

A Gender Equity Network:



The last year has seen a growth of community organizations advocating for justice for their communities - from transgender people to undocumented immigrants to a new wave of reproductive health care organizing. But the growth of these organizations often came in response to policy rollbacks and unprecedented levels of violence, just as often as positive opportunities to advance justice. This sparked the interest of DataCenter, Transgender Law Center, and Western States Center to explore how to better support local and state organizing among communities that are on the frontlines of policy and culture change for a new vision of gender equity. This report shares our analysis of the results of the interviews. Our collaboration aims to put a new program into place in 2016 that will support a cross-sector, state based approach to advancing transgender, immigrant and reproductive justice through a new Gender Equity Network.



--- Landscape for Building Power ---

With many organizations already emerging as leaders of intersectional community organizing efforts, many of us who are the most vulnerable to punitive policies, criminalization, and violence know that we are stronger together. Within our current political climate and its developing possibilities for social change, DataCenter, Transgender Law Center, and Western States Center joined together to create a “landscape scan” to:

- Describe the landscape of organizations and groups that are affected by gender oppression and are seeking to advance gender and reproductive justice as part of their work;
- Identify legislative, policy, and environmental threats to communities at the intersection of their reproductive lives and gender identities;
- Identify opportunities for transgender justice, immigrant justice, and reproductive justice organizations to collaboratively disrupt and dismantle these threats and potentially shift individual, institutional, cultural, and/or systemic sites of struggle.

These organizations, their leadership, commitments, needs, and resources are the foundation of this collective project.

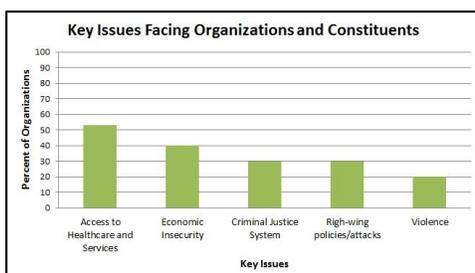
--- Community-based Research Shapes Our Strategy ---



Drawing on our collective expertise, we identified states where organizations were working on issues surrounding trans, immigrant, and/or reproductive justice across the nation. This yielded a sample size of 40 organizations across 11 states, including Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Minnesota, Louisiana, Georgia and Florida. We included small and large organizations from statewide equality-based organizations, Planned Parenthood programs, anti-gender violence organizations, gender advocacy groups, and community-based transgender and immigrant specific organizations.

Participants use a range of organizing models such as public education, direct service, policy advocacy, and direct action. Many of the organizations worked on issues affecting young people. Our landscape scan included in-depth phone interviews, which lasted 30 minutes to 2 hours, with representatives from the organizations. After the interviews, we conducted 4 cycles of data analysis to identify key themes to help us identify our participants’ common structural and organizational challenges, needs and resources regarding the intersections of reproductive, trans, and immigrant justice.

--- Similar Challenges, Common Root Issues ---



Five key issues and findings identified by our landscape scan were:

- Access to Healthcare and Services
- Economic Insecurity
- Criminal Justice System
- Right-wing policies/attacks
- Violence

→ Right wing policies/attacks

Participants shared that they and their members directly experience right-wing conservative attacks and policies that limit and sometimes strip the rights and freedoms of immigrants, people of color, and queer people. As cited earlier the number of national organizations that are fueling state-based policy restrictions are reaching record levels. Rarely did interviewed groups note that they understand the national networks that oppose their work, or ways to tap into resources to confront reactive policies.

"This state is such a strange place for young people of color. It has a very conservative, extreme pockets of people who hate everybody. They are a big threat. They vote, they pass legislation, they block policies that help queer folks and immigrants. They are the same people who are causing violence and harm in our communities."

→ Violence

Evidence suggests that our participants have experiences with police brutality, interpersonal gender-based violence against cisgender and transgender women, and anti-queer violence. Our participants also explained

"We have served thousands of people and worked with dozens of community groups for community organizing and education regarding prevention of sexual and domestic violence, exploitation, and human trafficking. We understand the cultural norms and stigmas associated with such violence and believe in the inherent strength and potential of each person and our communities to address situations in which there has been systematic emotional and/or physical violence. The biggest threat is people have no clue as to how to support transgender folks in this state..."

that their constituents experience intersecting forms of violence (structural, institutional, and interpersonal) and that those who live at the intersections of marginalized racial, gender, sexual identities are greatly impacted by violence. Indeed, there are countless recent examples of violence impacting people experiencing overlapping oppressions, such as the November 2015 mass shooting at a Colorado Springs Planned Parenthood where a majority of those killed or injured were people of color.

→ Criminal Justice System

Our participants shared that their constituents are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system through incarceration in prisons, jails and detention centers, transgender profiling, racial profiling, and poor access to health and maternity care in prisons.

