

# ms. foundation for women

## Letter from the President and Executive Director

**O**n behalf of the board and staff of the Ms. Foundation for Women, we express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of all those affected by the terrorist acts of September 11. Like everyone, we are shaken and horrified by the day's tragic events. We are grateful to be together again as a community, and we hope that the same is true for you and yours.

We want to share several thoughts uppermost in our minds now, and tell you about our thinking for the future. We know that in New York and communities across the country, it has been important for people to have something that they can do in response to the tragedy. As the foundation staff gathered, we felt privileged that we can, through our work, take immediate action in the aftermath of September 11. We want you, our key stakeholders in this institution, to know about these opportunities as well.

As longtime activists working to bridge the divide between gender, race, ethnicity and religion, we are grief stricken and even enraged by this tragedy. Violence and fear have cast a shadow over our lives, bonding us inexorably with women here and abroad who have long had firsthand knowledge of terror. For years, women's organizations have watched the Taliban tighten its stranglehold on the political, cultural, and spiritual life of Afghanistan, with the oppression of women as the greatest early indicator of its potential for harm. Afghan women remain under virtual house arrest because the slightest infraction such as laughing in public or wearing

nail polish will likely result in beatings, mutilation or death. In the United States, pro-choice groups receive daily death threats from fundamentalist groups, and abortion clinics have been bombed, injuring and killing providers and patients in the name of religion.

We also know that fundamentalism, in any form, threatens our most basic human rights, and women's rights

## We must take up the enduring work of healing, community building and promoting social justice.

in particular. The examples abound, though they are rarely acknowledged. We see their results everyday, in abstinence-only sexuality education, racial profiling, and most recently in the Rev. Falwell's comments on abortion providers, feminists, gays and lesbians, and civil libertarians. Since 1996, the Ms. Foundation has countered the growth of fundamentalism in this country by seeding local progressive movements through our Democracy Funding Circle (DFC), granting nearly \$650,000 to groups working on immigrants'

rights, organizing against the white supremacist movement and hate violence, and defending religious diversity and challenging the religious right.

These issues have the highest national significance in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, including the response of some of our religious and political leaders and the scapegoating of Arab Americans and South Asians. The individual donors now active in the DFC are poised to embark later this month on another round of grantmaking to organizations building a progressive vision of democracy. Together with them, we invite you to join this circle by either participating in the circle's educational process, or helping to expand the resources available for grantmaking.

In addition, we have just launched a Rapid Response Policy Fund to quickly give support to organizations bringing the perspectives of women and girls into the public policy arena. Federal and state policy makers are currently drafting

legislation at record speed to jumpstart the economy and counteract terrorism. We want to ensure that this legislation will take into account the needs of low-wage workers and their families, and will not place undue restrictions on immigration and civil liberties. We hope that you will join us in this effort to give immediate grants to organizations ensuring that women's voices are heard.

As we move ahead with these initiatives, we want you to know that we are more

Letter continued inside...

---

## Fighting for a Living Wage: The Raise the Floor Campaign

**A**s the United States struggles with the aftermath of September 11, many are questioning how terrorists managed to hijack four flights from American airports. How did this terrible breach of airport security happen?

Some contributors to the debate are noting that in the past several years airports have contracted out security services, often to the lowest bidder, resulting in poverty-level wages for security personnel. The average airport security worker makes \$6 an hour and receives two hours of training. Such low wages and poor working conditions lead to an annual turnover rate of 400 percent.\* It is not difficult to imagine that guards who have been on the job for less than three months are not fully prepared to safeguard passengers.

In fact, millions of American citizens and residents work at wages too low for them to make ends meet. Take the example of a mother of three in the Bronx who earns \$24,000 a year at her full-time job, and still must choose between paying her car insurance or feeding her family. Or of a woman in North Carolina who has successfully transitioned from welfare to work, yet is homeless because her \$6-an-hour job makes her ineligible for subsidized housing and she can't afford to pay market rent.

