

ADVANCEMENT PROJECT NATIONAL OFFICE

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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Dear Friends,

Our journey toward racial justice is nowhere near finished. With so much gained over the last year, so much more is at stake in the coming year. In 2021, we saw the weakening of our voting rights laws, and a heightened attack on our electoral system. With voting barriers being erected in states like Florida and Georgia and an insurrection at the Capitol on January 6, it is clear that our democracy is in peril right now.

It is no coincidence that these efforts were waged after the 2020 Presidential Election, when people of color, especially Black people, turned out in record numbers. And because people of color are going to make up the majority in this country at some point soon, these baseless attempts to depress and suppress the vote continue to target people of color in a naked power grab that is disadvantaging our communities. And all the progress made by our team, partners, and ancestors is at risk.

We're also still fighting the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and mass incarceration—from the challenges that face our school system and students of color, to the inhumane health conditions that plague our prison system.

All year, we've been litigating in the courts, crafting resources for grassroots partners, and building national campaigns to strengthen local organizing and shift the narratives that uphold and reinforce systemic racism in this country. Whether we were removing police from schools and instead inserting effective supports, blocking barriers to the ballot, freeing people from COVID-ridden jails, or campaigning to invest in alternatives to police, we've been deep in the weeds with our grassroots partners creating the change that's necessary.

Currently, we are gearing up for some very important work in 2022. We're preparing for the 2022 mid-term election—mobilizing and empowering voters through our Right to Vote and Young Voters of Color programming and monitoring the voting rights landscape to prevent future rollbacks.

We're still working toward dismantling systems that criminalize and incarcerate people of color in the name of 'law and order' and uplifting new approaches where people are free to define safety and accountability in their own communities. We are training predominantly Black and Brown movement lawyers through our Policing Project, and developing various educational materials to arm folks with the necessary tools, resources and information needed to take back their power, while we work to hold law enforcement officials and leaders accountable.

In the coming year we will expose truths around police associations, detail how cops get off after enacting police violence that's most often fatal, and uplift even more the vital importance of defunding police.

Through our Quality Education work to end the schoolhouse-to-jailhouse pipeline, we remain steadfast in ending the criminalization of Black and Brown students, especially Black girls, and ensuring the full implementation of Police Free Schools in the cities where it was won, as well as expanding on those victories. In this work to ensure a truly caring and nurturing learning environment for students of color that meets not only their physical needs, but also their mental needs, we are championing the reinvestment of school funding into more adequate student supports while fighting to make clear the brutal effects that stem from the privatization of schools—outlining its true impact on racial justice.

THIS WORK WON'T BE EASY, BUT THIS MOVEMENT IS STRONG, AND I TRULY BELIEVE IN WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED.

The work of Advancement Project is integral to the future of our democracy. And with all that is at stake, we're going to fight. This is an all-hands on deck moment. Continue reading to learn, in more detail, how we showed up across the country in 2021.

It's people like you who make our impact possible.

**Onward Together,
Judith Browne Dianis**

Executive Director, Advancement Project National Office

WHY WE DO THIS WORK

America is still in a compounding crises, even as we work to end the impacts of white supremacy on our systems and people. Our founding team of veteran civil rights lawyers believes that structural racism can never be reformed, only dismantled, and we seek to wholly dismantle systems that criminalize and incarcerate people of color every day. We believe that true freedom is rooted in abolition and in strengthening community-based power. We are committed to transforming systems and building a better world for our communities despite any challenges that may arise.

We provide direct, hands-on support at the local level for organized communities in their struggles for racial and social justice - everything from legal, communications and narrative, and campaign organizing strategy. We also assist in helping local partners build up their own capacity and power in their communities.

OUR ROLE AS A CONVENER HELPS BUILD MOMENTUM & CREATE SPACES TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER AND WORK TOGETHER.

We do not shy away from difficult issues and typically are first responders to civil rights crises. Whether at the national or local level, we choose projects that have the potential to build and reframe power at the grassroots level and accelerate the quest for racial justice.

It's our responsibility to remain on the cutting edge of racial justice issues.



