



The newsletter of the Ms. Foundation for Women

Summer 2006

Ms. Foundation goes to bat for women of Katrina

In the months since Hurricane Katrina hit, thousands of Gulf Coast women have found new hope for recovery through grants from the **Ms. Foundation for Women**.

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck, the Ms. Foundation raised close to \$1.3 million in grants to give women a say in how their communities and lives will be rebuilt.

Through the new **Katrina Women's Response Fund**, we made an early round of emergency grants totaling more than \$40,000, for aid to Gulf Coast-based organizations working to meet the immediate needs of women devastated by the hurricane. We then made a

electoral wins that will bring long-marginalized voices into the mix. "The pulse of our recent Katrina efforts involves working to re-enfranchise dislocated and evacuated citizens," Ms. Foundation Program Officer **Mia White** said. "We are re-enfranchising women in the south."

In the weeks leading up to the recent New Orleans elections, the Ms. Foundation partnered with the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation to support the democratic process for New Orleanians seeking to secure their right to vote on the future of their hometown — despite efforts on the part of local lawmakers to deny them that very right.

"Thanks to a track record of funding a variety of grantees in the Gulf Coast region ... the Ms. Foundation for Women was in a unique position to respond immediately after Hurricane Katrina hit."

nearly \$600,000 grant to the **Women's Funding Network**, which in turn was able to move that money to local funds in Jackson, Memphis, Atlanta, Birmingham and Chicago. Our latest round of grants — \$560,000 to 25 regional and national organizations in Louisiana, Mississippi and "evacuee cities" such as Houston, TX — provides strategic support to women of color and low-income women of the Gulf Coast, to ensure that their leadership and priorities are central to recovery and rebuilding efforts (*see page 3*).

"Hurricane Katrina opened many eyes to the reality of race, class and gender inequality in our nation," said **Sara K. Gould**, president and CEO of the Ms. Foundation. "The catastrophe playing out before news cameras daily made it clear that the people living on the margins of society — women, people of color and people without access to economic resources — don't matter most to our federal, state and local governments."

To ameliorate these disparities, the Ms. Foundation is now working to ensure public policy and

"Hundreds of thousands of people are still displaced," said White. "To vote, they had to obtain and return ballots, then get to New Orleans, find their precincts, and pray those locations hadn't changed. Many people weren't able to get there because they had no transportation, and nowhere to stay if they did get home. Exercising the right to vote shouldn't be this difficult."

Despite the challenges, the Ms. Foundation has helped achieve a number of successes, including convening 130 women of color leaders to prioritize the needs of low-income women and women of color in upcoming policy decisions. And at the recent **13th Institute for Women's EmPOWERment**, the Ms. Foundation's Katrina grantees met to begin the planning process for the fall elections (*see page 6*).

"Our goal is ensuring that every woman, child and partner understands the importance of protecting their vote," said White. "Voting is one of the last ways they can feel connected to their home."

The Ms. Foundation for Women

Mission

The Ms. Foundation for Women supports the efforts of women and girls to govern their own lives and influence the world around them. Through its leadership, expertise, and financial support, the Ms. Foundation champions an equitable society by effecting change in public consciousness, law, philanthropy and social policy.

Beliefs and Values

Our work is guided by our vision of a just and safe world where power and possibility are not limited by gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability or age. We believe that equity and inclusion are the cornerstones of a true democracy in which the worth and dignity of every person are valued.

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From the President & CEO

An action-packed year!

It's wonderful to be with you again! Since our last newsletter, we at the **Ms. Foundation for Women** have been hard at work. As we go to press, we are making \$1.5 million in grants, bringing our total in fiscal year '06 to more than \$3 million.

The goals of the Ms. Foundation have always been focused on moving women from the margins to the center of social justice movements and demonstrating women's power through policy and system change wins. I am happy to report that, over the last few months, as over the last three decades, the Ms. Foundation has been leading the charge to mobilize women's power to drive social change. *How have we done it?*

- **By supporting the needs of women in crisis.** In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we responded immediately by awarding more than \$1 million in grants to the Gulf Region.