The Ms. Foundation tells these stories and more in our new book, *Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us*—authored by Holly Sklar, Laryssa Mykyta, and Susan Wefald, Ms. Foundation director of institutional planning. The book, highlighting research, analysis, and

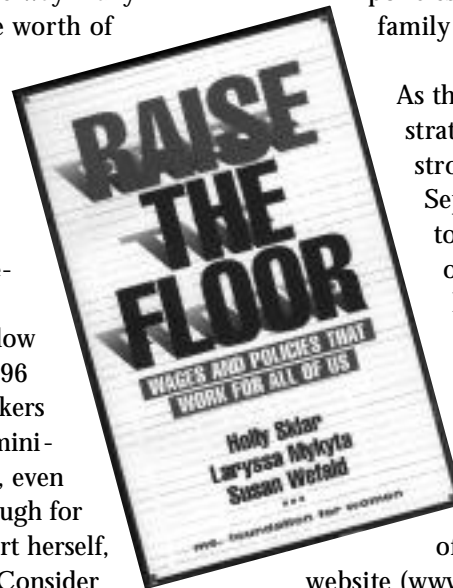
policy recommendations, shows what it really costs on a national basis to raise a family, and makes a case for raising the federal minimum wage to \$8.00 an hour. In addition, this fall, the Ms. Foundation launched a campaign, called Raise the Floor, that we hope will change the way many in our society view the worth of low-wage work.

The book and the campaign show that although the American economy experienced unprecedented growth, low unemployment and low inflation between 1996 and 2000, many workers were left behind in minimum wage jobs that, even today, don't pay enough for one person to support herself, much less a family. Consider the numbers:

- A full-time, year-round worker earning the current minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour makes \$10,712 a year.
- Two out of three minimum wage workers are women.
- Only one out of three minimum wage workers is a teenager under age 20, and many of them are already out of school and working for a living—

debunking critics' assertion that most minimum wage workers are teenagers living with their parents.

The book also addresses opponents of raising the minimum wage by giving concrete examples of cities and counties across the country that have passed living wage ordinances requiring city/county contractors to pay their employees well above \$5.15 an hour—and how these communities and contractors profit from it. By telling the stories of how a living wage revitalizes local economies and large and small businesses alike, the book shows how all Americans can benefit from a federally mandated higher minimum wage, coupled with other policies that ensure that no family is left behind.



As the country looks to strategies to remain strong in the wake of September 11, we need to examine the wages of those workers who hold our security in their hands. By raising the minimum wage, we will strengthen our economy and our country. Visit the

official Raise the Floor website ([www.raisethefloor.org](http://www.raisethefloor.org)) to purchase the book and view a schedule of press events. For other information about Raise the Floor, contact Nora Grip, at 212-742-2300 ext. 329, or [ngrip@ms.foundation.org](mailto:ngrip@ms.foundation.org).

---

\*Source: Brad Foss. Experts: Costs Undermine Security. [Washingtonpost.com](http://Washingtonpost.com). [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A20110-2001Sep12.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A20110-2001Sep12.html). Viewed September 28, 2001.

---

# Combating Fundamentalism: The Ms. Foundation's Democracy Funding Circle

**T**he attacks on September 11 have left Americans, and people around the world, struggling to comprehend the terrorist acts. One question echoes in our minds: "Why?" There is no easy answer, but one fact is clear: these acts were partly motivated by a belief in an extreme and commonly unacceptable interpretation of Islam, as well as an adherence to a way of life that disregards human life and human rights.

Such fundamentalist beliefs may seem far removed from United States political, religious and economic life, but in fact, we can find examples all around us. We see it in limits on women's reproductive freedom, from the terrorist attacks on clinics, to the more subtle but dangerous policies to increase benefits to married women on welfare to create "proper" families. It's also apparent in Jerry Falwell's remarks blaming the terrorist attacks on abortion providers, feminists, gays and lesbians, and civil libertarians. Organizations on the far right have recently stepped up their activities aimed at rolling back gains made by the civil rights, women's, environmental, and gay rights movements. They daily assault the very principles of democracy—free speech, the power of the people to elect leaders, and the guarantee of basic human rights.

In 1996, the Ms. Foundation established the Democracy Funding Circle (DFC) in response to this increasingly conservative political climate, helping to seed cutting-edge progressive work in local communities across the country and at the national level. The DFC supports organizations that both challenge the conservative politics of the right wing and build the strength and effectiveness of the progressive movement. DFC grantee

organizations place special emphasis on involving women—especially women of color and young women—in leadership and decision-making positions, and promote a better understanding of the complexities and intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. The DFC, comprising nine individual donors, recently awarded grants to 15 organizations, bringing the amount awarded through the circle to nearly \$700,000.