MISSION

Advancement Project is a next generation, multi-racial civil rights organization. Rooted in the great human rights struggles for equality and justice, we exist to fulfill America's promise of a caring, inclusive and just democracy. We use innovative tools and strategies to strengthen social movements and achieve high impact policy change.

VISION

We envision a future where people of color are free – where they can thrive, be safe and exercise power. Driven by the genius of ordinary people and their movements, racism will no longer exist and justice will be radically transformed.



We work to remove structural barriers to equality in communities of color. As such, Advancement Project embraces creating multiracial alliances between Black, Latinx, immigrant, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Indigenous communities. Our efforts are always bottom-up and community-oriented.

We believe that a just society will only be achieved through a multiracial movement that challenges the status quo. We must build sustainable power in communities of color and ensure they have a voice in decisions that affect our communities and well-being. Too often, our communities are excluded from discussions or are marginalized by structural inequalities that disproportionately limit our educational opportunities or threaten our civic engagement.

We also believe the struggle for racial justice is generational. To this point, we've worked to engage and raise the voices of youth throughout our work.

OVER 80 GRASSROOTS & NATIONAL PARTNERS IN 20 STATES

ARIZONA

Opportunity to Learn
Justice Project

COLORADO

Opportunity to Learn

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JUSTICE PROJECT



OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

RAMPING UP OUR EFFORTS TO SECURE AN AFFIRMATIVE RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION & LEVELING THE EDUCATIONAL PLAYING FIELD

When students returned in-person this past fall for the first time in over a year and a half, many of them, particularly those in communities of color, returned to a school more likely to have a police officer than a counselor. Along with their books, many of these students carried the traumas they endured over the course of the pandemic - with many young people losing parents and loved ones to the virus or facing significant financial hardships. Schools need to invest in resources to support students facing that reality.

Instead, we have witnessed a push to keep or return police to public schools, despite data that shows that police in schools create a hostile environment and strain relationships between students, educators, and law enforcement.

While the pandemic has made organizing a bit more challenging, we did not let this stop us. In 2021, we convened the Police Free Schools Abolitionist Summer ActionCamp in collaboration with Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ). Held virtually, the 10th Anniversary ActionCamp brought together over 120 participants from 16 states across the United States, as well as from Canada and the United Kingdom. ActionCamp opened with a presentation that reasserted that achieving police free schools is possible, providing a space for partner organizations to learn and draw inspiration from their peers, and coordinating organizing and communication strategies to further advance local campaigns with national impact.

We also relaunched our Police Free Schools campaign website and #AssaultAt map to serve as a national campaign center of resources and stories for our partners in the field. The map shows the harm caused by keeping police in schools.



It was essential to begin the school year with this energy and enthusiasm, as school districts increased surveillance of students and re-hired law enforcement to serve in other roles, rather than hiring and training staff qualified to provide students the supports they need to actually be safe. We are working with our campaign partners to hold local officials accountable to the demands of their communities to remove police from their schools and address education equity.

THE PANDEMIC HAS BOTH EXPOSED & EXACERBATED THE SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES INHERENT IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

While schools were closed, many students, particularly those in communities of color, languished on the deficit side of the digital divide and those lacking access to reliable broadband fell even further behind. A report commissioned by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, found that "the pandemic had negatively affected academic growth, widening pre-existing disparities. In core subjects like math and reading, there are worrisome signs that in some grades students might be falling even further behind pre-pandemic expectations." These findings are particularly troubling given that the majority of students in public school are students of color.

Through generous support from Arnold & Porter, we have hired a fellow to pursue legal and advocacy challenges to racial inequities and to advance the idea of a right to education. For the past several years, Advancement Project has been conducting research and monitoring litigation relating to the right to education. We plan to use this research to develop a strategy to help grassroots organizations challenge a range of issues that create and perpetuate structural barriers to high quality education. We believe public schools are a public good under control of the community and should be fully resourced to ensure that not only are the mental and physical needs of students met, but that they experience power, dignity, freedom, creativity, experimentation, wholeness, wellness, nurture, and care.

APPLYING PRESSURE TO MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY


In October 2021 during an interview on PBS News Hour, Executive Director Judith Browne Dianis said,

"I DON'T THINK I'M BEING ALARMIST TO SAY THAT OUR DEMOCRACY IS IN PERIL RIGHT NOW."

