

CHALLENGING GRANTMAKERS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES



Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities

IMPACTS OF ADVOCACY, ORGANIZING, AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE GULF/MIDSOUTH REGION

by Frontline
Solutions

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I. Executive Summary

Many grantmakers at the local, regional and national levels seek to make a difference in the American South. Their strategies may range along a continuum that includes social services, community economic development, resident-led decision-making, parent engagement, coalition building and public policy. Often, nonprofits employ multiple strategies in combination. Many forces shape and affect their success, including cultural, economic and political factors that are unique to the South. Yet, perceptions of the South as underresourced and limited in capacity may lead to an underestimation of what grantmakers and nonprofits can accomplish when they work together to tackle serious challenges.

When funders invest in policy advocacy and constituent engagement, what difference does it make for local communities? What part does this support play in realizing policy reform and community change? How can the impact of this support be measured?

This report, the seventh from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy's (NCRP) Grantmaking for Community Impact Project, sought to answer these questions by studying advocacy, organizing and civic engagement in the four states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, which collectively make up a region referred to here as the Gulf/Midsouth. The report describes, measures and, where possible, monetizes the policy impacts – achieved largely with foundation support – of 20 community organizations across the four states during a five-year period (2005-2009). Researchers also studied the activities of five major coalitions in which many of the groups participated.

The data collected by NCRP offer a compelling case for funder-supported advocacy and organizing.

Despite perceptions of limited capacity and impact, the 20 organizations achieved tremendous benefits for the communities they serve and engage. Key findings include:

- > Collectively, the groups garnered more than \$4.7 billion in benefits for underserved communities during five years.
- > The groups achieved many equally important impacts that cannot be monetized but have significant benefit for their communities and states, such as advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and immigrant rights and protecting communities from environmental threats.
- > The 20 organizations also demonstrated a striking depth and breadth of civic engagement. Collectively, they trained more than 31,000 constituents and helped 98,000 people communicate with policymakers – thus ensuring that the voice of the most disenfranchised was heard at every level of government, including being counted in the census and shaping redistricting.
- > Foundations played a critical role in supporting this tremendous impact, providing 78 percent of all funding for policy and civic engagement.

For every dollar invested in advocacy and organizing (\$41.9 million total), the groups garnered \$114 in benefits for their communities and states. A few specific examples of impact are:

- > Ending life without parole for nonviolent offenders in Alabama, thereby conserving more than \$113 million for the state.
- > Saving low-wage borrowers more than \$45 million each year by curbing predatory payday lending practices in Arkansas.

- > Dramatically increasing state funding for public schools in Mississippi, so that more students will graduate high school and become economically independent, which ultimately will save taxpayers millions of dollars.
- > Through legal advocacy, ensuring that tens of thousands of minority homeowners in Louisiana could rebuild and recover from the disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, leading to more than \$2 billion in additional compensation.

The researchers also found that five themes captured how the organizations went about their work and why they succeeded, often against formidable obstacles:

1. Despite significant underinvestment, the South's uniquely innovative, flexible and interconnected institutions have maximized extremely limited resources to achieve significant advocacy and programmatic impacts.
2. Organizational coalitions necessarily have been an integral part of the Gulf/Midsouth region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure.
3. Workshops and trainings are a linchpin strategy for constituency engagement and leadership development in the Gulf/Midsouth region.
4. The nonprofit infrastructure in the region consists of many organizations that, due to factors of capacity, geography and the diverse needs of their constituency, play the dual function of offering direct services while engaging their clients as a base for advocacy.
5. Geographic isolation and historic underinvestment in the region's rural areas have necessitated sophisticated community mobilization strategies.

Furthermore, the authors determined that findings from the data would not be understood properly without contextualizing advocacy, organizing and civic engagement for the Gulf/Midsouth region. Thus, the following eight considerations frame the results:

1. The Civil Rights Movement has had a noticeable impact on the brand of advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth region.
2. The hurricanes of 2005 and 2008 changed the face of advocacy and organizing in the region.
3. Advocacy and organizing in the region has been hindered by a dearth of philanthropic institutions that invest in social justice.
4. Rural life is not the exception but the predominant

reality for the great majority of those living in the Gulf/Midsouth.

5. The Gulf/Midsouth, like the rest of the American South, is no longer ethnically defined by African Americans and whites.
6. Advocacy and organizing strategies face diminishing returns if they do not acknowledge systemic racial disparities.
7. The political environment in the region has both necessitated reactive efforts and hindered the development of a proactive agenda.
8. Organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth are both dynamic and depleted.

Through its study of the 20 groups, and with direct input from funders who work closely with the region's advocacy and organizing sector, NCRP arrived at four recommendations for grantmakers:

1. Work toward building the region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure.
2. Make nimble and flexible investments in organizations working in rural communities.
3. Help transform the sector by supporting organizations with people of color in executive and board leadership.
4. Invest in the organizing potential of a strong base or constituency.

Finally, NCRP urges grantmakers and community leaders to use this report to educate others about the ways in which philanthropic dollars can be leveraged for significant community benefit. The research has demonstrated in all four states (a) the clear need to address inequities, (b) the capacity of community leaders to achieve change (confirmed by proven impact), and (c) the opportunity to make change happen through funder-nonprofit partnerships.

Impressively, the featured organizations achieved much with the resources they had. Yet, they and their peers in these four states and throughout the South still have a long way to go to overcome a long history of structural racism, underinvestment and poverty. Creating better schools, healthier communities, vibrant rural economies and a fully engaged citizenry will require many more resources and even greater capacity. Together, foundation and nonprofit leaders can make these hopes a reality.

II. Introduction

Author Rudyard Kipling wrote, “If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.” His words ring true in light of the stirring stories of the Civil Rights Movement and what they reveal about the history of the South and of this country. Yet, because many stories fail to be told, a broader history of dynamic institutions and individuals has been neglected.

The same can be said about the realities of the present. So many stories that detail structural inequity and systematic marginalization of neighborhoods, communities, populations and even cities are kept from the public discourse. We risk overlooking history yet again.

This publication reverses that general trend by telling 25 stories about organizations and individual leaders in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. These are stories of community innovation, change, struggle, leadership and impact.

They include an account of an immigrant youth organizer in New Orleans who mobilized young people to expose and combat environmental injustices in their community, and a profile of a multiracial, multi-sector coalition of institutions and individuals working to reform a repressive and discriminatory state constitution in Alabama. They contain accounts of education reform in Arkansas, and civic engagement and participation in Mississippi. Collectively, they highlight community organizations and coalitions that are rooted in these four states and are mobilizing citizens and promoting policies designed to expand opportunity and justice in local communities.

This report aims to share with the philanthropic sector stories and analyses of civic engagement, community organizing and advocacy in the four states designated here as the Gulf/Midsouth region. It is based on research that measures the policy impacts of 20 organ-

izations during a five-year period (2005-2009). The goal of this publication is to inform philanthropy about:

- > The substantial needs and inequities in the Gulf/Midsouth region.
- > The history and current reality of underinvestment by philanthropy in the Gulf/Midsouth region.
- > The assets, innovation and dynamic leaders in the Gulf/Midsouth advancing social equity/justice in their communities.
- > The positive impact that specific communities have seen through funder-supported nonprofit advocacy and organizing.
- > The return on investment (ROI) in civic engagement, organizing and advocacy strategies to advance social equity and justice for various underrepresented populations in the Gulf/Midsouth.
- > The potential benefits of greater investments from philanthropy in the region.

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy’s (NCRP) initial research for this publication included interviews with a group of national, regional and local funders to distill their ideas, analyses and perspectives about advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth. Each interviewee was asked to share his or her definitions of advocacy and community organizing. These discussions were revealing, as more than a few of the funders asserted that advocacy and organizing often have regional distinctions and idiosyncrasies that inform their grantmaking approaches to support these strategies effectively.

However, each funder also pointedly made a distinction between advocacy and organizing. The consensus affirmed the view that these are two different, yet interrelated, strategies. This perspective may seem

to be an intuitive one, but as one of the funders interviewed noted, “For funders and practitioners who have been funding or doing this work, their familiarity with the work reinforces the clear difference between advocacy and organizing. But, if we are seeking to encourage more funders and nonprofits to fund and do this work, then we have to unpack these definitions and not assume everyone is familiar with how these strategies are different, and how they are related.”

There are several definitions of advocacy and organizing that are widely accepted in the field. However, taking into account the assumption that regional context helps shape the meaning of words and how they are used, NCRP has provided below some definitions for organizing and advocacy offered by foundation leaders who are investing in the sector in the Gulf/Midsouth.

This report attempts to calculate the monetary return on investments in advocacy and organizing in the region. At the same time, it draws pictures and tells stories of impact and change that often are more dynamic than outcome numbers or dollar values.

The following sections of the report provide research and analysis of demographic data and philanthropic landscapes of these four states; assert a set of factors that provide a contextual framework for the region; share the research methodology and findings from the sample of 20 organizations; and present some recommendations for funders interested in supporting advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth. It is the authors’ hope that both the data and the stories will be persuasive and instructive.

ADVOCACY	ORGANIZING
The act of someone working on behalf of others to make change.	The act of people coming together to find and fight for solutions to their own problems.
The exertion of influence on a particular cause for vulnerable communities. This process does not require a connection to those communities.	The process by which people who are affected by a particular policy lead in their focus on reform of that policy.
The art of influencing and creating policies and initiatives in the public sphere that are forward-thinking and create change.	A strategy for community and personal change that relies on the leadership of those most affected by an issue to help determine outcomes and solutions.
A tool that people use to mobilize, organize and galvanize around a strategic goal or set of goals.	A process wherein voices are organized to implement change.

III. Research Overview

As part of the Grantmaking for Community Impact Project, NCRP developed a specific methodology for measuring impacts of advocacy, organizing and civic engagement among a sample of 20 organizations across the four Gulf/Midsouth states over the five-year timeframe 2005-2009. The researchers' approach to conducting this study included three sequential phases: Background Research Phase, Data Collection Phase and Data Analysis and Recommendation Phase.

The Background Research Phase comprises research to collect relevant demographic, philanthropic and nonprofit sector trends in the Gulf/Midsouth states. Additionally, the researchers conducted a set of key interviews with individuals in the philanthropic, advocacy and organizing communities with deep knowledge about advocacy and organizing in these four states, either individually or as a region. And lastly, there were three vital steps taken to identify the sample organizations:

Step 1: Identify Potential Sample Organizations

The initial step consisted of identifying potential community organizations to be researched in the region by gathering suggestions from philanthropic, civil society, government and other leaders. Generating this list was an important process, in that it required a set of discussions with social change sector actors in the Gulf/Midsouth who articulated a varied set of perspectives on what constituted "community organizing" or "advocacy" work. These discussions did not evidence a significant lack of consensus on definitions, but rather highlighted a shared analysis among most everyone that participated in these initial interviews, that the face, modality and idiosyncrasies of advocacy and organizing work are distinct in the American South,

and more specifically in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. This pervading analysis informed the development of an expansive, diverse set of organizations to be considered to participate in this study.

Step 2: Apply Selection Criteria as a Filter

NCRP developed criteria for organizations to participate in the Grantmaking for Community Impact Project. Participating organizations are expected to:

- > Have been existence for at least five years.
- > Have at least one full-time person or the equivalent devoted to advocacy or organizing.
- > Focus on a core constituency of lower-income people, people of color, or other marginalized groups, broadly defined.
- > Work on a local or statewide level (may also work regionally or nationally)
- > Have the capacity to provide the data for the research.

The researchers gathered information to apply these criteria but also had to make some assumptions about whether they were eligible to participate in the study. For instance, in some cases there was no way to be certain that an organization had "the capacity to provide the data" for the study.

Step 3: Select a Diverse Sample

After applying the filter of the selection criteria to qualify as a sample organization, NCRP further narrowed the participating organizations by seeking to include a balanced and diverse set of organizations to participate in the study. Five organizations were identified in each state. NCRP prioritized several components of diversity when identifying sample organizations:

- > **Geographic diversity** – the sample comprises organizations that are located or work in different parts of each state. For instance, in Alabama there are organizations in South Alabama, Central Alabama and in rural and urban areas. Organizations in the other Gulf/Midsouth states were chosen with the same goal of geographic diversity in mind.
- > **Diverse sets of issues** – the sample comprises organizations that are organizers and advocates across a broad set of issues and outcomes. Issues range from environmental justice to fair housing to education to human rights.
- > **Diverse constituencies** – the sample comprises organizations that organize and advocate on behalf of a wide range of historically underserved populations, including African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, low-wage workers, LGBTQ residents, people with disabilities, child care providers and youth.
- > **Diverse organizational compositions/histories** – the sample comprises different types of organizations, both in composition and structure. Some are membership organizations, a couple developed as a result of a lawsuit, some are affiliates of national organizations, some were founded by faith institutions, while another is a youth organizing group.
- > **Age diversity** – the sample comprises organizations that have been in existence for four decades, some that formed in 2005 and most fell in between. The researchers consciously sought to not only include the “usual suspects,” or organizations that were the most well-known, but also less visible organizations doing important work.
- > **Diverse approaches to organizing and advocacy** – the sample comprises organizations that engage in advocacy and organizing in different ways. Some of the organizations utilize tactics of research and policy analysis, others advocate to change or regulate private sector practices, others target specific state legislative agendas, some others endeavor to reform or provide more equitable city ordinances and policies, while some lead large-scale community mobilization strategies.
- > **Diverse organizational mandates/missions** – the sample comprises some organizations that are primarily statewide advocacy groups; some grassroots organizing institutions; others that are both advocacy or organizing institutions and provide direct services; and others that are most known for their direct service work, but out of necessity have

expanded their work also to include advocacy and organizing.

The following 20 organizations were selected and partnered with NCRP as respondents:

ALABAMA

Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)
 Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL)
 Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (¡HICA!)
 Greene-Sumter Enterprise Community (GSEC)
 Center for Fair Housing

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families (AACF)
 Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP)
 Center for Artistic Revolution (CAR)
 Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center
 (NWAJWC)
 Rural Community Alliance (RCA)

LOUISIANA

Family and Youth Counseling Agency (FYCA)
 Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center
 (GNOFHAC)
 Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB)
 Southern Mutual Help Association (SMHA)
 Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of
 New Orleans (VAYLA-NO)

MISSISSIPPI

Children's Defense Fund (CFD)
 Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County (CCBTC)
 Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI)
 Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
 (MSCCD)
 Southern Echo

During the Data Collection Phase, NCRP researchers collected data from all 20 organizations by interviewing senior staff from each group in person and through written responses to a detailed questionnaire. Several organizations also provided supplemental materials, such as news clippings, brochures, campaign materials, budgets and grant reports. NCRP gathered data from the five-year period 2005-2009 for the following measures:

- > **Advocacy and organizing impacts.** Where possible, groups included the dollar value of policy changes (e.g., income gained from expanded job opportunities, increased funds for health care, affordable

housing investments) and the number of constituents benefiting from the changes, as well as strategies and factors contributing to success.

- > **Civic engagement indicators.** For example, the number of leaders trained and people mobilized to communicate with policymakers.
- > **Interim progress and capacity-building indicators.** For example, changes in leaders' skills and access to the policy process.
- > **Amounts and types of funding** the groups received for advocacy, organizing and civic engagement during the five years, examples of positive funder partnerships and obstacles they faced in seeking funding.

NCRP and its research team aggregated the data from the sample organizations to determine the total monetary benefits of all the wins that could be quantified. Financial data were aggregated to determine the total amount invested by foundations and other sources to support advocacy and organizing across the groups.

A **return on investment (ROI)** calculation was made using the following formula:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{aggregate dollar amount of all monetizable wins}}{\text{aggregate dollars invested in advocacy and organizing}}$$

The ROI shows how collective financial support by grantmakers and other funding sources for a set of organizing and advocacy groups in a location over time has contributed to the collective policy impacts of these groups. It would be almost impossible to attribute a specific policy change to a particular group or grant. The use of an *aggregate* ROI helps focus the findings on the investment that all of the organizations and their supporters together have made that contributed to success. Unless otherwise noted, every monetary figure attached to an impact and cited in the report for

the four states (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi) is included in the ROI. See Appendix B for a detailed listing of monetized impacts and the calculation of dollar impact for the total ROI.

The ROI is not intended to be a precise figure but to provide a solid basis for understanding the substantial benefits for communities in the Gulf/Midsouth from investments in nonprofits that use advocacy and organizing to achieve long-term, systemic change. It does not capture every input that contributed to these successes. For example, there were many coalition efforts in which groups not featured in this report participated, and their financial information is not reflected in the ROI. However, for the impacts that are included, one or more of the 20 sample groups played a *significant or lead role* in achieving the victory. Often, even small local groups working in broad coalitions can make the difference because of their strategic relationship to legislators, knowledge about and connection to those most affected by a public policy and ability to mobilize constituents to influence decision-makers. Additionally, a large proportion of the impacts were not quantifiable, making the ROI an *underestimate* of the benefits actually achieved. Appendix C contains a detailed listing of these equally important non-monetized impacts.

The final phase was Data Analysis and Recommendation, which distilled the input provided in interviews with regional, state and local funders and practitioners, and the data collected during each sample organizations interview or site visit. Additionally, NCRP staff and consultants convened to discuss their perspectives on the implications of the data collected. Then the team developed recommendations and observations pertaining to the Gulf/Midsouth region's local social change infrastructure and the funders that currently or will potentially invest in community organizing or advocacy.

IV. The Demographic and Philanthropic Landscape of the Gulf/Midsouth Region

Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi each differ from the national average in terms of racial composition. Compared against the national African American percentage rate of 12.5 percent, Alabama is 26.2 percent African American; Louisiana, 31.5 percent; and Mississippi, 37.1 percent. Arkansas, at 15.1 percent African American, is closer to the national average. All four states are lower than the national average in the proportion of Asian and American Indian people.

Although Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi all have low Latino populations compared to the national average – their rates are 2.7 percent, 3.2 percent and 1.9 percent respectively while the national average is 15.1 percent – immigration rates in these three states are increasing and signal that proportions could change. In Alabama, the immigration rate between 2000 and 2009 increased by 67.5 percent, giving the state the second highest-increase in immigrants in the United States during that period. Arkansas, which is above the national average for Latino residents, was ranked fifth in the nation with a 63.2 percent increase in immigrant population.

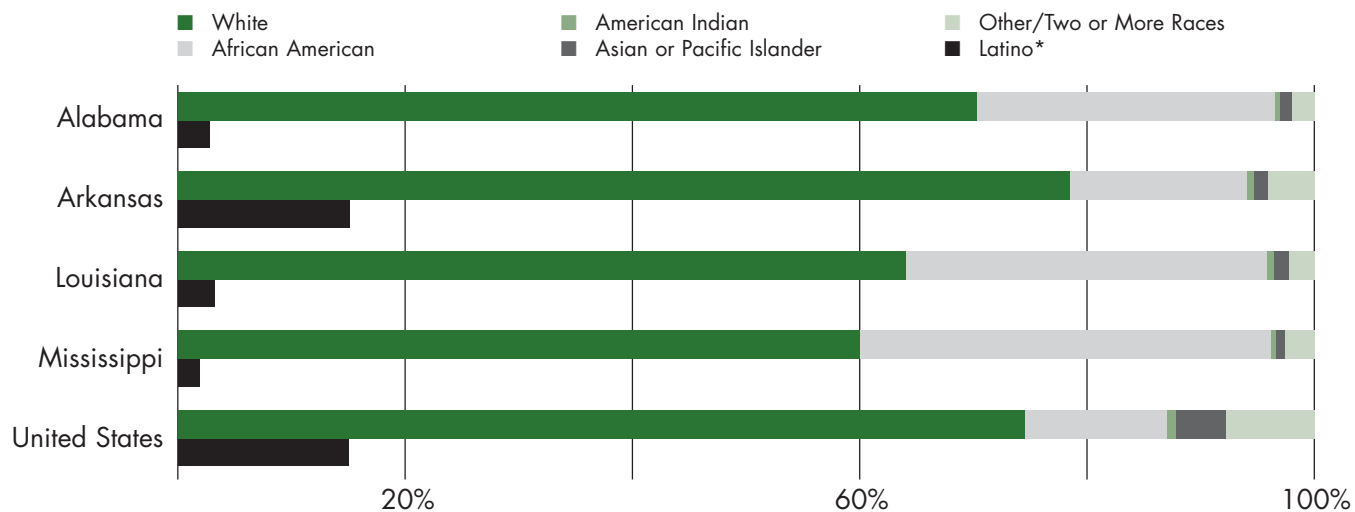
Poverty levels in all four states are much higher than the national average. Per capita income estimates during the years 2005-2009 from the Census Bureau show that the per capita income levels ranged between \$19,500 and \$22,500 for the four states. These levels are all significantly below the national per capita income estimate of \$27,041.

Children also are heavily affected by poverty in these four states. In 2009, the percentage of children living in poverty in the United States was 20 percent. This figure was 25 percent in Alabama, 27 percent in Arkansas, 24 percent in Louisiana and 31 percent in Mississippi.

Health statistics for the four states give reason for concern. All four states rank above the national average for child obesity. Mississippi's rate of child obesity is 44 percent, compared to the national rate of 31 percent. A ranking by Kids Count Data Center compares data between 2000 and 2008 for all 50 states around 10 key indicators affecting children including health, education and economic wellbeing. In the results, the four delta states occupied the four lowest rankings, with Alabama ranking 47th, Arkansas 48th, Louisiana 49th and Mississippi 50th.¹

The region's nonprofits and philanthropic organizations play a vital role in how the region's civic infrastructure combats some of the disparities and poverty statistics reported above. Notable components of this civic infrastructure are the support organizations and collaboratives for nonprofits and philanthropy. Each state has an active nonprofit support center or association (Alabama Association for Nonprofits, Arkansas Coalition for Excellence, Louisiana Association for Nonprofit Organizations and Mississippi Center for Nonprofits). Additionally, there are philanthropic regional associations and collaboratives that provide venues for philanthropic partnerships, professional development and strategic initiatives to maximize return on investments in the nonprofit sectors. Organizations such as the Southeastern Council of Foundations, Southern Organizing Working Group, Central City Funders Collaborative, Mississippi Association of Grantmakers, Alabama Giving, Gulf Coast Funders for Equity and an informal Philanthropy Roundtable in Arkansas all have important roles in the philanthropic landscape of the Gulf/Midsouth region.

The foundation giving per capita rank of each state in the region in 2008 was very low, with the exception

GRAPH 1: RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY 2009²

*"Latino" is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Latinos may be of any race. For more information see <http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/files/MRSE-01-US1.html>.

of Arkansas. Mississippi ranked 48th out of all states in the country, Alabama ranked 46th, and Louisiana ranked 43rd. Of course, not all grant dollars come from institutions within the state. But looking at total grant money received in 2008, Mississippi ranked 40th in the country and Alabama ranked 43rd.

The following sections provide thumbnail pictures of each of the four states featured in this report, covering areas such as demographics,³ immigration, political leadership, nonprofit activity and philanthropic giving.⁴

A. Alabama Facts and Figures

Demographic Information

- > 48.4 percent male, 51.6 percent female
- > Race and ethnicity: 70.3 percent white, 26.1 percent black, 2.8 percent Latino, 0.5 percent American Indian, 1 percent Asian, 0 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.8 percent other, 1.2 percent two or more races
- > 67.5 percent change in immigrant population between 2000 and 2009 (Ranked 2nd)⁵
- > 104 State House Legislators: 65 Republican, 39 Democrat⁶
- > 35 State Senators: 22 Republican, 12 Democrat, 1 Independent⁷
- > 28.4 percent of population classified rural, 71.6 percent urban⁸
- > 15.9 percent of population below the poverty level

- > Per capita income: \$22,732
- > Children ages 6 to 17 who repeated one or more grades since starting kindergarten: 17 percent⁹
- > Children living in poverty: 25 percent¹⁰

Philanthropic and Nonprofit Landscape

- > 740 foundations
- > Assets totaling \$2,053,151,800
- > Giving, 2008: \$173,265,120
- > Grants received, circa 2008: \$66,927,888
- > Rank (per capita giving): 46th
- > 19,936 total nonprofits; 10,194 filing 990s (i.e., have annual budgets greater than \$25,000)
- > Nonprofits per 1,000 residents: 2.16

History of Social Movements

- > *Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956)*: Montgomery citizens boycotted city buses in protest of Jim Crow Laws requiring black riders to sit at the back of the bus. In 1956, the Supreme Court responded with the ruling that Montgomery's bus laws were unconstitutional on the basis of racial discrimination.
- > *Selma Voting Rights Movement (1963-1965)*: In 1963, organizers worked to register black voters in Dallas County. This work culminated in a series of three marches. Police brutality and violence against the marchers on "Bloody Sunday" drew the attention of the nation, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law in August 1965.

TABLE 1: STATES RANKED BY PERCENT CHANGE IN THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION: 1990, 2000, AND 2009¹¹

	1990 Estimate	2000 Estimate	2009 Estimate	Change 1990–2000 % Change	Rank	Change 2000–2009 % Change	Rank
Alabama	43,533	87,772	146,999	101.6%	17	67.5%	2
Arkansas	24,867	73,690	120,231	196.3%	4	63.2%	5
Louisiana	87,407	115,885	152,002	32.6%	40	31.2%	29
Mississippi	20,383	39,908	59,538	95.8%	21	49.2%	14
United States	19,767,316	31,107,889	38,517,234	57.4%		23.8%	

> *Interracial marriage (2000)*: Despite a 1967 Supreme Court ruling striking all state bans on interracial marriage, Alabama’s ban remained on the books until 2000, when the constitutional provision was repealed by referendum.

