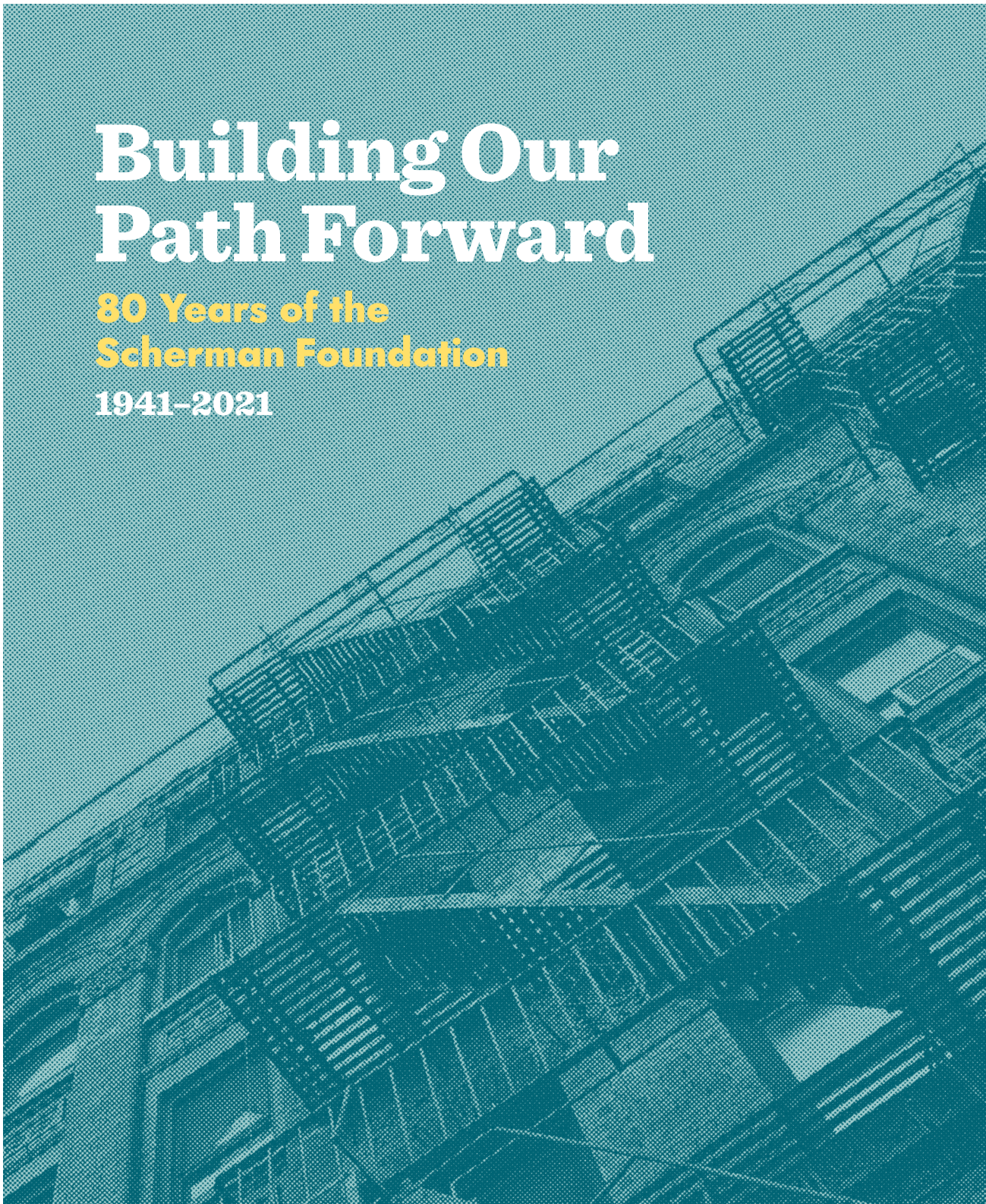


Building Our Path Forward

**80 Years of the
Scherman Foundation**

1941-2021



Dear Reader:

In these pages, you'll find the 80-year and ongoing story of the Scherman Foundation. From our founding in 1941 to improve "social welfare" to our current focus on movement-building and systemic change, our work has evolved over time. Yet our dedication to expanding justice and empowering communities persists. We look forward to continuing to serve and grow in the decades to come.

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Lower Manhattan in 1941, the year the Scherman Foundation was established.





Foreword by Marianna Schaffer

I JOINED THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION'S BOARD as a director in 2019 and am deeply honored to serve in a new capacity as chair in 2021. I am also humbled to be the first non-family member, second woman, and first person of color in this role. I am following in the footsteps of Karen Sollins, who served with great distinction for nearly 25 years, and her father Axel Rosin, as well as her grandfather—the Foundation's founder, Harry Scherman.

I had already been a longtime admirer of the Foundation's work when I joined, particularly for its focus on climate change and supporting New York City organizations. When I arrived—along with two other new trustees—I noticed that the Scherman Foundation was at a defining point not only in terms of its programs but also its strategies and overall identity, shifting towards more support for advocacy and grassroots organizing. This was a testament to the board's vision at that time. I was also profoundly impressed with the staff, whose dedicated efforts sought to uplift and demonstrate the value of supporting organizations and leaders rooted in the impacted communities they work with.

The events of 2020 brought the impacts of systemic racism and inequity into sharp focus, and there was not only a willingness but a readiness for the Foundation to respond. The board and staff used this moment to further advance our mission, have challenging but crucial conversations about our programming, and examine our work through new lenses and approaches that center dismantling systemic racism.

Marianna Schaffer is Chair of the Scherman Foundation's Board of Directors. She is also Vice President of Programs at The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and has served on the boards of Hi-ARTS, Outdoor Empowered Network, and the Public Theater.

As the Foundation's new chair, I am excited to bring my vision and energy towards building an institution that has a greater emphasis on racial equity and justice. We offer this text to explore with our colleagues and grantees the story of how we got here—how the Foundation has evolved, shifted, and worked to define our place in the struggle for an equitable, just, and sustainable world.

Marianna S. Schaffer



Introduction by Mike Pratt

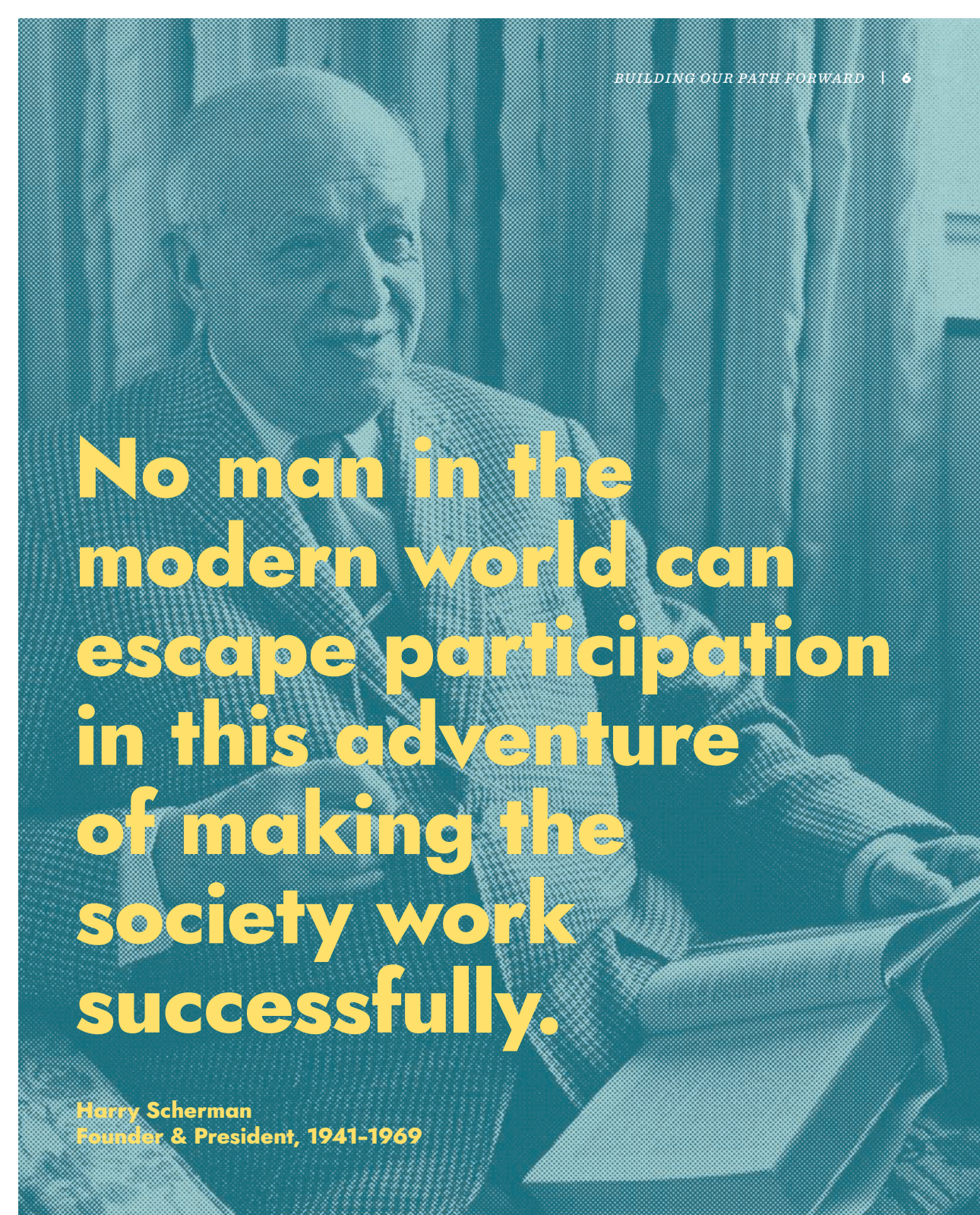
UNTIL NOW, THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION HAS never done anything more grandiose to mark important institutional milestones than to place a small medallion commemorating our 60th year on our slim annual report in 2001. In early 2016, as the Foundation prepared to transfer our historical papers to the New York Public Library, the board and staff decided to break that precedent and produce a brief history of the previous 75 years, reflecting on the past and how it has informed current grantmaking. That decision, made during a presidential administration and a political climate that were at least moderately in line with the Foundation's goals, quickly took on a more urgent feel. Over the subsequent four years, we lived with a federal government that was at war with the rest of the world and many of its citizens on the environment, climate, racial equity, reproductive justice, democracy, government accountability, and even the arts. What was certainly an overly optimistic vision of a growing progressive consensus in the Obama years became obscured, if not obliterated. To be blunt, it was in part a liberal fantasy that reasonable policy solutions benefiting the broader good could be implemented without a struggle against entrenched economic, racial, and social inequality.

But the shock of these assaults also underscored the wisdom of the Foundation's historic values and pushed us to deepen and strengthen those commitments. First and foremost among those values is our long-held dedication to enabling our grantees through general operating support: the Foundation believes that nonprofit organizations with strong leadership are generally better qualified than donors to decide on the most effective use of grant funds. This thinking has deepened

Mike Pratt has served as President of the Scherman Foundation since 2009. He has previously held roles as Treasurer and Program Officer, and before joining the staff, practiced law with grantee New York City Legal Aid Society.

with the recognition that, more than organizations, it is the affected populations—low and moderate-income communities, people of color, and women—who must be empowered to stake their claim to a more equitable, sustainable, and just future. And those demands for structural change need to find expression in broad social movements.

Most importantly, the Foundation recognizes the imperative that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities be supported and joined in the struggle to dismantle the systemic racism that pervades our society. That imperative's urgency was heightened by the movement for Black lives and uprising against racial inequity amid the COVID-19 pandemic that itself underscored the depth of racial disparities. In looking back at the Foundation's historical appreciation of those at the forefront of social change, we commit to understanding our ongoing and evolving role in supporting movement-building, particularly around racial justice.



No man in the modern world can escape participation in this adventure of making the society work successfully.

Harry Scherman
Founder & President, 1941-1969

Our History

NEW YORK CITY BETWEEN THE WARS was a place of intellectual, social, and cultural transformation. The modernization shift that spurred the great early twentieth-century reform movements—progressivism, women’s suffrage, and even prohibition—also invigorated groundbreaking transformations in the visual and performing arts, as well as the explosion of new industries like radio broadcasting, advertising, and public relations. Even during the darkest days of economic collapse in the 1930s, New York City burned bright with ideas and energy. The city received significant New Deal monies and began to undertake massive building projects via the Works Progress Administration, with new bridges, highways, schools, and public housing sprouting up all over. The disruption of changing neighborhoods and emerging skyscrapers is all too familiar to a New Yorker today, a demonstration of the complexities of rapid expansion. Amidst this urban upheaval, and against a backdrop of rising global fascism and the drumbeat of war, the Foundation’s founder Harry Scherman—a writer, avid reader, and successful salesman—created the Book of the Month Club in 1926.

Isaac Harry Scherman (“Harry”) was born in Montreal in 1887 to Jacob Scherman and Katherine Harris. After his parents separated, and his mother moved the family to the United States, Harry and his siblings were sporadically placed in an orphanage in Atlanta, Georgia. During that time, over the course of six years, Katherine supported the family as a single parent by selling publications and membership for a Jewish organization door-to-door. Harry eventually moved to Philadelphia, where he attended high school and university, then arrived in New York City early in the century, where his ambitions and activities were broad and very of-the-moment. He aspired to be a playwright and frequented

Harry Scherman was throughout his life a dedicated reader, writer, and book-lover.

Greenwich Village literary hangouts, like the bohemian-filled Polly's beneath the Washington Square Bookshop, which would later be reborn as the Theatre Guild. At the same time, he supported himself by writing advertising copy for the renowned J. Walter Thompson agency. This was followed by a foray into sales, involving the bundling of Whitman's chocolates and leather-bound copies of Shakespeare as part of the Little Leather Library Corporation, which Harry co-founded in a desire to make good literature more widely accessible to Americans. The company would then inspire the concept of his renowned Book of the Month Club. Around this time, he married Bernardine Kielty, a nonfiction writer and columnist for *The Ladies' Home Journal*. They had two children, Katharine and Thomas.

Harry's polymathic interests included progressive social causes as well as the basic workings and real-life consequences of the American economic system for jobs and workers, a subject on which he ultimately wrote several books. In 1941, with the success of Book of the Month Club, and at a time when several charitable foundations were springing up partly due to changes in the tax laws, Harry's various interests and passion for community came together. He established the Scherman Foundation as a small private philanthropy, first funding studies that examined the impact of world trade on American industry. In a period of global conflagration—decades before globalization would become a common term—Harry wanted to explore the economic relationship between the United States and the rest of the world. As he later explained: "The purpose was to gather facts which might ultimately be used to demonstrate, in popular fashion, how closely integrated American society is with all other societies throughout the world, and how dependent our high standard of living is upon work previously done by other peoples." In the Foundation's first six years, Harry developed numerous reports and studies on topics ranging from monetary policy to the history of inflation. Although he was unable to engage partners in these projects and therefore decided to shift the direction of the Foundation's funding efforts, the influence of his interest in economic research could be seen for several more decades in other areas of the foundation's grantmaking.

