

VIRTUAL SUMMIT 2020

THE Climate +
Clean Energy
**EQUITY
FUND**

SUMMARY & REPORT



July 7-30

TEAM STATEMENT

After a year of organizing and learning with grantee partners through five State Power Building Summits in 2019 (FL, VA, PA, NM, and MN), we were excited to convene everyone at our second National Power Building Summit in 2020. We were planning to bring our grantee partners, including new partners from GA, NC, and NV, together in Philadelphia, PA, in June 2020. The global pandemic changed everything. We were inspired by our grantee partners who navigated multiple crises - health and economic crisis, the uprisings for police accountability and racial justice, the 2020 electoral season, ongoing climate disasters and injustices - and rose to the occasion over and over again to protect and empower their communities. Our Summit Planning Committee made sure the Equity Fund knew that creating space to convene, learn, and inspire, was more important than ever.

The Climate and Clean Energy Equity Fund's **2020 Virtual Power Building Summit** took place from July 7th to July 30th. We came together via 10 video calls to center the role of communities of color in the climate movement; to share best practices in climate policy, organizing and messaging; and to build relationships across the Equity Fund's eight states and almost 60 grantee partners. The Summit included an opening plenary, eight topic-specific panels, and a Q & A with funders. In the following report we summarize each session: panel discussions, key takeaways, and more.

A special thank you to our Summit Planning Committee members for leading the vision and structure of the summit: **Marco Hernandez** (COPAL), **Kandace Montgomery** (Black Visions), **Leng Leng Chancey** (GA 9to5), **Veronica Coptis** (Center for Coalfield Justice), **Harrison Wallace** (CCAN), **Kenneth Gilliam** (New Virginia Majority), **Francisco Segovia** (COPAL), **Julie Greenberg** (POWER), **Oriana Sandoval** (Center for Civic Policy), **Allex Luna** (NM CAFE), **La'Meshia Kaminski** (NC Black Alliance), **Marcus Bass** (Advance Carolina), **Laura Martin** (PLAN), **Carlos Torrealba** (Central Florida Jobs with Justice) and **Tram Nguyen** (New Virginia Majority).

In Solidarity,

THE EQUITY FUND TEAM

Opening Plenary: “What Does an Antiracist Climate Movement Look Like?”

We opened the 2020 Virtual Power Building Summit on July 7th with several dynamic speakers, guests, and artists. The opening plenary articulated a clear vision of the Equity Fund’s grantee partners work and shared how grantee partners are creating an antiracist climate movement.

Reverend Yearwood of the **Hip Hop Caucus** kicked things off with a sneak peak of a climate-comedy film created by creatives of color, “Ain’t Your Mama’s Heatwave,” and shared inspiring words for our 137 attendees. The Equity Fund’s Executive Director, Roger Kim, then took the mic and gave an overview of the Equity Fund’s mission and the tremendous growth and impact that both the Equity Fund and our grantee partners have created over the past four years.

Meagan Llerena with **Make the Road PA** did a “flash talk” on her work organizing in Pennsylvania’s Latinx community and spoke about the important role that Latinx people play in fighting climate change. After Meagan, **Jonathan Alingu** from **Central Florida Jobs with Justice** talked about the importance of centering workers rights in our fight for climate equity.

Singer [Cecily Bumbray](#) then took the virtual stage and honored us with her first of two phenomenal performances. Jordan Estevao moderated a panel featuring **Nse Ufot** with the **New Georgia Project**, who spoke about the intersections of heatwaves, utility shutoffs, pandemic, air quality, and voter protection. The panel also featured **Elianne Farhat** with **Take Action Minnesota** who spoke about the importance of race in their work in MN and **Tram Nguyen** with **New Virginia Majority** who spoke of the challenges with navigating traditional environmentalists in the legislative process. One of the key takeaways was that a neutral stance on racial justice issues is not an option for equitable climate solutions; we must address climate change along with all the other issues faced by communities of color. As such, it was clear that across our states, multiracial coalitions in particular are doing some of the most impactful climate organizing.

After the closing, there was a funder-only session in which we discussed how the funding community needs to change to be antiracist and support racial and economic justice centered

climate work. The group discussed the deep institutional work that is needed at the trustee, staff and operational levels to center equity within climate and clean energy philanthropy.

