

IMPACT REPORT

2014-2021



“Love is profoundly
political. Our deepest
revolution will come when
we understand this truth.”
- bell hooks (1952-2021)

Salvation: Black People and Love

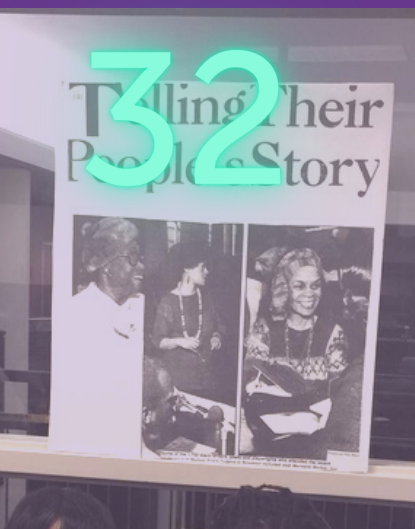
This report is dedicated to bell hooks. When Women Engaged (WE) Co-Founder Malika Redmond was an undergraduate student at Spelman College, she read her books. hooks' Black feminist critique of society, culture, and the systems that oppress Black people, and all of humanity, was standard academic reading.

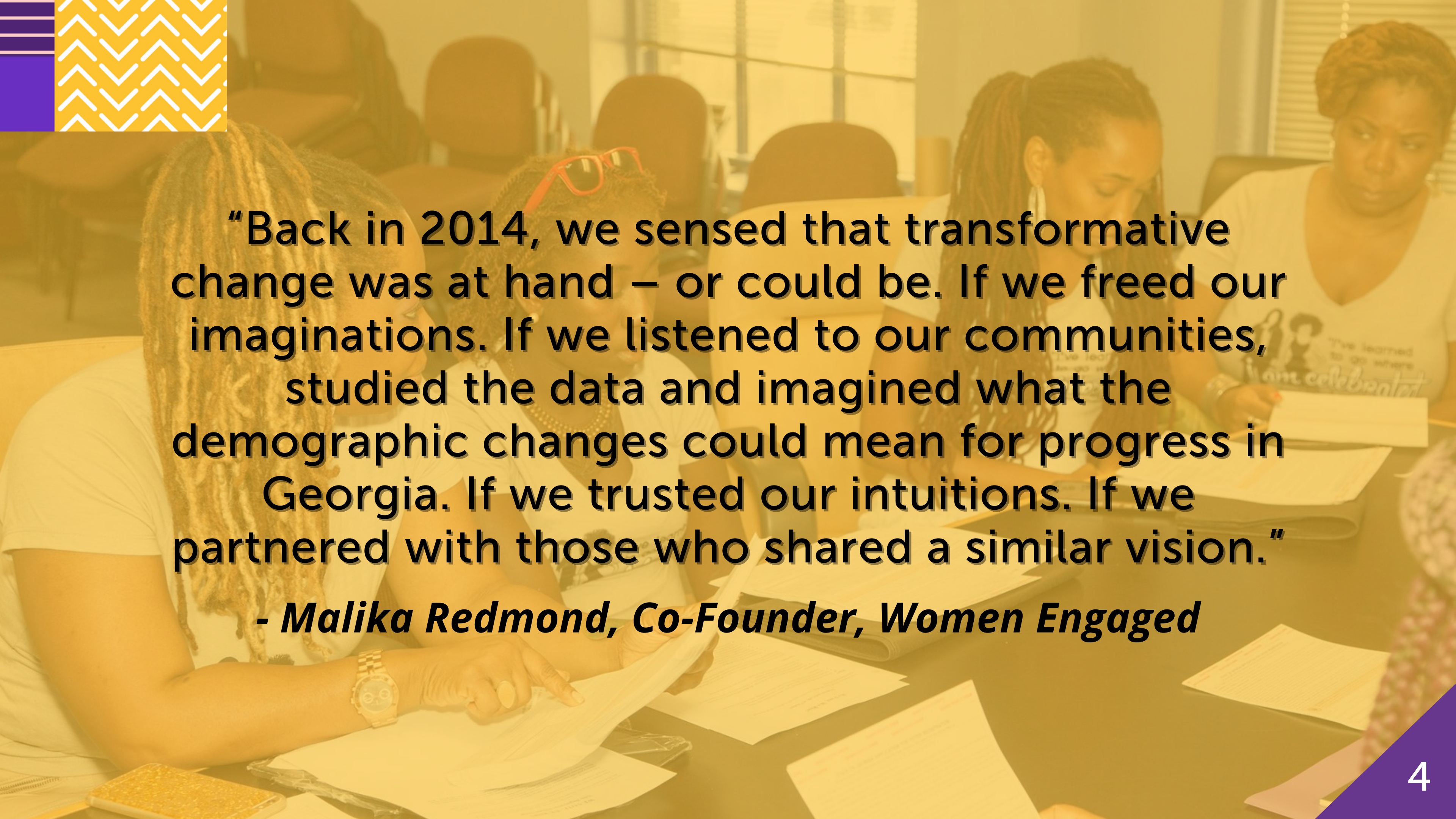

It is through hooks' intellectual work that Redmond found deep and meaningful ways to express her unique perspective on the world and how, without apology, to place love for herself at the center of the justice she seeks for the community.

WE has been able to create a space for Black women, girls and femmes. Here, fighting for reproductive justice and reparations are weighted with equal importance. The lives of people of African descent are respected as sacred. WE gives thanks to bell hooks!

