



# CRITICAL RESPONSE FUND REPORT

**CROSSROADS FUND**  
change, not charity

**THE CRITICAL RESPONSE FUND** provides organizations with funding to protect, empower and support community members in this time of heightened racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism and xenophobia. In addition, we seek to support work that expands our notions of what is possible and is oriented towards building the world that we need, through new and unconventional movement collaborations and coalitions that bridge issues and sectors. This fund is designed to center and follow the leadership of people who are most directly impacted by the current political fights and to respond quickly to their self-identified needs. Crossroads Fund initially established the Critical Response Fund to support Arab, Muslim, and immigrant communities who faced a backlash following the September 11, 2001 attack.

Following the recent election,  
Crossroads Fund anticipated an  
urgent and prolonged struggle with  
new fights arising at the national,  
state, and local levels. We rose  
to the occasion and gave  
\$683,105 in grants,

**47%**

more in grants than originally  
budgeted for fiscal year 2017.

This includes an additional

**12%**

for the Critical Response Fund,  
a total of \$80,500 to 15 grantees.

Crossroads Fund is a public foundation that gives money to groups working on issues of racial, social and economic justice in the Chicago area. To accomplish our goal of supporting progressive movements in our city, we raise money from our community of individual and institutional donors.

## Impact On Grantees

In addition to financial support, we have continually engaged grantees in asking what this political moment means to their work. Some of their responses are:

- For immigrant serving groups, there is a palpable fear of deportation, harassment, and a feeling of alienation. There is also a determination to continue fighting for human dignity, and a commitment not to shut down in the face of events taking place.
- Grantees have seen an increase in the number of people who want to engage in social justice work, and are working to find pathways to incorporate this new energy.
- Organizations are increasing their working across issues and neighborhoods. They understand that to take on these current challenges, we need to build power together.

Crossroads Fund is committed to continuing to respond to the political moment and support grantees during this time. For more information on applying to the Critical Response Fund, please visit [www.crossroadsfund.org](http://www.crossroadsfund.org).

## Join Us In Building The Resistance

**THE CROSSROADS FUND IS ABLE TO OFFER THESE GRANTS BECAUSE OF PARTNERS LIKE YOU.**

Please consider joining Crossroads Fund in support of this critical response effort and help us fortify the resistance against the heightened racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and xenophobia of this moment.

Current supporters include the Chicago Community Trust and a generous anonymous donor.

**Please feel free to contact Jane Kimondo at [jane@crossroadsfund.org](mailto:jane@crossroadsfund.org) to discuss a partnership.**

## Lessons Learned: Exemplary Movement Building

The election of the current presidential administration emboldened a group of elected officials and hate groups who escalated their attacks on a diverse majority of people who exemplify this country's ideals. This threat has inspired many to take action and actively resist these attacks with new and heightened urgency. While the assault from all levels of government continues, there are important lessons on building long-term, sustained movements towards justice from the groups who received Critical Response Fund support.

**FIRST,** all of the groups who received support have been active in building strong grassroots bases for years, if not decades. Having the capacity to resist in overtly hostile moments takes years of leadership, relationship, and trust building to have the infrastructure needed to respond at a moment's notice. For example, thousands of people converged at O'Hare International Airport when the Arab American Action Network called for a direct action against the "Muslim Ban." The success of this action took years of organizing to build and the power that was demonstrated spoke volumes.

**SECOND,** organizing, at its core, is about meeting people where they are at and supporting their struggle for self-determination. Since the start of 2017, many of the Critical Response Fund grantees nimbly shifted efforts to support the needs of their grassroots communities. Not only are groups leading campaigns for policy change, many grantees began to offer more tools for their constituencies to build their own capacity for resistance on a daily basis. For example, Organized Communities Against Deportation (OCAD), Ixchel, and Proyecto de Accion de los Suburbios del Oeste (PASO) all began offering "know your rights" trainings to undocumented immigrant communities to fight back against potential mass deportations. Simultaneously, these organizations developed campaigns for passing "Welcoming City" or "Sanctuary City" ordinances in Chicago and the suburbs. At a time of heightened fear, OCAD, Ixchel, and PASO all modeled responses to effectively meet the needs of their constituencies by both providing essential training and creating a platform for people to achieve significant policy wins.

**THIRD,** strong movements rely on coalition building through an intersectional lens. All of the groups who received Critical Response grants outlined plans to educate their own communities on issues that other communities are facing. This cultivation of shared empathy built a foundation for coalition building across issues. An obvious example is the broad coalition behind the Women's March on Springfield, which united a diverse group of organizations in a sophisticated articulation of the connection between issues. Groups like the Chicago Workers' Collaborative, Howard Brown Health, and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, among others, partnered to confront the spectrum of issues that all women face at this moment. A more subtle effort is the "What's at Stake" teach-ins that First Defense Legal Aid is hosting in conjunction with civil rights and community organizations to educate different populations, e.g. children, youth, LGBTQ, People of Color, on what they have at stake when they interact with the police. Finally, OCAD partnered with BYP100 to lead a coalition focused on expanding the definition of "Sanctuary City." These groups are building solidarity between the Black and Brown communities by fighting to expand the definition of sanctuary and challenging the role of police in both immigration issues and mass incarceration. The last eleven months has shown that the movement for racial, social, and economic justice in Chicago is strong.

