching it, not deploying ads, none of that, just researching it, they spent \$350 million in 2020. So I say that to say we could outspend them, but I don't think we're going to. But what we can do is begin to outmaneuver them and I think lean into our messaging and our narrative across movement. But we need philanthropy to understand just what we're up against. I hate to state the obvious, but if anyone here doesn't know ... I know that there's a lot of just emerging leaders and leaders here who are probably facing the same exact issues that I'm facing, but for context, within LGBT philanthropy 4.6 cents of every \$100 goes to trans work. 4.6 cents.

(00:37:44):

And so TLC is a bit of an anomaly. We're a very large organization. We have worked on the front lines to get to where we are. But I think what we've done is we've started to do a lot of education to our own funders and our own donors about why they need to give and who they need to give to. And I'm happy to play that role, but I don't really think it's necessarily my job to be advocating to philanthropy why they should fund the group in Texas who right now can't make their payroll but is getting death threats and has five anti-trans bills in their state legislature. So what we've done is push philanthropy on general operating support, emergency funds without having to be asked. And I will say post-election, we had one

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funder give us a bump beyond what we were already slated to get. One. I don't know about y'all, but I've been literally working around the clock trying to create new programming, build new safety infrastructures that we knew we needed, but maybe not the severity that we needed it at.

(00:38:49):

And then the one thing I'll say is we need to figure out how to move money rapidly. So TLC and shout out to Emergent Fund, and Alicia. A year ago we were at a conference and I said, "We had a really good fundraising year. We would like to move a million of our own dollars back to the field. Can you move that rapidly for us?" And she said, "Yeah, no problem." So we've set up the Action for Transformation Fund. If you work with trans groups, have them apply and in four months we've moved almost a million dollars once the fund was live to groups on the ground who wouldn't ordinarily get access to rapid response funds. Shout out to Emergent the ways that they've structured it's within a two-week period.

(00:39:32):

So we need to move away from this idea that emergency rapid response dollars is every quarter or every five months. It's like, no, the sky has fallen within that period of time. The bill has become law and people can't do the thing that they were trying to block. So I think moving those dollars ... And I'll say this, having come from Minnesota, that's where I grew up. To see the tenacity and just drive of black led organizing in that state in the wake of George Floyd that could have been prevented had philanthropy given what they could have given 10, 15, 20 years prior when black organizing said, "We need this money and we need it now." It shouldn't have to be in the wake of someone dying and being murdered.

(00:40:12):

So I think that's where the tipping point that we're at with trans people right now. So I think it's like people are going to die if we do not figure out ways to move money to individuals, to nonprofits. But I think to what some of my colleagues lifted up is we're hitting a time where I don't think some of us will exist as nonprofits. So what's the mechanisms that funds can be moved to groups legally or in new ways that can deploy the resources to the ground right now. Not in three months. Because we know the answers to defeating this MAGA, Alt-Right agenda, we just need the resource.

Janis Rosheuvel (00:40:52):

Brilliant. Totally brilliant. I love it. Yeah. I feel like y'all are just really coming with all the bars today. I appreciate it. I appreciate ... You know what I was noting as you were all talking, I was noting that you all are leaders in your field obviously, but then you are really also playing this role of being a clearing house in a lot of ways for your communities, which is not work I assume you signed up for. But also I'm grateful to that. And I think building the infrastructure that enables there to be 20, 30 trans organizations nationally that actually could hold this work, I think is a direction that we need to support. And I love the idea of ... And we'll hear from Alicia a little bit later, but I'll lift up just the brilliance of Emergent Fund and just being able to be so tightly alongside our comrades on the front lines and just really serving such an essential purpose. Also want to lift up my former crew at Solidair doing similar work. Just a lot of love there.

(00:42:15):

We have one last question and then we'll open it up to folks for a little bit of Q&A. But the last question is, what does cross-issue infrastructure need to look like, particularly at the state and local levels? So I know this is stuff that you all have somewhat spoken to, but if you want to expand here, please do. I'll start with Shelby, if you don't feel a little too much on the hot seat since you just spoke.

