



**WOMEN ON THE RISE GA  
2020 ANNUAL REPORT**





# A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

At the beginning of 2020 I remember saying that this would be our year, the year for formerly-incarcerated Black people in this country. It was the first year of Women on the Rise as an independent organization, newly launched from the Racial Justice Action Center, and formerly-incarcerated people were building our power both in Atlanta and all across the country. I'd just attended the first presidential candidate's forum led by and for formerly-incarcerated people, met with Elizabeth Warren, and was halfway through co-chairing the Reimagining Atlanta City Detention Center Taskforce to close the city jail and replace it with a Center for Equity, Wellness and Freedom. Despite the ongoing attacks from the federal government, I knew that 2020 would be the year that Black and brown people would build real political power to abolish the broken windows systems that have held us in bondage for so long.

Of course, I had no idea the challenges we would face this year, including a global pandemic, continued police murders of Black people (including Rayshard Brooks here at home), increased violence against members of the trans community, ongoing white supremacist violence taking the life of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, GA, and *so much loss* - including Civil Rights legends John Lewis & C.T. Vivian.

But 2020 saw victory, too. Black Lives Matter uprisings happened not just along the East and West Coasts, but in the South, the birthplace of struggle but also a place known for being resistant to change. We saw people in the streets of Atlanta like never before. We turned up and turned out in June when the City of Atlanta tried to put \$18 million dollars during a pandemic into a jail they'd agreed to close- and won the almost complete divestment from the jail and reinvestment in community-based services like the Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative. We saw visible leadership from Black women, including trans and queer women, and investment in direct support for our communities when the government once again failed to provide for us. We saw the final passage of SB 288 for record restriction, thanks to the leadership of the Georgia Justice Project. And we saw broad-based coalition building between immigrant rights organizations, Black formerly-incarcerated people, housing and economic justice organizations, LGBTQ and reproductive rights organizations uniting under one banner during the 2020 election.

Thanks to **you**, Women on the Rise also grew like we never could have imagined. We are headed into 2021 with new staff, our first official Advisory Board and an increased budget to support our powerful work. We moved from the legendary Blue House with the Racial Justice Action Center into a bigger office, while remaining in collaboration with our sister organizations SNaPCo, LaGender and Transforming.

The challenges that face us in 2021 are of a different kind, but we are ready to take them on. We will continue building our base of 100 Women Rising who will become active member leaders. We will continue providing direct support to our people, bailing and bonding people out of cages, housing and feeding them and connected them to employment opportunities. We will continue **mobilizing the Black formerly-incarcerated vote**, ensuring our people exercise their power at the polls. Lastly, we will see the final permanent shuttering of the Atlanta City Detention Center and a building full of cages transformed into a building full of hope as we break ground on a Center for Wellness, Equity and Freedom.

As I said, it is **our time**.

  
Marilynn Winn

# 2020

## STAFF

MARILYNN WINN  
Executive Director

CARLA LEWIS  
Director of Operations

BRIDGETTE SIMPSON  
Lead Organizer

DENISE RUBEN  
Community Organizer

SAM JAMES  
Digital Organizer

ROBYN HASAN  
Executive Assistant

## ADVISORY BOARD

SANDRA BARNHILL VERONICA

JOYNER CHALANA "CHAY"

McFARLAND ELIZABETH WILSON

VALENCIA MILLER ANTOINETTE

JARRELLS THERESA GODFREY



Click on the arrows & yellow text for an interactive experience!



**Our Communities Over Cages:** **Close the Jail ATL Campaign** saw significant wins this year, though the Mayor has yet to commit to a date to permanently shutter the Atlanta City Detention Center and transform it into a Center for Wellness, Equity & Freedom.



# DEFUNDED THE ATLANTA CITY DETENTION CENTER IN 2021 BUDGET



After learning the city included \$18 million dollars for the extra city jail in the 2021 city budget we met with the Mayor personally, privately negotiated with others in the Mayor's Office, held a march from City Hall to the jail under the banner *Cuffs to Care*, and mobilized with organizational partners for 17 hours of public comment during the budget hearings.

Ultimately, we were victorious in almost entirely defunding the jail from the 2021 budget, diverting a million dollars to the community-based **Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative** to expand 311 services for the city. The new budget eliminated 23 positions and transferred 198 full-time staff members from the Atlanta Department of Corrections to the mayor's Office of Constituent Services.