B. Arkansas Facts and Figures

Demographic Information

- > 49 percent male, 51 percent female
- > Race and ethnicity: 78.6 percent white, 15.5 percent black, 15.1 percent Latino, 0.7 percent American Indian, 1.1 percent Asian, 0.1 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 2.3 percent other, 1.8 percent two or more races
- > 63.2 percent change in immigrant population between 2000 and 2009 (Ranked 5th)¹²
- > 100 State House Legislators: 55 Democrats, 45 Republicans¹³
- > 35 State Senators: 20 Democrats, 15 Republicans¹⁴
- > 39.6 percent of population classified rural, 60.4 percent urban¹⁵
- > 17.3 percent of population below the poverty level
- > Per capita income: \$20,977
- > Children ages 6-17 who repeated one or more grades since starting kindergarten: 14 percent¹⁶
- > Children living in poverty: 27 percent¹⁷

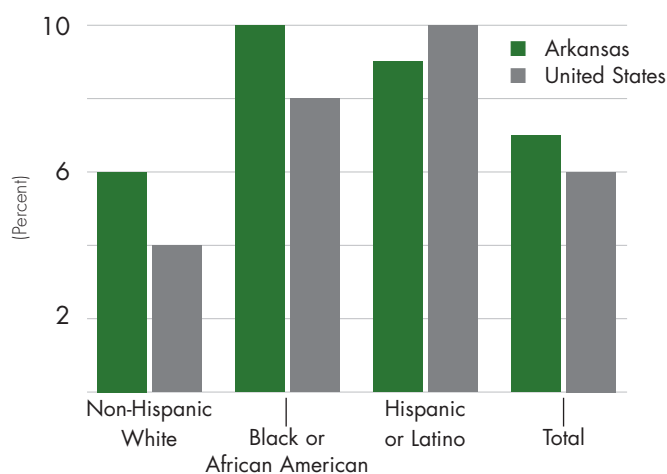
Philanthropic and Nonprofit Landscape

- > 299 foundations
- > Assets totaling \$3,316,762,921¹⁸
- > Giving, 2008: 371,983,220
- > Grants received, circa 2008: \$161,251,895
- > Rank (per capita giving): 20th
- > 13,227 total nonprofits; 6,649 filing 990s
- > Nonprofits per 1,000 residents: 2.3

History of Social Movements

- > *School Desegregation and the Little Rock Nine (1957)*: In response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the NAACP registered nine black students at Little Rock Central High School. Governor Orval Faubus used the Arkansas National Guard to block the students from entering the school, but President Eisenhower sent federal troops to enforce desegregation.
- > *Securing the Right of Adoption for Gays and Lesbians (ongoing)*: Arkansas has a state constitutional amendment against gay marriage and a law prohibiting unmarried partners from adopting or fostering children. In 2008, the ACLU brought a case against the law, which was struck down by a state court. The case now is going to the Arkansas Supreme Court.

GRAPH 2: TEENS AGES 16–19 WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL AND ARE NOT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, BY RACE, 2009¹⁹



C. Louisiana Facts and Figures

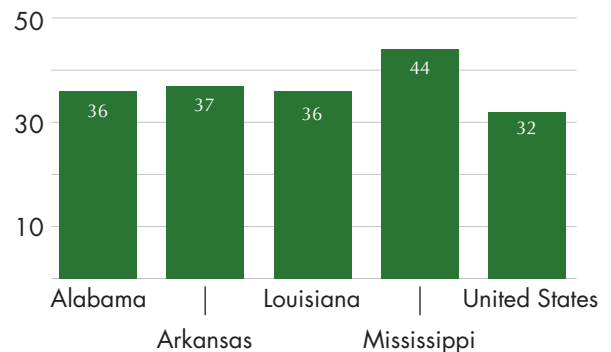
Demographic Information

- > 48.6 percent male, 51.4 percent female
- > Race and ethnicity: 64.3 percent white, 31.5 percent black, 3.2 percent Latino, 0.6 percent American Indian, 1.4 percent Asian, 0 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent other, 1.2 percent two or more races
- > 31.2 percent change in immigrant population between 2000 and 2009 (Ranked 29th)²¹
- > 105 State House Legislators: 54 Republicans, 46 Democrats, 4 Independents, 1 vacant²²
- > 39 State Senators: 22 Republicans, 17 Democrats²³
- > 25.3 percent of population is classified rural, 74.7 percent urban²⁴
- > 17.6 percent of population below the poverty level
- > Per capita income: \$22,535
- > Children ages 6 to 17 who repeated one or more grades since starting kindergarten: 25 percent²⁵
- > Children living in poverty: 24 percent²⁶

Philanthropic and Nonprofit Landscape

- > 466 foundations
- > Assets total for 2008: \$2,993,385,433
- > Giving for 2008: \$176,678,604
- > Grants received, circa 2008: \$154,198,079
- > State rank in per capita giving: 43rd
- > 18,769 total nonprofits; 8,654 filing 990s
- > Nonprofits per 1,000 residents: 1.93

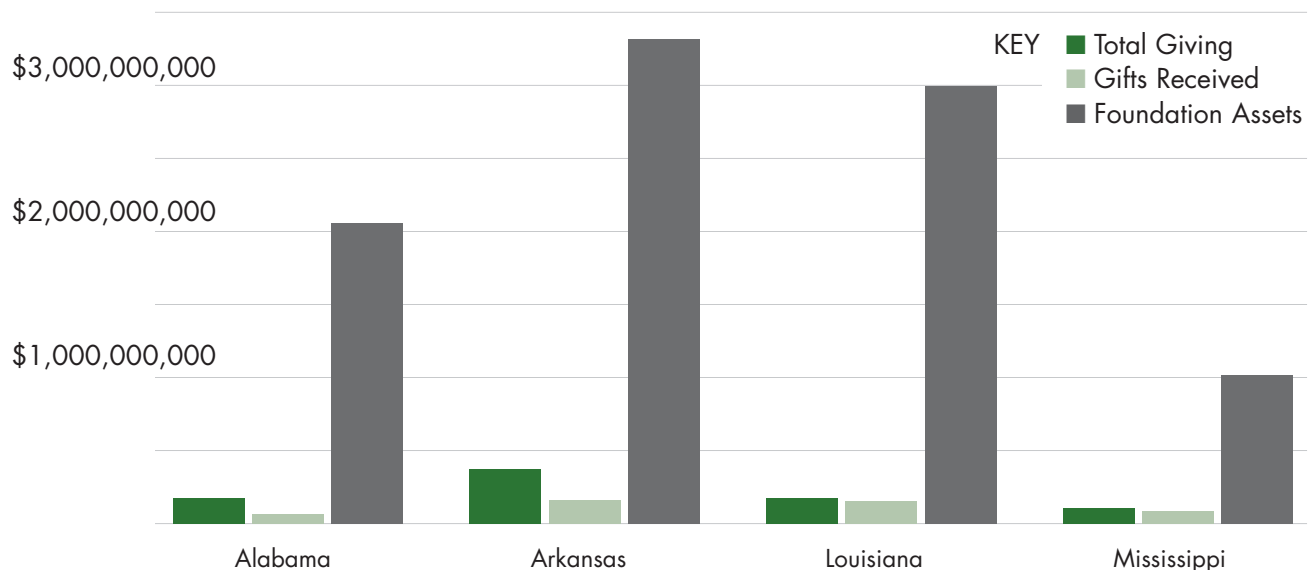
GRAPH 3: PERCENT CHILDREN AND TEENS AGES 10–17 OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE, 2007²⁰



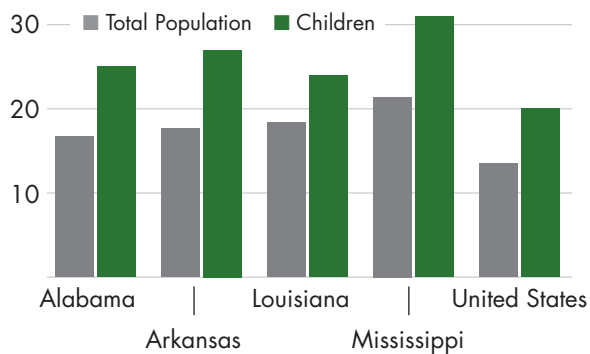
History of Social Movements

- > *New Orleans Sit-ins and Boycotts (1960)*: In response to sit-ins in Greensboro, N.C., students from Dillard and Xavier Universities staged sit-ins at white-only stores. Civil rights leaders organized a boycott of merchants on Dryades Street who did not employ blacks above the menial level.
- > *Environmental Justice and Toxic Waste (1980s-ongoing)*: The stretch between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is known as Cancer Alley because of the unusually high rates of cancer incidence among area residents. Advocates have strived to demonstrate that the petrochemical companies dumping toxic waste in the area have contributed to this health crisis.

GRAPH 4: FOUNDATION ASSETS, GIVING AND GRANTS RECEIVED, 2008²⁷



GRAPH 5: PERCENT CHILDREN AND TOTAL POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY, 2009²⁸



D. Mississippi Facts and Figures

Demographic Information

- > 48.5 percent male, 51.5 percent female
- > Race and ethnicity: 60 percent white, 37.1 percent black, 1.9 percent Latino, 0.4 percent American Indian, 0.8 percent Asian, 0 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.7 percent other, 1.9 percent two or more races
- > 49.2 percent change in immigrant population between 2000 and 2009 (Ranked 14th)²⁹
- > 122 State House Legislators: 72 Democrats, 50 Republicans³⁰
- > 52 State Senators: 27 Republicans, 25 Democrats³¹
- > 55.6 percent of population is rural, 44.4 percent urban³²

- > 20.8 percent of population below the poverty level
- > Per capita income: \$19,534
- > Percent of children and teens obese or overweight: 44 percent³³
- > Children living in poverty: 31 percent³⁴

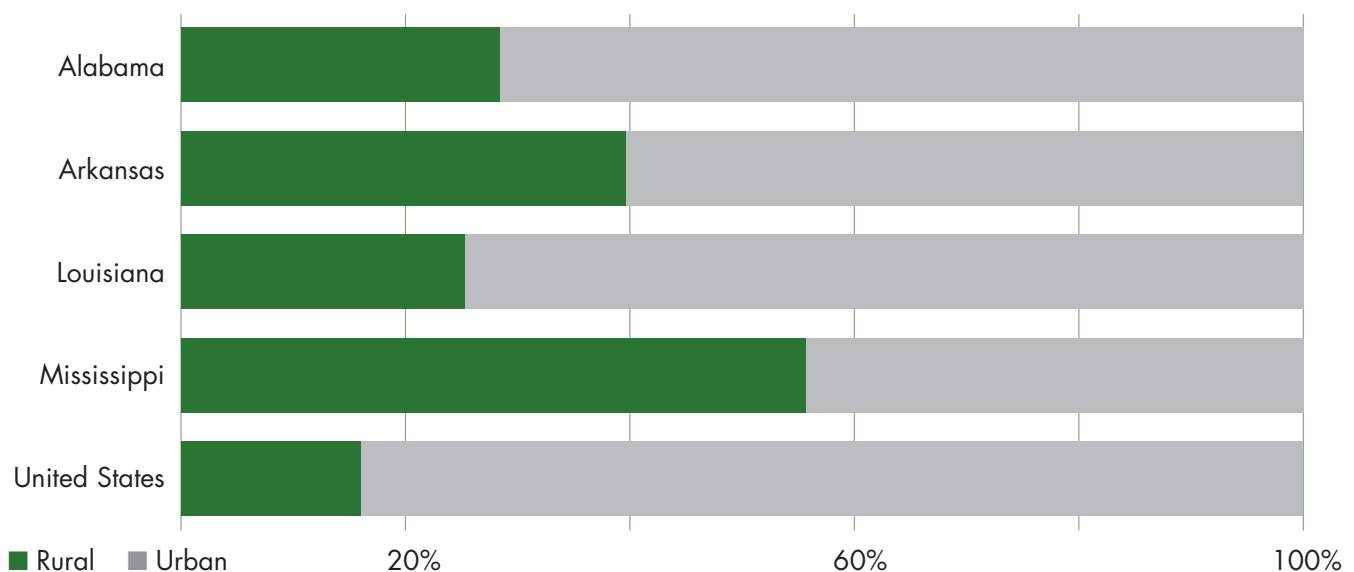
Philanthropic and Nonprofit Landscape

- > 250 Foundations
- > Assets total \$1,013,298,914
- > Giving (2008): \$103,580,092
- > Grants received, circa 2008: \$87,919,955
- > Rank (per capita giving): 48th
- > 12,666 total nonprofits; 5,325 filing 990s
- > Nonprofits per 1,000 residents: 1.8

History of Social Movements

- > *Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964)*: In the summer of 1964, civil rights organizers concentrated their efforts in Mississippi to register black voters and set up Freedom Schools where black children could get a quality civic, political and academic education.
- > *Corrections Reform (2002-2010)*: In 2002, the ACLU filed a lawsuit challenging the conditions of the death row unit at Mississippi's notoriously cruel Parchman Farm. The Department of Corrections responded by instituting a number of reforms that have decreased incarceration in the state. Perhaps the most publicized outcome was the prisoner release of the Scott sisters, two women who were jailed for 16 years after stealing the equivalent of \$11.

GRAPH 6: RURAL/URBAN POPULATION RATIOS, 2009³⁵



V. A Primer on Organizing and Advocacy in the Region

An investigation of this nature requires the right contextual analysis, one that goes beyond facts and figures and reflects upon the region itself and factors that shape organizing and advocacy approaches. The NCRP team took a step back from its data collection to answer the question, “What do people need to know about this region to have a firm grasp on the individuals and organizations practicing advocacy, organizing and civic engagement and their impacts?” What emerged was a collection of eight considerations, partly informed by interviews in the region, focusing on dynamics such as history, race, culture, demographics and public opinion.

A. The Civil Rights Movement has had a noticeable impact on the brand of advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth region.

Each of these four states – Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi – became landmarks during the Civil Rights Movement in different ways. In some instances, pivotal events occurred in the region that had a ripple effect in the movement, the country and on history. For example, the integration of Central High in Little Rock and Bloody Sunday in Selma produced images and stories that were forever etched in America’s collective conscious.

However, in addition to being associated with milestone events, the movement was both a product and producer of anchor institutions for not just the Gulf/Midsouth region but the entire American South. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equity (CORE), NAACP and Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) all represented not just the movement, but the advocacy and organizing infrastructure in the region at that time.

Many assume that after the Civil Rights Movement the infrastructure continued to be built. However, it would be misguided to assume that there has been a continuum of investment and support for advocacy and organizing from the Civil Rights Movement through the present day. Linetta Gilbert, former senior program officer at the Ford Foundation, explained: “In parts of the region there is a real understanding of political organizing that is rooted in the region’s history and experiences in the Civil Rights Movement, but there has not been enough training for the next generation of organizers. Lots of young people have come back to the Gulf region after the storms, but in some



instances it's been a difficult transition for veterans of the Civil Rights Movement to envision and implement leadership transfer to this next generation."

What is clear is that the evolution of the civic engagement sector in this region is deeply rooted in the movement. It is apparent in many organizations in how they mobilize constituents, how leaders are trained and developed to conduct advocacy or organizing and even in the culture of organizations. In Mississippi and Louisiana, one of the signature programs of the Children's Defense Fund is the Freedom Schools program, a model of public engagement and alternative education carried over from the movement. At Southern Echo, most staff members have learned movement songs, taught to them by Hollis Watkins,

"In years four and five, many of the grants have been reduced or phased out, severely restricting funds available to nonprofits for collaborations, through which much advocacy work has been done."

—Linda Usdin in *Power Amidst Renewal*

one of the organization's founders and an important figure during the civil rights era. These are just a few illustrations of how many – if not most – of the organizations in the region have been built on the shoulders of the movement.

B. The hurricanes of 2005 and 2008 changed the face of advocacy and organizing in the region.

The Gulf Coast experienced an unprecedented level of human suffering and physical damage, population displacement, international attention, turmoil and transition as it coped with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and Gustav and Ike three years later. The natural disasters uncovered and drew attention to a myriad of deep-seated structural inequities that had long existed and were oft-ignored in the affected region. The impact of these storms and the rebuilding efforts that followed were significant, and they have drastically reshaped

advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth, particularly in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Following Katrina, there was an emergence of new organizations and initiatives that has brought a new generation of diverse young people – some former residents, others transplants – to the region to support community change. This new energy has been great for the sector, as the advocacy agendas and organizing activities for organizations like Mobile Center for Fair Housing and Family and Youth Counseling Agency have blossomed. However, the influx of new institutions also raises concerns that funding will dry up. In *Power Amidst Renewal*, an Alliance for Justice report published five years after Katrina, Linda Usdin writes, "In years four and five, many of the grants have been reduced or phased out, severely restricting funds available to nonprofits for collaborations, through which much advocacy work has been done."³⁶

Beyond the issue of diminished funding, there are pressing questions about how philanthropy carries out work in this region. "How is the funding community more strategic in supporting the

capacity and infrastructure of local grassroots organizing and advocacy groups, particularly in the most affected areas?" asks Melissa Johnson, executive director of the Neighborhood Funders Group. "Are funders still seeing the residents of the affected areas as victims? Are nonprofits still presenting themselves to funders and the public as representing victims? In part, we must change how we view these organizations."

Another example of how the sector has changed in the region has been the increased interest of national institutions. National nonprofit, research and advocacy institutions and some foundations have become enamored with the Gulf region. This has provided both opportunities and threats to the region. Some local organizations have been able to forge strategic partnerships with national organizations that have increased the effectiveness of their advocacy and organizing efforts and built the organizations' capacity in sustainable ways. For example, the National Fair Housing Alliance and PolicyLink have each been a strong partner and ally with the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center as it challenged discrimination on

the part of local, state and federal entities in rebuilding efforts. However, in other cases partnerships have been founded on shortsighted strategies rather than long-term visions for structural change. Subsequently, local advocacy and organizing institutions have had to learn how to screen for those national partners looking to help build capacity, not merely provide the semblance of capacity (and for a small fee).

C. Advocacy and organizing in the region has been hindered by a dearth of philanthropic institutions that invest in social justice.

The numbers for foundation total giving and per capita giving show that within the four states focused here, particularly Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, institutional philanthropy offers scarce funding to nonprofits, including advocacy and organizing groups.

An analysis of social justice grantmaking in the region reveals further disparities. Foundation Center data³⁷ show that Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi have much fewer philanthropic resources within their states going to civic and policy engagement than does the rest of the country. Of the four states, Arkansas is the most in-line with national trends and shows a much healthier indigenous source of foundation funds. However, two funders, The Walton Family Foundation and The Walmart Foundation, account for the vast majority of social justice grants awarded in Arkansas.

It should be noted that the definition of “social justice grantmaking” used by the Foundation Center includes community and economic development grants, policy research and other activities, as well as grants for direct advocacy, organizing and civic engagement. Data on grants received within the states for social justice from all foundation sources nationally show that Alabama is significantly underresourced, even compared to other states in the South. The data show high levels of grant dollars coming into Louisiana and Mississippi for social justice during 2006-2008, but this is likely attributed in large part to post-Katrina grantmaking. It will be important to track future giving in these states to see if these levels decline significantly relative to the national median.

A healthy advocacy and organizing sector relies on access to philanthropic resources to build and strengthen infrastructure, and for institutions in this region, that access is limited. But lacking such invest-

ment does not preclude organizations from having a strong social justice analysis. The organizations included in this report are a small sample of effective organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth region working to reform systems, hold government accountable and mobilize constituents to inform local and state policies.

Even as organizations deliver significant advocacy and organizing impacts, their organizational infrastructure suffers from so few philanthropic resources. Some important organizations that advocate and serve seriously marginalized populations receive little to no philanthropic dollars from within the region or their home state. Tamiaka White, program officer at Southern Partners Fund, is familiar with the funding challenges these organizations face. She noted, “There was a major foundation in the South that said, ‘We don’t fund [organizing and advocacy]; we don’t think those things are worthy of our dollars.’ That was really jolting for us to hear. That type of perspective is tripping us up a lot right now. We need some way to show how the investment that they could be making would benefit all of us in the South.”

Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), an Alabama-based organization in the sample that provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners, like so many groups, has felt the burden of limited funding. EJI receives no philanthropic resources from state foundations and very little philanthropic dollars from regional foundations. An entrepreneurial organization, EJI has implemented a smart business model through which it has received significant national funding. However, even this strategy is vulnerable to circumstances beyond an organization’s control. It is unrealistic to expect every advocacy and organizing institution to strengthen its infrastructure without a history of investment or at least a significant, consistent commitment from philanthropy.

D. Rural life is not the exception but the predominant reality for the great majority of those living in the Gulf/Midsouth.

Geographically, a significant majority of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi is rural, as evidenced by a rural-urban population ratio across the four states that is considerably higher than that of the national population.³⁸ Arkansas and Mississippi each have only one city with a population greater than 100,000 people. The largest city in the four states is New Orleans,

which has a population of nearly 344,000.³⁹ In consideration of the region's rural character, understanding the nature, idiosyncrasies, challenges and sophistication of advocacy and organizing in rural communities is essential to understanding advocacy and organizing in these states. Similarly, effective philanthropic support of the sector regionally rests on understanding organizing and advocacy in the rural context.

These states have a distinct geography that at times causes significant disconnects in how state level policy and philanthropy supports growth and prosperity in rural communities. According to Felecia Jones, executive director of the Black Belt Community Foundation, funders should make a deliberate effort to go out into these areas. "Much of our work must be done in rural communities," she says. "Very little work can be done on the Internet and through email. You have to go out and reach the people. Community members value face-to-face relationships over trying to connect through email or other forms of technology."



The distance factor also can make it difficult to move information and mobilize people around issues important to them. For example, one of the organizations in the research sample, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County (CCBTC), is in coalition with a number of organizations throughout the state of Mississippi. These partnerships are vital to CCBTC's work in its small community of almost 11,000 people. State policies on education funding, criminal justice reform, redistricting and health insurance have significant implications for the county of Tunica. CCBTC's capacity to educate lawmakers, learn from advocacy strategies in other parts of the state and even connect with funders and state and regional thought leaders rests largely on having the capacity to make the three-hour trip one way from north Mississippi to the capital city, Jackson.

Rural communities in the region are not usually known to be hotbeds for social entrepreneurship and innovation. However, by necessity many organizations have been very entrepreneurial to cultivate opportunities for empowering marginalized populations in their communities. One impetus for innovation has been restricted access to traditional capital, which in turn has raised the premium on relational capital – the vital relationships that are more accessible than dollars. Southern Mutual Help Association, an organization featured in this study, utilized relational capital with nontraditional partners to cultivate financial capital that is making a lasting impact on women and children in a rural Louisiana community.

E. The Gulf/Midsouth, like the rest of the American South, is no longer ethnically defined by African Americans and whites.

There has been a recent influx of immigrants, primarily Latinos, to the region, which is changing its cultural, economic and political landscape. Social movements in the Gulf/Midsouth have been either explicitly or implicitly centered on race, and until recently, the construct of race in the American South, particularly in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, has been framed primarily in "black and white."

Alabama and Arkansas rank second and fifth, respectively, in total change in immigrant population between 2000 and 2009. The growing Latino population includes many vulnerable residents who are subject to discrimination and marginalization. The

research for this publication included interviews with more than 40 organizations (20 of which make up the research sample) working in advocacy and organizing in the region. There were a notable number of institutions that talked about immigration, black/brown alliances or advocacy for the DREAM Act, which promotes educational opportunities for undocumented immigrant youth who have graduated from high school in their state of residence. The Center for Artistic Revolution (CAR), a grassroots organization founded to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities in Arkansas, has placed the DREAM Act high on their advocacy agenda. This stance alone indicates a changing landscape in the region.

Because of the growth of new immigrant communities, there has been (and will likely continue to be) an emergence of several locally based organizations whose missions are explicit and targeted to support these populations. These institutions represent new and important changes to the nonprofit sector in the region. Organizations such as the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, the Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center, and the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans should not be tagged exclusively as immigrant rights organizations, but all of them serve immigrant or new immigrant populations around a myriad of issues from environmental justice to juvenile justice reform to workers' rights. None of these organizations existed 10 years ago, and they represent how the landscape is changing as the population changes.

F. Advocacy and organizing strategies face diminishing returns if they do not acknowledge systemic racial disparities.

The pervasiveness of racism in public and private systems in the Gulf/Midsouth is significant, and permeates the fiber of the region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure. It is important to note that this assertion applies a structural racism lens, not the type of racism that describes interethnic relations.

This report grasps structural racism as, in the definition of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "a system of social structures that produces cumulative, durable, race-based inequalities. It is also a method of analysis that is used to examine how historical legacies, individuals, structures and institutions

work interactively to distribute material and symbolic advantages and disadvantages along racial lines."⁴⁰

This construct places an emphasis on systems that distribute advantage and opportunity in a racialized way. This is both a description of how societal structures came to disenfranchise people of color and a snapshot of a current reality that continues to exacerbate inequity in the region. Most significantly, every system that the region's organizers and advocates look to reform or dismantle rests on a foundation of race-based policies, economies or advantages that marginalize people of color. Some of the targeted systems and structures that have disparate impacts on communities of color include education, juvenile and criminal justice, polluting industries, housing policies and state constitutions.

To illustrate how this marginalization works on the systemic level, president and CEO of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Sherece West, described inequities in the juvenile justice system. "All of the data indicates that young people across race and class commit crimes at roughly the same rate, yet the overwhelming majority of juvenile detention centers are filled with black and brown young men," she said. "This is a glaring example of how structural racism and inequity are deeply entrenched in public systems and lead to disparate outcomes for specific populations."

For advocates and organizers in the Gulf/Midsouth who promote democracy and equity and who recognize the entrenched structures described above, it is clear that their work is never divorced from the histories, realities and consequences of structures riddled with systemic, racialized inequities.

G. The political environment in the region has both necessitated reactive efforts and hindered the development of a proactive agenda.

In the region where stark inequity is the norm, often the role of groups has been simply to mount a response. Rarely has there been space or funding to develop a long-term agenda.

Organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth have talked about being "accused of being reactive, and not proactive." One organization leader shared, "Several funders framed their analysis of our work as reactive in a way that was accusatory. I thought about their feedback, and I think it's an accurate description. Our communi-

ty has so much to react to. I understand the need to have a more proactive agenda, but I need three more staff to do what we want to do. For now, we do what we've got to do for our communities."

In a very politically conservative environment, nonprofits simply have exhausted themselves advocating to stop bad legislation or stir public outcry about blatant injustices. In recent years, they have begun to build a proactive agenda, but they need additional funding to increase effectiveness to scale.

The history of organizing and advocacy in the region ranges from repealing poll taxes to fighting for fair allocation of hurricane recovery funds to reforming an archaic state constitution. The depth of discrimination in existing public systems has resulted in a litany of inequities that underfunded social justice groups rally against. And such a response is reasonable. Nonetheless, local communities, the state and the region as a whole call for a proactive agenda that balances coordination and strategy with responsiveness.

It is necessary for advocacy both to block or repeal bad policies *and* create new policies fostering equity and inclusion for all populations. Organizations in the region must aim to create this balance with extremely limited resources. The story of the Jena Six illustrates both how the current infrastructure in the region responds to injustice and how it needs to reform broken systems. The Jena Six protest was a mass response to what was deemed an excessive and racially motivated sentencing of six black boys for the assault of a white classmate in a rural Louisiana town. Local advocates, with the support of numerous national civil rights organizations, organized a series of actions to overturn the sentence, including a protest that attracted approximately 20,000 people in Jena and tens of thousands in other parts of the country.