Shelby Chestnut (00:42:40):

Oh no, that's good. It's also then I don't have to follow too dynamic, whatever they said I co-signed. I think being in spaces like this, I think oftentimes our work is so just massive that we don't get to get out of our little lanes and think expansively. So I think I'm immediately going to send an email and be like, "What can we collab on?" I think for us, we did a ton of learning as a trans group with repro groups in the last three to five years seeing where abortion and repro was heading in this country, looking at it as a broader bodily autonomy issue. And so I spent the last two years going to different conferences, meeting folks, and now we've created some shared work. We have a great partnership with If/When/How, we have a trans health legal defense fund, and that's for people who are being criminalized for seeking healthcare.

[\(00:43:30\)](#):

And had we not done that work to build across intersectional issue, we wouldn't have known how to make this moment. I think similarly, we do a lot of work around immigration, but this is not just a trans issue. This is a broader systemic issue that's impacting so many communities and how do we start to look at the plight of that? If you're looking for groups at the intersections of black liberation, trans justice and migrant justice, lift up the work of the black LGBT migrant project. It's a project that we actually fiscally sponsor at TLC, but every day I see on the front lines the ways that they're doing that work and just moving to say like, "Hey, this community is not including us. Hey, this community is not including us." So let's start to build centers where we can include each other.

[\(00:44:17\)](#):

I think for us as trans movement, we've hit a point where it's just we're sick of trying to ask for seats at tables and we're starting to build a bigger table where everyone's welcome and it is at the cross-sections of everyone that's speaking on today's call, but it's also the parents of trans kids who are figuring out how to keep their kids with healthcare right now and don't have an answer. But it's also the trans adults who are mentoring the trans youth right now to say, "We have been through this moment. We will endure this moment and do not lose hope." So I think for me it's just reaching out, asking to meet people, building across those lines. And the one thing I will say is also taking something slow because I don't think trust is built overnight. And I'm not going to be an issue area in Muslim justice in terms of what Muslim communities are under or black communities, but I do know that we have the care to want to know what that is and how to be intersectional.

Janis Rosheuvel [\(00:45:18\)](#):

Thank you for that. Appreciate it. I'll turn it to Darakshan now.

Darakshan Raja [\(00:45:25\)](#):

Yeah. I think in terms of state level infrastructure, to be fully transparent, MJF, we're a very small local organization. Our primary work was in the DC, Maryland, Virginia area, and then Chicago. And really around October 2023 when Wadea al-Fayoume was murdered in Chicago, I got on the phone with Deepa and I said, "I'm really worried for my frontline Muslim organizers and organizations because they're going to be inundated with both the attacks, the state repression, and we don't really have an ecosystem. We don't have calls, we don't have an infrastructure." And God bless Deepa and BMP for showing up in that moment and being like, "We'll help support you to hold these calls and these tables." And so it's taken actually about a year and a half to get to the point now where we have an ecosystem, we're trying to cultivate it, we're trying to build it out. That's more values aligned.

[\(00:46:09\)](#):

But I think part of the issue and challenge is that it often takes sometimes these very difficult attacked and targeting moments for when we have to expand our capacity and we don't have the resourcing, we

often don't have the infrastructure. If I could just make a wish and say maybe for the next six months no attacks were happening on our community so we could just build up so that we could be ready. But that doesn't happen. The problem is the very political terrain of what we're fighting is changing so rapidly while we are having to go and build infrastructure that was also decimated. So I think at this moment, we're trying our best. We are moving at literally 200% of our capacity. We're trying to create those spaces because we know the costs. We know the cost that it is going to be in those deep southern states where our are who are going to face the consequences of not having infrastructure support.

[\(00:46:54\)](#):

We know that it is going to be our people who are going to end up on those registries and on those deportation lists and so we need to get those resources out now. And I think this is where our proximity and being in community is pushing us to move, but I think philanthropy's distance from community is preventing them from moving at this point. In the last few months, I've had more funders tell me that they are not going to fund us anymore or they are moving away because it's a risk. This is happening across the ecosystem to anyone particularly Palestine, Muslims, south Asian organizations, but also anyone who has stood in solidarity with Palestine. That is unacceptable. We're being very concrete. We need in the next two weeks for philanthropy to step up and tell us we are going to come in and fund your organizations just so you can meet the last 100 days that we were building out because we have been working nonstop to way beyond capacity.