By 1949, in the booming post-war era, the Foundation expanded our grantmaking to include a wider range of issues and organizations that



Harry Scherman
(1887-1969)

FOUNDER & PRESIDENT
1941-1969



Bernardine Kielty Scherman
(1890-1973)

DIRECTOR
1941-1973

Thomas Scherman
(1917-1979)

DIRECTOR
1962-1979

Katharine Scherman Rosin
(1915-2009)

SECRETARY & DIRECTOR
1951-2009

Axel Rosin
(1907-2007)

CHAIR, PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR
1951-1997

Karen Sollins
(1947-)

CHAIR, PRESIDENT & DIRECTOR
1978-2021

Peter Sollins
(1975-)

SECRETARY & DIRECTOR
2018-present

Susanna Bergtold
(1948-)

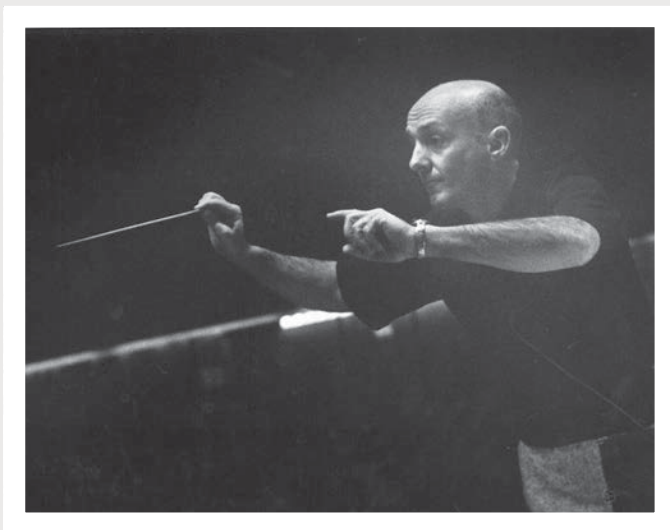
SECRETARY & DIRECTOR
1987-2021

Amy Bergtold
(1975-)

DIRECTOR
2015-present

Scherman Family

For four generations, members of the Scherman family have devoted their efforts to the mission of the Foundation, serving as leaders, directors, and officers on the board. Today, Harry's grandchildren and great-grandchildren carry on his legacy, continuing to help shape our programs and grantmaking.



Left, clockwise from top:

Harry and Bernardine Scherman play croquet outside their home in Bernardsville, N.J.

Katharine Scherman Rosin, who authored ten nonfiction books.

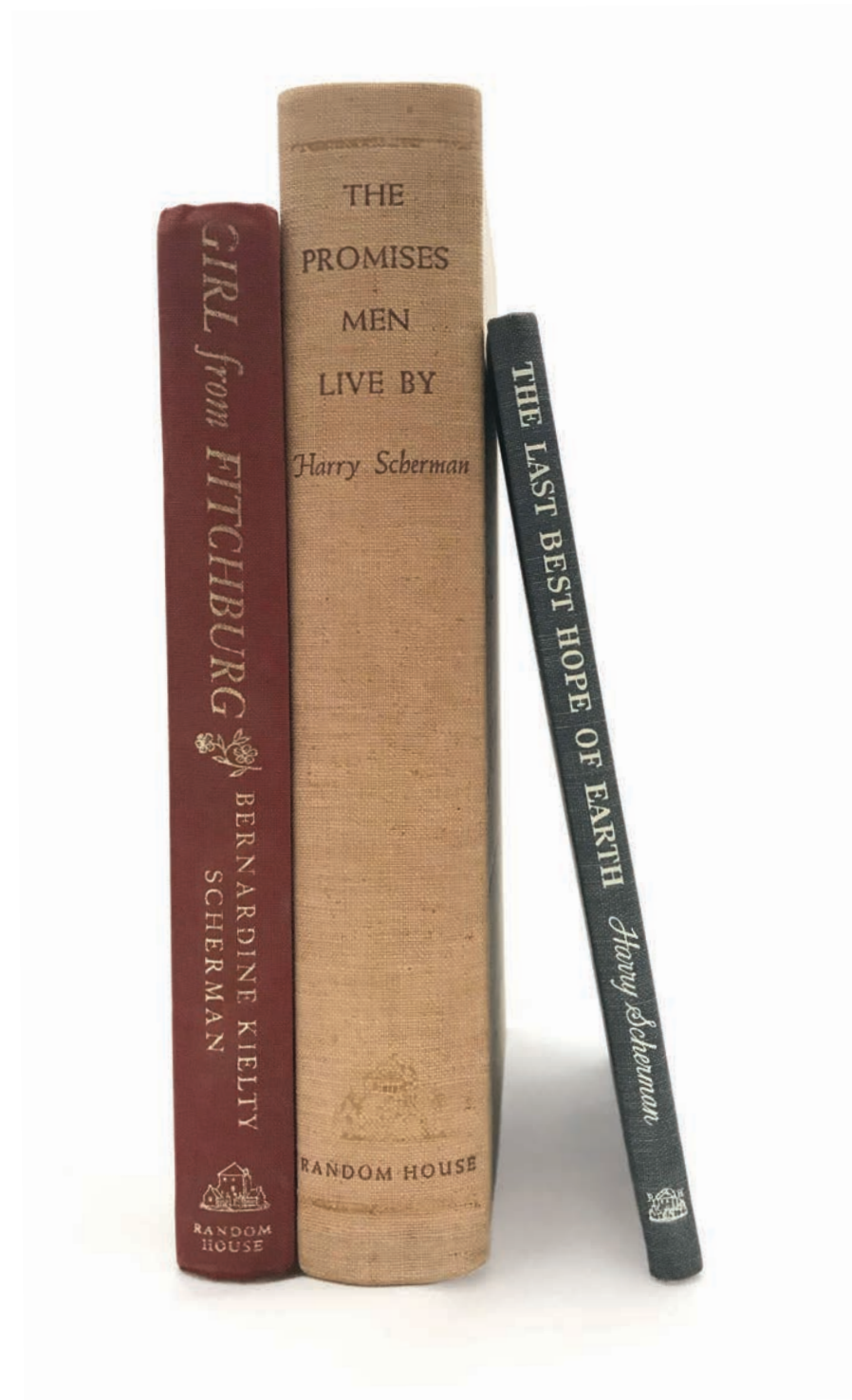
Harry Scherman holds granddaughter and future Foundation president Karen (Rosin) Sollins.

Thomas Scherman conducts for the Little Orchestra Society, which he founded in 1947 and led for 27 seasons.

Right:

Harry Scherman's most well-known book, *The Promises Men Live By*, was called by *The New York Times* "a remarkable book on economics for the layman."

Bernardine Scherman wrote several books for young readers, as well as the autobiographical *Girl from Fitchburg*, inscribed "To Harry."



were meaningful to the Scherman family. With a commitment in our amended bylaws to “the encouragement of art” and “the prevention of cruelty to children,” the Foundation began to home in on the specific communities affected by social and political change and inequalities. The Scherman Foundation was an early funder of the **NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund** and several other nonprofits that promoted civil and human rights. We supported charitable efforts by Jewish philanthropies to improve conditions for New York City communities most in need. The Foundation also made several grants to **The New School for Social Research**, which was known as a hub of progressive ideas and critical thinking and had provided an academic home before and after the war to émigré scholars and writers, particularly Jewish intellectuals fleeing the Nazis.

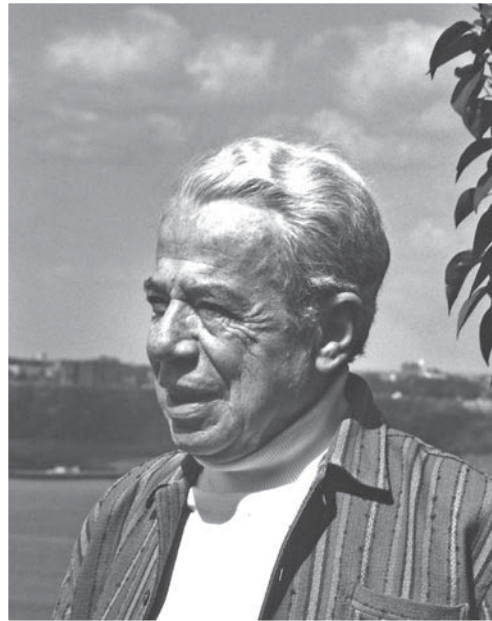
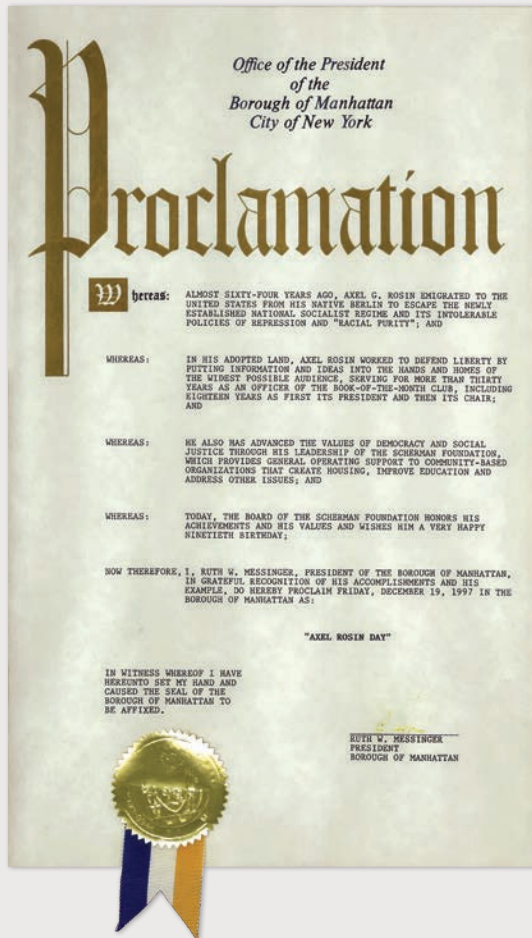
The city’s cultural institutions also became part of the Foundation’s grantmaking. A decades-long commitment to the **New York Public Library** began around this time—not surprising from a foundation whose assets came from a love of books. In *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire*, Janice A. Radway describes Harry as “a perceptive social observer who keenly understood the rich cultural meaning attached to the book at a transitional moment in history.” What’s more, his wife, Bernardine, and their daughter, Katharine, were both writers (Katharine would publish ten books during her lifetime), and both made frequent use of the library’s central branch for their research.

Music was another shared family passion. Harry had a close relationship with the Mannes family and the renowned **College of Music** they founded, now part of The New School. Katharine and her husband, Axel Rosin, were classical music enthusiasts who played cello and viola in chamber quartets. And Harry’s son, Tom, was an accomplished conductor who created the innovative **Little Orchestra Society**, which also received Foundation support.

FOR SEVERAL DECADES, HARRY RAN THE FOUNDATION from his Book of the Month Club office without formal staff. He recruited a distinguished board of directors, drawn from the Club’s editorial panel, that included such luminaries as pollster George Gallup and reformer and writer Dorothy Canfield Fisher. After Harry’s death in 1969, Axel Rosin, his



A painting by Joseph Hirsch shows an early 1940s meeting of the Book of the Month Club, led by Harry Scherman (lower left). Several of the Club editors also sat on the Foundation’s board, including Dorothy Canfield Fisher (center, in hat) and Meredith Wood (far right).



son-in-law and longtime member of the board, assumed the helm of the Foundation. Axel grew up in a prosperous, cosmopolitan family in Germany. His father, Arthur Rosin, the president of a major Berlin bank and an art collector, had close ties to German Impressionists. Axel graduated from law school in 1930; however, his law career was cut short when the Nazi regime came to power in 1933 and began to purge Jewish professionals and academics. In 1934, Rosin emigrated to the United States, intending to eventually return to Germany. When he soon realized that would not be possible, Axel became a naturalized U.S. citizen, and within a few years he was joined in New York City by his parents and small extended family. He began a long career at Book of the Month Club in 1945, and served as president and then chairman of the board from 1960 through the company's 1977 sale to Time, Inc., which he oversaw before retiring to devote his time to the Scherman Foundation.

The Foundation's approximately \$7 million endowment grew significantly in the 1970s and early '80s with major bequests from Harry, Bernardine, and Tom Scherman and from a share of the proceeds from the Book of the Month Club sale. Annual grantmaking increased tenfold from the \$100,000 the Foundation had averaged in the early years. By 1978, the additional assets made it possible to hire an executive director, David Freeman, a prominent philanthropy expert and former president of the Council on Foundations. Rosin opened the Foundation's first office, a small apartment in a residential building in midtown Manhattan, to which he faithfully rode a bicycle daily (his long-preferred mode of transport around New York City). At this point, David expanded the staff by bringing on board his administrative assistant, Harriet Steckler, from the Council on Foundations.

Under Axel, who served as president of the board until 1993 and then chairman for several years after that, the Foundation developed more specific definitions of our areas of interest. Grants supported organizations that were working in the fields of social welfare, human rights, the arts, family planning, and peace and disarmament, as well as conservation, which was surely a reflection of Axel's love of and commitment to wilderness and its preservation. He was also devoted to New York City, continuing the Foundation's grantmaking emphasis within the city, although several grantees had a broader reach. Among the pioneering

Clockwise from left:

A 1997 New York City proclamation declared December 19th "Axel Rosin Day," in honor of his 90th birthday and longstanding devotion to strengthening NYC communities.

Axel, in his element, as a lifelong lover of nature and the outdoors.

A pin created and worn by Scherman Foundation staff for the 1997 celebration.

groups that received support from the Scherman Foundation in these years were the **Center for Constitutional Rights**, the **Natural Resources Defense Council**, and **Physicians for Social Responsibility**. Funds also went to **Planned Parenthood** for its national activities.

During this time, the Foundation also focused internationally: several organizations based in the United States received funds for work that promoted civil and human rights in challenging global contexts. For instance, the **Southern Africa Legal Services and Legal Education Project** was founded in 1979 by a group of distinguished American lawyers to support the Legal Resources Centre, South Africa's first and largest public-interest nonprofit law firm which combated abuses under apartheid. Foundation grants supported both the Centre's early work and its subsequent efforts to help develop a constitutional democracy and address a range of post-apartheid rights issues. Another example is **The New Israel Fund**, a philanthropic partnership that fostered a strong network of civil society groups advancing social and economic justice in Israel; it became a grantee in 1987 and continued to receive support for nearly two more decades.

Funding for the arts remained a core interest, reflecting the Scherman-Rosin family's deep appreciation of the vital role of New York City's cultural institutions. Longtime grantees included such major groups as **The Metropolitan Opera**, **New York Philharmonic Symphony**, and **New York City Ballet**. In the 1960s and '70s, the Foundation also began to support less-established companies that were showcasing emerging artists, original performances, and new takes on classical works. **The Public Theater**, founded by visionary producer Joe Papp as one of the country's first nonprofit theaters, became a grantee in 1962. The **Brooklyn Academy of Music**, which had been significantly reimagined with a new artistic vision in the late 1960s, received its first Scherman grant in 1980, when it was still considered a cultural vanguard in its borough. Both organizations, which remain grantees, went on to become internationally renowned performing arts centers, presenting innovative works and reaching new audiences.

