



## Civil Discourse or Civil Disruption?

**GREENPEACE, NONPROFITS, AND ILLEGAL PROTESTS** PAGE 5

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# THE LEFT'S VOTING MACHINE

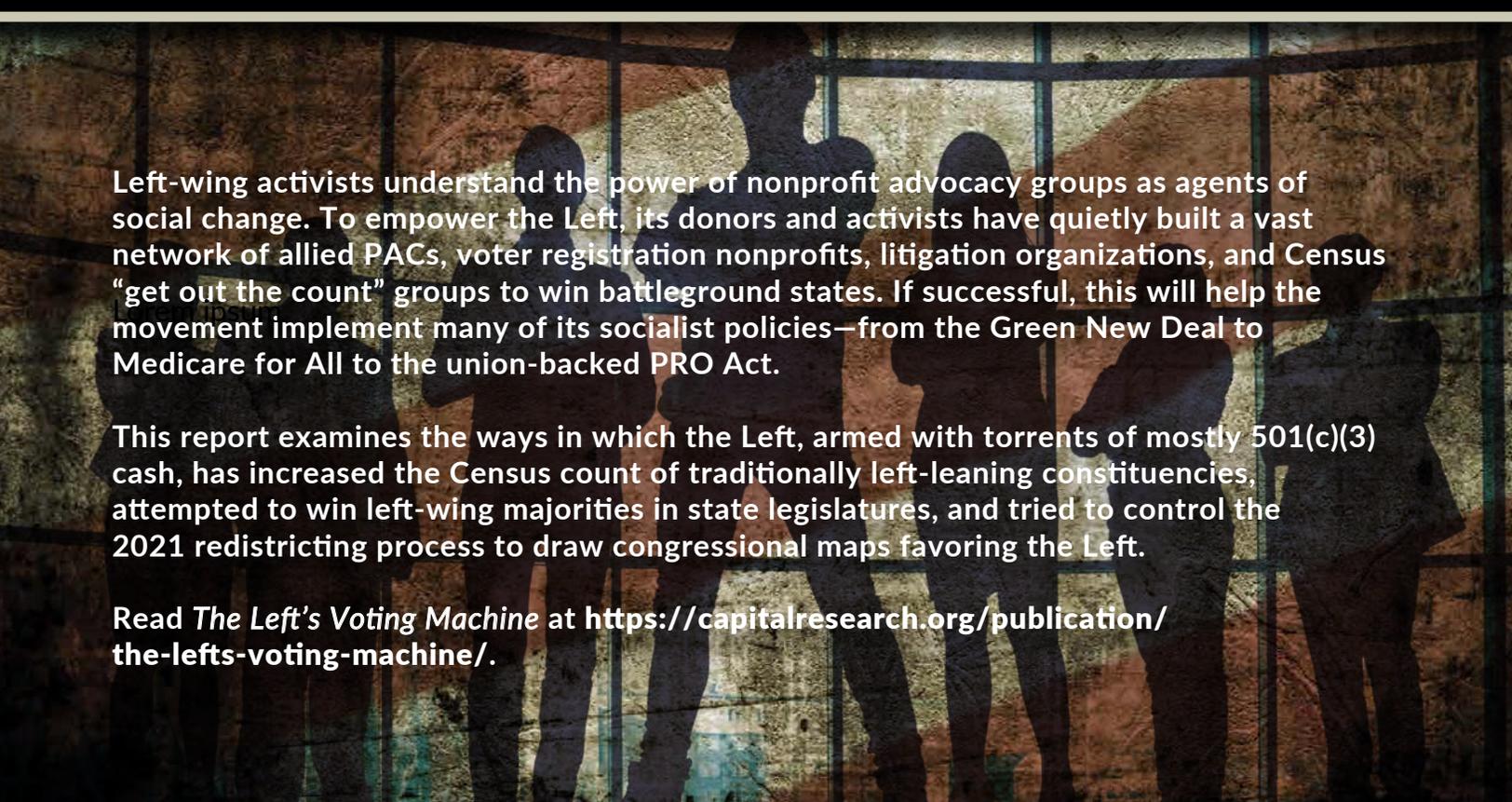


**CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER**  
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

Left-wing activists understand the power of nonprofit advocacy groups as agents of social change. To empower the Left, its donors and activists have quietly built a vast network of allied PACs, voter registration nonprofits, litigation organizations, and Census “get out the count” groups to win battleground states. If successful, this will help the movement implement many of its socialist policies—from the Green New Deal to Medicare for All to the union-backed PRO Act.

This report examines the ways in which the Left, armed with torrents of mostly 501(c)(3) cash, has increased the Census count of traditionally left-leaning constituencies, attempted to win left-wing majorities in state legislatures, and tried to control the 2021 redistricting process to draw congressional maps favoring the Left.

Read *The Left's Voting Machine* at <https://capitalresearch.org/publication/the-lefts-voting-machine/>.





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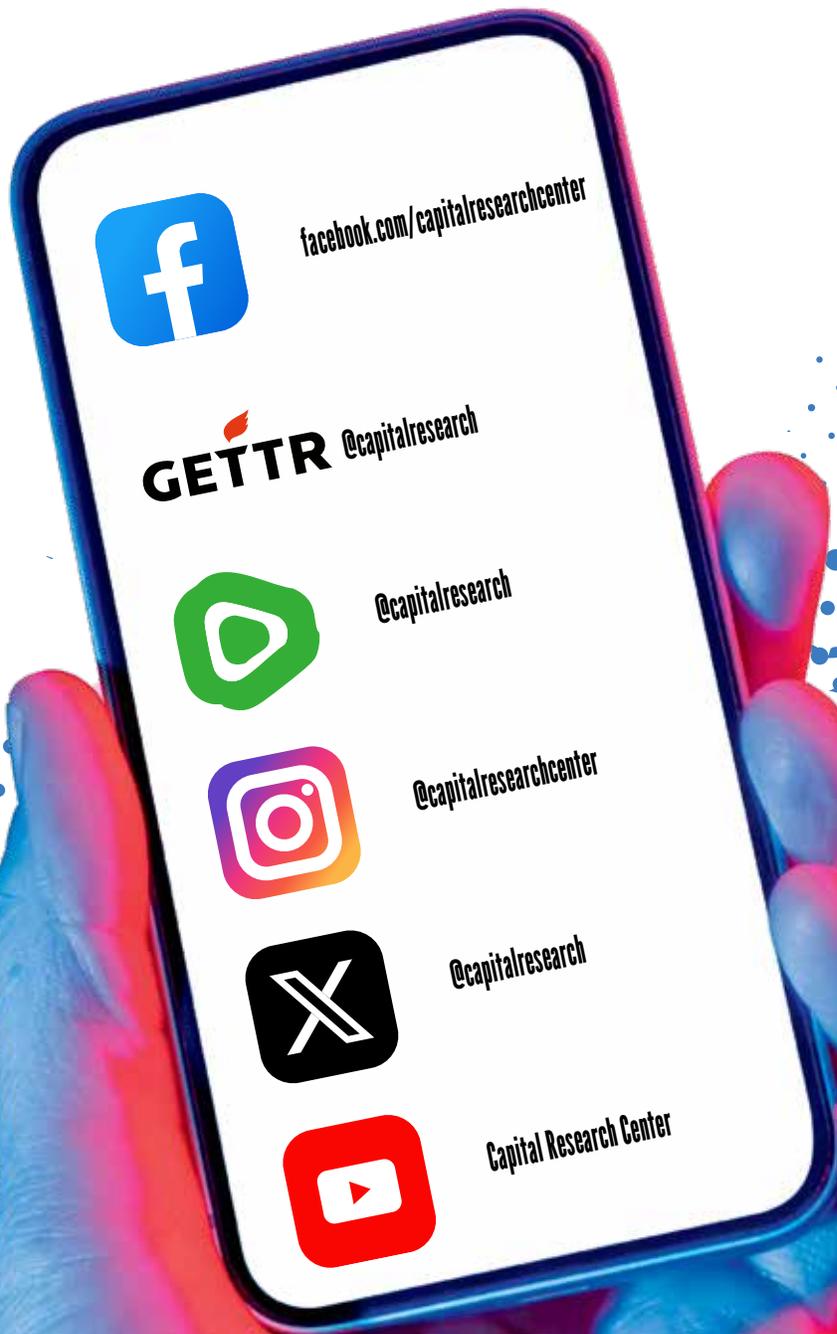
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AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

# MARCHING TOWARD VIOLENCE

THE DOMESTIC ANTI-ISRAELI PROTEST MOVEMENT

BY: RYAN MAURO

“Over 150 groups involved in the disruptive anti-Israel protests on college campuses and elsewhere in the United States are “pro-terrorism.” The vast majority support Hamas and/or the October 7 terrorist attacks. The movement contains militant elements pushing it toward a wider, more severe campaign focused on property destruction and violence properly described as domestic terrorism.”

Read the full study on [CapitalResearch.org](https://www.CapitalResearch.org).

# Greenpeace, nonprofits, and illegal protests

*Greenpeace is facing a \$345 million civil damage award for torts committed during a violent pipeline protest. So, what are we to make of the scores of other nonprofits that signed on to support Greenpeace's behavior?*

By Robert Stilson

A major policy and legal debate has erupted regarding the extent to which tax-exempt groups may engage in or support actions that violate the law. A high-profile case study involves Greenpeace, which earlier this year was found civilly liable for a combined \$667 million due to its conduct surrounding the 2016–2017 Dakota Access Pipeline protests.

While the verdict—if it stands—would be truly monumental, Greenpeace is far from the only nonprofit whose activities have arguably bumped up against legal lines during protests. Examining a sampling of such groups in the context of environmental activism reveals some important questions about the sort of activities the American people are currently incentivizing through federal tax-exemption.



Credit: Shutterstock/MikeDoria

*The Rainbow Warrior is Greenpeace's iconic floating billboard. Because of its behavior in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, the NGO was found liable for trespass, defamation, conversion, and tortious interference with business.*

## Nonprofits and protests

The Capital Research Center has previously asked whether ordinary Americans would consider 501(c)(3) nonprofits that engage in extensive public protests on controversial sociopolitical issues to be genuinely “charitable” in the broad sense—equivalent to food pantries, disaster relief groups, colleges and universities, homeless shelters, think tanks, churches, youth-development programs, and similar organizations. Would taxpayers who are willing to extend the substantial benefits of tax exemption and donation deductibility to these more-or-less consensus charities be willing to do the same with groups that organize political issue protests?

Whatever the answer to that hypothetical question might be, protests—even controversial or offensive ones—are unquestionably protected under the First Amendment. That is, until they cross the line into illegality. Nonprofits of any stripe—charities or otherwise—that encourage, support, or

engage in criminality warrant serious scrutiny and appropriate consequences. Importantly, “nonviolent” does not necessarily mean “legal,” and so-called “direct actions” and/or civil disobedience can violate the law without physically hurting anyone or damaging anything.

The basic legal contours are relatively straightforward, even if in practice their application can be murky and highly fact-dependent. The law firm Adler & Colvin, which specializes in nonprofit law (Gregory Colvin literally wrote the book on fiscal sponsorship), explains that “a charity cannot be organized or operated for an illegal purpose, or for the purpose of conducting illegal activity in furtherance of a lawful goal.” Illegal activity is defined as “any activity that itself violates the law, or that urges, promotes, or facilitates violation of the law.” Any “substantial” illegal conduct—as measured both qualitatively and quantitatively—could result in (among other things) revocation of tax-exempt status. According to the firm, funders are generally not held respon-



*Importantly, “nonviolent” does not necessarily mean “legal,” and so-called “direct actions” and/or civil disobedience can violate the law without physically hurting anyone or damaging anything.*

sible for the illegal conduct of their grantees unless they earmarked the funds for such activities or otherwise directed or participated in them.

First Amendment law professor Eugene Volokh concurs, writing that while “the government can’t strip groups of nonprofit status based on their ideological viewpoints,” their “right to express viewpoints doesn’t extend to a right to violate valid laws (such as content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions).” While even offensive speech is protected as a Constitutional matter, “trying to serve any cause, good or bad, through deliberately violating the law... can justify denying a tax exemption.”

The IRS itself addressed the issue a half-century ago in 1975, ruling that “a nonprofit organization formed to promote world peace and disarmament by nonviolent direct action and whose primary activity is the sponsoring of antiwar protest demonstrations in which demonstrators are urged to commit violations of local ordinances and breaches of public order does not qualify for exemption under section 501(c)(3) or (4) of the [Internal Revenue Code].” The group which prompted that ruling reportedly encouraged civil disobedience, including demonstrations designed to “deliberately block vehicular or pedestrian traffic, disrupt the work of government, and prevent the movement of supplies” in violation of local laws.

## The Greenpeace lawsuit

Of course, there can be other consequences besides the loss of tax-exempt status for nonprofits that engage in illegal or otherwise wrongful conduct. One of these is civil liability. An ongoing case study for this involves Greenpeace, and its actions surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline protests from 2016–2017. The pipeline was then being built by Energy Transfer Partners, and its route took it close to (but not across) the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and underneath a nearby body of water. A large protest occupation of the site developed, with the objective being to block the pipeline’s construction. It ultimately involved thousands of people and numerous organizations, including Greenpeace. Some demonstrators engaged in violence and property destruction, and hundreds were ultimately arrested.

Dozens were later convicted of various offenses, including serious felonies.

In 2019, Energy Transfer sued Greenpeace in state court for its role in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, and earlier this year a North Dakota jury found the 501(c)(4) nonprofit Greenpeace, its affiliated 501(c)(3) Greenpeace Fund, and the Netherlands-based Greenpeace International liable for a combined \$667 million, later reduced on appeal to \$345 million. The Manhattan Institute’s James B. Meigs called the verdict “the first major success in exposing and penalizing the putatively legitimate nonprofits that funnel money and material support to the lawbreakers embedding themselves in these hybrid protests”—a term he uses to describe the relatively common situation in which peaceful protesters are mixed up in the same demonstration with riotous lawbreakers. Meigs predicted that the award would “send shock waves through the loose networks of nonprofit groups that support disruptive protests around the nation.” As of this writing, Greenpeace was continuing to appeal the judgement.

Greenpeace was found liable for (among other things) trespass, defamation, conversion, and tortious interference with business. The facts as alleged, and evidently accepted by the jury, are remarkable. Energy Transfer’s amended complaint detailed what it called “violent attacks against Plaintiffs’ employees and property, soliciting money for and providing funding to support these illegal attacks, inciting protests to disrupt construction, and a vast, malicious publicity campaign against Energy Transfer and Dakota Access.” A resource published by the state of North Dakota and quoted in the complaint described the “brutality... committed by violent protesters who use[d] improvised explosive devices to attack police, use[d] hacked information to threaten officers and their families, and use[d] weapons to kill livestock, harming farmers and ranchers.”

According to Meigs, evidence at trial showed that Greenpeace had spent as much as \$20,000 to send training personnel to the protest camps, and that its executive director “personally raised another \$90,000 for the effort.” The group also provided a variety of materials, including so-called “lockboxes” allowing demonstrators to affix themselves to construction equipment or one another. A post on Greenpeace’s website explained that its staffers helped “run

# GREENPEACE

## Supply Drives for the Red Warrior and Sacred Stone Camps

We're hosting a supply drives at Greenpeace offices across the country on Monday, Sept 12 and Monday, Sept 19 to collect much-needed donations for the water protectors at the Standing Rock Sioux resistance camps. Here's how you can participate.



Demonstrators at a solidarity rally for Dakota Access Pipeline activists in Washington, DC. Robert Meyers.

*During the protests, Greenpeace hosted a nationwide multi-city supply drive to support the Red Warrior Camp.*

daily non-violent direct action training,” in addition to “a handful of technical blockades trainings, offered for people who were looking to escalate their tactics in a peaceful way.”

