

**START  
FROM THE  
GROUND UP:**

**INCREASING  
SUPPORT  
FOR GIRLS  
OF COLOR**

**MARCH 2019**

**GRANTMAKERS FOR  
GIRLS OF COLOR**



## START FROM THE GROUND UP: INCREASING SUPPORT FOR GIRLS OF COLOR

# INTRODUCTION

When we began creating spaces for funders committed to addressing structural barriers facing girls of color, an effort that has now transformed into Grantmakers for Girls of Color, we knew that listening was a critical place to start. Our early listening surfaced a deep need for data on what funding is available to support work that centers girls of color. At the time it was nearly impossible to find a comprehensive list of philanthropic investments for girls of color and there was no grantmaking research that reflected the voices and experiences of girls themselves.

To address these needs and gaps, in 2017 we commissioned research to assess the current landscape of philanthropic investments for girls of color and set a baseline for the field. We knew it was crucial to find research partners who shared our values and had deep expertise and relationships within the philanthropic sector. Through an open call for proposals, we identified Frontline Solutions and CLASP who had the skills and expertise necessary for this kind of research and are also led by women and people of color. Their approach centered girls of color—and those who are working to address the structural barriers in their lives. Their mixed methods research design included focus group discussions with girls of color in five locations, in-depth interviews with non-profit leaders and grantmakers and a review of Foundation Center data.

The result is *Start from the Ground Up: Increasing Support for Girls of Color*. We hope this report and the companion toolkit will facilitate important conversations, bolster the work of leaders in the G4GC network, and catalyze an increase in resources to organizations and leaders that are addressing the structural barriers facing girls of color and working to build their power.

We look forward to Grantmakers for Girls of Color continuing to foster and grow a community of funders working collectively to move resources into movements that center girls of color. We look forward to continuing this journey with you and welcome your input, reactions, advice and suggestions about this work.

*Start from the Ground Up* opens a window into opportunities for philanthropy to be more equitable and accountable to girls of color. We appreciate you joining us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Allison Brown, Communities for Just Schools Funds

Pamela Shifman, NoVo Foundation

Teresa C. Younger, Ms. Foundation for Women



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- [Resilient Campus, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- [Tiwahe Foundation, Minneapolis MN](#)
- [Transforming Generations, St Paul MN](#)
- [Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, Minneapolis MN](#)
- [Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League, Washington DC](#)
- [SMYAL \(Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and Leaders\), Washington DC](#)
- [Andrus Family Fund, NYC](#)
- [The Womanhood Project, NYC](#)



## SECTION I: GOALS, OVERVIEW, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The goal of our research endeavor was to better understand three specific areas: the experiences of girls of color, the landscape of philanthropy's current investment in girls of color (GOC), and the steps we might take to increase the quality and quantity of investment in girls of color. We focused our attention on the philanthropic and programmatic investments that explicitly and intentionally target girls of color, as well as the impact of experiences of racism and patriarchy on the identity development of girls of color. An analysis of public and private investments through this lens allows us to further consider how aspects of identity—including age, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and ethnicity—can frame the lives of girls of color, define the problems they face, and inform the solutions needed to address those problems. In addition, a direct exploration of the philanthropic investments toward supporting GOC aids in understanding the barriers, limitations, and opportunities for engagement and investment.

**“DON'T  
START  
FROM THE TOP  
DOWN. START FROM  
THE GROUND UP.”  
—ST. PAUL**



This report summarizes our frameworks and definitions, approach and analysis strategies, key findings, and recommendations. Our objectives for this report are as follows:

## 1 DEFINE

what we mean by “girls of color” and examine the tensions created by that definition.

## 2 EXPLORE

Explore the critical role girls of color play in creating healthy communities for all

## 3 MAP

Map challenges faced by girls of color, and structural barriers to change

## 4 RECOMMEND

Make concrete recommendations for funders, nonprofit leaders, and policy advocates that will lead to increased and smarter support for girls of color





## SECTION II: OUR APPROACH: RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY

Instead of operating out of a competition or deficit framework, we opted to investigate an alternative comparison that directly addressed increased funding toward GOC. Specifically, we asked: How do girls of color define themselves in comparison to philanthropy's definition? How do they define their issue areas and structural barriers in comparison to philanthropy's definition? We found these questions far more productive in leading us toward identifying the necessary supports to increase effective investments within philanthropy for the advancement of girls of color. These questions led to a series of interrelated research questions that guided our investigation:

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the field define "girls" and "of color"?
2. What are the most pressing structural barriers experienced by girls of color, and what prevents them from addressing these barriers?
3. What does the current funding landscape for girls of color look like?
4. What obstacles to funding and/or receiving funding do girls of color face?
5. What would it take to increase both the level and quality of investment in girls of color?



## DEFINITIONS AND DATA SOURCE

From the onset, this project was informed by reviews of the structural barriers facing girls of color [see APPENDIX 2] and of the philanthropic landscape around support for girls of color. The aforementioned structural issues both interlock and overlap for girls of color. They do not occur in a vacuum but operate under broader issues of injustice, including poverty, racism, discrimination, and community violence.

For the purposes of this work, we define girlhood from preadolescence to young adulthood, approximately ages 10-24. We include cisgender and transgender girls in our analysis. In addition, we define girls “of color” as those who are categorized and identify as non-white or, in some cases, a religious minority (e.g. Muslim girls). Based on the information acquired, we engaged in a mixed-methods research design: *qualitative analysis, focus groups and interviews, quantitative analysis of giving trends, and place-based analysis.*

The benefit of a mixed-methods approach is the incorporation of both narrative and disaggregated data points to report on the actual issues that girls of color face, rather than merely how we interpret these issues on a survey. In addition, mixed methods assist in breaking the habit of the assumed superiority of quantitative data. Quantitative data provides a snapshot of trends within a population but it also has significant limitations. Numbers are often used to perpetuate comparisons



Credit: Steph Segarra



that either lead to a deficit narrative (e.g. “Compared to white girls, GOC only receive X.”) or fuel an unnecessary competition model between or within groups (e.g. “Compared to boys and men of color, GOC efforts are only receiving X support.”). These frameworks limit the way we define and understand the barriers that impede the success of GOC. Furthermore, they stifle our ability to strategize effective ways to combat these barriers.

Another oft-overlooked issue with quantitative data is the coding strategy. If the data collectors don’t enlist the population in question to assist in the creation and development of the data set, we often see a mismatch in what data is truly valuable to the community. Often those who code raw data (i.e. those who attach labels to the values that appear in the data set) are not a members of the represented communities, so they miss nuances of data groupings and therefore exclude possible analytical opportunities for available data. Lastly, the addition of a place-based element is needed within a

research framework to address the specific ecosystems (political structures, funding organizations, community, exposure, etc.) in which different populations operate and experience challenges with varying levels of privilege and restraint. For a full discussion of the benefits, limitations, and considerations of our research design and approach, please refer to APPENDIX 3.





## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

### In-depth, Place-Based Analysis:

We found it necessary to attain an on-the-ground understanding of how girls of color actually experience investments, how the nonprofit youth development/organizing field utilizes funding, and how organizations in that field directly and indirectly define these investments to best support girls of color. In addition, we were curious about stakeholder and funder perceptions of how money flows around this work, so we sought to understand how stakeholders explain their own work versus what funders think stakeholders are doing. To achieve these ends, we conducted racially/ethnically and geographically diverse focus groups with girls of color and performed interviews with nonprofit leaders.

### City Selection:

In these sites, we focused on understanding how grantees connect with funders. Therefore, we strategically selected sites that meet the following criteria:

- Overall regional diversity (North, Southeast, West, and Midwest), both urban and rural.
- Evidence of philanthropic investment in racial justice, gender justice, and/or youth. Initiatives did not have to be targeted, as those in resource-rich communities often are. Rather, with this criterion, we sought to identify communities with the interest and will to shift funding and perspectives around girls of color.
- Racial/ethnic diversity and attention to gender identity as it relates to girls of color.
- Existing relationships (primarily with Frontline but also with G4GC core group and CLASP).

Based on these criteria, we selected the following cities: Birmingham, AL; Central Valley, CA; Denver (Area), CO; Twin Cities, MN; and Washington, DC.



## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

### Focus Groups with GOC

We conducted focus groups with girls in the five targeted cities mentioned above. We selected girls aged 18 and older based on intersecting social indicators such as racial group, sexual orientation, immigration status, nativity, educational background and socioeconomic status. We utilized the responses from these focus groups to inform our investigation of the Foundation Center data.

### Nonprofit Leader Interviews

We performed interviews with nonprofit leaders, both nationally and in the target cities, to attain an on-the-ground perspective of the barriers and strategies to supporting GOC around the country. To select interviewees, we used a snowball sampling technique, relying on previously held contacts in each area to recommend foundations, organizations, and individuals. In all, we conducted 30 interviews with

foundation and nonprofit CEOs, grantees, directors, program officers, lawyers, and juvenile correctional officers.

### Foundation Center Data

*Phase I: Overview of Giving Trends* Using Foundation Center data, we provided a national snapshot of investments in girls of color. To do so, we built on a previous report issued by the Foundation Center and G4GC and assessed single-year foundation giving trends for the 2014 fiscal year. Using the most recent data available and detailed codes, we first provided an updated overview of overall levels of giving to girls of color by the largest US foundations and offered a comparison between larger and smaller funders.

*Phase II: Investments Based on Barriers Identified by GOC* After conducting the focus groups, we performed a second sweep of the data to quantify specific investment in overcoming the structural barriers faced by GOC as a proportion of overall giving to GOC. Directly informed by focus group data and having added in these new variables, we developed a better grasp of obstacles in conceptualizing how funding flows toward girls of color.







**3. Identity is multidimensional.** Defining it is a complex process that requires comfort with intersectionality and non-binary thinking and the ability to draw outside the lines. Intersectionality is not just an academic term but one that, when applied judiciously, reveals truth, provides clarity, and establishes the organizational framing through which young people view themselves. Such a framing helps them understand how they are perceived and how they are included or excluded by others. Intersectionality refers to the multiple identities embodied in one individual, as well as the interlocking and overlapping social constructs related to oppression and discrimination. The young people in our focus group used key markers to describe themselves, including birthplace, language, name, appearance, history, community, and educational status.

*"I think for me, I would say, um, like my name. And people always ask me if I have an American name. And sometimes that kind of offends me in a way because why do I need one? And if you think about it, like, there's not really an American name because the English language comes from like Latin, like [Spanish]—they take parts of all other kind of cultures." —St. Paul*

*"I was born and raised here but most of the time I feel like I'm more Mexican than American. That's my culture, but then it kind of sucks because it's like this whole saying, ni de aqui ni de alla: like I'm neither from here or from there. Like, I know the American history and all that, but like when it comes to Mexico—I don't know any of that, you know?" —Central Valley*

Group members reported that the experience of attending four-year college at predominantly white institutions made race and gender more central to their identities.

*"But myself, I was born and raised here so it kind of like unites the two labels for that, and so when people ask of what are you, I'm like, 'I'm Mexican-American.' Until I went to school where everyone uses Latina, LatinX, and so I'm like 'okay, I'm Latina.'" —Central Valley*

*"Being a woman of color in college is difficult. I never felt so Hmong, so Asian in my life until I went to college, and I went to Cen - in Central Minnesota where it's super white, very Eurocentric, um, a lot of passive aggressive Minnesota nice. [LAUGHING] Um, very, very Eurocentric and passive, and yeah, never felt so Hmong or so Asian in my life until I went to college." —St. Paul*



#### 4. Misidentification is toxic and stressful.

Young people revealed that they experience misidentification as forms of violence and trauma. These experiences were particularly expressed by Native girls in Denver, Latina girls in Central Valley, and transgender girls and gender-nonconforming and non-binary youth in Washington, DC. Young people expressed a range of reactions and coping strategies which included depression, anger, fighting, fear, ignoring, and explaining.

*“Stories like that make me scared to answer.” (on responding to people who confront them about gender and identity) —Washington, DC*

*“I know now when that stuff happened to me, I’d get really defensive about it. You know, I’d fight ‘em about it. Be like, you don’t know my family. You don’t know. Does [last name] sound white to you? Like yeah, you’re just saying in a different way. No, and I used to get really defensive about it. About my races. And after a while I’d get, like, I’d get more angry about it, because they just kept shoving into my face saying, oh, you’re not who you claim to be.” —Denver*

## STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

A range of structural barriers emerged in our conversations with girls. These barriers included:

- **Housing/Homelessness:** Affordability, quality, and availability of housing were key themes in most of our conversations. Respondents also shared direct experiences of homelessness.

*“Like most of the houses that are affordable would be in like the worst areas, especially when you have like a two year old or three year old and just be playing out in the front. Like I think the worst part about here in the community and the schools is probably like gangs and drugs too.” —Central Valley*

- **Low-Wage Work:** Girls described low wages, the strenuous/dangerous nature of the work relative to pay, the lack of maternity leave and paid time off, and insufficient opportunities to access “good” jobs.
- **Financial Strain:** Girls described the difficulties of living in poverty and the stress of trying to meet basic expenses.