Even as our programs were refined, however, the Foundation maintained the flexibility to phase out some grant portfolios, add new ones, and respond to opportunities that may not fit neatly into any one category, but where a small grant had the potential to make a meaningful difference.

Announced in *The New York Times*, a 1962 Scherman Foundation grant allowed public schools across the city to fill their classroom bookshelves.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1962.

CITY SCHOOLS GET \$90,000 FORD AID

Grant Is for Program to Cut Administrative Red Tape

The Board of Education accepted a \$90,000 grant from the Ford Foundation yesterday to cut red tape.

The funds will be used for a program of "records management, data processing and forms control" to make many operations more automatic.

Dr. John J. Theobald, Superintendent of Schools, said the use of data-processing equipment and other devices would speed the payment of bills. Delays in payment have long been a sore point with contractors, who sometimes have had to wait a year or more for payment for supplies or services.

A school spokesman said that by paying certain bills within thirty days, the board would be entitled to a discount.

Dr. Theobald said the new equipment eventually would be used to relieve teachers and supervisors of much paper work, such as compiling pupil programs and attendance reports.

Acceptance of the foundation's grant was announced at a meeting of the board at school headquarters, 110 Livingston Street, Brooklyn.

In other actions, the board approved the following:

¶The appointment of Rose L. Schwab, Eugene T. Maleska, Edna V. Crowley and Maurice Mehlman as assistant superintendents, to take effect as vacancies arise in the future.

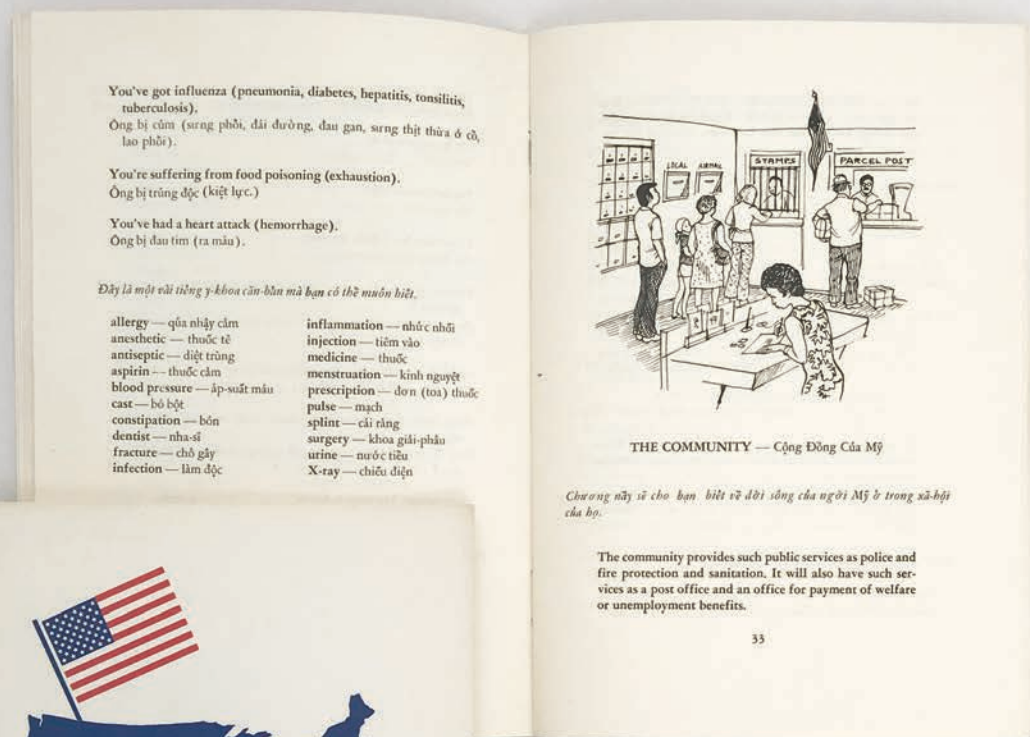
¶The incorporation of the "School Volunteer Program" into the school system. Under the program volunteers supplement the work of teachers by helping individual children in reading, language skills and other subject areas.

¶The selection of sites for eight new schools—Junior High School 88, Brooklyn; Public School 134, the Bronx; P. S. 46, Manhattan; P. S. 137, Manhattan; J. H. S. 201, Manhattan; P. S. 9, Richmond; J. H. S. 210, Queens, and P. S. 31, Richmond.

¶The acceptance of a gift of book packages, worth about \$50,000, from the Scherman Foundation to provide a special library shelf in each city school to stimulate voluntary reading among pupils.

¶Adopted a new procedure for handling tie low bids for school contracts. Work will be awarded on the basis of a public drawing conducted by a board member.

The board's next regular meeting will be on Aug. 22 at school headquarters.



A guide to language and life in the U.S.A.

Đây là một Chương Trình để chỉ dẫn về ngôn - ngữ và đời sống ở Mỹ Quốc

For example, reflecting Axel’s publishing expertise and his particular appreciation for the difficulties that new immigrants faced, the Foundation sought to help the thousands of newly-arrived Vietnamese refugees adapt to this country after the Vietnam War by funding the creation and distribution of a Vietnamese-English dictionary and guide to living in the United States. Another discretionary grant went to an organization that sought to provide books to third-grade classrooms in New York City public schools. The Foundation’s support made it possible to give every teacher a bookcase for their classroom and \$300 to fill its shelves with books. One of Axel’s favorite grantees was an advocacy group, now named **Housing Court Answers**, that set up card tables in New York City Housing Court to offer free legal advice and guidance to beleaguered low-income tenants facing eviction.

THROUGH THE YEARS, THE FOUNDATION’S LEADERS have continued to take an active role in shaping the organization’s efforts and advancing the progressive vision of the founding family. Helen Edey, a psychiatrist and philanthropist who served as a trustee from 1970 to 1998, had a particularly strong voice. Helen’s analysis of the Foundation’s grant-making raised critical issues about strategy. She suggested directing funds to fewer organizations, and above all urged greater attention to root causes of problems—encouraging, for instance, a focus on “the pernicious effects of racism, rather than funding more palliative measures.” Change came gradually in subsequent years, but Helen planted an early flag. She also encouraged support for environmental conservation, which she considered to be a public health issue. Long active in the reproductive rights field, Helen played a major role in setting priorities for the Foundation’s Family Planning program.

Another influential board member was Marcia Thompson, founding president of the National Arts Stabilization Fund. She served on the Foundation’s board for 38 years before passing in 2018, and saw the Foundation through its various changes in structure, direction, and leadership. Formerly on staff at the Ford Foundation’s Program in Humanities and the Arts, as well as being a veteran board member of numerous arts organizations, Marcia’s attention to budgetary issues as she assessed grantees’ strengths and weaknesses was illuminated by her passion for and delight in the arts.

A 1975 booklet published through a grant to the American Red Cross provided Vietnamese immigrants with useful phrases and information on topics from basic conversation to health, education, and government.

The close collaboration between Executive Director David Freeman and Axel Rosin helped create a seamless transition that paved the way for the changes to come as the Foundation entered our sixth decade, including Axel's eventual retirement and further expansion of the professional staff. Even after Axel resigned from his official leadership role, he remained engaged well into his 90s, sitting in on meetings with grantees whose work he followed enthusiastically.

IN A GENERATIONAL SHIFT, KAREN SOLLINS, Axel and Katherine Rosin's daughter who had served as president of the board since 1993, became our chair in 1997. Karen—one of five Scherman family members who have served on the board in recent times—first became a trustee in 1978. A principal scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where her research focuses on computer networks and network architecture, Karen helped fuel and sustain a gradual shift in program strategies, including the more explicit commitment to social change, and in geographically concentrated, multisector grantmaking. For example, during this period, the Foundation supported environmental, community development, and arts groups in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx—a strategic targeting of a neighborhood that was particularly effective. Karen also oversaw some operational changes, such as a broader delegation of decision-making, which engaged the expertise of a board that was increasingly composed of prominent leaders in fields related to the Foundation's work. This also strengthened the role and influence of the professional staff. To accommodate the expanding staff—though the number has never exceeded four—the Foundation moved during this period to a larger space in a midtown office building. Other highlights of her tenure before resigning from the board in 2021 include the creation of the Rosin Fund in 2013, as well as a significant expansion of grantmaking in areas such as the environment, arts, and arts infrastructure, and most recently the initiation of a new focus area in protecting and fostering democracy.

In 1993, Sandra Silverman, who had been a board member for ten years, became executive director, adding the title of president in 1997. Sandra, known to everyone by the nickname Sandy, was formerly a public relations executive at M Booth & Associates, directing the firm's work with nonprofit organizations and government agencies. She had also

AN ONGOING NEW YORK CITY LEGACY

Axel Rosin

President, 1969–1993

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY REMAINED extremely important to Axel Rosin, even as the Foundation eventually phased out support in our quest to fund less-established arts organizations. Shortly before retiring, Axel donated his collection of rare German first editions and printings to NYPL. On his 90th birthday, the Foundation honored Axel's lifelong love of books by granting \$500,000 to help renovate the library's oldest branch, the Ottendorfer on Second Avenue and St. Mark's Place, which first opened in 1884 and has served generations of new immigrants and Lower East Siders.

Another bequest that has continued to serve both the Foundation and the people of New York City was a rare sixteenth-century sculpture of St. Catherine by the German master sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider, which Axel had inherited from his father. Having loaned it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he ultimately gifted it directly to the Foundation, and the proceeds from its 2008 sale at Sotheby's to artist Jeff Koons—who also loaned it to the Met—added \$6 million to our endowment.



Intricately carved from a single piece of limewood, Riemenschneider's figure of Saint Catherine (circa 1505) is recognized as a masterwork of German Medieval sculpture.

served as the executive director of the Citizens Committee for New York City, an organization that is still active today and raises funds to support resident-driven neighborhood revitalization projects. It was through that work that she first came to know the Scherman Foundation. Shortly after the New York City blackout of 1977, her organization established a fund to assist merchants of the nearly 2,000 neighborhood stores that had been victims of looting. With characteristic nimbleness, Axel Rosin saw an opportunity to contribute to the economic recovery of the affected communities and called Sandy with an offer of support. “Axel had a deep passion for New York City,” Silverman wrote in a memorial tribute to Rosin, “and helping to make it a better place for those in need.”

Sandy, who died in 2011, brought a deep commitment to reproductive rights, and she played a significant role in the field while at the Foundation. Local and national politics were other strong interests. Sandy helped move the Foundation toward a greater support of civic engagement and policy advocacy.

As a program officer for 13 years under Sandy’s leadership, and subsequently as the Foundation’s executive director and president beginning in 2009, Mike Pratt expanded support for grassroots organizations that give voice to people who are directly affected by inequitable social and economic policies. Results are stronger and more long-lasting, Mike believes, “when communities have built the power to shape their own futures or to influence the policies that shape their futures.” His perspective on social change was informed by his own extensive community organizing experience, including as director of the successful Straphangers Campaign, and by his years as a litigator on housing justice and community development issues at New York City’s Legal Aid Society.

Sandy and Mike introduced a more hands-on approach to grantmaking, positioning the Foundation as a strategic partner to grantees and seeking to engage other potential funders. For example, Sandy would organize in-house breakfasts where foundation colleagues were invited to meet the leaders of selected grantee organizations to learn more about their work.

“Sandy was at heart a communicator, connector, and perceptive promoter,” says Mike, who has continued the Foundation’s outreach in a somewhat different way. People in the field describe his critical

leadership in broadening philanthropic support for issues affecting urban sustainability—including affordable housing, mass-transit improvements, a more participatory process for zoning and budgetary decisions, and efforts to combat the disproportionate impact of pollution on low-income communities of color. Benjamin Dulchin, former executive director of the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, notes, “Mike has served as an energizing convener of the most important funding projects around the city.”

The most recent addition to the Foundation’s leadership is Marianna Schaffer, who was elected as the board’s new chair in 2021. Marianna joined the board in 2019 and has since invigorated its decision-making with her creative thinking, strong voice, and nearly 20 years of experience as a leader in the philanthropic nonprofit sector. Her skill with aligning goals and values focused on equity, anti-racism, and justice as Vice President of Programs at the Dodge Foundation, is an asset to the Scherman Foundation’s own journey in examining and expanding its current programs.

It takes sophisticated givers to recognize the value of new ideas & approaches.

Helen Edey
Board Member, 1970-1996

Our Values

FROM THE FOUNDATION'S MODEST BEGINNINGS to our work today, changing social and political contexts have led to new strategies in thinking about how to achieve impact. This approach, and a willingness to take the kind of risks it can entail, has remained constant throughout the Scherman Foundation's history. While new and evolving insights continue to inform program work, there are consistent threads that link the Foundation's past to our present. The philanthropy that began with a concern for the effect of economic policies on American workers, and a commitment to a more just and equitable society, has evolved into a foundation with a broader canvas. But we are still guided by those same core values, as well as a determination that has shaped much of our work: to find ways to amplify our impact on the issues we care about.

1: Trust Grantees.

THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION HAS CONTINUALLY SOUGHT to stake out a path that makes the most effective use of our resources to advance positive change. A key strategy to achieve that goal is our longstanding commitment to provide general operating support—funding that supports our grantees' missions and operations, rather than specific projects or programs. This funding policy distinguishes the Foundation from many of our peers. While the value of general operating support is increasingly gaining recognition in the philanthropic community, it is still the exception rather than the rule. For the Scherman Foundation, the approach reflects two strong beliefs: one is that effective nonprofit leaders who are closest to the issues are best positioned to determine priorities; the other is that efforts to bring social change take time, the path is unpredictable, and the flexibility made possible by general

In an example of our commitment to build beyond funding, grantees participate in a strategic storytelling workshop coordinated by the New York City Capacity Building Collaborative.

operating support can enable organizations to respond more nimbly to unanticipated events or opportunities.

Flexible funds combined with long-term support have helped grantees weather changes in the external environment for their critical work and the shifting interests of other funders—and occasionally get through their own organizational ups and downs. The Foundation’s average tenure with grantees is close to 15 years, and in some cases the relationship has lasted considerably longer.

Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, former executive director of **National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health**, sums up the comments of many grantees on the benefits of flexible funds. “General operating support is the most valuable kind of funding, because not only does it make an investment in the organization, but it also places a lot of trust in the leadership to determine the best use of those funds. We certainly appreciate project-specific funding,” she adds, “but when you’re given general operating support you have the flexibility to use it for some of the hardest things to fundraise for—like salaries, equipment, and rent. In other words, sustaining the infrastructure that’s needed to support the work and to enable the organization to thrive.”

2. Cultivate Relationships.

BY CULTIVATING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH GRANTEEES, the Foundation has remained accessible for conversations around strategy, organizational issues, and ideas for new projects or directions. These exchanges have fostered a deeper level of engagement and mutual trust. Vince Warren, executive director of the **Center for Constitutional Rights**, a longtime grantee, describes its partnership with the Foundation as one that is based on shared ideals. “My sense is that the Scherman Foundation has always been interested not just in supporting the Center’s litigation or a specific issue area, but more broadly in helping us achieve our social justice mission. They understand what we’re trying to do in the world.”

