



Ms. Foundation for Women grantees register 384,000 new voters.

*The newsletter of the Ms. Foundation for Women*

Fall 2004

*Strategic focus*

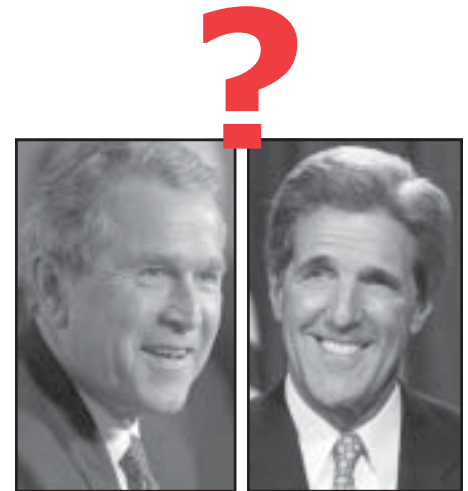
# Women get out the vote, gain power, make change

In its ongoing fight for a true democracy in which every woman and girl is valued, and every voice is heard, the Ms. Foundation for Women funded 30 nonpartisan Get Out the Vote (GOTV) and Voter Protection Initiative activities throughout the country in this crucial presidential election year.

Goals of this ambitious effort include increasing the number of women who vote “with a focus on those who generally have been left out of the political process, such as

low-income women, women of color, and recent immigrants,” said Anna Wadia, Ms. Foundation Program Director. “We also hope to build the power of women through voting. There is no better time for doing this than in a national election year.”

The Ms. Foundation awarded GOTV grants totaling more than \$700,000 to grassroots and national activist women’s organizations with proven skills in transforming marginalized women who



*George Bush*  
 Photo from George Bush presidential campaign

*John Kerry*  
 Photo by Sharon Farmer, John Kerry for President

have been alienated by politics into energized women who are actively

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**GET OUT THE VOTE!**

## Every woman’s vote matters in Pennsylvania

The Pittsburgh area alone will have more than 3,000 new voters this November, as the result of a \$12,500 Ms. Foundation for Women grant to the Just Harvest “Just Vote” Campaign.

The campaign has taken a bold move: “We are going to the county jail to register people there,” campaign director Joni Rabinowitz said. “At least 336 people will vote through absentee ballots, 196 of whom are newly registered.” The effort faced several challenges, including election laws mandating that Pennsylvania

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## Latina power at the polls builds in Colorado

Thanks to a \$40,000 GOTV grant from the Ms. Foundation for Women, a relative newcomer to the political process is increasing the involvement of

Latinas in exercising their right to vote. The Latina Initiative of the Colorado Conservation Voters Education Fund, founded in 2002, educates Latinas about the voting pro-

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## 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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Sara K. Gould

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*From the President & CEO*

# Foresight, courage, commitment — Words we thrive by

Welcome to the fall issue of the Ms. Foundation for Women's *Voices* newsletter. In recognition of the upcoming elections, this issue features up-to-the-minute coverage of our grants in support of nonpartisan voter education, registration, and participation efforts around the country.

This crucial work marks the beginning of my presidency of the Ms. Foundation for Women. You will hear more about my plans in the months ahead, but for now, the key message is Get Out the Vote!

The Ms. Foundation is working diligently to create a true democracy of equity and inclusion, a democracy in which every woman and girl is valued, and in which the voices of women living at the margins of our society are brought to the center. Reaching this goal requires the participation of all women in our country's electoral process. I trust that each of you is involved, whether by exercising your right to vote or by helping to Get Out the Vote wherever you live and work.

Over the past many months, the Ms. Foundation has committed more than \$700,000 to some 30 organizations around the country engaged in nonpartisan get out the vote efforts. Our grantees are trusted messengers of truth and skilled organizers, and they can reach deeply into their communities. Our grants support a fascinating variety of projects covering every aspect of the voting process, from registering women in communities across the country, including incarcerated women; to educating women and the general public about local, state and national



*Photo by All Price*

*Sara K. Gould, President & CEO*

issues; to reminding registered voters of polling places; to taking registered voters to the polls.

Our success requires strong, strategic institutions that can act now and remain vigilant over time. The Ms. Foundation is such an institution. We possess the foresight to identify the issues that matter most to women and girls: the courage to take action, even on issues that are unpopular; and the commitment to see it through over the long haul.

Thank you very much for your partnership and support; you have made the crucial, proactive work of the Ms. Foundation possible for over 32 years. I look forward to collaborating with you in the weeks, months, and years ahead. ■

# Women of color take center stage in innovative new public-policy initiative

The Ms. Foundation for Women is taking bold steps to promote the role of women of color in public policy with a new initiative, *Public Voices, Public Policy: Realizing the Power of Women of Color*.