The complaint also alleged that Greenpeace provided “direct action training” to members of the Red Warrior Camp, which it characterized as “an informal organization of the most violent, most radical anti [Dakota Access Pipeline] activists in North Dakota and across the country.” Indeed, a “communique” released by Red Warrior Camp during the protests justified its “direct action” by claiming that “without the Warriors who locked down and took measures to put a stop to the work on [the pipeline], the black blood would already be flowing under the Missouri river.” The group boasted that its members eat “rubber bullets for breakfast,” and that some were “facing felony charges [and] lasting bodily harm” for their actions. Another statement from the group declared that “Red Warrior Camp came together in Standing Rock as dedicated and trained individuals committed to nonviolent direct actions and civil disobedience.”

During the protests, Greenpeace hosted a nationwide multi-city supply drive to support the Red Warrior Camp.

## Supporters of Greenpeace

While the saga of the Greenpeace lawsuit continues to unfold through the appeals process and separate European litigation, the allegations in Energy Transfer’s complaint have been public for years. Since this time, Greenpeace has continued to receive substantial philanthropic support. In 2023, the 501(c)(4) Greenpeace reported \$40.2 million in total revenue. Its largest donor that year by far was the affiliated 501(c)(3) Greenpeace Fund, which gave it \$13.1 million. Another \$3.85 million came from Greenpeace International. The Greenpeace Fund in turn reported \$22 million in total 2023 revenues. Major donors to the Greenpeace Fund that year included Schmidt Family Foundation (\$1.7 million), the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$1.45 million), Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (\$679,500), the Foundation for the Carolinas (\$500,000), and the Arcus Foundation (\$323,017).

Many groups also publicly came out in support of Greenpeace and its actions, as evidenced by an open letter of support signed by more than 400 groups and “hundreds of thousands of individuals,”

including public figures such as Alec Baldwin, Billie Eilish, Jane Fonda, Susan Sarandon, James Cromwell, and Shailene Woodley. Curiously believing that “if enough of us speak out, we can stop this abusive lawsuit,” the letter declared formal “solidarity with Greenpeace against Energy Transfer’s meritless \$300 million lawsuit,” which it called “a blatant attempt to silence legitimate work to protect people and our planet.”

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the signatories considered the conduct detailed above, for which a jury ultimately found Greenpeace liable, to be “legitimate.”

At least 219 of the letter’s signatories are groups that evidently operate within the tax-exempt 501(c) nonprofit sector in some capacity—whether as a standalone nonprofit, a fiscally-sponsored project, or through some other arrangement. IRS Form 990 financial returns from 2023 could be located for 142 of these groups—though in two cases these were not available and 2022/2024 financials were substituted. The combined total revenues of those nonprofits in that year were an astonishing \$1.57 billion. This is

excluding the University of Arizona, whose presence on the list of signatories was eyebrow-raising enough to warrant skepticism as to whether this truly represented an official institutional position.

The three largest U.S. nonprofit signatories by revenue were all major left-wing 501(c)(5) labor unions: the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Other large signatories organized as 501(c)(3) charities included Amnesty International USA (2023 revenue: \$63 million), Global Citizen (2023 revenue: \$60.5 million), the Union of Concerned Scientists (2023 revenue: \$41.7 million), and the Center for Biological Diversity (2023 revenue: \$34.5 million). At least four projects of the Tides Center or the affiliated Tides Advocacy signed, as did four different projects of the Earth Island Institute.

In addition to their public support for Greenpeace, some of the letter's signatories promote, support, and/or engage in disruptive direct action protests themselves. It is worth examining a sampling of these groups (and others) to illustrate the sort of activities that are currently being undertaken with tax-exempt—and in many cases charitable—dollars. It is also worth asking whether they might be running afoul of IRS restrictions on illegal conduct by nonprofits and/or engaging in prohibited political campaign intervention.

## Honor the Earth

One of the more notable charitable signatories of the Greenpeace letter—given its own connections to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests—was Honor the Earth. Believing that “so-called ‘Israel’” and “the so-called ‘United States’” exist as “violent settler-colonial regimes, rooted in racist supremacist systems, that enact programs of extermination and land theft,” Honor the Earth’s purpose is to further a “political movement of Indigenous Peoples reclaiming sovereignty over homelands from colonial states.” It also evidently serves as fiscal sponsor by accepting tax-deductible donations on behalf of the virulently pro-terrorism Palestinian Youth Movement, a group which the Anti-Defamation League says has “co-sponsored at least 450 anti-Israel rallies in the

United States,” including illegal demonstrations which have resulted in arrests.

Honor the Earth was deeply involved in supporting the 2016-2017 pipeline protests, including the extremist Red Warrior Camp. According to its 2016 annual report, multiple Honor the Earth staffers were present at the protests “until the bitter end,” supporting “the logistics, frontlines, direct action teams, and the legal teams.” The group’s then-national programs director Tara Houska was described in a Sierra Club interview as “leading logistics and legal support for Red Warrior Camp.” Houska was arrested at the protests, and years later lamented how “direct actions are often relegated to the fringe” of protest movements, and that “too often folks stick solely to marching and sign-making, as if we lack a diversity of tactics to fight injustice.” Houska has since founded a group called the Giniw Collective, which also signed the Greenpeace letter.



*James B. Meigs called the verdict “the first major success in exposing and penalizing the putatively legitimate nonprofits that funnel money and material support to the lawbreakers embedding themselves in these hybrid protests”...*

Honor the Earth’s current executive director is Krystal Two Bulls, who replaced long-time head Winona LaDuke in 2023 after the group was found liable in a \$750,000 sexual harassment lawsuit brought by a former employee. Years earlier (before joining Honor the Earth), Two Bulls had been active in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests, and featured prominently as a co-defendant in Energy Transfer’s lawsuit

against Greenpeace. In an article she co-authored during those protests, Two Bulls is described as “a leader and media coordinator at the Red Warrior Camp.” She wrote at the time that “militant direct action” should be “the organizing strategy, not just a tool in the toolbox”—describing such tactics as a way “to build real movements, change power dynamics, shift societies and even remove governments.”

Honor the Earth operates as a 501(c)(3) charity, and reported \$3.6 million total revenue in its fiscal year 2024. This was down from \$6.2 million the year before. Its recent major funders have included the Freedom Together Foundation (\$1 million from 2022–2023), Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (\$400,000 in 2022), the New Venture Fund (\$400,000 from 2022–2023), Donor Advised Charitable Giving (\$371,065 from 2022–2024), the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (\$336,943 from 2022–2023), the Schmidt Family Foundation (\$300,000 from 2022–2023), and the Erol Foundation US (\$300,000 from 2022–2023).

## Direct Action Everywhere

A Greenpeace letter signatory which is openly involved in illegal activities that it believes are morally justified is Direct Action Everywhere. The nonprofit conducts so-called “open rescues” of livestock, whereby activists simply walk on to commercial farms and walk off with stolen animals. Direct Action Everywhere justifies its lawbreaking by arguing that the animals in question were sick or otherwise in distress, and that it took action to save them. Ultimately, the group’s goal is “to establish a legal right to rescue animals from distress and exploitation.” Direct Action Everywhere is a 501(c)(3) charity, although by its own admission it “is not a traditional nonprofit” and engages in “bold action to create revolutionary social and political change for animals in one generation.” In 2023, it reported \$894,401 in total revenue.

Direct Action Everywhere views civil disobedience as a way “to force a debate” through “shutting down the normal functioning of society,” and multiple activists have been charged with crimes for their actions. In 2023, the group’s co-founder and former president Wayne Hsiung was convicted on felony trespass charges and sentenced to 90 days in jail and probation for two separate instances in which activists illegally entered a chicken and duck farm, respectively, to remove animals. In the process, they reportedly “chained themselves to various fixtures,” caused property damage, and “effectively shut down the farm operations for hours.” Another Direct Action Everywhere activist facing felony and misdemeanor charges for her alleged illegal conduct wrote that, “I will not apologize for my actions. I will not hang my head in shame. I refuse to accept that helping a few baby birds makes me a criminal.”

Direct Action Everywhere’s website directs prospective donors to contribute to a second affiliated 501(c)(3) called Friends of DxE, which in turn makes grants to Direct Action Everywhere and a handful of other similar groups. In 2023, Friends of DxE reported \$5.1 million in net assets and \$1.7 million in total revenue. Recent institutional funding for both Direct Action Everywhere and Friends of DxE has come largely from donor-advised funds such as the American Online Giving Foundation and the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund. Most notably, the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program sent a combined



*The Climate Emergency Fund claims to have funded “the groups responsible for almost all of the bold, disruptive protests in the United States and Europe that have garnered international media attention.”*

\$2,596,900 to the two groups from 2023–2024, making it by far their most important single identifiable source of funding.

## Community Movement Builders

Another signatory in defense of Greenpeace was Community Movement Builders, a 501(c)(3) charity that reported more than \$2.9 million total revenue in 2023. Believing that “bourgeois representative democracy has failed to represent and execute the true will of the people,” Community Movement Builders seeks to create territorial “liberated zones” evidently to be organized around some form of racial communism, in which “Black/Afrikan people in Black/Afrikan communities collectively control where, how and with whom resources are invested in our communities.”

Indeed, Community Movement’s objective appears to be nothing less than a global revolution along such lines: it wants to “destroy” what it calls “the white supremacist power structures that control the land, economic, political and social institutions worldwide,” and replace them with “an Afrikan and Indigenous centered approach that reflects the cultural, political and economic practices that produce and sustain Black/Afrikan liberation.” Along the way, it wants free universal healthcare, a right to housing, police abolition, and more. Membership inquiries on the Community Movement Builders website begin with a threshold question



*Accordingly, it can be concluded that the signatories considered the conduct detailed above, for which a jury ultimately found Greenpeace liable, to be “legitimate.”*

asking about the applicant’s race, and direct the respondent to two different applications depending on the answer given.

Community Movement Builders is headquartered in Metro Atlanta, and it was one of the primary nonprofits behind the Stop Cop City protests, which opposed construction of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center for police and firefighters. The group’s website claims that it was “the leading Black organization on the ground fighting to StopCopCity since its construction was announced,” and that it encouraged demonstrators to engage in “creative civil disobedience.” Before one November 2023 confrontation, in which police were forced to deploy tear gas and flash-bang grenades, Community Movement Builders founder and national director Kamau Franklin reportedly told protesters that they had a duty to engage in civil disobedience. In declaring its own “solidarity with the activists” and pledging to provide “resources and support to communities on the ground who are fighting to ensure that Cop City will never be built,” the 501(c)(3) Center for Constitutional Rights identified Community Movement Builders as the group that was “spearheading the resistance.”

Protesters at Stop Cop City took actions ranging from civil disobedience and trespass to serious violence. Among other things, demonstrators were alleged to have caused extensive property damage and even to have physically attacked police and other first responders with Molotov cocktails, fireworks, and more. In early 2024, Atlanta’s deputy chief operating officer said that protesters had committed 23 separate acts of arson, damaging or destroying 81 items. All of this contributed to substantial cost overruns for the training center. Some protesters were charged under Georgia’s Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, although these charges were dismissed by a state judge in September 2025.

In one particularly violent incident occurring in March 2023, dozens of protesters dressed in black launched what the Atlanta Police Department called “a coordinated attack on construction equipment and police officers,” throwing “large rocks, bricks, Molotov cocktails, and fireworks at police officers” and destroying “multiple pieces of construction equipment by fire and vandalism.” Days later, Community Movement Builders posted a message reading

“destruction of property is not violence. The pigs killing a protester is violent. The pigs pointing guns in bouncy houses is violent. The pigs mass arresting people is violent. The pigs threatening to shoot people is violent.”

Community Movement Builders also may have engaged in impermissible political campaign intervention in connection with its Stop Cop City activities. An essay co-authored by Franklin claimed that in 2021 members of the group engaged in “targeted online and canvassing” efforts against then-Atlanta City Council member Joyce Sheperd, who was up for reelection. It described Sheperd’s subsequent defeat as “a small but mighty victory for CMB and the Stop Cop City movement.” This statement appears very difficult to square with laws strictly prohibiting 501(c)(3) charities such as Community Movement Builders from “directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.”

Despite its far-left radicalism, Community Movement Builders has received substantial funding from across the mainstream left-of-center philanthropic sector. Since 2022, the Waverly Street Foundation, funded by Laurene Powell Jobs, has given the group at least \$1 million earmarked for a project called the Earthseed Farm and Permaculture Center. Another \$915,000 came from ImpactAssets, and \$626,500 from the Vanguard Charitable Endowment. The Schmidt Family Foundation and the Windward Fund each gave \$360,000 from 2022-2023, while the Amalgamated Charitable Foundation gave \$224,500 and Borealis Philanthropy gave \$215,000. Other notable funders have included the Tides Foundation, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, and the New Venture Fund.

## **Extinction Rebellion and the Climate Emergency Fund**

Two national chapters (Belgium and the Czech Republic) of the Extinction Rebellion movement also signed the Greenpeace open letter. Known for both its extreme climate catastrophizing and its disruptive direct action protest meth-

ods, members of Extinction Rebellion have engaged in civil disobedience worldwide. Protests were particularly widespread in the United Kingdom, and London’s Metropolitan Police reported making over 3,000 Extinction Rebellion-related arrests in 2019 alone, with hundreds more in subsequent years. According to the group’s United Kingdom branch, which announced in December 2022 that it had made “a controversial resolution to temporarily shift away from public disruption as a primary tactic,” approximately 2,000 people have been prosecuted for Extinction Rebellion actions since 2019.

Extinction Rebellion is a global movement, and in the United States it consists of a loose network of local groups—none of which signed their name to the Greenpeace letter—under a broad national umbrella called Extinction Rebellion US. There is also a separate organization called Extinction Rebellion America, which reportedly split from Extinction Rebellion US over a dispute about whether to prioritize considerations of race/ethnicity alongside its environmental activism.

The mission of Extinction Rebellion US is to produce “national, coordinated economic and government disruption on an unprecedented scale that lasts indefinitely, until the government feels forced to concede to the four [Extinction Rebellion US] demands” for far-left social-environmental public policy. Indeed, the group believes that the entire environmental movement must prepare for a “national, coordinated rebellion that targets the government and [the energy] industry as a whole.” Extinction Rebellion US believes that this sort of “sustained resistance” will eventually force the government to “concede or collapse under the pressure.”

The local Extinction Rebellion DC chapter notably participated in the 2019 Shut Down DC disruptions, during which activists systematically blocked traffic in the nation’s capital, reportedly leading to over 30 arrests. In addition to repeatedly obstructing roadways, Extinction Rebellion activists in the United States have been arrested for stunts such as climbing on buildings, blocking trains, breaching airport security, and vandalism.



Credit: <https://extinctionrebellion.us/press-release-sep-23-2019>

*The local Extinction Rebellion DC chapter notably participated in the 2019 Shut Down DC disruptions, during which activists systematically blocked traffic in the nation’s capital, reportedly leading to over 30 arrests.*

None of this is especially shocking: radical activists can generally be expected to take radical actions. Ordinary Americans might find it much more surprising that at least some Extinction Rebellion groups operate (or claim to operate) with charitable tax-exempt status, with donors able to claim a federal tax deduction for their contributions. A fundraiser for Extinction Rebellion US claims that all donations are tax-deductible, though it provides no further information.

The Extinction Rebellion Boston chapter is fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) charity called the Climate Direct Action Education Fund, which was formed in 2024 and received tax-exempt status from the IRS in 2025. Extinction Rebellion NYC and Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area are both fiscally sponsored by the 501(c)(3) Oil and Gas Action Network, a Greenpeace letter signatory which had 2023 total revenues of more than \$1.8 million. Extinction Rebellion America operates as an independent nonprofit through a 501(c)(4) called XR Actions, which has regularly reported annual revenues of less than \$50,000. Extinction Rebellion DC has its own 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, reporting \$42,866 in 2023 revenues.



