

# solidaire **CLIMATE JUSTICE**

DISPATCH AUGUST 2023 / MOVEMENT PARTNERSHIPS & GRANTMAKING TEAM



SOLIDAIRE NETWORK IS A COMMUNITY OF DONOR ORGANIZERS MOBILIZING CRITICAL RESOURCES TO THE FRONTLINES OF INTERSECTIONAL MOVEMENTS FOR RACIAL, GENDER AND CLIMATE JUSTICE. OUR DISPATCHES UPLIFT KEY ISSUES OF MOVEMENT WORK BROUGHT TO US BY OUR MOVEMENT PARTNERS FUNDED THROUGH OUR GRANTMAKING VEHICLES. EACH DISPATCH TACKLES EMERGING ISSUES FOR FUNDERS AND HIGHLIGHTS THE WORK OUR PARTNERS ARE DOING ON THE FRONTLINES.

# WHAT PHILANTHROPY GETS WRONG ABOUT CLIMATE JUSTICE

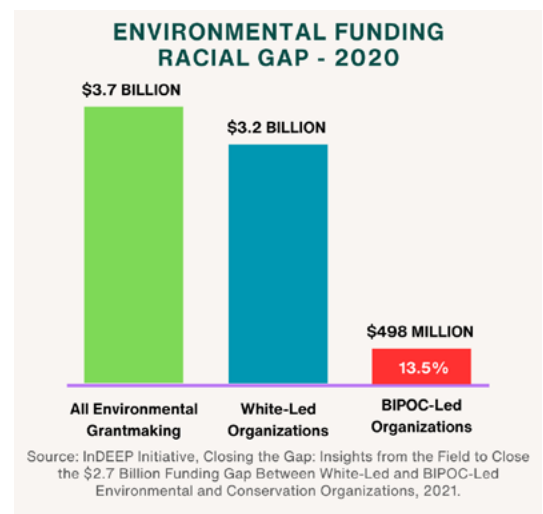
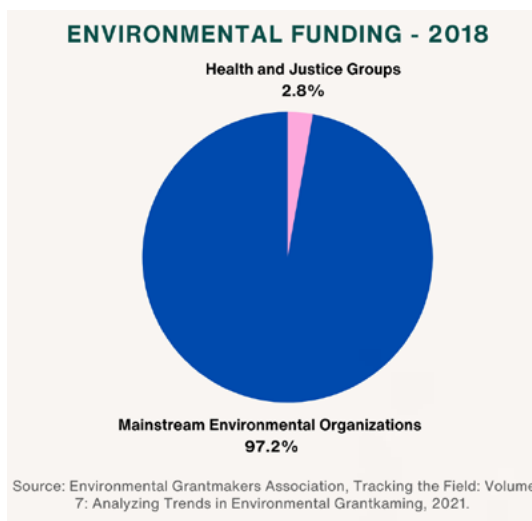
Climate justice is central to the vision Solidaire members hold for a just and equitable future for life on Earth. Since our inception, we have funded the fight against climate catastrophe in a robust, movement-engaged and intersectional way. Our commitment to social justice movements is critical in this space, because a staggering majority of philanthropic dollars go to big environmental organizations and scientific research.

The groups on the ground organizing to address the root causes and pushing for systemic changes are direly underfunded, receiving only 2.8% of environmental funding in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Frontline communities are underresourced, and the expertise of Indigenous and Black leaders, who have been protecting the world's biodiversity, is ignored. The environmental movement is rife with greenwashing and false solutions that further economic and racial injustices. The movement partners resourced by our pooled funds are the vanguard of innovators leading society toward climate justice.

*“Climate justice is a place where intersectionality is front and center. Solidaire’s strong grounding in racial justice and climate justice is apparent in our grantmaking commitments to Indigenous sovereignty and regions like Alaska and the Gulf Coast.”*

*- Robin Beck, Solidaire board member*

1 Environmental Grantmakers Association, [Tracking the Field: Volume 7: Analyzing Trends in Environmental Grantmaking](#), 2021.