[\(00:47:40\)](#):

Second, in this moment, given the apparatus that nonprofit killer bill is built upon, it is meant to freeze an organization's assets and bank accounts. Even if you're just being under investigation, you have done nothing wrong. Let go of this idea that you have to be guilty of something to be targeted. That is not the administration we are under in. A lot of this is just to stop our work so that we can be there with our communities. In this moment. Part of the letter that I shared, which I'm happy to share with you all is a demand and ask for philanthropy, can we get a pooled fund so that our livelihoods don't get impacted so that if our assets are in bank accounts are frozen, I can pay my staff, I can pay their health insurance? We also know this work makes many of our people sick. Many of our folks are grappling with family care or disability. They need that healthcare, otherwise our people are going to die because we just didn't provide the care infrastructure that they need. And care is not just here, I'm giving you candles and a flower and saying, "Thank you. Go to your yoga retreat. I got you. Your livelihood is taken care of, your health insurance and your bills are going to be paid so that you can show up in this work well."

Janis Rosheuvel [\(00:48:47\)](#):

Yeah. Brilliant. I love that. I love the signposts of community and rest and care and the expansive nature of care. That's brilliant. That's brilliant. I will turn it to Rachel. Oh no, is that right? Yes. Sorry. Thank you. Thank you.

Rachel Leonidas [\(00:49:07\)](#):

It's becoming real obvious that within this cross issue ecosystem, we have different roles. And there's no need to reinvent the wheel. So I think about sometimes Deepa Iyer's ecosystem mapping. How do we map where we are as it relates to this and what are our strengths and how do we work together? I think Shelby alluded to this already. How do we work together in solidarity with each other? What does it mean to be an ally? And that word is more important now than before, but it has really specific terms. So what does it mean to be an ally with the Muslim community and transgender community? Certainly ProInspire works with many leaders that identify in these areas, and what we're hearing is we need that support and allyship. And so we are builders. That's what we do. Some people are disruptors. That is what they do. And how does philanthropy really support and make sure that ... It's live into your roles in

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this moment. And how do they or help to provide cover, if you will, for the roles that people have to play in this moment.

[\(00:50:22\)](#):

When we think about cross issue, it's hard to not ignore what is happening at the federal level, but then we don't want to dismiss what is happening at the local level as well. We spend so much time within the last 24 to 48 hours following this up and down. We're dizzy. And there are real implications. And we don't want to give up the resources that we have. We have the intuition, we have the knowledge. We've been here before. We feel that it was going to be this way. So ProInspire is committed to how do we stay, hold on, thriving and not just stay in survival mode? How do we resource those conditions for thriving and how do we not step into other people's expertise and space. Dark shot, like she came with it.

[\(00:51:14\)](#):

How do we partner together with what are you learning, what we are learning? Shelby. What currently we have a fellowship for black women and femmes in this space. And so in my mind, I was thinking about what are some things, some knowledge that we have together, knowledge sharing that we have together so that we can collaborate and accelerate. So that is what I see around the cross-issue infrastructure. Yes, what is happening at the federal level, but also what is happening at the local level because that is how the strategies are won and it bubbles up to the federal level. And let us not be caught in the next two years or four years from now, not really being armed with the things that we really need to shift the landscape and shift the political climate in our favor.

Janis Rosheuvel [\(00:52:04\)](#):

I love it. Thank you. Thank you so much for that. And thank you so much for name-checking Deepa and her brilliance and the social change ecosystem map. That is work that is so great, and a lot of people are using that tool right now, and we definitely want people to keep using it. I have a million questions I want to ask y'all, but I won't because I'm going to turn it over to the folks who are participating. There's a couple questions. I'm going to start with one, and then maybe one or two people can answer it or one person can answer it if they feel that they can. And then we'll maybe take three if we have time. The first is many of our organizations, despite doing vital work in our communities consistently fall through the cracks of traditional funding models. The current application process, reporting requirements and organizational criteria often create instrumental barriers for smaller nonprofits, which is I think something that you spoke to Shelby. Particularly those led by and serving marginalized communities. I'm curious to understand from the conversations you all have had had with funders ... Oh, sorry. Have funders discussed reimagining their funding models to become more accessible to smaller grassroots organizations? I don't know who wants to pick up on that.