*She wrote at the time that “militant direct action” should be “the organizing strategy, not just a tool in the toolbox”—describing such tactics as a way “to build real movements, change power dynamics, shift societies and even remove governments.”*



*The Sunrise Movement’s “theory of change” is that thousands of protesters must “take to the streets and disrupt business as usual until we force the change we need.” Illegal actions undertaken by the group, such as blocking highways and interrupting Congressional proceedings, have resulted in numerous arrests.*

The donation page on Extinction Rebellion DC’s website explains that “we hate capitalism too, and we wish it weren’t the case, but we need money to keep protesting.” It assures donors that contributions will allow the group to “continue to take radical disruptive action on the climate crisis.” Institutional nonprofit funders which have made grants to Extinction Rebellion DC include the Rockefeller Family Fund (\$25,000 in 2020), the American Online Giving Foundation (\$13,261 from 2023-2024), and the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (\$10,000 in 2023).

A major funder of United States-based Extinction Rebellion charities is a 501(c)(3) grantmaker called the Climate Emergency Fund. From 2019 through 2022, it made at least \$831,024 worth of grants that were specifically earmarked for “Extinction Rebellion” or “XR” (a common abbreviation). Much of this money was evidently routed through an Arizona-based charity called the National Institute for Peer Support. Separately, in 2022 the Fund provided more than \$1 million in seed funding for Just Stop Oil, the group responsible for throwing soup on a Vincent van Gogh painting, vandalizing Stonehenge with orange paint, and numerous other illegal acts that have resulted in more than 3,000 arrests. The Climate Emergency Fund also spent \$200,000 on what it called “hyper-targeted protests” against former U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV), in addition to funding groups engaged in blocking roads, airports, and more.

Indeed, the Climate Emergency Fund claims to have funded “the groups responsible for almost all of the bold, disruptive protests in the United States and Europe that have garnered international media attention.” Its internal grantmaking policy is to “only fund groups that engage in or directly support disruptive tactics,” and most of this money directly pays organizers. In addition to attracting media attention, the Fund believes that disruptive protests “can inflict a tangible cost on climate villains for their crimes in the form of lost profits, or on political leaders for their inaction in the form of damaged reputation.” It contends that “disruptive climate

protest remains shockingly underfunded,” and views it as its mission to fill that alleged void.

A truly astonishing case statement published by the Fund declares that “for groups of organized people seeking to exert power, nonviolent disruptive protest is the most efficient and most effective approach.” In the Fund’s view, “the costs imposed by disruption allow protesters to directly exert hard power in a way that no other tactic can, making their actions impossible to ignore.” It also claims that such protests “are very effective at securing election outcomes aligned with the interests of protesters.”

But the Climate Emergency Fund is a 501(c)(3) charity which is strictly prohibited from “directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.” Why is it concerned with producing specific election outcomes?

Perhaps recognizing its proximity to legal lines, the Climate Emergency Fund claims that its “robust legal team” ensures that its activities are supposedly compliant with 501(c)(3) restrictions, and it advertises itself as a tax-deductible “safe harbor for donors who want to fund disruptive activism.” Despite intentionally funding groups that openly break the law and approvingly posting their conduct on its own website, the Fund asserts that its money is only used “to support legal activities.”

In 2023 the Climate Emergency Fund made \$3.6 million worth of grants, after having made \$5 million in 2022. It has received significant support from Los Angeles-based private foundation called the McKay Family Foundation, which is funded and run by Hollywood director and producer Adam McKay (who personally signed the Greenpeace letter) and his wife Shira Piven. From 2022-2024, the foundation gave \$4,595,000 to the Climate Emergency Fund, accounting for 85 percent of its total grantmaking over those years. McKay now sits on the Fund’s board of directors.

Other significant funders of the Climate Emergency Fund since 2022 have included the Kaplen Brothers Fund (\$800,000 from 2022–2024), the Eutopia Foundation (\$664,117 from 2022–2023), Onward Together (\$500,000 from 2022–2023), and the Aileen Getty Foundation (\$475,000 in 2022). Aileen Getty, heiress to the Getty family oil fortune, was the Climate Emergency Fund’s “founding donor” and a former member of its board.

## Sunrise Movement

A noteworthy direct action protest group which somewhat surprisingly *did not sign* the Greenpeace letter is the Sunrise Movement. Officially, it consists of the 501(c)(4) Sunrise Movement and the 501(c)(3) Sunrise Movement Education Fund. There is also the Sunrise PAC political action committee. In 2023, the Sunrise Movement reported \$2.46 million in total revenue, while the Sunrise Movement Education Fund reported just under \$5 million.

Founded in 2017 and closely associated with proposals to enact an eco-socialist Green New Deal, the Sunrise Movement has quickly become one of the most well-known “direct action” climate groups in the country. In addition to rapid and total economic decarbonization, the Sunrise Movement also demands the abolition of police, domestic reparations for slavery and so-called “climate reparations” globally, a dramatic expansion of the federal welfare state, and direct government interventions in the economy at a scale that will supposedly create “millions of good paying union jobs.”

The Sunrise Movement’s “theory of change” is that thousands of protesters must “take to the streets and disrupt business as usual until we force the change we need.” Illegal actions undertaken by the group, such as blocking highways and interrupting Congressional proceedings, have resulted in numerous arrests. Sunrise’s actions have targeted politicians from both parties whom the group views as insufficiently aggressive in pursuing far-left climate policy.

In 2018, more than fifty protesters were arrested for occupying Rep. Nancy Pelosi’s office during debates over the Green New Deal. Sunrise Movement activists have elsewhere been arrested for occupying former Rep. Kevin McCarthy’s office, the hallway outside then-Senator JD Vance’s office, then-president Joe Biden’s 2024 campaign headquarters, the street outside then-vice president Kamala Harris’s California home at least twice, a Donald Trump 2024 campaign office in Arizona, and more. In mid-2025, *The Guardian* reported that the Sunrise Movement was considering

“using more disruptive nonviolent tactics than they have previously employed.”

Despite believing that philanthropy is “a tool to uphold capitalism and white supremacist culture,” and describing it as “an imperfect form of [wealth] redistribution” to be exploited until such time as billionaires cease to exist, Sunrise has received significant funding from left-of-center grantmakers. From 2022–2023, the 501(c)(4) Sunrise Movement received \$500,000 from the Open Society Action Fund and \$140,000 from 128 Collective Initiatives. In 2022, it received \$150,000 each from the affiliated Sunrise Movement Education Fund, the Grove Action Fund, and the Way to Win Action Fund.

Since 2022, the Sunrise Movement Education Fund has received major grants from the Sequoia Climate Foundation (\$2.25 million), the Freedom Together Foundation (\$1.05 million), the Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (\$533,836), the American Online Giving Foundation (\$510,875), the Hewlett Foundation (\$500,000), and the MacArthur Foundation (\$500,000). The relatively unknown Cabin Road Foundation gave the Sunrise Movement Education Fund a full \$10 million from 2020–2021, plus an additional \$10 million to the Greenpeace Fund.

## Tax-exempt consequences

Consequences should generally follow any substantial non-profit deviations into illegality. Depending on the factual circumstances, this could take the form of civil liability (as with Greenpeace, if the verdict stands), criminal prosecutions, and/or the revocation of tax-exempt status. The American people incentivize nonprofits—especially 501(c)(3) charities—through favorable tax treatment, because the activities of such groups are seen as broadly beneficial to society. To the extent a given nonprofit is engaged in or directly supports actions that violate the law, this public policy bargain collapses.

In the context of protests, First Amendment considerations will always rightly loom large. That said, the First Amendment does not cover illegal acts such as vandalism and blocking traffic—to say nothing of more serious crimes. As the UCLA police department cautions: “civil disobedience is not protected speech under the Constitution. The Constitution does not guarantee any right to engage in civil disobedience—which, by its very definition, involves the violation of laws or regulations—without incurring consequences.” In appropriate cases, those consequences should include the loss of tax-exempt status. ■



 CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER  
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

# INFILTRATED

## THE IDEOLOGICAL CAPTURE OF HOMELESSNESS ADVOCACY

A report by Capital Research Center  
In cooperation with Discovery Institute

Foreword by: CHRISTOPHER F. RUFO

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# REPORT: The Ideological Capture of Homeless Advocacy

*The NGOs in the homeless industrial complex are spending money—and often a lot of tax dollars—on everything but obvious solutions.*

By Ken Braun

In 2018, Grants Pass, Oregon, was providing homeless shelters in tandem with a city ordinance that prohibited camping on public property. This generous policy mix for a town of just 39,000 was a compassionate compromise that both protected vulnerable people and the enjoyment of public spaces by everyone else. But a corrosive national movement that effectively promotes rather than prevents homelessness thought otherwise. They sued Grants Pass, seeking to overturn the camping prohibition.

In his 2021 book, *San Fransicko: Why Progressives Ruin Cities*, journalist Michael Shellenberger chronicled the damage inflicted by what he called the “homeless industrial complex.” The funding and radical agendas of the NGOs running this war against civil society is the subject of *Infiltrated: The Ideological Capture of Homeless Advocacy*. The new report from the Capital Research Center was produced in cooperation with the Discovery Institute.

The Grants Pass camping prohibition was ultimately upheld in 2024, but only after *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* had wound its way all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. That positive outcome aside, the case was important for another reason, as explained in *Infiltrated*:

While the case began as a local dispute in Oregon, it quickly grew into a national referendum on how American society chooses to respond to homelessness. What made Grants Pass remarkable for our purposes was the sheer scale of non-profit mobilization: hundreds of groups—many organized as 501(c)(3) charities—filed amicus briefs, making it one of the most heavily lobbied homelessness cases in U.S. history. Collectively, these amici reported more than **\$9.1 billion in revenue**, underscoring



Credit: <https://unsplash.com/plus/license>

*Funds that could provide housing or mental-health services instead flow into protest infrastructure, widening the gap between public spending and on-the-ground results.*

that this debate is not only about ideology but also about the immense resources flowing through the sector. [emphasis original]

Those NGOs that stood against Grants Pass’s policies form the backbone of the research for *Infiltrated*. The Capital Research Center investigated who they are and exposed their often-radical agendas.

The report also explored where the \$9.1 billion in annual revenue comes from. Almost a third of the total, \$2.9 billion, was from government grants. This is literally your money (if you’ve been paying your taxes) that is funding a rich and radical movement that opposed a very modest law enforcement role in keeping order in Oregon.

Compare those billions to the projected budget for the city of Grants Pass, which anticipates \$155.6 million in new revenue for 2025. The town might have eventually won the lawsuit, but this wasn’t a fair fight.



...homelessness debate is not about compassion versus cruelty, but about which ideology will govern America's civic life and actually help her citizens.

—Christopher Rufo

It's not unreasonable to expect a visit from the members of the homeless industrial complex if your town passes sensible homeless policies.

One example of the NGOs that opposed the camping prohibition in *Grants Pass* was the National Harm Reduction Coalition (NHRC). In its most recent IRS filing, NHRC reported \$12.8 million in revenue, with more than \$9.4 million of the total (73 percent) credited to "government grants."

What else did you get for your money?

## Harm Reduction

*Infiltrated* explains that NHRC is "among the most prominent promoters" of the so-called "Harm Reduction" policy.

Harm Reduction is best described as an anti-responsibility approach to homelessness. According to *Infiltrated*, "Harm Reduction emphasizes minimizing the harm of drug use rather than requiring abstinence or treatment before receiving services."

What may appear to be a bad idea in principle grows far worse when the Harm Reduction NGOs explain what it means:

[The National Harm Reduction Coalition] accepts drug abuse "for better or worse" and tells those struggling with addiction that "no one knows what's best for you better than you. Whatever drugs you use, we want you to be safe and healthy." It supports calls to defund the police and claims that "racism drives both homelessness and health inequities," including the "inhumane" Grants Pass decision.

It's wrong to assume that *everyone* who is homeless is struggling with serious mental health and substance abuse issues. But the general stereotype is otherwise valid. There is a well-known correlation between all of them. Only a fool would dismiss the high probability that these correlations also equal causation.

The homeless population would be far smaller if many and perhaps most of those enduring it were cajoled and (when

necessary) forced into psychiatric and substance abuse treatment. Any reasonably large collection of Americans knows this because they've lived through it with a close friend or family member—or know someone who has.

This is true for at least two of us at the Capital Research Center: an adult son in one case, and a mother in another. What prevented our loved ones from becoming homeless was the aggressive intervention of their families, not inane policies hiding behind corrupt euphemisms such as "Harm Reduction."

The aforementioned son wasn't diagnosed with his schizophrenia until he resurfaced after vanishing and refusing to speak to his family for nearly a year. The disappearance began in early 2021, during the pandemic restrictions, which vastly complicated any effort to find him.

Whether or not he was homeless at any point in that ordeal may never be known. His delusions were that serious. But if he had been intercepted by the police in Grants Pass or anywhere else for "public camping," then the likelihood of him being returned far sooner, and in less mental peril, would have gone up substantially. Among other benefits, the Grants Pass camping prohibition is how a humane civilization gets vulnerable people back to those who most want to help them.

It was some time after his son resurfaced and endured the first of two involuntary hospitalizations that his father came face to face with the so-called "Harm Reduction" thinking.

Some of the son's psychiatric staff were excellent, but others not so much. The difference was most pronounced when the son began to resist his anti-psychotic medication. Hearing the complaints for the third time during a pandemic-inflicted Zoom call check-up, his doctor advised: "You're an adult, so if you won't take your medication, then that's your choice."

Thanks doc!

The son stopped taking the medication. Six weeks later, and just days before Christmas, he began harming himself and wildly ranting about an alien invasion. With no help from his obtuse doctor, another involuntary commitment and

forced medication slowly restored some mild sanity. Despite, or perhaps because of, his delusions, the young man either didn't realize or didn't want to act upon the option of simply disappearing again.

He could have easily added to the nation's exploding homeless problem.

The National Harm Reduction Coalition and its "Harm Reduction" apostles may tell such people that "no one knows what's best for you better than you." But people suffering from serious mental illnesses and addictions do not. They don't know they're sick, won't believe it, and often do not want the help they desperately need.

To tell them otherwise is to promote these problems, not mitigate them. The name aside, "Harm Reduction" doesn't reduce suffering—it spreads the "harm" to the rest of us.

## Housing Justice

But Harm Reduction isn't the only anti-responsibility policy promoted by the homeless industrial complex.

A close cousin is "Housing First." We explain it this way in *Infiltrated*:

Housing First emphasizes providing immediate, permanent housing without preconditions such as sobriety or treatment compliance. Its rationale is that stable housing provides a foundation to address deeper issues like addiction or mental illness.

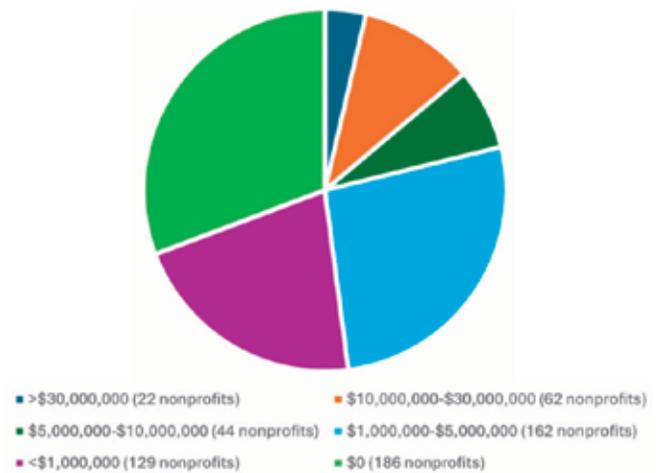
That rationale, as shown above, is deeply flawed. Even in stable home environments, the afflicted will deny they have a problem and resist treatment until forced.