- **Gender Discrimination, Stereotyping, Patriarchy:**

Girls described intense experiences of gender-based discrimination, stereotyping, and patriarchal action in contexts including school, family, culture, and workplace. Particularly notable were descriptions of sexual harassment in the workplace that were endemic in low-wage work environments.

*"My boss at Little Caesar's, she told me if I ever wanted to be manager that I have to open my legs. And I was like 17 and I was like, I'm not gonna open my legs for some old man. Like no. Because I don't find old men like attractive to me, like I don't know. She would always tell me like, it's nice to have sugar daddies, and like I would get really grossed out, because I don't like that stuff."* —Denver

- **Racism, Discrimination, Colorism:** Girls described interpersonal experiences of individual, structural, and systemic racism. They also explained the challenge of colorism within their own racial or ethnic groups.
- **Mental Health/Substance Abuse:** In several communities, girls described the pervasive challenges created by substance use and abuse, as well mental health challenges caused by ongoing trauma.

- **Education:** Girls identified a number of structural barriers in education, including disproportionate discipline, underqualified teachers, lack of access to vocational and adult education, and insufficient financial aid.

- **Community, Domestic, and Interpersonal Violence:** Girls in multiple communities described the impact of community violence, particularly gun and gang violence. Girls also related instances of physical fights in their schools and neighborhoods, as well as incidents of domestic and partner violence.

*"What's safe for me is like I can walk down the street and not be worried about being shot. Now that's safe."* —Birmingham

- **Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement:** Girls described negative interactions with law enforcement and discussed the impact of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system, including deleterious effects on their future educational and employment opportunities.



## INVESTMENT IN ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Using findings from the survey conducted by the project infrastructure team and detailed codes from the Foundation Center data, we considered the question: where are investments in GOC relative to the structural barriers that GOC identified?

Of the nine structural barriers identified by our focus group, eight were also identified as top barriers in our survey of the G4GC network. Housing/Homelessness were notably missing, although one survey participant identified this issue as an “other” response.

The Foundation Center data set includes 38 codes that reflect investment in addressing those nine structural barriers. Twenty of those codes have \$0 associated with them in our data set. These include codes for:

- Equal Opportunity in Education
- Vocational Education
- Comprehensive Sexual Education
- Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement
- Sexual Abuse
- Anti-Violence Efforts

- Community Economic Development/Economic Justice
- Job Benefits
- Housing/Urban Development

Overall, the pattern of investment showed relatively low levels of investment in addressing the structural barriers that girls identified. These investments totaled less than 20% of all dollars and 23% of all grants to girls of color.

Even in cases where some investment was evident, we could not necessarily determine it was made with an eye toward dismantling structural barriers. For example, housing money was focused in emergency shelter and homelessness programs, with no investment in affordable housing or urban planning. Investments in education were focused on higher education and charter schools, not the types of equity challenges that girls identified.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data shows a disconnect between how philanthropy defines and supports girls of color and how girls of color identify themselves and their own needs.



STRUCTURAL BARRIER	TOTAL FUNDING	TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS
Discrimination (gender and race)	\$8,677,024	229
Low-wage work	\$6,316,596	112
Housing	\$558,334	41
Financial strain	\$3,291,994	82
Criminal justice/law enforcement	\$0	0
Violence	\$3,985,428	275
Mental health/substance abuse	\$40,000	2
Education	\$9,832,647	126
Total	\$32,702,023	867
Percent of total grants	19.47%	22.86%



## TALKING TO NONPROFIT LEADERS:

*“Disease, violence, suicide. These are all the things that philanthropy is used to hearing.”*

When we engaged in discussion with those who work directly with girls of color, we found common themes regarding barriers and subsequent strategies to supporting girls of color. Nonprofit leaders expressed four main barriers to successfully supporting GOC.

### 1) Assumed competition of resources

As discussed previously, the framework around supporting girls of color in philanthropy is often couched in terms of competition with boys and men of color (BMOC) and/or white girls. While discussing barriers to changing the state of support for GOC in philanthropy, one respondent noted,

*“White philanthropy is the fear of the angry Black man, which promotes their giving toward men of color. Women don’t have that. Their issues are seen as internalized and private. No one is scared of that.”*

Other respondents noted similar sentiments. Girls’ issues, they said, are in general seen as private, and thus GOC are not only competing for visibility in spaces where funding efforts are dominated by BMOC work, but are also struggling for any visibility at all.

When we spoke to girls of color, they did not want to compete with their ‘brothers.’ They found the framing of competition for resources to be inherently flawed and wished to reframe the discussion in terms of building up the community as a whole through support for GOC.

Similarly, nonprofit leaders lamented the competition within gendered spaces that cloaks itself in advocacy for girls “as a whole.” As one respondent put it,

*“I frequently get the, ‘What about white girls?’ question at networking events and receptions when I tell people about the work that I do.”*

Because of the philanthropic field’s underdeveloped intersectional equity lens, nonprofit leaders who work directly with GOC find it difficult to acquire funding that addresses the specific needs of their constituents. A framework that focuses on such oversimplified definitions of girls and their issues must necessarily ignore the unique issues faced by GOC as the result of intersecting systems of structural oppression. One nonprofit leader stated,

*“As funders we are issues-focused rather than allowing intersectionality. That is where GOC work lives, at the intersections.”*



As respondents reported, the centrality of whiteness is inherent within these questions about the inclusion of white girls. Interviewees described this as the notion that if white girls are not included as direct beneficiaries, then these efforts are non-inclusive and therefore should not be prioritized. This white-centric mentality is an underlying and largely undiscussed barrier to funding for GOC.

## 2) Philanthropic Miseducation Regarding Adequacy of Resources and Programmatic Needs

The majority of interview respondents expressed the need for individuals in the philanthropic sector to be educated on the intersecting needs of GOC, with the end goal of creating more adequate funding structures to overcome systemic barriers. Namely, nonprofits have difficulty securing multi-year, general operating support. Securing this type of support would provide nonprofits with the most flexibility to address the specific needs of their communities. Likewise, it would put them in true partnership with funders to begin an ongoing relationship of support and education.

*“Funders are also reluctant to take the risk on providing more flexible funding in the beginning... Thus, we find ourselves having to keep funders happy, which creates tension with being responsive to our communities as our priority.”*

Nonprofits are often caught between the need to be present for their communities and the need to secure funding. Flexibility would allow them the innovative space to address the intersecting barriers that impede the success of GOC.

In this vein, interview respondents recognized the role that small grants and seed grants play in broadening their funding options. However, they lamented at the limitations of these grants.