04	Introduction	23	Changing The Narrative	40	Conclusion & Acknowledgements
05	Black Women's Leadership	26	The COVID-19 Pandemic	42	Sources
09	Political & Civic Engagement	29	Fundraising		
13	Reproductive Justice	30	Standing Up for Black Lives & Dignity		
19	Partnerships	39	By The Numbers		

TABLE OF CONTENTS





"Back in 2014, we sensed that transformative change was at hand – or could be. If we freed our imaginations. If we listened to our communities, studied the data and imagined what the demographic changes could mean for progress in Georgia. If we trusted our intuitions. If we partnered with those who shared a similar vision."

- Malika Redmond, Co-Founder, Women Engaged

INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD WE IMAGINED



When Margaret Kargbo and I founded Women Engaged (WE) in 2014, we did not know that WE and other reproductive justice allies would help overturn HB481, the 6 weeks abortion ban that would have forced pregnancies disproportionately on women of color, young people, and low-income women.

We could not predict then that Georgia would become the focus of national attention for both the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election and the 2021 U.S. Senate runoff

race with historic shifts in political leadership reflecting the values of the seismic changes within its electorate.

We did not dream that — thanks to years of ground-level voter engagement work by WE and like-minded organizations — young, Black and other historically disenfranchised voters would surge to the polls.

Who could imagine that these voters would ultimately surpass previous turnout records in a state with a grim civil rights and voter rights history.

Margaret and I could not have foreseen that we would have a hand in inspiring emerging reproductive justice activists and leaders; many of whom will continue to change the face of this state and nation.

Nonetheless, even though we could not predict these

events, back in 2014, we sensed that transformative change was at hand – or could be. If we listened to our communities, studied the data and imagined what the demographic changes could mean for progress in Georgia. If we trusted our intuitions. If we partnered with those who shared a similar vision.

These are the values and practices that have shaped this organization and raised it up from a mere idea to one of the most influential civic-engagement organizations in Georgia, an organization that brings together voter engagement and the human and reproductive rights of Black women, femmes, and girls.

The ingredients for transformation were already there in 2014's demographic map. Georgia's communities were becoming more

diverse, with younger populations. We wanted to represent the power of those communities and declare their presence.

A new American majority was dawning in Georgia, and we wanted to ensure its political and civic power. We rejected the idea that the “Obama coalition” was an anomaly occasioned by the nation's first Black president.

And while Margaret's unexpected passing in 2015 means she is not here to receive her due flowers from the seeds she planted, I am here to emphatically state that we proved the skeptics wrong. We trusted our intuition, research, and experience. We knew that historically marginalized people would come out to vote if they were heard. If, instead of sporadic engagement with voters around election cycles, there was sustained and

committed collaboration and deep investment in communities.

In the subsequent pages, I invite you to explore what Women Engaged has accomplished in the seven years since our founding. Above all, I invite you to join us in our belief that what was once previously unthinkable can become reality if we tap into our shared power and our future-shaping ideas.

Given the continued uncertainty around the pandemic and the continued threat to democracy in the state of Georgia and elsewhere in our nation, now more than ever, we must continue our work to engage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in the struggle for justice.

Malika Redmond



BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

If leadership is an exercise in wielding power for the greater good, then WE's mission is to help the disenfranchised tap into their power.

For seven years, WE has cultivated leaders in our communities to be advocates for the issues that matter most to them. We focus on Black women's leadership and the leadership of all those whose voice and influence has been discounted. This includes Black men and LGBTQ, cis, trans and gender-expansive people.

Through our leadership offerings — including issue advocacy, reproductive justice advocacy and voter engagement training — ***we have cultivated 2,503 leaders.*** We provide these individuals with the tools they need for changing hearts and minds. Many have gone on to lead across the state of Georgia and around the country in the areas of reproductive justice, campaign, policy and law.

"When I was still a Clark Atlanta University student, I was referred to WE by my sister, who had attended one of their events. I became a canvasser for WE and this really helped me understand Political Science. We went to Moreland Avenue and West Atlanta and told people about the upcoming gubernatorial vote and the deadlines and asked them if they needed any information. I learned that if you don't vote consistently you can get purged from the voter rolls. Now, I'm really involved at my new school [University of Alabama]; I'm the secretary and treasurer for the NAACP and am running for the State Chairman. I got that out of working for WE. Currently, I'm writing a proposal about access to healthcare in rural Alabama and what the governor should do about it. We don't have enough beds and physicians. As part of my proposals for Health Policy Reform, I'm proposing to change the bed intake and incentivize physicians with grants or loan forgiveness."

- Michelle Stevenson, Student Activist

BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

WE has also invested in the development of three regional and national organizations by training members in integrated voter engagement strategies. This approach engages communities beyond high stakes elections and presents pathways for them to develop their leadership on the issues that matter most to them. Through our strong connections with the Atlanta University Center, especially Spelman College, we also developed a Reproductive Justice Institute. The institute stimulates scholar-activism and cultivates new leaders in the work of reproductive justice and human rights.

Why does WE uplift the leadership of Black women? Because Black women have long been caught in the crosshairs of oppression.

- Bearing the burden of gender, race, class and cultural discrimination
- Having poverty rates that surpass male counterparts
- Having less access to reproductive health services than white women
- Facing a 3-4 time greater chance of dying from pregnancy related complications than white women
- Facing a 40% chance of experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime

Despite these injustices, when it comes to voter engagement, Black women are a bulwark of their communities. Black women accounted for the highest voter participation rates of any group in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Black women have been carrying the torch of democracy through consistent voting, running for office, and community organization work. WE knows that Black women tend to vote in the way of progress. That is, in alignment with policies that help whole communities. Such policies advance issues including racial justice, healthcare and police brutality.

BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

WE provides non-partisan 501c3 civic and voter education and outreach in Georgia. And, WE is proud that Georgia has been a harbinger of the tide of Black women's civic and political leadership. In 2014, the year WE was founded, Georgia made history as the only state in the country where five Black women ran for statewide offices. Still, there was little national attention to this fact. The importance of Black female leadership remained under-appreciated in the national consciousness.

Stacey Abrams' historic bid for Georgia Governor in 2018 was a culminating event in the generations-long history of Black women's resistance and social movement building in the South. As the first Black female major-party gubernatorial nominee, Abrams put the political power of Black women at the forefront of the national political discourse.

WE supports and celebrates emerging Black women's leadership through our leadership offerings. WE salutes Black women leaders who work daily for equity and social change in every facet of our society.

"I started working for WE in October 2017 as a canvasser for the City of Atlanta mayoral election and ended up being promoted to leading the canvassing. I got trained in the Voter Activation Network and in doing debrief sessions. That experience brought a lot of humanity to the work; now when I do community organizing, I'm able to talk to people about a wide range of issues. In becoming a leader, I got to see what it takes organizationally to do the work and who the comrades are. I was always interested in social justice but didn't know how it translated into a job. I am in D.C. now and am consulting for a social justice nonprofit in D.C. — Teach Reconstruction. I'm getting people to sign a petition for more funding for education. I also worked for a community organization in Chicago. Doing this work as a Black woman makes a difference. I can relate to what people tell me. Also, all of my mentors and bosses have been Black women."

- Hesena Bokum, Social Justice Consultant

BLACK WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



How will WE continue in its development of Black women leaders?

Since 2015, WE has hosted its annual Reproductive Justice Institute within the Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Activism Conference at Spelman College. Over the years, we have worked with **75 scholar activists**. WE has presented on the history of the movement, how they can participate, and continue to progress the movement for reproductive justice.

Over the next three years, WE will grow our institute through deeper relationships with the Atlanta University Center and the inclusion of community members outside of 4-year institutions. WE will build out a catalog of offerings to continue to provide cutting-edge information and development for movement partners.

WE will also engage in cross-movement building to broaden our impact. This will include production and publishing of a series of white papers, position papers and policy papers on the issues that matter to the communities we work in.

Lastly, WE will increase its leadership development opportunities for scholar activists, community members, upcoming leaders, and budding initiatives and organizations.

POLITICAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



In 2020, Georgia witnessed record-breaking voter turnout in the general election. The phenomenon was set to repeat itself in the January 2021 senate runoff. While the rest of the country focused on the effects of election results in Georgia on the presidency and the balance of power in the senate, WE celebrated this increase in voter turnout as the culmination of years of steady, non-partisan work to engage Black and youth populations across the state. Indeed, according to the Pew Research Group, the increase in turnout in 2020 was led by an increase in voter registration since 2016—across all groups but led by Black voter registrations.



POLITICAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



How did WE and allies help create this season of record-breaking voter turnout? Our efforts began well before 2020. In fact, integrated voter engagement using a reproductive justice framework and centering the issues key to Black women's lives, or lack thereof, was the original catalyst that called our co-founders to action. In 2013, *Shelby vs. Holder* brought a jolt of urgency to the struggle for voting rights. This Supreme Court ruling removed the need for pre-approvals on voting changes so that states no longer had to have their possibly discriminatory voting legislation scrutinized by the justice department.



Malika Redmond predicted that this would lead to a rise in voter suppression strategies. And, sadly it has right here in Georgia. In 2014, the year WE was founded, there was an untold story of Black women's political and civic ascendancy. Georgia was the only state in the country where a record-breaking number of Black women ran for statewide offices. This striking fact received little attention, as the national spotlight was centered on the first Black male president. We felt that this under-appreciation of Black women's leadership was related to a cynicism among some progressive political organizers that Black people would ever come out and vote again the way they did for President Barack Obama.



POLITICAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

WE's co-founders believe Black voters are not a monolithic group and vote based on a range of issues that are key to their lives. They saw the surge in Black women's political leadership as a sign that Black women were rising up to right the many wrongs of an unjust society.

WE created an organization with the first grant from Groundswell Fund, the largest donor in the reproductive justice arena. This organization was a proactive response to the noted changes in Georgia and the nation to ensure Black people and other vulnerable communities can continue to build political power and fully participate in our democracy.

One of the first acts of the new organization was the launch of our signature WE Vote. WE Rise! (WVWR) Program. This involved an 11-15 week summer Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign, which continues every summer. The campaign conducts on-the-ground, non-partisan voter registration and voter education at hot spots across the areas that WE serves.

Our beginnings were modest — a dining table serving as our office, a paper list for door-knocking, and canvassing everywhere from MARTA stations to farmers' markets. Yet we managed to achieve 1,114 voter conversations and identify 119 reproductive justice supporters during our first GOTV campaign in 2014.

VOTE

POLITICAL & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



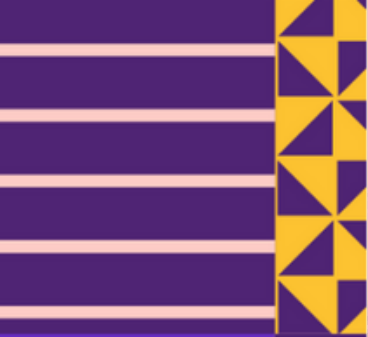
WVWR has become a year-round integrated voter program with core campaigns: 1.) Spring Issue Advocacy, 2.) Summer Voter Registration, and 3.) Fall “Get Out The Vote” (GOTV).