This strategy is powerfully illustrated by the Foundation’s nearly four-decade commitment to the Center, which began in the late 1970s, with support for its litigation to protect access to abortion in New York City, and has extended through a series of landmark legal victories on

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS FOR REFORM NOW (ACORN)

Staying the Course Amid Controversy

A **STRONG NATIONAL NETWORK OF COMMUNITY-ORGANIZING** groups that was known as the **Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)** fell apart in 2009 after the release of a misleading video that sought to discredit its work, as well as earlier revelations of serious financial mismanagement at the national office. ACORN’s success in building grassroots political power through its civic engagement work also made it a target of right-wing conservative attacks. While the Foundation had suspended support of the New York chapter’s social and economic justice activities a year before the dissolution due to inadequate financial reporting, we decided to support the chapter’s effort to reconstitute itself as an independent organization in 2010. Mike Pratt was invited to join a committee of external advisors that would guide what he later described as a “grueling process” of putting in place robust legal, accounting, and management structures.

With the national ACORN controversy still high on the public’s radar, the New York chapter’s effort to rethink its future was likely to trigger pushback from critics, which could extend to attacks on the committee members and funders. However, when Mike alerted Karen of the potential fallout before accepting ACORN’s invitation, she determined that the risk was worthwhile. The experience, expertise, and rigor of the group overseeing the reorganization was one critical factor. But the decision, Karen explains, also reaffirmed a commitment to the Foundation’s guiding values, which “have allowed us to stick to our guns and fund work that we believe is important.” Eventually renamed **New York Communities for Change**, the organization has since become a leading grassroots force in broad-based coalitions that are fighting for a living wage, affordable housing, educational reforms, and environmental justice.



different issues. These include the organization’s post-9/11 work to ensure that national security measures during a time of heightened fear did not violate constitutional rights, as well as numerous legal battles against torture and indefinite detention at Guantánamo. The latter effort included the use of a novel strategy that established U.S. court jurisdiction over the prison and affirmed detainees’ right to a court hearing of their cases. More than one Foundation director expressed reservations, and the board held deep discussions around balancing security needs and civil liberties in a time of crisis. Ultimately, the board held firm to its principles and decided to trust the Center with continued support—and continues to provide crucial support for work that others might consider too risky because of an untested approach or controversial goals in the prevailing political climate. “We have always funded what we think is right, despite the complexity of the context,” says former Program Director Alexa Avilés (who is now the New York City Councilmember for District 38). In a recent victory closer to home, the Center won a federal ruling that secured a reform of New York City’s “stop and frisk” policy, which was disproportionately targeting men of color.

“Some foundations will wait until you can demonstrate that you have already won in the past using the same legal strategy. That doesn’t help the Center for Constitutional Rights because we work on a wide range of issues. Sometimes we’ll do something once and then move on,” says Warren. “The Scherman Foundation’s support has been so valuable because we’re always on the cutting edge and we need thought and funding partners that will help us take a risk moving forward. Our metrics seem to be aligned—because the question isn’t so much what is winnable; the question is what is the change in the world that we need to invest in? Those are two very different things.”

Our value of cultivating relationships enables strategic grantmaking to amplify impact—for instance among transit grantees Transportation Alternatives (left), Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Riders Alliance, and the Straphangers Campaign.

3: Embrace Opportunity.

BEYOND ITS COMMITMENT TO GENERAL OPERATING support, the Foundation also makes some room in its operations for innovative and unique programs and projects with more targeted impact. This became codified in 2013 with the establishment of the Rosin Fund. Among Karen’s critical contributions as Chair, she helped develop the fund with a \$33 million bequest from the estate of her mother, Katharine Rosin, née

SOUTHERN BRONX RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Collective Efforts in Underserved Communities

FOR OVER 20 YEARS, THE FOUNDATION supported Bronx community-based organizations individually and collectively in their fight to transform the Bronx River waterfront. A major aspect of this fight has been to significantly modify the Sheridan Expressway, an underutilized mile-long road with six elevated lanes. The Expressway has exacerbated environmental and health problems in the low-income neighborhoods it bisects, as well as cutting off waterfront access. These organizations, all part of the **Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance**, have developed a strong advocacy and power-building infrastructure to improve the quality of life for more than 380,000 people. Together, they provide transportation advocacy and planning expertise (**Tri-State Transportation Campaign**); comprehensive community planning, land use, and sustainability knowledge (**Pratt Center for Community Development**); youth environmental mobilization (**The Point**); and youth and community organizing (**Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice**).

Although the Sheridan Expressway “boulevardization” project as now conceived by the state of New York falls short of the city and community-favored design, this collaboration played a critical role in the progression and preservation of the area. And it illustrates the way in which the Foundation can facilitate and support relationships among various grantees that have overlapping goals.

Scherman. The terms of the gift were fairly open-ended, with the only firm testamentary suggestion being that the funds should be used over a ten-year period for “social welfare, the arts, and cultural institutions in New York City and environmental organizations and programs throughout the world.” While the board considered combining those funds with the existing endowment, Karen convinced her colleagues to try something new: a program that would provide larger, limited-term grants for projects that had the potential to achieve high impact in a short time frame. The board and staff then formulated specific program parameters, believing that a narrower concentration would aid in project solicitation and evaluation, as well as the development of staff expertise. This also prompted the first set of explicit guidelines for the existing grantmaking activities, now called the Core Fund.

The Social Welfare program was renamed Strengthening New York Communities (SNYC), with both the Core Fund and the Rosin Fund focused on marginalized communities and issues of social, economic, and racial inequity. Funding centered around organizations and programs that prioritized various forms of advocacy, as well as community organizing and empowerment. In the Rosin Environment program, the Foundation chose three categories: Urban Sustainability, Green Economy/Green Jobs, and Sustainable Drinking Water. Inspired by the Boston Foundation’s efforts to strengthen that city’s arts sector in partnership with arts service organizations, Karen proposed that the Rosin Arts program be similarly designed, with the goal of fortifying the New York arts scene through funding infrastructure projects that support innovative advancement in the arts by providing them with management and entrepreneurial services and skills to further their careers, or through new frameworks that directly fostered artists’ creative processes.

A 2018 study of the Rosin Fund’s first five years was positive and thought-provoking, with success stories from all three of its programs. As a result of that analysis, the SNYC program guidelines were adjusted to concentrate more explicitly on movement-building and racial equity, while modifications of the Rosin Environment program include the elimination of the Green Economy/Green Jobs category and international grantmaking. More recently, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the uprising in support of Black lives and racial justice, and

the growing threat to American democracy from voter suppression and manipulation, the Foundation suspended new Rosin Fund giving for a few years to increase the support of movement-building organizations and those engaged in election protection and voter education, with a focus on BIPOC communities. Going forward, the Foundation has committed to a reassessment of the Rosin Fund to ensure that this form of project funding is adding value to the mission in a way that complements the signature general operating support of the Core Fund.

4: Build Beyond Funding.

TOGETHER WITH THE FUNDS WE DISBURSE, a large part of the Foundation’s impact results from the role we have forged as a strategic partner to grantees and other funders. We work to foster a mutual exchange of ideas around the challenges and emerging opportunities in specific fields. These relationships have strengthened the Foundation’s grantmaking, informed work on the ground, and helped grantees leverage support from other sources.

“In addition to our grant dollars,” says Alexa Avilés, “staff works to maximize impact by leveraging its other assets—such as relationships, capacity, skills, and positional power—in support of grantee work.” The Foundation encourages a culture of trust and openness with grantees that includes, “listening to organizations, soliciting feedback, and responding to what we are hearing, whether it’s simplifying the application and reporting processes or using metrics created by organizations that are truly meaningful for their work, not just for the Foundation. We are looking to develop partnerships.”

The Foundation has also made room in its portfolio for participation in funder collaboratives and other institutions that are coming up with new ways to help foundations support their grantees beyond just funding. The **New York City Capacity Building Collaborative**, for example, has brought city funders together to run skill-building workshops for grantees and meet regularly to discuss how they can shape and streamline their own processes to build capacity in the organizations they fund.

Several colleagues describe the Foundation’s “outsized imprint” as a thought leader in the philanthropic community. Scherman Foundation board member Miles Rapoport, a former Connecticut secretary of

state and state legislator who served as president of current grantee **Demos** as well as Common Cause, characterizes its role this way: “To use a boxing metaphor, the Scherman Foundation punches above its weight in the community of engaged philanthropy. It is looked to for real knowledge, expertise, and leadership in excess of the Foundation’s grantmaking capacity.”

Evident in all this is the Foundation’s understanding of the complex, interconnected factors that propel change. While we have sharpened our attention to community organizing and movement-building, we continue to fund policy advocacy and targeted litigation as well. Some of our grantees’ most notable successes have been achieved by collaborative campaigns that included all of these strategic strands.

We have always supported groups working on the frontlines of social change, but those lines keep moving.

Mike Pratt
President, 2009–present

Our Grantmaking

FROM SMALL GRANTS PROVIDING URGENT RESOURCES for underserved New York City communities in the 1940s, to funding for climate mobilization efforts at the turn of the 21st century, to nearly half a million dollars awarded in the past two years to protect democracy under attack, the Scherman Foundation's ability to respond to change is woven into the history of our grantmaking. Our six distinct programs—Strengthening New York Communities, Reproductive Rights and Justice, Environment, Arts, Democracy, and Human Rights and Liberties—meet at the intersection of this adaptability, a history of serving communities, a shift towards organizing and advocacy, and an expanding racial justice lens.

37 Strengthening New York Communities

45 Reproductive Rights and Justice

51 Environment

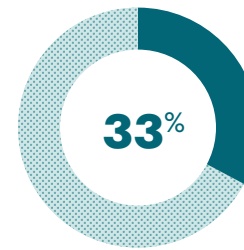
59 Arts

69 Democracy

75 Human Rights and Liberties

ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project, URGE, and other Scherman Foundation grantees protest together against abortion bans.

Strengthening New York Communities



of Scherman Foundation grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

A PASSION FOR NEW YORK CITY has informed the Scherman Foundation’s grantmaking since the beginning. In our first five decades, the Foundation assisted disadvantaged people in New York City by supporting charities that provided direct social services. An early example, starting in the late 1940s, was the **Federation of Jewish Philanthropies** which, through its network of local member agencies, supported a wide range of health, social, and community services—from nutrition programs, employment training, and assistance with medical costs in hospitals and nursing homes, to rent and energy subsidies and efforts to improve living conditions in struggling neighborhoods. Another early grantee was the **Bowery Residents Committee**, whose services helped move homeless people toward more independent lives by providing housing, mental health and addiction treatments, and job training. Social Welfare program grantee **South Forty Corporation** developed a comprehensive program to equip people in prison and on parole, and formerly incarcerated citizens, with the life and job skills that help prepare for a successful transition back into society.

It became increasingly clear to staff around the turn of the twenty-first century that the Foundation’s relatively modest-sized grants were not likely to make a significant difference to direct-service organizations, which are often more well-funded than grassroots efforts. Even more important, new realizations about what brings about powerful change necessitated a new approach. In 2012, the Social Welfare program was renamed Strengthening New York Communities, formalizing the gradual shift over the previous 15 years from a charity-oriented focus to one of community empowerment and systemic change. The Foundation believes that supporting grassroots mobilization is a more

The Public Housing Organizing Project of CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities builds power of Bengali, Chinese, and Korean public housing residents living in Queensbridge.



effective way to achieve long-term benefits—engaging community residents to define the problems (and solutions) that directly affect their neighborhoods, and enabling them to influence related policies and practices.

While this work is vulnerable to fluctuations in the political environment, the Foundation’s strategy has helped build strong community-based organizations that can assert a powerful voice in good and bad times. As Mike Pratt explains, “One of the things we’ve learned is that even with friendlier mayors, these advocacy organizations still have to be willing to push the city administration in a more progressive direction and to make choices that serve the communities they represent.”

The Foundation has long supported the creation and preservation of affordable housing—including in areas where new development threatens to displace longtime residents—as critical to promoting family and neighborhood stability. To achieve this goal, however, it is essential that the people who are directly affected have a voice in shaping city zoning and housing policies, as well as budgetary decisions, to ensure that resources are equitably allocated.

“There’s an overlap among sustainability issues, affordable housing, city planning, and the more neighborhood-based visioning and organizing work,” says NYC Comptroller Brad Lander, former director of two Scherman Foundation-funded community-development organizations.

“Unfortunately, when local government develops strategies to address these issues the process does not necessarily put the folks in communities front and center in shaping the policies that will affect their neighborhoods. The groups that the Scherman Foundation has supported are the groups that are organized to do that. It has been a really reliable partner in a space that unfortunately does not have enough of them.”

One example of an organization addressing this overlap is long-time grantee **Make the Road New York**, which has built a successful track record as one of New York City’s most powerful community-based organizations advocating for the needs and rights of poor and working-class New Yorkers, primarily from Latinx immigrant communities. Founded in a church basement in Bushwick in 1997, Make the Road New York began with the goal of helping immigrant welfare recipients whose public benefits were illegally disrupted following the federal

RIGHT TO COUNSEL PROJECT

From Policy to Practice

HISTORICALLY, MOST LOW-INCOME TENANTS APPEARED in NYC Housing Court without a lawyer. This led to worsening housing conditions, preventable evictions, increased homelessness, and a significant reduction in the number of affordable rent-regulated apartments. Landlords have often illegally raised rents on vacant apartments, pricing them out of the rent-stabilization program. In early 2017, a successful multi-year campaign led by a broad coalition of grassroots, policy, and legal advocacy groups—including several Foundation grantees—secured groundbreaking city legislation. Low-income people appearing in Housing Court were now guaranteed free legal representation, also known as Right to Counsel. A three-year grant from the Rosin Fund helped support the **Right to Counsel NYC Coalition** during its implementation phase, followed by ongoing support from the Foundation’s movement-building initiative.

Built on decades of activism, the campaign was bolstered by a comprehensive, independent financial analysis that found the proposed program would save the city several hundred million dollars annually compared to what it was spending on shelters and other services for homeless families. Early reports on implementation confirmed this, and evictions declined nearly 14%, pre-pandemic. “That was a significant game-changer,” says Andrew Scherer, policy director at New York Law School’s Impact Center for Public Interest Law, where he created the Right to Counsel project with Foundation support.

As with all fundamental change, the implementation will take time and require ongoing involvement of organizers and advocates. Among the concerns is the need to develop standards that ensure high-quality legal representation for tenants and to create an infrastructure that is not vulnerable to changes in city government. “It’s a major victory but there’s still an enormous amount of work to be done,” Andrew says.



government’s welfare-reform policies in the mid-’90s. “The attacks,” explains co-founder Andrew Friedman, “both on legal permanent residents as well as undocumented ones, were a direct result of the inadequate organizing infrastructure among these rapidly growing communities. Our strategy and Scherman’s strategy was to step into that void to help build the community strength to respond.”