- **By nurturing women's leadership.** In late May, we convened many of our grantee partners at the **13th Institute for Women's EmPOWERment** (see page 6). This was an amazing opportunity for grantees across our program areas to network, strengthen their skills, and enhance the vision and energy of the grassroots organizations that are the Ms. Foundation family.

- **By ensuring the health and safety of women at risk.** The Ms. Foundation has issued a 10-Point Call-to-Action to put an end to women being the last, the least and the left out in the fight against AIDS. This plan calls on federal legislators and the public to make women a priority in the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

- **By honoring individuals and organizations that improve the lives of women and girls across the country.** The **18th Annual Gloria Awards**, held on May 25, was one of our most successful events yet, featuring film icon **Pam Grier** and honoring a host of amazing women who are changing the way the world works every day (see page 5).

- **By investing in the future.** This year, **Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day®** was, again, a smashing success. By highlighting the challenges of achieving a work-life balance for employers, co-workers, the media and the public, TODS plays a crucial role in helping the next generation build a better, more equitable future.

- **By finding new ways to spread our message.** Thanks to the producers of "In the Continuum," which depicts the impact of HIV/AIDS on two black women, \$7.50 of every \$60 ticket was pledged to our **Women and AIDS Fund** (photo, page 4). We also published an insert on the topic in *Playbill*, to educate every theater-goer in town about our work on behalf of women with AIDS.

On a personal note, I am thrilled to be celebrating my 20th year at the Ms. Foundation. I can't imagine a more rewarding place to work. This organization — its staff, board members, donors, grantees and supporters — inspires me each day.

Together, we really can build a true democracy of equity and inclusion for us all.



Region at a glance – the Gulf Coast

Thanks to a track record of funding a variety of grantees in the Gulf Coast region, all of which are now rebuilding communities, the **Ms. Foundation for Women** was in a unique position to respond immediately after Hurricane Katrina hit.

Typifying the impact of Ms. Foundation grantees across the region is the recent work of the **Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV)**, a nonprofit network of 20 domestic violence programs and shelters throughout Louisiana. As a result of Katrina, four of its shelters and two nonresidential programs closed, and three of the facilities were destroyed. LCADV used its grant to relocate domestic-violence victims; purchase basic needs (baby formula, diapers; food; clothing; medications and prescriptions); provide deposits on houses and electric bills; and cover car repairs, gas and public transportation.

Wide-ranging support

Other Ms. Foundation grantees include:

- **Louisiana – All Congregations Together, Common Ground Collective, New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative**, all in New Orleans; **Friends and Families of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children**, Lake Charles; **Helping Everyone Receive Ongoing Effective Support (HEROES)**, Columbia; **Jeremiah Group**, Harvey; **Lafayette Restoration Center**, Lafayette; **Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault**, Hammond; **Louisiana Housing Alliance**, Franklin; **YWCA Baton Rouge**, Baton Rouge; **United Houma Nation Relief Fund**, Raceland.

- **Mississippi – Children's Defense Fund Southern Regional Office, ACLU of Mississippi, Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, Friends of Children of Mississippi, Inc., Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA)**, all in Jackson; **Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights**, Greenville; **Mississippi Low Income Childcare Initiative**, Biloxi; **North Gulfport Community Land Trust**, Gulfport.

- **Elsewhere – Boat People SOS**, Falls Church, VA; **Critical Resistance/Justice Now**, Oakland, CA; **Institute for Women's Policy Research, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Wider Opportunities for Women**, all in Washington, DC; **Institute**



Ms. Foundation grants are helping Gulf Region women of all ages, including these young participants in recent voting-rights efforts.

of Women and Ethnic Studies, Nyack, NY; **NAACP Mississippi**, Baltimore, MD; **Women's Funding Network**, San Francisco, CA.

One exciting outcome of the Ms. Foundation's Gulf Coast work is the creation, by grantees, of the **Women of Color Katrina Public Policy Roundtable**. This collective of women of color leaders is now meeting regularly across the region, focusing on housing, employment and childcare aspects of rebuilding the city and making it possible for women and families to return home.