Launched with support from the Ford Foundation, the central goal of *Public Voices* is to share power with women of color engaged in public policy. “*Public Voices* will bring new resources to women of color organizations and put decision-making power in the hands of activists,” said Ms. Foundation President and CEO Sara K. Gould.

The Ms. Foundation has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for women of color-led organizations to participate in *Public Voices* and will make four to eight grants for general operating support from a base of \$550,000. The deadline to respond is November 12 (details are at [www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org)).

A Steering Committee of women-of-color advocates will meet in early December to select grant recipients. In addition to making grants, the Steering Committee will devise training and networking opportunities for partners in the initiative. A key strategy will be to encourage dialogue among policy makers, service providers, community women, academia, philanthropists, and other stakeholders in addressing current policy issues of concern to women of color.

“We aim to promote strategies to diversify the voices and leaders in public policy, and to ensure that women of color and issues of concern to communities of color stay at the forefront of national, state, and local policy agendas,” said Gould.

“We will address issues of access and power within the women’s movement and within public-policy



*Public Voices Steering Committee members (left to right): rear — MaryKay Penn, consultant; Jacquelyn L. Boggess, Center on Policy, Family, and Practice; Bo Thao, Hmong National Development, Inc.; Malika Sanders, 21st Century Youth Movement; Radhika Fox, PolicyLink; center — Melanie Herrera Bortz, COLOR; Caroline McAndrews, former Ms. Foundation Program Associate; Patricia Eng, Ms. Foundation Program Officer; front — Pamela Kingfisher, Selu Circle; Mia White, Ms. Foundation Program Officer.*

advocacy, and work to better understand how power and access affect different women differently,” said Ms. Foundation Program Officer Mia C. White, who is managing the *Public Voices* initiative.

Grantees will be organizations that:

- are led by women of color and grounded in the communities in which they work;
- are engaged in organizing and advocacy directed toward local, state, tribal, or national-level issues;
- demonstrate an intersectional analysis in their work (recognize that gender, race, class, and other

forms of identity can overlap to make women vulnerable to abuse and discrimination); and

- show innovation in their approaches.

“This is the only known initiative to focus on building institutions led by women of color with the goal of creating at least a dozen strong ‘go-to’ organizations on public-policy issues,” said White. “It is the first time at the Ms. Foundation that the people who are working in the field will decide who receives funding.”

While that aspect is new, the Ms. Foundation funds women of

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## Voting, continued

engaged in the electoral process. The Ms. Foundation's Democracy Funding Circle, Sophia Fund, Rapid Response Public Policy Fund, and Reproductive Rights Coalition and Organizing Fund provided support. Organizations received one-year grants of \$10,000 to \$60,000 for GOTV initiatives this year.

Grant recipients have been working to:

- Expand participation in the democratic process by women whose voices are often under-represented.
- Build long-term capacity of state and local organizations in voter-engagement efforts.
- Inform voters about their rights.

**"People are feeling empowered about engaging constituents that no one else is talking to or about."**

The grants support a central tenet of the Ms. Foundation's theory of change: that local organizations are the most effective, especially in getting women involved who may have felt disenfranchised and are more likely to vote if approached by people they know and trust.

The grants support nonpartisan efforts such as voter registration, education, and protection to ensure that every eligible citizen has the right to register, cast a vote, and have that vote counted.

### Engaged and energized

"The Ms. Foundation for Women is providing opportunity and leadership that are important in both day-to-day activities and in finding long-term solutions to issues of importance to women," said GOTV specialist Teresa Purcell.

"We're seeing involvement from groups that aren't usually part of the civic-engagement process. People are feeling empowered about engaging constituents that no one else is talking to or about. Seeing

people involved in the voting process for the first time will be an interesting dynamic on Election Day."

According to Wadia, "Most of these grants have gone to existing local organizations with a history of being trusted messengers in their communities. These groups know what makes their constituencies tick and understand the small details, such as when to reach people and the importance of providing child care on Election Day."

### You can have a role

There is still time to be involved in Get Out the Vote efforts. To find local, regional, or national projects of interest, go to the Ms. Foundation for Women's website ([www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org)) and click on the "Get Involved, Get Registered, Get Out the Vote" banner.

The Ms. Foundation's work in assuring that every woman and girl has a voice, and her voice is heard, does not end with Election Day. No matter what the outcome of this year's local, state, or national elections, the Ms. Foundation will make further grants to help organizations advance strategies and mobilize women to hold elected officials accountable. ■

The Ms. Foundation for Women's Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work® Day is always the fourth Thursday in April. Join us next year on April 28, 2005.



MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN

For details, go to [www.daughtersandsonstowork.org](http://www.daughtersandsonstowork.org)

# Oregon is battleground for same-sex marriage amendment

Four years ago, a Ms. Foundation grant supported community organizing that helped defeat an antigay ballot measure in Oregon. This year, the Ms. Foundation for Women gave \$20,000 through its Get Out the Vote and Reproductive Rights Coalition and Organizing Fund (RRCOF) to the Equality in Oregon/Basic Rights Oregon campaign for efforts to defeat Measure 36, which would amend the state constitution to prevent same-sex marriage. NARAL Pro-Choice America is a coalition partner in the campaign.