At the time, Make the Road’s combination of direct service, civil rights and economic justice organizing efforts, and focus on affordable housing and tenant rights was not the typical scope of grassroots groups, and it took several years to build the capacity to respond to all these issues. With support and encouragement from the Foundation, Make the Road New York was able to develop a housing-advocacy program that eventually became one of the largest and most effective in the city. Scherman’s pivotal role in this expansion, Andrew notes, went beyond the grants it provided. “We were not traditional community development folks—we had a different kind of institution—and I think people in the field saw us as upstarts,” he says. “Mike helped us understand the landscape of actors working on housing in New York City and State and to step into that work. The Foundation’s outreach to philanthropic colleagues also proved critical in bringing other funders on board.”

Make the Road New York and its advocacy partners went on to win significant reforms that improved the enforcement of housing codes and strengthened the rights of low-income tenants. It also played a leadership role in the campaign that culminated in the 2019 state legislation that reformed, strengthened, and expanded rent stabilization.

Make the Road New York’s economic justice advocacy has also made a difference. A Rosin Fund grant supported the Workplace Dignity Campaign, which succeeded in shining a light on abusive practices, advocating for workplace improvements, and recouping stolen wages in the car-wash industry. The Campaign also leveraged and supported low-wage worker efforts including the expansion of the Paid Sick Leave law and a statewide increase in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

As local organizations move to build advocacy and grassroots empowerment activities, we have continued to seek out and support such efforts. In the ‘90s, the **Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development (ANHD)**—a consortium of nonprofit affordable-housing

In 2018, grantee New York Immigration Coalition organized a march in solidarity with immigrant families torn apart at the U.S. southern border.

developers and advocates, and a long-time Scherman Foundation grantee—developed a plan, with Foundation support, for reinvigorated community development work. This included housing organizing, protection of rent-regulated apartments, and the founding of the **Initiative for Neighborhood and Citywide Organizing** (now the **New York City Change Capital Fund**, a vital funder collaborative).

With the erosion of the city’s manufacturing base, ANHD next sought to address the pressing need in low and moderate-income communities for increasingly scarce quality jobs. “We wanted to create an expanded set of strategies and tools that could engage the community development movement beyond housing to also work effectively on equitable economic development,” says former ANHD executive director Benjamin Dulchin. “Scherman was the essential early funder that let us really take off with this work.” A 2014 Rosin Fund grant supported ANHD’s efforts to organize a broad-based coalition of key players—nonprofit developers, business outreach networks, community advocates, policy experts, and decision-makers—to change industrial zoning policies and hold local policy-makers accountable for land use.

Another grantee the Foundation supported as it continued to evolve beyond its initial mission is **Community Voices Heard**. Founded in 1995 by a group of women who were receiving public assistance, Community Voices Heard’s first battle was to change New York City’s workfare program. The program’s requirements kept public-assistance recipients in dead-end jobs that paid below minimum wage, and in most cases failed to provide the mandated training that they needed to transition into full-time, higher-level employment.

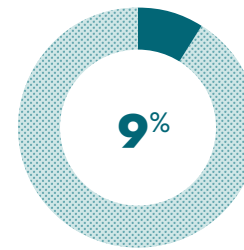
The campaign’s success—the city eventually eliminated workfare, deeming it ineffective in moving people out of poverty—led Community Voices Heard to take on a broader range of issues affecting low-income families. With a growing membership, the organization became one of the leading grassroots groups in New York City working on job development, housing, and economic justice. It has also been a key force in promoting participatory budgeting, a process that gives community members a voice in public budget decisions that directly affect their lives.

The Foundation has remained a steady partner with Community Voices Heard since 1999, through ups and downs, leadership transitions, and

periods when the external political climate was particularly difficult. The organization’s significant impact as it continued to expand its work and geographic reach illustrates, says Mike, how sustained support can “empower a group to really transform and respond to the needs and demands of their members and to be creative about where a community is going.”

The Foundation continues to be responsive to needs identified by communities themselves, including criminal justice reform, worker justice, immigration reform, and a wide range of discriminatory practices. Its stalwart general operating support of groups like **Voices of Community Activists and Leaders** helps build power among low-income New Yorkers affected by HIV/AIDS, the drug war, mass incarceration, and the COVID-19 pandemic through direct action as well as participatory research, civic engagement, and development. For **African Communities Together**, a mutual aid civil rights organization for African immigrants, Foundation support helps provide its strong membership base with education, training, and leadership opportunities to fight for systemic change in the issues that affect their daily lives.

Reproductive Rights and Justice



of Scherman Foundation grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

THE FOUNDATION'S GRANTMAKING IN THE REPRODUCTIVE and sexual health, rights, and justice field has evolved dramatically over the years, from family planning and population control to alleviate poverty to reproductive justice organizing and legal advocacy to ensure hard-won rights are not rolled back. Under the guidance of family-planning pioneer and Scherman Foundation trustee Helen Edey, initial grants were given to the **International Planned Parenthood Federation**, **Margaret Sanger Research Bureau**, and **Association for Voluntary Sterilization** (now named EngenderHealth). These organizations, working domestically and internationally, provided a combination of direct services, research, and medical professional training. They also offered public education on family-planning options and services to support women's ability to control their fertility and families. Like other progressive institutions in New York City at the time, the Foundation believed that family planning could improve reproductive health outcomes and alleviate financial stresses on low-income families.

As the civil rights and women's rights movements intensified throughout the '60s and '70s, the fight for reproductive and sexual autonomy both advanced and retracted. A new wave of feminist activism jump-started momentum around gender equality and shifted the movement's primary emphasis from birth control toward legalizing abortion. Over the decades following the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide, the reproductive and sexual health, rights, and justice movements would move into a defensive posture, fighting a well-funded and organized opposition to restrict women's reproductive freedom, as well as more hostile federal and state administrations.

A 1979 Union Square rally brought together numerous early Scherman Foundation grantee groups working to secure reproductive rights.



In response, the Foundation began supporting organizations that employed a mix of strategies to assert the reproductive rights of women across the country. To expand the base of support and shift the narrative around abortion and reproductive health care, the Foundation funded organizations like **Catholics for Choice** and the **Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice** which represented the faith community, as well as **Physicians for Reproductive Health** and **Medical Students for Choice**, representing physicians, medical professionals, and students. Litigation and legal advocacy became critical strategies to protect women's rights and personal autonomy. When the Supreme Court eliminated federal funding of abortion in 1994, the Foundation provided support to the **ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project** to defend the right for low-income women in New York and across the country to access abortion.

Since then, litigation and legal advocacy organizations have been a bulwark in stopping hundreds of harmful policies and practices across the country. Grantee **National Advocates for Pregnant Women** has brought unique attention and expertise to the field. They have spearheaded litigation and hard-hitting advocacy to ensure that pregnant and parenting women maintain their constitutional and human rights and are not criminalized for their pregnancy outcomes, whether they have an abortion, experience a pregnancy loss, or go to term and give birth. Longstanding Foundation grantee **Center for Reproductive Rights** has also been an anchor legal organization in the field. The Center litigated the landmark 2016 Supreme Court case *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, which blocked harmful provisions of a Texas law designed to shut down most of the state's abortion clinics and strengthened the constitutional standard protecting abortion rights in the United States. *Hellerstedt* was the most significant legal victory in over a decade.

Today, the Scherman Foundation's portfolio of Reproductive Rights and Justice grants is nearly unrecognizable from its early funding of population control. In 2012, the Foundation officially shifted its strategic direction to a comprehensive reproductive justice framework that recognizes how race, class, gender, and sexual identity affect women's reproductive health and autonomy. The program's name was subsequently changed from Reproductive Rights and Services to Reproductive Rights and Justice. Now funding more than 20 organizations that are primarily BIPOC-led, the Foundation acknowledges a critical and historically less-

Founded in 2004, **New Voices for Reproductive Justice** is dedicated to the health and well-being of Black women and girls in Pennsylvania and Ohio.



URGE: UNITE FOR REPRODUCTIVE & GENDER EQUITY

Shifting with the Field

ONE OF OUR LONGEST-STANDING GRANTEES, **URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity**, and the Foundation have transitioned together over the years as the movement has changed. Founded in 1992 by Gloria Steinem and other notable feminists as Voters for Choice, in 2000 the organization restructured to become Choice USA. Over the next decade, under the growing leadership of young, queer women of color, Choice USA emerged as a leader in the reproductive justice movement. As its framework broadened from a traditional pro-choice lens to a broader and more expansive reproductive justice lens, its constituency also evolved into a diverse group. In 2014, the organization became URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity, adopting a name that better reflected the organization they had already become.

With ongoing Foundation support, URGE now builds power and sustains a young people's movement for reproductive justice by centering the leadership of young people of color who are women, queer, trans, nonbinary, and low-income. Over the past several years, URGE has built a yearly voter-engagement program in Alabama, Ohio, and Texas, laying the groundwork for its mobilization campaigns in 2018. This contributed to the highest level of participation among youth in a midterm election in the past quarter century.



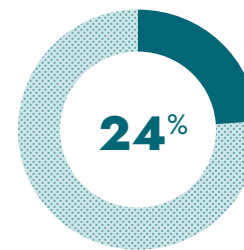
recognized battle—that women of color and low-income women have suffered terribly under deeply racialized reproductive politics. Through this intersectional framework, the Foundation's grantmaking includes a mix of innovative national and state-based organizations that use a wide range of strategies, such as base-building, leadership development, public education, policy advocacy, voter engagement, and culture change to secure reproductive justice for all people.

Scherman Foundation grantee **SisterSong** has played a critical movement-building role in strengthening and amplifying the collective voices of people of color and Indigenous people through its thought leadership and intensive trainings across the country. Grantee **New Voices for Reproductive Justice** is dedicated to the health and well-being of Black women, femmes, and girls in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Its programs, such as *SistahSpeak* and the Reproductive Justice Leadership Network, provide a pathway for women to move from supporters to champions of the reproductive justice movement while connecting them with other women of color leaders and activists nationwide. Through the unifying theme of "strong families," grantee **Forward Together** has effectively built powerful cross-issue coalitions that have successfully challenged abortion restrictions while also supporting living wage, education reform, and immigrant rights campaigns in New Mexico, Oregon, and California. Three Foundation grantees—**National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health**; **In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda**, and **National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum**—launched the initiative *Intersections of Our Lives*. This powerful collaborative builds solidarity across the various communities to amplify their voices, needs, and perspective, and to harness their growing political power to advance a comprehensive and intersectional reproductive rights and health policy platform.

By increasingly centering the voices and activism of people who have been most marginalized and then following their lead, the Foundation's grantees are engaged in transformational and impactful work in communities across the country. From leveraging new alliances to building a stronger grassroots base, the Foundation's reproductive justice grantees are shifting power while effectively blocking regressive laws and advancing policy wins at the local, state, and federal levels.

Volunteer-created signs from URGE's annual Abortion Positive Tour illustrate how this grantee is reducing stigmas and lifting all voices in support of abortion rights.

Environment



of Scherman Foundation grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION'S INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL issues dates back to the 1970s. The decades-long program began with supporting conservation and funding efforts to protect land and waterways that sustain the biodiversity that is essential for a healthy ecosystem, and has evolved into a more recent focus on mitigating global climate impacts and environmental justice. Early grantees include the **Nature Conservancy of New York**, which we supported for many years as they succeeded in protecting several hundred thousand acres of nature preserves across the state through conservation easements, acquired private and public lands, and joined with other environmental groups to promote projects that balance sustainable development with preservation. Other early groups included **Manomet Center for Conservation Services**, which initially focused on the migratory shorebirds in New England, and the **World Wildlife Fund**, which sought to protect the natural habitats of specific species.

Recognizing the importance of open spaces to enhance the quality of urban life, particularly in low and moderate-income neighborhoods that typically have less access to them, the Foundation funded a number of large projects led by broad-based coalitions as well as smaller-scale efforts. For example, the community garden movement supported by the Foundation has benefited hundreds of city neighborhoods, one small plot of land at a time.

In the late 1990s, as scientists were beginning to link greenhouse gas emissions to global warming, the Foundation began to concentrate on critical issues related to climate change and the urgent need to stem the dangers posed by climate disruption. The Foundation supported key DC-

Led by grantee New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, the 2014 People's Climate March was the largest action against climate change in history.



based policy groups, such as the **Natural Resources Defense Council** and **National Environmental Trust**, but it also began to recognize the increasing importance of strengthening locally-based education and mobilization efforts to drive policy change. Several major setbacks during George W. Bush's two terms reinforced this strategy, but it was the failure of the 2009 Clean Energy bill—considered during the Obama years and with the Democrats in control of Congress—that solidified the commitment. The 2009 bill had proposed a cap-and-trade system to limit greenhouse gas emissions, but while it passed the House, it failed to get a vote in the Senate.

“That was a key disappointment for the environmental movement,” says Mike, “but it was also a wake-up call. The bill had been a massive, well-funded, inside-the-Beltway effort, and it didn't get through in large part because there just wasn't support for it in the districts back home. The lesson was that you had to build a strong grassroots constituency if you wanted to force any kind of change at the federal level. You can't do it just by talking in Washington.”

The Foundation's subsequent support for local and state environmental work helped build an advocacy infrastructure that bolstered the tougher regulations passed during the Obama presidency, and subsequently became a key force in resisting efforts to reverse those gains under the Trump administration. Funds have gone to smaller groups in New York and some other cities, as well as to major DC-based environmental organizations with active state affiliates across the country. Grantees such as the **League of Conservation Voters** and **Environment America** are getting traction on local efforts to replace reliance on fossil fuels with clean-energy options. This success has helped strengthen their national policy advocacy, which faces greater obstacles.

“There's a famous saying that all politics is local. I would say now that all progress is local,” says Michael Brune, former executive director of Foundation grantee the **Sierra Club**, adding, “The threats posed by climate change and the escalating attacks on air, water, and public health really demand once again a stronger movement than we currently have.”

One way that the Sierra Club is seeking to mobilize community responses is through a program called Climate Parents. The program began as an independent grassroots group that engaged parents and families to

PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

The Fight for Congestion Pricing

THE FOUNDATION HAS LONG SUPPORTED EFFORTS to create a cordon tolling system around Manhattan's central business district, south of 59th Street, that would reduce traffic congestion, lower emissions, improve livability, and provide increased financial support for mass transit throughout the MTA region. Those efforts have included grassroots advocacy and organizing in favor of Mayor Bloomberg's 2007-08 Congestion Pricing Plan, which, while overwhelmingly supported by the City Council, fell victim to suburban opposition and the mayor's heavy-handed advocacy in Albany. Exemplifying our commitment to sticking with the scrappy groups that fight lengthy campaigns for fundamental change, the Foundation continued to back Congestion Pricing through ongoing support for and special one-time grants to groups like **Move New York**, **Riders Alliance**, **Environmental Advocates of New York**, **ALIGN**, **Transportation Alternatives**, **Tri-State Transportation**, and New York Public Interest Research Group's **Straphangers Campaign**.