*“Seed grants are great but they aren’t sustainable...It’s difficult to sell small numbers alongside big visions for dismantling structural barriers.”*

Interview respondents stated that if larger foundations could adopt some of the flexibility of smaller grants—or create a matching system—they could create more opportunities to secure better, smarter funding for GOC. Many respondents noted that risk aversion is inherent in inflexible funding structures. Its presence disproportionately impacts communities of color.

Lastly, respondents reported a one-dimensional approach to the needs and issues that face GOC. For example, GOC are often targeted for teen pregnancy interventions without being supported in other aspects of mental, physical, and emotional health. Likewise, educational support often exhibits tunnel vision.



Said one interviewee,

*"We have to make all of our grants STEM-related. There is virtually nothing for teens out there that isn't related to getting the girls in a STEM field."*

Respondents expressed frustration with the amount of time it took to create workarounds to use funding for issues that girls were actually facing rather than what was being offered by the specific grant. This, they said, takes away valuable time and resources from an already limited situation.

*"We got our start-up funds from this organization using a fluffy framework around a similar goal and purpose that we had about advancing opportunities for youth. It just took a lot of time on our part, time that we didn't have but we needed the resources so we made it work."*

Narrow support frameworks are not the only issue plaguing the philanthropic sector. Some respondents reported that funders' unfamiliarity with the needs of GOC retarded their readiness to act. Funders, they said, seemed to be earnest but unsure where to begin. Therefore, funding communities should pursue more education and in-the-field experience to gain adequate understanding of the unique needs of girls of color.

*"We aren't going to mentor our way out of this situation."*

### 3) Gender Equity over Racial Equity

Nonprofit leaders described the reluctance within the philanthropic sector to embrace racial equity in the same way it has gender equity. They discussed the internal struggle within their foundations and organizations as to how to make members understand why a racial lens must be applied to gender work. Likewise, they examined the external struggle within the broader philanthropic sector.

*"We issued a survey two years ago to our donors, participants, and grantees about strategy, and we actually had pushback on why we asked specific questions about girls of color."*

*"It's the 'of color' part that is challenging for [board members]."*

Interview respondents often experienced hostility, argument, and isolation when they attempted to interject racial equity and inclusion into their foundation's gender initiatives.

#### Hostile/Conservative Locations

Throughout the interviews, respondents consistently mentioned geographic place as a definitive force in shaping how nonprofits and funders support GOC, define GOC, and experience structural barriers to their endeavors. For example, those serving the Latinx community in the Central Valley of California describe their situation as unique to their otherwise liberal state:



*“Our areas are underserved. No one really knows about the Central Valley. They think California and they think progressive, so we are overlooked by both the conservative funders and the mainstream liberal market.”*

*“We are always watching our back in the community for backlash and exposure. Unfortunately, the youth have been at the brunt of that backlash.”*

*“I’m most proud of working in collaboration with so many lgbt+ activists who are from conservative communities [and] who are isolated and written off from mainstream progressives.”*

Specifically, regional demographic shifts, historical relationships with populations, and definitive political landscapes have all impacted the ways in which a region engages with girls of color.

*“As a women’s funding institution, our population change is shifting the priorities of the foundation. We leverage these shifts to push back against what conservative white women have understood as priorities for the foundation and for women’s issues in general, as well as their approach.” —Denver, CO*

Communities like Denver have seen a regional demographic overhaul, which has resulted in a greater number of Latinx, refugee, rural, and other communities. This, in turn, expanded local understanding of the “of color” descriptor. Interviewees expressed a desire for support to understand how these demographic shifts change the nature of the support they offer and/or need. The growth of new communities invites questions

like: How do we serve people in diverse cultural ecosystems? How do we support them as they create systemic support for GOC?

## WHAT WE KNOW NOW: KEY FINDINGS

Throughout this analysis three key findings emerged.

- First, we found that girls of color define themselves differently than the field currently does. Their identities begin with personal attributes rather than a racial designation as a “girl of color.”
- Second, we found that girls of color and philanthropists identify the same key issues (as outlined in the coding of the Foundation Center data) but frame them differently. This disparate framing leads to inadequate funding and misconceptualization of the true needs of GOC.
- Third, nonprofit leaders currently must develop time-consuming workarounds in order to secure funding. These workarounds eat away at a nonprofit’s already limited resources. On the positive side, they highlight the innovative, resourceful ways in which nonprofit leaders have secured funding to address the needs of GOC in their communities.



## SECTIONS IV: WHAT WE CAN DO: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD

*"We have moved past the diversity convo, stuck in the inclusion space, but not in the equity space yet."*

Based on our conversations with girls of color and those who work directly with them, we note a series of recommendations for philanthropy, policy advocates, and nonprofits, as well as recommendations for G4GC. Below we discuss each recommendation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY FROM GOC

*"Look for people who understand that group so they can distribute that money." —Washington D.C.*

We concluded our focus groups by asking for participants' advice to funders. Their recommendations included:

- 1. Increased support for basic necessities and critical supportive services:** Girls in all five communities highlighted the importance of direct investment in meeting their basic needs. Structural barriers cannot be dismantled at the expense of immediate needs.

- 2. Innovative health and wellness support:**

Girls called for investment in innovative approaches to health and wellness. For example, they identified the need for a comprehensive approach to substance use/abuse, as well as non-traditional supports (i.e. therapy dogs) to address trauma and mental health challenges. Girls also emphasized the need for comprehensive sex education.

- 3. Investments in educational equity and opportunity:**

Although education is one of the better funded areas, current investments do not align with the specific challenges identified by GOC. Girls articulated a need for increased efforts to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, to tackle disproportionate suspension and expulsion, and to ensure that low-income communities have access to qualified teachers, financial support, and mentoring for first-generation college students.

- 4. Ongoing engagement with girls and young women:**

Most of the young women indicated that they were both willing to remain engaged around these issues and interested in contributing to this work. Only through ongoing engagement with girls and young women can philanthropy effectively align investments with need, remain attuned to those needs, and chart change in investment patterns.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR G4GC FROM NONPROFIT LEADERS

- 1. Incubator for Women of Color** Respondents suggested G4GC develop an incubator for Women of Color (WOC). This would serve as a physical location for WOC to convene and work together (potentially in a co-working space) with the hopes of sharing best practices while having a safe and discursive space to express anxieties and fear around doing the work.