Organizing in Rural Communities

Too often, rural communities are overlooked, undervalued and underinvested in by progressive movements, yet they are critical if we want to win on climate equity. The first topic-specific session of the Virtual Summit focused on organizing in rural communities. Through a diverse panel of speakers, we aimed to bring to light the different folks that live in rural areas and the corresponding challenges and opportunities that come with working within these communities. The panel, composed of **Johana Bencomo** with **CAFe NM**, **Brigid Flaherty** with **Downhome NC**, **Janie Hill-Scott** with **Georgia WAND**, and moderated by **Veronica Coptis** with **Center for Coalfield Justice**, talked about the underinvestment in rural communities by progressive organizations. Over forty participants listened to the panelists discuss the limitations of only investing in cities, the progressive vision of rural communities, and the opportunities to advance social change through deep listening and conversations. We heard about the fear some community members have of the potential backlash of being active on progressive issues and the need for organizations to create safe spaces to support these advocates. The panelists emphasized standing in solidarity with community members when the economic transition of their community away from fossil fuels is underway. They reminded us that the pain and fear of these communities is real and must be always heard and respected.

Covid-19 and Climate Equity

We find ourselves in the middle of many intersecting crises - from a global pandemic exacerbated by existing health disparities, to uprisings against police brutality, to climate change that impacts communities of color and low income folks first and worst. Forty-nine leaders and organizers came together to explore and learn how communities are responding to the pandemic, how it intersects with their existing work on racial and climate justice, and

new strategies and tools that are being developed and implemented. **Zelalem Adefris** from **Catalyst Miami** talked about their work to support community members with financial guidance, unemployment, and utility shutoffs; **Leng Leng Chancey** with **9to5 Working Women** discussed the incredible mutual aid fund they have deployed to support their members facing unemployment, food insecurity, and eviction; and **JaNae Bates** of **ISAIAH** lifted up the importance of narrative, how to center BIPOC folx in our narratives as heroes and protagonists, and the power of this moment to bring people together around collective actions. In the midst of the devastating health, economic, and emotional toll of the COVID pandemic, organizers are innovating and bringing new strategies and ideas to the movement, including new virtual trainings on letters to the editor, multilingual virtual convenings, leadership development, and civic engagement skills building for community members to engage with elected officials.

Working with Labor

During this session we discussed the challenges and openings for growing partnerships with both organized labor and workers for climate equity. The session opened up with 30 attendees and a panel discussion where **Carlos Torrealba** the Climate Justice Organizer with **Central Florida Jobs with Justice** talked about opportunities to build from the bottom up with unions, especially in Florida and places where climate impacts are evident. He advised that community organizations have a plan for working with unions. **Hannah Laurison**, Executive Director of **PA Stands Up** discussed how organized labor is under attack by the legislature and corporations. Local and statewide partners showing up for labor can be very powerful and build trust that we need for a Just Transition. **Michael Leon Guerrero**, Executive Director of the **Labor Network for Sustainability** talked about how the pandemic has created some openings. Right now 40 million people are out of work and many jobs are not coming back the way they were. The “Right” is seeing this as an opportunity to get rid of environmental protections, the postal service, and social security. These kinds of threats are opportunities to talk to labor about defending our common values. Some key takeaways from this session included the need to deepen relationships and get past bad history. This is accomplished in

the long run by seeking out near term areas and campaigns of shared self interest. Also, it's tough to bring labor to the table after the policy outcomes are mostly decided. Don't go to organized labor with a full agenda on a short turnaround to sign on. Instead, engage them from the start.

Organizing for Climate Equity in Black Communities

It is clear that the Black community is leading the fight for racial equity in 2020. The session on organizing for climate equity in Black communities came together to discuss the common opportunities and challenges and identify actionable steps for increasing/empowering Black climate leadership. This was our most popular session with 55 attendees. The panel consisted of **Wanda Moseley** with **Black Voters Matter** (GA), **La'Meshia Kaminski** with **North Carolina Black Alliance**, and **Sophia Benrud** with **Black Visions** (MN). Wanda spoke to the need to make climate and energy “kitchen table issues,” that is, connecting utility bills and energy burdens to climate change in order to motivate Black voters. La'Meshia brought in her experience working with Black communities in North Carolina who have been bombarded with environmental racism such as coal ash, hog farms, pipelines and urban heat zones. She talked about the potential of North Carolina as one of the nation's largest Black electorates. Sophia spoke about how Black Visions is anchoring a table in Minnesota for BIPOC organizers and leaders that centers their experiences and priorities. Key takeaways from this session included a clear desire from our grantee partners to create Black/BIPOC spaces within states and across states; the need for policy organizations to listen to Black leadership on climate issues; and the fact that Black voters are a vital part of any effective coalition on climate which makes voter enfranchisement, protection and turnout critical to climate action.

Latinx Organizing

The Latinx population is not often seen as a crucial part of the broader climate movement, when in fact they are among the most concerned about the effects of climate change. Our session on organizing in Latinx communities discussed the diversity of Latinx people within the US and the way grantee partners simultaneously push forward the many issues that affect

Latinx people. **Laila Martin** with **CASA** Pennsylvania moderated a diverse panel of speakers including **Marco Hernandez** with **COPAL** Minnesota, **Maria Romano** with **Somos Un Pueblo Unido** in New Mexico, and **Nahomi Matos Rondon** with **FLIC** in Florida. Twenty-seven participants tuned into this conversation and - thanks to a timely question from one of the participants - the panel spoke frankly about the challenge and importance of tackling anti-blackness in the Latinx community. Key takeaways from this session included that we must prioritize addressing racism and colorism within the Latinx community if we want to achieve racial justice, and that addressing the immediate challenges Latinx people face - such as fear of deportation, lack of driver's licenses and housing insecurity- is critical to building Latinx power that also tackles climate justice.