Our dynamic team of 15 intergenerational canvassers are the heartbeat of the organization. During times when there is not an election, WE continues to interact heavily in all of the Greater Metro Atlanta communities WE serves.

WE engages in deep dive canvasses to better understand the shifting landscapes in the areas served and better connect constituents to advocacy opportunities at local, state, and national levels. WVWR trains women and young people of color in voter engagement.

This includes learning how to conduct effective 501(c)3 GOTV campaigns and participate in the political process. The numbers bear witness to the effectiveness of our work. In 2015, WE focused our efforts in East Point to increase municipal voter turnout via canvassing and placing door hangers. WE also hosted a candidate forum to inform constituents and educate canvassers on candidate platforms.

While voter turnout was 15% of registered voters as a whole for East Point, of the 1,826 voters WE canvassed, 34% voted — a turnout that outpaced national averages by 10%.



REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Reproductive justice is an expression of wellbeing and healthy decision-making for Black women, femmes, girls, trans, non-binary, and gender expansive people. Reproductive justice can only be achieved through economic, social, and political power. As a Black feminist critical thinker, researcher and advocate, WE co-founder Malika Redmond developed the theory of change and approach of WE from her study of the critical theories of the foremost Black women intellectuals and scholar-activists. These individuals' frameworks are widely used to articulate the complex problems in society and illustrate remedies. For this reason, WE places a Black feminist lens on issues key to the lives of Black women. WE uniquely incorporates an integrated voter engagement strategy within our efforts to actualize reproductive justice.



REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

According to civil rights advocate and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, reproductive justice has always been based on a Black feminist foundation with a particular focus on intersectionality.

Reproductive Justice was introduced by Black women health activists in the early 1990s. These activists understood that the binary frame of the pro choice movement too often failed to connect how access to abortion care was intimately tied to other equity issues. Such issues primarily impacted the lives of Black, indigenous and other people of color.

The reproductive justice framework countered the binary pro choice frame by acknowledging how intersecting forms of oppression worked in tandem to create overwhelming barriers to access to healthcare. This is especially true for reproductive and sexual healthcare, particularly for Black women and other women of color.

The reproductive justice framework provided an expansive vision that welcomed marginalized voices to the center of its discourse. Today, the innovative thinking of the Black women founders of the reproductive justice framework has resulted in a movement that is a dynamic representation of BIPOC leaders. These leaders are creating policy prescriptions, organizations and power-building strategies that are forming a culture of accountability and equity.

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

The connectedness between reproductive justice and civic engagement was brought into dramatic focus in November 2018. Election protection ensures that polling locations are operating correctly and that voters have assistance to deal with any issues, including through reporting them to the Election Protection Hotline. While conducting election protection of the gubernatorial race, the WE team witnessed — primarily working-class Black Pittsburgh community of Atlanta — long lines and early closure of poll locations. It was the culmination of months of voter suppression.

WE, along with partners in a statewide civic engagement coalition, intervened and ensured that a majority of Black voters in that community were able to vote. Yet, the intensive statewide voter suppression strategy to undermine the 2018 elections meant that by 2019 one of the key actions of the newly elected Governor was to attach reproductive justice with the signing of HB481.

HB481 would force unwanted pregnancy by banning abortions after six weeks. After more than six months of organizing alongside reproductive justice partners, in October 2019, this bill was struck down by the court!

“What does it mean for the reproductive justice movement to build culture? The answer is found in the work of WE and others with shared values and strategy. Together we are rebuilding the culture around civic engagement through reproductive justice. WE uses political and civic engagement to not only advocate for policies but to change what it means to be an American, all while keeping reproductive justice at the helm and being led by the priorities of communities. Black feminist pillars of self definition and culture building have made it possible for WE to tap into a way of shifting traditional civic and political engagement. WE and many other Black feminist-led civic engagement and reproductive justice organizations are transforming the transactional nature of politics and campaigns into a more accountable one. These organizations are saying that the day-to-day lives of Black women, girls and femmes are political, and must be centered by the people with the potential to hold a lot of power.”

- Kai Johnson, If/ When/How Reproductive Justice Legal Fellow

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE



It took an energetic, multi-pronged approach to achieve this victory. WE created the #PissedoffPeaches social media campaign. It went viral for months, allowing us to build community with others and providing a platform for people to share stories about the issue.

WE also worked at the capitol, training community leaders on how to lobby their legislators. Our advocacy around the abortion ban included participating in panel discussions, including with Pastor Dallas Wilson of the Center of Hope church during his Wednesday night service. WE educated nearly 40 members of the congregation about the implications of HB481. The panel discussion concluded with many reconciling that while they may not agree with abortion personally, they do not want Black women criminalized for it.

WE additionally conducted a reproductive justice deep dive canvass campaign from April 22-May 23, 2019. Our five canvassers averaged 10-12 hours in the field weekly. WE held extensive conversations with voters about reproductive healthcare, religious freedom and voting rights in Georgia. WE spoke to 110 voters in person and 154 via phone.

Of the roughly 76% of those canvassed about religious freedom in regards to reproductive healthcare, 92% believed that religious arguments that seek to restrict access were wrong and 6% were unsure due to lack of subject matter knowledge. WE successfully contacted 686 people in person in 2019 before the global pandemic in 2020.