Cover image: Movement Generation and Cooperation Jackson with Grassroots Global Justice Alliance at the It Takes Roots Solidarity to Solutions action the Global Climate Action Summit | Brooke Anderson Photography

A 2023 study by Yale School of the Environment found that the largest mainstream environmental organizations have received more financial support than all environmental justice organizations combined.<sup>2</sup> InDeep Initiative revealed that between 2014 and 2018, \$3.2 billion of the \$3.7 billion given to environmental organizations was given to white-led organizations, while just \$498 million was allocated to Black, Indigenous and people of color-led organizations.<sup>3</sup>

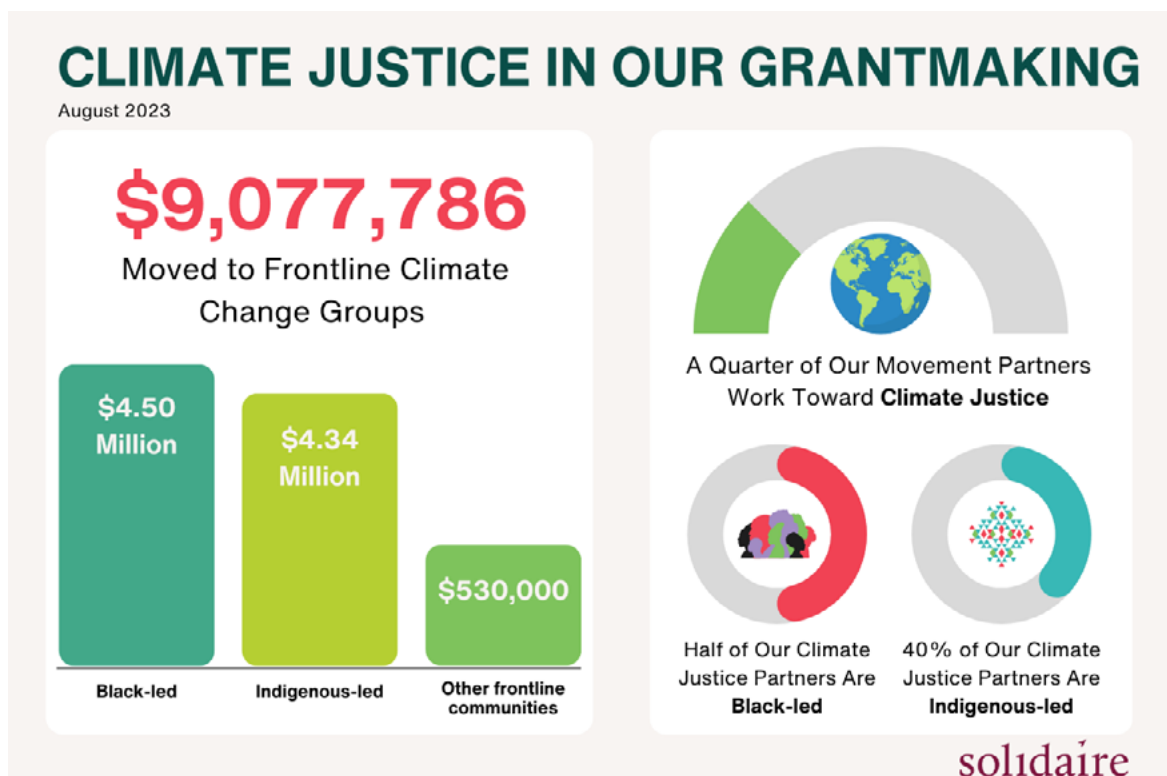
## OUR POOLED FUNDS LEAD THE WAY

Through our pooled funds we are working to close this funding gap by focusing on climate change groups. For example, climate justice groups make up 40% of our [Movement Infrastructure Fund](#) (MIF) movement partners. Since 2020, Solidaire has moved \$9,077,786 to frontline climate change groups.

We provide multiyear commitments to general operations, with grantmaking practices that reduce the burden on grantee partners. We fund grassroots organizing for racial, economic and climate justice that resists systemic injustice while advancing mechanisms and practices for the new world we aim to build.

2 Yale School of the Environment, [Examining Disparities in Environmental Grantmaking: Where the Money Goes](#), 2023.

3 InDEEP Initiative, [Closing the Gap: Insights From the Field to Close the \\$2.7 Billion Funding Gap Between White-Led and BIPOC-Led Environmental and Conservation Organizations](#), 2021.