"One of the biggest threats to gender justice is the school to prison pipeline. Young people of color, queer and transgender defending themselves and getting locked up."

→ Access to Health Care and Services

Participants shared that their constituents faced problems with access to equitable and relevant health care services. In particular, access to *comprehensive* health care was a concern for the immigrant community,

"For transgender and gender non-conforming people there are no resources for mental health. There is a lot of discrimination in health care. People do not feel safe in accessing health care, especially in very rural, small towns. Border patrol checkpoints are barriers to people traveling to get services. It is dangerous for those who are undocumented in our community."

transgender community (esp. relevant services), and poor women of color. This scan suggests that, while there are ongoing efforts to organize and advocate for health access, there is a need to re-examine and respond to the reproductive needs of

transgender and gender non-conforming communities. In particular, participants explained that these needs

were central for mothers in prisons who had poor to no access to health care, and undocumented communities that are under constant threats of police surveillance. Using a reproductive justice framework that includes policy advocacy, political education, and cultural change highlights the need for culturally relevant and accessible health care.

→ **Economic Insecurity**

Our participants' responses suggest that their constituents are consistently affected by economic insecurity. Unemployment, low-wage work, and lack of employment training are common issues especially

"Often times our folks are looking for friendly doctors, free services, and resources. We try to answer folks questions and direct them to resources that we know about or connect them with others that may know. The challenge is there is no centralized place, resources are scarce in the South and people just don't have money. Lots of queers are also wanting to have babies and don't have the means to go through expensive doctors."

for LGBT and immigrant communities. Many are heavily impacted by incarceration and deportation, affecting people's ability to get jobs and support their families. Some groups indicated that their membership faces extreme levels of poverty, homelessness, and significant challenges in finding and keeping affordable housing. Those living in rural areas, who already have limited financial means and mobility, also have to travel considerable distances to access services such as health care. While several of the organizations have programs

"In talking about equal pay women get 70¢ on dollar (for white women). Latina women make 54¢ on dollar. When it comes to health care, this is huge. There is an economic impact when a woman and family decide to have a child. There are disproportionate health outcomes for women of color."

that focus on economic empowerment, it is clear that more local and regional organizing is needed to address economic conditions for transgender and gender non-conforming people, immigrants, and low-income women of color. Their members' access to comprehensive health care, particularly reproductive services, is shaped by their economic conditions.

--- Needs and Resources ---

Those we interviewed had different responses to what constitutes justice in their particular field/social justice issue, and even more disparate understandings of how justice is defined within other fields. Yet, more than half expressed an understanding of the importance of sustained movement building at the intersections of transgender, immigrant and reproductive justice. They pointed to the potential strengths of this model and the opportunities for building power. At the core, the participating organizations recognize that organizing at the intersections builds stronger and more coherent efforts for policy advocacy and culture shifts that will bring real material gains for our communities. As part of our conversations, we asked those we spoke with to identify what gaps exist and what needs they have to fully engage in intersectional organizing. Participants identified four areas of need that, if filled, would significantly boost their organizing efforts.

1. Increased infrastructure stability for organizations working at the state and local level

"We need the resources to convene folks, to do on-going leadership development and build stronger more intentional coalitions and alliances."

The organizations that we interviewed, while diverse in terms of size, sited struggles related to financial resources, particularly funding and staff.

Nearly 23% of the participating organizations had estimated budget sizes below \$75,000 annually.

Another 15% had estimated budget sizes of between \$100K and \$300K. This suggests that across the board that community-based organizations working on issues related to transgender and immigrant communities as well as reproductive justice are significantly underfunded and struggle to meet infrastructural needs such as staffing.

2. Communications strategies that resonate across diverse communities

When asked what tools they would need to effectively organize at the intersection of transgender, immigrant and reproductive justice, many of the participants expressed that messaging and communications were

“The tools we would need is more partnership with orgs that are working with these communities. Finding ways in which we can help. Working with language and re-framing our language in the material we put out there. We want to work with orgs in a way that help us develop our tools and resources in a way this is not tokenizing or harmful.”

significant needs. For example, some participants expressed that while multi-lingual messaging may be essential to community organizing different immigrant communities, not all organizations have the internal capacity to meet this need.

3. Strengthen leadership development programs at the state level

Based upon our landscape scan, we found that our organizations already possess numerous assets that can be used for collective community organizing and visions for social change. We learned that there are organizations that are already firmly rooted at the intersections of reproductive, transgender and immigrant justice. These organizations are poised to provide leadership in an emerging movement. Others expressed their growing commitment to learn more about intersectional organizing and analysis despite working separately as experts of different models of organizing and advocacy. Additionally, at least 11 of the organizations we spoke with demonstrated a need for ongoing leadership development among their members and constituents. Movements, participants expressed, must be led by those being most strongly impacted by the key issues.