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

WE has also tabled at a series of festivals where we conversed with 50 attendees about religious exemption, many of whom believed that religious preference should not be legislated. WE continues to train our canvassers on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and religious exemption. Additionally, we continue to message test in order to deepen our relationship with congregations in Black communities. Our efforts have resulted in a teach-in event with 200 people in person in addition to virtual attendees on Facebook Live led by the reproductive justice coalition of Georgia with 12 other organizations.

Georgia still has not expanded Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act, which has left millions of dollars on the table and led to the closure of 13 rural hospitals over the last 10 years. Currently 1 in 8 Georgians do not have access to health care and that number is even higher for Black people. This is especially true for those who are marginalized in other ways, such as by being poor, queer, disabled or female.

Over the years, WE has consistently asked community members if elected officials should expand access to not only healthcare, but reproductive health care. WE found that 80% of those we have spoken with believe that legislators need to increase access to affordable healthcare. WE continues to make this an advocacy priority.



REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

“Reparations are as much about repair for the centuries-long theft of Black labor, wealth, and knowledge as they are about bodily integrity and freedom from reproductive oppression. Oppression that has spanned from the mutilation of enslaved Black women’s bodies in the pursuit of gynecological research to the current disproportionate rate of maternal mortality among Black women. Reparations are key to actualizing true reproductive justice for Black women, girls, and femmes, and I am honored that our stance and work at Women Engaged to build collective power and transform culture at this intersection has been recognized by Decolonizing Wealth and the #Case4Reparations grant initiative. The Women Engaged team looks forward to being in community with others leading on reparations across issues, knowing that investments to correct injustices, past and present, are the pathway to a healthy democracy.”

- Malika Redmond, co-founder of WE

In our next phase of reproductive justice work, we will focus on gaining reparations using our comprehensive approach to community power-building to transform the economic, environmental and public health issues that are intimately tied to the inequity and oppression that persists today due to the centuries of enslavement of people of African descent with those who've been foremost on the fight for reparations. This will include educating and organizing the movement for Reproductive Justice and those who fund reproductive justice to support and prioritize reparations as a necessary part to actualizing true reproductive justice. Our stance on reparations is recognized by the Decolonizing Wealth Project and the #Case4Reparations grant initiative.



PARTNERSHIPS

Movement partnerships can be unpredictable. A single moment can make all the difference. Because struggle is so formidable, having the right partners is imperative.

PARTNERSHIPS

A single moment definitely made the difference for WE in 2020. The challenge was voter engagement in Georgia during a turbulent year of crisis. The leaders of the Positive Women's Network (PWN) and New Voices for Reproductive Justice reached out to WE for help. Volunteering with them in tandem during the critical Georgia senate runoff helped push the "get out the vote" message. Together we contacted over **500,000** people across the state of Georgia.

WE Co-Founder Malika Redmond made the connection between PWN, an HIV/AIDS national organization, and WE after being invited to provide training on issue-advocacy and civic engagement at their national convening. PWN was interested in implementing integrated voter engagement strategies in their hubs nationwide. WE was enlisted to train on best practices and data tools necessary to actualize such a program. Michelle Wilson, COO of WE, was also enlisted to led workshops and training for the PWN leadership team.

In 2019, PWN hosted their national convening in Atlanta, Georgia and received hands-on training by shadowing our "WE Vote, WE Rise!" canvass team on census outreach. Through the ongoing exchange of information, PWN was able to launch its own program just in time for the 2020 election cycle. The joint push from WE and PWN proved critical. The partnership has become a key example of WE's belief in the impact that comes from building and nurturing state and national relationships.

PARTNERSHIPS

WE is an active coalition member of the ProGeorgia c3 State Table and responsible for forming its Reproductive Justice Workgroup. Our coordination efforts locally include organizations such as SisterSong, SisterLove, Planned Parenthood, and the Georgia Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice Coalition. WE has also built and strengthened relationships with:

- 9to5 Working Women Georgia
- New Voices for Reproductive Justice
- We Dream in Black - National Domestic Workers Alliance
- Spelman College's Women Research and Resource Center
- SafeSpace, a Morehouse College queer organization
- Ujamaa, a Clark Atlanta University political science organization

ProGeorgia has been one of WE's most pivotal partnerships. ProGeorgia is a coalition of organizations that work across intersecting issues, focusing on civic engagement and building a more representative democracy. Our program was one of the first at this state civic engagement table. WE focused on reproductive justice and civic engagement directly targeting Black voters in the Atlanta metro area who are less inclined to vote consistently.

After a successful 2014 election, WE outpaced other organizations in voter outreach and turnout. ProGeorgia realize more organizations with goals similar ours were needed.



PARTNERSHIPS



In 2015, WE Co-Founder Malika Redmond was elected to the board of ProGeorgia. Her naming as board chair made her the first Black woman to chair the board of a state civic engagement table and a reproductive justice-aligned organization. In 2016, in partnership with SisterSong, Malika co-facilitated a reproductive justice training for all table partnered organizations on intersectionality, gender justice and the framework of reproductive justice. The training led to another first — the birth of the Reproductive Justice Workgroup.

WE continues to facilitate the workgroup. In 2018, the workgroup conducted a childcare experiment where 30,000 people were surveyed about how childcare affects their ability to vote in elections. Upon substantiating the need, WE provided childcare at election sites that year. With what we learned from that effort, WE is now preparing for 2022 by establishing relationships with childcare providers that can service children already under their care. This way, parents will be able to utilize providers they are familiar with.