Shelby Chestnut [\(00:53:28\)](#):

I can start because I tend to do a lot of this advocacy. So I think the thing that we folks need to understand is twofold but I think some of the private funders need to be more transparent about the intermediaries that they're giving funds to because they can't give to the grassroots. So then at least when you get a rejection from ... Let's use the MacArthur Foundation as an example. It's not that they're not wanting to fund you, it's that that's not their bucket of work. So they're giving to other intermediaries. That said, I will say to the application point, it is a goddam mess. You need a PhD in ... I don't know, something that I don't have and will never have. And I'm very fortunate to have a grant writer on our staff to do that. But I do think if you look at folks like the Trans Justice Funding Project, and I know Emergent Fund, their applications are simple and easy.

[\(00:54:24\)](#):

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We also I think right now have to factor in limited English proficiency in some of these groups submitting applications. So are they available in another language? Can you submit a video? Those things that I do think the intermediaries that have those options or the smaller giving should work with other intermediaries to fund and to push them to have their application process like that because it shouldn't be logging into some elaborate system that you can never remember the password to, and then you're just sitting there and you don't know how to do anything. Which to be fair, if I logged into any of our grant portals, that would be the case so that's why they don't let me, but that's a very privileged position to be in. So that's the advocacy that I would say is funders need to start pushing their other peers to do that work in a way that's accessible.

Janis Rosheuvel (00:55:13):

That's really helpful. I have one question. I don't know if y'all want to speak to this specifically, but I do have one other question I feel like is pretty on point, but I don't know if y'all want to speak to this one specifically, if you had something to add.

Darakshan Raja (00:55:27):

Yeah. I'll briefly just add to what Shelby mentioned. I think on two points. I think one, on the philanthropy side, I believe that a lot of the paperwork is really rooted in them believing that somehow our movement and organizations are risky. And so they are trying to cover their tracks or something by being like, "Oh, we're investing in these risky organizations." So I think there's some work that needs to be done there of what is the paperwork you actually need? Because some of this you may not actually need and you're just putting us through the hoops because you want to make sure we're up to your standards to even talk to. So this happens a lot around, we need your financial reports, we need updates on that. They'll bring in the language side that often in very structured business world that you would use, and they expect us to do that. So I think there's one side for philanthropy.

(00:56:08):

I think Emergent fund does a beautiful job. It's a very streamlined application. But also I love the fact that you can do an application by getting on the phone for 15 minutes with a program officer. Because here's the reality, in our small groups that one person is your grant person, it is your operations person, it is your organizer, it is your ... Every single job, 10 jobs in one. You sometimes literally don't have the mental capacity to sit on paperwork in front of a screen because you are dealing with so much. So let's be honest about the infrastructure limitations. On our movement side, we do have organizations that are larger with more budgeting and have those program officers. Sorry, grant writers. It is time to think about partnering and collaborating with the smaller grassroots groups to actually sub grant so that we can still move money and use the infrastructure of the more multimillion dollar nonprofits who can say, "We see the front line work you all are doing that actually, matter of fact, sometimes we're not doing so we're going to partner with you and move the money to you while we're offering some infrastructure support."

(00:57:08):

So I do think rooted in trust and movement building and coalition building, we can use the more structured movement organizations to the advantage of our smaller groups and saying, "Let's partner and let's move you money quickly so that you can do the programmatic work that you need."

Janis Rosheuvel (00:57:23):

Just super practical notion of what solidarity actually looks like in practice. So I love that. I love that. I have one last question. We're really coming close to our time. We wanted to keep it to an hour for folks. But this is something you all may be able to speak to or maybe one of you can speak to. But are there

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any resources or tips to address agent provocateur or informants targeting nonprofits? What are things funders can do?