**FINALLY,** this specific moment illustrates the important role philanthropy can play to support immediate and long-term movements for justice. The effectiveness of the Critical Response Fund is in the ease and quickness that grantees can access financial support. Knowing the urgency of the moment, Crossroads Fund placed phone calls to grantees to see how we could better support their resistance. Foundations need to continue to expedite the time it takes to complete a grant application and this can be done if foundations are as focused on relationship building as their grantees often are. Deeper and more transparent relationships between foundations and grantees could transform the fight for justice in Chicago and across the country.

These lessons illustrate the brilliant and powerful organizing happening across Chicago. While there is an undeniable urgency at this moment, history shows that the struggle for justice is long. The Critical Response Fund grantees have worked closely with Crossroads Fund for many years, partnering to build movements that we are witnessing today. Systems change does not happen overnight and Crossroads Fund is committed to the long-term fight for racial, social, and economic justice.

Crossroads Fund supports groups working at the intersections of racial, social, and economic justice. Here's what that looks like in action from our first round of Critical Response Funding:



In addition to the \$80,500 in Critical Response Fund support, these 15 grantees received a total of **\$74,500** in funding from the \$683,105 total granted in fiscal year 2017 by Crossroads Fund.





## Critical Response Fund Grantees

**Arab American Action Network** strives to strengthen the Arab community in the Chicago area by building its capacity to be an active agent for positive social change. This grant supported rapid response organizing after the Muslim Ban was implemented.

**Blocks Together** is part of the national Poor People's Campaign, which aims at uniting poor people, poor-people-based organizations, and faith-based organizations to bring awareness to policies and win changes toward a new economic agenda. This grant supported activities of the Chicago Chapter of the New Poor People's Campaign.

**Chicago Community and Workers Rights** is an organization led by and for workers dedicated to educating, building leadership and gathering resources for collective action. This grant supported additional know your rights trainings to immigrant workers facing increased abuse, including wage theft from employers.

**Chicago Legal and Education Fund** provides direct access to legal services, resources, and education using a community based model that uses schools and libraries as community centers for Chicago's most vulnerable communities. This grant supported providing additional know your rights workshops and legal support work to families facing deportation and experiencing fear around the increase in ICE raids.

**Circles & Ciphers** is a youth leadership development organization of young men of color who are prison, court and gang involved that fuses restorative justice practices and principles with hip-hop arts and culture. This grant helped connect vulnerable community members to legal services, employment services, and spaces to heal, process, and build solidarity.

**First Defense Legal Aid** provides individuals in neighborhoods with high police interactions with access to free legal counsel while in police custody. This grant supported their "What's at Stake" series of teach-ins for particular demographics likely to be in contact with police i.e. children and youth, immigrants, the mentally ill, the LGBTQ community, and survivors of police violence.

**The Hana Center** hosted the National Asian American Youth Organizing Summit this past summer. This grant helped bring together Asian-American youth from around the country to strategize on issues ranging from immigration to anti-blackness.

**The Illinois Women's March on Springfield** brought together 2,000 individuals representing over 100 organizations to fight for progressive legislation during the spring session of the Illinois legislature. This grant was to support education and outreach around this effort.

**Ixchel**, in collaboration with other community organizations from the western suburbs, are embarking on getting an official "Welcoming City Ordinance" passed in the town of Cicero. Funding has supported these ongoing efforts.

**Lifted Voices** is an action-oriented organizing collective whose femme and non-binary membership provide tactical education in the city of Chicago. This grant supported direct action trainings throughout the winter and spring.

**March to Springfield's** grant supported Fair Economy Illinois' March to Springfield for a People and Planet First Budget. The coalition of organizations involved included Jane Addams Senior Caucus, Chicago Student Action, ONE Northside, National Nurses United, the People's Lobby, and Illinois People's Action.

**Organized Communities Against Deportation's** grant supported a series of know your rights trainings to prepare the community for the increase in ICE raids and deportations, as well as other emergency work.

**Neighbors for Affordable Housing in Jefferson Park's** grant supported building an anti-racist opposition and pushing forward Chicago Housing Initiative's work to construct a new affordable housing development in Jefferson Park.

**Proyecto de Accion de los Suburbios del Oeste/PASO's** grant supported organizing focused on passing Welcoming City ordinances which are among the strongest and most inclusive in the country for western suburbs, such as Oak Park and Summit.

**Transformative Justice Law Project** is a collective of lawyers, activists and organizers committed to gender self-determination, transformative justice and prison abolition. This grant supported the 2017 Transgender Day of Remembrance.