Additionally, the workgroup has created a Safehouse and Homeless Shelter Program. Organizations in our workgroup cultivated relationships with shelters in the Atlanta metro area to provide resources, voter education and employment opportunities. WE has hired two shelter residents, providing them with resources and encouraging their development in leadership, civic engagement, and social justice advocacy.

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE




"‘The minute that was gone,’ said Redmond, ‘we were going to be faced with aggressive efforts to suppress Black voters in particular.’ At the same time, she saw the potential of voting rights work to start with the issues that were most important to Black voters, like the fact that Georgia hadn’t expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. ‘People were fighting for it,’ said Redmond, and that gave them ‘an ability to talk about reproductive and sexual health care and family planning, as part of a holistic look at what it would mean if you didn’t have to worry about having health care. That was how it was merged.’ What that meant in turn for Black women, she said, is they could put the key issues that matter to them ‘at the forefront and center of our politics, and not have it have to be compartmentalized, that we can actually lead with it.’ They could use those issues to hold elected officials accountable to ‘what makes us thrive, versus necessity.’"

- The New Republic, 'The Election in Georgia Is About Reproductive Justice'



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE



In advance of the 2017 Atlanta mayoral election, the Center for Civic Innovation decided to survey Atlanta residents in order to learn what changes they wanted to see in the city in the next 10 years. The Center invited ProGeorgia to help develop the survey for all Atlanta residents. And, ProGeorgia enlisted the expertise of WE, GA WAND, and 9to5-GA to conduct a deep dive operation to survey an accurate sample of residents.

The initial content emphasis was on efforts such as bike lanes and green space. WE and the other partners expressed concern that other important issues were missing from the survey. Specifically, it was key that another round of surveying was conducted to ensure issues impacting low wealth residents of color were included.

This led to the creation of a reproductive justice question about access to affordable healthcare and sexual and reproductive healthcare. The question was included in an additional survey of 600 residents. There were 400 responses to the question. Due to the high response rate, the results were included in the final report.



CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Changing the narrative to make sure Black voices and opinions are included has been an integral part of WE's journey. Listening to the communities in which we work is always the first step that we take.

Too often, leaders approach communities in need thinking that they have a lot to give. However, there is a need to listen first in order to find out what is most important and where help is most needed. Otherwise, what is perceived as help can become a burden; taking up space, resources and time to deliver ill-guided aid.

With listening comes compassion, mutual trust and shared benefits. This is why WE canvasses, takes deep-dives, holds constituent forums, conducts message testing, and implements other dialogue-based activities. Those conversations inform and drive our issue advocacy, allowing us to push key issues and hold elected officials and the broader community accountable.

Media is key to this process. Press appearances and news mentions help shape public opinion. At the time of this report's publishing, WE was featured in 8 radio podcasts in 2021 and 15 mainstream publications in 2020.





THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WE prides itself on understanding and responding to the varied but interconnected problems that face our constituents. Taking this approach for the COVID-19 global pandemic has been no different.

From day one, we have integrated pandemic relief into our work. We focused on adapting canvas scripts to include questions to identify community members in need of help.

Through this one adjustment, WE directly connected nearly **1,000 families** with resources for food, housing, transportation and more.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Not putting staff, partners or community members in harm's way has been our guiding light during the pandemic. This was not easy in a time when political leaders were denying the severity of the COVID-19 threat and many offices remained open. Yet, Malika Redmond stuck by her decision to

take all WE operations virtual. Her decision quickly proved prudent as we had a head start on pivoting to online platforms that met voters' needs. Over 14 months, safety and resiliency have remained a top priority as we resisted pressure to return to in-person activities.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Instead, we directed resources towards providing technical assistance, technology, training and mental healthcare to the WE team to enable effective virtual work. During what could have been a cataclysmic period, we expanded operations beyond 8 counties to the entire state. As a result, WE reached more voters during the critical 2020 and 2021 national and senate runoff elections.

In 2021, WE sent 728,992 text messages and made 52,549 phone calls across campaigns. Our offices remain closed, yet we continue to engage our base and volunteers via online platforms.

STANDING UP FOR BLACK LIVES & DIGNITY

In 2020, the uprisings and national demonstrations for Black lives deeply impacted the team and work of Women Engaged. As a Black women-founded, and Black-led organization, our work is steeped in power-building and love for the Black community.

These communities reflect the rising American electorate, as 85% of residents are Black and between the ages 25-44, with an average income of \$28,000. It is no coincidence that the WE team witnessed these neighborhoods become the site of the Atlanta uprising for Black lives. Over the years, we have heard directly from community members sharing with us their concerns for their communities, including over-policing, access to healthcare, and gentrification. Therefore, we make sure to work with community partners, like Dr. F. Keith Slaughter and his church, to engage residents by providing voter education, developing a voting plan, assisting voter registration, and sharing job opportunities within our WE Vote, WE Rise! program. As a Black women-founded, and Black-led organization.

Our work is steeped in power-building and love for the Black community. WE connects our work with the rich legacy of those resilient ancestors who loved us enough to resist oppression and stand up for their dignity and our collective freedom. This tie that binds is beautifully illustrated as a mural in the Pittsburgh community of Atlanta. In 2021, WE commissioned the world renowned muralist Charmaine Minniefield to execute the piece. It is displayed on the community resource center building of the Beloved Community Church.