The organizing infrastructure at the regional and national level supported what is considered by many a successful advocacy and organizing campaign that resulted in overturned convictions and reduced sentences. However, the same infrastructure has not supported or sustained a coordinated set of advocacy and organizing strategies to effectively combat the myriad policies that exacerbate episodes like Jena Six. These strategies could lift up alternative policies that scale back punitive discipline and seek real juvenile justice reform. This is an important distinction between the sector's capacity to respond versus its capacity to proactively build. It is incumbent upon philanthropy to

invest significant resources in the sector's capacity to proactively build.

H. Organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth are both dynamic and depleted.

There are two strains of thought that seem to consistently ring loudest in the discussion of advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth region: 1) organizations in the sector are dynamic, creative and sophisticated in how they advocate and mobilize constituents to influence policy and promote equity; and 2) institutions suffer from weak organizational infrastructures that inhibit their capacity to effectively mobilize constituencies and achieve tangible and impactful policy wins. Interestingly, oftentimes it is the advocacy and organizing institutions themselves that articulate both viewpoints. Thus, many of the people and organizations on the ground feel that both assertions are true: the sector is both dynamic and depleted.

The sector is *dynamic* because organizations find creative and resourceful counters to underinvestment. They form coalitions as a strategy to strengthen their reach and base to effect change around specific issues. And they possess a unique cultural and strategic legacy inherited directly from the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders.

The sector is *depleted* due to inconsistent and event-based investments from the philanthropic sector in advocacy and organizing; organizations prioritizing (and receiving most resources for) specific programs or campaigns at the expense of investing in sustainable institutions; and a legacy of structural racism in the nonprofit sector, which often hamstring the long-term development of organizations led by persons of color in the region.

"Overall, there are too few groups [in the South]," said Nat Williams, executive director of the Hill-Snowdon Foundation. "And groups may be too far separated and on average underresourced; however, it does not mean they are not effective organizations. Often their genius is their capacity to do more with less."

It is vital that any assessment of the sector in the Gulf/Midsouth understands the magnitude of innovation in the region, the structural and historical nature of the sector's capacity shortfalls and most importantly, how both traits characterize the sector in equal measures.

VI. Findings

The research demonstrates that nonprofits engaged in advocacy, organizing and civic engagement – often in conjunction with other programs and strategies – have contributed significant benefits to communities in the Gulf/Midsouth. The 20 participating groups were asked to list their top five most impactful accomplishments. At least 54 separate impacts were verified, and 24 of these could be monetized. These policy successes directly benefit tens of thousands of workers, people with disabilities, minority homeowners, public school students, immigrants, young children, LGBTQ residents, rural communities and other historically underserved populations. Major impacts were found across numerous issues, including criminal justice reform, fair housing, worker rights, early education and care, environmental justice, immigrant rights and human rights. Examples of these impacts are found in the next section. Detailed lists of all monetized and non-monetized impacts are contained in Appendices B and C.

Overall, the data show that:

- > The total amount spent on advocacy and organizing across the 20 groups from 2005 to 2009 was \$41.9 million.
- > Of that amount, \$32.5 million was contributed by foundations, comprising 78 percent of all support for advocacy and organizing.
- > The total dollar amount of monetizable benefits during the five-year period exceeded \$4.7 billion.
- > The return on investment, which is total dollar value of impacts divided by total spent for policy engagement, is 114.

Thus, for every dollar invested in the civic and policy engagement activities of the 20 groups collectively, \$114 in benefits accrued to Gulf/Midsouth communities.

The following section contain stories of impact for each of the 20 organizations, as well as stories of important coalitions in the region. It is organized in a way that helps the reader to better understand the reported accomplishments within a framework of five observations or themes about organizing in the context of this particular region:

- 1) How organizations achieve wins on their respective issue despite underinvestment in the Gulf/Midsouth region.
- 2) The fundamental role coalitions play in the region's organizing infrastructure.
- 3) How training and public education is a linchpin strategy.
- 4) How and why so many organizations perform the dual function of advocacy/service provision.
- 5) The direct correlation between geographic isolation and sophisticated mobilization strategies.

The data, accounts and observations of the organizations sampled here serve to illustrate and expand upon these five findings. As a reference, each segment includes a brief overview of a particular organization's mission, vision and general activities. More information is available in Appendix A, including websites and contact information. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in the following sections are from interviews conducted by the authors with community and philanthropic leaders.

A. Despite significant underinvestment, the South’s uniquely innovative, flexible and interconnected institutions have maximized extremely limited resources to achieve significant advocacy and programmatic impacts.

Although the Gulf/Midsouth region is known for its high rainfall numbers, in philanthropic terms, it is a desert. Combined, all nonprofits operating in the four featured states in this report receive only 42 percent of the total philanthropic investment in Pennsylvania and Connecticut, a sample of roughly equal population.⁴¹ But an arid climate shapes hardy residents; organisms evolve to be adept, flexible and efficient with resources. Likewise, the organizations working for social change in the South have endured significant underinvestment by adapting unique strategies to achieve significant and identifiable impact.

Sometimes these wins are successful defenses against regressive policies, like the work the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama helped lead to stop the passing of anti-immigrant legislation. Others include creating new legislation, like Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families’ work to expand pre-K services. Each of these efforts necessitated the kind of efficiency and cooperation not always required in more resource-rich environments.

The stories below illustrate the intricacies of this broader point. Organizations in this region have not had the luxury of working independently to achieve policy change. They have had to create the knowledge base among their constituents, peers and political leaders through trainings and workshops. Many organizations have not had the privilege of focusing solely on advocacy or direct service. The needs of the individuals they served have too strongly correlated with harmful laws that needed to be banned; the immediate needs of those they advocated for have been too severe to ignore.

What these and other material realities have meant for work in the South is a persistent paradox. On the one hand, funders and other observers with narrow conceptions of what “capacity” looks like will often not find a depth of highly specialized, highly resourced organizations able to clearly articulate their impact in the latest social justice lingo. On the other hand, as the findings of this report illustrate, the harsh conditions of the American South have spawned nation-leading institutions capable of creating lasting change. This section will highlight seven examples of advocacy and organizing efforts in the Gulf/Midsouth region that have targeted advocacy and programmatic gains

around specific issues, such as immigration, fair housing, workers rights, human rights, criminal justice reform, education and environmental justice.

1. Criminal Justice Reform: Equal Justice Initiative

One of the premier criminal justice reform organizations in the nation, **Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)**, operates in the state with the highest death sentencing rate: Alabama. In 2008, Alabama handed down more death sentences than Texas – a state with a population almost six times greater. Alabama also is the only state that allows judges to override a jury’s sentence of life without parole in favor of a death sentence. More than a quarter of all inmates currently on death row in the state were condemned to death by judicial override of a life sentence. None of the state’s appellate judges are African American, and of the state’s 42 district attorneys, only one is African American. Although 65 percent of murder victims in the state are African American, 80 percent of death row convictions are from cases with a white victim.

In a state with harsh sentencing laws and consistent racial bias, EJI has been able to use advocacy and litigation to reverse court decisions and work for policy reform. EJI’s efforts have had an effect beyond the borders of Alabama – to the rest of the South and the country as a whole.

From 2003 to 2007, EJI launched the “Kirby Campaign.” Named for an Alabaman man condemned to life without parole for drug possession, the campaign sought to end mandatory sentencing in Alabama that imposed harsh punishments on repeat offenders. Similar to “three strikes” sentencing policies of many states, Alabama’s Habitual Felony Offender Act requires life without parole for anyone who commits a fourth offense – even for non-violent crimes.

With the Kirby Campaign, EJI represented convicts, got their sentences reduced and helped them qualify for parole. EJI also started a re-entry program to help prevent their clients from re-offending. One of the clients that EJI represented in this campaign now runs the re-entry program. Ultimately, EJI helped obtain a ruling from the Alabama Supreme Court reducing sentencing for repeat offenders, who were previously mandated to a life sentence without parole, even for non-violent crimes. EJI Director Bryan Stevenson explained, “Three hundred in Alabama benefitted because of our victory in the state, but about 50,000 in the country are incarcerated without parole under

these types of laws.” This court ruling, which actually will save the state of Alabama hundreds of millions of dollars in incarceration costs, has the potential to be leveraged in other states to obtain similar wins.

Racial discrimination in jury selection remains one of the most unchallenged issues in criminal justice reform in Alabama. Although Congress made race-bias in jury selection illegal in 1875, there has never been a prosecution of this statute. African Americans in Alabama and across the South continue to be excluded from juries by preemptory strikes.⁴² In Dallas County, Ala., for example, District Attorney Ed Greene used 79 percent of his preemptory strikes from 1988 to 2001 to exclude African Americans from jury duty. Under the prosecution of Ed Greene, defendant Earl McGahee was tried, convicted and sentenced to death by an all-white jury – despite the fact that Dallas County is more than 60 percent African American.

Under the representation of Equal Justice Initiative, McGahee was granted a new trial in 2009. EJI has helped overturn 27 death penalty sentences by proving intentional racial bias in jury selection. In addition, EJI spent two years going into various counties in eight Southern states to gather data showing illegal racial bias. EJI spoke with African Americans who had been excluded from jury duties and reviewed hundreds of court records.

As the data emerged, EJI transitioned into a public education phase to draw attention to the project and bias issues through television, radio and print media. *The New York Times* and National Public Radio ran pieces about race discrimination in jury selection and the work of EJI. Although individual sentences have been overturned, 135 years after the statute prohibiting racial bias there still has been no prosecution of district attorneys who exclude jury members by race. However, EJI continues to lay the foundation for this and for other significant legislative and judicial changes that will benefit Alabama, the South and the United States as a whole.

2. Environmental Justice: Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Rich in natural resources and business-friendly politicians, Louisiana has been a fertile ground for all types of industry including oil and gas refineries and chemical plants producing a variety of industrial chemicals. The **Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB)** works with communities that border these refineries and plants, called fenceline communities, to become informed, organized and eventually free from industrial pollution.



EJI fellow Irene Joe meets with Joe Sullivan, who was 13 when he was wrongly accused, convicted and unfairly sentenced to die in prison.

With more than 200 industrial chemical plants and refineries across the state, there are hundreds of incidents, accidents and pollution violations every year. The Louisiana Bucket Brigade has been an important catalyst of the environmental justice conversation in the state. The organization collaborates with both neighbors and workers to document how industry negatively affects chemical facilities and the communities adjacent to them. LABB created the Refinery Efficiency Initiative (REI) to improve public health by reducing the number of refinery accidents. Throughout the state, the oil refineries average ten accidents a week, indicating the need for change within the industry. REI brings together regulatory agencies, neighbors, workers and refineries to create solutions to reduce accidents, which both harm workers and increase pollution.

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade researched the accident reports for five years of accidents (2005-2009) and has created a research program to gather the data in an ongoing fashion. The result of that research is now an online, searchable database called the Refinery Accidents Database. The database has been created with the significant technical assistance of the Environmental Working Group. LABB is in the process of augmenting the database by reviewing Occupational Safety and Health Administration reports to track specific pollutants released during accidents. Founding Director Anne Rolfes said, “These accidents are part of a pattern of leaks, spills and accidents from plants all along the Mississippi River. Companies like Dow and Exxon have the money to hire workers and invest in maintenance and they should do so.” The Refinery Efficiency Initiative has been successful because the database allows partners to track acci-

dents and provide strong data to help decrease accidents. The initiative also makes the commonsense argument that reducing accidents is good for all parties, including the refineries.

Since 2000, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade has worked with an informal network of grassroots groups fighting for pollution-free communities. In 2008, LABB began formalizing this network through the Fenceline Neighbors Network. It is a powerful space that community groups use to exchange ideas and share strategies that have been successful. Groups also receive database-training, media training and training on how to use the bucket to capture air samples. The bucket in the organization's name is a literal reference to an EPA-approved bucket that can take samples of a community's air quality. This simple tool empowers neighbors to hold industry and regulatory agencies accountable to keep everyone safe.

The Environmental Justice Corps is LABB's program to create a new generation of environmental health and justice leaders. The program recruits students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities to work in Louisiana for nine weeks over the summer, providing training in development, community organizing, research and other skills needed to pursue environmental justice as a profession.

Iris Brown Carter is a leader within the community group the Concerned Citizens of Norco. The fight in Norco, a town about 26 miles west of New Orleans and home to a Shell Oil refinery, was a 15-year struggle to reduce pollution in the community, started by a few old ladies picketing with signs. The long-term exposure to a variety of chemicals had taken its toll on many in the Norco community. After losing both her mother and her sister to respiratory diseases within the same year, Iris got involved and led the environmental justice fight in Norco. With the help of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade and some other critical partners, including Xavier University and Greenpeace, Brown Carter and her neighbors successfully pressured Shell Oil to buy out contaminated properties in 2002. Iris, now a board member of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, is proud of achieving this milestone and uses it to illustrate the importance of engaging the media to force the refineries to act in a community's interest.

As Louisiana continues to struggle with quality of life issues, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade continues to provide tools and assistance to grassroots groups to hold industry accountable for the health and safety of all communities adjacent to refineries and chemical plants.

3. Fair Housing: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) has at the core of its mission to ensure that individuals or municipalities in the Greater New Orleans area are not violating the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of a dwelling on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, disability or national origin.

Following Hurricane Katrina, more than 60 percent of all housing structures were damaged or destroyed throughout south Louisiana. In areas like the Lower 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish, more than 88 percent of all structures were either damaged or destroyed.

During those early days after the storms the GNOFHAC was running on a skeleton crew and didn't have a physical location. Yet, it faced rampant claims of housing discrimination and recognized the urgent need for housing in the Greater New Orleans area.

With the region in sheer chaos, GNOFHAC staff were troubled by egregious discriminatory conduct on the part of St. Bernard Parish officials. Even as virtually 100 percent of the housing stock was destroyed in St. Bernard Parish, Parish leaders adopted the "blood relative ordinance," which required single-family homeowners to rent exclusively to their blood relatives. This stipulation was problematic because recent data showed that more than 90 percent of single-family homeowners in the parish are white. Consequently, under the terms of the ordinance, white homeowners were not able to rent to anyone outside of their own race and people of color would face insurmountable barriers in renting single-family homes.

At the time, GNOFHAC Executive Director James Perry said, "When people enter the parish, the sign says 'Welcome to St. Bernard,' but this ordinance makes it clear that if you're not white, you're probably not welcome. Our goal is to make sure that everyone is truly welcome to live in the parish. We have attempted to settle the matter amicably, but the parish has flatly refused requests to reverse the ordinance. We have been left with no choice but to pursue legal action."⁴³

GNOFHAC moved into action and filed suit for a permanent injunction to stop the parish from enforcing the ordinance in October 2006. In November 2006, St. Bernard Parish agreed to suspend enforcement of the ordinance. This would be the beginning of a long fight against discrimination in St. Bernard Parish but a significant victory for equity as the State of Louisiana picked up

the pieces after the storms. In 2008, St. Bernard Parish agreed to enter into a consent decree with GNOFHAC, and paid considerable fees and costs to GNOFHAC attorneys. More importantly, the parish agreed to not violate the Fair Housing Act again. This victory is important because it opened up housing opportunities and sent a message throughout the Gulf Coast that housing discrimination would not be tolerated.

James Perry said, “We hope that the result of this lawsuit sends a strong message to local governments that choose to enact discriminatory zoning ordinances. GNOFHAC is dedicated to achieving the mission of ensuring equal housing opportunities for all members of our community. Governmental efforts to exclude protected class members, intentional or not, will be challenged.”⁴⁴

However, even as GNOFHAC celebrated this win, another fight ensued regarding rental housing in St. Bernard Parish. Provident, a developer out of Texas, was working to build a multifamily housing development in St. Bernard, with time-sensitive Gulf Opportunity Zone tax credits. Initially, the project even had approval from the parish president. As Provident was applying for the proper permits, an editorial ran in the local newspaper, claiming that the development would draw minorities and increase crime in the parish. In response to the editorial, the parish president changed his tune and parish leaders refused to grant building permits, even attempting to pass a moratorium on building multifamily housing in the parish. GNOFHAC and Provident filed motions for contempt under the consent decree, and after a two-year legal battle, the district court judge ordered the parish council to provide the permits. The council refused, forcing the judge to fine the parish and each council member personally for every day that Provident did not have a permit.

Parish officials finally relented, although the victory celebration was cut short by the knowledge that the tax credits needed for the project expired at the end of 2010, not allowing the developer enough time to complete the project. GNOFHAC’s fair housing litigation against St. Bernard Parish continues to this day.

In 2008, GNOFHAC undertook another project to ensure equity in federal policy in the wake of disaster.

GNOFHAC filed a lawsuit against the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) for discriminatory practices in its Road Home program, which administered home rebuilding grants. The lawsuit alleges that the grant calculation formula, proposed by the LRA and approved by HUD, is inherently racially discriminatory in that it relies on the pre-storm values of homes rather than the cost to rebuild in some instances.

“When people enter the parish, the sign says ‘Welcome to St. Bernard,’ but this [blood relative ordinance] makes it clear that if you’re not white, you’re probably not welcome.”

—James Perry, Executive Director, GNOFHAC

Data revealed that African Americans who applied for Road Home grants received \$40,000 less than their white counterparts, even as the cost to rebuild a three-bedroom house is the same regardless of location. Currently, GNOFHAC is working with HUD and the courts to define a solution to compensate homeowners who suffered discrimination. The Road Home has already distributed more than \$2 billion to low-income claimants through Additional Compensation Grants in a partial attempt to resolve the issue.

4. Early Childhood Education: Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families

There are many causes that **Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families (AACF)** champions, but the expansion of Arkansas Better Chance (ABC), the state’s pre-K program, continually remains a top priority for this Little Rock-based public policy group. It also is an issue on which AACF has seen real results: annual funding for ABC has increased by more than \$100 million, reaching thousands of children at or below 200 percent of the poverty level who need and deserve quality care and education.

AACF’s legislative wins in this area are particularly impressive since historically, early childhood education has seen little support from funders. An AACF action item since 2001, pre-K education now has a



School children during a Red Tape Rally for Kids Count. Photo by Tara Manthey, AACF.

higher profile as a result of the organization's three-pronged approach of coalition-building, legislative advocacy and research.

AACF found a way to engage debate over pre-K funding with the landmark decision on *Lake View School District v. Huckabee*, a case in 2001 in which the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the state's school funding formula did not adequately provide for poorer school districts. AACF and its allies sought a tax policy that applied the mandate for expanded funding for pre-K youth as well as K-12 students.

As a first step toward building an alliance, AACF convened a group of educators and experts that became the Invest Early Coalition. Before putting together an action plan, the coalition needed to reach consensus regarding its priorities. "There was a split within the childhood community on whether we should expand access or improve quality. We convened a group of early childhood leaders to get everyone on the same page," said Rich Huddleston, AACF executive director.

Solidifying the Invest Early vision led to the coalition's first legislative victory: the passage of a beer tax in 2003 that made up for \$7 million in tax cuts by the governor and raised \$11 million per year for ABC. Notably, grassroots advocacy was carried out by the newly initiated. "Coalition members came to the capitol – many for the first time – and lobbied. There were days when we had the early childhood community blanketing legislators everywhere they went," said Paul Kelly, AACF's senior policy analyst. "And they never had done that as a group."

AACF next pulled from its research arsenal as well as other existing data on the merits of pre-K funding. An opinion poll AACF had commissioned showed that pre-K

education was the key issue that the public was willing to pay for in the form of higher taxes. Research by Entergy Corporation, a company committed to supporting the cause, showed that funding for pre-K was sound fiscal policy that delivered long-term benefits for all Arkansans. Specifically, a dollar invested in early education quality saves more than nine dollars in costs related to education, welfare and

criminal justice.⁴³ The case was compelling enough to garner an endorsement for pre-K expansion from the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce, the state's largest business advocacy group.

The combination of data and public support sparked debate in the Arkansas legislature about expanding ABC in 2003. No decisions were made during that session, but in 2004, the legislators passed a \$100-million plan. AACF and the Invest Early Coalition then set to work to ensure that this funding was properly distributed. Over the course of three sessions between 2005 and 2007, pressure from AACF and its partners resulted in the allocation of the entire sum of money.

By assembling the right research, initiating new advocates and aligning with power players who have the ear of legislators, like the Chamber of Commerce, AACF helped ensure that the legislature distributed the funds that it had set aside for the state's youth. This story highlights the importance of vigilance to ensure that policy commitments are honored even after the initial victory.

5. Immigrant Rights: Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (¡HICA!) is the only independent organization in the entire state that serves the Latino community. Because so few organizations have begun to address the needs facing Latino immigrants, victory has often meant blocking negative legislation rather than passing laws that proactively help Latinos. However, even facing difficult cultural and political opposition, ¡HICA! has been able to obtain policy wins on the local level for the Latino immigrant community.

Despite lacking a network of like-minded organizations that work specifically with the Latino population, ¡HICA! has managed to collaborate with other advocacy groups to make a legislative impact. In 2007, ¡HICA! joined with Alabama Appleseed and other key immigration rights groups in the state to form the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ).

At that time, legislation threatening negative consequences for immigrants had been forming in the Alabama State House, and a united opposition was essential. Through its advocacy, the ACIJ blocked the Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2008, which would have taken a number of measures to reduce the rights of undocumented immigrants and those in solidarity with them. Such measures included making it illegal for a U.S. citizen to protect or harbor an undocumented immigrant; denying tuition, scholarships and financial aid to undocumented immigrants and expanding the instances in which law enforcement agents, state agencies and employers are required to verify immigration status. ACIJ addressed the state house in public hearings, issued press releases and coordinated a front opposing the legislation that included the Southern Poverty Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union of Alabama, the Alabama Alliance of Latino Health and the Central Alabama Fair Housing System. In 2008, ¡HICA! worked with the ACIJ to block proposed legislation that would require all examinations for driver's licenses to be given in English.

At the local level, ¡HICA! has started to see wins that actively benefit immigrants in Alabama. Owing to the influence of ¡HICA!, ACIJ organized a rally in Birmingham on July 28 – the night before Arizona law SB 1070 was scheduled to go into effect. Arizona's controversial legislation required law enforcement to determine an individual's immigration status if there is reasonable suspicion that he or she is in the country illegally. It thus had broad ramifications for undocumented immigrants.

The law was especially relevant to Birmingham as the nearby city of Irondale had, based on Arizona's legislation, passed a resolution earlier in the month that required police to verify immigration status at traffic stops and criminal investigations. As a direct result of the rally, and at the request of Isabel Rubio, founder and director of ¡HICA!, the mayor of Birmingham issued a proclamation of welcome for immigrants. The proclamation stated that the city of Birmingham would "reject any policies that divide our community." Rubio

said of the proclamation, "This paper has no teeth, but it matters a lot in terms of pushing our community forward." In a climate of hostility towards immigrants, this official warm welcome was a major step in the direction of active change.

¡HICA! also has taken steps to make Alabama's judicial system fairer and more effective for Latinos. Until recently, Jefferson County (where Birmingham is located) only had one Spanish-speaking court advocate. Through working with the courts and with Coordinated Community Response, ¡HICA! successfully pressured the judges to stagger dockets so that more Latino victims are able to use the court advocate.

In addition, ¡HICA! now is notified within 48 hours if a Latino person is brought to court, and is therefore able to ensure the availability of the court advocate. The use of a court advocate is especially critical for female victims of domestic violence, who are significantly more likely to bring their abusers to court if they have access to an advocate. Recently, ¡HICA! has been funded to advocate for a similar system in Shelby County that will also allow Latinos greater access to the sole Spanish-speaking court advocate in that county.

Reflecting on the work of ¡HICA!, Isabel Rubio said, "Sometimes, I think we aren't doing enough, but when I take a more historical perspective, I think, 'It just takes time.'" Despite dealing with limited partners and a hostile legislative environment, ¡HICA! is pioneering gains for Latino immigrants in Alabama that will be built on in years to come.

6. Worker Rights: Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center

Since northwest Arkansas is home to global corporations like Wal-Mart and Tyson Foods, one would assume there are many workers rights groups active in the region. But the **Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (NWAJJC)**, an interfaith, membership-based nonprofit, is the only active player locally – and in the whole state for that matter. Founded in 2002 and headquartered in Springdale, the NWAJJC has worked with its sole limited capacity and lone-wolf status to protect the rights of local workers and tap into the national network of organizing devoted to preserving worker rights, primarily for the immigrant community.

NWAJJC focuses on wage theft, discrimination and workers' compensation – three prevalent issues in a community where employers regularly exploit a majority-Latino labor force in low-wage/high-risk work

environments. Between 2005 and 2009, in coordination with labor attorneys and state agencies like the Department of Labor, NAWAJC helped workers recover \$356,941 in back wages, worker compensation claims and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) settlements. The majority of workers filing claims come from the construction, poultry, service and manufacturing industries.

NWAWJC's activities around wage theft extend beyond individual worker claims. At the municipal level, the organization has made inroads with nearby Fayetteville, drawing support from Mayor Lionel Jordan and city council members in its campaign to pass a wage theft city ordinance. To throw his support behind the campaign, the mayor created a Task Force on Wage Theft and made Fayetteville the first city in the nation to issue a public pronouncement against the practice. The ordinance would have a twofold purpose, making an example of employers who try to get away with wage theft *and* exposing victims of wage theft to available legal options. "The ordinance campaign is also an educational campaign," said NAWAJC campaign coordinator Fernando Garcia. "Wage theft is a crime that's not being enforced, so people don't know where to go."

Over the course of its work, NAWAJC has refined its messaging about worker issues. Along with pointing out the clear injustice of labor violations to society's most vulnerable, the organization has exposed how wage theft and other related crimes hurt communities as a whole. If wage thieves are not prosecuted, NAWAJC explains, they cheat the municipal and state budgets out of wage tax revenue and enjoy a competitive advantage on competitors who follow fair wage practices. Espousing this "big-picture" perspective has laid the groundwork for the fruitful NAWAJC partnerships with the Department of Labor and the EEOC to file and win worker claims.

NWAWJC is a training and leadership development organization as well as an advocacy group. For victims of wage theft, speaking out against employers can be intimidating as many face the threat of being fired or worse. However, the main objective is for workers to expand their voice as their own advocates. In addition to offering moral support, NAWAJC has offered "know your rights" training to more than 1,000 workers between 2006 and 2010. In addition, by design, half of the members of the Mayor's Task Force on Wage Theft are workers – four of them NAWAJC members. As confirmation that NAWAJC is developing advocates,

in 2010 an organization member and a victim of wage theft Ruth Escobedo stepped up to organize the picketing of the restaurant that withheld her wages.