“We need to ensure that we maintain ownership of our identities and that we are not exploited or tokenized. We need to be leading the work. We need something like a retreat for transgender women of color from across the country to do some building together. We need a place to plan strategy that we can take back to our own communities and use what we learn to build projects and mobilize people.”

4. Align the vision for long-term work through deep political education

“We want more anti-oppression facilitation tools, more education on Queer, Transgender People of Color stuff. We want to provide more spaces to heal, plan and find ways of learning to work together. We need healing to let go of the oppression system’s pain inflicted on us. I think there is a desire but we don’t have the tools. We do not have the resources to do what we need to.”

Those that we interviewed advocated for ongoing training and education on organizing at the intersections. They shared that one-off trainings and short-term solutions would not meet the needs of communities that are looking towards long-term sustainability.

--- Next Steps: Strategies for Organizing at the Intersections ---

The landscape scan has provided much needed direction for the future of reproductive, transgender, and immigrant justice community organizing. Based upon our analysis, we found that when community organizations are isolated from one another, they are in need of resources, space, trainings, messages, to collectively work together. With the opportunity, these communities may be able to draw from their current assets - expertise in areas of community education, policy advocacy, direct service, and direct action - to build a long-term movement.

DataCenter, Transgender Law Center, and Western States Center will continue to work with communities as we develop a shared analysis and intersectional approach to organizing for transgender, immigrant, and reproductive justice. Our next steps will be to explore opportunities for a strategic cohort to convene a group of organizations that will make individual and collective contributions towards movement building.

Through a strategic cohort model, we will:

- Create spaces for communities to engage in the work;
- Support organizations through leadership development, capacity building, and base-building trainings;
- Support and build upon our partners' existing political campaigns on the administrative, state and federal level.

As we move forward, DataCenter, Transgender Law Center, and Western States Center will be drawing on our collective expertise in these areas to bring to bear proven community organizing, capacity building, and community-driven research models that lead to these goals.

--- Key Terms ---

Cisgender: A person who identifies or is comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth. Cisgender is often used by people who do not identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

Community Organizing: When people who share common experiences take measures together to influence politics and/or culture to build power and change the conditions in which they live.

Gender Non-Conforming: An umbrella term used to describe people whose appearance, personal characteristics or behavior differ from people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

Immigrant Justice: When people from any nation can move freely across borders without fear of discrimination, persecution, economic and social repression or state violence.

Intersectional Organizing: Organizing that centers an understanding that identities like race gender, class and systems of oppression like classism, racism and patriarchy are all interconnected and that developing strategies and visions that address those connections are essential for social change.

Institutional: Entrenched within the organizational practices and policies of a society.

Leadership Development: An intentional effort to provide community members with opportunities to learn, grow and change by developing practical skills that empower them to be more effective leaders.

Structural Violence: Structural violence refers to ways in which social and institutional structures (including economic, educational, political, legal and environmental networks) harm, disadvantage, or reduce the life-chances of individuals often based upon their race, gender, sexuality, and class. Structural violence can be subtle and invisible, operationalized through policies and social relationships. Through structural violence there are immediate and long-term effects often extending across generations.

Transgender: A person who knows on a deep level that their gender is different than their sex from birth; a political word that binds together multiple communities of people who experience transgender oppression.

Transgender Justice: When all people can identify and express their gender as who they are and have the economic, political and cultural power and resources to make healthy decisions over their own bodies, families and communities, while living free from discrimination and violence based on gender identity or expression.

Reproductive Justice: When all people have the political, economic, and social power and resources to make healthy decisions about their own bodies and desires for family.

❖ **Thank You** ❖

to all of the organizations and individuals that contributed their time and insight to this project.

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OutFront Minnesota
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Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN)
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Planned Parenthood Utah
Planned Parenthood Nevada
Pro-Choice Resources Center
Safeguarding American Values for Everyone (SAVE)
SLC Dream Team
Southern Arizona Gender Alliance
Southerners on New Ground
SPARK
Strong Families NM (Forward Together)
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Trangender Allies Group
Trans Active
Transgender Education Advocates of Utah
Transgender Inclusion Project
Young Women United



DataCenter unlocks the power of knowledge for social change. We support grassroots organizing for justice and sustainability through strategic research, training, and collaborations. We use research to help move the knowledge and solutions of communities of color and the poor from the margins to the center of decision-making. www.datacenter.org



Transgender Law Center changes law, policy, and attitudes so that all people can live safely, authentically, and free from discrimination regardless of their gender identity or expression. We envision a future where gender self-determination and authentic expression are seen as basic rights and matters of common human dignity. www.transgenderlawcenter.org



Western States Center mission is to connect and build the power of community organizations to challenge and transform individuals, organizations and systems to achieve racial, gender and economic justice. We envision our movement achieving a just society where we all flourish in sustainable, caring and connected communities. www.westernstatescenter.org