"California epitomizes the failings of this approach," we write in *Infiltrated*. "After the state mandated all funding flow exclusively to Housing First programs (2015–2019), unsheltered homelessness increased 47.1 percent."

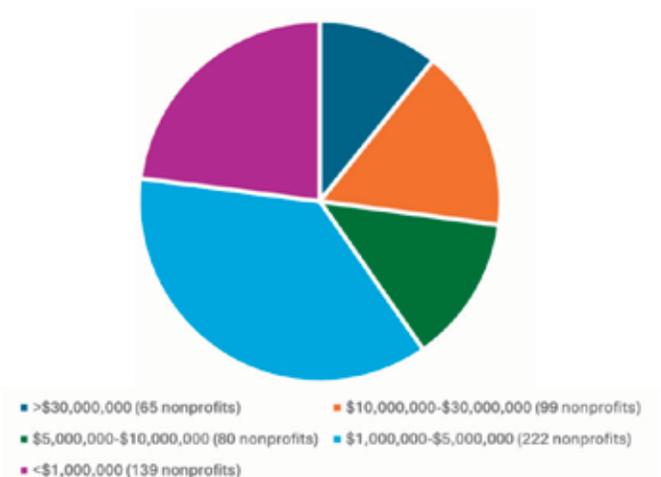
According to a 2024 report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which we share in *Infiltrated*, the homeless population of California had ballooned to more than 187,000.

The same report showed that Texas and Florida, states with lots of residents and warm weather, much like California, had a combined homeless population of less than 60,000. Despite a combined population 15 million people greater than California, these two states together had a homelessness problem only one-third the size.

**Nonprofits opposing the use of arrest and fines to address homelessness reported over \$2.9 billion in government grants (2023)**



**Nonprofits opposing the use of arrest and fines to address homelessness reported over \$9.1 billion in total revenue (2023)**



Similarly, New York has more than 158,000 homeless while sunnier and more populated Texas had less than 28,000. Washington, with far fewer people and far less sunshine than Florida, had just as many homeless as the Sunshine State.

The lesson from these numbers is irrefutable. Big cities, a great climate, and lack of housing were not what created a boom in a state's homeless population. Bad policy was the major difference.

And the gold medalist for horrible and inhumane homeless policy goes by the name "Housing Justice." We write of it this way in *Infiltrated*:



*Visible evidence of a system failing the very people it claims to serve—while vast sums intended for relief are funneled toward protests and political theatrics.*

Housing Justice frames housing as a human right, advocating tenant protections, eviction defense, and systemic reforms to ensure what advocates deem equitable access. Grassroots organizations frequently champion affordability and anti-displacement campaigns under this banner, but the movement also serves as a vector for extremist co-optation. Critics argue that Housing Justice, while rooted in calls for equity, often functions as a platform for radical agendas.

We show that NGOs operating within the Housing Justice framework often reach well beyond bad homelessness policy to promote radical left-wing transformations for the entire nation. Funders Together for Housing Justice (previously Funders Together to End Homelessness) is one example. They were the lead NGO in one of the amici filings opposing the Grants Pass camping prohibition.

Funders Together, as we show in *Infiltrated*, using their own rhetoric, seeks racial reparations and the overthrow of capitalism:

Funders Together’s vision is to highlight what it alleges is “the legacy of racism” in housing and homelessness and to “reimagine and transform systems to be Pro Black and Pro-Indigenous using an intersectional lens to achieve housing and racial justice.” It believes that “homelessness is a racialized experience created and exacerbated by the forces of structural racism,” and claims that “white supremacy has intentionally limited growth and opportunities” for minority communities in the United States. In pursuit of what it calls “housing abundance,” Funders Together supports government reparations “in the form of money and land” as compensation for what it says are the “intentional and ongoing projects of slavery and subjugation” in the United States.

The global economy, according to Funders Together, is similarly built upon “racial capitalism,” which supposedly leverages “racial exploitation to facilitate capital accumulation.” A so-called “liberated society” can only be achieved through what amounts to a socialist welfare state, in which “everyone’s basic needs are met in full.” Funders Together aims to “decommodify” the housing sector, replacing it with Green New Deal-style public housing.

*Infiltrated* shows these goals and similar are shared by many of the *Grants Pass* antagonists and their allies. The agendas and the NGOs promoting them often come off as more irrational than the troubled people they claim to be helping.

## Radical agendas

There is even an overlap with pro-Hamas sympathies.

The San Francisco chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America is one of the amici co-signers. As we write in

*Infiltrated*, the DSA’s radical agenda for America goes well beyond homeless policy and socialism:

DSA applauded the October 7 attacks, praising “the just armed resistance in Palestine” for its “struggle against American imperialism.” The group even cheered on Iran’s direct missile and drone attacks on Israel, stating, “the Iranian defensive strikes have helped to further undermine the mantle of invincibility which the Zionist project has constructed.”

A left-wing litigation group named the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) wrote one of the briefs submitted to oppose the Grants Pass camping prohibition. But unlike the fringy Democratic Socialists of America, CCR was a leader in the attack on the town, not a follower. The CCR brief was co-signed by 45 other NGOs, including the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, Make the Road New York, and the National Women’s Law Center, all of which have reported annual revenue in excess of \$20 million.

The research for *Infiltrated* uncovered this about the CCR agenda:

In an abhorrent same-day response to the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks against Israel, the Center characterized them as “Palestinian armed resistance from occupied Gaza,” referred to what it claimed was “the international legal right of colonized people to resist colonial domination,” and declared that “Palestinian resistance fighters” were within their rights to “carry out attacks on military targets.” Even while Hamas militants were still operating within Israel, the Center for Constitutional Rights was essentially saying that the Israelis deserved it.

As we noted, CCR’s violence-curious agenda could not have been a secret to the cosigners on its *Grants Pass* brief. We also found that at least nine of the 45 CCR cosigners derived at least half of their 2023 funding from government grants.

One of them was Make the Road New York:

Make the Road New York—which had 2023 total revenues of over \$31.7 million—is another good example of a 501(c)(3) charity that functions as a taxpayer-funded left-wing political activist group, supporting everything from defunding the police to abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. It is also an example of the “mega-phone philanthropy” phenomenon, as there is hardly a page on its website that does not feature imagery of protesters yelling into bullhorns and/or marching with signs that read things like “Proud Ashamed to be an American” and “Trump is not my President.”

Then there is the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a serial litigant against anyone that seeks to try something other than the irrational, sometimes anti-American policies of the homelessness industrial complex.

Christopher Rufo addresses SPLC in his forward to *Infiltrated*:

In early 2025, President Donald J. Trump issued a series of executive orders that signaled a decisive shift. His administration rejected the prevailing narrative—that homelessness is solely a problem of housing supply and discrimination—and sought instead to restore order to public spaces, strengthen accountability for public spending, and redirect resources toward treatment, rehabilitation, and the enforcement of basic civic norms that will actually benefit the homeless and the public at large. The backlash was immediate. The National Homelessness Law Center, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and allied groups denounced the reforms as “attacks on human rights” and pledged to fight them in court. This response revealed what had long been hidden: the homelessness debate is not about compassion versus cruelty, but about which ideology will govern America’s civic life and actually help her citizens.



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*In Infiltrated, we examine this disconnect between what Americans believe to be charity and what left-wing advocates are really promoting ...*





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*[Michael Shellenberger] wrote that San Francisco spent \$61,000 per tent to provide socially distanced shelter for the homeless during the pandemic.*

Neither LWV nor the ACLU are noted for the beds and treatment they provide for the homeless. This is true of many of the opponents of order in the Grants Pass case. In *Infiltrated*, we examine this disconnect between what Americans believe to be charity and what left-wing advocates are really promoting within the charitable space:

What makes the Grants Pass amici striking, however, is not simply their tax status but the tension between public perception and actual practice. Americans tend to associate 501(c)(3) charities with work like sheltering the homeless or running food banks, and many amici indeed provide such services. The Court itself acknowledged their importance in supporting unsheltered individuals.

But that same tax status also applies to a smaller group of amici whose activities are rather less intuitively “charitable.” These organizations focus primarily on advocacy, using litigation, lobbying-adjacent campaigns, and public messaging to advance broader political or ideological agendas. Despite operating under the same tax status as food banks and homeless shelters, their missions frequently stem from highly contested policy debates.

In *San Fransicko*, Michael Shellenberger provided comically tragic anecdotes demonstrating what happens when good money is thrown after bad ideas to fix real problems. In one example, he wrote that San Francisco spent \$61,000 *per tent* to provide socially distanced shelter for the homeless during the pandemic. Shellenberger wrote this was “2.5 times the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in the city.”

“Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket,” wrote philosopher Eric Hoffer. The United States has more resources to address any challenge than any nation in the history of nations. We spend more than enough to provide and mandate the mental health and substance abuse treatment that would mitigate homelessness with genuine compassion.

But in *Infiltrated* we demonstrate that too many of the NGOs trusted to accomplish these worthy goals are aiming the money they receive at every solution that benefits their cause, rather than the needy. “Without clearer boundaries between service and advocacy,” we conclude at the end of our report, “the United States will continue to spend at scale while leaving tens of thousands on the streets.” ■



# CREDIBILITY WHERE IT COUNTS

CRC's Scott Walter has testified before Congressional committees multiple times on issues ranging from politicized nonprofits to environmental activists. And Hill staff regularly seek out our research as they vet and prepare for hearings and witness testimony.



U.S. Senate Budget Committee, April 1, 2024, "Examining the Influence of Extreme Environmental Activist Groups in the Department of the Interior."



U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency, June 4, 2025, "Public Funds, Private Agendas: NGOs Gone Wild."



U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight, July 15, 2025, "How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical Agenda."



U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights, June 25, 2025, "How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical Agenda."



U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, December 10, 2024, "Desecrating Old Glory: Investigating How the Pro-Hamas Protests Turned National Park Service Land into a Violent Disgrace."



U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, April 30, 2024, "Examining the Influence of Extreme Environmental Activist Groups in the Department of the Interior."



U.S. House Committee on House Administration, February 13, 2024, "American Confidence in Elections: Confronting Zuckerbucks, Private Funding of Election Administration."



U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, December 13, 2023, "Growth of the Tax-Exempt Sector and the Impact on the American Political Landscape."



U.S. Senate Budget Committee, June 22, 2023, "Dollars and Degrees: Investigating Fossil Fuel Dark Money's Systemic Threats to Climate and the Federal Budget."



U.S. Senate Finance Committee, Subcommittee on Taxation and IRS Oversight, May 4, 2022, "Laws and Enforcement Governing the Political Activities of Tax Exempt Entities."



U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action, and Federal Rights, March 10, 2021, "What's Wrong with the Supreme Court: The Big-Money Assault on Our Judiciary."

# The Skillman Foundation’s fixation on funding racial grievance and the education blob

*One of America’s worst performing school districts needs outside-the-box solutions. But a big foundation with the resources to deliver reform is subsidizing the status quo.*

By Tom Gantert

Only in the world of DEI can a black woman make nearly \$600,000 annually while serving a destitute city, dress up in a William Shakespeare costume for a promotion while proclaiming, “I am a genius” and decrying the hardships she endures due to her race.

That’s our introduction to Angelique Power, the president of the \$568 million nonprofit Skillman Foundation. With its deep pockets (\$21.9 million in revenue reported for 2023 and \$394.9 million in net assets) Skillman has emerged as a power broker in the diversity, equity, and inclusion/social justice movement with Power leading the charge.

In September, Power was promoting her participation in a campaign called “Shakespeare in Detroit.”

“Black women proclaiming our genius,” Power stated in a social media post of the photo of her dressed up in a Shakespearean wardrobe. “It was both hard to do and necessary to remember in spite of our own doubts—in the face of the rhetoric we face daily.”

Part of that “rhetoric” she faces was the *Detroit News* naming her as the Michiganian of the Year in June. Or in 2021 the *Chicago Tribune* article calling Power “a rock star” when announcing she was leaving for the Skillman Foundation. Or in June when *Crain’s Detroit Business* named her as one of the “Notable Leaders In Philanthropy In 2025.”

In a YouTube video, Power says, “Well, first of all, I want to say that asking a black woman about her genius still seems radical in 2025.”

It should be noted that Power is the third black CEO of the Skillman Foundation. The first was Carol Goss, who took over 21 years ago. Yet, one of Power’s first acts was to implement a “racial equity audit” on the Skillman Foundation.

## Funding the status quo

Skillman’s calling card in 2025 is molding education with the DEI initiatives it funds to shape an “equitable education system.” On its website, Skillman claims, “It’s time to reimagine how decisions are made—expanding the table to



*“Black women proclaiming our genius,” Power stated in a social media post of the photo of her dressed up in a Shakespearean wardrobe.*

ensure those who know our schools best are truly heard and included.”

To this end, Power paraded three Detroit area schoolchildren onto a September 8 podcast on WJR, calling them “truth-tellers.” The ruse was that those teenagers would really have a say in spending the \$20 billion Michigan government now spends on K-12 instruction.

There’s an old joke that “status quo” is Latin for “the mess we’re in.” This should be the motto for Skillman’s grant-making. Follow the Skillman money, and you find that it is going to the same cast of characters that have steered

Credit: www.linkedin.com/post/angeliquepower\_black-women-leaders-claiming-our-genius-activity-7374066666479067136-z7BF



*These groups, with these people, are not offering new ideas, nor are they ignored voices. They are the status-quo that steered Michigan's K-12 system into crisis.*

Michigan's public education system generally, and Detroit specifically, into the mess Skillman claims to be fixing. As an example: nearly 9 out of 10 third graders in Detroit Public Schools are not proficient in reading.

One grantee, 482Forward, received \$1 million from Skillman in 2024. The nonprofit is run by Jamila Martin, a former SEIU organizer, and Molly Sweeney, who worked for Excellent Schools Detroit, an education group that advocated for more public-school funding.

(Note: Unless stipulated otherwise, all grants referenced are from January 2024 or later.)

Skillman granted Launch Michigan \$200,000 in 2024. The Skillman website claims Launch Michigan “members are committed to working across political and ideological lines to uphold a common agenda aimed at building a strong, thriving public education system for all Michigan students.”

Launch Michigan's president and CEO is Venessa Keesler, who spent 10 years as a top administrator with the Michigan Department of Education. The vice chair of the board is Chandra Madaffari, president of the Michigan Education Association—the state's largest teachers union.

These groups, with these people, are not offering new ideas, nor are they ignored voices. They are the status-quo that steered Michigan's K-12 system into crisis.

In a February 2022 interview with *Crain's*, Power was asked about the “system change” she was trying to enact.

“We have been working closely with Launch Michigan, and they have been doing some really thoughtful work around the teacher shortage,” Power said. “So that's like a direct line of trying to listen, but also try to sit in coalition with others that are putting points, really bold ideas, around fellowships. How do we bring new people into the teaching pipeline? How do we incentivize teachers to stay?”

But Power has been listening to *and funding* the people whose agenda for decades has been to cry over teacher shortages . . . even when they do not exist.

In 2024–25, Michigan had more full-time teaching positions than at any point since 2010. The Detroit Public

Schools Community District had 3,021 full-time teaching positions in 2016–17. In 2024–25, the district had 3,533 full-time teachers.

Where's the shortage?

## Losing the race

While education is the main Skillman focus, race is the umbrella that many grants fall under.

Prior to joining Skillman, Power was president of the Field Foundation. The *Chicago Tribune* reported in 2021 that Power was “noted” for transforming the Field's funding structure to focus on racial equity. The Field Foundation currently describes itself as a “private, independent foundation that supports community power building.”