Her statement was particularly poignant during a year when over 400 voter suppression bills were introduced in 49 states. Introduced under the guise of securing the integrity of the ballot, these bills respond to a problem that never actually existed. For example, even though Georgia election officials declared the outcome of the 2020 Presidential election legitimate and found no real fraud, the legislature introduced and hastily passed Senate Bill 202. The bill restricts voters access in a number of ways:

- Restricting the mail-in voting process used by 1.3 million Georgians including adding new identification requirements and rules for third-party organizations sending absentee ballot applications.
- Restricting early voting, including making Sunday voting optional, prohibiting mobile polling locations, and outlawing line warming.
- Giving the GA legislature more power to supersede local election officials in a power grab by the state.

The facts on the ground in Georgia show the threat this bill poses to our democracy and to communities of color:

- 
- Five million people, or 2 out of 3 eligible voters, cast a ballot in the Presidential election;
 - Four and a half million people voted in the 2021 Senate runoff;
 - The number of Black, eligible voters have accounted for more than half of Georgia's electorate growth since 2000;
 - Since 2016, Black, Latinx, and Asian American and Pacific Islander voters have comprised the majority of newly registered voters in Georgia.

We, at Advancement Project, have long known that attacks on the right to vote coincide with the rise in power of communities of color. This year, we filed lawsuits in Georgia and Florida, challenging legislation so clearly aimed at silencing the engines of democracy— working in collaboration with and on behalf of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Concerned Black Clergy, Mijente, the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, Faith in Action and a coalition of churches; and Florida Rising, Faith in Florida, Equal Ground Education Fund, UnidosUS, the Hispanic Federation and Poder Latinx.

Litigation is one tool at our disposal to support our organizing partners and can be a jumping off point for political education of voters. We teamed up with our partners in Georgia to build a campaign to educate voters about the new restrictive voting laws and to push local election officials to make elections fair and accessible.

While many states have sought to make it more difficult for communities of color to access the ballot, Virginia serves as a model for how states should be moving on this important issue. We supported New Virginia Majority in advocacy to pass the Virginia Voting Rights Act. Modeled after the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, the law protects voters from discrimination and creates an oversight of voting changes.

Advancement Project attorneys consulted as subject matter experts with lawmakers and legislative staff prior to the bill's introduction, spoke at public events to raise awareness about modern voting rights challenges, provided testimony in General Assembly hearings, addressed stakeholder concerns about the bill, and analyzed potential revisions to the bill as it moved through the legislative process. The bill, signed into law in September, is a blueprint for states looking to protect access to the ballot for communities of color.

For the last 20 years, Advancement Project has supported grassroots organizations in challenging felony disenfranchisement laws that are a relic of the Jim Crow era. In 2021, we supported our partners in Mississippi, One Voice and Mississippi Votes, where more than 235,000 people cannot vote due to felony convictions; more than half them are Black. We co-authored a report, *Our Voice, Our Votes: Felony Disenfranchisement and Reentry in Mississippi* that highlighted the onerous nature of the state's procedure for restoring voting rights and its impact on people of color. We provided information and assistance to people seeking rights restoration while making the clarion call for legislative reform.

We continued to strengthen the capacity of local organizations across the country working on rights restoration by hosting our second national convening. Our Summer 2021 Rights Restoration Convening, brought together nearly 100 activists, grassroots leaders, organizers, and communications staff from 49 different organizations in 15 states to continue to build their network of allies and gain new tools to expand their state-level campaigns.

ADDRESSING THE MASS INCARCERATION CRISIS AND DECRIMINALIZING POVERTY AND RACE

In April 2021, eleven months after kneeling on George Floyd's neck for nine minutes, Derek Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter. Despite the overwhelming evidence—as well as the callousness with which he ignored Floyd's repeated exhortations that he “couldn't breathe”—the verdict was most definitely not a certainty.

“THE SAD REALITY IS THAT ONE OF THE DEFINING FEATURES OF POLICING IS A LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY, PARTICULARLY AS IT PERTAINS TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR.”