We are also among the few national funders resourcing the urgent, holistic security and collective care needs of grassroots movement organizations and leaders, such as a community of Black women, genderqueer survivors of gender violence and Indigenous Peoples who came together to purchase a 300-acre property dedicated to collective healing. When the community began facing vandalism from neighbors and harassment from local law enforcement, they turned to Solidaire's [Janisha R. Gabriel Movement Protection Fund](#) to resource a physical security infrastructure.

[Taproot Earth](#) was founded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when federal disaster recovery work excluded Black and Indigenous communities. They provide relief and legal services, advance community stewardship of resources and create movement infrastructure across the South. Taproot Earth is a leader in the fight against climate catastrophe creating solutions and alliances to repair the harms caused by extraction and disinvestment in communities on the front lines of climate change. They work on campaigns like [#WeChooseNow: Gulf to Appalachia Climate Action Strategies](#) and coordinate the [Gulf South for a Green New Deal](#) regional strategy.

*“Climate change is not the problem,” she said. “Climate change is the most horrible symptom of an economic system that has been built for a few to extract every precious value out of this planet and its people, from our natural resources to the fruits of our human labor.”*

*- Colette Pichon Battle, Taproot Earth<sup>4</sup>*

4 Mallory McDuff, [“The Women of the Gulf Coast Are Fighting for their Communities in the Face of Climate Change.”](#) Outside Magazine, April 22, 2023.



Monica Atkins from the Climate Justice Alliance and Brandon King Cooperation Jackson at the It Takes Roots Solidarity to Solutions action the Global Climate Action Summit | Brooke Anderson Photography

# FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES HOLD THE SOLUTIONS

Black and Indigenous communities are at the center of fights for climate, racial and economic justice, because they bear the brunt of land dispossession and racial capitalism. For instance, Black people are 75% more likely than white people to live next to a commercial facility producing pollution.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous Peoples are most at risk of toxic exposure, and a majority of nuclear waste is dumped on tribal lands.<sup>6</sup>

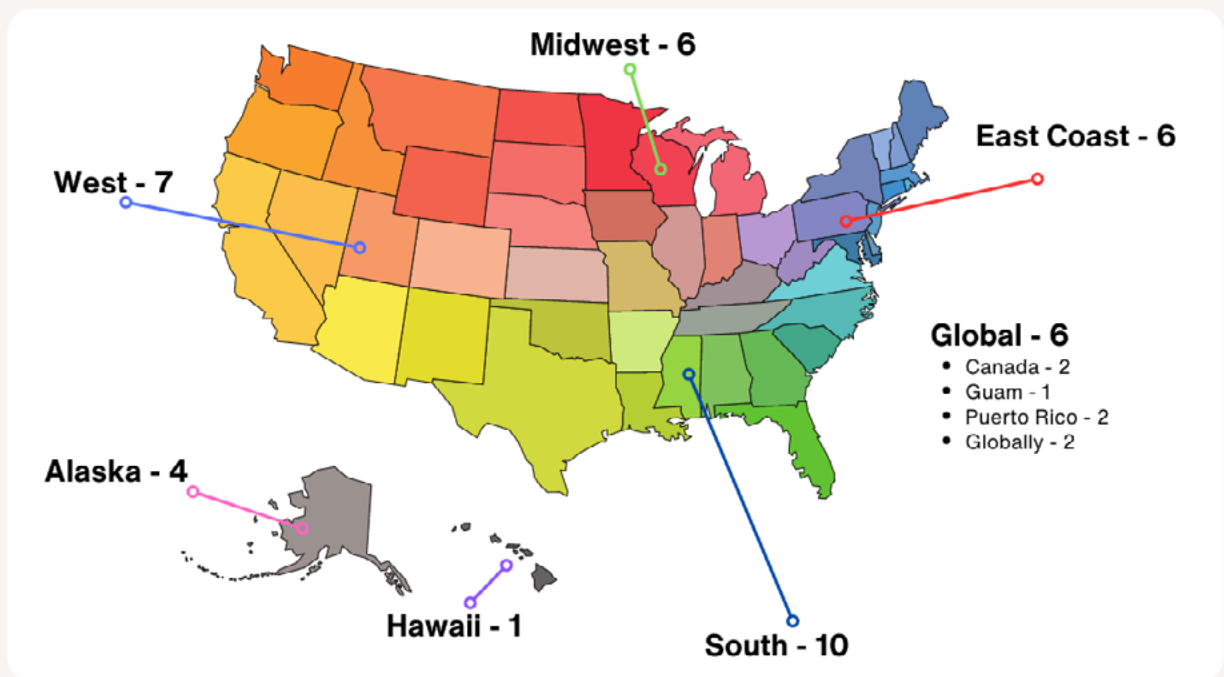
Funders should prioritize Black, Indigenous and low-income communities for long-term funding, allowing for innovation and experimentation. These communities have the most experience adapting and creating alternative models. Of our [Black Liberation Pooled Fund](#) (BLPF) movement partners, 19% work toward climate justice. While Indigenous Peoples make up only 2-3% of the U.S. population, over a third of our MIF fund, and 40% of our climate change partnerships are with Indigenous-led groups. We have moved \$5,525,000 to Indigenous-led groups since 2020.