For more details regarding grantees activities in response to Hurricane Katrina, please visit www.ms.foundation.org.

Please vote now!

Working Assets names Ms. Foundation to 2006 Annual Donations Ballot

The **Ms. Foundation for Women** is pleased to be on the **Working Assets 2006 Annual Donations Ballot**. The number of votes the Ms. Foundation receives will determine the size of our contribution from Working Assets. Working Assets customers may cast votes online www.workingassets.com until December 31, 2006.

Women and AIDS Fund fosters innovation, provides support

This month marks 25 years since the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) first identified the syndrome that would become AIDS. Today, more than 65 million people worldwide are infected with the disease, which continues to affect the health and lives of women at a disproportionately disastrous rate. For these reasons, the Ms. Foundation for Women believes that a sustained commitment to fighting AIDS and its collateral effects is as important now as it ever has been.

Through its innovative **Women and AIDS Fund** (WAF), the Foundation strives to help grant recipients working to improve the lives of women with AIDS and their families. WAF was the first, and remains the only, national fund that supports advocacy and self-determination for women living with HIV/AIDS. Working alongside grantee partners such as **Sisters Mobilized for AIDS/HIV Research and Treatment** (SMART) and the **Women Alive Coalition**, WAF continues to push for policy changes across the nation.

With help from the Ms. Foundation, New York based-SMART — which was founded to provide treatment education and support for all women living with HIV/AIDS — “sprang into action this spring,” according to Executive Director **Maya Iwata**.

“SMART University kicked off the spring session of its eighth year of treatment education in April,” Iwata said. “More ladies than ever are coming to SMART University and are participating in our adjunct programs – SMART Body, SMART Sewing Circle and SMART Voices. We also took action through our community education and advocacy series, called SMART ACTION, on the issues of proposed changes to HIV anti-body testing and the confidentiality law in New York State.”

The organization also is determined to reach out to a younger demographic. SMART Youth, a youth-driven program for HIV-infected and -affected adolescents, held an event in March in New York City on the first annual National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. Attendees screened the group’s HIV/AIDS public-service announcements and received copies of SMART’s educational booklet, “Shared Wisdom,” to stimulate dialogue between adults and teenagers about issues including sex, sexuality and sexual health.

Meanwhile, on the West Coast, Women Alive has been busy doing critical work in its own backyard, said Executive Director **Carrie Broadus**. “Through a community assessment focus group, we identified two major goals for improving HIV education, prevention and needs awareness for African American women and Latinas who are at heterosexual risk of acquiring HIV: developing HIV education and prevention services that help re-brand who is at risk, and strengthening collaboration across all health and social service providers by creating a ‘women-specific HIV prevention coalition.’”

To support these goals, Women Alive hosted an event on May 20 to address the correlation between the number of men of color who are in the California corrections system and the rapid rise of HIV infection among women of color, while continuing to raise awareness around the Inmate Medical Testing bill, which calls for HIV tests to be performed on inmates 60 to 120 days before their release.

According to Ms. Foundation Program Officer **Desirée Flores**, WAF “will continue to organize to achieve changes in public policy” on the AIDS front in the years ahead. But with the renewal of the Ryan White Act — which provides federal funding relevant to people with and organizations in the AIDS crisis — currently in limbo, WAF’s immediate priority will be finding a way to increase and secure funding for these critical organizations, while also boosting the representation of women with AIDS/HIV in policy debates.

To learn more about the Ms. Foundation’s Women and AIDS Fund and to support its vision, visit: www.ms.foundation.org.



Gloria Steinem (center) with cast and supporters of “In the Continuum,” a play about AIDS that generated support for WAF (see page 2).

Gloria Awards recognize extraordinary leadership



The Ms. Foundation's 2006 Women of Vision (left to right): Hill, Chapman, Ferdinand, Cohen, Grode.

On May 25, the Ms. Foundation for Women celebrated the achievements of an exceptional group of women whose efforts have changed the lives of those in their communities and around the nation at the 18th **Annual Gloria Awards: A National Salute to Women of Vision**.