Darakshan Raja ([00:57:56](#)):

I'll take that real quickly. Legal support. Again, my colleague, Bina Ahmed. I don't know if she's still on here, but there are resources out there of how to deal with informants, infiltration for nonprofits and communities. This is where having that legal network and lawyers is super, super helpful because we're navigating the law. So please invest in organizations to have legal support and also general counsels and criminal defense and all of that so that we are ready with the support that we need. And then I think philanthropy needs to also just understand that those of us who are doing work to dismantle state violence are going to get targeted directly by the state. It is not going to be easy and clean work, and so give us even more support to build up our security infrastructure and vetting processes. Because as you mentioned, Janis, a lot of this is also about lack of capacity, which turns into security concerns. If I don't have an organizer who can vet the people coming into my membership, guess what? Infiltrators are going to take advantage of that. They're going to use that to their advantage. They know that capacity is a limitation. So this is where capacity investments and investing in our organizations also allows us to deal with these agent provocateurs and infiltrators who seek to destroy our spaces.

Janis Rosheuvel ([00:59:05](#)):

Yeah, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. Thank you. Sorry, Shelby. Go ahead.

Shelby Chestnut ([00:59:09](#)):

The one thing I would add is there has been some pilot programs recently of funders funding almost like a stress test for state-based organizations. So where are your threats and your opportunities here and then doing some oppo research on you and then connecting you to legal counsel as well as different safety measures you might have in place. Because the organizer in me is, I didn't start most of the organizations I've ever worked at because I knew how to run an organization, but more there was a need that needed to be filled. I'm sure that relates to most folks. But I do think there's just a learning curve that we're under and we can't be under it while we're being criminally investigated for doing just our basic jobs. So I think having pilot programs like that that are fully funded that will connect you to long-term resources would be very beneficial in this moment. Particularly states that have had very, very harmful attorney generals in place. Like TLC is incorporated in California, which might give us cover longer, but what about a group that's based in Texas or based in Alabama, and their AGs have been after them for some time. So of course they're thrilled that their buddy Trump is now going to have his friends investigating us.

Janis Rosheuvel ([01:00:28](#)):

Yeah. That's really great. That's really great. The infrastructure pieces are so essential. Last word to Rachel, and then we'll close with probably in one minute.

Rachel Leonidas ([01:00:37](#)):

Yeah. I'll just throw really quickly that a lot of leaders are asking in our programs through our Catalyst Collective programs that they're asking, we need people to help us hold space when this happens. We need the scenario planning. And so we hear this a lot and that holding space of like, oh my gosh, we're really busy as executive leaders. We have a program to help that. Holding space to even do this, to think about this is really important. So I just wanted to double click on there.

Janis Rosheuvel ([01:01:02](#)):

Amazing. Thank you so much. We could keep talking for the next two hours, but we're not going to. I just want to have everybody give all of their love to these three brilliant people who came and talked to us today, shared their experiences. You probably saw yourselves here in a lot of what they said. So thank

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you, thank you, thank you so much. Many kudos. And we'll send contact for them if you want to be in touch and if you want to fund them, obviously. I'm going to turn it over to my comrade, Alicia, now to just close us out.

Alicia Sanchez Gil (01:01:39):

Oh, what an incredible honor to be able to close us out in this space, especially After such brilliant insight from our people. My name is Alicia Sanchez-Gil, she [foreign language 01:01:50]. I am the executive director of Emergent Fund, which you've actually heard a little bit about. A movement aligned and accountable rapid response fund. We're a hundred percent queer and trans and people of color. And also with Shelby Transgender Law Center we launched the Action for Transformation Fund, a rapid response fund that's specifically for trans folks. We launched in September in preparation for this onslaught of anti-trans legislation that we knew would be coming from this administration. And because we know that this is a legacy of care that trans and queer people have been doing for many, many generations, we knew we couldn't wait for anyone else to do this for us.

(01:02:28):

Again, I'm just really grateful for the rich conversation that we've had today with our movement partners. I don't take it for granted when our grantees come into this space and drop gems, drop knowledge, drop bars for us. And so I'm really grateful that this happened with us today. I always think of the words of Grace Lee Boggs, that we have to do what we call visionary organizing, that we have to see every crisis as both a danger and an opportunity. It's a danger because it does so much damage to our lives, to our institutions, to all that we've expected, but it's also an opportunity for us to become creative, for us to be the new people that are needed at such a huge period of transition. And so it's important for philanthropy to note that we are again at an inflection point. And so I am talking specifically to my philanthropic peers, my people. And so what is the call for philanthropy in this moment? We've heard so much from our movement partners in this space. And so I really just want to reiterate and put a fine point on what our comrades here have shared.