In the midst of its ongoing local activities, NAWAJC remains part of the national movement furthering rights and protections for workers and immigrants. It advocates for passage of the DREAM Act at the state and federal levels, and it maintains a close partnership with the Chicago-based Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ). NAWAJC's Fayetteville wage theft ordinance campaign is part of an IWJ-coordinated campaign of local and state efforts throughout the country.

7. Human Rights: Center for Artistic Revolution

The **Center for Artistic Revolution (CAR)** is an organization that stands in the gaps and advocates on the frontlines for the important and often controversial causes of the LGBTQ community. As the only statewide advocate for LGBTQ individuals, CAR works in a strategic and savvy manner with key organizations and individuals that cut across gender, racial, geographic and political lines. From rural areas to the Capitol, CAR provides a significant voice and resources for opposing discrimination against disenfranchised populations and communities.

CAR was founded in 2003 with the mission of working for fairness and equality for all Arkansans. Social justice values are deeply rooted and intertwined in its organizational core. CAR utilizes education, advocacy, organizing and cultural work as the primary tools to create a progressive movement. This is reflected in diverse leadership and programs, and a passionate approach to incorporating the next generation of advocates and organizers in its social justice work. Persistence and the organization's ability to shift, scale back and regroup in the face of external as well as internal adversity has been a staple of the organization's approach, leading to significant actions and wins. Notably, these actions have worked against the grain of values and politics that often discount and undervalue individuals who have traditionally lacked a voice.

Despite opposition to CAR's political agenda, the group has been able to tap into an influential network of allies including the ACLU, Arkansas Citizens First Congress, Southern Partners Fund, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Stonewall Democrats, Northwest Arkansas Center for Equality, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and the Human Rights

Campaign. The coupling of CAR's local and regional network with these strong affiliates has created a formula for achieving impact, as demonstrated by the organization's legislative and community work.

A good example of CAR's work is its fight against the 2004 state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, civil unions and domestic partnerships. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the effort provided high visibility for CAR and set the stage to create a campaign called "We the People," which was viewed by Arkansans across the state, built a tremendous constituent base and created a new dialogue about the LGBTQ community.

This work set the stage for the organization's next endeavor, which was to work in partnership with the ACLU and other groups in the state to block the statewide anti-adoption initiative in 2007 by mobilizing LGBTQ and straight ally community members across the state and launching a huge campaign of petition and letter-writing to key legislative officials to force a conversation about same-sex adoptions.

CAR also played a role in the hearings that contributed to the demise of SB 959, the bill that would have banned same-sex couples from adoption and foster care. In 2008, the same group that had pushed the legislative adoption ban was able to get an initiative on the November ballot. Despite CAR's best efforts utilizing its All Families Matter campaign along with the advocacy of an ad hoc group called Arkansas Families First, the ballot initiative passed, banning cohabitating couples from adopting or providing foster care. In an ACLU-led challenge, oral arguments began in mid-March 2011 at the Arkansas State Supreme Court.

These actions provided the momentum for the organization to mobilize its constituent base of youth organizers and work in partnership with the Citizens First Congress to push for passage of the federal and state DREAM Act in 2009. In the spirit of collaboration and in keeping with the organizational mission to fight for the fairness of all Arkansans, CAR incorporated advocacy for this immigrant rights act during the 2009 legislative session. At an LGBTQ youth-hosted legislative luncheon at the state Capitol, the issues of LGBTQ equality and the DREAM Act received attention in equal measures.

Although CAR and its allies were unsuccessful in getting the DREAM Act passed, CAR helped create intentional space for youth voices and made a clear statement that crossed over gender and cultural lines in the LGBTQ community. Randi Romo said of CAR's



CAR led march to the capitol calling for the repeal of Act 1, which banned unmarried couples from adopting children. Photo courtesy of CAR.

work, "This was a forward loss for us, we did not win but we did not leave anyone behind. It allowed us to plant seeds so that we can do more work in the future."

The tenacity of CAR's leadership and diverse constituent base has been the equalizer in its strategy to highlight issues that act as a barrier to not only the LGBTQ community, but any community that is negatively affected by institutional, political and community inequities in Arkansas. Romo said, "In our work everyone is included and as a result we come out of it a stronger community."

The Final Word: The profiles of social change groups above briefly illustrate what organizers and advocates working in the Gulf/Midsouth can achieve with limited funding. Although the impacts detailed in this section cover a diverse set of issues, the following general conclusions can be made regarding this region:

- > Organizations often stand alone in their locality or state as the only players working for change in their respective field. Thus, national allies and partners can be important in helping groups build capacity and advance policy change.
- > Many organizations are capable of achieving significant change that benefits underserved communities, even if, by conventional standards, they do not look or talk the part or are "low-capacity."
- > In defining successful impacts, defensive victories against regressive policies are just as important as proactive activities such as the creation of new legislation. Likewise, intermediate gains also are noteworthy, particularly when they set the stage for later "wins."

B. Organizational coalitions necessarily have been an integral part of the Gulf/Midsouth Region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure.

Coalitions have been a linchpin advocacy strategy of many nonprofits and community groups in the Gulf/Midsouth region. These alliances have largely been the product of chronic underinvestment in advocacy and organizing both within and outside of the region, because even as philanthropy's underinvestment has impeded many nonprofits from building some aspects of their organizational capacity, it has also served as an unintended driver for pooling resources, sharing expertise and forming common agendas and campaigns in the form of coalitions. By looking beyond individual goals and objectives, many organizations in the region have amassed collective power, thereby bolstering the region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure.

Jared Raynor, an expert on coalition building at TCC Group, has pointed out that coalitions are not effective by their existence alone.⁴⁶ They must take action through various measures: analyzing issues, organizing and raising public awareness. One feature that distinguishes strong coalitions from the weaker ones is the ability to forge strategic connections between different issues or constituencies, and sometimes both issues and constituencies.

Those points of connection manifest themselves in myriad ways, as this review of the Gulf/Midsouth region shows. There are coalitions working on the state and regional levels, coalitions organized around a single issue or campaign, and in recent years, coalitions formed in the wake of disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the BP Oil Spill.

Some of the driving forces in these coalitions are part of this report's sample. Children's Defense Fund, Southern Echo, and Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County all are members of the Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse; the Family and Youth Counseling Agency and GNOFHAC support the Equity and Inclusion Campaign; FOCAL and ¡HICA! are participants in the ongoing efforts of Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform; in Arkansas, the Citizens First Congress is the coalition network of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel; and in Mississippi, the Low-Income Child Care Initiative and the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities are both Steps Coalition members.

These coalitions and others are an unmistakable and valuable component of the Gulf/Midsouth region's

nonprofit infrastructure. And any assessment of their value to the region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure should not solely consider the successes of individual institutions. Of more importance is the total impact that coalitions have had in mobilizing their citizenry, influencing public policy and impeding repressive local and state systems and policies. This section, based on interviews with coalition leaders, features five distinct examples detailing the anatomy and impact of coalitions in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

1. Achieving Equity in the Mississippi Gulf Coast: The Steps Coalition

In November 2010, low-income residents and housing advocates in the Mississippi Gulf Coast received great news: rather than proceed with a federal lawsuit, HUD agreed to direct at least \$132 million to help low-income disaster victims with unmet housing needs. The allotment was significantly less than the \$570 million in housing funds that the state had diverted for the redevelopment of the Port of Gulfport, a pet project designed long before the 2005 storms. However, as a *New York Times* editorial noted, the fact that the government was finally allocating money to low-income families meant that it was finally "doing right by Katrina survivors."⁴⁷

From a coalition perspective, the victory was the culmination of a long coordinated effort by several groups, including the Mississippi-based **Steps Coalition**. A 48-member collaborative working for a "healthy, just and equitable Mississippi Gulf Coast," the Steps Coalition was not a plaintiff in the lawsuit filed in 2008. (The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and Mississippi Center for Justice filed the case on behalf of the Mississippi State Conference NAACP, the Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center and four individual plaintiffs.) Nonetheless, the advocacy and service groups that made up the Coalition laid pivotal groundwork through the organizing, advocacy and research they had conducted since 2006, the year Steps was created.

As one of Steps's founders and senior attorney in the Katrina Recovery Office of the Mississippi Center for Justice, Reilly Morse played a fundamental role coordinating the state's housing advocacy efforts as well as building the lawsuit. He explained that this case required extensive legwork for which different Steps coalition members were already prepared. "Since we were dealing with the governor and his executive team, you had to have a pretty evolved position," he added.

The data and stories that the legal team collected against HUD had both direct service and advocacy components. These included detailed calculations of how much Gulf Coast residents lost in Katrina, case management approaches to addressing unmet needs and outreach strategies to connect individuals with the programs they need – all issues that had already been talked through in the Steps coalition committees, noted Morse. In addition to the hard objective data, there also were personal testimonies of Katrina survivors pleading for help at the doors of grassroots nonprofits.

The role of the Steps Coalition extends beyond its information-sharing capacity. It also is an umbrella

organization that pushes the agenda of disparate social justice groups, much like a Chamber of Commerce acts on behalf of its business members. A united front like the one Steps has mounted is crucial when it is time to influence a high official. “Now that we have Steps, you don’t have to go the rounds and talk with 13 or 14 people to figure out their common position,” said Morse. “State and federal government see that we are the people to go to.” In the case of the contested disaster relief funds, Steps received a receptive ear from the Mississippi Coast Housing Director and former Biloxi mayor Gerald Blessey, who took the message to Governor Haley Barbour.

Funder Q&A: Gladys Washington, Program Director, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation

One of the foundation’s strategies to support advocacy and organizing is specifically through supporting coalitions. Why?

We don’t believe that any organization standing out there by itself can create change. It is one of our core beliefs that large-scale, lasting change requires really skilled individuals and effective organizations working together with a set of allies so they can accomplish more together than separately. We provide “glue” support for coalitions, because for them to be together takes time, money and lots of other things. Our theory of change is that connected folks can be better at what they do and more effective at moving people out of poverty.

Can you share some specific examples of coalition efforts that the foundation is supporting in the region?

We support several members of a coalition in Arkansas. They are issue-based and very sophisticated, including Arkansas Public Policy Panel and Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. In the Gulf coast, we support

coalitions in Mississippi that are fighting to save community development funds that Haley Barbour used for other purposes. These include the Mississippi Center for Justice, Economic Policy Center, HOPE Community Development Agency, Low-Income Child Care Initiative. In Alabama, we support groups working together on tax and constitution reform, including ACCR, Alabama Arise, Greater Birmingham Ministries, and Alabama Appleseed.

What are some of the characteristics and some of the challenges that are common among the coalitions supported by the foundation?

Coalitions need adaptive leadership and a strong component that gives them real-time information on the policy issue they are struggling with. They need to be diverse, with representation by folks on the ground. And they have to have time for process, especially when you are marrying strictly policy organizations with local leadership.

In the South, coalitions also have to have an analysis on race, class, poverty and change. There is a place-based

lens that overlays all of this, it’s about “Southern-ness” and Southern culture. This is a cultural analysis.

What is very clear in this region, and an interesting phenomenon, is that people are becoming more strategic in the ways they consider who their coalition partners are and how they change their processes to adapt to diverse coalition members. Around the strategy piece, there are a number of coalitions saying that we have to be adaptive in the ways we think about who is in the coalition with us. Some folks can come and go depending on the issue. They realize they cannot only work with people “who think like us,” because that won’t be enough to win.

This is an interesting time. There are enormous fiscal challenges in state budgets and Gulf Coast challenges that will take another ten years to address. The question is: How do you maintain coalitions in times of momentum-building? How do you build momentum and build your base, when it may take years to win? What happens in the meantime, and how do you get those incremental wins that serve as important glue for coalitions?

The collaborative spirit of Steps traces back to the time before Katrina when a small cluster of individuals realized that to grow the movement, they needed to share information with each other and centralize their operations. As tragic a disaster as Katrina was, one saving grace was that it demonstrated how all communities were equally affected. “Katrina hit us all – the Vietnamese community, the Hispanic community, the African American community. Since then, we’re working a lot closer together,” said James Crowell, Steps president and president of the Biloxi Branch of the Mississippi NAACP.

Crowell pointed out that many nonprofit members of the coalition have folded or are in danger of folding due to lack of funding. The financial instability is especially dismaying considering the multiyear advocacy project that Steps and its allies envision for Gulfport. Advocates have already begun the campaign to engage the Gulfport community and develop civic awareness about the redevelopment project, which threatens to have devastating impacts on the area’s environmental and economic welfare.

2. Multi-Issue Political Action: Arkansas Citizens First Congress

There are few coalitions in the region that can so strategically draw connections between issues and constituencies as well as the **Arkansas Citizens First Congress (CFC)**, a 501(c)(4) made up of 50 membership groups and nonprofits that develop political initiatives and run campaigns. A convincing illustration of the CFC’s issue diversity is the fact that the majority of



Arkansas Public Policy Panel provided political process training to college students who promptly used their new skills to lobby Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe (center) to support the DREAM Act. (Photo credit: Kirk Jordan, Office of the Governor)

Arkansas groups in this report sample – handpicked for maximum diversity – also are CFC members, including the Center for Artistic Revolution, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, and the Northwest Arkansas Workers’ Justice Center.

Perhaps a more compelling feature of the 12-year-old CFC is the close support it enjoys from the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP). The CFC and APPP are distinct groups but share ties and a joint strategy founded on community organizing, coalition building and policy development. The Panel has the responsibilities of a typical 501(c)(3) social justice group—organizing, educating and developing campaigns while the CFC serves as the advocacy vehicle that acts on those campaigns, delivering the right messages to Arkansas leaders.

For every legislative session, which include the biannual general session and the budget session held in the interim years, the CFC brings together 50 member groups working across seven issues (agriculture, civil rights, economic justice, education reform, the environment, government and election reform and public health). Issue caucuses are convened to develop strategies, discuss issues and build agendas. These meetings lead up to a statewide convention, attended by as many as 100 representatives, during which delegates present issues for the Congress to endorse. The culmination of these efforts is the creation of “Ten Priorities for a Better Arkansas,” a multi-issue platform that effectively serves as the grassroots agenda for Arkansas progressives. The priorities are revised every other year based on the consensus of coalition members.

In recent years, this consensus-building process has factored into several legislative victories, which the CFC shares with APPP and its 49 coalition members. They include the creation of Arkansas’ first Department of Agriculture, the product of a seven-year CFC campaign to help protect the interests of the state’s 45,000 family farms against corporate interests; increases in pre-K funding (see section on AACF on p. 27); and the formation of a Global Warming Commission, which laid out a plan for reducing energy use in state buildings and promoting renewable energy

Among the many legislative campaigns of CFC, one strategy-related detail is worth lifting up. In telling the story of the campaign for an agriculture department, the CFC often shares two color-coded maps demarcated by congressional districts. One map illustrates the CFC membership for that year, and the other depicts which way Arkansas representatives fell in the close

51-49 vote. A side-by-side comparison of these two maps shows that there is a direct correspondence between the districts in which CFC advocates live and push for legislation and the representatives who voted in favor of the bill. Simply put, the more districts that the CFC reaches, the greater the opportunity for meaningful legislation.

By working through the structure of the all-volunteer convention and lobby corps, the coalition can compensate for the fact that it is only working with one paid staff member, Patty Barker, who is also the organization's only paid lobbyist. "When I first started," she said, "I was jealous of other advocates working at the state capitol who only had one issue to work on." However, despite these challenges, CFC has no interest in dropping its multi-issue approach, especially since it is through that approach that it mounts such a broad base of vocal advocates.

3. Multistate Collaboration: The Equity and Inclusion Campaign

Reaping the advantages of scale and collective power, regional coalitions can be well-oiled engines of advocacy and action. The **Equity and Inclusion Campaign**, which serves the three Gulf Coast states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, is a positive example of what a regional, multi-issue coalition can accomplish in a region strapped for resources. This 60-member coalition, originally an initiative of the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, advocates for structural solutions to the poverty and inequity that were so vividly exposed by the 2005 hurricanes.

The Equity and Inclusion Campaign's infrastructure is composed of five working groups devoted to the "policy planks" of housing, environment and infrastructure, economic development and workers' rights, disaster health care and response and education. Each working group focuses on developing a sturdy advocacy strategy, interfacing with experts in the respective issue areas so that campaign participants build their policy awareness. It is a system designed for specialized knowledge, but National Director Adren Wilson stresses that a common purpose unites the working groups. "We're so clear that if you build and create the right overall narrative, people can see their place in the work," he said. For the region's activists, that common purpose is frustration and outrage over exceptionally high levels of poverty across the three Gulf states in which they live and work.

In addition to its working group framework, another signature trait of the campaign is its commitment to living out the inclusiveness it fights for in the region's economic life. The campaign and the citizens it represents suffered a disaster relief program marred by exclusivity, in which federal and state funding was dictated by who had the right political connections. The campaign has countered with a reverse approach, steeped in inclusive values. "Who's not at the table and who needs to be at the table?" That's a question we constantly reinforce," said Wilson.

Of course, a coalition with a diverse membership has to deal with conflict and tension among its members. "I'll be frank, there are moments of productive struggle," noted Wilson. "That's good for us, because when people can get into a room and struggle with others but struggle with the same values, it's worth it."

Coalition members benefit from the campaign through the capacity they build through coalition activities. Two separate forms of capacity building are provided: policy capacity and organizing capacity. As Wilson explained, policy capacity involves identifying the direct-service solutions that grassroots groups already know and communicating those solutions through a policy framework. Organizing capacity involves identifying the major players and knowing at what point in the political process those players "pull the triggers you want pulled."

This built capacity translates into real action. Since it was founded, the campaign has organized multiple trips to Washington, D.C., where grassroots coalition members have met with the country's leaders to deliver insightful policy recommendations regarding the Gulf's problems concerning housing, education, economic development, health care and the environment. In addition to meetings with legislators and officials, the campaign also successfully appealed for Senate hearings on the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act to amend housing provisions relevant to the National Disaster Relief Framework (NDRF), a guide on how the federal government is organized to handle catastrophe. The campaign's advocacy at the Capitol has entailed what Wilson calls "personal narrative coupled with sound policy analysis."

In 2010, the tables were turned and D.C. came to the Gulf, owing in great part to the campaign's advocacy efforts. In January, the campaign partnered with the Baton Rouge-based Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation to convene an educational session attended by U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Shaun Donovan, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and several other Administration officials. The session elicited input from leaders across the Gulf/South on ways to improve the NDRF to provide fair outcomes in post-disaster situations.

Ten months later, the campaign hosted Secretary Donovan again. This time he took a tour of the Alabama Gulf Coast to visit disaster-stricken communities and met with local advocacy groups like the Bay Area Women's Coalition (BAWC), a campaign partner based in Mobile. There, Donovan made the announcement that HUD will build 37 new homes for families, with plans to build more in the future. After the tour BAWC leader Leevones Dubose gained some national exposure for her group by publishing a *Huffington Post* article celebrating HUD's commitment to fair housing in the Gulf.⁴⁸

Most recently, in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 BP oil spill, the campaign once again turned to its grassroots organizing and the strength of its partnerships with national organizations, which laid the groundwork for several policy briefings and testimony at committee hearings on Capitol Hill. Through these efforts, the campaign was able to inform and advance policy solutions developed by affected citizens from the Gulf Coast region.

4. Juvenile Justice Reform: Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse

Founded in 2003, the **Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse** focuses on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline, a trend wherein students are pushed out of school and into the juvenile justice system as a result of harsh or unfair discipline policies at the district, state and federal levels. The coalition confronts the issue from several angles, including working with research groups to inform policy change, advocating for juvenile justice reform and offering training and resources to communities across the state. The coalition structure has helped Schoolhouse to Jailhouse fulfill its objectives pertaining to all these activities.

On the research front, the diverse 30-member coalition – made up of education, community, civil rights, legal and public policy groups – is a rich data resource for policy analysts. Network members collectively supplied the research for “Missing the Mark: Alternative Schools in the State of Mississippi,” a 2009 report published by the ACLU of Mississippi. The input from students, parents, educators and advocates all informed



Youth at a rally staged by the Mississippi Coalition for the Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse. Photo by MCPSJ.

guidelines for how the state's alternative schools track student progress. "Now we know whether or not kids are groomed to go back to mainstream schools," said Mattie Wilson-Stoddard, the coalition's coordinator.

To further its advocacy around juvenile justice reform, the coalition's committee model ensures representation across the state. The steering committee is divided by state congressional district, and coalition member groups are asked to nominate committee leaders who serve their constituency's interests. Further, youth members are represented in every segment of the coalition's work, serving on the steering committee and making up the youth advisory committee, through which they develop their own agenda complete with an implementation plan. This infrastructure has ensured that not some but *all* of Mississippi's legislators hear the coalition's petitions and grievances, and it has contributed to coalition successes like the passing of the Juvenile Justice Reform Acts of 2006 and 2007, which laid groundwork for (a) a reduction in the number of offenses that could send a young person to an alternative school and (b) mandatory training for public defenders attorneys representing youth in court.

Like other coalitions examined in this report, the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Coalition trains a very broad segment of the population. For Mississippi families who can't afford legal representation and who have to deal with a system that fails to include due process, training about student hearing procedures can be a tremendous source of power. "We want people to advocate for themselves, so the goal of the coalition is to open up avenues for people in local communities who don't have a lot of access to training and assistance," said Wilson-Stoddard.

The coalition's legal groups and policy groups have trained 100 individuals from 25 counties in venues across the state. After receiving their training, these advocates go back to the communities to fight their battles in the courtroom and in the alternative schools.

Wilson-Stoddard stressed that the coalition's wealth of knowledge does not solely reside with the legal and policy experts who comprise the coalition's anchor groups. "We have community groups who have mastered Organizing 101 and they are a training resource too," she said. Because members train each other in their fields of expertise, the coalition becomes a resource in itself and does not need to look to national groups for training. Furthermore, the legal and policy groups do not have special authority because they are the anchor groups. The decision-making power resides with the coalition's

community groups and the various committees that steer the ultimate direction of the coalition.

5. Transforming State Government: Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform

As a campaign, the crusade to reform Alabama's constitution differs from many others. Rather than calling for distinct pieces of legislation, the 34-member **Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform (ACCR)** seeks fundamental changes in the state governmental framework as it is laid out in Alabama's 1901 constitution. However, in strategy, ACCR shares a lot in common with other coalitions reviewed here, and it has helped fortify the state's advocacy structure by assembling a broad network of educated and mobilized citizens.

An outdated document infused with racist language, Alabama's constitution also places an extraordinary level of power in the hands of the state capital in Montgomery. Consequently, city and county governments are severely limited in establishing their own tax codes and making other fundamental decisions that directly affect their constituents. Despite contributing to regressive taxes, inequitable education and backwards economic development policies, the constitution has proven difficult to amend.

For ACCR, the leading state group working on this issue, securing the majority legislative vote to create a ballot initiative on constitutional reform requires building an alliance of constituents in every Alabama county. Thus, casting as wide a net as possible is the goal of ACCR's two entities (ACCR Foundation is its educational arm and ACCR Inc. is its advocacy arm). The latest initiative to further this effort is Bring It Back Home, a newly launched ACCRF Foundation initiative designed to educate citizens about topics related to the Constitution.

According to Keith Young, an ACCR statewide county organizer, the demand for civic engagement in his state is high. "Alabamans are hungry to learn more about the fundamental laws governing them," he wrote in an ACCR newsletter. He also said that the casual conversations he has struck up with local citizens are creating "pockets of grassroots citizens for change."

To implement the Bring It Back Home campaign, ACCR's full-time county organizers are leading small teams of volunteers, who are working within their respective counties to build awareness about home rule and constitutional reform in general. At minimum, the team consists of three individuals, and each has a specific role. A county captain serves as a lead organ-

izer, someone else handles fundraising and the third team member is responsible for the educational component. Bring It Back Home is designed to serve all of the state's 67 counties, and as of this writing, ACCR has recruited 52 of 67 county captains, with plans to enlist leaders from the remaining counties in 2011. ACCR also is preparing a training manual for these teams that lays out their organizing structure and guidelines for educating citizens about why constitutional reform is necessary and how legislators can implement it.

ACCR's work is a good illustration of just how inter-related issues are in the world of advocacy. ACCR's membership represents groups working for issues like economic justice, racial equality, civic engagement and fair government. In recruiting more allies, ACCR Foundation President Audrey L. Salgado explained that connecting the dots is one of the easier tasks that ACCR takes on. "If I'm able to learn about an organization and their work," she said, "I can explain how the [state] constitution affects them."

ACCR also is focused on how it can contribute to the field of advocacy as a coalition. Salgado pointed out that in 2009, Alabama had 21,000 nonprofits, which employ 126,000 people and generate \$12.4 billion in revenue. "We definitely need to work together so we don't waste resources," said Salgado. As an effective coalition, ACCR not only is maximizing the resources of the nonprofit sector, but also is fortifying the infrastructure of Alabama's progressive movement.

The Final Word: Largely born from necessity in a low-funding environment, organizational coalitions continually lay pivotal groundwork in the Gulf/Midsouth region's advocacy/organizing field. Through coalition work, the region has benefited from:

- > A diversity of collaborative frameworks, including those organized around geography (i.e. state, multi-state) and sociopolitical issue(s) or spawned by catalytic events (e.g., 2005 hurricanes, BP Oil Spill).
- > Strategic connections between different issues or constituencies, and in some cases issues *and* constituencies.
- > Far-reaching organizing activities that reach broad segments of the population and form the foundation for subsequent advocacy campaigns and legal battles.
- > The accumulation of collective power, which like-minded groups have used to pressure or negotiate with leaders at all levels of government.

- > Enhancing power and capacity by combining non-partisan 501(c)(3) advocacy and civic engagement with 501(c)(4) political engagement.
-

C. Workshops and trainings are a linchpin strategy for constituency engagement and leadership development in the Gulf/Midsouth region.

The history of injustice from oppression of specific communities, peoples or places has always included impeding citizens' access to specific information. Learning where and how to access information can itself be an act of empowerment. This observation was consistently raised by the participants in this study. Organizations working on behalf of marginalized populations in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi articulated how important a component public education and training was to their advocacy and organizing work.

Some of the most hot-button and politically charged issues in these states are centered on key points of information that are often debated and disputed. For instance, success for the coalition of Alabama organizations mobilizing citizens around constitutional reform rests on the extent to which the populace grasps the implications of *not* reforming the constitution. Likewise, organizations with programs designed to solicit participation in the 2010 Census identified the need to inform the citizenry about how the census count affected their everyday lives and communities.