5 Princeton Student Climate Initiative, [Racial Disparities and Climate Change](#), 2020.

6 Sanjana Manjeshwar, [“The Lasting Harms of Toxic Exposure in Native American Communities,”](#) Berkeley Political Review, July 10, 2021.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE MOVEMENT PARTNERS

August 2023



solidaire

*“Alaska is so underfunded and at the frontlines of climate catastrophe. The multi-year giving we received from Solidaire gave us the confidence to hire the on the ground organizers we need.”*

*- Margi Dashevsky, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition and Solidaire member*

We also invest in underresourced communities and geographies that are disproportionately impacted by climate change, including Alaska, the Gulf Coast and Appalachia. We prioritize these geographies and then use an ecosystem funding approach, because robust movements require a variety of formations and tactics. We support membership organizations, political education, networks and alliances, self-determination and sovereignty, and resource providers such as legal aid, bail funds and those providing messaging and security. We foster a culture of collaboration over competition by bringing funding to clusters of organizations, LLCs and collectives. We listen to our movement partners and ask who else in the area we should be funding.

The [Indigenous Environmental Network](#) (IEN) is an international alliance of Indigenous Peoples whose mission it is to protect the sacredness of Mother Earth from contamination and exploitation by strengthening, maintaining, and respecting Indigenous teachings and natural laws. IEN works with Indigenous grassroots community organizations, Tribal governments, Indigenous national organizations, multi-cultural alliances, Tribal universities and colleges, as well as Tribal Knowledge holders and spiritual leaders. We work to empower and build the capacities of Indigenous Peoples and frontline communities to develop mechanisms to demand environmental justice, protect our sacred sites, land, air, water, the health of our people and all living things, and to build sustainable communities.

## **INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY IS CLIMATE JUSTICE**

Indigenous lands hold 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity, while only making up 20% of the Earth.<sup>7</sup> Indigenous Peoples, armed with their Traditional Knowledge, are the most effective stewards of the environment and have been protecting all of us. Well-resourced Indigenous leadership is essential in designing sustainable solutions at scale.

<sup>7</sup> International Institute for Sustainable Development, [Indigenous Peoples: Defending an Environment for All](#), 2022.



*Urban Tilth | Brooke Anderson Photography*

An example practice is Indigenous fire management or cultural burning, which restores depleted soil and prevents large-scale wildfires due to climate change. We must accompany Indigenous Peoples' fight for self-determination through the defense of Indigenous sovereignty, collective land rights and the requirement of free, prior and informed consent<sup>8</sup> to all major projects impacting Indigenous territories.

The MIF supports a cluster of climate justice and Indigenous sovereignty groups in Alaska, including [Native Movement](#). Alaska is home to 228 of the 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States. In *Regenerative Economies: A Guide to a Thriving Alaska*, the collective writes, "Indigenous stewardship of Alaska is vital to maintain subsistence ways of life and restore sacred connections which, fortify the health of our communities."<sup>9</sup> Indigenous worldviews and leadership are keys to climate justice for all. Margi Dashevsky, a Solidaire member and administration co-executive director of our movement partner [Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition](#), credits Native Movement with sparking a movement for climate justice across the state.