(01:03:29):

Really flanking movement in this moment is really to not cede power to the right. The right really wants us to cede power, to reassess our relationship to risk. And what we know at Emergent Fund is it's not risky to fund our ... Oh, I got blurry. Hold on. To fund our people is never a risk. And so we're clear about that. And so flanking movement right now is really moving at the pace that our grantees need. And I'm not saying ... Emergent Fund is a rapid response, but not everybody has the infrastructure to be rapid response. But as a rapid response, open access fund, we often find ourselves filling in the gap for larger funders, the grassroots groups can't access.

(01:04:13):

And so what we need is the funders with endowments, the funders with deep pockets to move resources now. So if you've been waiting for a rainy day, I want you to know that some of us are out here without umbrellas, that we are getting rained on, that we are in thunderstorms, that we are drowning out here. And so if you've been waiting for a rainy day, move the money now. Okay. There's no more time for mapping landscaping analysis. Move the money today. Trust our people. Trust the leadership of the folks who've been doing the work without resources. Move in a spirit of trust and move the money today. Increase money for overhead, increase money for healing justice. You hear the work that Rachel, Darakshan, and Shelby are holding. They are not just holding programmatic work, they're holding infrastructure work. They're holding the healing of their staff. Fund the healthcare. Fund healing justice.

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Fund sabbaticals. Fund people's rest. Our people deserve that. People are on fumes right now. So fund people's overhead and healing.

[\(01:05:15\)](#):

Earmark funds for security and security preparedness, both physical safety and security, but also digital safety and security for our people and save some unrestricted funds for emergency response. Again, not everyone has to be rapid response, but if there's space in your budget for discretionary funds so that people can come to you if they're already your grantees and you can move some emergency funding ... We know that our folks are pivoting constantly for the amount of crisis that we're experiencing. This administration wants us tired out. And so people need the money to pivot so that they can protect those general operating funds that they have and also more general operating funds, of course. So make sure that there's money earmarked for emergency response.

[\(01:06:01\)](#):

And then the other thing that I'll say is make sure that you're trying to do subversive work. Subversive work that takes into account safety. The amount of surveillance that our people are under. For example, the best proposal is probably a short one or no proposal. The less information that our people are giving us, the better. We don't want people giving us their whole entire strategy in their proposal. We don't actually need that information. And also it's a security risk. And so find ways to shorten the proposal? What do you actually need from folks? Stick with that. And then find ways to work outside of the traditional nonprofit structure, which our movement partners have already said. But as we continue to see fascism rise, it's already here and rising. Do you need to find other ways to get folks money? Talk to me if you want to think about an LLC, a trust, direct cash to organizers. Our people are already working outside of the state. How can we also do the subterranean work of creating systems outside of the state as well?

[\(01:07:06\)](#):

Legal and accounting support, communications, resources, mental health, like I've already said, peer learning and infrastructure for our people to gather, to strategize, and to build with one another. And then the last thing I'll say is it's one thing for us to be doing good work in our own institution. The other thing that we have to do is organize and build together and build the infrastructure so that we're not constantly back in the same place. I came from organizing and now I'm just organizing in a new place. My job now is to organize funders and to organize resources for my people. And so I think that if we're in philanthropy, our job is not to gate keep resources. Our job is to organize ourselves in one another and to do that on behalf and in community with our movement partners. And so I'll leave it there. And know that you'll be hearing from Building Movement Project, but just so grateful again to be in community with y'all. Thank y'all so much for having us, and thank you to our speakers for dropping so many gems. And I'll turn it back to you, Janis.

Janis Rosheuvel [\(01:08:08\)](#):

Brilliant. I don't think I can say anything other than thank you. And that was amazing for all of our speakers. We just are so grateful for the work you've done and you taking the time to be here. We will be in touch and we will continue this work in earnest together alongside one another. Thank you. Thank you. Be safe everyone.