Similarly, the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns and community organizing efforts rest largely on the cadre of informed, equipped and prepared community leaders to help advance a cause and lead the respective constituencies. Providing venues to invest in and educate community leaders is both a short- and long-term strategy. The Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County has worked with the local high school to conduct workshops with students on civic participation. The high school uses actual voting machines to conduct its Homecoming elections as a practicum for teaching students how the voting machines work. This small exercise is ensuring that all high school graduates in Tunica County both know the importance of voting, as well as how to do so with accuracy.

For organizations, workshops and trainings provide information not only about policy issues, but also the processes that shape policy. Workshops cited for their effectiveness included those covering topics such as

how the legislative process works, how school funding is allocated in public schools and how to petition local or state government.

Workshops and trainings as key organizing and advocacy strategies are in no way unique to the Gulf/Midsouth region, or more generally the American South. However, in the research conducted for this publication, trainings and workshops were lifted up consistently and described in detail as key strategic tools. This section will describe how organizations utilized trainings and workshops as part of impactful community organizing and advocacy efforts and as venues to invest in community leaders.

1. Turning Apathy into Activism: Arkansas Public Policy Panel

Located in southeast Arkansas, Gould is a small town of 1,200 mostly African American residents. The Gould Citizens Advisory Council (GCAC), a dedicated civic group assisted and trained by the **Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP)**, promotes civic engagement with a simple call to action: "It's not about pointing fingers; this is about fixing problems. We are *all* responsible. Please join us to bring our city back."

GCAC's message speaks of the council's strong understanding and commitment toward participatory democracy, but there was a time when Gould residents weren't so politically active. The assistance and non-partisan training that the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP) provided were catalysts for an activist awakening that pulled Gould out of bankruptcy and made the town a model of community transformation.

Founded in 1963, APPP often uses the Gould story to explain how training is integral to the group's approach to organizing. It also is a lesson in the factors that can destroy or revive a community. Several years ago, Gould was bankrupt and plagued with a crumbling water infrastructure and dysfunctional city leadership literally at war with itself (a fistfight even broke out between the officials who were then mayor and police chief). Frequent election irregularities were proof of what can happen when a community fails to hold its leadership accountable.

A statewide organization, APPP shows how the political process works by helping groups organize, create infrastructure, set goals and develop action plans to reach those goals. APPP's organizing director, Bernadette Devone, noted that when she first connected with the town's residents, she observed a town suf-

Civic Engagement and Leadership Development: By the Numbers

The breadth and depth of constituent involvement is captured numerically here. Collectively, 19 organizations reported engaging tens of thousands of individuals during the five-year period between 2005 and 2009.

22,755	Individuals joined community organizations
1,758	Members became core leaders
4,026	Leadership trainings held
33,577	Constituents participated in leadership training
98,036	Residents communicated with policymakers
46,582	People attended public actions

A number of organizations incorporated nonpartisan voter engagement as well, increasing voting participation by youth, Vietnamese Americans and other immigrants, African Americans, LGBTQ residents, rural communities and others that often are underrepresented at the polls. Four of the organizations shared their outcomes, presented here collectively:

4,010	Voters registered
12,960	Direct Get-Out-the-Vote contacts (face to face or phone conversation)
17,950	Indirect GOTV contacts (voice and text messages, door hangers)
945	Volunteers recruited to register or mobilize voters
740	Volunteers further engaged as members or leaders in the organization

fering from serious apathy. "These were everyday citizens," said Devone. "They had never participated in the process." GCAC's chairperson, Curtis Mangrum, agreed. "We were sitting on the sidelines watching our city council members behave unprofessionally and fail to meet our city's needs."

APPP's strategy in Gould was to provide residents with the expertise to get off the sideline and onto the field. Specifically, organizing training familiarized the initiates with the big-picture components of the legislative process as well as the smaller but crucial details of effective meeting facilitation. For Devone, the training

and planning process had to unfold at a measured pace, in spite of the fact that Gould was in crisis. GCAC's training and orientation could not be rushed for two reasons: learning all the fundamentals of organizing took time, and GCAC and APPP had to develop trust and overcome suspicions that APPP was just another group looking to parachute into Gould to "solve its problems."

With APPP as an advisor and ongoing training organization, GCAC began by working toward "small wins" through a community development plan that included neighborhood watches and a beautification project. Through these efforts, residents developed essential skills and stepped into leadership roles, including Curtis Mangrum, now co-chair of APPP's board of directors. After three years of small-scale organizing and following APPP's lead on how to do a proper analysis of local issues and political dynamics, GCAC accelerated its efforts, taking independent steps to pull Gould from the brink. GCAC developed a city council electoral strategy in 2008 that unseated five incumbents, replacing them with GCAC-endorsed officials who brought the city's water system into compliance with its federal loan and negotiated successfully with creditors to bring Gould out of bankruptcy.

Effective candidate forums were the cornerstone of GCAC's success in forcing a change in leadership. APPP showed GCAC members how to efficiently run a non-

partisan candidate forum that encourages residents to ask tough questions and gauge candidate qualifications. "When we began to hold the meetings and began to explain the process, they said, 'Oh, that's why our council is not functioning because they don't have that civic participation piece, they don't have the accountability piece.' And they don't have folks saying, 'No, you can't do this in our communities,'" explained Devone.

Gould residents first mobilized on a state level issue when the state government sought to consolidate Gould High with neighboring Dumas - a common occurrence for many Arkansas schools in recent years. GCAC lost the battle, but after working with the APPP, they saw new opportunities to preserve their now-vacant school building. Over time, they pressed State Representative David Rainey to draft three separate bills: one bill that enabled Arkansas school districts to give an empty school back to a community for purposes it dictates (Gould High became a community center); another that mandated districts with closing schools to create a historical preservation plan so that that school archives are protected from loss or neglect; and another that required school districts with contested school board races to open up a polling site in every ward of that district. All three drafted bills passed in the state legislature.

Together, the bills were an example of how community organizers can attain wins even in the midst of losses, and how a small community like Gould can

Funder Q&A: Interview with Cynthia Renfro, Director of Programs and Evaluation, Marguerite Casey Foundation

Describe Marguerite Casey Foundation's grantmaking approach in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

We really look for "anchor" organizations, groups that have a policy analysis but one grounded in community and not skating at the policy level. It doesn't mean we're not open to new organizations, but our focus is on building the capacity that already exists.

The reason we fund anchor organizations is because we know that solutions facing low-income communities are found in low-income communities. Anchor organizations bring that street

credibility. You can buy a policy win, but it won't stick without a base. We want to build out what exists and works, not recreate the wheel.

What are some of the characteristics that these organizations have in common in their approach to and implementation of advocacy and organizing efforts?

One thing that is distinct for the region is that groups there do a lot with very little resources. They don't pay themselves well, and they know how to stretch a dollar. Another distinct feature is that organizations often have programs that

include service delivery, which confuses some national funders. The point that we've been able to capture and understand well is that the depth of poverty is so great and their constituents' access to other types of resources is so limited that without offering some kind of services to bring folks in, organizations have difficulty implementing programs that can get to policy changes.

Can you give an example of how a local organization with modest to moderate resources effectively mobilized its constituents or mounted a successful advocacy strategy?

mobilize to change state law. That degree of impact inspired Janice Tillman, a Gould resident, to sign up with GCAC. “For me it was about the bill, when we were able to get the archives. I said, ‘Okay.’ I can now tell people about organizing because I believe in it.” Tillman now works at APPP as an organizer.

APPP’s vision is to replicate the success in Gould in the rest of the state. And according to plan, other towns throughout southern Arkansas and the Arkansas Delta have approached the group, asking for training so they can do an analysis of their community and develop a responsive, strategic plan that helps fulfill their goals. APPP’s staff currently are at work in seven other communities. They do not have the capacity to meet many of the organizing and advocacy needs of Arkansas’ communities themselves – but that is not their approach. What APPP does offer are training tools for new activists to effect change through their own efforts.

2. Exposing the Value of Self-Advocacy: Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama

As an organization that supports community-based child care providers, the **Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL)** facilitates child care training, technical assistance and empowerment strategies designed to grow leaders in their neighborhoods and communities and enhance participants as teachers in classrooms and

as administrators of their small businesses. During more than 35 years of community-based organizing, the director and staff of FOCAL noticed that attendants were much more engaged in workshops on educational and entrepreneurial skills than they were in those on how to organize for social and political change.

“Our main question was, ‘What is it that causes people to seek guidance on the development of children, but deters them from learning skills on how to contact their policymakers?’” asked Sophia Bracy Harris, FOCAL’s executive director. Musing over this question led FOCAL to understand and explore how the history of poverty, race and oppression in Alabama left people of color and low-income communities with internal blocks against organizing and advocating on their own behalf. Harris said, “It was really something about characteristics people had developed out of a system of oppression: the residue left people thinking, ‘I’ve got to find someone else to do it for me – all I need to do is be good and someone will do it.’”

FOCAL realized that addressing these internal barriers in child care providers would have to take the form of programmatic coaching – just as structured as the education the organization provides in business development, tax structures and meeting state standards for child care facilities. These realizations led FOCAL to develop and publish a strategy called *More Is Caught Than Taught™*. It was designed to help community

The most obvious one for me would be Southern Echo. When we started funding them, their operating budget was around \$600,000, and now it’s over \$1 million. Over 10 years, their work and their leadership on dismantling the public education achievement gap has resulted in an increase of state and federal dollars spent per pupil from \$284 in the mid-1990s to almost \$5,000. That’s over \$2 billion. And they did it really incrementally.

The Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama is very effective but hard for some funders to understand because their constituency is

child care centers. They seem like a direct advocacy organization but actually they do a lot of community organizing. You have to go visit them and hang out to understand them and their analysis. They have developed a training for agencies around delivering child care that deals with racism. FOCAL also got several bills passed that have improved child care in the state. They have significant reach and do significant networking. They have 25-30 organizations looking at child care issues, a constituency that didn’t exist before in the state of Alabama.

How can philanthropic organizations effectively support grassroots organizing and advocacy campaigns?

They can spend time listening and learning. There are progressive funders who fund advocacy and organizing in the south, and they know the turf well, so funders can check with those folks to learn. Don’t come in unless you plan to stay for the long haul. Multi-year general support grants are the only way groups can sustain efforts to make change.



Children from Ms. Elizabeth Sankey's Southlawn Child Care Center in Montgomery pose for a photo after participating in a press conference at the Alabama State House. Their T-shirts show the name of FOCAL's report on the effect of unlicensed child care on the Alabama child care system: *Coming Undone*. Photo courtesy of FOCAL.

members understand and process internalized oppression, and envision and create change. FOCAL later adapted the principles and tools of *More Is Caught Than Taught™* for community organizing and development: *Communities Act To Create Hope™* or *CATCH™*.

Now, every session that FOCAL conducts – whether it is specifically in organizing or one in educational or business tools – starts with an exercise designed to confront the roots of indoctrination that keep people from speaking out on their own behalf. In this process participants are asked to describe their visions of what they would like to see happen in their communities. Second, they are asked to list the barriers that impede the realization of their visions. Each barrier is addressed by the group and categorized as monetary (stemming from lack of resources) or spiritual (intrinsic). Harris explained that this is a key moment in the exercise, “When we realize that some [barriers] can be addressed without money, that’s when we get to the heart of it.”

As they think through their visions, participants begin to take ownership of what changes they would like to bring about in their communities. FOCAL then asks what supports they can offer to participants to help them realize their visions. FOCAL also uses this exercise to engage child care providers around reforming the state constitution of Alabama, a document originally designed by prominent white landowners to centralize power in the state legislature. “We point out how the constitution is a barrier to their visions. This is a much more effective tool than just preaching at people,” explained Harris.

At the end of the day, children and families are key access points for engaging child care providers.

FOCAL mobilizes child care providers to organize and advocate for themselves and their communities on the local, state and national levels. A participant from North Alabama who completed one of the programs thanked FOCAL for the positive impact that the experience had on her child care center and community. “Now we have tools that we have learned from FOCAL on how to advocate on our own behalf,” she said.

“That is the most powerful thing that has ever happened to us here.”

3. Nurturing Visions for Better Communities: Children's Defense Fund

The Southern Regional Office of the **Children's Defense Fund (CDF)**, housed in Jackson, Miss., does dozens of trainings every year on a wide variety of topics. Although the organization advocates for minority children, low-income children and children with disabilities, CDF's trainings go beyond professional development for youth and early childhood workers. Human rights trainings teach participants to look at issues in their communities through a human rights lens. Trainings in benefits outreach provide information about health insurance, income tax credits and child tax credits. CDF also teaches policy and organizing skills and gives trainings on a variety of topical issues that empower participants to advocate for change. Oleta Fitzgerald, the director of the Southern Regional Office, says that all CDF trainings are designed to help participants “generally understand the world they live in and the policies that impact it.”

One training program in particular – called “New Visions Videography” – illustrates how CDF's training strategy doubles as an advocacy strategy. The program is run in conjunction with the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative (SRBWI), an organization working in the rural counties of Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia to mentor women, organize and advocate for communities of color and support economic development. The Southern Regional Office of CDF adminis-

ters and leads SRBWI's work in Mississippi – but also is involved in the initiative in all three states.

More selective than SRBWI's regular youth training track, New Visions accepts five young women from each of the three target states. These 15 women develop and use their videography skills to take oral histories as part of the SRBWI's cultural heritage work. They also are integrated into other SRBWI work to learn general skills in advocacy and organizing. The videography program equips the young women with a visual approach to advocacy and civic engagement, but it also provides them with a marketable skill and a potential source of income.

This videography program is an example of how CDF's trainings – even trainings that are not centered on contacting policymakers, designing legislation or registering voters – tie back into to CDF's advocacy work. The New Visions Videographers have recently been recruited by CDF to use the skills they have gained in trainings to build a case for better funding for the Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP).

MAEP has not been fully funded by the state of Mississippi since 2008. Even in that year, funding was only secured because of additional dollars the state received for Katrina relief. Since 2008, CDF has worked to fight cuts to the program. Current proposed cuts would bring the program \$230 million below what is needed for full funding. In addition to working with the NAACP Education Network and organizing young people to call their legislators, CDF is now enlisting the young women videographers to take footage of their own schools – to give policymakers and all Mississippians visual evidence of the need for greater school funding.

By incorporating videography into the campaign for MAEP, CDF and the SRBWI invite young women to give Mississippians what they themselves received in New Visions training: the opportunity to “generally understand the world that they live in and the policies that impact it.” Those who view school footage will be able to see issues with Mississippi's education system and how increased funding for MAEP has the potential to address these issues.

CDF trainings go full circle, giving participants the ability to see and change problems in society, but also equipping participants to help others see and change problems in society. CDF's impact is multiplied by training and empowering others to do advocacy.

4. Educating and Mobilizing Mississippians on the Census and Redistricting: Southern Echo

“Southern Echo's goal is to empower local communities through effective community organizing work,” reflected Southern Echo Executive Director Leroy Johnson. “Sometimes – quite often – effective community organizing work is *bringing a room of folks together* and giving them access to information about what's going on around them, and providing skills to address these things that are going on.”

In all of its work, Southern Echo's goal is to “empower local communities” to build “broad-based organizations necessary to hold political, economic, educational and environmental systems accountable to the needs and interests of the African American community.” Throughout the organization's history, it has deemed building community capacity and knowledge as a necessary component of community organizing. It has never been sufficient to solely mobilize communities or advocate for better policies, rather Echo has been committed to engaging its constituencies to better understand the processes and policies that affect their daily lives. In other words, Southern Echo has been “bringing rooms of folks together” since 1989.

“Sometimes – quite often – effective community organizing work is bringing a room of folks together and giving them access to information about what's going on around them, and providing skills to address these things that are going on.”

—Leroy Johnson, Executive Director, Southern Echo

As such, Johnson further contended, “We believe voter engagement and education has to be more than just something that happens every two years. Our democratic voice cannot be relegated to one election!” Voter education and civic engagement are integrated into each training that Southern Echo conducts.



Aliyah Mason, a ninth grader from Dekalb County Schools in Georgia, creates a poster for a back-to-school event for Rankin County Schools. Photo courtesy of Southern Echo.

(See sidebar on page 39 for a breakdown of civic and voter engagement numbers among our sample.)

For over 20 years, Southern Echo has engaged rooms – from small rooms to town halls – of local people to discuss, engage and share information about prevalent community issues. Perhaps, most notably, Echo trains people in every corner of Mississippi about redistricting and reapportionment. It is vital that local communities understand the implications of redistricting in order for the citizenry to advocate for the kind of transparency and accountability that ensures the legitimacy of elected governing bodies.

The organization sees that work as imperative. Southern Echo contends that their work is much more than merely encouraging participation in the census. Rather, Echo in the years preceding and following the census engages citizens and trains them on:

- > Laws and procedures that control the census data collection process.
- > Strategies for grassroots groups to fight for a fair and complete census count.
- > Understanding the impact of census data on redistricting plans and its consequences for electing leaders.
- > Laws and regulations and mapping tools and skills used to create fair redistricting plans.

- > Organizing strategies for grassroots communities to affect the formation and adoption of redistricting plans.

The hundreds of Mississippians who have been a part of one or more of Echo's trainings on redistricting become a part of the civic infrastructure to work with, challenge and hold accountable elected officials during the redistricting process. In August and September of 2010, scores of participants in Southern Echo's redistricting trainings participated in the Mississippi State Legislative Reapportionment Committee's series of public hearings to provide public input concerning adoption of guidelines to redistrict the Congressional, Legislative and Judicial offices in 2011.

Similarly, Echo trains grassroots, rural and urban communities on an array of issues and competency areas that are vital parts of building systems of accountability, transparency and advancing democracy. Training topics include understanding state budgets, community organizing and how to draw down federal resources. Through Southern Echo's issue forums, constituents learn about different policy areas like housing, health policy and education reform.

Training is a "principal means" through which Southern Echo has engaged and empowered local communities in Mississippi and throughout the Southern region.

The Final Word: Without a training component, organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth region would be severely handicapped in engaging their constituents. The research for this report turned up key findings about the role that training and workshops play for organizers and advocates:

- > The central topics of effective training programs are how the legislative process works, how funding decisions are made, and how to petition local or state government.
 - > Constituents need information not just about policy issues but also the basic processes of government.
 - > Beyond their practical purposes, trainings demonstrate how public policy and government actions affect everyday life. Thus, they have the potential to wake community members from apathy to embrace activism and reverse notions that politicians can, and must, be trusted with solving society's problems.
 - > Increasing the public awareness of constituents is integral to building power and achieving significant change in communities.
-

D. The nonprofit infrastructure in the region consists of many organizations that, due to factors of capacity, geography and the diverse needs of their constituency, play the dual function of offering direct services while engaging their clients as a base for advocacy.

There have been numerous frameworks and definitions for “community organizing” as well as “advocacy” offered by scholars, researchers, advocates and non-profit professionals. A number of community leaders in the American South contend that many of the most widely accepted definitions of these terms do not account for regional and cultural variations.

Most definitions of “community organizing” share a theme of *collective action*, or *collective power*. Similarly, most definitions describe “advocacy” as an act or process that includes arguing or influencing in favor of some type of change.

The researchers for this report found that many of the organizations in the Gulf/Midsouth region that self-identify as community organizing or advocacy institutions also see themselves as direct service providers for segments of their constituencies. This dual role is noteworthy, particularly because several of the sample organizations articulated that some funders that support “advocacy” and “organizing” have challenged the validity of institutions that attempted to be both organizers or advocates as well as direct service providers.

Melvin Young, executive director of the Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, spoke extensively about the necessity of providing support to meet the needs of the same individuals the organization also attempts to organize and empower through advocacy campaigns. Young contended, “We can’t organize people who are hungry and illiterate and unaware of their civil rights. Services *has* to be a part of our work.”

Other leaders reported that they founded their organizations so they could provide a specific set of services to a particular population. Later in their history, they grew into the role of advocate or organizer because no one else was advocating for their respective constituencies. They surmised that their resiliency as organizations is grounded in the reality that their constituencies, having received vital services, are loyal and accessible, and thus easily mobilized and engaged.

There are numerous examples of institutions that act as community organizer or advocate as well as direct service provider. Furthermore, some of these

organizations demonstrate how their role as service provider is one of the contributing factors to their capacity as effective organizers or advocates. This section will feature several organizations that play this dual role, and will demonstrate the anatomy of these models of organizing and advocacy.

1. Enhancing Child Care, Improving Systems: Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative

Working in a state where child care centers that serve low-income families struggle to survive, **Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI)** provides a mix of advocacy and direct services for its constituents to give them the best shot at succeeding both as viable businesses and enriching environments for children.

The state of Mississippi provides vouchers for child care for qualifying low-income families through its Child Care Certificate Program (CCCP). However, the reimbursement rate of vouchers is particularly low – the state only pays 58 percent of the average market value of child care fees. In addition, Department of Human Services subcontractors often terminate vouchers for families that have not met administrative requirements – causing child care centers to lose those reimbursements altogether. MLICCI supports child care centers that accept CCCP vouchers to stay in business while still providing a quality learning environment for low-income children.

The organization has developed a robust advocacy strategy to push for reforms of CCCP. Through the use of litigation and the services of pro-bono lawyers, MLICCI has obtained a fairer appeals process for parents who are denied child care vouchers. The organization also has educated lawmakers on recommendations for improving the program and has launched a statewide communications campaign to develop and promote consensus around critical areas of reform of the program.

At the same time, MLICCI also prioritizes the need to “improve the quality of child care for all Mississippi’s low-income children” as a key component of its mission. The organization provides an array of direct services to ensure that struggling providers are able to offer valuable care to low-income families. MLICCI offers centers curriculum enhancement kits focused on cultural diversity, gender equality and parent engagement. The kits feature puppets, books and other materials designed specially to enhance the early childhood learning environment.

MLICCI also holds regional training events, which are followed up with on-site trainings at individual child care centers, where the organization also provides technical assistance. These supports allow child care centers to prepare for the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale – the tools that Mississippi uses to assess the quality of child care centers. In 2008, MLICCI began providing financial assistance in the form of \$3,500 per center to help the center improve their quality rating system.

Rather than detracting from organizing work, the direct services that MLICCI offers actually build the knowledge and relationships that allow the organization to effectively advocate for change in the child care sector. The Step Up Demonstration Project, an endeavor that MLICCI has recently launched, exemplifies how direct services and advocacy unite together to help the organization do its best work.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has funded the project to address a quality rating system (QRS) that Mississippi recently established to determine reimbursement rates for child care centers participating in CCCP. Centers with high scores under QRS are eligible for a higher reimbursement rate than centers with low scores. The reimbursement rates, however, are still so low that child care centers cannot afford the expense of bolstering their facilities and curriculum to obtain a high score.

MLICCI now is working with 20 child care centers across the state to help them make their entry level requirements for QRS. Each center develops a strategic plan and then is provided with technical and financial assistance to ensure that it meets state standards. While offering this support, MLICCI also is documenting the cost involved in each of the 20 centers achieving entry requirements. This data will be presented with detailed recommendations and a study of how other states have used quality rating systems without penalizing centers that serve low-income families.

The services that MLICCI provides to centers through Step Up allow it to gather the information it needs to make a case to state policymakers for adequate funding and policy revision in QRS. MLICCI lays the groundwork to make QRS work for centers serving low-income families who cannot afford to finance the costs of QRS by paying higher fees. The dual strategies of service and advocacy support each other in one cohesive project that meets the needs of child care centers.

2. Rolling Together Services and Mobilization: Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities

The Jackson-based **Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities (MSCCD)** has been an organizing and advocacy group since its founding in 1989. However, there are few examples in the history of this statewide coalition in which it has not integrated direct services into its activities. Typically, the coalition's services for people with disabilities and their families are a stepping stone to advocacy work, or in some cases, MSCCD operates simultaneously as advocate and service provider.

A review of MSCCD's offerings shows that no service or program detracts from the mission of expanding opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for Mississippians with disabilities and their families. "The direct services that we give are not services like helping someone pay their lighting bill," said MSCCD Executive Director Mary Troupe. "They are basically helping people get benefits, or doing hearings with Medicaid on behalf of people when their services have been cut."

MSCCD contends that safety net services ought to be easily accessible through the government programs Medicare and Medicaid, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, but when they are not, the organization's services work to ensure their availability. The services and individual advocacy inform the policy agenda and also serve as a recruiting tool for civic engagement by affected constituents.

Troupe explained the seamless tie between advocacy and organizing and services at MSCCD: "We work with parents on the steps that they need to take – not only to assist us but to assist themselves. Then when we have meetings and actions, they are there to help support us. It all rolls in together."

MSCCD's wins have all affected the everyday realities of people with disabilities, such as how they receive medical care, how they travel and where they live. In 2005, state residents with disabilities faced the threat of Medicaid cuts. MSCCD mobilized program beneficiaries to carry out actions, stage hearings at the state house and senate, and eventually win the allegiance of the state attorney general, who pled the case against the cuts in federal court. The cuts were not enacted, and as a result 65,000 Mississippians qualifying for Medicaid still received assistance.

The coalition also has engaged in a six-year-long legal fight to improve bus transportation for people with disabilities in Jackson. Actions and meetings with offi-

cials did not force the city's hand, so the MSCCD tried a new strategy. Working in tandem with the Mississippi Council for the Blind as co-plaintiffs, the organization sued the city in 2008 for failing to provide adequate and accessible buses. The lawsuit resulted in a legal agreement that required that the city pay up to \$139,000 over the span of three years to finance an Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator, employed to implement disability compliance.⁴⁹ This kind of victory is more achievable with the support of the community's individuals with disabilities, some of whom are the same advocates who have received direct services from MSCCD.

3. Youth Development Leads to Youth Action: Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans

The Vietnamese American community in New Orleans East is one of the largest populations in the Gulf Coast region and organizing their voices has proven to be a powerful tool for both the youth and the adults in the region. Following Hurricane Katrina, the Vietnamese American community there received considerable damage but was able to quickly rebuild, drawing on the strength and resilience of the close-knit community, who moved into action immediately.

The early success of the **Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA-NO)**, located in New Orleans East, stemmed from creating a physical space that allowed Vietnamese youth a safe place to gather, receive support and talk about what was happening in their community. By being responsive to the needs of the community following Hurricane Katrina, the youth center organically became a fertile organizing space for Vietnamese youth to come together and fight inequities in their community. At the same time, it became a place for youth to receive services and become leaders.