Power wrote in April that the “Skillman Foundation is race explicit—not race exclusive.” In practice, this means Skillman funds groups that blame racism or injustice for the failures of nearly any social institution.

482Forward, one of the biggest recipients of Skillman funding, has an “anti-oppression” platform that makes this claim:

We know that in the U.S. many individuals and classes of people have been denied quality education based on their identity. In particular, we recognize the significant impact of racism on our society and schools. Racist and oppressive policies have played and continue to play a substantial role in shaping our education systems.

Economic Justice Alliance of Michigan received \$50,000 from Skillman in 2024. EJAM claims that issues such as paid sick leave, voting rights, and climate justice are all under the economic justice umbrella.

We the People of Detroit received \$50,000 from Skillman in 2024. The nongovernmental organization claims that shutting off water to Detroit citizens who don't pay their water bills illustrates “the racial inequities” of city policies that are “systematic and structural forms of racism.”

The Detroit People’s Platform received \$50,000 from Skillman in 2024. It claims racism “has historically plagued our transit policy.” It defends that claim by saying the city has not properly funded its transit system.

Doling out this money makes Skillman the grandest of puppeteers, pulling all the strings trying to influence more taxpayer spending on Detroit’s education. The blueprint for success is simple, yet costly. Skillman funds the research, *and* the media to publicize the research, *and* the educators to carry it out.

Here are some examples:

**Finance the research:** In 2024, Skillman granted \$150,000 to the Citizens Research Council of Michigan’s Detroit bureau. In 2025, the Citizens Research Council released a report that discussed the benefits of the city implementing an entertainment tax, e.g. taxing patrons who come to town for professional sporting events by increasing the price of their tickets.

The report stated:

In Detroit, policymakers may want to allocate revenue to specific city services, including infrastructure, transportation, public safety, and potentially education services (e.g., arts and recreation). For example, in Columbus, Portland and Seattle, the revenue has historically been utilized to support arts education and recreation programs in public school systems and non-profit organizations.

Sarah Winchell Lenhoff, a Wayne State University professor, received \$50,000 from Skillman. She is the former director of policy and research at The Education Trust-Midwest, a nonprofit that publishes research promoting funding increases for traditional public schools. As such, Lenhoff’s work parrots the talking points of the K–12 status quo that constantly advocates for more money.

Wayne State University, where Lenhoff is now a professor, also received a \$245,552 research grant from Skillman in 2024.

Credit: Detroit Public Schools Community District



*Detroit’s public school superintendent Nikolai Vitti stands at the intersection of public governance and private philanthropic power—a dynamic created by the Skillman Foundation’s influence in Detroit.*

Skillman also gave \$100,000 to the Education Trust and \$350,000 to the Michigan League for Public Policy. Both are left-leaning organizations that have a long history advocating for more taxpayer spending on public schools.

**Finance the media:** The impact of mainstream newspapers is eroding, but Skillman is far more modern with its journalism philanthropy.

Skillman has funded with \$75,000 The Center for Michigan, operator of *Bridge*, a news website designed to replace the *Detroit Free Press* and *MLive* as the go-to source for liberal news. (The name is a reference to the Mackinac Bridge that separates Michigan’s upper and lower peninsulas.)

Civic News Company received \$100,000 from Skillman in 2024. Civic News funds Chalkbeat, a chain of progressive news sites that

promote the school districts they cover. Skillman designated its money for Chalkbeat’s Detroit bureau.

Skillman has also tapped into the radio market. Skillman president Angelique Power has a monthly radio show on WJR-760, Detroit’s major 50,000-watt AM radio station. Sponsored by Skillman, the program is called “Our State of Education.”

**Finance the educators:** The Skillman Foundation Visionary Award is a “no strings attached” \$50,000 grant to individuals. A cynic might observe that shipping five-figure blank checks to the upper management of K-12 systems is a nifty way to get your agenda adopted. Examples of past “Visionary Award” recipients have included Nikolai Vitti, the superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools Community District (the state’s largest K–12 system), and Juan Jose Martinez, president of the Cesar Chavez Academy charter school, the largest charter school in the city of Detroit.

## Dead-enders for DEI

After he became president for the second time, Donald Trump began dismantling federal support for the

diversity, equity, and inclusion movement that Skillman had embraced.

But Skillman's president is a DEI dead-ender who won't give it up.

"This administration is mandating we remove language many of us have held dear," Power wrote in April 2025. "It has set off such alarm bells and internal debates—what do we do, what do we sacrifice in doing so, what do we keep, what do we risk in keeping it?"

The language she refers to—the descriptions used to identify DEI initiatives—is often incomprehensible jargon. A careful reader wading through it will be left without a clear idea of what the program is meant to accomplish.

For example, Power has talked about the concept of "centering youth" ... "especially black and brown youth in terms of lifting their voice and centering their power."

Problems in education aren't due to a lack of good ideas, Power said in her podcast on WJR. "Often it is because they don't work together and don't break down conversations into real talk," Power said.

Centering power? Real talk? Can this vacuous public relations blather get any worse?

Yes, yes it can.

One of Power's guests on the Skillman-sponsored WJR radio program was John A. Powell, director of the Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley. Powell prefers that his name be spelled in lowercase letters—spell-check be damned—"in the belief that we should be part of the universe, not over it, as capitals signify."

Maybe Skillman should fund "grammar justice."

Some Skillman grantees use talking points that sound as if they came right out of the Democratic National Committee.

In 2023, Skillman granted \$130,000 to Mothering Justice, a nonprofit "dedicated to advancing policies that center the needs of mothers, particularly Black and Brown moms, to ensure families thrive."

The same year, Mothering Justice was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit filed against the Michigan Attorney General. That lawsuit led eventually to the Michigan Supreme Court

imposing mandatory paid sick leave for all workers on private companies as well as hiking the minimum wage.

Skillman also gave to well established progressive organizations in 2025: \$56,000 to the Tides Foundation and \$50,000 to the ACLU-Michigan.

But not all Skillman grants are saturated in race and corporate PR babble.

In 1962, one of the first donations from the Skillman Foundation went to Torch Drive, a precursor to the United Way. In 1963, Rose Skillman, founder of the eponymous foundation, gave \$600,000 through her three-year-old nonprofit to help construct a new "Children's Hospital of Michigan" in Detroit (that's \$6.3 million in 2025 dollars).

Today, Skillman still has truly philanthropic moments, albeit now overshadowed by the obsession with racial politics.

Skillman's 2024 grantees included the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, the Detroit Police Athletic League, Special Olympics Michigan, YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit, and the United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

## K-12 in Detroit

And the Skillman Foundation has had its fingerprints all over the Detroit Public Schools Community District. In 2016, the state of Michigan approved a \$760 million plan to bail out the Detroit Public Schools. The end result of the process was a reorganization and rebrand of the district, which has since become the Detroit Public Schools Community District.

That same year, a group of Detroit public school students filed a lawsuit against Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Education, claiming the state had failed to provide a basic level of education. The settlement

brought \$94.4 million in 2025 to the Detroit Public Schools Community District.

And then in 2021 the Detroit Public Schools Community District received \$1.3 billion in federal pandemic aid.

Does this sound like a school district that is flush with money?

Not according to Detroit superintendent Nikolai Vitti.

 *Maybe Skillman should fund "grammar justice."*

Skillman president Angelique Power wrote this of her first meeting with Vitti in March 2022:

I asked him what he would put forth as critical pieces of education systems change. Equitable funding, hands down, number one, he said. Vitti spoke of how Michigan isn't even in the realm of equal funding, much less equitable funding where students who require the most support receive the most resources. He spoke of issues with the local millage required to get to state funding and how the wealthier suburbs generate so much more to support their schools. He said DPSCD can't invest in buildings the way they need to, nor can they pay the much higher salaries needed, and the trauma that children come into classrooms with due to living in poverty is not being addressed. Wraparound services are needed desperately.

Vitti is a skilled, competent administrator who has stopped the exodus of students from his district, balanced the budget (an inconceivable notion to his predecessors, although Vitti has done it with unprecedented state and federal funding) and his tenure has been absent the corruption that preceded him. He has managed slight improvements in reading, math, and student attendance.

Still, in 2024–25, 61 percent of Detroit students were labeled as “chronically absent,” meaning they missed a minimum of 18 days of class days in a school year.

And Vitti's district is still the worst public school district in the country when it comes to standardized test results, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress bi-annual The Nation's Report Card. Detroit has been last among the largest public schools in education performance since it first entered that rating system in 2009.

With that pandemic funding raining down in 2021, the Skillman Foundation predicted big things for Detroit students:

The stimulus funds create real opportunities to address students' and schools' immediate needs AND to redefine and rebuild how children and families are supported. They lay the ground for an equitable recovery. A way up for all Americans, and in particular, our children.

Now that most of that money has been vaporized (2026 is the last year federal pandemic money can be spent), what does the Detroit Public Schools Community District have to show for it?

According to state data, there was very little improvement. In 2018–19, a year before pandemic hit, 89.2 percent of the district's black students were not proficient in English Language Arts (i.e.: they were not learning to read). In 2024–25, that percentage dropped to 87.9 percent. Is that truly progress?

What did Skillman's president have to say about this dismal outcome?

More vacuous gobbledygook.

In a September opinion piece for the *Detroit News*, Angelique Power wrote:

It's about making Michigan's education system strong, consistent and modern for the long haul. That requires listening to the people who know schools best and putting their solutions into practice.

In other words, Skillman is listening, yet again, to Michigan's progressive educational complex: the teacher unions, school executives, administrators, and all the cottage industries that attach themselves to the state's multi-billion-dollar education blob. Skillman has the resources to help bust up the status quo, yet it is forever “listening to the people” that made the mess in the first place. ■

CC —————  
*Skillman has the resources to help bust up the status quo, yet it is forever “listening to the people” that made the mess in the first place.*



 **CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER**  
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

# OPEN SOCIETY, CLOSED EYES: THE \$80 MILLION SOROS PIPELINE TO EXTREMISM

BY RYAN MAURO, INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCHER, CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER AND  
SCOTT WALTER, CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHER, WRITER AND EDITOR, CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER

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# Cash for crazymaking: a tour through recent MacArthur Foundation grantees

*John D. MacArthur was a conservative. But his fortune is being spent on left-wing grantees such as NGOs that oppose energy and prosecutors who won't jail lawbreakers.*

By Ken Braun

In August 2024 the MacArthur Foundation sent a terse letter to the office of San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, informing her that they would be withholding \$625,000 in previously-approved grant support because . . . *she was putting too many people in jail*. The letter also bemoaned the “racial and ethnic disparities” among the population Jenkins was locking up, not-subtly implying that the daughter of Latino and black parents was convicting too many of her own people. In an understandably irate response, Jenkins’s chief of staff told the philanthropy bureaucrats to keep their money, accused them of “structural racism,” and said MacArthur would no longer be permitted to treat the DA’s office “as sharecroppers to a Foundation’s vision of criminal justice reform.”

One of the wealthiest private foundations on Earth, with net assets of \$8 billion, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awards annual grants in excess of \$300 million. A look at recent grants (those sent out since January 2024) demonstrates that the drama in San Francisco was a typical example of MacArthur purchasing crazymaking with cash.

Jailing more bad guys was precisely why Jenkins was appointed DA in 2022. Her predecessor, former DA Chesa Boudin, was recalled after his lenient approach to prosecutions had convinced the locals that their city had become a sanctuary for criminality. But keeping the jail population down is presumably what impressed MacArthur about Boudin. During his brief reign from 2020 to 2022, MacArthur approved \$3.2 million in grants addressed to the “San Francisco District Attorney’s Office.”



Credit: Nicholas Doherty on Unsplash

*Modern MacArthur funding helps drive policies that prioritize symbolic energy projects like this over grid reliability and affordability.*

According to the San Francisco Police Department, there were 54,702 total crimes—including 56 homicides—during 2022, the last year Boudin was in office. But for 2024, the year MacArthur began fighting with Jenkins over which reforms to fund, the city police reported total crimes had dropped to 36,879, with 35 homicides.

That was still too high, but it was a major drop from Boudin and his predecessor. There were more than 63,000 crimes and 56 murders in 2017, the year before MacArthur began sending criminal justice grants to the city’s DA office and three years before Boudin arrived.

Successful crime control has predictably helped Jenkins politically. With endorsements from California Gov. Gavin Newsom and a long list of other Democrats and labor unions, she cruised to reelection in November 2024. Police

data through October 2025 showed the city on pace for an even lower crime rate this year.

To keep the MacArthur money flowing, the translucently pale Boudin, while locking up far fewer offenders overall, must have also been nabbing a higher ratio of white ones than Jenkins has been. The top of page on the MacArthur grants website for “Criminal Justice” lists locking up fewer people and reducing racial disparities as their only concrete policy objectives. The word “safety” isn’t in that mission statement.

## “Big Bets”

The United States imprisons a far larger percentage of its citizens than all other rich western nations. Unless Americans are really one of the most dangerous societies on Earth, or the most repressive—such as Cuba—we are enduring a major policy failure. One of many obvious contributing factors is our reluctance to force mental health and substance abuse treatment on offenders who haven’t yet committed serious crimes. In the long run, counselors are less costly than cages.

But as the San Francisco dispute makes clear, MacArthur judges its criminal justice grantees not by these nuances, but by the size of the jail population and the colors of the people in the cages. “Criminal Justice” is one of four “Big Bets” identified by MacArthur as funding priorities. Grantees in this space have received at least \$411 million since 2013.

Losing their partnership with the San Francisco DA’s office hasn’t ended MacArthur’s effort to influence crime policy in the region. A 2025 grant award of \$307,500 was approved for the San Francisco Sheriff’s Office. The grant award stipulated the money is to be used “to address overincarceration by reducing jail misuse and overuse and disparities in jail usage.” Variations of this language appear in many, if not most, of MacArthur’s recent criminal justice grant descriptions.

Many other big cities, local governments, and law enforcement groups have remained in good standing and have

received millions in recent MacArthur criminal justice grants since January 2024. Here are a few examples:

- \$700,000 for the Lake County State’s Attorney (this is a Chicago suburb).
- \$500,000 for Multnomah County in Oregon (includes Portland).
- \$500,000 for Clark County in Nevada (includes Las Vegas).
- \$400,000 for the International Association of Chiefs of Police.
- \$334,000 for County of Allegheny in Pennsylvania (includes Pittsburgh).
- \$200,000 for the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City.
- \$100,000 for Harris County in Texas (includes Houston).

This is a representative list of recent grants of this type, not a full one. In addition to subsidizing local governments and law enforcement associations that side with MacArthur’s vision of criminal justice vision, the foundation has also invested heavily in policy research and advocacy.

The University of Michigan School of Social Work’s Center on Wellbeing received a \$500,000 grant for 2024. The race-obsessed grant description ends with a DEI objective: “The Center will provide technical assistance to the racial equity cohort to assess aspects of diversity and inclusion in their communities and develop strategic plans for implementation that address racial inequities in their communities.”

The Urban Institute, a left-leaning think tank, has received \$2 million from MacArthur since January 2024, half of which was for a homelessness project to provide “an array of housing solutions that can permanently end the use of jails and prisons as ‘housing of last resort.’”

There is an obvious *correlation* between homelessness and criminal conduct, but it is usually due to mental illness and substance abuse, not due to the lack of a permanent



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*Since January 2024, MacArthur has approved at least \$15 million for seventeen grantees that have opposed the use of nuclear power, or have parent firms and partner nonprofits that have done so...*

residence for the perpetrators. Just giving people a reliable address, the stated purpose of the MacArthur grant to the Urban Institute, makes homelessness the issue rather than mental health and substance abuse being the core cause.