Unfortunately, in the same budget hearing, City Councilmembers also voted to *increase* the budget for the Atlanta Police Department.



**[WWW.CLOSETHEJAILATL.ORG](http://WWW.CLOSETHEJAILATL.ORG)**

*Special thanks to 2020 campaign co-lead Racial Justice Action Center and the powerful organizations making up the Campaign Alliance. Stay tuned for a new formation in 2021 with the sunset of RJAC, including increased leadership by our Lead Organizer Bridgette Simpson!*



# RELEASED RAZE & REPLACE: THE PEOPLE'S PLAN TO REIMAGINE ATLANTA

After serving as Co-Chair for the Reimagining ACDC Taskforce, 4 design proposals were delivered to the Mayor's desk by abolitionist architects **Designing Justice + Designing Spaces**, 2 of which keep the building in tact and 2 of which demolish it so it can never be used as a jail. When the Mayor failed to act, we released Raze & Replace, survey results from over 500 community members who overwhelmingly voted to raze the jail and replace it with one or more Centers for Wellness, Equity & Freedom.

**READ THE REPORT**

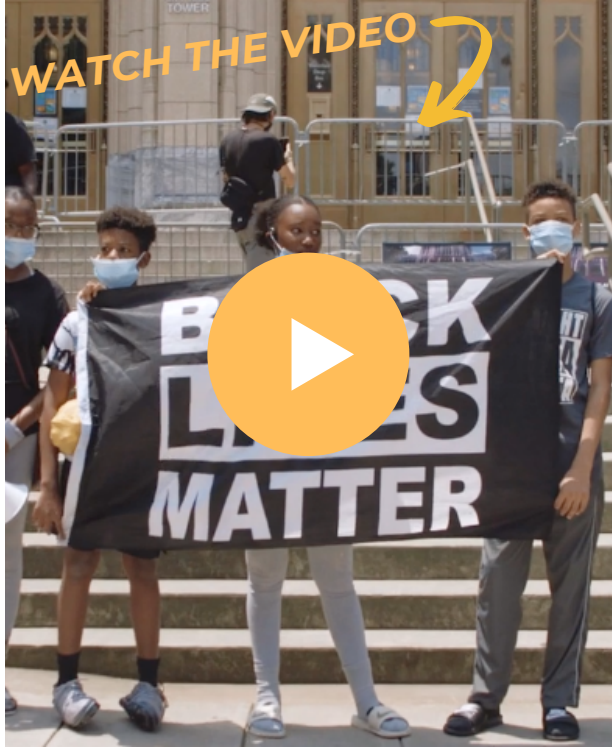


# DEFENDED BLACK LIVES

We mobilized in the wake of police murder and state sanctioned terror against Black people, including the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery and Rayshard Brooks in Georgia. We demanded justice in Brunswick, GA, rallied on the steps of Atlanta City Hall, and marched in the streets from Grant Park to Little Five Points. And we joined with partners to develop **Redeeming Atlanta**, a 3-part plan to defund and dismantle the Atlanta Police Department.

# DEMANDED FULTON COUNTY RELEASES

With rising cases of COVID-19 and inhumane, unsanitary conditions inside Fulton County Jail, we joined with SONG to meet with the District Attorney and held a car rally to demand the release of people from inside the jail. 300 people were ultimately released- *none were women.*







# SUPPORTED BLACK LIVES

Through our Welcome Home Fund, we provided direct support to Black formerly-incarcerated women amidst the COVID-19 health crisis, including

**62** people bailed out of jail  
**18** women rapidly rehoused  
**105** gift cards for food & other essential needs

*"I was given a second chance. I am thankful for [Women on the Rise] for the love and help that they showed me...this experience has changed me for the best."*

- 2020 Welcome Home Recipient

*We also continued our weekly Support Group Meetings and Participatory Defense meetings & monthly membership meetings through 2020!*



# OVER 300 BLACK VOTERS REGISTERED & MOBILIZED

We hit the streets to ensure formerly-incarcerated women knew their rights and eligibility to cast their ballots all year long (if you're off paper, you're #Free2Vote!)

Although voter disenfranchisement is alive and well in the state of Georgia, it didn't stop us from mobilizing and registering over 300 people to vote, **including 36**

**formerly-incarcerated people who thought they were ineligible.** In November, facing

a contentious run-off, we mobilized again, launching #Free2Vote and installing billboards across the City.