Vietnamese residents were one of the first communities to resettle in the city following the hurricane. When city officials of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, a group of leaders tasked with rebuilding New Orleans, started planning New Orleans East as green space, the community was taken aback. Worse yet, the Mayor decided to locate an Enhanced Construction and Debris dumpsite right in the Vietnamese community, unaware that many in the Vietnamese community had already returned.

VAYLA-NO jumped into action because the dumpsite would slow down the process of residents return-

ing to the community, had no democratic process, had no proper restrictions on what could be put into the dump, and there was no lining in place to protect the groundwater of one of the largest wetlands in the country, the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.

VAYLA-NO Executive Director Minh Nguyen said, "Educate, educate, educate was our key strategy and we built allies across all lines, did research and a power analysis. We also worked with partners like Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network in addition to holding a community forum. We followed that forum with a mock direct action and began to teach the youth organizing strategy."

The youth played a critical role in shutting down the dumpsite in their community because they bridged the language gap and were present at meetings while adults worked to rebuild local homes and businesses.

VAYLA-NO started doing research and inviting elected officials to their general meetings about what was happening to their community. Media training offered additional important skills that gave the youth leaders of VAYLA-NO visibility and enabled community voices to be heard.

Along with helping to shut down the landfill in its neighborhood, VAYLA-NO's effective advocacy also built a stable cadre of young leaders that can effectively advocate for their community and provide valuable assistance to peers.

VAYLA-NO's education Participatory Action Research project (PAR) is an example of youth-led work through which the organization develops its advocacy efforts and



A Vayla-NO leader standing outside the organization's Youth Community Center. Photo by Jamaica Gilmer.

youth leaders. The PAR project has empowered local youth and other community members to conduct research to accurately assess and capture the poor conditions of local schools and to document prevailing inequities within New Orleans' School Choice model. Stemming from their own lived experiences of educational injustice, the youth conducted numerous interviews and created a survey for both students and parents. The most ambitious student-led education equity research project since Hurricane Katrina, VAYLA-NO's youth organizers will utilize their data and findings to

generate policy recommendations for individual schools, the Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board. Through the research initiative, VAYLA-NO's PAR work is another strategy to amplify the voice and power of Vietnamese American youth and develop them as future prospects in public service at the local, regional and national levels.

VAYLA-NO has continued to support the issues important to their community. The BP Oil Spill affected more than 80 percent of local Vietnamese families who are fishers. In addition to providing counseling and

Funder Q&A: Flozell Daniels, President, Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation

LDRF is approximately six years old and was founded to lead a philanthropic response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Louisiana. Can you talk about the foundation's history?

Six days after Katrina, the governor pulled together a group of leaders from the philanthropic sector to form LDRF. She was given wise counsel that you need to have folks you trust create something and then step away from it. That is largely what happened. They designed a disaster recovery framework from a philanthropic perspective. We wanted to respond to a catastrophic situation but also wanted to found it on the principles of social justice, equity, access and inclusion as cornerstone values.

How has the nonprofit landscape changed over the last five years? How have advocacy and organizing efforts changed?

We still lean on professional organizers. A lot of it is still the PICOs, the ACORNs and the Jeremiah groups. You still need the experienced organizers in any region to do the work. People talk about needing new blood. We need both. These groups are still powerful and capable

when given resources to be effective.

The emergent grassroots organizing has happened out of necessity. In a city like Detroit, where the decline has been gradual, you don't see the level of urgency that we had post-Katrina. People who never would have spoken with their neighbors or taken action were organizing themselves and had no choice but to lead. So you see an ethos of organizing (even though some people don't call it that) almost out of necessity that continues to be robust.

How did you balance supporting people's emergency needs in a post-disaster context with building a stronger advocacy and organizing infrastructure?

That question got answered in the work. We did employ professional organizers and we had the luxury to have some resources – \$15 million – to immediately go out and build capacity. We had a staff person who was an organizer and ran the community organizing fund. That person walked the streets and identified community leaders to develop those neighborhood leaders and connect them to planning efforts where decisions were being made.

Philanthropy has the flexibility and resources to invest in people, which doesn't take a whole lot of money. Resources go very far when investing in individuals. I can't overstate the power of giving ordinary folks with fire in their bellies the opportunity to build local power.

In some cases, are the organizations that you have supported to provide direct services and meet emergency needs the same as those who receive support for advocacy and organizing? How do organizations play these dual roles?

Yes, but there are some challenges to the way that works. We are a region that is relatively philanthropically poor. Most of our nonprofits are heavily dependent on government funding, and with that dependence comes hesitation to challenge decision-makers who are often the same government leaders. For example, in Louisiana we have seen government challenge nonprofits to say they are ineffective, just feeding at the trough, can't get the work done. Others start to believe it even though it isn't true. From a funding and policy perspective, we have to figure out how we defend the nonprofit sector and still hold to high standards.

Note: In summer 2011, LDRF will be renamed Foundation for Louisiana.

working closely on language access issues regarding the spill, VAYLA-NO moved into action and worked closely with then Congressman Anh “Joseph” Cao to hold a community briefing on Capitol Hill. More than 70 youth from the Gulf coast and over 100 young people were recruited to attend. As a result, VAYLA-NO created access to federal secretaries and ways to address linguistic and cultural competencies issues for Vietnamese and other ethnic families affected by the oil spill.

All of these impacts can be traced back to VAYLA-NO’s initial incarnation as a hub for local youth. The organization has become a vital organizing and advocacy force while maintaining its role as an invaluable provider of services for the Vietnamese American community in New Orleans.

4. Creating Broad Networks to Advance Change: Family Youth and Counseling Agency

The **Family and Youth Counseling Agency (FYCA)** has been providing social services to families throughout Southwest Louisiana for more than 40 years. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita severely damaged Southwest Louisiana, FYCA moved quickly to address the needs in their community by establishing the Children & Families Action Network (CFAN). CFAN’s purpose is to empower nonprofit boards, professional staff and volunteers with the knowledge, skills and tools to engage in effective and meaningful civic engagement to bring about equitable public policy on behalf of children and families.

Building on FYCA’s longstanding reputation and credibility in the region, CFAN has continuously worked to educate and empower social service providers and other nonprofits to develop a network so they can make advocacy a part of their mission-based work and build up their capacity to engage in advocacy at all levels.

With buy-in from each organization’s leadership, establishment of an advisory council, a strong partnership with philanthropy and a commitment from the mayor and business leaders, CFAN was able to zero in on its target goals, which included equitable and inclusive recovery, engagement of young leaders in the democratic process and better access to mental and health care.

Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the health disparities in Southwest Louisiana and throughout the state grew at alarming rates. CFAN and its members established a partnership between the State Office of Mental Health, NAMI Southwest, State Office of Addictive Disorders, Office of Public Health and Family and Youth

Counseling Agency to bring mental health services to new mothers affected by trauma and depression. With funding from the Bristol Myer Squibb Foundation for two years and through FYCA’s coordination, CFAN promoted better access to care, which provided women the services they needed while documenting best practices and creating a “Mental Health Service Map.” The Mental Health Service Map works to eliminate obstacles that create barriers for individuals and families seeking quality health care by increasing access.

In an effort to focus more specifically on children’s issues following the storms, CFAN collaborated with the mayor’s office and the City of Lake Charles to improve the overall health and wellbeing of children by creating a children’s cabinet of community leaders working to generate positive systemic change for children and families in Southwest Louisiana.

In 2009, CFAN helped convene more than 50 key business and corporate leaders to establish Kids Can of Southwest Louisiana. Kids Can engages business, industry, government, education and human service sectors in issues affecting children and families in crisis; helps set a regional vision to support the healthy development of children and families; and provides general support to advocacy leaders in the field. Kids Can is now incorporated as a nonprofit organization and continues to elevate issues affecting children and their families to the forefront of corporate and business agendas.

Through CFAN, FYCA has used their services to children and families in crisis to build effective programs that meet the needs of the members in addition to advancing a strong advocacy agenda that continues to result in real change at the local and state level.



Members of FYCA’s Leadership Center for Youth traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with the Louisiana’s Congressional delegation. Leadership Center for Youth members are local high school students who meet monthly to explore careers and learn about civic engagement. (Photo credit: Family and Youth Counseling Agency)

5. From Individual Case Work to Policy Reform: Center for Fair Housing

The **Center for Fair Housing** is the only fair housing advocate in the southern part of the state of Alabama. Its small staff of six based in Mobile work to protect the fair housing rights for eight counties in the state. Teresa Bettis, the center's executive director, said, "We are a civil rights organization; a watchdog group to ensure fair housing practices, but we are also housing counselors and case workers."

The center plays a unique role in its quest to promote "more healthy and inclusive communities" by working in the areas of fair and adequate housing, public accommodations, tenants rights and lending practices. It provides housing counseling for potential homebuyers and for property owners in danger of foreclosure. Over a span of three years, the center has worked with 60 clients to prevent property foreclosure.

The center works with an array of clients to address their claims of housing discrimination. In a recent instance, it had a single mother as a client who had been charged higher rent because she had children. The result was a favorable ruling, entitling the client to a monetary settlement. There are many other clients, some whose cases ended favorably, while many others did not. Results are a long time coming, as fair housing cases often span two to three years before they see a ruling.

The Center for Fair Housing is the primary agency through which these complaints and discrimination cases get filed. The array of clients and cases that the Center engages informs its advocacy for state and local policies that promote fair and adequate housing. In addition to responding to housing discrimination claims and providing trainings for the city government, property owners and renters, the center is the leading local advocate and watchdog organization for fair housing in eight southern Alabama counties.

When the City of Mobile engaged in a process to overhaul its zoning laws, the center underwent a review process of its own to hold the city accountable and to ensure compliance with laws designed to guarantee equitable access to fair housing. The Center for Fair Housing is forming a citywide commission to support and ensure that the City of Mobile implements a plan to remediate its current fair housing infractions.

Similarly, the center is forming a statewide commission to engage state policymakers about relevant fair housing policies. "Policy reform is key, but it has to come faster," said Bettis. "In 2007, Alabama Arise successfully

advocated for the passing of a landlord/tenant law in Alabama, which is great! But, it took 13 years to get that law passed. We have to engage with state lawmakers to educate them about the implications of the lack of strong policies to prevent housing discrimination." The Center for Fair Housing's advocacy is not just for the clients that it serves, but for anyone in South Alabama who could potentially be denied equal access to fair and adequate housing. "Fair housing is a civil right!" Bettis asserted.

The Final Word: The above profiles exemplify the dual function of advocacy and service that organizations often perform out of necessity. They dispel a popular notion that playing dual roles detracts from a group's capacity or overall impact. In fact, their versatility often bolsters their organizing and advocacy efforts. Four findings emerged from NCRP's investigation of this issue:

- > In the nonprofit sector in this region, there are many positive examples of how service provision is integrated with advocacy and organizing and how these efforts contribute to the overall effectiveness of a nonprofit's work.
 - > Groups that self-identify as service providers *and* community organizers or advocates face funding obstacles from grantmakers that require an "either/or" approach.
 - > In light of the significant needs of underserved individuals and families in the region, many organizations believe that an exclusive advocacy/organizing focus simply is not an option.
 - > By offering vital services, an organization gains the trust of constituents, and by virtue of that loyalty, its base is subsequently more easily engaged and mobilized.
-

E. Geographic isolation and historic underinvestment in the region's rural areas have necessitated sophisticated community mobilization strategies.

Community mobilization has historically played a critical role in many social movements in the Southern states, including the four states documented here. Rising above the obstacles of seclusion and underinvestment, change agents in these four states have relied on the foundational values and practices of community mobilization to address systemic problems affecting disenfranchised and poor populations.

However, it is important to note that community organizing and advocacy efforts in rural communities

often are distinct in their form and implementation. One of the core elements of all community mobilization efforts is the connection to a highly motivated and nimble base of individuals and organizations with the passion to take action and draw attention to specific issues so that they become priorities for community, state and regional stakeholders.

In rural communities, where factors of geography and limited infrastructure can pose various obstacles, including smaller constituent numbers, sluggish action agendas or a deficit of elite leadership in positions of power, the connection to a central base of constituents and issues is critical to creating enough traction and energy to seed long-lasting change. Through focusing on change strategies that are built on the principles of resiliency, inclusiveness and seeding, organizations have reframed the measurements by which political and community wins are defined. They have created a new conversation that acknowledges that indicators of success are categorized by small incremental steps that create permanent footprints in deconstructing longstanding community and political systems.

This approach has been critical as these organizations work to build bridges with untraditional allies and sectors while reaching across regional and national lines to garner support, resources and training opportunities to build movement. As a result, this collaborative strategy has demanded an adaptive approach, as community groups and nonprofits constantly need to reposition themselves as they implement resource-intensive strategies that address gate-keeping by affluent individuals, institutions and businesses in the community or region and provide economic cover for those individuals working to make change in their communities.

By celebrating their strength of connection to people and place, while acknowledging their challenges, organizations have been able to navigate the unique characteristics of rural communities and create innovative and regionally appropriate strategies that have begun to move the needle on key issues.

The research for this project has uncovered a portfolio of best models in this area of advocacy and

organizing. This section features four organizations and their respective models for rural community change.

1. Overcoming Isolation through Creative Partnerships: Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County

Tunica County is a small county with a population of approximately 10,500 people, located in the north-west corner of Mississippi. And although Tunica is closer to Memphis, Tenn., than any county in Mississippi, **Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County (CCBTC)** has developed a reputation and built relationships all over the state, and in regions throughout the country.

The small rural county of Tunica faces numerous challenges, similar to many communities (rural and urban) throughout the country. Thirty-three percent of the population lives at or below the poverty line, the

By celebrating their strength of connection to people and place, while acknowledging their challenges, organizations have been able to navigate the unique characteristics of rural communities and create innovative and regionally appropriate strategies that have begun to move the needle on key issues.

economic downturn has affected local industries and employment opportunities and the high school dropout rate is greater than 25 percent.

Since 1995, Concerned Citizens has been an active advocate working to support and empower low-income and disadvantaged persons in Tunica's communities. Through grassroots organizing, coalition-building and leadership development, the organization fights for reforming the education system to provide more equitable access to quality education; equips local youth to know their rights when coming into contact with a criminal justice system with a history of racial profiling and unequal sentencing; trains youth and adults about HIV & AIDS prevention, testing and care; and mobilizes community members to engage civically through voter participation, redistricting and reapportionment and opposing local and state policies

that marginalize low-income and people of color.

CCBTC's community organizing and advocacy work has been multi-issue and dynamic, and always grounded in the realities of being located in a small, rural, underresourced community in the Mississippi Delta, primarily populated by low and moderate income African Americans. Part of the power of CCBTC's work is that it does not equate the reality of being a rural community as a deficit in its capacity to effectively organize residents and change local and state policies. However, Concerned Citizens has been intentional in some specific ways in its programming and partnerships to develop a strategic approach to effectively advance equity in a small rural community.

CCBTC has developed strong statewide partnerships with coalitions such as the Mississippi NAACP, ACLU of Mississippi, Prevention of the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Coalition, Southern Echo and Mississippi Delta Catalyst Roundtable. Concerned Citizens' active participation in these coalitions that work throughout the state has strengthened its capacity to organize and advocate for equitable policies locally. ACLU of Mississippi has worked closely in supporting and training Concerned Citizens to implement the "Know Your Rights" trainings for youth when they come into contact with the criminal justice system. Southern Echo and the MS NAACP have provided consistent support to Concerned Citizens in developing capacities to understand state budgets, engage state lawmakers and influence local redistricting by legislators.

Similarly, CCBTC's Tunica Teens in Action members have traveled to communities throughout Mississippi supporting, training and building alliances with youth organizing efforts and campaigns. "Seems like half of what we do sometimes is organizing bus trips to take members to Jackson to the Capitol, or other parts of the Delta, or the Gulf Coast for coalition meetings, actions and legislative hearings or trainings," commented Ashley McCay, an organizer and Youth Director for Concerned Citizens. "But, it's important – vital – that we connect with, learn from and provide support to our partners throughout the state," she said. These state partnerships are an integral component to how Concerned Citizens overcomes its geographic isolation.

Another notable characteristic of CCBTC's strategic approach to empowering its constituents and members is how they engage in unique and nontraditional partnerships. Concerned Citizens Executive Director Melvin Young reflected, "Small towns are ... well, small. Sometimes your partners on one initiative, are

the very same folks who you're in opposition with on another." Mr. Young again cited as an example, the "Know Your Rights" trainings, "Ironically, our lead local partner with the Know Your Rights trainings has been the Tunica Sheriff's office. We've had some real battles over the years with the local criminal justice system, but in this effort, they really support us in making sure young people understand their rights when engaged by law enforcement."

Concerned Citizens is involved in a long list of partnerships and coalitions with a diverse set of organizations in Tunica County. Often, it partners with organizations that it also is organizing against. Friend and enemy designations often are blurry. "In a small town and rural community, it's not necessarily a good strategy to draw a hard line of opposition with other organizations. Our commitment is to a better Tunica County; sometimes that means learning to work with unlikely partners," said Young.

The rules of organizing and advocacy aren't necessarily different in rural communities. Community change and reform efforts in rural and urban areas, in the Gulf/Midsouth as well as regions throughout the country, have partnerships and coalitions as a hallmark. However, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County exemplifies that local realities and culture often are distinct in a rural context, affecting how organizations partner, the effort and resources it takes to collaborate with and learn from communities outside ones own, and the necessity of local partnerships to achieve policy change and an engaged citizenry.

2. Organizing Local Institutions to Support Economic Empowerment: Southern Mutual Help Association

The **Southern Mutual Help Association (SMHA)** has been working in rural communities throughout south Louisiana for more than 41 years. For much of its history, SMHA has taken part in the political activity typical of community organizers, but its unique economic development program has become a signature component. At the core of the organization's work is the belief that good organizing starts with listening followed by empowerment.

SMHA started many years ago by working with poor communities to create peer lending groups or self-help associations. Oftentimes in rural communities people have to work with what is available. For rural communities, leveraging relationships to create change at the local level is a powerful strate-

gy. To make the self-help associations work, SMHA needed a partner with resources. SMHA went to a local bank and gave the bank \$25,000 and asked that it lend the money out to poor, rural residents at an interest rate of 1 percent.

Iberia Bank agreed and was open to thinking outside of the box. The bank president's only question was, what would serve as collateral for the loans he would be making? SMHA explained that the self-help association would meet weekly to determine who would get loans. The person who borrowed would be the first line of collateral and then the community would hold a fish fry to raise \$1,200 to put into a CD to provide further collateral. The third line of collateral, naturally, was SMHA's \$25,000 initial investment.

The community in partnership with SMHA organized themselves to ensure that none of the loans defaulted. Executive Director Lorna Bourg said, "If someone got sick or lost their job, they would hold a fish-fry or dinner of some type to raise the money needed to make sure that the bank loans were paid." SMHA would share these stories with Iberia Bank so that they would understand how people and communities worked together for everyone's benefit.

Iberia Bank was moved by the experience; it came back to the table and put up \$50,000. The community invited Iberia Bank's leadership out to see what was happening in the community and to see the new homes and fixed roofs. Iberia Bank leadership was blown away by the community's dedication, community spirit and determination. By successfully organizing bank leaders to see the value of lending in poor rural communities, SMHA now had Iberia Bank's attention.

Iberia Bank grew its commitment and put \$100,000 at 1 percent on the table. Now there were four self-help associations, and they all paid off their loans without a default over a 10-year period.

After this successful experience working and empowering rural communities, SMHA applied to become a community development financial institution (CDFI). SMHA was awarded the credentials and launched Southern Mutual Financial Services in 2000. After a long and fruitful relationship with Iberia Bank, SMHA asked the bank for \$200,000 to kick off its CDFI. This amount would be matched with grant funds from the federal CDFI Fund. In addition, SMHA asked Iberia for a \$10 million investment to buy SMHA's loans into poor communities at par, without recourse, using SMHA's loan policies. The bank agreed to the terms.

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, SMHA went



A work crew constructs a house that the Southern Mutual Help Association helped finance. Photo courtesy of SMHA.

back to Iberia Bank and asked it to buy \$100 million in loans in addition to providing \$250,000 in grant dollars for human development programs. Iberia Bank once again granted the requests, pledging \$25,000 annually to support work in the community for 10 years.

Bourg concluded, "The economic development extrapolation of this work is hundreds of millions of dollars that poor, rural communities of mostly women, through their dedication and determination, taught the bank how to lend and be useful within rural communities."

3. Moving Policy for Asset Development: Greene-Sumter Enterprise Community

Located among some of the most rural and undeserved counties in the Black Belt region of Alabama, **Greene-Sumter Enterprise Community (GSEC)** has positioned itself as an influential powerhouse in the movement to support the creation and retention of wealth opportunities for disenfranchised rural communities.

Birthered out of an initiative developed under the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in 1994, GSEC's mission is to reduce poverty by creating jobs, expanding educational opportunities, building wealth and growing small businesses that enhance quality of life. A commitment to serving the small and often economically isolated counties of Sumter, Greene, Choctaw and Pickens has solidified GSEC's reputation as an organization that is bold in its actions to address the ever-increasing wealth gap in the communities that it serves.

Through a focused agenda that utilizes advocacy and education as a conduit for change, GSEC is strategically readying rural communities and stakeholders to embrace alternative strategies that will improve the

quality of life and economic prosperity of the region. Its initiative, which is grounded in expanding the participation and use of Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) by targeted families, has been a staple of its approach to enhancing the quality of life of families. By opening an IDA, individuals can start their own businesses, attend post-secondary education or buy a home. Supplemental programs and creative partnerships help expand GSEC's impact and move its asset-based agenda. They include financial instruction, volunteer income tax assistance, scholarships, youth and transportation programs, community tax incentives and infrastructure development projects.

Although a small organization, GSEC's ability to navigate the political landscape of the region has optimally positioned it for partnerships with key umbrella organizations like the Alabama Asset Building Coalition, the Alabama Housing Finance Authority, Alabama Association of Community Development Corporations, Black Belt Action Commission and Alabama Arise. These partnerships have served as a key accelerator in its legislative work and laid the foundation for potential legislative success in the future. A great example is its success in attempting to revise public assistance policies that limit the amount of assets individuals may obtain through IDA programs when they are receiving public assistance. In addition, GSEC has helped reform fair

housing legislation to ensure equity and diversity in housing options for low-wealth residents, and it has campaigned for the passing of a 1 percent sales tax to build a new school so that the region's next generation can compete in the global economy.

Stella Anderson said of GSEC, "Impact comes in all packages. You don't have to always look to larger organizations to do this work. Smaller and local organizations that know the community and understand their needs can have greater impact in moving change."

GSEC is savvy and recognizes that working with umbrella partners that can provide cover and access to a highly mobilized base is critical to moving an economic agenda in such a geographically challenged region. This approach is consistent with the organization's values, which are grounded in coalition-building and an approach that accurately reflects the needs of the community.

4. Creating Diverse Networks to Support Rural Schools: Rural Community Alliance

Backed by a highly networked constituent base that is structured in a way to stand in the gaps and support the improvement and retention of schools in low-wealth rural communities, **Rural Community Alliance (RCA)** has worked across rural Arkansas since 2003 with the goal of

Funder Q&A: Felecia Jones, Executive Director, Black Belt Community Foundation

Talk a little about the demographics and history of the Black Belt of Alabama. How did the Black Belt Community Foundation come to be and what is its approach to grantmaking?

This region we serve includes 12 counties in the Black Belt. It encompasses about 200,000 people, of which 65 percent are African American, 34 percent white and 1 percent other. These are mostly Latino and Asian, and we are seeing a growth over the last 5 years, as they are diversifying our community. The region is still somewhat segregated in some areas, specifically education. The majority of

public schools are attended by 99 percent African American students. And private schools are 99.9 percent white students.

We have the history of civil rights movement in the region, including the Selma to Montgomery march. Our office in Selma is not far from the Edmund Pettus Bridge where Bloody Sunday took place, and it serves as a constant reminder.⁵⁰

The foundation was created because we needed to do something to make our community better. Our vision was to be of the community, by the community and for the community, to bring community into all aspects of the work and decision-making. We've just reached \$1 million

in assets, which may seem small compared to other community foundations, but it's a big accomplishment for us.

Our business model is different than other community foundations. We accept that our model has to be run differently. It requires a lot of travel. "Rural development philanthropy" can't just be done from the office. We are out in the community on a regular basis. That requires larger travel budgets than others.

We have designated community associates, who are community volunteers. We run a grassroots leadership development program to strengthen the capacity of those individuals. They are

helping rural schools and communities survive and thrive. (In 2009, RCA settled on its current name, but the organization's first incarnation was as a grassroots movement called Save Our Schools, which then became Advocates for Community and Rural Education.)

In rural Arkansas, where the population is approximately 1.2 million and on average only 12.2 percent of individuals obtain a college degree, RCA has played a critical equalizing role by actively organizing and advocating to address some of the most critical educational challenges affecting low-wealth rural communities. Through coalition-building efforts, grassroots organizing, capacity building, community bridging and leadership development, the organization has played a pivotal role in fighting school annexation, diversifying local power and political bases, supporting innovative community revitalization strategies, training constituents and generating intentional community dialogue.

RCA's approach, built on an analysis that understands the correlation between education attainment and economic viability within a rural context, has made the organization uniquely qualified to lead some of the most significant and critical action agendas throughout the state. Renee Carr, RCA's executive director, offered this description of the organization's work: "Our willingness to listen to community, prac-

tice the art of patience and build a diverse network has been a staple in our approach to support local voices, focus on projects and not personal differences and use strategic planning as tools to support our work." A notable campaign was RCA's work in 2003 and 2004 to mitigate the negative impact of a school consolidation bill, which was passed in response to a 2002 Lake View lawsuit ruling that Arkansas had to improve its schools. RCA's use of push cards, e-mails, and engagement of an already mobilized base enabled the organization to come to the aid of 240 communities by preserving their local schools.

"If the schools go, the jobs go. And if the people go, the towns die. It is a ripple effect that is devastating for our rural communities," said Dorothy Singleton, RCA's lead organizer. The momentum RCA generated in its successful defenses against school consolidation helped drive similar campaigns, such as the organization's efforts to preserve funding for isolated schools and rural services for communities with populations less than 1,000 residents. RCA also supported legislation that forced the state Department of Education to inform schools districts of their "fiscally distressed" standing at an earlier stage, which means schools are better prepared to deal with the threat of losing funding and ultimately having to close their doors.

RCA's grassroots and community-focused approach

our best spokespersons for the foundation. We have at least 10 in each county, and we equip them to lead.