Similarly, the Vera Institute of Justice, another lefty policy advocacy NGO, has been awarded \$1.5 million from MacArthur since 2024. In a \$1 million grant description, MacArthur praises Vera as the “premier national organization committed to ending the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty.”

A recent \$500,000 Vera grant was for public relations research to “counter the fear mongering and weaponization of crime statistics that incorrectly and misleadingly claim justice reform has jeopardized community safety.” Perhaps not coincidentally, this 2024 grant coincided with the recall storm that took out Chesa Boudin because he was following MacArthur’s “justice reform” advice.

## Anti-energy grants

Wrongheaded though they are, MacArthur’s criminal justice grants at least aim at real policy challenges. The same cannot be said of those sent from the “Climate Solutions” bucket—another of the foundation’s “Big Bets” priorities.

“Ensuring that the Earth stays well below a two-degree Celsius temperature increase to avoid catastrophic global effects,” claims the MacArthur mission statement for the Climate Solutions program. “Globally, we must halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and balance carbon emissions and removal by 2050,” they assert.

None of this is going to happen because none of it needs to happen. *None of it should happen.* Cutting emissions by half by 2030 would require severely restricting our use of energy, and that would sharply cut the standard of living enjoyed by billions of people. And it would likely kill multiple millions of us in the process.

It is easy, but beyond the scope of this report to debunk the claim that we are facing “catastrophic global effects” because of slightly warmer temperatures, let alone that we can even



*Before Jonathan Chait wrote for a MacArthur-supported media outlet, he boldly predicted (based on being born in Michigan) that Trump could not win the state in 2016.*

do anything to prevent the warming. But even buying their fearmongering, MacArthur is reliably writing checks to NGOs that oppose the strongest solutions.

Nuclear power emits no greenhouse gas emissions, carbon dioxide or otherwise. It is one of the very safest electricity sources we have and the most reliable. It is also the cleanest energy option, and functionally limitless. No other energy source we have checks all of those boxes. Nuclear also imposes the smallest land use footprint, which means it chews up less of the “environment” than any other energy option.

Since January 2024, MacArthur has approved at least \$15 million for seventeen grantees that have opposed the use of nuclear power, or have parent firms and partner nonprofits that have done so:

- Partnership for Southern Equity (\$3 million from MacArthur).
- NDN Collective (\$2 million).
- Free Press (\$1.9 million).
- Southern Environmental Law Center (\$1.7 million).
- Earthworks (\$1.1million).
- Environmental Defense Fund (\$1 million).

- Demos (\$1 million).
- Alliance for a Just Society (\$750,000).
- U.S. Climate Action Network (\$600,000).
- Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest (\$500,000).
- Illinois Environmental Council (\$500,000).
- Labor Network for Sustainability (\$500,000).
- Climate Policy Initiative (\$400,000).
- Movement Strategy Center (\$250,000).
- Hip Hop Caucus (\$100,000).
- Texas Campaign for the Environment Fund (\$50,000).
- Institute for Policy Studies (\$50,000).

The timing of some of these awards betrays the severity of MacArthur’s crazed agenda.

In 2023, Illinois Gov. J.D. Pritzker (D) vetoed legislation that would have lifted a moratorium on building new nuclear power in the state. To even arrive at the governor’s desk, this sensible proposal had to navigate past a legislature controlled by Pritzker’s fellow Democrats. His veto was politically needless and thus exceptionally hostile to energy production.

The Illinois Environmental Council issued a news release praising Pritzker’s strident anti-nuclear position. The MacArthur Foundation is based in Chicago and sent half a million bucks to the Illinois Environmental Council in 2020—before the veto—and another \$500,000 in 2024—after the veto.

Similarly, the Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center of the Midwest has received at least \$9.5 million from MacArthur since 2015. Environmental Progress awarded ELPC the distinction of being the “most influential anti-nuclear environmental organization in Illinois.”

Unless the MacArthur grant officers, most of whom presumably live in Illinois, are paying no attention to local policy, then it’s difficult to argue that MacArthur isn’t as stridently anti-nuclear as its local grantees.

Next to nuclear, natural gas is the cleanest burning fuel we have. Due to the abundance of it in the United States, and its low cost, we began replacing coal with natural gas in our electricity generation mix after 2007. By 2023, this switch alone had reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 893 million metric tons per year.

In practical terms, this means annual American carbon emissions from electricity production alone had fallen by an amount equal to the *combined* annual CO2 emissions of Germany and France. That’s not just their electricity emissions—that’s *all of the emissions* generated by two of the world’s ten largest economies.

If MacArthur really believes lowering CO2 emissions is critical for our survival, then promoting natural gas—methane—should be a major funding priority. Instead, since 2021, MacArthur has awarded grants totaling \$20 million just for the Windward Fund’s “Global Methane Hub,” which—among other obtuse objectives—proposes a “methane fee” on energy firms.

CC —————  
*Most of MacArthur’s Climate Solutions have been grants to NGOs and donor foundations that oppose all hydrocarbon energy and nuclear power. This places MacArthur’s money in opposition to 85 percent of the world’s energy needs and 88 percent of American energy use.*

Most of MacArthur’s Climate Solutions have been grants to NGOs and donor foundations that oppose all hydrocarbon energy and nuclear power. This places MacArthur’s money in opposition to 85 percent of the world’s energy needs and 88 percent of American energy use.

Our survival and prosperity are deeply entwined with these fuels. The

MacArthur Foundation is funding a mad war against all of that.

## “Civic engagement”

As with the Criminal Justice grants, MacArthur also tries to fund lawyers to implement its supposed “Climate Solutions.” The Tides Foundation was awarded a \$750,000 grant in 2024 for Tides’s “Local Environmental Accountability and Defense Fund.” The purpose of this program is to park anti-energy litigators within state attorneys’ general offices, where they can leverage the resources of state governments against their climate enemies.



*John D. MacArthur would hardly recognize how his fortune is now used—to underwrite agendas that leave cities grappling with crime and diminished accountability.*

Another project of the Windward Fund that is supported from the MacArthur Climate Solutions fund is the “Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice.” The Hive Fund been awarded at least \$6 million from MacArthur since 2020, including \$3 million in 2024.

If the phrase “climate and gender justice” doesn’t sufficiently convey that MacArthur is purchasing a smorgasbord of left-wing DEI babble speak, then the full grant description MacArthur provides makes this abundantly clear:

The award supports the Windward Fund’s Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice, which helps organizations and networks on the frontlines work to address the climate crisis in the American South. Without an equity and racial-justice orientation, climate solutions risk perpetuating and exacerbating previous unjust patterns, thus undermining the broad public support needed for rapid progress on the climate crisis. The Hive Fund supports organizations that advocate for women, people of color, and under-invested communities participating in developing and implementing climate solutions.

The “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” DEI movement thrived because of programs just like this that encouraged

racial and gender grievance collecting. When DEI began to fall out of favor, MacArthur began opening the vault to save it.

The Independent Sector’s “DEI Retrenchment Program” was awarded a \$250,000 MacArthur grant in 2024. According to the grant description, the program was to use the money to “commission research that documents the costs to nonprofits if funders and companies backslide on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI); provide tracking of lawsuits and legislation targeting DEI; and educate the sector about countering DEI backlash.”

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law was awarded \$1 million in 2025 to protect DEI and other MacArthur priorities: “Through legal action, advocacy, and public education, the Lawyers’ Committee is challenging the rollback of critical civil rights protections: the dismantling of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives, the weakening of criminal justice reforms, and the restricting of voting rights.”

This and a lot of the MacArthur grants from 2024, not coincidentally a presidential election year, carry the stench of partisan electioneering rather than charitable education.

A \$750,000 award for 2024 was granted to the Voter Participation Center. VPC, according to MacArthur, is a “civic engagement organization that works to ensure the New American Majority (NAM)—people of color, young people, and unmarried women—engage in democracy equal to their presence in society through voter registration, mobilization, and education.”

In September 2024 the *Washington Free Beacon* revealed that VPC was skewing its social media posts to encourage “civic participation” by everyone but likely Republicans:

Facebook ad library data indicate the Voter Participation Center’s ad campaign is deployed with partisan intent. The group has instructed Facebook to exclude from the reach of its ads anyone with expressed interests in 26 categories typically associated with Republican men, including the “PGA Tour,” “Indianapolis 500,” “Daytona 500,” “Tom Clancy,” “Modified Jeeps,” “Duck Dynasty,”

and others. [. . .] On the other hand, the Voter Participation Center has instructed Facebook to ensure its ads target audiences interested in a wide variety of topics typically associated with liberal audiences, including “African-American Literature,” “Jordan Peele,” “Taylor Swift,” “Patagonia,” and “hot yoga.”

Legally, VPC is supposed to be an educational charity providing *nonpartisan* voter information. In practice, MacArthur has been funding what appears to be a partisan get-out-the-vote program with the intent to favor Democrats.

Knowing what MacArthur was really trying to accomplish during the 2024 election makes it easier to decode the grant language they used. The aforementioned \$1 million grant for Demos in 2024, was to further the “progressive” group’s mission “to build a just, inclusive, multi-racial democracy and economy.” Similarly, the stridently left-wing African American Policy Forum received a \$500,000 award in 2024 to bring about the “multi-racial democracy.”

MacArthur is getting the multi-racial democracy they paid for, but it doesn’t look like the one they wanted. According to the Pew Research Center, the black vote for Trump in 2024, relative to 2020, nearly doubled from 8 percent to 15 percent. And this was despite a black woman leading the Democratic ticket.

Similarly, Pew reported the Hispanic vote for Trump went from 28 percent in 2016, to 36 percent in 2020, and then to 48 percent in 2024. Relatively soon, those insubordinate Hispanics may become a solidly Republican demographic. At that point, the MacArthur bureaucrats will probably declare them to be simply “white” and cease funding programs to encourage “civic engagement” by Hispanic Americans.

## The “Big Bet” on media

In addition to funding election manipulation masqueraded as “civic engagement,” MacArthur has also been investing big to influence media coverage. Since January 2024 they have given out grants totaling almost \$100 million for projects labeled “Journalism & Media” or “Local News.” The

latter is listed alongside “Climate Solutions” and “Criminal Justice” as one of MacArthur’s “Big Bets” funding priorities.

That equals \$150,000 *per day*, every day, weekends included, spent just on media by MacArthur’s left-wing bureaucrats. Not surprisingly, the grants are frequently aimed at creating favorable coverage for MacArthur’s other funding priorities.

For example, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) was approved for \$1 million this year to provide “in-depth investigative reporting on government and democracy, race and economic justice, climate solutions, and reproductive health issues.” Last year, CIR merged with *Mother Jones*. The stridently left-wing journal is infamous for helping Christopher Steele kick off the Russiagate hoax in October 2016. That fiasco caused the FBI to terminate Steele as a source.



*When DEI began to fall out of favor,  
MacArthur began opening the vault to save it.*

MacArthur clearly loves this fake news. In 2016, the year *Mother Jones* first published Steele’s fables, MacArthur sent a \$1.5 million grant to the magazine, writing in the description that “*Mother Jones* . . . conducts

in-depth investigative reporting.” MacArthur sent another \$400,000 to the magazine in 2021, well after the credibility of Steele had been obliterated, and then \$725,000 more in 2023. The ironic MacArthur grant description attached to the 2021 award claimed “*Mother Jones* has conducted deep investigations into the wrongdoings of corporations and public officials . . .”

In MacArthur world, “fabricated” is a synonym for “conducted.”

Similarly, Atlantic Monthly Group, publisher of *The Atlantic*, was awarded a \$700,000 “criminal justice” grant from MacArthur in 2024. *The Atlantic*, which has existed since before the Civil War, was purchased in 2017 by the Emerson Collective, a grant maker funded by Laurene Powell Jobs, widow of Apple Computer’s Steve Jobs.

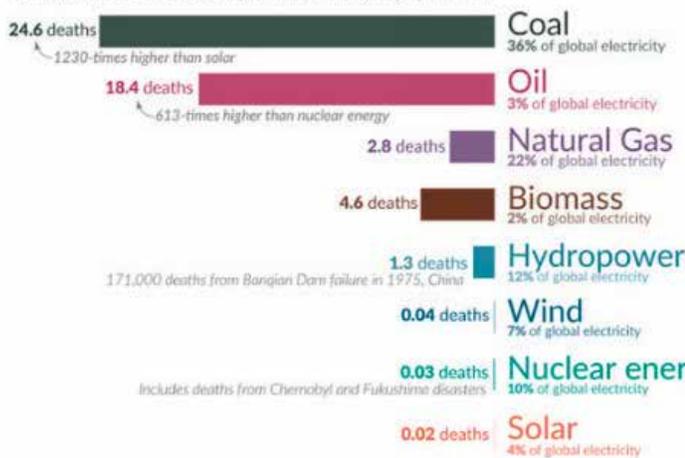
A serious ideas journal until a decade ago, *The Atlantic* has since devolved into an asylum for writers such as Jonathan Chait, who used his previous post at *New York* magazine to serially promote the most bat guano crazy claims from the Russiagate hoax. Before that, Chait was writing “Intelligencer” essays wherein he boldly predicted (based on being born and raised in Michigan) that Trump could not win the state in 2016.

# What are the safest and cleanest sources of energy?



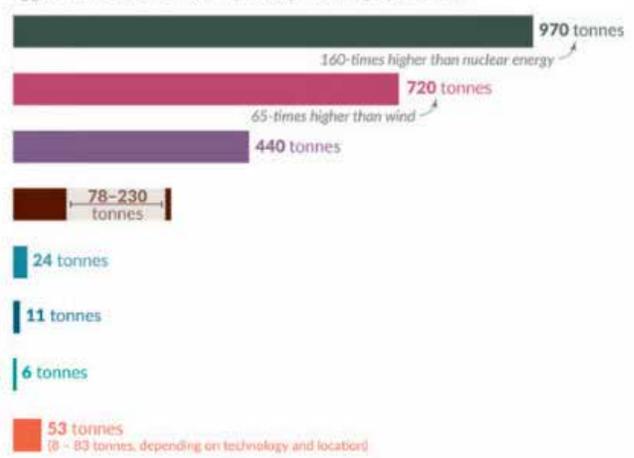
## Death rate from accidents and air pollution

Measured as deaths per terawatt-hour of electricity production.  
1 terawatt-hour is the annual electricity consumption of 150,000 people in the EU.



## Greenhouse gas emissions

Measured in emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents per gigawatt-hour of electricity over the lifecycle of the power plant.  
1 gigawatt-hour is the annual electricity consumption of 150 people in the EU.



Death rates from fossil fuels and biomass are based on state-of-the-art plants with pollution controls in Europe, and are based on older models of the impacts of air pollution on health. This means these death rates are likely to be very conservative. For further discussion, see our article: [OurWorldinData.org/safest-sources-of-energy](https://OurWorldinData.org/safest-sources-of-energy). Electricity shares are given for 2021. Data sources: Markandya & Wilkinson (2007); UNSCEAR (2008; 2018); Sovacool et al. (2016); IPCC AR5 (2014); UNECE (2022); Ember Energy (2021).

[OurWorldinData.org](https://OurWorldinData.org) - Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems.

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Perhaps media malpractice is prized by MacArthur and *The Atlantic*. Darryl Rogers, the late Detroit Lions head coach, was just as inept as Chait, yet more self-aware. Rogers once asked: "What's a guy have to do to get fired around here?"

Another hard left turn for MacArthur's media money was the \$600,000 sent this year to the TYPE Media Center. Formerly known as the "Nation Institute," TYPE is a donor vehicle for *The Nation*, another very old and sharply left-wing news journal.

Similarly, the Reader Institute for Community Journalism has been approved for three MacArthur grants totaling \$825,000 since January 2024. This is the publisher of the *Chicago Reader*, which (according to Grok) "... leans progressive and left-leaning in its ideology. . ."

