

Grantee Partner, Asian American Women's Political Initiative



BOSTON **WOMEN'S** FUND

RADICAL IMAGINATION FOR A LIBERATED FUTURE.

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“Many funds begin with
a donor or donor base.
We began with our beliefs.”

—Jean Entine, founding mother of the Boston Women’s Fund



Asian Women for Health
Community Impact Grantee

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asianwomforhe



MISSION.

Boston Women's Fund uplifts, advocates for, and invests in women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals who are leading grassroots organizations and systems change. Together we strive toward racial, economic, social, and gender justice.

VISION.

We envision a world where power, opportunity, and access exist for those persistently marginalized, regardless of gender identity or gender expression.

We believe our work is sustained through creativity, joy, and an abundance mindset.

We believe in the power of transformative relationships. Individuals shape relationships, relationships shape communities, and communities shape society.

We believe experts come from within their communities and when we invest in women, girls, and gender expansive individuals, we uplift families and communities.

We believe in the value of continuous learning, evaluation and growth in both individuals and organizations.

VALUES.

We believe in the power of organizing and movement building.



We believe philanthropy has a unique role, responsibility, and is at its best when working together with communities to create a more just and equitable world.

We believe that when we disrupt harmful practices we move towards systems change and a more just world.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD.

We are proud to collaborate with our communities to elevate women, girls and gender-expansive individuals as we pursue racial, economic, social, and gender justice.

Over the summer, the Boston Women's Fund Board of Directors participated in a retreat where we focused on BWF's mission statement, vision, and strategic plan. During our discussions, we each articulated our most heartfelt hopes for what we can accomplish together through BWF to reach our collective vision of a world where all individuals share power, opportunity and access, regardless of gender identity or gender expression.

We'd like to share a summary of our goals:

- Establish BWF as the “go-to” organization for critical issues impacting women, girls and gender-expansive individuals.
- Inspire grantees and constituencies understanding of BWF as a trusted guide, respected partner, and empowering agent for change in grassroots, community-based efforts.
- Reimagine philanthropy as a strategy to galvanize and embolden grassroots organizations and systems change.
- Implement programming that facilitates our awe-inspiring youth to participate at all levels within BWF, strengthening their leadership skills and sense of belonging.
- Evolve into a beacon of inspiration for other foundations and philanthropic organizations as we create solidarity, collaborations, and partnerships to expand our outreach and impact across Boston.

As the BWF Board, we will tirelessly dedicate ourselves to these objectives with a renewed sense of purpose and undeterred commitment. That is our promise to you. Please join us in our work.

Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of this extraordinary and mighty organization.

The BWF Board of Directors



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she/her

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We continue to hold the vision of our founding mothers in mind as we reimagine philanthropy and work toward a more just, equitable future.

Founding Mothers: Rachel Burger, Cynthia Chin, Jean Entine, Marion Lill, Brinton Lykes, Renae Scott, Kip Tiernan

BOARD MEMBERS.



Our founding mothers were on the front lines of a need that philanthropy at large has yet to catch up to. In 1984, they noticed that organizations uplifting women and girls of color were funded unequally to their counterparts. Fast forward to today, and organizations supporting women and girls of color receive only .5% of all charitable giving in the U.S.*

This year, we decided we wanted to take bolder steps toward liberation for communities of color and steer philanthropy toward true partnership with grassroots leaders. But to get there, we realized we needed a new map. In all that we do, we return to these strategic directions as our north star. Are we channeling our radical imagination? Are we going deeper and wider with our work? Are we amplifying the voices of those who need it most?

[*Pocket Change. 2020.](#)



LETTER FROM THE ED.

Our team began this year dreaming about how to create lasting change for communities that have been excluded by mainstream philanthropy. Just as we were in the midst of drafting our strategic directions, the year brought more than we could have imagined — The war in Ukraine, an outbreak of anti-trans legislation, violence against Black communities, hate crimes against the AAPI community, inflation, a baby formula shortage, and the repeal of Roe v. Wade.

There was no question that we would stay nimble to respond to the needs of our communities, so we augmented our plan. We knew that women, girls, and gender-expansive folks of color were literally in a fight for their lives. We knew something different needed to be done. We knew that philanthropy had to change.

But first, we held the mirror to ourselves.

We tightened our internal practices and

expanded our staff so we could be a stronger organization. To embody our values of rest and trust, we instated unlimited paid time off. We also revisited our HR policies to ensure we're fostering belonging for people of all identities.