FUNDRAISING

“I believe what philanthropy is getting right is focusing on the structural and institutional racism that has both created and perpetuated the disparities and inequities that are a part of the American experience. I challenge philanthropy to look at their total grant dollars and be transparent about what percentage of those dollars are granted to organizations and institutions led by Black women and are focused on social justice and reproductive justice issues and to compare that percentage to the impact and disparities they are focused on changing. If only 1-2% of their total annual grant funds go to organizations, institutions and communities where the inequities exist, the inequities will persist. Philanthropy has a tremendous opportunity to support the infrastructure of these organizations and institutions to be sustainable. First, by reassessing the policies that exclude such organizations from even being considered for large grant dollars. Philanthropy can help break the vicious cycle of the inability for Black women-led organizations to qualify for large grant awards because they’ve never received large grant awards.”

-Letetia Daniels Jackson, WE Board Chair

FUNDRAISING



At the outset, WE's co-founders experienced the challenges to fundraising for their strategic vision. This is not uncommon for Black, women-led non-profits, especially those based in the southern U.S. Too often, these organizations face significant institutional barriers to funding that matches efforts and respects contributions toward equity and social justice.

This is showcased in the Ms. Foundation 2020 report, "Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less." The report highlights the understanding among Black women leaders that the path to sustainable, long-term support is unfairly arduous.

The report states, "Organizations focused on Black women and girls experience higher levels of all barriers to foundation funding, including identifying funding and opportunities relevant to their communities and the work they do, encountering unresponsive funders and excessive administrative work for grant success."

This finding parallels the report's summary of southern-based social justice organizations. The report notes, "Southern organizations experience all funding barriers more acutely than other groups. Although a higher proportion of Southern organizations receive foundation funding, the median grant size is very small—only \$12,350."



FUNDRAISING

“Groundswell Fund is proud to have been a seed funder of WE and to continue our support of their work today. Under Malika Redmond’s leadership, WE has accomplished powerful and groundbreaking work for Reproductive Justice in the voter engagement arena.”

– Vanessa Daniel, Executive Director Emeritus, Groundswell Fund

FUNDRAISING

As a southern-based and Black, woman-led reproductive justice organization that uses a non-partisan integrated voter engagement model to execute our efforts, we spent years educating funders and navigating undercapitalization. And, our innovations were sometimes overlooked or underestimated, resulting in less-than-requested support to sustain efforts. Funding requirements are often burdensome. Proposed investments are, instead, met with numerous skill- or capacity-building offers in lieu of financial support.

Time and diligence helped build authentic relationships with WE's funding partners. In the interim, our leadership continued to make out-of-pocket investments to power WE, and generate results that continues to rival all others and garner respect both locally and nationally from well-resourced, established entities. Support for our integrated voter engagement campaign efforts increased significantly during the historic gubernatorial race of 2018. The race cemented the importance of Black women's leadership nationally. "Get Out the Vote " efforts showcased Black women's political savvy regarding transformative shifts and political progress.

In 2020, racial uprisings, effects of COVID-19, economic impacts, and vitriol in our country's politics were compelling. Many funders were led to take more deliberate and intentional action to support Black women leaders to fund work that strengthens our democracy.



FUNDRAISING

"WE is a shining example of the type of organization State Infrastructure Fund seeks to invest in. With smart leadership, sophisticated and innovative programs and a bold and unapologetic approach to engaging and lifting up the voices of Black women in Georgia, which includes their work to protect access to the ballot, WE continues to raise the bar for effective community-based civic engagement. We are committed to the success of WE for the long-term and look forward to continuing our partnership with them as they build on the accomplishments of their first seven years and continue to grow and thrive."

***– Page K. Gleason, Senior Program Officer, State Strategy,
State Infrastructure Fund of Neo Philanthropy***



FUNDRAISING

WOMEN ENGAGED

“I CHALLENGE PHILANTHROPY TO LOOK AT THEIR TOTAL GRANT DOLLARS AND BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THOSE DOLLARS ARE GRANTED TO ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS LED BY BLACK WOMEN AND ARE FOCUSED ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE ISSUES AND TO COMPARE THAT PERCENTAGE TO THE IMPACT AND DISPARITIES THEY ARE FOCUSED ON CHANGING.”

LETETIA DANIELS JACKSON, WE BOARD CHAIR



Started with
\$35,000 voter
engagement
grant in 2014



Over the past seven years, WE has received fifteen percent of funding from local funders.



Over the past seven years, WE has received eighty-five percent of funding from non-local funders.

PUBLIC
\$3,742,943.48



PRIVATE
\$1,790,307.06



CORPORATE
\$12,300.00



MAJOR GIFT
\$316,858.00



INDIVIDUAL DONORS
\$31,888.51



**Individual Donors refers to all monetary gifts given through the WE "ActBlue" account or "Donate" button on the WE website.*



Positioned to
grow budget to
\$3.5 million in
2022

FUNDRAISING

Today, WE is reaching a broader audience of donors. We have earned a reputation as a critical organization that is central to political change in Georgia.

WE has seen a sizable increase in giving. WE is proud of our growth since receiving an initial \$35,000 voter engagement project grant in 2014 from Groundswell Fund. Now, we are a thriving 501c3 organization with an annual budget of more than \$1.8 million. Our 2022 goal is on track to reach \$3.5 million.

Moreover with 8 full-time staff members and 15 part-time canvass campaign employees, WE is in the position to scale our canvass operation, leadership development offerings, public policy advocacy, and voter activation and engagement. WE plans to reach 3 new states with 15 new organizational partners over the next 3-5 years.

Our funding journey has been one of obstacles, resilience, courage, triumph, building and belief. We thank all of our donors and funders for the continued support! Special thanks to Vanessa Daniels, Letetia Jackson, Page Gleason, Tanya Clay House, Tamieka Atkins, Pia Infante, Lela Ali, and Alejandra Ruiz for your philanthropic partnership. You all have been true collaborators!