In the spring of 2019, that persistence paid off in a big way. After three years of engaging and educating riders during the worst transit service decline since the '70s, these organizations mobilized the political will to win gubernatorial and state legislative support for a transformational Congestion Pricing Plan, providing over \$15 billion for service improvements. Initially set to finally go into effect in 2021, the plan was delayed by federal government approvals as well as a shifting of priorities related to COVID-19. The devil is in the details, and the Foundation's grantees continue working to ensure that the final plan to be framed by a new commission is robust.



advocate for “kid safe, climate safe” clean energy in their communities. Climate Parents’ organizing efforts center around providing participants with training and leadership development. Now part of the Sierra Club’s vast member network, Climate Parents’ activism extends from the most granular—fighting for school boards to integrate climate science into the curriculum, and in some cases to resist pressure to teach views that deny climate change—to holding policy makers accountable. They have often joined forces with larger campaigns to advocate for the replacement of polluting diesel school buses and coal and gas plants for clean, renewable alternatives.

BEYOND CLIMATE ISSUES, THE FOUNDATION HAS worked to bolster the rising environmental justice movement. This movement seeks to enable environmentally challenged low-income communities to look within “big picture” environmental problems and solutions to address racial, social, and economic inequities.

The environmental justice movement in New York City was just emerging in 1995 when **Lawyers for the Public Interest**, a longtime Foundation grantee that coordinates pro bono legal assistance for community-based advocacy groups, approached the Foundation to support a new project. Eddie Bautista, who was director of Community Planning at the organization, described the project as “focusing on racial justice from an environmental lens for some of the poorest, hardest hit communities in the city.” It was not, he notes, the kind of work that attracted many funders. “You had to have a vision and commitment to racial justice to see what we saw and help us launch our journey. I think it’s the hallmark of what Scherman is today. They’re not afraid of taking that less traveled path.”

Eddie eventually became executive director of current grantee **New York City Environmental Justice Alliance**, a coalition of grassroots groups seeking to change inequitable policies and practices that create hazardous environmental conditions in low-income communities of color. Eddie presided over the rebuilding of the Alliance after a difficult period prior to his joining that had resulted in the closing of its office. The Foundation was among the first funders to resume support to help get the organization back on its feet. We also provided critical early funds for the Alliance’s lead role in putting together the unprecedented 2014 People’s Climate March.

Red Hook Farms, an initiative of grantee Red Hook Initiative, is a youth-centered urban agriculture and food justice program.

The march, timed to precede the United Nations Climate Summit of world leaders in New York by two days, brought together a broad coalition of grassroots social justice and environmental groups—many of them Foundation grantees—as well as larger environmental organizations, labor unions, schools, and faith groups. The organizers knew it would be a challenge to foster collaboration among so many different players, and success was far from guaranteed. The planning required careful building of relationships and trust as well as a shared will to resolve any hurdles. In the end, the event exceeded even the most optimistic aspirations, attracting close to 400,000 participants from around the country, the largest climate mobilization in history.

“It was a key moment of change,” Mike says, “where people of color and Indigenous communities were very much at the forefront, and more traditional environmental groups and even other organizers stepped back a bit in a very smart and deliberate way.”

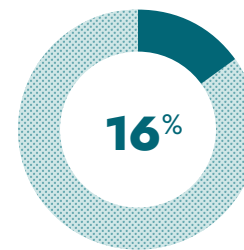
As a result, Eddie notes, the People’s Climate March expanded awareness of how race and class and competing interests affect environmental policies. “What was so important about the march is that not only did it give political support to the President and U.S. negotiators by showing there was broad popular backing for stronger climate policies, [but] it also opened a lot of people’s eyes to the fact that this was not just a white, middle-class movement, that the harm disproportionately affects low-income white communities in Appalachia and urban communities of color,” says Eddie. “It helped us rebrand and reboot the climate movement so that for the first time the true victims of climate change were elevated.” By starting a broader conversation about these issues and amplifying a more diverse range of voices, the event gave critical momentum to the climate advocacy and environmental justice efforts that the Foundation was beginning to support on a larger scale.

The Rosin Fund Environment program has built on this support by looking at broad and often national issues, using our grantmaking to build coalitions and bring together intersecting communities and organizations of different sizes and constituents for common change. Take, for example, the Rosin Fund grant to **Solar One** for its Shared Community Solar project. The project develops new methods of financing and installing community-based solar power in low and moderate-income communities in New York City, and has had significant success.

Solar One has facilitated the installation of almost two megawatts of solar generation with another ten megawatts at various stages of planning or implementation. Shared Community Solar continues to expand the innovative concepts of virtual net metering and shared solar power, lowering regulatory barriers and building out prototypes. It has partnered with former and current Foundation grantees **The Point**, **UPROSE**, **Urban Homesteading Assistance Board**, and **Fifth Avenue Committee**, all of which work toward the protection and development of low-income communities and housing in the city, to bring solar power to those residents.

“We are encouraged by the confluence of a lot of the organizations that we fund,” Mike says. “In the past, economic justice has been kept separate from environmental justice and reproductive rights. Now these movements are coming together in common interests and efforts. That is happening on the city, state, and federal levels, most recently with the discussions around the Green New Deal. The Foundation continues to play a supportive role in building bridges to help these movements come together.”

Arts



of Scherman Foundation
grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

FROM THE BEGINNING, THE FOUNDATION HAS recognized the value of the arts and culture to the fabric of New York City, as the Scherman family's passion for books and music led to early support of the **Mannes School of Music, Little Orchestra Society, and New York Public Library.** Over time, dance, theater, visual art, and multidisciplinary institutions, such as **New York City Ballet, Lincoln Center Theater, and The Metropolitan Opera,** became integral parts of the Arts program, along with educational entities, like **Harlem School of the Arts** and the **School of American Ballet.**

The Foundation's support of the arts has evolved from mostly larger, Manhattan-based anchor institutions to a greater emphasis on midsize and smaller groups throughout the five boroughs of New York City. There were exceptions—**The Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival** (The Public), for instance, was an outlier as a gritty young organization when the Foundation first began funding it in 1962, only truly growing into an institution after its production of *A Chorus Line* became a Broadway hit. And the Foundation had supported a few grassroots arts groups in the outer boroughs, like **Black Spectrum Theater Company** in Queens. But the Foundation's appetite for seeking out a broader range of groups presenting interesting, original work began to grow even more by the 1990s. This change was driven in part by developments in both the philanthropic and nonprofit fields: when the Foundation began in 1941, there were far fewer foundations and far fewer arts organizations, so the large, high-profile institutions were ones where the Scherman Foundation could have the most impact. As the number of both foundations and arts organizations dramatically increased, and particularly after first Sandy Silverman, then Mike Pratt, joined the staff,

Kecia Lewis performs as gospel music legend Sister Rosetta Tharpe in grantee Atlantic Theater Company's 2016 play *Marie and Rosetta.*



the Foundation realized it could make much more of a difference in the cultural life of the city by supporting smaller organizations that were breaking new ground and reaching into communities outside Manhattan.

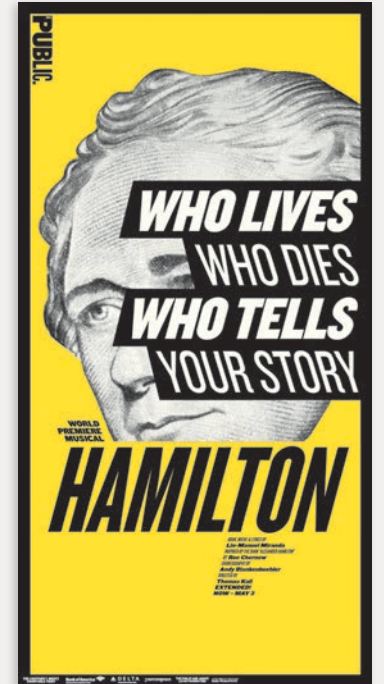
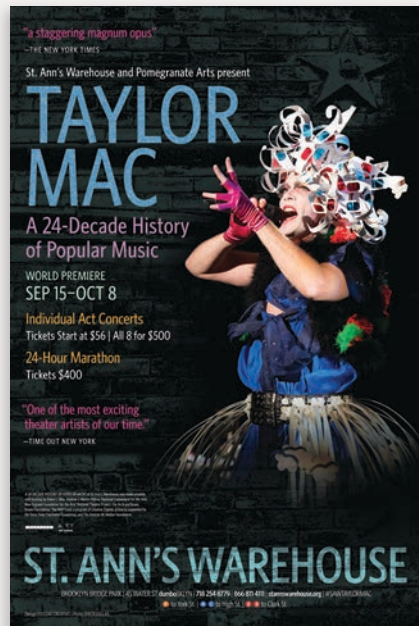
Artistic excellence and visionary leadership have always been the top criteria for arts grantees, even when that leadership has turned over, an artistic approach has changed, or an organization has had a growth spurt. In this, our commitment to long-term investment in organizations holds true.

The Foundation began funding **Mannes School of Music** in 1952 and continued to do so into the 1990s through a number of internal financial crises and its merger with The New School. Similarly, the **Little Orchestra Society**, founded by Tom Scherman, was supported from the 1950s until the mid-2000s, despite financial difficulties. Among the current roster, groups such as **HERE**, **Atlantic Theater Company**, and **New York Live Arts** are at 20 years or more of support. And **The Public**, **Brooklyn Academy of Music**, and **Symphony Space** have been funded for three, four, and even five decades.

As a nonprofit arts ecosystem began to blossom in the late 1960s and '70s following the work of people like former Scherman Foundation board member Marcia Thompson and the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Foundation looked for ways to nurture artistic and managerial excellence among these new companies. One of the chief approaches was to champion dynamic presenting organizations that could provide less-established groups and individual artists—who might not otherwise have resources or access to a main stage—with infrastructure that could allow them to make more experimental work. Multidisciplinary presenting organizations across the city—from the largest arts grantees like The Public, to midsize organizations like **Harlem Stage**, **Symphony Space**, **Abrons Arts Center**, and **St. Ann's Warehouse**, to more grassroots groups such as **Dixon Place**, **Brooklyn Arts Exchange**, and the **Center for Traditional Music and Dance**—provide space for emerging talent, showcasing edgier original productions and new looks at classical works. Organizations supported by the Scherman Foundation have debuted such Broadway shows as *Hamilton* (The Public) and *Brief Encounter* (St. Ann's Warehouse). And more importantly, funding presenters that expand opportunities for many artists and small groups has been a highly effective grants multiplier.

Grantee Dance/NYC hosts its annual, full-day gathering of the New York City dance community to strengthen networking, mentorship, advocacy, diversity, and equity.





Posters showcase just a handful of the many groundbreaking stage productions Scherman Foundation funding has helped make possible.

Left, clockwise from top:

Gatz
Elevator Repair Service

Taylor Mac:
A 24-Decade History of Popular Music
St. Ann's Warehouse

Celebrate!
Brooklyn Festival
BRIC

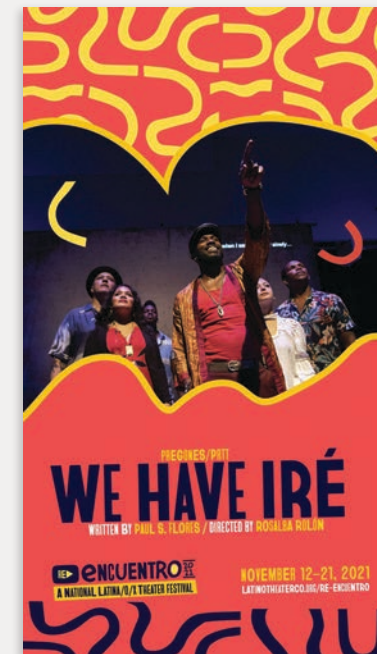
What the Constitution Means to Me
New York Theatre Workshop

This page, clockwise from top:

Next Wave Festival
BAM

Hamilton
The Public Theater

We Have Iré
Pregones/PRTT



While supporting these presenting organizations has been an efficient way to spread Core Fund giving to as many arts groups as possible, the Foundation's general operating support also sustains the work of numerous producing entities, from midsize organizations, like **New York Theatre Workshop** and **Ballet Hispánico**, to small, independent producers. Artistic invention, collaboration, and unusual, nimble organizational structures are common threads among these smaller groups. For instance, string quartet **ETHEL** performs contemporary works in collaboration with such entities as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where they have been the museum's first music ensemble-in-residence, and the Ringling Museum, with which they developed an original music and spoken word piece on circus life. And **Elevator Repair Service**, a collaborative that devises theatrical works based on novels, "found" text, films, television, and internet videos, is best known for *Gatz*, its riveting, eight-hour verbatim presentation based on *The Great Gatsby*.

Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the challenges faced by arts groups of all sizes have been increasing steadily, even exponentially, over the past 25–30 years. The vagaries of New York City real estate are well-known; space is often hard to sustain and always at a premium. Exacerbating these challenges, funding for the arts overall has been rapidly declining, starting with the major federal cuts in the late 1980s and '90s. To further reinforce the work of Core Fund grantees and other members of the New York City arts community, the Foundation has sought to improve the supportive infrastructure for arts groups and leaders by funding arts service organizations such as the **Alliance of Resident Theatres/ New York** (A.R.T./New York), the **Brooklyn Council on the Arts**, and **Dance/NYC**. These service organizations provide help with resource development, small-business training, and other specific technical assistance for administrative needs, as well as facilitating community-building and promoting economic vitality in different artistic fields and the arts community overall.

WHILE SUPPORT OF ARTS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS was never a significant percentage of Core Fund grantmaking, the need in recent years for this kind of assistance has been great, so service to the field became the main tenet of Rosin Fund project-based arts grants. The Rosin Fund Arts program aims for broader impact by funding projects that are helping to

DRAMA IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Technological Innovation in the Arts

A THREAD THAT HAS RUN THROUGH many Rosin Arts projects is support for artists in the digital age. One such grant was awarded to playwright-centered arts service organization **New Dramatists** in 2013. Its innovative program, **New Plays/More Ways**, had two components: the Creativity Fund, which provided extended, financially backed workshopping for resident playwrights; and the Virtual Home Project, which supported this with expanded computing and online tools for artists, allowing for long-distance collaborations. Over the three-year grant period, 47 plays received development subsidies through the project. Writer and performance artist Taylor Mac, who developed his play *Hir* with New Dramatists, notably said, "What New Plays/More Ways has done is to give New Dramatist playwrights access to collaborators while they rewrite (something rarely done in our industry). Paid collaborators I might add. The difference between a paid workshop and a non-paid one is palpable. When artists feel respected, they dig in deeper. It's my prediction that New Plays/More Ways will be a trendsetter in how plays are developed in our country (and abroad)." He added, "It truly is a gift to all theater practitioners."

Similar to the New Dramatists project, Gibney Dance's **Digital Technology Initiative** has trained choreographers and dancers to develop and use digital best practices to create new work, collaborate with colleagues, and engage with audiences. **New Music USA's** New York City New Music Impact Fund has created a sophisticated website designed to build the capacities of musical artists and connect them with audiences through residencies and concerts. **Playwrights Horizons'** Digital Audience Engagement explored varied uses of digital technology, from enhanced marketing materials to democratizing access to work online to the creation of unique digital performing arts works. This project placed Playwrights Horizons in particularly good stead when the pandemic necessitated moving all its offerings online.

move the field forward, either by supporting artists' creative processes directly or by providing them with the operational and entrepreneurial services and skills necessary to generate art. One key early example of the latter is ArtsPool, an ingenious model developed by A.R.T./New York, which has long provided critical services to its member network of more than 350 nonprofit theaters. The growing reality for independent companies that are "pushing the edge of the envelope" with original productions, says former Executive Director Virginia Louloudes, is that many have been struggling to make ends meet.