"We believe Oregon remains the best opportunity nationally to defeat a constitutional amendment

on same-sex marriage," said Lisa Horowitz, Vice President and Chief Foundation Officer of NARAL Pro-Choice America. "A win on this issue would have a substantial impact on marriage equality, providing access to rights that should be guaranteed to gay and lesbian couples and their families."

Horowitz sees chances to defeat the Oregon measure as good, because of "a strong, diverse, committed, broad base of support; experienced campaigners; and volunteers already at work," she said. "We have built a unique strategy that presents the individual, emotional stories of real people."

The effort is inclusive: "Even

people who are not comfortable with gay marriage can vote 'no' on this measure, because they would rather not see the state constitution permanently amended to allow legal discrimination in marriage."

"They've done a great job of building a coalition to include groups that are not traditionally expected to be involved in such issues," said Desiree Flores, Ms. Foundation Program Officer for Health, of campaign activities.

The Ms. Foundation funded this effort through RRCOF because "we strive to connect with other groups that believe having control over your body and your sexuality is a basic human right," Flores noted. ■

## Pittsburgh, continued

voters must vote in person. "We had to work with the jail and the election board to figure out how to get those ballots recorded," Rabinowitz said. The Just Vote Campaign convinced the election board to take ballots from the jail to the board to be recorded.

The county jail is only one of many sites where Just Vote workers registered new voters. "We partnered with 40 community-based organizations and social-service agencies to focus on voter registration, participation pledges, education, and mobilization activities," said Rabinowitz. "Many of our new voters registered at agencies where we trained staff or held registration events onsite."

Getting people registered is one thing; making sure they show up at the polls can be another. To ensure that existing and newly registered voters will exercise their rights on Election Day, Just Vote workers ask them to sign participation pledges.



Photos from Just Harvest.

Scenes from registration activities of the Just Harvest "Just Vote" campaign in Pittsburgh.

"We have more than 1,500 pledges from people who have asked to be called with reminders to vote on Election Day," Rabinowitz said.

The big push to turn pledges into real votes in the final days leading up to November 2 includes a

major phone bank and disseminating a newsletter, questionnaire for candidates, and voter's guide with specific polling-place information. Just Vote's GOTV activities will continue until the polls close on Election Day. ■

## Latinas, continued

cess and mobilizes women to go to the polls and make their voices heard on public-health issues such as clean air and water, neighborhood pollution, and childhood asthma.

"It's been going great," said Latina Initiative Director Dusti Gurule. "People are very excited about this election. The impact we've made has been very positive — we've given Latinas an opportunity. Many Latinas have wanted to vote, but haven't been sure of how to do so, because the process can be so complicated and intimidating. We've provided a vehicle to make it a little easier."

Working in four counties around Denver, the Latina Initiative met its goal of registering 2,500 new voters. One key to success was a creative marketing move: putting the campaign logo — "I am Latina and I vote!" — on yard signs and T-shirts in both Spanish and English.

"We've installed more than 600 yard signs, we're on our third order of T-shirts, and we've gotten good press on this aspect of the campaign," said Gurule.

The Latina Initiative has expanded its reach by partnering with other groups dedicated to voter education and registration.



"We all have the same goal: getting more voters," Gurule said.

Efforts planned through Election Day include continued canvassing and public education, disseminating absentee ballots, a special event to encourage early voting, and transporting registered voters to the polls on November 2. ■

## Public Voices, continued

color public-policy efforts throughout all areas of its work: health and safety; economic security; and girls, young women, and leadership.

Planning for *Public Voices* began in 2002, when the Ms. Foundation brought together 45 women-of-color leaders to discuss common issues in both public policy and the women's movement, and asked for nominations for a Steering Committee.

The resulting committee is diverse in race, ethnicity, class,

sexual orientation, age, geographic origin, and issue expertise.

"It is important to develop a more focused, crosscutting approach to increasing the voice and power of women of color in the policy process, and to address policy in a broad framework," said Margaret Hempel, Ms. Foundation Vice President for Program. "We will look for ways to connect organizations across issues and regions."

*Public Voices*, which also has received backing from the Moriah Fund, will support organizations

that encourage translating activist research into policy; raise awareness that local, state, tribal, and national issues are interdependent and connected; are interested in women of color transforming politics; and redefine political concepts such as citizenship, leadership, and representation.

To respond to the RFP, send proposals and letters of interest to Natasha Marks at [ptemp@ms.foundation.org](mailto:ptemp@ms.foundation.org) or Ms. Foundation for Women, 120 Wall Street, 33rd Floor, New York, NY 10005. ■



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