These funds help organizations, such as the Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN), counter conservative policies and practices. Ken Toole, co-director of MHRN and a Montana state senator, said, "MHRN started as an anti-racist, anti-white supremacist group. Over time what we came to realize is that the right wing is fundamentally anti-democratic. Through a variety of tactics, including formation

of an anti-Native American movement and localized fights over land use and the environment, the right wing is creating an intimidating atmosphere that discourages citizens from exercising their democratic rights at the local level. MHRN's mission shifted from anti-racist to pro-democracy because to fight for democracy is to support everything we were founded to uphold."

## Becoming Part of DFC

Local organizations like MHRN are having a big impact in their communities, helping spread ripples of change across the country. MHRN is only one of the many programs that members of the Circle support through their generosity and commitment to democracy. DFC members pool their gifts and work together to establish grantmaking criteria, review proposals, and select grantee organizations.

---

## An Alternative Voice of Faith

Equal Partners in Faith (EPF), based in Washington, DC, seeks to unite communities through religion, offering the public a more welcoming perspective than fundamentalism. Leslie Watson, managing director, explained EPF's work: "The Christian

Coalition and the Promise Keepers are not the only religious voices in this country. Equal Partners in Faith offers a positive alternative for people of faith who actively oppose the manipulation of religion to promote exclusion and inequality based on gender,

sexual orientation, and race. Because the progressive movement is one movement with many voices, EPF is doing crucial work with African American and Hispanic congregations and leaders to demonstrate its commitment to inclusion, equality, and diversity."

An additional unique feature of the DFC is the education component, provided mainly by Jean Hardisty, a former Ms. Foundation board member. Jean is the founder and president of Political Research Associates, an independent, not-for-profit research center that monitors and analyzes the organizations, leaders, ideas and activities of the U.S. political right that undermine democracy and diversity. DFC

## Through DFC, local groups uphold our country's democratic principles.

members appreciate the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of contemporary political and social issues and collaborate with other donors; Cathy Raphael, a DFC member since January 2000, said, "Being part of this circle at the Ms. Foundation has been very important to me. Working with a group of concerned women, researching issues and organizations, connecting with activists and, finally, coming to consensus about our grantmaking was an

incredible process. I'm looking forward to next year!"

The Ms. Foundation invites you to become a part of this exciting experience. In late October, DFC members will start meeting to engage in education and begin the process of determining the next cycle of grantee organizations. A minimum contribution of \$25,000 is required for full membership in the DFC; smaller gifts to increase

the grantmaking pool are also welcome. If you are interested in becoming a member or making a gift to support the DFC's work, please contact:

- Sara K. Gould, executive director, at 212-742-2300 ext. 417 or [sgould@ms.foundation.org](mailto:sgould@ms.foundation.org)
- Susan Wefald, director of institutional planning, at 212-742-2300 ext. 318 or [swefald@ms.foundation.org](mailto:swefald@ms.foundation.org)

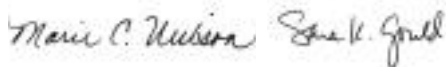
Letter continued...

committed than ever to protecting women's rights and freedoms and to our long-term work of building alliances across issues and communities. Women have long been the architects and leaders of progressive social movements to combat racism, end poverty and obtain gender equity. The Ms. Foundation for Women was founded on their courage, and that of women who daily face threats of terror.

We must take up the enduring work of healing, community building and promoting social justice. Whether you reach out to your Muslim neigh-

bor in friendship and support, march in Washington for reproductive rights, lobby Congress for a higher minimum wage, or support the work of organizations like the Ms. Foundation, you will be doing your part to create an equitable society. We look forward to walking alongside you on this road to compassion, peace and understanding.

Warmly,



Marie C. Wilson President Sara K. Gould Executive Director

### ms. foundation for women mission statement

The Ms. Foundation 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 Foundation champions an equitable society by effecting change in public consciousness, law, philanthropy, and social policy.

### Board of Directors

Wendy D. Puriefoy, Chair  
Andrea S. Levere, Treasurer  
Lindsay D. Shea, Secretary  
Marie C. Wilson, President  
Judy Belk  
Michael J. Campbell  
Carol Gilligan  
Katie Grover  
Kathleen Hall Jamieson  
Rob McKay  
Yolonda C. Richardson  
Andrea L. Taylor

Ms. Foundation for Women  
120 Wall Street, 33rd Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
ph: 212-742-2300  
fax: 212-742-1653  
email: [info@ms.foundation.org](mailto:info@ms.foundation.org)  
[www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org)

While the aftermath of September 11 remains in our thoughts, we draw strength and inspiration from our work and that of our grantees.