Held at New York's Mandarin Oriental Hotel, this year's event was an opportunity to applaud publicly the outstanding work of 2006's remarkable awardees. "The women whom the Ms. Foundation honored at our 18th Annual Gloria Awards offer all Americans a powerful example of what can be accomplished in our communities by and for women," said **Sara K. Gould**, president and CEO.

This year's recipients included Ms. Foundation grantees and supporters who, through their exceptional work to promote social justice and courageous leadership on a variety of issues, personify the Foundation's longstanding belief that women are the true experts at finding solutions to the problems that most effect us.

The 2006 Gloria Award Honorees are:

- **Jaribu Hill**, executive director of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights. Jaribu combats injustice across multiple sectors of American life, including housing, employment and voting discrimination. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, MWCHR provided organizing support, legal representation and training to hard-hit workers throughout the state of Mississippi.

- **Margaret Chapman**, executive director of West Virginia FREE, the only organization in the state of West Virginia whose sole focus is advocating for reproductive justice. It has become a force to be reckoned with in the fight to ensure reproductive freedom.

- **Lamika Ferdinand**, recipient of the **Marie C. Wilson Young Women's Leadership Award**, a 16-year-old who has used her personal experiences with the juvenile justice system to become a powerful advocate for young women at risk. Lamika is a living testament to other young Black women that they too can reach their goals and live out their dreams.

- **Betty Cohen**, president and CEO of Lifetime Entertainment Services, recipient of this year's **Corporate Philanthropy Award**. A leading force in revolutionizing the genre of women's television, Betty presides over Lifetime's television programming, as well as its issue education and advocacy work on behalf of women and girls.

- **Susan Grode**, partner, Katten, Muchin, and Rosenman LLP. Co-chair of her firm's Entertainment and Media Department, Susan is a former Ms. Foundation board member and has helped lead the fight for women's empowerment as a founder of the Hollywood Women's Political Committee and the California Women's Law Center.

Ms. Foundation founding mother **Gloria Steinem** hosted the 2006 awards ceremony; Ms. Foundation board member **Rob McKay** and his wife, **Anna Hawken McKay**, served as event chairs. **Kenita R. Miller** of the Tony Award-winning musical, "The Color Purple," performed the show's closing number and film icon **Pam Grier** was on hand to lend her signature sparkle to the evening's festivities — the largest annual fundraiser held by the Ms. Foundation.

For highlights of the 2006 Gloria Awards, go to **www.ms.foundation.org**.

Join our Equity Society!

For information on how to include the **Ms. Foundation for Women** in your estate planning, call 212-709-4452 or e-mail to **alondono@ms.foundation.org**.

13th Institute spurs vision and action

Nearly 200 women activists gathered in Peachtree City, GA, from May 31 through June 3 to take part in the Ms. Foundation's 13th **Institute for Women's EmPOWERment**.

Under this year's theme — "¡Muévete! Moving from Vision to Action" — the Ms. Foundation broke new ground, bringing together constituents from all of its different program areas to explore the growing litany of challenges facing those working to achieve full empowerment for women and girls.

A grand kickoff by New Orleans' Hot 8 Brass Band and a powerful keynote address by two young activists from Georgians for Choice set the stage for the spirited hard work that followed. Over the course of the Institute, participants attended skills-building classes, strategy sessions and regional meetings — all designed to provide the space necessary to develop the deeper knowledge, alternative strategies and non-traditional alliances that makes moving from vision to action truly possible.

Buoyed by an innovative art-project led by long-time Institute partner **Mildred Keel-Williams** and cultural activities that ranged from a fashion show to spoken word poetry to Middle-Eastern dance, the 13th Institute for Women's EmPOWERment proved through its success that women working in coalition really can change the world.

For more information on the 13th Institute for Women's EmPOWERment, please visit: www.ms.foundation.com/events-Insitute.



Participants enjoy a multitude of cultural events and opportunities to connect during their time at "¡Muévete! Moving from Vision to Action," the 13th Institute for Women's EmPOWERment, held at Aberdeen Woods in Peachtree City, GA.



Summer 2006



Ms. Foundation for Women
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**Celebrating Women
of Vision ... and action!**