Comprehensive Building Blocks for a Regenerative and Just 100% Policy

Traditional environmental organizations think of 100% policy as only about energy. This session was moderated by **Aiko Schaefer** the Director of **100% Network** and focused on 100% energy policy through a comprehensive lens. It also introduced the 38 grantee partners on the call to the [100% Network and their "Building Blocks Policy"](#) - a resource for frontline organizations interested in the topic. **Jacqui Patterson**, the Director of Climate & Environmental Justice Program **NAACP**, laid bare the reality that big energy is colonizing the green economy and that some environmental advocates are rolling out the red carpet for them because of their singular focus on reducing GHGs and fossil fuels by any means necessary. She also gave hope in sharing the stories of frontline communities building community owned power, leading to community-led and owned energy systems such as in Loreda, TX where a women's immigrant rights center just put in a 96 panel solar system to power their center.

Suzanne Singer of **Native Renewables** discussed their work on Navajo land and the inspiration that fuels her work in native and rural communities. She sees community members as drivers of energy policy and moving more comprehensive economic and energy plans forward. **Clarke Gocker** of **PUSH** Buffalo shared their community's story of organizing a multisectoral coalition of greens, faith, community. PUSH is a member of New York Renews

which is organized around Jemez principles of democratic organizing and leadership. The NY Renews coalition won the boldest climate bill in the state - The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which calls for net zero economy wide transition by 2050. The most vibrant discussion was generated by a grantee partner's question about coalition and when or if it is ever strategic to walk away from the negotiating table. The takeaway is summarized in the following quote from one of the panelists: "we never left the table alone - the agreement was we would never separate, if needed we would walk out together. This required everyone to be committed to walk if the equity provisions were not in there, maybe because we did this we got what we wanted. To be clear, we would have walked out together if we did not."

Native Organizing

Native peoples are the original stewards of this land and yet are routinely left out of discussions and decision-making spaces when it comes to climate change and our clean energy future. The session on organizing with Native communities kicked off with 28 attendees and two short video clips - one on the need for accurate representations of native people in the media and the other on the importance of native folks to be accurately represented in the census. The panel consisted of two indigenous women, **Beverly Harry** with the **Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada** and **Ahtza Chavez** with **Native American Voters Alliance** (NM) who elaborated on the importance of authentic representation and native stories to be widely heard and understood. They spoke candidly about the need for non-native allies to ensure that native voices are included in discussion and decision-making, especially around environmental issues and clean energy development. The panel shared some best practices with regards to working with native communities which included taking the time and resources needed to build relationships in which non-native allies are deeply listening to the needs of native communities. The link between native sovereignty and stewardship of our land and water was made very clear; so was the importance of any sort of allyship to be rooted in supporting the sovereignty of native people and their land.

Funder Q&A

We closed out the virtual summit with a conversation about climate and energy grantmaking, philanthropy, and coming back to our opening question: how do we build an anti-racist climate movement? Forty-seven partners joined us for a conversation with **Erin Rogers** of the **Hive Fund for Gender and Climate Justice**, **Aimee Witteman** with the **McKnight Foundation**, and **Paige Brown** of the **Climate and Energy Funders Group**. The conversation shed light on how climate philanthropy got to where it is today, explored trends in the field, and gave space to ask questions about how BIPOC-led organizing can move to the center of climate funding. Key takeaways from the session included the opportunity to educate climate philanthropists on the connections between climate, democracy, and racial justice; the need for “renegade program officers” to be advocates for equitable grantmaking within their institutions and to organize across their field; and to translate the anger, trust, and power from organizing groups to their boards and decision makers to move more resources to the field for climate justice organizing and powerbuilding.

Closing

The 2020 Virtual Power Building Summit exceeded our expectations. From the inspiring stories of organizations centering BIPOC and low income communities in their fight for climate equity, to the exchange of ideas by grantee partners from across the country, the Virtual Summit was a success.

While we lost some relationship building opportunities because we were not able to meet in person, making it an online virtual summit allowed much broader participation of staff from grantee partner organizations who might not have otherwise been able to participate. For that we are thankful and we want to continue to find virtual convening opportunities for the broad and deep participation of the staff of grantee partners.

We are grateful for the wisdom that our grantee partners shared over the course of the month and the palpable camaraderie of all participants. We look forward to continuing to work with and *win* with all of you. Onward!