Then, we decided to discard the conventions of "how things are done" and instead chose to imagine how things should be. That's where reimagining philanthropy came in.

Standard practices, like massive grant applications, are huge hurdles for grassroots teams. So, we eliminated them entirely. Instead of issuing requests for proposals, we requested conversations. We brought the community in to nominate organizations they saw doing incredible work where they lived and recruited them to help decide who we would fund.

BWF grew from 12 to 18 grantees and encouraged them to set their own goals and measures of success. We also designed a program of check-ins throughout the year to

uncover how we could continue to offer support beyond writing a check. We launched our first-ever seed fund to provide an on-ramp for new ideas and challenge the trend of Black leaders' exclusion from entering philanthropy.

After *Roe v. Wade* fell, we revamped our advocacy plan. We committed to amplifying the voices of women, girls, and gender-expansive leaders and fighting alongside them to shift public policy.

These pillars are more than just strategy — they're lighting the path to a more liberated future. Philanthropy can and must do better. In tandem with our grantee partners, we are advocating for women and gender-expansive individuals with unconventional thinking and radical imagination. Together, we are drawing outside the lines on purpose, and today, we invite you to join us.

In solidarity,

Natanja Craig Oquendo (she/her)
Executive Director

REIMAGINING PHILANTHROPY.

We are a people-first fund, dismantling barriers that exclude women, girls, and gender-expansive leaders from philanthropy.

Power is meant to be shared — So we are dedicated to working in true partnership with our grantees.

Some call this approach “trust-based.” We say it’s simply respect.

Our Approach

We partner with grassroots organizations led by women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals from historically excluded communities including BIPOC, elderly, disabled, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, refugee, and low-income communities.

All of our grantees are nominated by the public. We assemble an Allocations Committee comprised of community members of all backgrounds and disciplines to help choose which grassroots organizations to fund. This enables communities to have a say in the changes toward racial, economic, social and gender justice happening where they live.



Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective
Community Impact Grantee

■ 13 Grantees

Total of \$240,000 Awarded

COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANTS.

Community Impact Grants fund grassroots organizations led by women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals supporting their communities through outstanding systems change work, leadership development, and community organizing.

*Indicates multi-year funding



Justice 4 Housing

Association of Haitian Women in Boston

Asian Women for Health

Dominican Development Center



Association of Haitian Women in Boston
Community Impact Grantee

Asian American Women's Political Initiative

Love Your Menses

Cambridge HEART

Essex County Community Organization*

Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective

Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition

Massachusetts Coalition of Domestic Workers*

Women Encouraging Empowerment*

The Grimes-King Foundation for the Elderly



Grantee Feature: Asian American Women's Political Initiative

“Angry Asian Girls,” read the t-shirts of Asian American Women’s Political Initiative’s 2016 fellows. Alongside their events with legislators and community members, they’d created an innovative way to engage potential allies. Each conversation sparked by their shirts was an opportunity to elevate the political issues disenfranchising Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women, namely invisibility.

Of the 7,000 plus legislative seats in the U.S., only 1% are held by AAPI women. Four times as many AAPI women are needed to reach equal representation, and the Asian American Women’s Political Initiative (AAWPI) is working to make that happen.

AAWPI is the country’s only political leadership organization for AAPI women. They’re on a simple but monumental mission — to ensure AAPI women have a voice in our democracy. Diana Hwang (she/her) founded AAWPI in 2009 after working in politics herself. Since then, AAWPI has been building power among

immigrant and low-income AAPI women, leaders who aren't often reflected in government but are so needed. Their model is working. More than 90% of AAWPI program participants run for office, work on campaigns, or become organizers.

AAWPI grew rapidly after the rise of anti-Asian violence and the 2021 mass shooting in Georgia that took the lives of six Asian American women. After success with their Massachusetts-based program, AAWPI began creating the first-ever national infrastructure to activate, mobilize, and elect AAPI women.

"We've realized just how urgent it is to change the invisibility that leaves our community vulnerable to the targeted hate we still see today," Diana said. "But, while ongoing anti-Asian violence aims to take away our power, AAWPI is building political power in the AAPI community.

This year, AAWPI is piloting its National Civic

Impact Fellowship and Incubator Program in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, designed and led by AAWPI fellows. The program's goal is two-fold: embed fellows in the work already taking place on the ground while surrounding them with political leadership development, training, mentorship, and community.

AAWPI's determination to center the voices of AAPI women impacted by the intersections of anti-Asian racism, poverty, immigration, and queerphobia, is building a movement of new political leaders. Their fellows are Dreamers, first-generation high school and college graduates, nonprofit entrepreneurs, artists, anti-foreclosure activists, LGBTQIA+ rights advocates, and candidates for local office.