*"It would be great to be in a room or have a space to go to where I can talk about my insecurities in my position, sustainability of my portfolios, and addressing the nuances of WOC in different positions within the non-profit world. I never meet people like me. I don't want to have to work under the radar or at home. A physical space would offer community and the wrap around support that some of us so desperately need."*

—Twin Cities, MN

- 2. Training** Many of those interviewed expressed an interest in training on research techniques and methods, best practices and effective arguments to make the case for the support of GOC within their organization, and

grant-writing for those grant seekers trying to acquire funds in a "competitive market."

*"I am new to my position and I am in charge of getting grants. Most of the grants available are for STEM and that's not really our focus. So many grants are focused on youth rather than girls so I want to learn how to bring the importance of girls to the surface because what these grants are asking is what we are doing but I just need help making that case. I want to know what others are doing and examples of successful grants that aren't STEM related."*

—Birmingham, AL

- 3. Data** Having access to different data sources, assistance and training in interpreting different forms of data, and distribution of up-to-date trends, were a repeated priority for our respondents.

*"Data is what funders know. It is what they respond to but it is hard to come by and to know what sources to trust. I know of other foundations doing a lot of good work and it would be great to have it all housed in one place--a place that we can trust has our best interest in mind and that will support us in learning how to use the research for our benefit."*

—Washington, DC



**4. Allyship** A number of participants questioned the stance of G4GC on allyship among white peers and men. Many suggested the promotion of allyship would be necessary to advance the work G4GC plans to undertake. In our interviews, respondents asked for an investigation of how to involve allies and leverage them.

*“Look, allyship is helpful for any initiative. You always need champions of the work that stretch beyond your community. Is there a way to talk about allyship in G4GC and what that would look like?” —Twin Cities, MN*

**5. Inclusive** While G4GC is marked as an inclusive initiative, respondents addressed the need for message testing of the identity and value statements made by the G4GC. In interviews, participants stated G4GC needed to make a clear stance on who is considered a “girl” and how they will maintain the inclusion of intersectional identities.

*“If we are talking about those who have experienced misogyny, then that is a more expansive group.” —Twin Cities*

**6. Support Youth-Led Initiatives** Throughout each of the interviews there were no shortage

of references made to the initiatives that young women were leading in their communities and around the nation. Respondents expressed a desire to find ways that G4GC could support (through dollars/resources, mentorship, fellowships/leadership opportunities, and publicity) these initiatives in a more streamlined way.

*“I don’t think G4GC can move forward without having a plan on how to support these youth-led initiatives. These girls are out here doing amazing things and I know if we invited them in we could all think up some amazing ways to funnel support for them and build a base of leadership that can take our places in the future.” —Washington DC*

**7. Inclusion** of Hyper-Local Initiatives In a similar vein, respondents expressed a desire to see G4GC support targeted, place-based initiatives.

*“I think solutions start here, at the local level. The solutions to the problems facing our youth are never a one-size-fits all. I have watched girls carry their communities on their backs and find the solutions for their communities, on their turf and on their terms. It is important that these efforts don’t get lost in the shuffle or dismissed for a national level initiative.” —Central Valley, CA*



## APPENDIX 1: FOUNDATION CENTER DATA

The Foundation Center collects data annually on the size, scope, and giving priorities of the US foundation community. Approximately 150,000 grants are part of the Foundation Center’s research sample, which consists of grants of greater than \$10,000 that are awarded by larger US foundations (those giving more than 1000 grants/year). This sample represents approximately half of all grant dollars awarded in the US, and the findings from this sample are comparable year over year. The Foundation Center also collects data on grants of less than \$10,000 from smaller foundations, thus providing a snapshot of giving in a particular year.

These grants are coded for a variety of dimensions, including subject area, type of support, and population group served. The analysis presented here focuses on grants clearly intended for women and girls of color. It updates prior analysis by analyzing data for the most recent year available (2014), describing giving trends for smaller foundations/grants, explicitly considering grants supporting Muslim girls, and considering giving by age group.

### 2014 OVERVIEW

In 2014, the Foundation Center documented nearly **\$168 million** in giving to girls of color in 2014 through **3793 grants**.

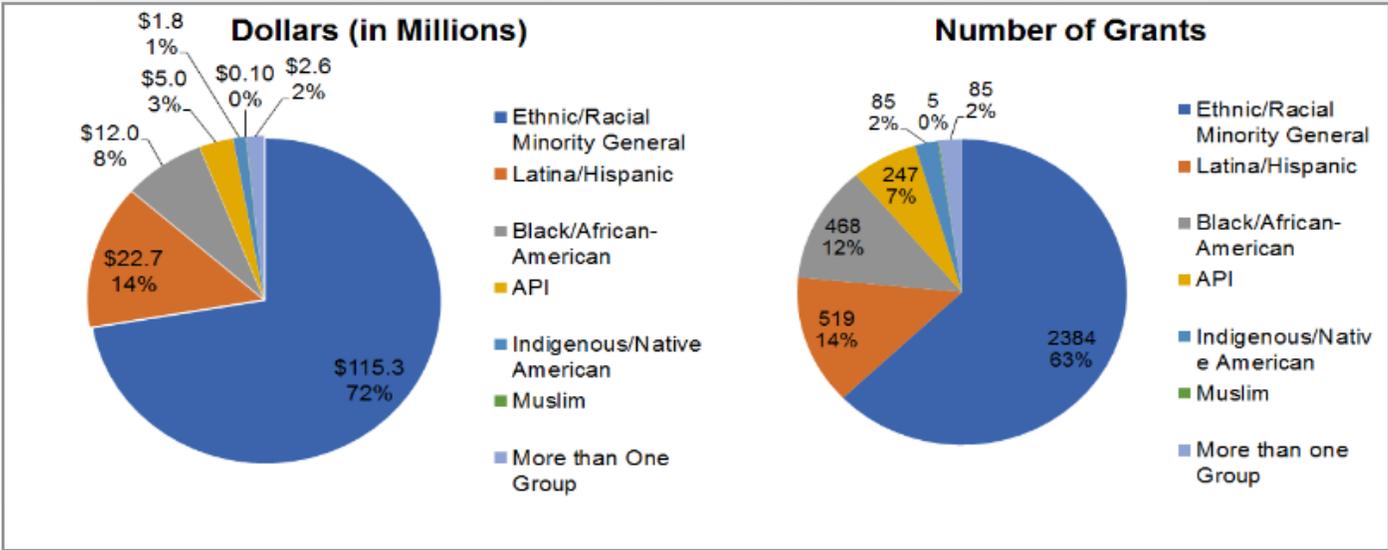
The majority of these **grants (2587)** were given by small foundations, although the majority of dollars (**\$137.5 million**) were given by larger foundations.