And yet, nearly two years after the uprisings sparked by the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the criminal legal system remains intact.

Accordingly, this year we have helped our partners build political education campaigns to demystify the system and build power in their communities. “Mapping Injustice: Navigating the Criminal Legal System 101” brought together Michigan Liberation, Close the Workhouse, Neighborhood Defender Service Detroit, Detroit Justice Center, and East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition for a series of webinars on the criminal legal system.

According to Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2022, a report by the Prison Policy Initiative, “in a typical year, about 600,000 people enter prison gates, but people go to jail over 10 million times each year.”

This has significant ramifications for impacted people and their communities. For this reason, the two overarching priorities of our Justice Project are to decarcerate and decriminalize—reducing our communities' interactions with the legal system and ultimately reducing their power to criminalize communities of color.

We scored a major victory when we secured a settlement in our case against the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison, in support of our partner the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition (EBRPPRC) and their campaign to close the jail. We were successful in having bail determination hearings scheduled for the same time every day. Making it easier for counsel to appear with their clients. Furthermore, judges are taking into consideration the amount that defendants can pay when setting their bail.

With a focus on police accountability and dismantling the system, we also launched the Policing Project along with our partners at Civil Rights Corps and other grassroots partners. This is a national project to provide infrastructure and training for Black and Brown lawyers who want to challenge police abuse, those who collaborate with them, and those who fund them. We aim to meet the demands of the moment by training more lawyers in our movement lawyering approach to connect with local campaigns for change. In August, we partnered with Civil Rights Corps to bring together lawyers in Houston for a 12-week training on Section 1983 litigation, political education, and movement lawyering. We helped design the curriculum, recruit and screen participants, identify experts in the field to lead these sessions, and co-taught a session on lawyering in support of racial justice movements.

Finally, in order to shift narratives and discourse around the criminal legal system, we've helped to tell the stories of people impacted, putting a human face to the devastating impacts of mass incarceration. We partnered with Michigan Liberation to elevate their 2021 Black Mamas Bailout Campaign project in the week leading up to Mother's Day, highlighting the stories and humanity of seven mothers who have been incarcerated.

We also used our social media platforms to drive engagement back to Michigan Liberation's campaign to raise money that was used to pay the bail, fines, and fees of Black Mama's, Black women, gender nonconforming people and fem(me)s and bring them home to their families.

In 2021, our work was front and center across the nation. Here are some headlines that took airwaves by storm and stood out:

"We have seen the most significant rollback of voting rights this past year in state legislatures. This court decision is opening up the floodgates to more of that."

"How SCOTUS voting rights decision is 'opening up the floodgates' for voter discrimination", *MSNBC*, July 2021.

[Read more](#)



"The most important thing is for them to take responsibility for what we saw and not to downplay it," said Judith Browne Dianis, Executive Director of Advancement Project National Office."

"What Black People Saw When Border Patrol Whipped Haitians on Horseback", *Vice News*, September 2021.

[Read more](#)



"Protesting and voting are two essential parts of the democratic formula. We can only defend our democracy — and usher in an inclusive and just future for all — when we defend the right to vote alongside the right to protest."

"Why Florida Gov. DeSantis signed voting rights restriction on Fox News", *USA Today*, May 2021.

[Read more](#)



"The Supreme Court ... dealt another blow to the Voting Rights Act just this past session, and so it's made it harder for us to prove discrimination in the courts, but we're still in the states—we're still fighting—using what's left of the voting rights act, and using the constitution."

"Voting protection bill blocked in Senate",

PBS, October 2021.

[Read more](#)



"This really shows the dehumanization of Black people at the hands of police, and that this isn't just about this trial, but it is the story that the Black community keeps telling America, that there is a problem with policing and that we are targeted by the police."

"Impact of testimony from the first week of Derek Chauvin's murder trial", *CBS News*, April 2021.

[Read more](#)



"Activists vowed Wednesday to keep fighting for substantial changes to the Minneapolis Police Department, despite the defeat of a ballot initiative that would have replaced it with a reimagined public safety unit in the city where George Floyd died under an officer's knee."

"Activists keep police reform push despite Minneapolis loss", *AP News*, November 2021.