AAWPI plans to expand to Texas and California, states where Diana says their voices and votes can make a big difference. They hope to mobilize 50,000 AAPI women by 2025.

SEED FUNDING GRANTS.

The biggest challenge grassroots organizations face is securing their first grant. Most funders won't commit until others have, and this paradox shuts down countless life-changing solutions before leaders have a chance to try. With changing the game on our minds, this year, we issued our first Seed-Funding Grant of \$5,000.





“Boston Women’s Fund’s innovative approach to philanthropy enables them to respond to community need with a nimbleness and speed that we value. They’re taking innovative approaches with their grantmaking process and challenging the status quo to drive equity for the individuals who need it most. Supporting BWF allows us to make an impact in communities that we may not be able to reach on our own. We’re so grateful for our partnership and honored to support their vital work.”

— Jim Canales (he/him), President and Trustee, Barr Foundation

Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
Community Impact Grantee





Grantee Feature: Small House

Asjah Monroe (she/her) has always combined facets of youth work, housing support, and education in her career. But while working in a shelter for unhoused young adults during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, something changed.

“When things shut down, we were all in our houses. We were locked in, but they were locked out. And to me, that was the cruelest irony. They just had nowhere to go. They were outside all day,” Asjah said. “Seeing it in technicolor in that way created a sense of urgency in me.”

So in March of 2021, Asjah founded Small House, an organization helping transition-aged youth, ages 18-24, find a pathway out of homelessness. Small House’s model uses a combination of coaching, life skills, and housing support, a triad she stressed is essential.

Asjah’s own experience of sudden homelessness at age 18 also fuels her approach.

When she searched for services then, she found shelters that were full or operating under systems that didn't account for her situation. Often, youth have to prove that they're homeless (which can be difficult without a paper trail), or are considered not vulnerable enough to qualify. Others require long-term commitments and a case manager's involvement, entering the individual into the system. There wasn't a place for young adults who just needed a stable, safe place to stay.

Asjah found an extended family member to move in with and continued her collegiate education. Her work today is driven by the reality that many transition-aged youth don't have that option.

Small House is in its early stages. Most funders want to see a proven track record and previous funding before they commit, which for over a year, Small House didn't have. However, with a seed-funding grant from Boston Women's Fund, this year, Small House designed,

developed, and launched its life skills and coaching pilot program — 10 sessions teaching, what Asjah calls, "the mechanics of adulting." One session features cooking lessons, followed by a competition cook-off. Others cover anxiety and interpersonal relationships, and all are supplemented with life coaching and a guide on managing finances.

Asjah sees the cost of housing as a prominent barrier. Small House's next big goal is to offer a place where youth can live affordably and independently, but in community and with support, until they're prepared to move on.

"I would challenge everyone to take a moment and think of their favorite niece or young person that they think so highly of and understand that those are the kinds of people that we're serving that are without somewhere to live," Asjah said. "They are not any different. They have people who love them in that same way."

■ **3 Grantees**

Total of \$75,000 Awarded

MOVEMENT BUILDING GRANTS.

Movement Building Grants offer general operating support to community-led grassroots movements building collective power to promote systemic change and advance racial, economic, social, gender, and disability justice.





Abilities Dance

Sisters Unchained

Neighborhood Birth Center

Sisters Unchained
Movement Building Grantee



Grantee Spotlight: Abilities Dance

Abilities Dance uses dance as a tool to promote disability rights. Through community engagement programs, workshops, and live performances, they are disrupting ableist beliefs in Greater Boston. Their work is grounded in intersectionality. The dance company includes individuals who identify as disabled, BIPOC and/or LGBTQIA+, and the narratives of their programming are informed by their lived experiences.

Ellice Patterson's desire to perform professionally as a disabled dancer was met with rigidity by local dance companies. They were unwilling to adapt their movements to her body. Craving a space to perform, as well as repertoire that shared stories reflecting her culture, in 2017, she decided to create Abilities Dance. Abilities Dance was, and still is, the only employer in Massachusetts explicitly hiring disabled dancers.

When reflecting on Abilities Dance's accomplishments, Ellice is very proud of their first, large-scale production, the Firebird Ballet, livestreamed from the Wimberly Theatre in 2021. She says it allowed for wider exposure for what reframed ballets for disabled dancers could be like, what identities could be represented on stage, and the stories they could tell that connect with larger equity-based themes.