#### Giving by Race/Ethnicity

**63%** of funding was given to a general “girls of color” category with very low levels of giving explicitly to Native girls and almost zero giving to Muslim girls.

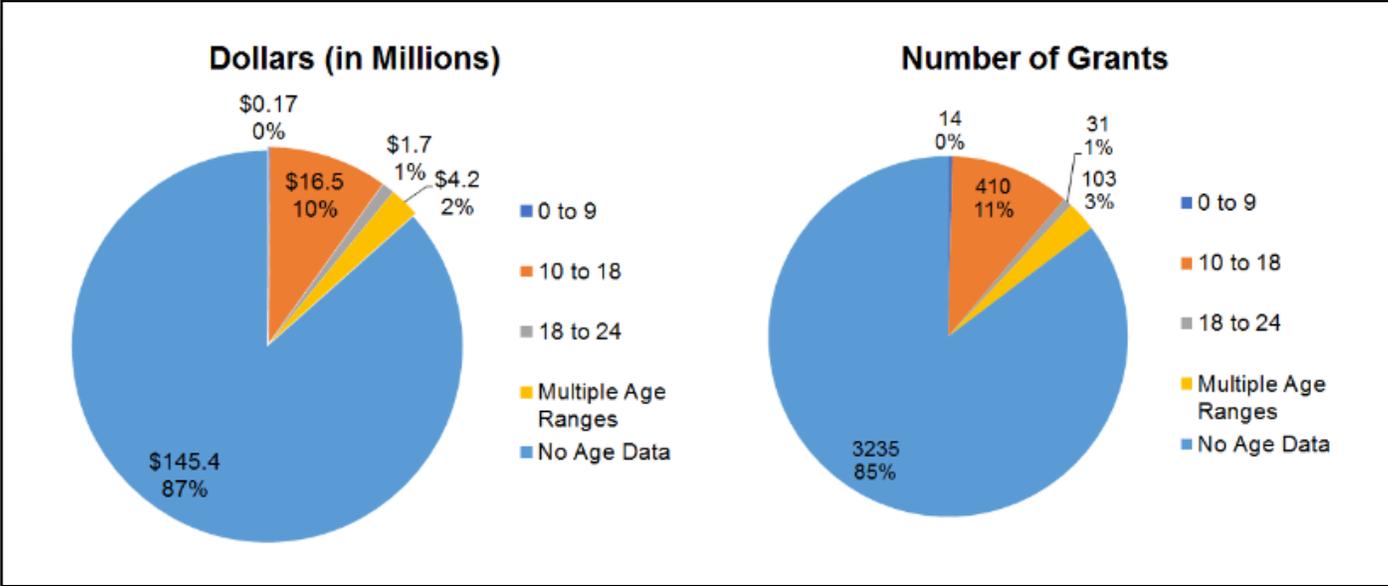


Credit: Shutterstock



### Giving by Age and Issue Area

The vast majority of grants (86%) did not specify a target age range. Among those that did specify, the most giving was directed toward 10 to 18-year-old girls.



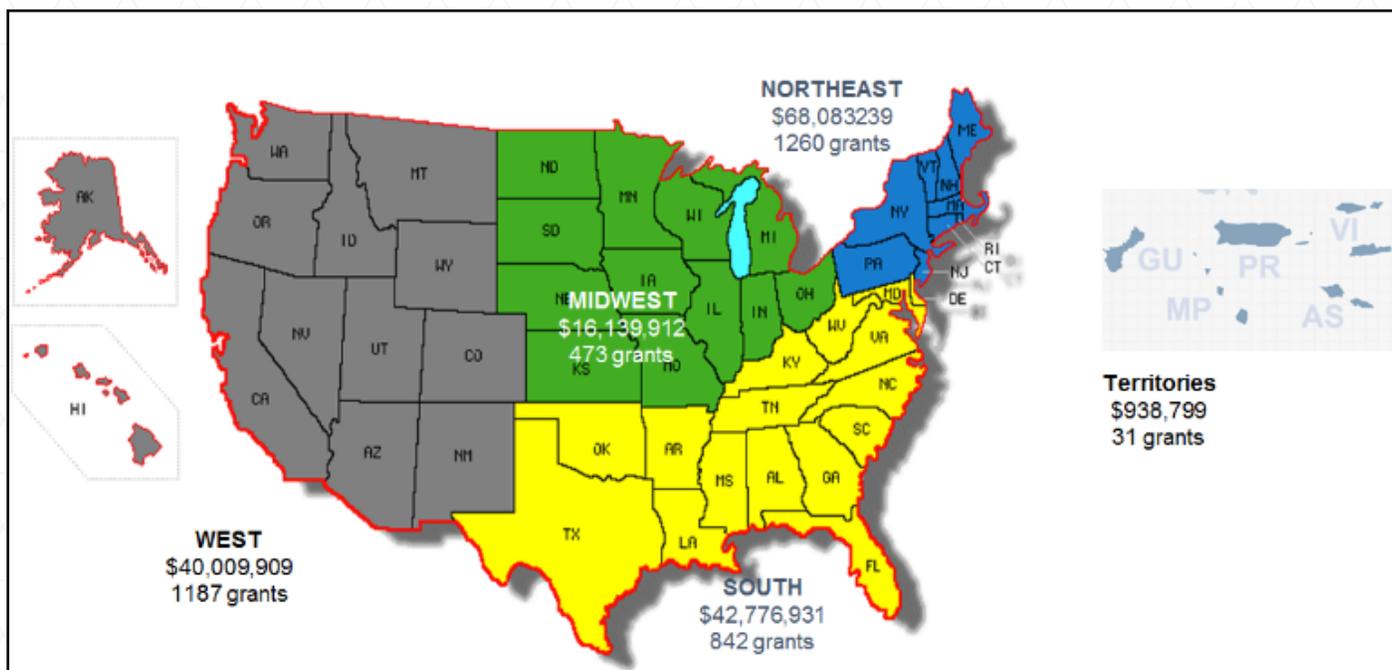


The issue area of Health reported the largest investment, with the largest number of grants supporting Human Services. When considering the intersection of age and issue area, the following top issue areas emerged:

AGE RANGE	SMALL FOUNDATIONS	LARGE FOUNDATIONS	OVERALL
10-18 AMOUNT IN FUNDING	SEXUAL EDUCATION	YOUTH ORGANIZING	YOUTH ORGANIZING
10-18 NUMBER OF GRANTS	SECONDARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION	YOUTH ORGANIZING
18-24 AMOUNT IN FUNDING	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION
18-24 NUMBER OF GRANTS	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION	VOTER EDUCATION AND REGISTRATION
0-9 AMOUNT IN FUNDING	SHELTER AND RESIDENTIAL CARE	CHARTER SCHOOL EDUCATION	SHELTER AND RESIDENTIAL CARE
0-9 NUMBER OF GRANTS	SHELTER AND RESIDENTIAL CARE	CHARTER SCHOOL EDUCATION	SHELTER AND RESIDENTIAL CARE
MULTIPLE AGE RANGES AMOUNT IN FUNDING	SECONDARY EDUCATION	HOMELESS SERVICES	SECONDARY EDUCATION
MULTIPLE AGE RANGES NUMBER OF GRANTS	SECONDARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION	SECONDARY EDUCATION



## Giving by Region



By region, both the largest number of grants (1206) and the largest number of dollars (\$68.1 million) were given in the Northeast, followed by the West (1187 grants, \$40 million), South (842 grants, \$42.8 million), Midwest (473 grants, \$16.1 million), and US Territories (31 grants, \$939 thousand). The states awarding the highest number of grants in each region were New York, California, Texas, and Illinois. As shown below, removing these states from the total drastically reduces the funding amounts in the Northeast, West, and Midwest but has a much smaller impact on totals for the South.



Credit: Steph Segarra



Regional Giving Excluding the Largest Contributing State

REGION	FUNDING	NUMBER OF GRANTS
NE without NY	\$14 million	553
South without TX	\$39 million	665
Midwest without IL	\$6.4 million	274
West without CA	\$0.94 million	263



Credit: Carolina Kroon



## APPENDIX 2: OUTLINE OF STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

The purpose of this outline is to provide an initial framework of the key structural issues that impede the ability of GOC to be economically secure while threatening their physical and emotional safety and overall wellbeing. These issues result from the interlocking systems of oppression—related to race, class, gender, and sexuality—that impact how girls of color, their families, and their communities are perceived in public and private spaces. These structural barriers are reinforced and magnified through institutional and public policies and through damaging approaches to programming. Through this lens, an analysis of public and private investments allows us to consider how other identities, including age, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and ethnicity, can frame the lives of girls of color, define the problems they face, and inform possible solutions to those problems.

Please note that the following issues affecting GOC do not occur in a vacuum. They interlock, overlap, and operate under broader social issues, including poverty, racism, discrimination, bullying, and community violence. For the purposes of this work we define girls as between preadolescence and young adulthood, approximately ages 10-24.

## EDUCATION

- K-12 school discipline and criminalization
  - Female students of color are more likely to be suspended, expelled and/or referred to law enforcement than their white peers. Girls of color with disabilities are also distinctively impacted.
  - Low-income girls of color are more likely to attend high-poverty schools that lack qualified, experienced teachers and counselors, as well as access to college and career readiness coursework.
- Access to higher education
  - While girls of color are more likely than their males counterparts to attend and graduate college, they still are less likely to do so than white women.
  - Compared to white counterparts, low-income girls of color are also more likely to face obstacles to college completion, particularly higher unmet financial need (the amount individuals are expected to pay above grants, scholarships and aid).



## SAFETY/EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE (DOMESTIC AND DATING VIOLENCE, SEX AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT)<sup>1</sup>

- Girls of color are disproportionately affected by the sexual abuse to prison pipeline.
  - Girls of color are more likely to be arrested and/or confined than their white counterparts (includes transgender girls).
  - Black young women report high incidence of physical and sexual assault.
  - Childhood trauma and instability make children more vulnerable to being trafficked. Risk factors for domestic child sex trafficking include but are not limited to: history of sexual abuse and family violence, exposure to the child welfare system, and poverty. The majority of domestic child sex trafficking victims are Black girls. Survivors face stigma and often do not report crimes because of racial and geographic isolation or language and cultural barriers.
  - High school girls of color are more likely to be forced to have sexual intercourse than white girls (self-reported).

- One in four incarcerated young women of color reports a history of sexual assault.
- Despite young adult males being more likely to commit suicide, suicide rates among Native, Asian and Pacific Islander young women are unacceptably high.

## JUVENILE/CRIMINAL JUSTICE<sup>1</sup>

- Girls and young women of color are overrepresented in these systems. Contributing factors include: biased law enforcement practices and policies that target communities of color and place law enforcement in non-traditional settings; implicit biases that perceive girls of color as complicit with criminal acts rather than victims of them; and the unnecessary criminalization of adolescent behavior (being truant, underage drinking, etc.).
- Girls of color are more likely to be held in residential placement than are white girls.

## EMPLOYMENT

- Early work experience, labor market attachment, job quality
  - Poor and low-income young women of color have limited access to early work experiences, in part because of public divestment. Living in resource-poor

<sup>1</sup> The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story [https://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015\\_COP\\_sexual-abuse\\_layout\\_web-1.pdf](https://rights4girls.org/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2015/02/2015_COP_sexual-abuse_layout_web-1.pdf)



communities hinders young people’s ability to join the labor market in their late teens and early twenties.

- This has long-term implications for future wages, as limited job availability often forces people into low-wage or forced part-time work that lacks opportunity for career advancement.
- Durable, entrenched racism and discrimination also impact access to jobs and wages.

account for the majority of new HIV cases in their age group. Yet they lack both prevention services and information.

## MENTAL HEALTH/ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- In several communities, girls described pervasive challenges created by substance use and abuse, as well mental health challenges caused by ongoing trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Mental health issues also often lead to interactions with the juvenile and/or criminal justice system, which in turn adversely affect employment and educational opportunities.

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

- Pregnant and Parenting  
Teen pregnancy rates across race and ethnic groups have declined. However, teen pregnancy rates among Black, Latino and American Indian/Alaskan Native girls are twice as high as for white girls. Young women of color not in school or work are also more likely to be young parents.
- Exposure to Sexually Transmitted Infections  
Girls of color are disproportionately at risk for negative sexual outcomes. Some GOC groups are facing crisis-level exposure to STIs. For example, Black girls have higher rates of chlamydia, and Black and Latino youth



Credit: Steph Segarra





As mentioned in the report, quantitative data is both useful and has its limits. Namely, numbers can often perpetuate a deficit narrative or an unnecessary competition model through the common practice of comparisons across groups. This approach detracts from the development of definitions and frameworks that address the actual barriers to success, GOC face. Furthermore, they stifle our drive to creatively combat these barriers. Nonprofit leaders agree:

*“Institutions are moving toward supporting boys and men of color, and there is competition of resources. We need to talk about how oppression is gendered, but it is not competitive.”*

Limiting our inquiries to a competition-based framework only repeats a pattern within philanthropy that has yet to effect positive change for girls of color. Furthermore, a competition framework masks the gender oppression that operates within philanthropy and society. Similarly, a deficit model perpetuates the idea that GOC are on the bottom without addressing the intersectional barriers that stifle success. As one of our interviewees stated,

*“I don’t want to be a white girl. That is not my goal. So why do we keep thinking about the success of our girls in relation to white girls? That’s not it.”*

Girls of color are brilliant, resilient human beings who face unique, specific challenges not shared

by white girls or boys of color. Thus, their issues merit a stand-alone investigation. If we move away from the existing limited frameworks, we can start thinking creatively about solutions. If we fund resilience over deficits, we begin to ask different questions directly geared toward GOC, like “Who are girls of color, and what do they need for success?” If we fund community over comparison, we begin to change the narrative, asking, “How do we help girls of color achieve success?” These questions, within this framework, lead us to the ultimate goal of greater, smarter funding for girls of color that is aligned with views the girls have shared.