*"Native Movement brought grassroots organizing to Alaska. They offer training in decolonization and organizing, including direct action. They challenged the assumptions of some very well-intentioned white conservationists and gave us a shared vocabulary and analysis. That wasn't happening before and it energized the whole organizing ecosystem in this area."*

*- Margi Dashevsky, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition and Solidaire member*

<sup>8</sup> Cultural Survival, [Free, Prior and Informed Consent: Protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, participation, and decision-making](#), 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Alaska Just Transition Collective and Alaska Climate Alliance: [Regenerative Economies: A Guide to a Thriving Alaska](#), 2022.

## JUST TRANSITION, NOT FALSE SOLUTIONS

Just Transition, the Jemez Principles and Buen Vivir are examples of frameworks that guide many leading climate justice formations. The [Climate Justice Alliance](#) notes that “Just Transition, is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.”<sup>10</sup>

Our partners at the [Ironbound Community Corporation](#) engage the [Jemez Principles](#) in their climate justice work. These principles encompass being inclusive, emphasizing bottom-up organizing, letting people speak for themselves, working in solidarity and mutuality, building just relationships and committing to self-transformation. Based on a long history of Latin American Indigenous movements’ fights for freedom and sovereignty, the concept of [Buen Vivir](#), note our colleagues at [Thousand Currents](#), “implies ‘right living’ or life in balance with community, natural systems, and future generations.”

These principles are the best defense against the many false solutions that plague environmentalism. As the state of Alaska tries to move away from an economy that relies solely on fossil fuel extraction, some present mining as an alternative. Our movement partners in the region, including Native Movement and Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, are amplifying local residents’ opposition to a proposed open-pit mine in Nome for graphite, a material used in the production of battery anodes.

<sup>10</sup> Climate Justice Alliance: [Just Transition Principles](#), 2019.



*Christian Rodriguez from Ironbound Community Corporation, with Sha Grogan-Brown, Adrien Salazar, and Jaron Browne at the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance Membership Assembly | Brooke Anderson Photography*





*Doria Robinson of Urban Tilth | Brooke Anderson Photography*

*“Apache Stronghold has shown the importance of just transition because this is a frontline community being hurt by false solutions. We can’t replace one mega industry with another one rooted in racial capitalism that will continue to abuse frontline communities.”*

*- Robin Beck, Solidaire board member*

[Apache Stronghold](#) is fighting another example of greenwashing. Oak Flat, a sacred site for the Apache, is being threatened by plans to create a copper mine. Copper is a key material in renewable energy efforts and the making of electric cars. The mine will deplete groundwater, contaminate the environment and destroy a sacred site. Solidaire board member Robin Beck has been accompanying Apache Stronghold through his family’s foundation, The [Max and Anna Levinson Foundation](#). “It is not just legal methods and organizing strategy of Apache leaders,” explains Robin. “The work that they are doing is sacred. It is a spiritual practice to save this sacred site. There is profound power in their leadership that taps into the core of humanity’s culture.”

## OUR GROWING EDGES

[Land back](#) purchases are an essential part of returning power to frontline communities. Solidaire board member Laura Flynn supported the 10-year struggle to [Stop Line 3](#), fighting a pipeline bringing tar sands from Alberta, Canada, to Wisconsin and cutting across Anishinaabe tribal land, the Mississippi River and threatening Lake Superior. When construction was announced, Laura mobilized Solidaire's rapid response to raise an initial \$20,000 for our movement partners [Honor the Earth](#) and the [Giniw Collective](#) to seed resistance camps in Northern Minnesota.

Laura met Solidaire member Katie Redford, of the [Equation Campaign](#), on the Line 3 frontlines. Laura and Katie teamed up, organized donor briefings, and once again, Solidaire members showed up with resources. Some put their bodies on the line for civil disobedience. Solidaire members and other aligned funders moved over \$3 million to the Indigenous-led Stop Line 3 resistance and funded three landback purchases.

*“The Line 3 struggle birthed dozens of ongoing environmental justice campaigns, land back and just transition projects. Rapid response organizing made that possible, but people need consistent year over year support. And especially for land back purchases, communities need ongoing support to build on and maintain the land. Solidaire’s pooled funds do that.”*

*- Laura Flynn, Solidaire board member*

“We funded them throughout the struggle,” explained Laura. “Solidaire’s Movement Protection Fund made crucial grants to protect people and communities taking huge personal risks. As the protests wound down we really didn’t want folks to come home with debt and charges.” The Stop Line 3 struggle is a great example of the progress that can be made, even when a campaign doesn’t achieve the desired outcome. Providing continuing support after land back purchase is an area where funders and donor networks can grow.