## Laughing for a Good Cause

In the wake of tragic events, one of the most important things we can do to heal is come together as a community and begin to laugh again. On October 29, 2001, the Ms. Foundation gathered with friends at our 13th Annual Comedy Hour. Each year,

at the famed Carolines on Broadway, the Ms. Foundation showcases today's best female comics to entertain and enlighten our guests. This year's event was presented by president Marie C. Wilson, author and activist Gloria Steinem, and Carolines president Caroline Hirsch. We were especially proud to work with Carolines on Broadway this year, as Caroline Hirsch generously donated the proceeds from one week of shows to New York City's relief efforts. Featured performers included Janeane Garafolo, Molly Ivins, Kathleen Madigan, Sue Murphy, Maya Rudolph, and Vicki Shaw.

## Rapid Response

The Ms. Foundation announces the launch of our Rapid Response Policy Fund to provide resources to organizations working to bring the agendas and perspectives of women and girls into public policy. The initial cycle of this fund will focus on getting resources to groups—national, state and local—that are moving right now to: 1) impact federal and state policy initiatives related to terrorism, civil liberties and the weakened economy; and 2) organize communities against racism, hate violence and threats to equity, freedom of religion, and civil rights. We have identified several groups

already working on these issues, and will provide resources to additional programs as funds become available. If you would like to support strategic work responding to September 11, we invite you to increase the grantmaking resources of the Fund. To make a contribution, please contact Molly Honigsfeld at 212-742-2300 ext. 414.

## Connecting National Policy and Local Advocates

On October 10, the Ms. Foundation sponsored an audio conference call to link national policy makers and advocates to organizations across the country. The audioconference featured two members of Congress, Rosa DeLauro and Jane Harmon, as well as Linda Tarr-Whelan of the Center for Policy Alternatives and Karen Narasaki of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, who updated listeners on proposed policies to stimulate the economy and enhance homeland security. Conducted in partnership with the National Council of Women's Organizations and the Women's

## The Rapid Response Policy Fund fights threats to equity, civil rights and freedom of religion.

Funding Network, the conference call featured a talk show format in which participants engaged in a dialogue, serving as an important first step in the conversation that all national, state and local policy makers and advocates need to have as they move forward in the months to come.

## Call to Protect

After September 11, personal safety is daily on our minds, as is the crucial role that cell phones played both during and after the events in New York, Washington, DC and Pennsylvania. In the spirit of keeping women safe and connected to emergency help, the Ms.

Foundation is now a cell phone collection site for the Call to Protect program. Sponsored by the Wireless Foundation, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Motorola, this program distributes new and recycled cell phones that are preprogrammed to automatically dial 911 to survivors of domestic violence. If you have a cell phone that you are no longer using, please consider donating it to the Call to Protect program. After deactivating your wireless service, bring or mail the phone, battery and charger (if available) to: Ms. Foundation for Women, Call to Protect, 120 Wall Street, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10005. You will receive a letter acknowledging your donation for tax purposes, and thanking you for helping to keep women safe.

## Girls Get on the Bus

This summer, young women from Sisters in Action for Power (Sisters) celebrated a major back-to-school victory: subsidized bus passes for all students in Portland, Oregon. Supported

in part by the Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women, Sisters' public transit campaign had previously won subsidized bus passes for one school district in the city. Encouraged by their initial success, Sisters fought to have the benefit extended to all school districts. Thanks to their persistence, this fall, Portland students have a guaranteed ride to school, lifting the financial burden of transportation from low-income families' shoulders.

For more Ms. Bits, visit the What's New page at [www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org).

---

## A Special Edition of the Ms. Foundation Newsletter

**W**e want to begin by offering our deepest condolences to all of the families and friends of those affected by the terrorist acts of September 11. Here at the Ms. Foundation, we are back in our Wall Street offices; due to last month's events, we are sending you this special edition of our fall newsletter. We witnessed firsthand the destruction of the World Trade Center, and we saw our community of friends and supporters unite

to share not only mutual grief, but also renewal of hope for the future. In the aftermath of tragedy, we feel new affirmation of our work and mission. Thank you for your past support, which has enabled us to safeguard the rights of women and girls and champion their leadership in all spheres of life. As your life begins to take on a sense of normalcy, we hope our work will inspire you to remain a staunch supporter of the Ms. Foundation for Women.