“The goal is not for us to be the only ones, but for folks to be able to think about disability rights and add access to their own productions or organizations and communitites.”

— Ellice Patterson (she/her)



Youth in Transformative Philanthropy

YOUTH-CENTERED MOVEMENT BUILDING AND ACTIVISM GRANT.

- **1 Grantee**

Total of \$25,000 Awarded

From the beginning, we've believed in supporting young people to drive change. This year, through our Youth in Transformative Philanthropy initiative, we hired six radical youth leaders of color to drive BWF's first-ever Youth-Centered Movement Building and Activism Grant. In addition to deepening their understanding of justice movements and philanthropy, the group led a phenomenal grantmaking round to fund a youth-focused organization in Greater Boston.

The data speaks for itself. The youth's capability to create social change is limitless.

All we had to do was make a way.

Were confident they could achieve their goals

50%
Before

100%
After

Had knowledge of and felt included in the philanthropic sector

20%
Before

50-75%
After



blackyard
Movement Building Grantee

“It’s not the dream for blackyard to exist. The dream is for young Black and Brown people to not need blackyard, to be liberated from systems that are racist and homophobic.”

— Ashley Herring (she/her)

Grantee Spotlight: blackyard



blackyard is a transformative learning community for Black youth, led by Black youth. The organization is an affirming, queer-inclusive “blank canvas” space where youth can develop programming plans and bring them to life. Youth at blackyard have engaged in community organizing, designed afterschool programming, hosted music and art activities, led support for families in need, and held dialogs about white supremacy and racial justice, among other initiatives.

Ashley Herring (she/her) was a theater teacher when she began organizing on behalf of Black students impacted by systemic racism and homophobia in public schools. Her desire to see Black and Brown young people treated with dignity inspired her to create a safe haven for youth to learn and make creative work with adult support right in her backyard. As the program continued to grow, she went on to found blackyard in 2018.

OUR PROGRAMMING.

Funding grassroots organizations is just one way we're working toward justice. We also engage the community through programs that cultivate leaders across generations and allow us all to learn, grow, and heal together.



The **Women of Color Leadership Circle** is a unique program designed to tackle the isolation so often experienced by women and gender-expansive leaders of color while supporting the advancement of their leadership journey. Over six months, the cohort participates in sessions facilitated by the Interaction Institute for Social Change and executive coaching by women coaches of color.

The 2022 program was supported by The Boston Foundation and Angell Foundation. We were honored to support our second cohort of 15 women, from first-time managers to executive directors, in building a sisterhood and restoring what white supremacy so often works to strip away — the notion that we are more than enough. We're excited for the 2023 cohort to commence!



In partnership with the Access Strategies Fund, this year, we offered free, monthly **healing justice retreats** for women and gender-expansive folks of color to engage in healing practices, from dance and painting to self-care workshops.



We continued our **Getting Proximate Conversation Series**, engaging the public in dynamic conversations reflecting how we can all show up for women and gender-expansive individuals in vulnerable communities.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

Emily Clark Hewitt and
Eleanor D. Acheson
Katherine and
Eugene Achter
Miki Akimoto
Randy P. Albelda
Evelyne Martial and
Paul Alexander
Henry and
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Zoe Yang
Nyia Yannatos
Xiaodong Zhao
Robert Zverina

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The Newmann Darrah Family Charitable Fu
The Woods and Gil Family Foundation



Love Your Menses
Community Impact Grantee



Boston Women's Fund is also thankful for our anonymous donors who, over the last year, gave \$105,950.



OUR TEAM.

Left to right: Alexandra Auguste (she/her), Kiarah Hortance (she/her), Natanja Craig Oquendo (she/her), Sumaya Mohamed Ibrahim (she/they), Aisha Woodruff (she/her), Olivia Lehman (she/her)

REIMAGINING PHILANTHROPY.

Join the Movement

Join the movement today. Make a meaningful donation at bostonwomensfund.org.



When you donate to Boston Women's Fund, you are investing in an ecosystem of change. Every day, our grantees are changing the lives of women, girls, and gender-expansive folks across Greater Boston. And every day, we are building innovative public programs and challenging the "way things are done" with practices that truly serve the people who need it most.

Together, we are charging toward a world where power and opportunity aren't limited by gender. Where people have control over their bodies. Where people of color, youth, and LGBTQIA+, disabled, and elderly communities are supported and thrive.

We can see a more liberated future. But it will take all of us to get there.



BOSTON **WOMEN'S** FUND

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