In exploring ways to address this problem, Louloudes was struck by an observation from some colleagues. "They had come to believe that the reason why a lot of organizations go under is because they don't have the financial skills that equal the artistic skills," she explains. With this in mind, A.R.T./New York's financial director came up with the idea of creating a shared pool of professionals who could provide members with bookkeeping and other back-office services at a much lower cost than what they would pay for financial staff. One of the first Rosin Fund grants made it possible to complete the planning for this arts cooperative and to beta test it, leading to a successful 2017 launch.

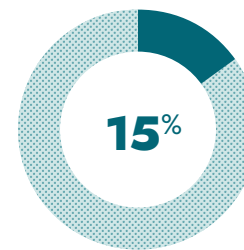
Other Rosin Arts grants that have supported management-services skills include **NYFA's Arts Business Incubator**, focusing on entrepreneurship for artists from different disciplines; **The Field's Leadership Fund**, which matched early/mid-career artists with administrators from underserved communities; and **Pentacle's Administrative Resource Team**, which provided choreographers with bundled managerial, artistic, and financial services, and took the unusual step to create a control group to test efficacy. Grants supporting the creative process, on the other hand, have tended to support residency programs, such as **Queens Museum's Open A.I.R.**, which created a residency that involved full integration of the artists into all aspects of the museum's life.

WITH PHILANTHROPIC AND MAYORAL ATTENTION AROUND the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in recent years, the Rosin projects have increasingly included those focused on supporting BIPOC artists. More recently, A.R.T./New York developed its Diversifying Our Organizations initiative, which works to increase representation on stages, with staff, and particularly with boards. One of the more singular Rosin projects,

Queens Council on the Arts' Artist Commissioning Project engaged a circle of community members in highly diverse, predominantly low and moderate-income Queens communities—for its first round, Jamaica and Jackson Heights—to select, produce, and finance new performances. The goal is to create a new kind of producer and cultural influencer, but also to redefine the meaning of artistic "excellence" by raising the value of rigorous performing art forms that are often dismissed as "folk."

As arts and culture are inextricably linked with life in New York City, the sector's specific shifts and challenges are always on the Scherman Foundation's radar. When the pandemic necessitated the closing of performance spaces in March 2020, the Foundation knew that many smaller grantee organizations—especially those with spaces that would have to remain empty and those serving and/or representing BIPOC communities—would be disproportionately hit by the virus. They would also likely lack the community wealth that might be accessed by other groups. An emergency fund of \$90,000 was swiftly devised and approved by the Scherman Foundation board, and the funds were quickly distributed to a select group of these grantees. Through emergency, Core, and Rosin funds, the Foundation has been successful at strengthening the city's arts scene and facilitating creativity and innovation in artists who are, by nature, risk-takers.

Democracy



of Scherman Foundation
grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

The use (and misuse) of private digital data is an important emerging issue for democracy.

FOR SEVERAL DECADES, ASIDE FROM ITS larger programs, the Foundation has funded a cadre of organizations that work to ensure open, ethical, and effective government under our Government Transparency and Accountability program. Renamed the Democracy program in 2021 as the U.S. faced new threats to voting rights and assaults on democratic norms, the program has now become a larger, more urgent area of the Foundation's focus.

An example of the Foundation's earlier transparency focus, the **Project on Government Oversight** was still a relatively young entity working to expose waste and fraud in military spending when it received our support in 1984. Since then, the organization has expanded in size and scope from not only exposing wasteful spending at the Pentagon, but also in protecting whistleblowers and promoting transparency and accountability across the federal government.

"Scherman was ahead of the curve in appreciating the value of this work in protecting our democracy and becoming an early funder," says Danielle Brian, Project on Government Oversight's executive director. "The big foundations followed them, but as often happens, many then moved on to other issues and left this field."

The Foundation's commitment remained constant even when the Project on Government Oversight came close to shutting down after a problematic leadership transition. "They stuck with us because they believed in our mission," Danielle recalls, "and they have been supportive of our work through Republican and Democratic administrations, because it's not very effective if an organization only cares about accountability and transparency when one party is in power." The

Foundation was also an early supporter of the **Electronic Privacy Information Center**, a public-interest research organization focusing its work on emerging privacy and civil liberties issues. Since the Foundation’s initial support in 1994, the Center has been on the cutting edge of defending consumer privacy, monitoring government use of people’s private data, and protecting democratic values and institutions.

Another grantee in this area is the **Government Accountability Project**, a leader in whistleblower protections and advocacy, which we began supporting in 1990. Since its founding, the Project has helped more than 8,000 whistleblowers whose revelations have exposed fraud, waste, and corruption within federal agencies and in the corporate sector, resulting in better and safer practices. From a narrower perspective, but with broad-based implications, **Taxpayers for Common Sense**, funded since 2004, is a nonpartisan budget watchdog working to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly and that the government operates within its means. Among its many achievements, Taxpayers for Common Sense has successfully advocated for cuts to unnecessary projects, such as the \$200 million Bridge to Nowhere in Alaska, the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research replacement facility in the Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory, and the annual \$6 billion ethanol subsidy to companies like BP.

The work of the Foundation’s Democracy grantees has, unfortunately, been more relevant than ever in recent years, due to the Trump administration’s unrelenting attacks—from its flagrant and deliberate disregard of the truth to censorship of information and employees to mounting ethical violations to undermining the rule of law. And yet, despite the highly corrosive impact of the administration and deep structural problems, one thing is clear: while flawed, our democracy can be resilient. In response to the urgency of the moment, amidst a raging pandemic that has, as of this writing, killed more than 850,000 people in the country, the Foundation’s directors quickly pivoted to respond, providing resources to organizations that reflected our values and a deep commitment to the integration of voter engagement and ongoing movement-building. In 2020, the directors approved a round of grants directed to long-standing organizations in key states working to turn out voters, especially those who are most often disenfranchised or disconnected from political power.

Staff from the Project on Government Oversight present their 2014 Open NDAAs petition to bring transparency to the Senate’s markup of the National Defense Authorization Act.



BLACK VOTERS MATTER CAPACITY BUILDING INSTITUTE & WIN BLACK/PA'LANTE

Protecting and Strengthening Democracy

BUILDING ON SIGNIFICANT RECENT REFORM VICTORIES, the 2020 presidential election saw the greatest voter turnout in the history of the U.S. In its wake, two facts were clearer than ever: democracy is fragile, and democracy reform is a racial justice issue. With that knowledge and the promise of a friendlier, more aligned administration, the Scherman Foundation has expanded funding to protect and strengthen democracy on a local, state, and federal level. We have supported several victorious efforts—from organizing record turnouts in targeted cities including Detroit, Philadelphia, and Atlanta; to the successful expansion of Vote by Mail; to defending the lawful execution of the election process and the post-election count. Two Scherman Foundation grantees have been lauded as key players behind the historic turnouts in both the national election and the Georgia Senate runoffs:

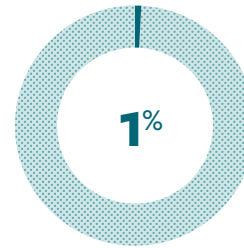
Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute builds enduring political power in marginalized, primarily Black communities. The organization has advocated for policies to broaden voting rights and access, including expanded early voting, resisting ID requirements, reentry restoration of rights, and strengthening the Voting Rights Act. Unlike traditional get-out-the-vote work that leads with registration, Black Voters Matter mobilizes through in-depth conversations with Southern Black communities, utilizing authentic messaging to speak to their concerns, connect with their hopes, and affirm their humanity.

Win Black/Pa'Lante is a communications project, national campaign, and “digital storytelling studio creating new narratives about people, power, and social change to transform our politics and the economy.” Win Black/Pa'Lante’s purpose is to ensure that the right-wing campaign to suppress the vote of Black and Latinx citizens is not successful and that instead, these communities continue to be energized on a mass scale.



Social media posts were an important tool for grantee Win Black to energize and connect with voters leading up to the 2020 general and runoff elections.

Human Rights and Liberties



of Scherman Foundation
grantmaking in 2021

(Approximate across all funds)

THE FOUNDATION HAS SUPPORTED AN EXCEPTIONAL group of anchor institutions that have, throughout the decades, been stalwarts in fielding attacks on human rights and liberties across the country. Among them are **Human Rights First**, an international organization that has consistently challenged the U.S. to live up to its ideals and the rule of law. Foundation resources have helped support Human Rights First's hard-hitting advocacy work to protect refugees, combat torture, defend persecuted minorities, and push the U.S. to leverage its leadership in support of upholding human rights globally.

The **Center for Constitutional Rights**—another long-term Foundation grantee—uses a combination of high-impact litigation, rapid-response advocacy, and strategic communications to uphold and protect the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, the Center has paved the way in challenging the post-9/11 national security state, corporate human rights abuses, racial injustice, sexual and gender-based violence, and LGBTQ+ persecution, among other issues.

Another human and civil rights champion funded by the Foundation is **LatinoJustice PRLDEF**, which works to ensure the rights and liberties of all Latinx people across the U.S. The organization has led efforts to defend and expand voting rights, end mass incarceration, protect the rights of immigrants, and address economic justice issues for the Latinx community in the U.S., including Puerto Rico.

Attorney William Kunstler, famous for his defense of the **Chicago Seven**, also founded the **Center for Constitutional Rights**—a Scherman Foundation grantee since the 1970s.

We have always funded what we think is right, despite the complexity of the context.

Alexa Avilés
Program Director, 2011–2021

Our Future

THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION'S 80-YEAR GRANTMAKING ARC—from economic research in our earliest beginnings to direct-services funding, then advocacy, and most recently community-organizing efforts that include power-building, leadership development, and movement support—happily demonstrates that we are adaptable and learning. Again and again, staff has been reminded of these lessons: listen to grassroots organizations and affected communities; maintain a culture of openness, including an embrace of the possibility that any assumptions, acknowledged or hidden, are wrong; and take risks.

The climate-change movement, for example, has been a major learning opportunity for the Foundation. While mainstream environmental groups have cogently described the existential problem and numerous solutions, engaging people of color and low and moderate-income communities has broadened the understanding of the deep systemic change and shifts of political power required for progress. Listening to groups like New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and California's Asian Pacific Environmental Network, as well as recognizing the disparate impact of such climate events as Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, has helped the Foundation understand that without these perspectives, real change is unlikely. More recently, the breadth and comprehensiveness of the Green New Deal and the complex debate it has inspired have emphasized this need for listening and movement-building.

The Foundation has learned to seek out less-heard voices, looking particularly for organizational membership structures that will bring them to the fore. While leadership development is often cited as a key

Our dedication to justice and empowering communities across New York City and beyond persists, even as the shape of our work continues to evolve.

value, staff has begun to delve deeper to support community leaders who are doing just that: leading. For example, Transportation Alternatives' leadership has enabled its neighborhood committees to flourish, grow, and shape their own demands when meeting with public officials, which has prompted demonstrably better results for the city's streetscapes and transportation policies. Similarly, **Brandworkers**, a member-led organization of food-factory workers fighting for dignity in New York City's local food industry, has supported and educated its membership base, providing a mix of legal support and intensive leadership development, including training on a range of skills, such as organizing 101, campaign fundamentals, direct action, storytelling, and facilitation. After engaging in its intensive programs, once reticent members emerge as confident leaders, employing and leading factory-wide grassroots campaigns.

The Scherman Foundation is also working to integrate our approach to these structures into all of our operations, guided by the principles of trust-based, grantee-centric philanthropy. Building on the preference for general operating support and multiyear grants, the staff has worked to reduce bureaucratic burdens and a gatekeeper mindset. We have simplified the application process and replaced midterm grant reports with check-in meetings and phone calls—more direct personal contacts, which build trust as well as knowledge. While the Foundation shoulders more of the burden of understanding and evaluating grantees, it is with the goal of freeing them up to do their critical work.

The multiple crises in 2020—the COVID-19 pandemic, the fervent call for a broad reckoning with police violence, racial inequity, and white supremacist culture, and the rise of an authoritarian threat to democracy—accelerated this streamlining process as the Foundation further reduced application requirements, quickened the pace of grantmaking, and transformed our few Core Fund project grants to general operating support as grantees struggled to survive. More importantly, the Foundation increased our annual giving and suspended new Rosin Fund grantmaking in order to provide support for democracy protection and movement-building.

In Harlem, a 2013 mural by artist Sophia Dawson helped inform and empower the community in the face of stop-and-frisk policies.



THE CAPACITY TO LEARN AND CHANGE has been important in our shift from a model of charitable support of direct services to grantmaking for social and systemic change; however, the past few years have challenged any comfortable sense of steady progressive evolution. While many of our grantees have been leading the resistance to reversals of hard-fought economic, racial, and environmental gains, the rise of regressive and antagonistic forces has been heartbreaking. Perhaps most horrifying has been the explosion of “official” racism, as discrimination and violence against people of color in the form of police violence, anti-immigrant cruelty, and other attacks go unanswered and in fact encouraged by some in government. Unfortunately as American as apple pie, corrosive racial inequity challenges everything that the Foundation stands for. Because it fundamentally undercuts the innate value and dignity of every human being, it clashes with our dedication to the arts and the environment as much as our more explicit commitments to reproductive, racial, and social justice. And while beneficial, a change of federal administration alone will do little to repair that national legacy.

The Foundation is therefore in the process of reexamining both our programs and our internal operations through the lens of racial equity. That work, led in part by former Program Director Alexa Avilés, has already begun in the Reproductive Rights and Justice, Strengthening New York Communities, and Environment program areas. That process has been accelerated by the vividly disparate impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities, the outcry against continued racially-driven police violence, and the rising threat of antidemocratic forces. As the Foundation initiated grantmaking in 2020 to combat voter suppression and to support fair and inclusive elections, with grants focused largely on BIPOC organizations, the idea of creating a new Democracy program was conceived. Together as a staff and board, we intend to both fund groups that are challenging racial inequity at the polls and elsewhere, and to do the self-examination and education required to identify and learn from those groups. Most often, those will be organizations that are led by and accountable to persons and communities of color.

Paired with our racial equity lens is the Foundation’s commitment to movement-building, as we support organizations that encourage oppressed people and their allies to envision and work for fundamental, systemic change through collective action. In many ways, the

Foundation is already there: long-term general operating support of the various components of organizing—from door-knocking and demonstrating to education and leadership development to coalition and power-building—is a necessary element of building movements. Base-building is among the key factors, as are trust, patience, and a willingness to wait and prepare for the “movement moment.” Motivated by the challenges and inspiring resistance of our grantees in 2020, the Foundation increased our payout rate, committing to an additional \$1 million per year in grants to movement-building organizations and coalitions.