Then there's the *Daily Kos*, a news and opinion website that sprung up in 2002 as yet another home for those anxious to drive the Democratic Party even further left. Daily Kos wrapped a charitable bow around the journalism part of the mission when it begat the Daily Kos Education Fund, which has since been rebranded as Prism Reports. Prism was awarded \$200,000 from MacArthur in 2024 so it could continue "producing in-depth and thought-provoking journalism on workers' rights, racial justice, disability justice, environmental justice, health, gender and LGBTQIA+ issues."

## Funding misinformation

And these big grants prominent names from the lefty media sphere are only part of the loot flowing from MacArthur to lesser-known, yet just as ideologically slanted media efforts.

Free Press, for example, was approved for \$1.9 million in MacArthur grants for 2025. This is not to be confused with *The Free Press*, the successful independent media empire founded by journalist Bari Weiss and recently purchased by Paramount for \$150 million. Indeed, Free Press is so NOT *The Free Press* that the former released a blog criticizing the latter for becoming "part of the billionaire-controlled media establishment that is capitulating to an authoritarian administration."

That statement is a fair representation of the ideological spin and hyperbole that is promoted as journalism by the MacArthur-funded Free Press.

Another vector for misinformation is the Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism. The Bass Lab was awarded grants totaling \$2.2 million in 2024.

A trained eye looking just at the homepage will swiftly spot the prominent image of Nikole Hannah-Jones, who was the featured speaker at the “inaugural event of the Charlotta Bass Media Trailblazer Speaker Series” in 2023. The announcement for the event noted that Jones was the creator of the *New York Times Magazine’s* 1619 Project. One bit of evidence for her “trailblazing” is that Jones conceded ‘1619’ was intended to grease the policy skids for passage of slavery reparations. Jones didn’t get that yet, but the project did win her a Pulitzer Prize. Winning journalism’s top prize was also trailblazing because ‘1619’ was roundly criticized by prominent historians for multiple and serious inaccuracies. The list ironically included at least three Pulitzer Prize winning historians: Gordon S. Wood, James M. McPherson and Sean Wilentz.

But misinformation is what MacArthur’s grant makers clearly desire. In 2017, before producing the 1619 Project, Jones was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellows award. Colloquially known as “genius” awards, these are unrestricted prizes of \$625,000 doled out annually by the MacArthur Foundation. At least two of Jones’s 1619 Project contributors were also MacArthur Fellows.

While far from a complete list, here are additional examples of recent media awards from MacArthur to projects with clear ideological agendas:

- *Grist* magazine (\$840,000 in grant awards since 2024). This is an anti-energy, climate-catastrophizing media nonprofit.
- Puente News Collaborative (\$450,000 grant award for 2025). The main page stories are unabated criticism of the Trump administration’s border security and trade policies.
- City Bureau (\$350,000 for 2024). The NGO’s guidelines stipulate the following: “To combat journalism’s history of paternalism and white supremacy, often dressed as objectivity, we must unlearn the notion of a singular truth.” In practice, that means covering the 2020 Chicago city budget process from the perspective that an \$80 million proposed cut to the Chicago police budget wasn’t doing enough to defund the police.
- Coda Media (\$175,000 for 2025). A March 2025 essay explored the alleged similarities between President Trump and Vladimir Putin. The author claimed “the parallels between them are unmistakable. . .”

The strong hints of left-wing ideological and partisan bias with so many of MacArthur’s grants casts doubt on the objectivity of the awardees where the bias isn’t advertised so clearly. And some of the biggest money from MacArthur is headed in this direction.

For example, MacArthur has sent more than \$3 million in combined grants to Press Forward since January 2024 to local projects in Florida, Minnesota, Texas and Alaska.

Press Forward is a massively capitalized, \$500 million project managed through the Miami Foundation. MacArthur alone has sent at least \$58.5 million in Press Forward since 2023.

And MacArthur is not alone. The list of the other major contributors to Press Forward includes the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett

Foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This reads like a roll call of the largest left-wing grantors in America, and it’s not even an exhaustive list of the Press Forward donors. In their most recent IRS filing, just those six foundations (including MacArthur) reported combined net assets of more than \$53 billion (yes, with a “b”) and annual revenue of \$3.1 billion.

There were no right-of-center contributors on the Press Forward donor list. Press Forward claims it is “working to strengthen local news so communities stay informed, connected and engaged.” Maybe Press Forward, unlike MacArthur’s other grantees, isn’t in the media misinformation business. Perhaps objective, local news, is all they’ll be promoting with that half a billion bucks coming their way.

But that’s not the agenda of their benefactors.

## Benefactors

The benefactors are obvious from the full name: The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. But he died in 1978 and she in 1981. They haven’t been donating the money for nearly half a century.

Philanthropy bureaucrats have been spending it ever since.

In the most recently available IRS report (covering 2023) the MacArthur Foundation listed seven employees whose base salary exceeded \$1 million and total compensation exceeded \$1.3 million. MacArthur president John

CC —————  
*MacArthur has been funding what appears to be a partisan get-out-the-vote program with the intent to favor Democrats.*

Palfrey wasn't even the highest paid. That honor went to MacArthur's chief investment officer, whose total listed compensation was in excess of \$3.3 million.

There may be other millionaires at MacArthur, as the IRS requires a list of only the highest paid staff.

In August 2015, *Chicago* magazine produced a profile of the MacArthur Foundation, which it referred to as "Chicago's biggest philanthropy." The report included a brief digression regarding the benefactors and identified John D. as a "politically conservative" man who established the eponymous foundation "on the advice of his lawyer, mainly as a way to avoid estate taxes."

The MacArthur Foundation wasn't filled up with funding until after John D's death in 1978. At that point, the loot fell into the hands of philanthropy bureaucrats such as Palfrey.

The *Chicago* profile also examined how "...the interests of the foundation have tended to be fairly liberal, in every sense of the word." That led to this obvious conclusion: "What the foundation does would likely come as a surprise to the man for whom it is named."

The modern MacArthur Foundation steers far clear of this. The MacArthur website has profiles of its history and specific profiles of John and Catherine, but neither makes any mention of John D's conservative politics.

Between them, those two pages of MacArthur history have nearly 1300 words. But only 16 of those words are deemed worthy of a pull quote. On the "Our History" page, in giant letters at the top, are these words from John D. MacArthur:

I made the money; you guys will have to figure out what to do with it.

Mr. and Mrs. MacArthur surely said much more profound things during their lives that warranted such special attention from the lucky millionaires now spending their money. But for the modern MacArthur Foundation executives, no words from their benefactors could be more important. If the MacArthur millionaires were being a bit more transparent, then they might have attached this to their favorite quote: "This means the loot is ours, that we'll spend it as we see fit, and none of it will go to things that crazy old conservative would have approved of." ■



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# The Hewlett Foundation's mission to divide and rule the right

*A giant left-wing donor has a plan to turn American exceptionalism into European malaise, and one piece of the mission is to co-opt the free society right.*

By Michael Watson

*Divide et Impera*—“Divide and rule.” Such was the slogan of Macedonian King Phillip II and the Roman emperors who would adopt his approach to controlling the Mediterranean world in antiquity. By dividing the peoples that were to be conquered against themselves, the Macedonians under Phillip and the Romans under Pompey and the Caesars found domination much easier than if they had to contend with united defenders. Imperial successors took the lesson.

For those who would fundamentally transform America into a sclerotic, European-style socialist glorified retirement home with no air conditioning, “divide et impera” is a lesson well-learned. And none do it better than the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a left-wing behemoth that funds the typical left-wing Big Philanthropy patronage cast of environmentalists, abortion-access advocates, racial agitators, and Bidenomics alumnae.

Were its grantmaking limited to the “usual suspects,” the Hewlett Foundation would be bad enough. But it learned from King Phillip and the nabobs of the East India Company: if the adversary is for sale, buy low and hold until you conquer. If there is a faction claiming to be on the American right that is in the newspapers and cocktail circuit for breaking with the conservatism of the “grill dad Republican” and backing bog-standard progressivism, then there’s a very good chance the Hewlett Foundation is integral to keeping the organization’s lights on and the spokespeople’s suburban-Virginia mortgages paid.

The goal is stark: Displace the American conservative movement’s commitment to strength in foreign affairs, free(ish) market capitalism, and social traditionalism.



Credit: Canva images

*European malaise has become the model for Hewlett-funded climate and governance initiatives, which aim to steer the United States away from its tradition of independence and innovation.*

Conservatism’s commitment to these principles has helped prevent the United States from becoming Canada. Destroying conservatism would be a great victory for those who wish to see America become a passive dependent of the United Nations, a socialist welfare state aiming not for Mars but for Net Zero, and a place where abortion protesters are jailed for silent prayers.

Most foundations dedicate themselves to electoral...er, “nonpartisan educational” efforts to beat conservatism on the open field of ideological combat. But the Hewlett Foundation throws its massive financial weight—by annual grants, Hewlett is more than ten times larger than the conservative Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation—toward dividing and occupying the right. Hewlett has funded the “Never Trump” movement, the “eco-right” who are responsible for seeding watermelon-environmentalism (green on the outside, socialist Red on the inside) into the American right, left-of-center policy focus interests within American

Protestantism, and American Compass and aligned think tanks that oppose traditional conservative pro-capitalist economic policies.

## Hewlett's early years: from electronics to environmentalism

The Hewlett Foundation owes its existence to Hewlett-Packard, a major electronics (and later computer- and computer-peripherals) firm founded by William R. Hewlett and David Packard in 1939. Its founders, who by the late 1960s had proven quite successful in the electronics industry and had become wealthy, both founded major philanthropic institutions: William Hewlett's William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and David Packard's David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

While independent from each other, both foundations were influenced by the then-trendy cause of combating overpopulation through the mass distribution of contraceptives and expanding access to abortion. Packard made population control central to his grantmaking, writing that the "highest priority of our foundation must be to do what can be done to get the worldwide population growth" below two percent per year.

The Hewlett Foundation's opening grants in 1967 included gifts to Planned Parenthood for population control efforts, asserting that "current population trends constitute one of the major threats to human happiness and fulfillment." The Foundation also supported California-based higher education, public broadcasting, and the arts in San Francisco.

Hewlett expanded population-control giving into the broader environmentalist movement through the 1970s and 1980s. Grantees included the Sierra Club, the Oceanic Society, Worldwatch Institute, Centre for Population Activities, Center for Population Options, and National Alliance for Optional Parenthood. The foundation continued funding abortion-access groups like Planned Parenthood and its research associate, the Guttmacher Institute.

David Gardner, the former president of the University of California, worked as the foundation's president in the 1990s. He continued the practice of funding pro-abortion groups, adding Catholics for Choice (CFC) to Hewlett's grantee portfolio.

Catholics for Choice is an early example of a divide-and-rule institution targeting conservatism. It exists to present the appearance of division on the morality of abortion, which the Catholic Church strongly opposes.

Catholicism has an advantage in dealing with outside-funded Fifth Columnists in its ranks that movement conservatism does not. Catholicism is hierarchical and monarchical, and the hierarchy has the authority to denounce and expel those who falsely claim the Church's authority to oppose its teachings. The Church's formal bodies in the United States have exercised this power repeatedly against Catholics for Choice. While most American Catholics do not practice the letter of Church teachings on reproduction, CFC as an institution is today recognized as little more than a surrogate of liberal, pro-abortion Big Philanthropies such as Hewlett, the Susan T. Buffett Foundation, and the Ford Foundation.

In 2000, new leadership gave Hewlett a new grantmaking strategy. Paul Brest, the dean of Stanford Law School, took the reins and committed it to "strategic philanthropy," which supporters identify as a science-based philosophy for "maximizing the social impact of foundation grants to non-profit organizations."

Defenders of "strategic philanthropy" focus on its employment of social science to find "best practices" rather than the practices that made donors happy. Critics cautioned that it overestimates the rigor of social science itself and rejects learned knowledge of on-the-ground relief groups.

After 12 years on the job, Brest stepped down and was replaced by one of his successors as Stanford Law dean, Larry Kramer. A former clerk for arch-liberal Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, Kramer was an avowed liberal-progressive legal scholar, notable for promoting "pop-



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*Packard made population control central to his grantmaking, writing that the "highest priority of our foundation must be to do what can be done to get the worldwide population growth" below two percent per year.*

ular constitutionalism” as a rival to the conservative-leaning “originalist” school of constitutional interpretation. In a *New York Times* piece, legal writer Jeffrey Rosen detailed the theory:

Now that it seems clear that Republicans will control the courts for the foreseeable future, canny liberals are beginning to wean themselves of the romantic idea that judges inevitably favor liberal values. And now these liberals have a rallying cry—“popular constitutionalism”—which appears in the title of a book published this year by Larry Kramer, the new dean of Stanford Law School. In the early 90’s, Kramer became interested in the idea that the public might do a better job of protecting its rights than the courts. He became convinced that the framers of the Constitution expected it to be interpreted not by unelected judges but by the people themselves—through petitions, juries, voting and civil disobedience.

...

[L]iberals should resurrect political tools for controlling the courts that presidents from Jefferson to Lincoln embraced—from Congressional filibusters of controversial nominees to efforts to strip the court of jurisdiction to hear controversial cases.

Hewlett’s grantmaking and strategic vision under Kramer would fit with his progressive partisanship.

## Left-wing policy grants

Hewlett is a huge pool of resources available to left-of-center ideology and advocacy, with special notice due those in the environmentalist movement, the abortion-advocacy effort, 2020 racial agitation, and anti-capitalism. Its grantmaking in 2023 exceeded \$648 million, and its assets exceeded \$13.3 billion.

**Climate:** By the foundation’s own accounting, it made \$240.9 million in grants for environmentalist causes and advocacy in 2024, with focuses on climate change mitigation and western-lands conservation in the United States.

Hewlett’s “U.S. Climate Strategy” sites it comfortably within the “watermelon” environmentalist coalition. It focuses on the power of government to enforce decarbonization through central planning (under the euphemism “industrial policy”), government purchasing, and regulatory programs. And it presses for extremely aggressive policies

such as the war on cars, endorsing “binding commitments for 100% clean energy or clean car and truck standards that are more ambitious than those promulgated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.” (This would be the Biden administration’s EPA, which was in power at the time of the strategy’s publication.)

Notable Hewlett Foundation environment program grantees include ClimateWorks Foundation, the Energy Foundation, RF Catalytic Capital, the Arabella Advisors network (Windward Fund), Center for Strategic and International Studies, Hispanic Access Foundation, and Just Transition Fund, among others.

**Abortion access and gender ideology:** Critics of the Hewlett Foundation cannot complain that it has failed to carry out its donor’s intent with regard to abortion advocacy. The group has consistently, from its very inception, upheld William Hewlett’s support for Planned Parenthood and other abortion advocacy groups and campaigns.

The foundation maintains two separate complementary strategies focused on abortion and contraception; one directed overseas and one focused domestically. The “U.S. Reproductive Equity Strategy” aims to “ensure that people in the U.S.—particularly those facing the greatest barriers—have the freedom and resources to access the abortion care and contraception they need and want to achieve their life aspirations.”

The Hewlett strategy on pregnancy and abortion is explicitly committed to the Left’s gender ideology. It affirms: “We have intentionally shifted to using the word ‘people’ to be inclusive of cisgender women and girls, transgender, and nonbinary individuals.”

Notable recent grantees for the so-called “Gender Equity and Governance” program area include Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors’ Care for All with Respect and Equity (CARE) Fund, If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice, the Arabella Advisors-managed Hopewell Fund’s State Abortion Access Network project, NEO Philanthropy’s Healthy and Free Tennessee project, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Abortion Care Network.