[Read more](#)



"Florida's recent legislation attacking the voting rights of its Black and Latino residents is like a virus attacking the human heart... Without a remedy to undo the effects, our democracy will die."

"Another legal challenge filed against new restrictions on voting by mail in Florida", *Miami Herald*, May 2021.

[Read more](#)

The Miami Herald

The U.S. Department of Justice continues to offer schools hundreds of millions of dollars under the guise of "school safety" to monitor students through anonymous reporting systems, social-media surveillance, and threat-assessment teams that coordinate with law enforcement. These are dangerous and unproven practices that disproportionately criminalize Black and brown students."

"The Police-Free Schools Movement Made Headway. Has It Lost Momentum?", *Education Week*, June 2021

[Read more](#)



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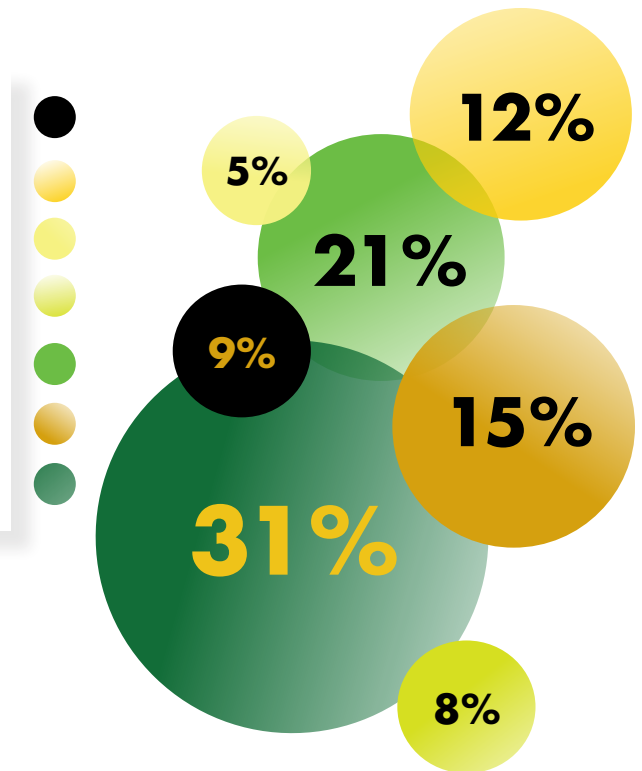
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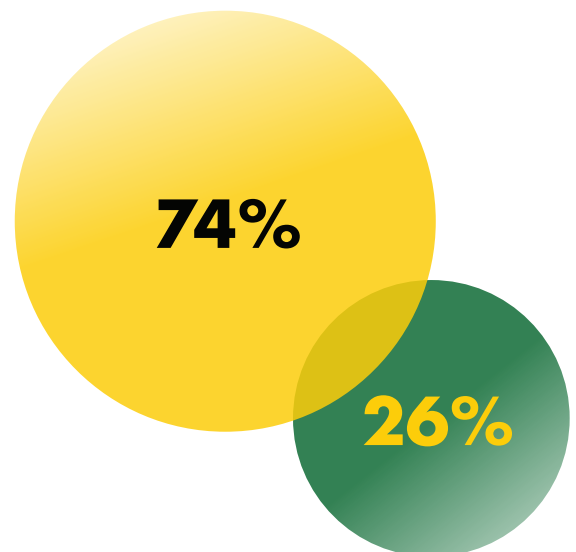
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FUNDRAISING	\$921,851.17
ADMINISTRATION & INFRASTRUCTURE	\$1,203,446.25
GENERAL PROGRAMS/CAMPAIGNS	\$482,840.67
STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS	\$784,234.95
JUSTICE PROJECT	\$2,167,369.29
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN	\$1,522,892.87
POWER & DEMOCRACY	\$3,156,717.28
TOTAL REVENUE	\$10,239,352.48



2021 REVENUES

RESTRICTED	\$2,548,614.80
UNRESTRICTED	\$7,189,536.20
TOTAL REVENUE	\$9,738,151.00



All financials are preliminary and pre-audited numbers on an accrual basis.

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