When the foundation was in early planning stages, we initially chose 11 counties and did meetings in each county and talked about their assets. People were so grateful as this was the first time there had been a meeting to talk about assets, rather than problems in their community. Each county gave a resounding "yes" that they wanted to work together. It wasn't just usual suspects. It included ordinary people who just wanted to improve their community.

What is unique about supporting nonprofits in rural communities? What have you learned about advocacy and organizing efforts in rural communities?

Long-term change is very, very difficult. It requires commitment, passion and persistence. What has helped us has been working with the associates. They are our organizing arm, a network that can get information out to people.

It's ongoing work. Associates serve on all the board committees. They help us do site visits for grants, help us fundraise, you name it. I eventually see

them as a pool of future board members. Associates assume leadership in their county. They want more regular contact. So this year we will try to meet with each one quarterly.

We are raising up this group. The training we gave them helps them feel very prepared. If you bring folks to the table and don't prepare them, you set them up for failure. We help them understand good governance; they are learning with us. Their voice is heard in all foundation decision-making, and advocating for the foundation has helped them realize the power they have.

has served as the foundation for their legislative success. RCA has grown valuable partnerships with such organizations as Southern Echo, Southern Partners Fund, The Rural Schools and Community Trust, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation's Equal Voice for America's Families, the Schott Foundation's national Opportunity to Learn Campaign and other organizations pursuing a change agenda for rural undeserved communities.

By cultivating a multifaceted approach that incorporates coalition building at the local, regional and national levels while addressing the unique needs of its communities, RCA has distinguished itself as an organization that is innovative about moving change in the face of adversity and geography.

The Final Word: Organizations based in and serving this region's rural communities overcome the significant obstacles of geographic isolation and underinvestment by mounting sophisticated community mobilization strategies. These strategies include the following elements:

- > A highly motivated and nimble base of individuals and organizations that is ready to base definitions of advocacy success on local context and circumstances.
 - > Strong connections to people and place that are founded on intimate knowledge of local needs, resources, opportunities and barriers.
 - > Policy engagement to support asset development, using seed investments and wealth-creation models that are inclusive, promote interdependence and foster community resiliency.
 - > Collaborations that reach across state, regional and national lines, and in local contexts, remain open to partnerships that blur hard designations of "friend" or "enemy."
 - > A flexibility among community groups and nonprofits to adjust themselves as necessary to sustain funding from individuals, institutions and businesses.
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VII. Recommendations for Grantmakers

An integral piece of the research behind this report was the input a number of funders offered on supporting the advocacy and organization sector in the Gulf/Midsouth. The conversations NCRP had with regional leaders greatly informed its analysis of effective grantmaking in this region. One common view held by the group was that investing in the advocacy and organizing infrastructure is a good strategy for local and regional foundations as well as national funders.

The following suggestions for funders apply the wisdom of funders as well as nonprofit leaders. They focus on the issues of building infrastructure, attuning investments to local conditions, addressing power imbalances through support of minority leadership and recognizing the organizing potential of a strong base or constituency.

A. Work toward building the region's advocacy and organizing infrastructure.

Funders who participated in this research project consistently provided analysis of the advocacy and organizing infrastructure in the Gulf/Midsouth region, and nearly every respondent made reference to the needs of that infrastructure. Some words used to describe the advocacy and organizing infrastructure were “fractured,” “fragile,” “underinvested in” and “stunted.”

Respondents posed a myriad of theories about the history and implications of the sector's capacity needs, and several asserted that in spite of the infrastructure gaps there are many leaders with the capacity to “do the work effectively.” However, the lack of infrastructure and philanthropic investment makes their jobs harder.

These insights, coupled with the contextual realities described by several research sample groups, inform a

recommendation to funders to invest in strengthening the infrastructure of the advocacy and organizing sector in the Gulf/Midsouth. The following is a list of four sub-recommendations for how local, regional and national funders can achieve this objective:

1. Provide more multiyear and general operating grants

NCRP's *Criteria for Philanthropy at its Best* encourages grantmakers to provide at least 50 percent of their grant dollars for general support and 50 percent as multiyear grants. These grants allow organizations to build and grow.

A 2006 grant that the Marguerite Casey Foundation awarded to the Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (¡HICA!) demonstrates the impact a multi-year, general operating grant can achieve. This three-year grant, designated “for general support of education and advocacy toward leadership development and greater civic capacity for Latino immigrant families in Alabama,” was a flexible investment that enabled ¡HICA! to ramp up its organizational infrastructure and organizing and advocacy capacity. Now, ¡HICA! is the only nonprofit organization that advocates specifically in support of the Hispanic community in the state of Alabama.

¡HICA! Executive Director Isabel Rubio noted, “Marguerite Casey's initial investment in us was crucial because it gave us the space to really learn and grow our own capacity to effectively advocate for our constituents. It was flexible and not constricting. It allowed us to hire staff, connect with organizing groups in other communities and connect with local organizing groups as colleagues and partners.” Multi-year and general operating support grants are key to building the infrastructure of the advocacy and organizing sector in the region.

A Snapshot of Foundation Support for Advocacy and Organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth

The 20 groups in the research sample were asked to report the sources of funding for their policy and civic engagement activities. The list below underscores the lack of indigenous philanthropic support for this work. Compared with a similar list compiled for the Northwest region, this survey reflects a much smaller pool of funders at the local, regional and even national level. The good news is that 48 percent of the groups' foundation funding was in the form of general support or core support. However, only 16 percent was multi-year funding. In addition to foundation grants, the organizations were resourceful in finding other revenue sources, including from nonprofit intermediaries, local banks, religious institutions, the public sector, individual donors, local fundraising, member dues and even gaming profits.

NATIONAL FUNDERS

Abelard Foundation - East
 The Annie E. Casey Foundation
 ASC Foundation (suspended grant-making)
 Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
 Belvedere Fund of the Rockefeller Family Fund
 Ben and Jerry's Foundation
 Bernard van Leer Foundation (international, based in The Hague)
 Birth to Five Police Alliance
 Catholic Campaign for Human Development
 Charles Stuart Mott Foundation
 Colin Higgins Foundation (suspended grantmaking)
 The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
 Edward W. Hazen Foundation
 Environmental Support Center
 Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Fund
 The F. B. Heron Foundation
 Ford Foundation
 French American Charitable Trust
 Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing
 Funding Exchange
 Great American Insurance Group
 The Hearst Foundations
 Hill-Snowdon Foundation
 JEHT Foundation (no longer exists)
 Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
 The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
 The Kresge Foundation
 Liberty Hill Queer Youth Fund

Marguerite Casey Foundation
 Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger
 The McKay Foundation
 Ms. Foundation for Women
 The Needmor Fund
 Norman Foundation
 Open Meadows Foundation
 Open Society Foundations
 The Patagonia Foundation
 Peace Development Fund
 Peppercorn Foundation
 The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pre-K Now)
 Pfizer Health Solutions/
 Pfizer Foundation
 Public Welfare Foundation
 RESIST
 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 Stoneman Family Foundation
 Surdna Foundation
 Tides Foundation
 Twenty-First Century Foundation
 Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
 United Church of Christ
 W. K. Kellogg Foundation
 The Walton Family Foundation

REGIONAL FUNDERS

(fund in at least two of the four states)
 Foundation for the Mid South
 Greensboro Justice Fund
 Gulf Coast Funders for Equity
 Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
 The McKnight Foundation
 Southern Partners Fund

Alabama Funders

Black Belt Community Foundation
 United Way of Central Alabama

Arkansas Funders

Arkansas Community Foundation
 Arkansas Black Hall of Fame Foundation
 Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas
 Fred Darragh Foundation
 The Harvey and Bernice Jones Charitable Trust
 Munro Foundation
 Nathan Dalton Whetstone Endowment
 Riggs Benevolent Fund
 Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation

Louisiana Funders

Greater New Orleans Foundation
 Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation

Mississippi Funders

Magnolia Health Plan
 Women's Fund of Mississippi

2. Advocate and organize within philanthropy circles to promote investing in advocacy and organizing

Gladys Washington, program director at Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, contended, “Funders must move beyond merely funding organizing. We must become organizers within the philanthropic sector.” Funders are important messengers about how critical advocacy and organizing are to serving communities, and they should proactively engage with three key audiences: foundation boards, other philanthropic organizations and the broader non-profit sector.

Organizations such as NCRP and the Alliance for Justice provide important information and accountability for the sector, but leaders within the philanthropic sector are the most influential evangelists for this kind of work. It is not enough for foundation leaders committed to advocacy and organizing simply to give such grants; they must work toward a stronger sector by identifying venues to utilize their own voices to influence, educate and engage the broader philanthropic sector. Specifically, funders can:

- > Share information, research and stories that reinforce the importance of the work and its demonstrated impact with their boards and other funders.
- > Provide venues for grantees (those who are organizers and advocates and those who do not self-identify as such) to network, share experiences and build one another’s capacity.
- > Engage funder colleagues to be funding partners for organizations doing effective advocacy and organizing.

One specific way that funders can partner in this work is to join or organize funder collaboratives or working groups. Philanthropic affinity groups are important venues for funders to learn as well as to organize. For example, Alabama Giving convened a public policy initiative, the Alabama School Readiness Alliance, which increased funding for Pre-K in the state. Neighborhood Funders Group provides multiple venues for learning about community organizing best and promising practices. Council on Foundations has a Rural Philanthropy conference. Recently, Hill-Snowdon Foundation and Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation have led the development of the Southern Organizing Funders Working Group. It is vital that funders not only engage in these

and other like venues, but that sector leaders utilize these spaces to advance an agenda to proactively build the advocacy and organizing infrastructure in the Gulf/Midsouth.

These are just a few of many organizing strategies for funders to help build the sector and support this important work.

3. Support coalitions

Building strategic linkages, and providing necessary support for these partnerships, is part of building power.

The example of the Alabama Citizens for Constitution Reform (ACCR) clearly demonstrates how the impact of coalitions transcends a simplistic definition of “having power in numbers” to achieve a particular policy reform. In fact, ACCR has not yet reached its goal of successfully advocating for a new Alabama Constitution.

Nonetheless, a closer look at ACCR reveals a different, yet still significant, impact: As of this writing there are team leaders in 52 of 67 counties in Alabama who are organizing and educating citizens about the issues related to constitution reform. There also are 34 organizational members of the state coalition seeking an overhaul of the state constitution. Both the broad reach of ACCR county organizers and the size of the coalition’s membership roster represent the great potential that a funder-supported coalition possesses in contributing to a strong advocacy and organizing infrastructure.

Supporting coalitions is about more than just specific campaign wins; it is about strengthening the fabric of advocacy and organizing so that subsequent campaigns, actions and policy priorities are implemented from a position of strength.

B. Make nimble and flexible investments in organizations working in rural communities.

Many of the research sample organizations articulated distinct factors specific to advocacy and organizing in a rural context. By no means should these institutions be held to a different standard. However, it is vital that funders provide these organizations resources that enable them to utilize the tools and implement the strategies needed to effectively mobilize communities in geographically isolated localities and municipalities with small populations.

The realities that a group like Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County faces speak to the need for flexible investments. Every time constituents of Tunica County need to engage their legislature, hold rallies and collective actions or participate in training opportunities provided by national organizations, they must organize a five-hour bus trip each way from Tunica to Jackson. As such, resources allocated for bus trips, gas, box lunches and other costs are integral to their capacity to organize effectively. Additionally, as suggested by Black Belt Community Foundation Executive Director Felecia Jones, rural communities often “lack formal nonprofits” or a strong nonprofit infrastructure.

Philanthropy has to be proactive in its investments to build nonprofit capacity in rural communities. Investments that allow for the sector to grow and operate effectively in the rural context must be nimble, flexible and considerate of the distinct conditions in these communities. Examples of “nimble” grantmaking practices could include less arduous grant applications, additional investment in organizational capacity-building and supporting intermediary organizations close to the ground to re-grant to local and less formal organizations.

C. Help transform the sector by supporting organizations with people of color in executive and board leadership.

It is important to acknowledge that the historical and structural inequities that are largely defined by race in the region also infuse the philanthropic and nonprofit systems. There has slowly been an increase in Latino-led institutions in the region due to the notable influx of immigrant populations that have come to the Gulf/Midsouth states. Naturally, many of these organizations will not have long organizational histories or track records of effective advocacy and organizing. However, it is vital that funders invest in these organizations and their leaders.

Black-led advocacy and organizing institutions face a different set of scenarios. In particular, two scenarios evidence a history of exclusion for many black-led organizations:

- > There are many black-led advocacy or organizing institutions that have managed to sustain themselves through membership fees and models, grassroots fundraising and partnerships with black civic institutions. These organizations were often central

institutions during the Civil Rights Movement. Although many have had noticeable capacity gaps, often they have demonstrated an ability to move agendas, mobilize constituents and sustain their institutions despite scarce philanthropic investment. Too often the track records that these organizations have built are deemed insufficient and thus not worthy of funder investment.

- > There are also many black-led advocacy or organizing institutions that have not been able to sustain themselves and no longer exist, at least in a formal sense. However, in many cases their staff, boards and volunteers continue their work through less formal institutions. The wins and accomplishments of these organizations often go unnoticed, and when their work *is* acknowledged by philanthropy, the sector is challenged to deliver funding because they have become nontraditional, non-501(c)(3) institutions. However, the history of race-based exclusion by the philanthropic sector has been implicit in the informal character of many of these black-led organizations.

Philanthropy must be a part of promoting more representative leadership and governance in the advocacy and organizing sector in the region. Undoing systematic exclusion is not an organic process, thus it is incumbent upon funders to adopt a racial equity lens in their grantmaking approach and provide flexible and sizable investments in the institutions with people of color in leadership positions.

Additionally, philanthropy must be complicit in influencing white-led organizations with extensive commitments in communities of color to prioritize opportunities for people of color to engage in leadership positions at the staff and board level.

D. Invest in the organizing potential of a strong base or constituency.

As funders know, every nonprofit has its flaws. There are numerous organizations that have a strong base or constituency but do not have experience mobilizing their constituency toward policy change. In a similar vein, there are organizations that can effectively articulate their advocacy and organizing goals but do not have the base to realize those goals. Philanthropy can help groups fill in these gaps, and funders can be especially effective if they identify and invest in more groups with strong bases or constituencies.

As a starting point, funders can stop excluding direct service organizations from receiving advocacy and organizing support. Several organizations interviewed for this study reported that some social justice funders have challenged the notion that direct service can coincide with an organizing or advocacy agenda. For example, Sophia Bracy Harris, executive director of the Federation of Childcare Centers of Alabama (FOCAL), shared the story of how particular funders challenged the notion that FOCAL is an advocacy and organizing institution. In one funder's view, because FOCAL's constituents are childcare providers and because the organization spends significant time and resources providing training and technical assistance to those constituents, it was "improbable" that FOCAL also could mobilize the constituency around state and local policy issues, particularly if the issues were not directly related to child care. This recommendation contends that FOCAL is the *exact* type of institution that funders should target for its strong, identifiable base, in particular one comprised of low- to moderate-income individuals and people of color most directly affected by systemic inequity.

FOCAL is an example that has many parallels. Sometimes organizations serve the dual role of direct service provider *and* advocate or organizer. They also may have both strong civic goals and a strong constituency but have not yet mobilized that constituency. Funders would benefit from identifying organizations like these because they are key to organizing communities to combat inequity. In contrast, organizations with a sophisticated policy analysis that lack a base or core constituency struggle to be effective.

Funders should focus less on holding up a particular definition of organizing for the sake of disqualifying certain institutions, and focus more on identifying organizations with the target base that have the capacity, or at least the potential capacity, to move a policy agenda.

VIII. Conclusion

Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi share many things in common: rich and formative histories as Civil Rights Movement battlegrounds; vast rural land full of natural resources; rich local cultures that help anchor local economies and promote civic pride; pockets of economically distressed and vulnerable populations; and historic and systemic inequities combated by innovative, resourceful and dynamic local leaders.

These states also are distinct in many of their assets, challenges and demographics. Alabama and Arkansas are in the top five nationally of new immigrant populations; Mississippi boasts a high rate of African American elected officials per capita in the country; and Louisiana is the most urban state in the Gulf/Midsouth, with nearly 75 percent of the state classified as urban.

The similarities and distinctions between the states that comprise this region parallel the commonalities and distinct features of the advocacy, civic engagement and community organizing sectors in these states. So much of Alabama's advocacy connects in some way to an archaic, discriminatory and repressive state constitution. The brand of advocacy and organizing in Mississippi is affected by the realities of mobilizing constituencies and influencing policy in a vast and rural state. Arkansas is essentially segmented racially, spatially and culturally, resulting in vastly different constituencies, and thus organizing and advocacy strategies, in the northern and southern parts of the state. The advocacy and organizing sector in Louisiana is both damaged and revitalized, broken and infused with new energy and innovation, as communities continue to reel, recover, rebuild and reimagine after a series of destructive natural and man-made disasters.

Understanding the ties that bind these states together as well as the tangibly unique identities, histories and geographies of each of these states is vital to understanding the Gulf/Midsouth. However, the purpose of this report is not to highlight how the states in the region are alike or different. Rather, the interviews, surveys and research conducted collectively help to quantify the significant monetary value of advocacy and organizing investments by philanthropy in the Gulf/Midsouth, as well as tell stories and firsthand accounts of locally led change efforts.

The numbers and the stories paint pictures of tangible impact, dynamic leadership, innovative mobilization strategies and community resilience in the face of deep and pervasive structural inequities. The picture also reveals inconsistent and episodic philanthropic investments in sustaining strong advocacy and organizing institutions; and a weak ecosystem of supports, policies and organizations insufficiently equipped to dismantle these grossly inequitable structures.

The evidence of capacity and findings of impact in the Gulf/Midsouth are as impressive as the gaping vulnerabilities and stark needs. Together they make a compelling case for philanthropy to make increased, sustained and creative investments in advocacy and organizing in the Gulf/Midsouth.

Notes

1. Kids Count Data Center, Data Across States, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=137>.
2. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.
3. Unless specified, all demographic data for the four states are from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey. Latino origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Latinos may be of any race.
4. All Philanthropic Landscape data for the four states are from the Foundation Center for the year 2008: <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/grantmakerinfo.html>.
5. Migration Policy Institute, 2009 American Community Survey and Census Data on Foreign Born by State, <http://migrationinformation.org/datahub/acscensus.cfm#>.
6. Alabama House of Representatives Roster, http://www.legislature.state.al.us/house/representatives/houseroster_alpha.html.
7. Alabama State Senate, Roster, http://www.legislature.state.al.us/senate/senators/senateroster_alpha.html.
8. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/statefacts/al.htm>.
9. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=5110>.
10. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loct=2&by=a&order=a&ind=43&dtm=322&tf=38>.
11. Table generated by Aaron Terrazas and Jeanne Batalova of the MPI Data Hub (Migration Policy Institute). Estimates for 1990 and 2000 are from the US Census Bureau, Summary File 3, 1990 and 2000 US Decennial Censuses; 2008 estimates are from the US Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey.
12. Migration Policy Institute, 2009 American Community Survey and Census Data on Foreign Born by State.
13. Arkansas House of Representatives, Member List, <http://www.arkansashouse.org/members>.
14. Arkansas State Legislature, Member List, <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/2011R/Pages/LegislatorSearchResults.aspx?member=&committee=All&chamber=>.
15. U.S. Department of Agriculture, State Fact Sheet: Arkansas, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/statefacts/AR.HTM>.
16. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=5110>.
17. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loct=2&by=a&order=a&ind=43&dtm=322&tf=38>.
18. The Walton Family Foundation accounts for a large portion of Arkansas grantmaking dollars. After removing the Walton Family Foundation from the Arkansas totals, foundation assets in 2008 were only \$1,933,173,132; giving was \$203,108,786, and grants received was \$139,295,065.
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20. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=27>.
21. Migration Policy Institute, 2009 American Community Survey and Census Data on Foreign Born by State.
22. Louisiana House of Representatives, Member List, http://house.louisiana.gov/H_Reps/H_Reps_ByParty.asp.
23. Louisiana State Senate, <http://senate.legis.state.la.us/Senators/>.
24. U.S. Department of Agriculture, State Fact Sheet: Louisiana, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/statefacts/LA.HTM>.
25. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=5110>.
26. Kids Count Data Center, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?loct=2&by=a&order=a&ind=43&dtm=322&tf=38>.
27. See note 18 regarding portion of Arkansas assets, giving and grants received attributed to The Walton Family Foundation.

28. Source for children's poverty is National KIDS COUNT Program, which drew from multiple U.S. Census data sources (Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2009 American Community Survey). Source for total population is U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.
29. Migration Policy Institute, 2009 American Community Survey and Census Data on Foreign Born by State.
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31. Mississippi State Senate, Member List, http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/s_roster.pdf.
32. U.S. Department of Agriculture, State Fact Sheet: Mississippi, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/statefacts/MS.HTM>.
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36. Linda Usdin, *Power Amidst Renewal: Foundation Support for Sustaining Advocacy after Disasters*. (Washington, DC: Alliance for Justice, 2010).
37. The Foundation Center, 2010. Based on all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by a sample of over 1,000 of the largest U.S. foundations circa 2006-2008. The South Median is based on giving in 13 states (AL, AR, GA, FL, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV).
38. Data from U.S. Department of Agriculture, state fact sheets.
39. Data from U.S. Census Bureau. <http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn13.html>.
40. For a detailed discussion of structural racism/racialization, see pgs. 24-28 of *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best*, by John Powell and Niki Jagpal, (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, 2009).
41. FC Stats: The Foundation Center's Statistical Information Service, Fiscal Data by Grantmaking by Region and State, 2008: http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/statistics/pdf/01_found_fin_data/2008/01_08.pdf.
42. A preemptory strike occurs when the defense or prosecution removes a potential juror without providing a reason for the removal. Defense and prosecution are permitted a limited number of preemptory strikes in each jury selection.
43. "Fair Housing Center Files Against St. Bernard Parish; New Conference to be Held at 1:00 P.M. Today." Press release by Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center. October 3, 2006.
44. "St. Bernard Parish to Pay an Additional \$123,771.92 in Settlement of Blood Relative Rental Ordinance Lawsuit." Press release by Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, July 2, 2008.
45. Entergy Corporation, *2001-2002 Community Investment Report*.
46. Jared Raynor, "What Makes an Effective Coalition? Evidence-Based Indicators of Success." TCC Group, http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/What_Makes_an_Effective_Coalition.pdf.
47. Editorial Board, "For Katrina Victims, Relief at Last," *New York Times*, 16 November 2010.
48. Leevones Dubose, "We're Not Forgotten," *The Huffington Post*, 19 November 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/leevones-dubose/were-not-forgotten_b_786150.html.
49. Adam Lynch, "Council mulling JATLAN suite, route consolidation." *Jackson Free Press*, 20 April 2010. http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/index.php/site/comments/council_mulling_jatran_suit_route_consolidation_042010/.
50. The first of three attempted civil rights marches from Selma to Montgomery took place on March 7, 1965. It became known as "Bloody Sunday" after 600 civil rights marchers were attacked by state and local police with billy clubs and tear gas.

APPENDIX A

Organizational Profiles

Organization/Contact Information

Mission Statement/Description

ALABAMA

Center for Fair Housing

Teresa Bettis, Executive Director
tfbettis@hotmail.com

600 Bel Air Boulevard #112
Mobile, AL 36606

Acts to advocate, enforce and educate communities; serves in the areas of fair and adequate housing, public accommodations, tenants' rights and lending practices to promote more healthy and inclusive communities.

Equal Justice Initiative

Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director
bstevenson@efi.org

122 Commerce St.
Montgomery, AL 36104
www.eji.org

The Equal Justice Initiative is a private, nonprofit organization that provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. We litigate on behalf of condemned prisoners, juvenile offenders, people wrongly convicted or charged with violent crimes, poor people denied effective representation and others whose trials are marked by racial bias or prosecutorial misconduct.

Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL)

Sophia Bracy Harris, Executive Director
info@focalfocal.org

3703 Rosa L Parks Ave
P.O. Box 214
Montgomery, AL 36101
www.focalfocal.org

Improving the lives of children and families in Alabama has been the mission of the Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama (FOCAL) since its founding in 1972. Our core programs are child care training, leadership development, advocacy and organizing.

Greene/Sumter Enterprise Community, Inc (GSEC)

Stella Anderson, Executive Director
greenesu@bellsouth.net

P.O. Box 1786
Livingston, AL 35470
www.greenesumterec.org

Reduce poverty by creating jobs, expanding educational opportunities, building wealth and growing small businesses that enhance the quality of life.

ALABAMA (Continued)

Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

Isabel Rubio, Executive Director
info@hispanicinterest.org

P.O. Box 190299
Birmingham, AL 35219
www.hispanicinterest.org

The Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the social, civic and economic integration of Hispanic families and individuals in Alabama.

ARKANSAS

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF)

Rich Huddleston, Executive Director
rhuddleston@aradvocates.org

1400 West Markham Suite 306
Little Rock, AR 72201
www.aradvocates.org

The mission of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is to ensure that all children and their families have the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and to realize their full potential.

Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP)

Bill Kopsky, Executive Director
bill@arpanel.org

1308 W. 2nd Street
Little Rock, AR 72201
www.arpanel.org

Arkansas Public Policy Panel is a statewide organization dedicated to achieving social and economic justice by organizing citizen groups around the state, educating and supporting them to be more effective and powerful and linking them with one another in coalitions and networks. APPP seeks to bring balance to the public policy process in Arkansas.

Center for Artistic Revolution (CAR)

Randi Romo, Director
Artchangesu@yahoo.com

800 Scott Street
Little Rock, AR 72202

The Center for Artistic Revolution (CAR) is a grassroots community-based organization founded in Little Rock, Ark., in 2003 by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer Arkansans (LGBTQ) and their straight allies who believe that all people should have equitable access to fair treatment, a democratic political process and economic and environmental justice. CAR works with a holistic combination of progressive education, organizing skills, advocacy and creative/cultural work in order to create a fair Arkansas that values all of its residents.

Organization/Contact Information

Mission Statement/Description

ARKANSAS (Continued)**Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (NWAJJC)**

Jose Luis Aguayo-Herrera,
Interim Executive Director
joseluis.wjc@gmail.com

2200 West Sunset Suite B4
Springdale, AR 72762
www.nwawjc.org

The mission of the Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center (NWAJJC) is to improve conditions of employment for low-wage workers in northwest Arkansas by educating, organizing and mobilizing them, and calling on people of faith and the wider region to publicly support the workers' efforts.