While abortion access is the principal interest of the Gender Equity and Governance program, the Hewlett Foundation has also funded the Transgender Law Center, URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity, the Proteus Fund’s “Transparency and Accountability Initiative: Gender-Just Economy Collaborative Learning Platform,” and Funders for LGBTQ Issues, all of which are at least tangentially related to transgenderism and “gender ideology.”



*Hewlett's first commercial instrument—the HP 200A audio oscillator, launched in 1939—a breakthrough in low-cost, low-distortion test equipment, contributed to the wealth used for the then-trendy cause of combating overpopulation.*

**Racial Justice:** Hewlett adopted a “Racial Justice Strategy” for a ten-year grantmaking program in 2022. This occurred after a “racial justice” commitment as part of the 2020 “Summer of Love” following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis Police custody. The strategy heavily leans on early-2020s approaches of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that have been challenged by the Trump administration for violating the plain text of civil rights laws.

Notable grantees include Race Forward, which was pledged \$3.8 million over three years in 2025; Defending American Values Coalition, which was pledged \$1 million over three years; the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which was pledged \$500,000 over three years; Liberation Ventures, which was pledged \$484,220 over 20 months; the NAACP, which was pledged \$5 million; and Pop Culture Collaborative’s Becoming America Fund under Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, which was pledged \$1 million over three years.

**Anti-capitalism:** Opposition to American capitalism, derided as “neoliberalism” in the language of Larry Kramer and Hewlett leadership, has become an increasing focus of Hewlett’s activities.

Jennifer Harris launched Hewlett’s Economy and Society project. She entered the Biden administration at its beginning in 2021, became one of the architects of Bidenomics at the White House National Economic Council, and then transitioned back to Hewlett’s anti-capitalism project in 2023.

Our colleague Robert Stilson took note of Kramer’s anti-capitalism when he announced his intention to step down as Hewlett’s head. Stilson writes:

In short, Kramer believes that the free market has failed, and will continue to fail, to produce the economic, social, and political outcomes that he considers to be most desirable. He outlined his criticisms in a December 2022 article entitled “We Need to Talk About Capitalism,” though he went into greater depth in an earlier memo to the Hewlett Foundation’s board of directors.

To Kramer, the dominance of “neoliberalism” as championed by Milton Friedman and his many intellectual followers has produced such levels of income and wealth inequality—which in turn has led to a variety of negative societal externalities—that it must be replaced with a new economic philosophy. “The upshot,” he wrote, “is that the 20th-century free market paradigm has reached the end of its useful shelf life.”

The role of the Hewlett Foundation, as envisioned by Kramer, is to fund the intellectual development of such an alternative system. A comprehensive 2020 grantmaking strategy for the foundation’s Economy and Society program spells out the details, but it succinctly defines the overarching goal as being “to develop a new ‘common sense’ about how the economy works, the goals it should promote, and how it should be structured to serve those goals.” Income and wealth inequality are perhaps Hewlett’s biggest concerns with the current economy, though climate change and racism also feature prominently. The explicit presumption underlying the program—through which Hewlett

paid out \$34 million in 2022 [\$33.2 million in 2024]—is that free-market capitalism “has outlived whatever usefulness it might once have had” and today “causes more problems than it solves.” The Hewlett Foundation simply believes that capitalism offers “no credible solutions for society’s biggest challenges.”

The grant recipients from the Economy and Society Initiative are a litany of statist and even outright socialist institutions. PolicyLink, a racial-advocacy group with socialist policy proposals, received \$500,000 for its “Toward a Thriving Multiracial Democracy and Equitable Economy project.” The ClimateWorks Foundation, which also receives funding from Hewlett’s environmentalist programs, received \$3.5 million in pledges from Economy and Society “for support of U.S. Foreign economic policy for global green industrial policy.” The Arabella Advisors-managed New Venture Fund received \$1 million over three years to support its Groundwork Collaborative.

Other recipients included American Economic Liberties Project, a regulation-loving advocacy group with close ties to the Biden administration, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities—a liberal think tank better identified as the “Center for Government Priorities.” Showing that no area of the economic left is excluded from Hewlett’s largesse, the think tank of Randi Weingarten’s American Federation of Teachers union (the AFT Education Foundation) was given \$400,000.

## Divide and rule the right

But to truly wreck the right’s nominally capitalist economy agenda, Hewlett needs to subvert from within.

Hewlett once ran the “Madison Initiative,” a grantmaking program dedicated to “an effort to strengthen the values and institutions of American democracy in a time of polarization.” It funded groups across the political spectrum that sought to improve the functioning of Congress and other representative institutions.

That program has lapsed, and right of center (nominally) groups funded by Hewlett today are participating in a campaign by progressives to divide and rule the right. For Hewlett, the benefits of breaking the conservative three-legged stool of a tough foreign policy, free(ish) markets, and social traditionalism are obvious.

One striking feature of Hewlett’s work in this space is that they don’t trust voters to behave as they wish.

American electoral factions can only expect to control the federal executive half the time. Since George Washington left the presidency, the Federalist-Whig-Republican and Jeffersonian-Democratic political traditions have each won 29 presidential elections. If an ideological faction wishes to rule *regardless* of how the electorate may choose, then victory requires *undermining the opposition and turning it to your side without changing yourself*.

“Divide et impera” isn’t just a model for Hewlett but a command to aim its enormous grantmaking at co-opting and dividing the American right. If this bet pays off, then Hewlett’s environmentalist, racist, and socialist progressivism will win the day, regardless of what Americans vote for.

American Compass is the most prominent, effective, and notorious of the grantees taking Hewlett money for this purpose. Nominally a “right of center” group, American Compass is influential with certain members of the Trump administration and a handful of U.S. Senators. Since 2020, Hewlett has pledged or granted \$3.2 million to American Compass as part of the state-socialist “Economy and Society” program.

Hewlett hasn’t hidden what it wants from the investment in American Compass.

“Project 2025,” the Heritage Foundation-led coalition project to devise a governing agenda for a potential future presidential administration, first came to public attention in 2023. Left-wing critics noted that Hewlett had funded American Compass, which played a deplorable role in developing Project 2025’s labor chapter.



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*If this bet pays off, then Hewlett’s environmentalist, racist, and socialist progressivism will win the day, regardless of what Americans vote for.*

Hewlett, without declaring an intention to “divide and rule” conservatism, defended itself against the left-wing critics:

Both articles are misleading in conflating our support for a conservative nonprofit, American Compass, with the work of a coalition of more than 80 conservative organizations, Project 2025, to provide a policy blueprint for the next Republican administration.

American Compass is in our Economy and Society Initiative portfolio, in part, because of their work to move conservative thinking in a more worker-friendly direction—which is what they were doing in contributing to the labor section of Project 2025’s policy agenda. American Compass’ work on that chapter does not reflect, or even imply, endorsement of anything else in Project 2025.

**While Hewlett does provide grants to American Compass, we do not provide grants to Project 2025.** Indeed, there are many ideas in Project 2025 that Hewlett does not agree with, including some in the chapter on labor. [Emphasis in original.]

So, Hewlett was pleased that its strange bedfellow was admitted into the conservative tent, but only so the Hewlett agenda, not conservatism, may advance.

*Divide et impera.*

American Compass is not alone. Other nominally right of center grantees benefiting from Hewlett’s socialist “Economy and Society” program have included:

- American Moment, a staff-development network with a mission “to identify, educate, and credential young Americans who will implement public policy that supports strong families, a sovereign nation, and prosperity for all.”
- The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, once dedicated to teaching “the core ideas behind the free market, the American Founding, and Western civilization,” which took \$350,000 “with the aim of developing new economic paradigms.”
- *American Affairs*, a nationalist-populist journal of political economy.
- The Foundation for American Innovation, a technology advocacy group that joined the Teamsters union as a presenting sponsor of American Compass’s 2025 gala.

Evangelical Christian institutions have also been subjects of *divide et impera* grantmaking. Megan Basham, a right-of-center journalist focused on evangelical Protestant internal deliberations, reported that *Christianity Today* accepted more than \$1 million from Hewlett, including \$600,000 for elections reporting. Basham alleged that the magazine had published material downplaying opposition to abortion since taking the funding and published pieces in advance of the 2024 election encouraging evangelical Christians to abstain from voting.

That evangelicals lean strongly Republican cannot be ignored. Encouraging a strong demographic for one’s opposing party not to vote is denounced as “voter suppression,” at least when conservative Republicans do it.

Older dividing factions are also Hewlett projects. The foundation propped up the “eco-right” faction of environmentalists seeking to encourage left-wing environmental policies like carbon taxes among conservatives. And before the organized “Never Trump” faction all-but-formally defected to the Democratic Party, Hewlett funded the Bill Kristol-associated networks.

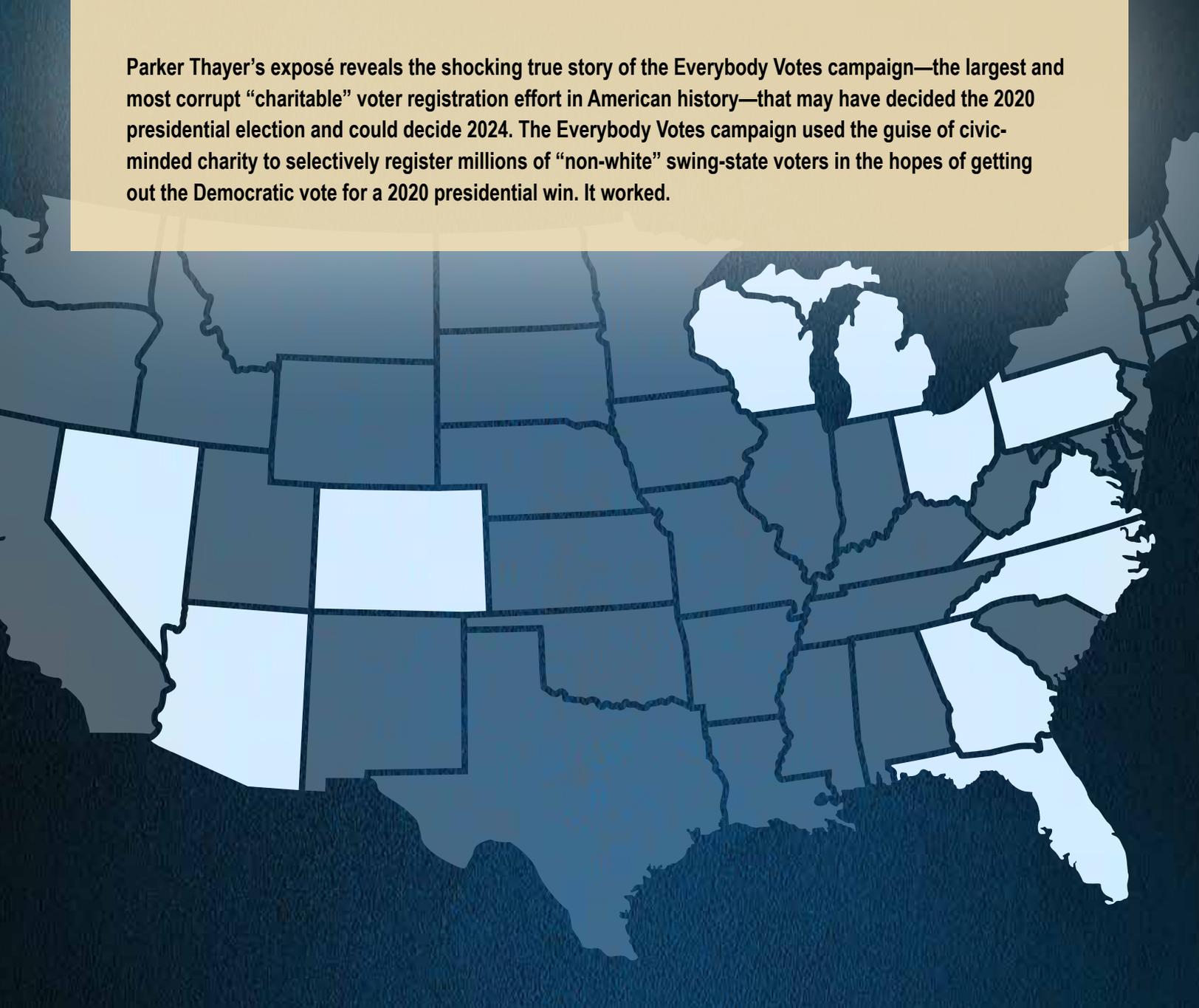
## “But this wolf comes as a wolf”

The quote “but this wolf comes as a wolf” is best known in politics from the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia’s dissent in *Morrison v. Olson*, a case in which the Court upheld the creation of the “independent counsel” officer in the Justice Department unaccountable to the President. Scalia’s point was that the constitutional vandalism the independent counsel law committed, and the Court was upholding, was obvious.

The vandalism to conservatism the Hewlett Foundation commits comes as a wolf. Allegiance to the progressive platform makes one a candidate for what Hewlett laughably calls “dialogue across difference.” It’s not difference from progressivism. It’s division within the political movement that has made America most distinct from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, where the only questions in politics (until the recent rise of populism) have been *how quickly* to reach Net Zero, *how fervently* to disarm while opening the borders, and *how strictly* to regulate speech, religious expression, and economic life.

America is different. Keeping her different means the right-center needs to reject the Hewlett Foundation’s agenda. ■

Parker Thayer's exposé reveals the shocking true story of the Everybody Votes campaign—the largest and most corrupt “charitable” voter registration effort in American history—that may have decided the 2020 presidential election and could decide 2024. The Everybody Votes campaign used the guise of civic-minded charity to selectively register millions of “non-white” swing-state voters in the hopes of getting out the Democratic vote for a 2020 presidential win. It worked.



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BY PARKER THAYER

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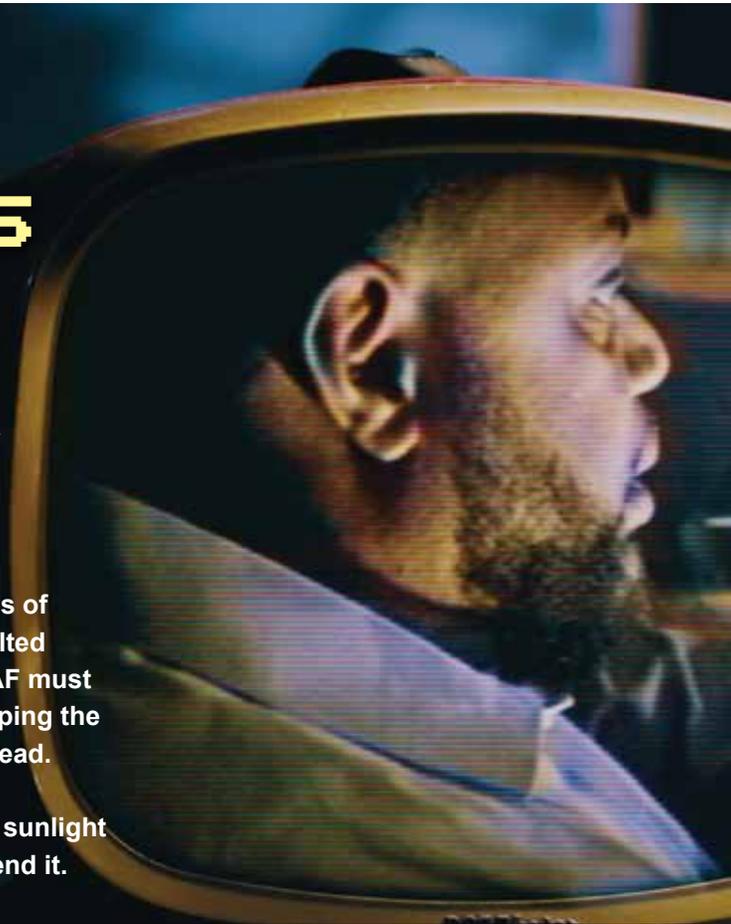
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