*“...And, uh, because of that, like I feel like there’s a lot of investment in, in young Hmong women, you know, to help us like, like to empower us and to help us like become like, —think it’s like our biggest like our biggest, brightest potentials, whatever, and um, and that’s great. You know like there’s like a lot of investment in like Hmong women, but then when I look at my Hmong brothers, I’m kinda like, I don’t know. Like there’s not a lot of investment there, and today like, there are a lot of thriving, successful Hmong women, and there’s not a lot of like thriving, good examples Hmong men.” —St. Paul*

In the report we mentioned the issues that arise when those who code quantitative data are not of the community under analysis. This is true of the Foundation Center data. According to the data, **68% of grants** specifically designated for girls



of color did not specify a sub-group, but rather addressed GOC as a whole. In addition, 85% of those grants were not specified by age. These data points reflect a broad issue: the incomplete conceptualization of girls of color and their needs. We must investigate new ways of defining girls of color and of understanding their specific needs so that we can identify effective methods of intervention.

## APPENDIX 4: ADDITIONAL FOCUS GROUP QUOTES

The following quotes represent qualitative data collected by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) during focus groups in five US locations. CLASP conducted these focus groups in partnership with the NoVo Foundation, Grantmakers for Girls of Color, and Frontline Solutions in St. Paul, MN; Denver, CO; Visalia, CA; Birmingham, AL; and Washington, DC.

### IDENTITY

*"I'm strong, I'm responsible, I'm very passionate with people I love and that I care about, and I'm very caring, kind, and I have a big heart. I'm hard-working."*  
—Birmingham

*"Yeah, I get a lot of, um, they're not compliments. 'Cause in the past I used to think, 'Oh my god, yeah, that's a, that's a good compliment,' but now I'm like, that's not a compliment! 'Cause in the past, I would get a -- people were telling me, 'You don't -- you don't look Hmong. Oh my gosh, you look Chinese or oh, you look Korean.' And then, and then, my mind would go to like oh, so they think I look like the people in the media of that and this city that they see on TV or whatever, and then like oh, wow, thank you! But then now, I'm like, no, wait, no, I'm Hmong. I'm proud to look like this, like I represent, um, a Hmong person, a Hmong woman, you know?"* —St. Paul

*"That's what they used to say about me in middle school. When I would speak Spanish and when I would do like that they would tell me not to pretend to be something, like not to be a fake Mexican, and I'm like 'How am I being that?' Like, I don't understand. They would be like, 'Because your color of your skin doesn't match your thing.' That doesn't make me; that doesn't mean I can't, you know, I can't be Mexican."*  
—Denver

### STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

*"There's always that kind of like barrier and a really strong hold onto those different ideals, which I think kind of like going back to everything just makes everything that like women do here feel like they have to fight a little bit harder to get something done. So I feel like that's like a big kind of gender disparity here"*  
—Central Valley



“So, um, this just like, microaggressions or things that have happened to me that makes me think, um, more about, um, who I—what I am as a Hmong person, like, uh, should I be happy that they’re thinking that I’m a Korean person? Which, you know, Koreans are part of the model minority, and they’re doing particularly well in the U.S., and they have their own country. So, and looking at like the movies and the, the music, you think, “Oh, they’re all beautiful,” and so like, and successful, and you’re thinking, “Oh, they think I’m like those people.” —St. Paul

“...Like everybody’s in a gang or associated with people in a gang. It’s like you can’t have friends because what if they’re in a gang, you know? And then what if you get caught with them in a bad moment. It’s horrible. Like the low-income thing. Like it’s true, but North Side is the worst place to be. Like you can’t go outside, you can’t go for a walk, you can’t go to the park because there’s homeless. What if they steal your kid, what if, you know, something bad happens?...What if there’s a shooting in the park? And because there’s a gang member there and it’s like, you can’t, it’s not safe.” —Central Valley

“Yeah, my baby daddy, he would pistol whoop me. You never know if the gun going to go off. The way he hits you, you never know somebody making you get on your knees while your child looking at you while they put a gun to your head. I done been through that. Don’t nobody want to go through that so I say, ‘I got to get my son out of here.’ Because I can’t just imagine him doing that to a woman when he gets old. I would

be so hurt. I be like ‘Boy, I raised you better than that.’... I got away. I snuck out the house and got away, that’s how I got away because if he was walking there was no way he was going to let me out that door. I remember what I had on my back, what my baby had on this back—that’s what we had.” —Birmingham

## RESILIENCE

“And, um, but I think I’m very hopeful. I’m very optimistic of the next generation, because I hope that that kind of, um, patriarchal structure within the Hmong community ends with our generation.” —St. Paul

“My mom was a strong Black woman. She raised me to be a strong Black woman, and I’m very thankful for that, you know. One thing I will say, she left me with that. When she passed, I was hurt, but I strong about it, because if she wouldn’t have to raised me, and I wouldn’t have saw everything she’s done, I wouldn’t know how to go on without this. I’m thankful for this program. So, and my son keeps me strong, and I am thankful for him.” —Birmingham

## NOT WITHOUT MY COMMUNITY

“I mean, one advice that would get it is don’t put an age limit because of what a 15-year-old girl is struggling to provide for—you know, one or two or how many children or even just supporting herself—that could be a 30-year-old woman that is struggling with the same issues, just the economy is so bad. No jobs.” —Central Valley

**Grantmakers for Girls of Color (G4GC) was born out of an organic and rapidly expanding community of people across philanthropy united by a commitment to connect, learn and organize to move more resources to movements centering and supporting girls of color. Initially launched as an online resource in 2015, G4GC has quickly become a dynamic learning and organizing space for hundreds of funders who are actively supporting or exploring efforts to address the structural inequities facing girls of color.**