Rural Community Alliance (RCA)

Renee Carr, Executive Director
cpa@mvtel.net

633 Highway 9
Fox, AR 72501
www.thenewrural.org

Rural Community Alliance (RCA) is a statewide organization of community groups whose purpose is "helping rural schools and communities survive and thrive."

LOUISIANA**Family & Youth Counseling Agency**

Julio R. Galan, Executive Director
julio@fyca.org

220 Louie Street
Lake Charles, LA 70601
www.fyca.org

It is the mission of Family & Youth to provide affordable and professional support through programs and services dedicated to advocacy, counseling and education for the people of Southwest Louisiana. Its effort and commitment to building family values will guarantee a stable and stronger community.

Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC)

James Perry, Executive Director
jperry@gnofairhousing.org

404 S. Jefferson Davis Parkway
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.gnofairhousing.org

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private, nonprofit civil rights organization established in the summer of 1995 to eradicate housing discrimination throughout the greater New Orleans area. Through education, investigation and enforcement activities, GNOFHAC promotes fair competition throughout the housing marketplace – rental, sales, lending and insurance. GNOFHAC is dedicated to fighting housing discrimination not only because it is illegal, but also because it is a divisive force that perpetuates poverty, segregation, ignorance, fear and hatred.

LOUISIANA (Continued)**Louisiana Bucket Brigade**

Anne Rolfes, Founding Director
anne@labucketbrigade.org

4226 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.labucketbrigade.org

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade is an environmental health and justice organization working with communities that neighbor the state's oil refineries and chemical plants. Our mission is to support communities' use of grassroots action to become informed, sustainable neighborhoods free from industrial pollution. Our purpose is to assist fence-line neighbors in their campaigns to make industry accountable for its pollution.

Southern Mutual Help Association

Lorna Bourg, Executive Director
smha@southernmutualhelp.org

3602 Old Jeanerette Rd.
New Iberia, LA 70563
www.southernmutualhelp.org

Southern Mutual Help Association's mission is to build healthy, prosperous rural communities in Louisiana. Our special focus is with distressed rural communities whose livelihoods are interdependent with our land and waters. We work primarily with agricultural and pervasively poor communities, women and people of color. We help build rural communities through people's growth in their own empowerment and the just management of resources.

Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association (VAYLA-NO)

Mihn Nguyen, Executive Director
minhnguyen@vayla-no.org

Youth Community Center:
4646 Michoud Blvd., Suite 2
New Orleans, LA 70129-1800

Mailing:
P.O. Box 870366
New Orleans, LA 70187-0366
www.vayla-no.org

The Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA-NO) is a youth-led, youth organizing and development, community-based organization in New Orleans dedicated to the empowerment of Vietnamese American and underrepresented youth through services, cultural enrichment and social change.

MISSISSIPPI**Children's Defense Fund (CDF)**

Oleta Fitzgerald, Regional Director
ofitzgerald@childrensdefense.org

2659 Livingston Road, Suite 200
Jackson, MS 39213
www.childrensdefense.org/sro

The Children's Defense Fund's Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start and a moral start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. CDF's Southern Regional Office opened in Jackson, Miss., in January 1995 and works in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Organization/Contact Information

Mission Statement/Description

MISSISSIPPI (Continued)**Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County**

Melvin Young, Executive Director
marmel@gmi.net

P.O. Box 2249
Tunica, MS 38676
www.tunicateensinaction.org

The mission of Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County is to empower the disadvantaged and low-income community by building leadership and organization, involving students and parents using the intergenerational model (young people and old people working together), in the community of Tunica County, Miss. "Empower" is defined as the effective participation of the community to impact the formation of public policy and effective participation in the decision-making process in the educational, economic, political, environmental and social change systems with a special emphasis on education policy in the Tunica School District that will help to create a first-rate quality public educational opportunity for all families in Tunica County and the country.

MS Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities

Mary Troupe, Executive Director
mary@mscoalition.com

5 Old River Place, Suite 101
Jackson, MS 39202
www.mscoalition.com

It is the mission of the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life for children, adolescents and adults with disabilities and their families; empower these individuals to reach for their full potential in every aspect of life; and to be a voice for families, advocates, consumers and professionals representing the interests and needs of people with disabilities.

Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI)

Carol Burnett, Executive Director
cburnett@mschildcare.org

PO Box 204
Biloxi, MS 39533
www.mschildcare.org

Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) is a statewide organization of parents, providers and community leaders working together to: improve the quality of child care for all Mississippi's low-income children; advocate for better policies and greater public investment in child care subsidies; and build a strong grassroots constituency for the working poor and their children.

Southern Echo

Leroy Johnson, Executive Director
leroy@southernecho.org

1350 Livingston Lane, Suite C
Jackson, MS 39213
www.southernecho.org

Southern Echo is a leadership development, education and training organization working to develop effective accountable grassroots leadership in the African American communities in rural Mississippi and the surrounding region through comprehensive training and technical assistance programs. The underlying goal is to empower local communities through effective community organizing work, in order to create a process through which community people can build the broad-based organizations necessary to hold the political, economic, educational and environmental systems accountable to the needs and interests of the African American community.

APPENDIX B

Monetized Impacts and Return on Investment*

DOLLAR VALUE	NO. OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ALABAMA		
<p>IMPACT: Succeeded in ending life without parole sentences for non-violent offenders. This will save the state more than \$15,000 per year to house the 300 inmates eligible for parole, which totals more than \$113 million over 25 years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Equal Justice Initiative</p>		
\$113,385,000	300 incarcerated non-violent offenders	2003-2007
<p>IMPACT: 1% sales tax approved to get a new high school built in Sumter County, Alabama.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greene Sumter Enterprise Community, The City of York, Town of Epes, Town of Gainesville, Town of Emelle, Sumter County Commission – all within Sumter County</p>		
\$600,000	3,000 junior high and high school students	2009-2010
<p>IMPACT: Prevented City of Mobile from blocking the development of new affordable housing units by the Mobile Housing Authority next to a middle/upper class neighborhood. Compelled the city council to approve zoning so that the \$3 million development could be built.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Fair Housing Center, Mobile Housing Authority</p>		
\$3,012,000	19 single family homes	2003-2009
ARKANSAS		
<p>IMPACT: Succeeded in winning and maintaining state funding for Arkansas Better Chance Program to expand pre-K care services throughout the state, resulting in increases of at least \$280 million from 2005-2010. Overall, annual pre-k funding is now more than \$100 million higher than 2003 levels.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Invest Early Coalition, individual members of Kids Count, State Representative LeRoy Dangeau, Senator Jim Argue</p>		
\$280,000,000	35,000 3- and 4-year-olds	2003-2010
<p>IMPACT: Helped workers recover \$356,941 in back wages, worker compensation claims, and EEOC settlements.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center, Department of Labor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</p>		
\$356,941	114+ workers	2005-2009

DOLLAR VALUE	NO. OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ARKANSAS (continued)		
<p>IMPACT: Secured state minimum wage increase from \$5.15 to \$6.25 per hour. 127,000 workers have garnered \$209 million per year in added wages over six years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Give Arkansas a Raise Now Coalition of 20 religious, union, poverty action and civil rights groups</p>		
\$1,257,300,000	127,000 Arkansas workers	2005-2006
<p>IMPACT: Fought payday lending and won crackdown on payday lenders by state attorney general in 2008 and Arkansas Supreme Court ruling that the former Check-Cashers Act violated the state constitution. The savings to borrowers is more than \$45.7 million per year, projected for four years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Center for Responsible Lending, AARP, military groups, the Family Council, credit unions, ACORN, Southern Good Faith Fund, Cooperative Extension Agents, credit counselors, Federal Reserve Bank</p>		
\$183,125,916	Thousands of low-income borrowers	2003-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Won reduction of grocery tax to 3%, exemption of families below poverty line from state income taxes, and lower income taxes for families up to 125% of poverty. These measures saved low-income taxpayers \$105 million in 2008 and continued to provide them savings in future years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Arkansas Citizens First Congress, KidsCount Coalition, Southern Good Faith Fund, State Representative Lindsley Smith</p>		
\$105,000,000	All 2,889,450 Arkansas residents enjoy the grocery tax cut; 183,000 low-income taxpayers	1999-2007
<p>IMPACT: Creation of Minority HIV/AIDS Taskforce, policy and research recommendations and expansion of access to prevention and treatment services. Garnered one-time state funding of \$900,000 to Minority Health Commission.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Future Builders, Inc., Arkansas Citizens First Congress</p>		
\$900,000	679,000 rural people of color	2007-2009
<p>IMPACT: During the last three biennial legislative sessions, successfully advocated for necessary funding to allow isolated schools and districts to operate, ensuring that more than \$48 million was allocated over five years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Rural Community Alliance, Arkansas Rural Educators Association, Arkansas African American Education Association</p>		
\$48,480,000	9,800 low-income students at 28 schools	2005-ongoing

DOLLAR VALUE	NO. OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ARKANSAS (continued)		
<p>IMPACT: Helped Arkansas form a Global Warming Commission and enact new policies based on its recommendations, including the Sustainable Energy Efficient Program to reduce energy use in all existing state buildings by 20% from 2008 levels by 2014, and by 30% by 2017. Estimated taxpayer savings are \$20 million by 2014; \$30 million by 2017.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Public Policy Panel, OMNI Center for Peace, Justice & Ecology; Arkansas Citizens First Congress</p>		
\$20,000,000	2.8 million Arkansas consumers	2007-2009
<p>IMPACT: Changed state labor statute of limitations to increase wage level for wage theft cases, so the state now investigates wage theft cases in which up to \$2,000 is owed (up from \$1,000). This allows more workers to go through the state to seek redress.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center, State Representative Lindsley Smith, state Department of Labor, Interfaith Worker Justice, Unions, Northwest Arkansas Labor Council, Homebuilders Association</p>		
\$152,448	103 workers	2008-2009
<p>IMPACT: Successfully advocated for money in the state budget for rural services in communities of less than 1,000, garnering more than \$5.5 million over five years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Rural Community Alliance, Director of Rural Services</p>		
\$5,580,098	Thousands of rural residents	2008-2009
LOUISIANA		
<p>IMPACT: Secured \$25 million in state funding for the Housing Trust Fund, which had been created but never given resources. It will provide affordable housing for residents across the state.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Louisiana Housing Alliance, Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations, Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, Senator Lydia Jackson, Senator Cheryl Gray Evans</p>		
\$25,000,000	Hundreds of low-income residents across the state	2006
<p>IMPACT: Successfully litigated with St. Bernard Parish to end discriminatory housing ordinances, opening up housing opportunities. Received \$50,000 in damages and \$1.3 million in legal fees.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center</p>		
\$1,350,000	Parish of St. Bernard, State of Louisiana, Gulf Coast Region	2005-2010

DOLLAR VALUE	NO. OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
LOUISIANA (continued)		
<p>IMPACT: Fought and litigated for fair treatment of all homeowners under federal/state Road Home program and won more than \$2 billion in additional compensation grants for low-income homeowners to rebuild their properties after hurricanes.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, National Fair Housing Alliance, PolicyLink</p>		
\$2,079,041,258	Statewide impact; national impact because HUD is the defendant and set the standard for how it manages other disasters	2006-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Promoted housing opportunities for people with disabilities, including winning 3,000 permanent supportive housing vouchers and enabling group homes to open in Denham Springs and New Orleans. Value of 3,000 vouchers averaged just under \$10,000 per year for five years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Louisiana Housing Finance Agency, Louisiana Housing Alliance, Senator Landrieu, Unity for the Homeless</p>		
\$145,700,000	3,000 people with disabilities	2005-2008
<p>IMPACT: Several hundred former residents of St. Thomas public housing development received housing vouchers to live there. The value is estimated at \$1,250 per month for 250 units over five years.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Tulane Law Clinic, attorneys, St. Thomas Residents</p>		
\$18,750,000	250 households	2005-2007
<p>IMPACT: Organized partners and resources to spur West End redevelopment in New Iberia, which may bring up to \$50 million investment over 10 years; \$1.7 million already is committed through public and private sources.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Southern Mutual Help Association, Mayor of New Iberia Parish, Mennonite Disaster Service, other community institutions</p>		
\$1,700,000	Residents in New Iberia Parish	2008-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Rural Recovery Response initiative ensured that after hurricanes, \$13.3 million in investment went to rural homes and businesses, which may generate as much as \$108 million in broader economic impact in rural Louisiana.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Southern Mutual Help Association, Iberia Bank, Mennonite Disaster Service, volunteers from 48 states, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation and many more</p>		
\$13,300,000	1,064 homeowners, fishers, farmers, businesses and churches	2005-2010

DOLLAR VALUE	NO. OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
MISSISSIPPI		
<p>IMPACT: The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP), a formula to ensure an adequate education for every Mississippi child, was fully funded in 2008 by the state legislature for the first time since its inception – an increase of \$222 million over 2007 funding level. Approximately 10,000 students drop out of Mississippi’s schools annually, costing the state a staggering \$458 million a year in lost revenue and public assistance and incarceration costs.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Children’s Defense Fund, Southern Echo, Parents Campaign, NAACP Education Network</p>		
\$222,271,597	More than 490,000 public school students	2002–ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Prevented a major state funding cut of \$110 million to Medicaid that would have eliminated important health services for elderly participants and those with disabilities.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, Mississippi Center for Justice, AARP, National Senior Citizen Law Center</p>		
\$110,000,000	48,000 elderly residents and residents with disabilities	2005
<p>IMPACT: Through organizing and legal advocacy, compelled City of Jackson to improve transit services and access for people with disabilities, including allocating \$139,000 over three years for an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance officer.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities</p>		
\$139,000	Jackson residents with disabilities and non-disabled	2004-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: After Hurricane Katrina, secured a portion of federal community development block grant funds for affordable housing through the Neighborhood Home Program that the governor had attempted to use to expand a port.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, NAACP, Mississippi Center for Justice, Steps Coalition, Gulf Coast Fair Housing Center</p>		
\$132,800,000	4,400 low-income households	2005-2010
<p>\$ 4,767,944,258 \$ 41,863,253 \$ 113.89</p>	<p>Total monetized impacts Total investment in advocacy and organizing Return on Investment (ROI)</p>	
<p>* NCRP independently verified each impact. Detailed calculation methods are available upon request. The “Organizations” field is not intended to provide a complete list of every organization or individual involved in achieving an impact. Additional stakeholders may have participated.</p>		

APPENDIX C

Non-monetized Impacts and Beneficiaries*

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ALABAMA	
<p>IMPACT: Successful campaign of legal advocacy resulted in federal Supreme Court ruling that banned life without parole (“death in prison”) sentencing for children.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Equal Justice Initiative, Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth, dozens of youth organizations, 16 groups that filed amicus briefs, including the American Bar Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of Student Councils, Amnesty International</p>	
2500 juveniles	2006-2010
<p>IMPACT: Systematically challenged prosecutors to address racial discrimination in jury selection; 100 death penalty sentences have been overturned after proving intentional racial bias in jury selection.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Equal Justice Initiative, NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, local groups</p>	
100 individuals whose death sentences were overturned	2006-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Negotiated a compromise in setting standards in the Baby Douglass Legislation, which prevents child care providers from giving any type of medication to children in their care. Educated child care providers about how to apply new standards.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Federation of Child Care Centers of Alabama</p>	
10,000 child care workers and the children in their care	2004-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Increased court advocacy for Latina victims of domestic violence by expanding access to sole bilingual court advocate in the state. Got judges to stagger dockets and courts to provide a report within 48 hours if a Latino person is brought to court. These changes make it more likely that victims will bring their abuser to court.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, YWCA</p>	
200 victims of domestic violence	2005-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Conducted an analysis of Mobile’s impediments to Fair Housing Choice, made the city aware of its compliance to HUD’s requirements, and provided guidance for remedying the city’s infractions to address areas in which fair housing access was impeded or not in step with legal regulations.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Center for Fair Housing</p>	
All 193,000 residents of Mobile	2005-ongoing

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ALABAMA (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Partnered with other community institutions to promote housing opportunities in Greene and Sumter Counties; the City of Eutaw completed infrastructure and sidewalks of 33-unit single family housing called Rosie L. Carpenter Haven.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Greene Sumter Enterprise Community, Black Belt Action Commission, PBLA Housing Development Corp, Sumter County BOE Material Center, Alabama Housing Finance Authority, Community Service Programs of West Alabama</p>	
34 families	2005-2007
<p>IMPACT: Newly formed Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice blocked anti-immigrant legislation in the state-house, including a 2008 bill requiring drivers' license tests to be given only in English, and the Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2008. This act would have made it illegal for an American citizen to protect or harbor an "illegal alien," denied tuition, scholarships and financial aid to "illegal aliens," and expanded the instances in which law enforcement agents, state agencies and employers are required to verify immigration status.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama, Alabama Appleseed, Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice</p>	
All undocumented immigrants in Alabama	2007-2008
ARKANSAS	
<p>IMPACT: Advocated to create Children's Mental Health Commission in Arkansas in 2007 and secured community-based, wraparound services not paid for by Medicaid.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Department of Human Services, Arkansas First Lady</p>	
Up to 60,000 children in the state's mental health system	2005-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Forced the removal of a Midland School District school board vice president, who was advocating for gay youth to kill themselves and was discriminating against gay youth.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Center for Artistic Revolution, Northwest Center for Equality, Unitarian Church, Human Rights Campaign</p>	
250 citizens in Pleasant Plains	2010

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ARKANSAS (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Won a series of new policies proven to increase opportunities to learn and close the education achievement gap between higher- and lower-income children and white and minority children. In addition to pre-K funding, policies include: strengthened the Achievement Gap Commission via Act 1314 (adding parents and low-income representatives, expanding its duties and requiring annual reports to the legislature); won Early Intervention and Underperforming School Bill; increased transparency of funding for programs to close the achievement gap; expanded access to school performance and improvement data.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Arkansas Education Association, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, Arkansas Citizens First Congress</p>	
More than 280,000 low-income students and students of color	2003-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Creation of Arkansas' first Department of Agriculture</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Arkansas Farm Community Alliance, Arkansas Citizens First Congress</p>	
45,000 family farms	1999-2005
<p>IMPACT: Fought against state anti-adoption initiative, which was enacted in 2008 but overturned in courts in 2010</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Center for Artistic Revolution, ACLU, Just Communities of Central Arkansas, Arkansas Citizens First Congress, Stonewall Democrats</p>	
6,000 same-sex couples in Arkansas	2008-2010
<p>IMPACT: Got rid of the American Indian ritual and mascots at Arkansas State University</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Center for Artistic Revolution</p>	
Native Americans	2005-2007
<p>IMPACT: Secured multiple commitments from mayor of Fayetteville, including creation of Mayor's Task Force on Wage Theft, assignment of police officer to investigate wage theft crimes and creation of hotline to report wage theft.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center; Lioneld Jordan, Fayetteville Mayor; labor allies and attorneys, business attorneys, and other members of the Wage Theft Ordinance Committee; St. Joseph's Catholic Church; St. Paul's Episcopal Church</p>	
Low-wage workers	2009-2010

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
ARKANSAS (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Assisted 800 workers in a Bentonville poultry processing plant to get their employer to provide safety equipment.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Northwest Arkansas Workers' Justice Center</p>	
800 workers	2004-2005
<p>IMPACT: Defeated a school consolidation bill that would have assigned only one school district for every county in the state (no matter how big the school population was).</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Rural Community Alliance, Arkansas Rural Education Association, Arkansas African American Administrators Association</p>	
Students in 240 school districts	2005
<p>IMPACT: Secured legislation that changed the timeline for the Department of Education to notify school districts when they are considered as "fiscally distressed."</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Rural Community Alliance</p>	
All 468,066 K-12 students	2007
LOUISIANA	
<p>IMPACT: Establishment of the Children and Families Action Network (CFAN) and the Human Services Response Initiative (HSRI) immediately after the devastation caused by Hurricane Rita ensured that \$1.8 million in public, private and philanthropic resources were used most effectively to provide equitable recovery.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Family and Youth Counseling Agency, Mayor of Lake Charles, CFAN members, philanthropy</p>	
Hundreds of residents affected by Hurricane Rita	2005-2007
<p>IMPACT: Informed White House's BP Oil Spill Initiative, serving the Asian-Pacific Islander community nationally. Connected API community to funders and federal agencies, including Homeland Security, Labor, Commerce and Energy. Educated federal policy makers on how residents and fishers were affected by the oil spill and ways to address linguistic and cultural competency issues for Vietnamese and other ethnic families affected by the oil spill, who faced barriers to accessing services and compensation.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association-NO, Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, Power of a Million Minds youth collaborative</p>	
Families and fishers affected by BP Oil Spill	2009-2010

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
LOUISIANA (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Organized state agencies, service providers and philanthropy to improve access to mental health services for women, including those suffering post-partum depression.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Family and Youth Counseling Agency, Louisiana Office of Public Health, Louisiana Office of Behavioral Health, NAMI - SWLA, The Counseling Center, many other mental health practitioners and medical personnel</p>	
250 women annually	2008-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Established Refinery Efficiency Initiative, a program to reduce pollution and improve health and quality of life by preventing accidents at Louisiana oil refineries. REI engages fenceline communities, regulatory agencies, workers and refineries to find solutions collectively that bring down accident rates.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Louisiana Bucket Brigade</p>	
The entire state of Louisiana	2009-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Created Oil Spill Crisis Map as a visual representation of citizen reports of where they have seen, smelled or otherwise been affected by the BP oil spill. These data have informed federal health studies of the spill's affects and may inform future public policy.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Louisiana Bucket Brigade, Tulane University</p>	
Residents of Louisiana	2010
<p>IMPACT: After Hurricane Katrina, defeated attempt by the New Orleans mayor to locate an enhanced construction and debris dumpsite in the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East, where residents already were rebuilding.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association-NO, Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, MQVN Community Development Corporation, Louisiana Environmental Action Network</p>	
Residents of New Orleans East	2005
MISSISSIPPI	
<p>IMPACT: Organized residents to participate in 2010 Census, which exceeded the census response rate from 2000. Also organized resident participation in the Mississippi State Legislative Reapportionment Committee's series of public hearings concerning adoption of guidelines to redistrict the congressional, legislative and judicial offices in 2011.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Southern Echo, Mississippi 2010 Census Stakeholder Alliance and other state, regional and national census and redistricting networks</p>	
Entire state of Mississippi	2005 - 2010

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
MISSISSIPPI (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Contributed to successful efforts at the state and national levels to reauthorize State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and enact national health care reform.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Children’s Defense Fund, many coalition partners, including Equal Voice for America’s Families, Mississippi Center for Justice, health care practitioners, Head Start networks, state legislators, religious communities, schools</p>	
Uninsured children	2008-ongoing
<p>IMPACT: Defeated charter school bills in state legislature that would have caused a disinvestment in already underfunded public schools.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Children’s Defense Fund, 6 legislators from Mississippi Delta</p>	
More than 490,000 public school students	2005 - 2010
<p>IMPACT: Worked with county officials to develop and adopt five-year plan to reform education system in Tunica County.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Tunica County School Board</p>	
2,600 public school students	2006 - 2009
<p>IMPACT: Successful campaign at the local level (Tunica County) and state level to reform school discipline policies that violated student rights. Secured passage of Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2009.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Prevention of Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Coalition, ACLU, Mississippi NAACP, Southern Echo</p>	
More than 490,000 public school students	2004 - 2009
<p>IMPACT: Convinced state Department of Human Services to make a recourse policy for a fair hearings process in the child care subsidy program.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative, Mississippi Center for Justice</p>	
Low-income children and child care providers	2006

CATEGORY AND/OR NUMBER OF DIRECT BENEFICIARIES	LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN
MISSISSIPPI (continued)	
<p>IMPACT: Issued report entitled, “MS Child Care Development Fund: Program Implementation, Evaluation and Analysis” that was released by the State Auditor’s Office with 14 recommendations. Report was basis for reform legislation requiring an external audit of DHS’s use of federal child care money.</p> <p>ORGANIZATIONS: Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative, Mississippi State University Stennis Institute of Government</p>	
Low-income children and child care providers	2007
<p><i>* The “Organizations” field is not intended to provide a complete list of every organization or individual involved in achieving an impact. Additional stakeholders may have participated.</i></p>	
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I can:

Refer NCRP to like-minded colleagues and friends (list names and contact information)

Host an NCRP event in my community

Write a blog post for *Keeping a Close Eye...*

Invite NCRP to write an article in my publication or post on my blog

Mobilize my network around an NCRP campaign

Other: _____

QUESTIONS

How did you hear about us?

Additional Comments:

PRIVACY NOTICE

NCRP thanks its grantmaker and organizational members on its website and in print. Please check this box if you would like your contribution to be anonymous.

Thank you for challenging grantmakers to strengthen our communities!

Questions or comments? Contact Samantha Davis, NCRP Field Assistant at sdavis@ncrp.org or 202.387.9177 ext. 16.

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STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY, INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES

Impacts of Advocacy, Organizing and Civic Engagement in the Gulf/Midsouth Region

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Funding advocacy and advocates is the most direct route to supporting enduring social change for the poor, the disenfranchised and the most vulnerable among us, including the youngest and oldest in our communities.

—Gara LaMarche, President and CEO
The Atlantic Philanthropies*

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) aims to ensure that philanthropic institutions practice Philanthropy at Its Best® – philanthropy that serves the public good, supports nonprofit effectiveness and responds to those in our society with the least wealth, opportunity and power. NCRP believes that one of the most effective ways to address the needs of the disenfranchised is by providing support for advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement.

NCRP's *Criteria for Philanthropy at Its Best*, published in March 2009, challenges grantmakers to promote the American values of opportunity and inclusion by contributing to a strong, participatory democracy that engages all communities. One way they can accomplish that is by providing at least 25 percent of their grant dollars for advocacy, organizing and civic engagement. This aspirational goal is one of ten benchmarks in Criteria.

Many grantmakers invest in advocacy, organizing and civic engagement as a way to advance their missions and strengthen communities. A sizable number of foundations, however, have not seriously considered investing in these strategies, partly because they have difficulty measuring impact and fully understanding how effective these strategies can be. The Grantmaking for Community Impact Project (GCIP) addresses these concerns by highlighting the positive impact that communities have seen through funder-supported nonpartisan advocacy and organizing.

To provide foundations with useful information that can help them consider supporting these strategies at higher levels, each GCIP report documents impact and demonstrates how advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement result in community-wide benefits and can advance a foundation's mission. This report on the Gulf/Midsouth Region is the seventh in the series.

Additional information is available online at www.ncrp.org.

* The Atlantic Philanthropies (2008). *Why Supporting Advocacy Makes Sense for Foundations*. Atlantic Reports, Investing in Change.

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