## CAMPAIGNS

[Apache Stronghold](#)

[Gulf South for a Green New Deal](#)

[LandBack](#)

[Sogorea Te' Land Trust](#)

[Stop Cop City](#)

[StopWillow](#)

## FURTHER STUDY

Aaron Dorfman, [“Listening to the Experts: A Campaign to Redirect Climate Justice and Just Transitizon.”](#) National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, July 12, 2023.

Alaska Just Transition Collective and Alaska Climate Alliance, [Regenerative Economies: A Guide to a Thriving Alaska](#), 2022.

Indigenous Environmental Network, [“Biden Administration Breaks Climate Promise and Approves Willow Project.”](#) March 13, 2023.

Jenni Monet, [“What Standing Rock Gave the World.”](#) Yes! Magazine, March 16, 2018.

Pennelys Droz, [“Indigenous and Black Communities Find Common Cause for Land Justice.”](#) Yes! Magazine, November 22, 2022.

Joseph Lee, [“The World Spends Billions to ‘Protect’ Indigenous Land. Only 17% Goes to Indigenous Peoples.”](#) Grist, October 6, 2022.

Keecha Harris, Tyrabia Womble and Sara Padilla, [“Will the New Funding for BIPOC Environmental Justice Leaders Last?”](#) Nonprofit Quarterly, November 1, 2021.

Mallory McDuff, [“The Women of the Gulf Coast Are Fighting for their Communities in the Face of Climate Change.”](#) Outside Magazine, April 22, 2023.

Michael Kavate, [“How Funders, Intermediary Groups and Activists Are Working Together to Stop the Line 3 Pipeline.”](#) Inside Philanthropy, May 14, 2021.

Supriya Lopez Pillai, [“For Real Climate Justice, Philanthropy Must Support the Front Lines, Fund Early and Fund Big.”](#) Inside Philanthropy, March 21, 2023.

Suzanne Benally, Rajasvini Bhansali, Carla Fredericks and Tia Oros Peters, [“Philanthropy Must Support Indigenous-Led Climate Solutions.”](#) Inside Philanthropy, November 2, 2021.

United Frontline Table, [A People’s Orientation to a Regenerative Economy: Protect, Repair, Invest, and Transform](#), 2020.

Taproot Earth, [#WeChooseNow: Gulf to Appalachia Climate Action Strategy](#), 2023.

# OUR MOVEMENT PARTNERS IN CLIMATE JUSTICE

[Alaska Public Interest Research Group](#)

[CLIMA Fund](#)

[Cooperation Jackson](#)

[Earth-Bound Building](#)

[Earthseed Land Collective](#)

[Earthseed Permaculture Center](#)

[Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition](#)

[Forward Montana](#)

[Grassroots Global Justice Alliance](#)

[Grow Dat Youth Farm](#)

[Honor the Earth](#)

[Indigenous Climate Action](#)

[Indigenous Environmental Network](#)

[Ironbound Community Development Corporation](#)

[Ko'ihouana](#)

[María Fund](#)

[Medicine Bowl, INC](#)

[Mississippi Center for Cultural Production \(Sipp Culture\)](#)

[National Black Food & Justice Alliance](#)

[Native Movement](#)

[Nfungotah Ile Osain Ecological Epicenter of New Orleans](#)

[Parceleras Afrocaribeñas](#)

[People's Advocacy Institute](#)

[Prutehi Litekyan](#)

[Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation](#)

[Sacred Earth Solar](#)

[Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples](#)

[Southeastern African-American Farmers Organic Network \(SAAFON\)](#)

[Taproot Earth](#)

[Tewa Women United](#)

[The Black Feminist Project](#)

[The Come Up Project feat. Gangstas to Growers](#)

[The Fields at Rootspring](#)

[The NY Black Ecosystem](#)

[Urban Growers Collective](#)

[Urban Tilth](#)

[We the People of Detroit](#)

[White Earth Land and Recovery Project](#)

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