**FORMERLY- INCARCERATED WOMAN OF COLOR IN THE ATLANTA AREA?**



**BECOME A MEMBER!**



# THANK YOU

## FOUNDATION SUPPORT

ASTRAEA FOUNDATION  
BOREALIS PHILANTHROPY  
BUTLER FAMILY FUND  
CIRCLE FOR JUSTICE INNOVATIONS  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER ATLANTA  
CONRAD N. HILTON FOUNDATION  
EMERGENT FUND  
GALAXY GIVES, THREE DOGS FOUNDATION  
GROUNDWELL FUND  
HEISING-SIMONS FOUNDATION  
HOMESTEAD FOUNDATION  
PINK HOUSE FOUNDATION  
MILTON & CHARLOTTE KRAMER CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  
MITS JUSTICE FUND  
ANONYMOUS

## FUNDING PARTNERS

SOUTHERN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
FORMERLY-INCARCERATED & CONVICTED PEOPLE & FAMILIES MOVEMENT  
NATIONAL BAIL OUT COLLECTIVE  
SIERRA CLUB  
FAIR FIGHT

*SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR  
MONTHLY SUSTAINERS &  
ALL OUR INDIVIDUAL  
DONORS!*

Special gratitude to Xochitl Bervera, Wesley Ware, Benetta Standly, Che Johnson Long, Sara Totonchi, Roberta "Toni" Meyers & Designing Justice + Designing Spaces

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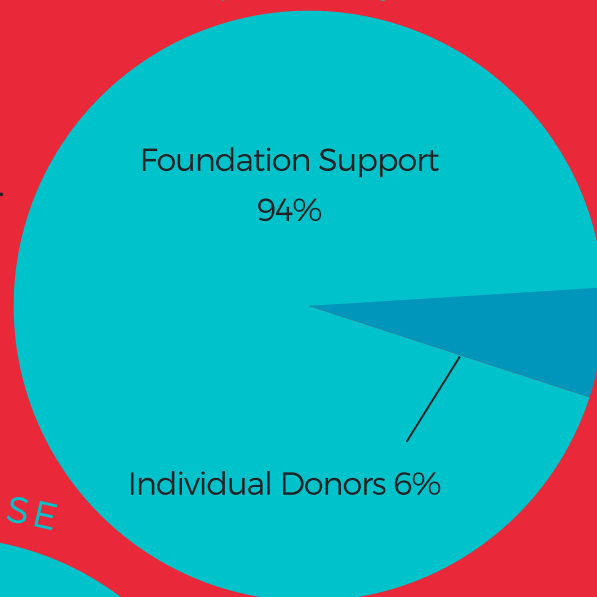
# OUR FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE *as of 11/20*

Thanks to **you**, we  
*grew more than  
ever before this year.*

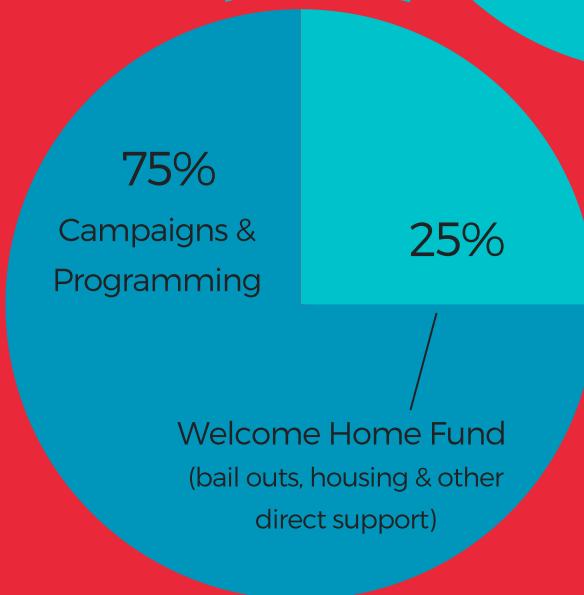
## 2021 Budget

\$1,521,447

## INCOME



## EXPENSE



$\frac{1}{4}$  of our expenses went directly to formerly-incarcerated women during the COVID-19 crisis through our Welcome Home Fund.

The rest of our funds went to ending the conditions that locked them up to begin with.

Women on the Rise is fiscally-sponsored by Social and Environmental Entrepreneurs, EIN 95-4116679