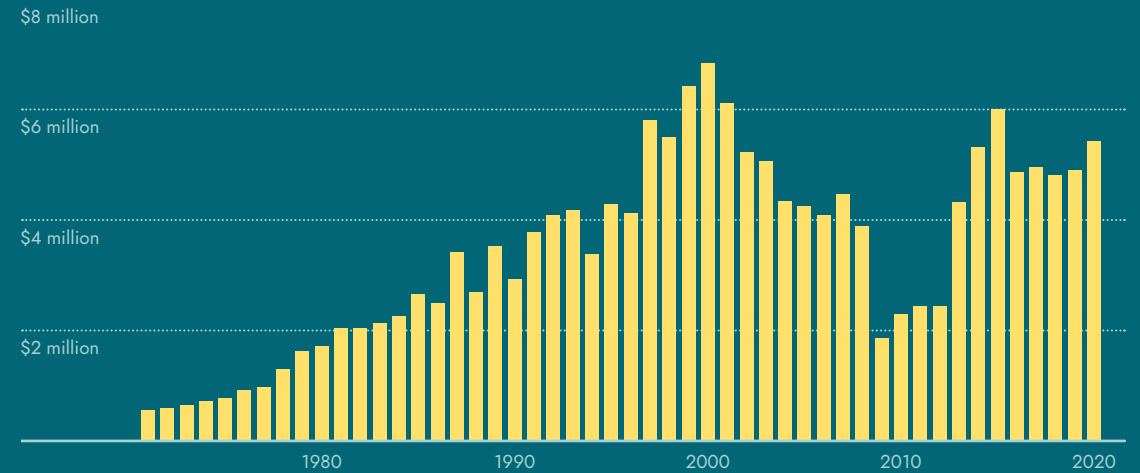
The staff and board of the Foundation know that we are bound to make mistakes and that going deeper into grassroots work can sometimes mean that we support an ineffectual group or an unfruitful effort. But we also know that an antidote for this is to look for larger movement opportunities, not only excellent and enticing issue campaigns. Recognizing the systemic inequities of our country, the Scherman Foundation strives to keep at least one eye on the greater prize and support those who are disrupting the status quo. And we will continue to learn and change, guided by the Foundation’s rich history and willingness to stay responsive to a changing world.

OUR FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

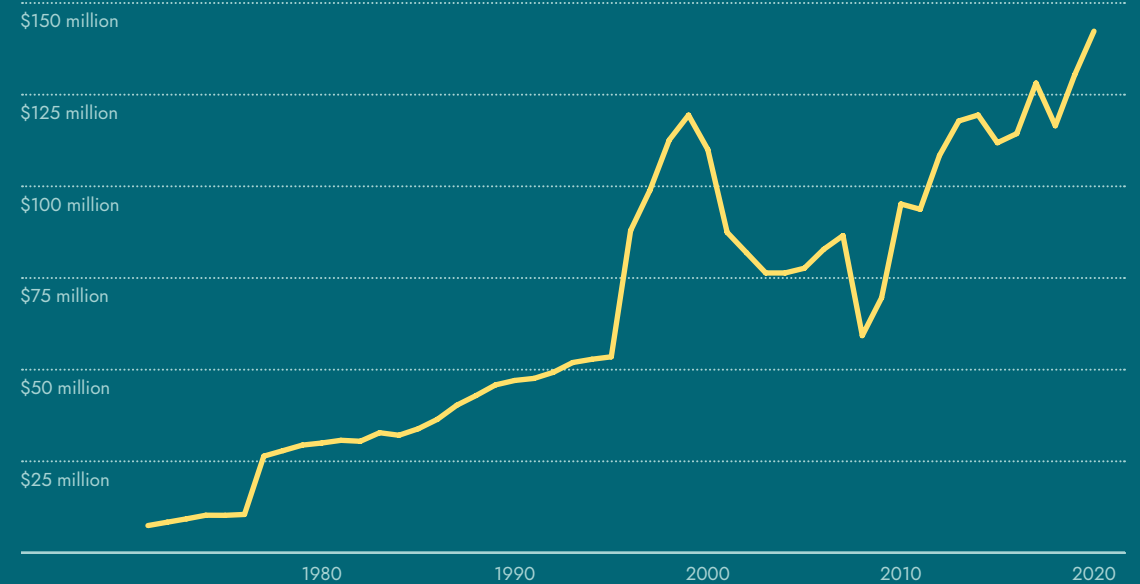
Diversifying and Aligning the Portfolio

MUCH LIKE THE FOUNDATION'S GRANTMAKING, the investment portfolio that makes it possible has grown in both size and sophistication. Estate gifts from Harry and Bernardine Scherman as well as proceeds from the sale of the Book of the Month Club lifted the endowment substantially by 1980, and, with the rise in equity markets, to more than \$100 million over the next two decades. An outsized and precipitous decline of the portfolio—then managed by a single advisor—during the dot-com debacle of the early 2000s convinced the Finance Committee and then Treasurer Mike Pratt to switch to a more sophisticated multimanager portfolio structure that included alternative funds, private equity, real assets, niche fixed-interest opportunities, emerging market equities, and other less, or at least variously, correlated investments. With the assistance of global investment firm Cambridge Associates, the Foundation now uses more than 25 active and passive investment vehicles. It has also significantly reduced its exposure to fossil fuels and is working toward an alignment of its investments with the values and goals of its grantmaking, including commitments to climate protection and racial equity. With the additional estate gift from Katharine Rosin that launched the Rosin Fund in 2013, as well as several years of strong performance, the portfolio was valued at more than \$140 million as of December 31, 2020.

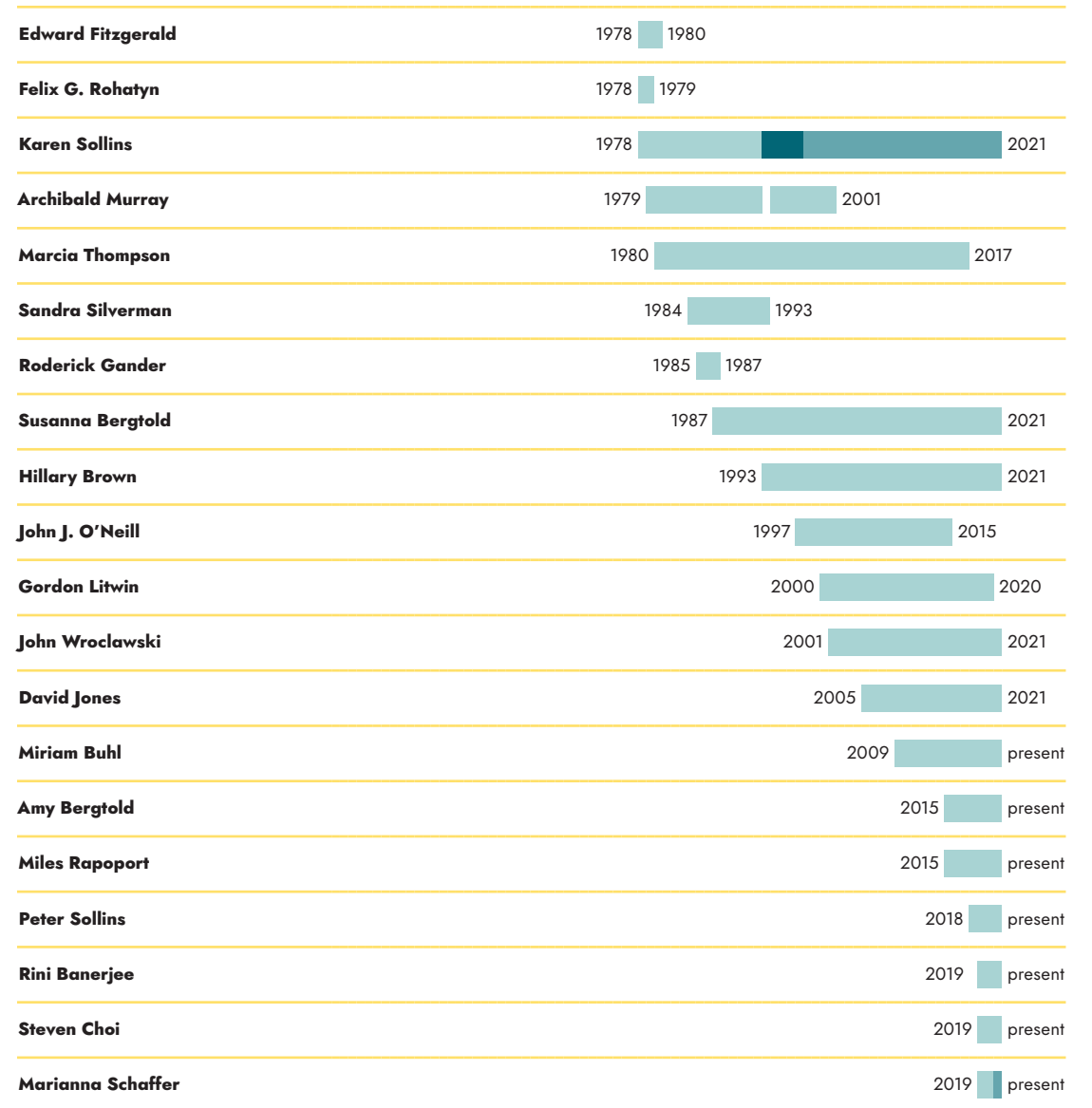
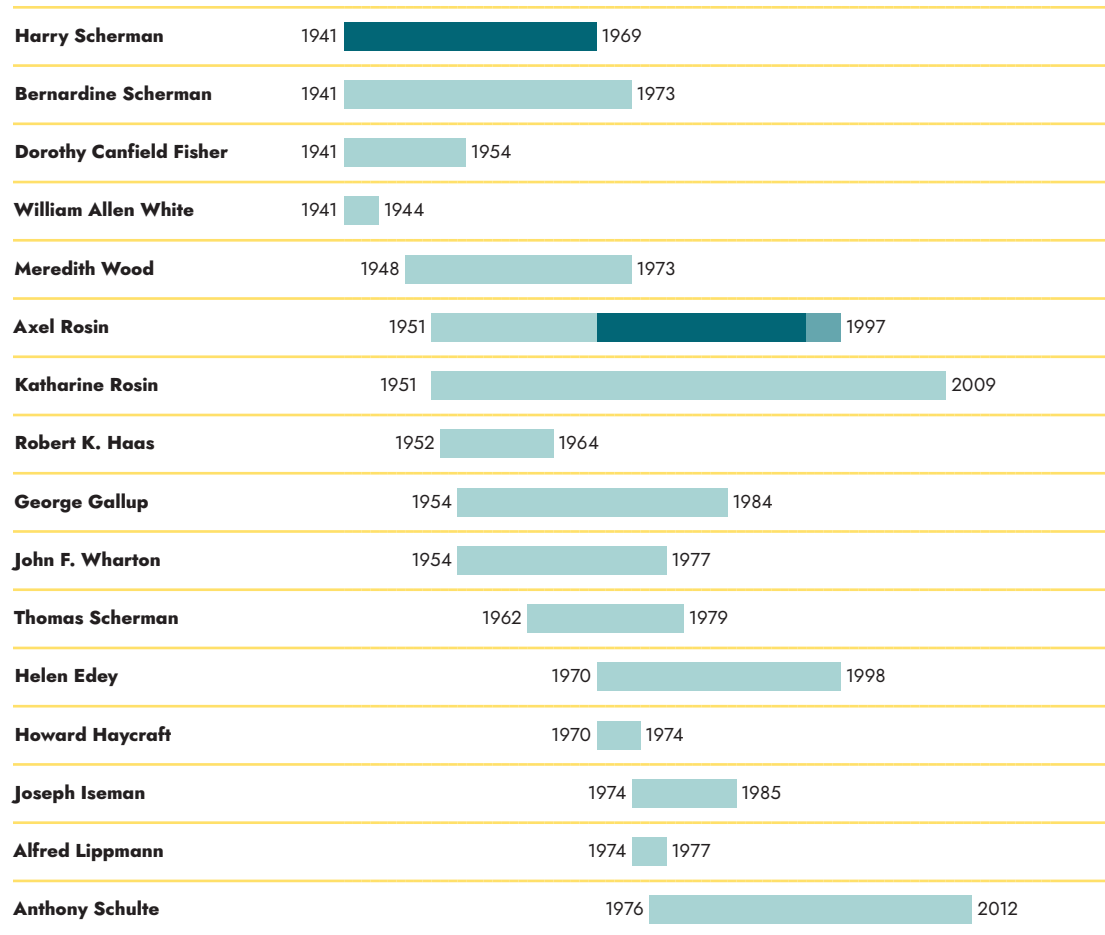
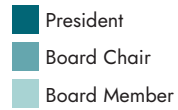
GRANTS MADE, 1971-2020



VALUE OF ENDOWMENT, 1971-2020



Board of Directors 1941–2021



Current Staff

Mike Pratt, **PRESIDENT**

Mike has been with the Scherman Foundation since 1996, and previously served as Program Officer until 2009. He also served as Treasurer until 2020 and continues to supervise the management of the Foundation's endowment. Prior to entering philanthropy, he practiced law with the New York City Legal Aid Society's civil division, and before that worked as a community organizer and Director of the Straphangers Campaign.

Gisela Alvarez, **SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER**

Gisela joined the Scherman Foundation in 2021. Through her work leading the Donors' Education Collaborative at The New York Community Trust and, prior to that, representing families at Advocates for Children of New York, Gisela has been dedicated to improving the lives of public school children through city, state, and national policy reform.

Catherine Porter, **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

Catherine has been with the Scherman Foundation since 2014, when she first joined as Administrator. She is particularly passionate about our work in the arts, and brings extensive expertise from her career in the theater—as a performer, development and finance professional, teaching artist, and award-winning artistic director.

Naiche Parker, **GRANTS AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER**

Naiche joined the Scherman Foundation in 2015. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Hunter College with a degree in Media Studies earlier that year, bringing her background in journalism and passion for storytelling to both aspects of her current role.

WITH GREAT THANKS

Acknowledgments

THE SCHERMAN FOUNDATION EXPRESSES OUR IMMENSE gratitude to all those who made this publication possible. This text was put together as a passionate team effort by current and former staff, who dedicated their time to tell the story of the Foundation's early beginnings and evolution into who we are today.

We thank Theodora Lurie, who conducted initial interviews and provided early research, for her valuable written contributions.

We thank the Scherman family for allowing us to share their story, including our former Chair Karen Sollins, who offered great detail and perspective to the project. Board and family members Susanna Bergtold and Amy Bergtold also provided us with important feedback and personal photos to help illustrate our history.

We thank the members of our board who were interviewed and openly shared their experiences as directors, especially those who—along with other colleagues and friends of the Foundation—read the narrative in its initial drafts and provided us with edits and insight to help further it to completion.

We thank our grantees for their tireless work towards our shared vision of a more just and equitable world. Without them, this story could not be told. Many of these organizations also took the time to share anecdotes on their relationships with the Foundation in extensive interviews and provided us with some of the photos and other content that fills the pages of this book.

Finally, we thank our professional editor Debra DeFord Minerva, whose attention to detail helped finalize this text, and our designer Rebecca Hume, whose skillset and vision brought it to life.

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