FUNDRAISING

“Alternate ROOTS is grateful to have played a small part in the success of Women Engaged. Our fiscal sponsorship relationship has been an opportunity for learning and growth for both organizations. The work of Women Engaged, voter engagement and reproductive justice, is vital to our community and it has been an honor to support them!”

-Paige Heurtin, Director of Operations, Alternate ROOTS

TIMELINE

WOMEN ENGAGED



BY THE NUMBERS



PARTNERSHIP AND MOVEMENT BUILDING

- Joined Positive Women's Network and New Voices for Reproductive Justice to contact more than **500,000** Georgians to increase voter participation

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

- Influenced Center for Civic Innovation survey of Atlanta residents to include reproductive justice resulting in high response rate of **400** residents
- Featured in 15 mainstream publications since 2020

COVID-19

- Connected nearly **1,000** families with food, housing and transportation resources
- Sent **728,992** text messages and made **52,549** phone calls across 2020 campaigns

FINANCIAL HEALTH AND FUNDRAISING

- Started with \$35,000 voter engagement grant in 2014
- Became 501c3 organization with annual budget of over **\$1.8 million**
- Current staff of 8 full-time and 16 part-time canvass campaign employees
- Positioned to grow budget to **\$3.5 million** in 2022
- Scale leadership development, advocacy, and voter engagement efforts to 3 states and 15 partners by 2024



CONCLUSION: THE WORLD WE IMAGINE

Founding WE was an act of love. It was based on a belief that the conversations that Black women routinely had around kitchen tables had power, wisdom and truth that could coalesce into something even greater.

“What if we build out an organization from those conversations; around the things that matter to us?” Margaret and I thought.

And, we did. Because we were true to this vision, we decided that it did not make sense to compartmentalize issues that were not separate.

These issues were part of everyday conversations and day-to-day experiences. For this reason, we felt we had to integrate fundamental rights like voting rights into a Black feminist agenda and into our reproductive justice work.

We didn’t think it was possible to do one without the other.

It worked. We know, however, that without our supporters this would not be the case. We could not have come this far. Groundswell gave seed funding for our first fall “Get Out the Vote” (GOTV) campaign in October 2014 in addition to critical operation and campaign assistance.

ProGeorgia was our first fiscal sponsor.

Spelman College gave us space and student volunteers for our early operations.

Our community made it possible for WE to exist and grow. As we look to the future of our work, which includes fighting for reparations, reproductive justice, and deep investment into the political leadership of Black women, femmes, and girls, we remember the support that seeded our efforts with profound gratitude.

Malika Redmond



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



9to5 Women - Georgia Chapter
Alternate ROOTS
Al-Yasha Ilhaam-Williams, PhD
Amalgamated Foundation
Anonymous Funding Partner
ARC
Ascend Fund
Beloved Community Church
Ben & Jerry's
Beverly Guy-Sheftall, PhD
Catalyst Fund of Groundswell
Christi Ketchum
Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity
Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta
Defending The Dream Fund
Feminist Women's Health Center
Fight For The Future
Ford Foundation
Forward Together/Strong Families
Foundation For A Just Society

Fresh Sound Foundation
Georgia Budget & Policy Institute
Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda
GoodNation
One for Democracy
Groundswell Fund - Integrated Voter Engagement Program
Grove Foundation
Helen Butler
Hill-Snowdon
Hive Foundation
HZQ
If/When/How
Irving Harris Foundation
Janke Studios
Jesse Smith Noyes
Jhana Grant
JJR and Associates
Just Fund
Keywanna Thompson
Kim Janke
Letetia Jackson

Liberated Capital
Liberty Hill Foundation
Loretta Ross
M. Bahati Kuumba, PhD
Malaika Cheney-Coker
Marquette Dupree
Mary Reynolds Babcock
Movement Voter Project
National Domestic Workers' Alliance - Atlanta Chapter
Neo Philanthropy - State Infrastructure Fund
Neo Philanthropy - Youth Empowerment Fund
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
NRG Consulting Group
Page Gleason
Paige Heurtin
Planned Parenthood
Positive Women's Network
Prentice Foundation
ProGeorgia - Civic Engagement Table
Proteus Fund

Quanita Toffie
Reproductive Justice Coalition of Georgia
Rev. F. Keith Slaughter
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
Roddenberry Foundation
RoyalRoots Barbershop
Rudolf Steiner Foundation
Rush Center
Samuel Rubin Foundation
SisterLove
SisterSong
Solidaire Foundation
SPARK
Spelman College Women's Research and Resource Center
Sustaining Individual Donors
SwagShop Barbershop
Tamieka Atkins
Tsedey Betru
The Emergent Fund
The Whitman Institute

The Women's Foundation of California
Tides/Movement Voter Project
Triangle Community Foundation
Trifecta Media
United Way of Greater Atlanta
Urgent Action Fund
Valerie Redmond
Vanessa Daniels
Victoria Ferguson-Young
WE Board of Directors
We Dream in Black
Wellspring Philanthropy
Whitman Institute
WE Staff
"WE Vote. WE Rise!" Canvass Team Members
Yellow Chair Foundation

WOMEN

SOURCES

Robin Bleiweis, D. B. (2019). The basic facts about women in poverty. Center for American Progress. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/08/03/488536/basic-facts-women-poverty>

Creanga, A.A., Syverson, C., Seek, K., & Callaghan, W.M. (2017). Pregnancy-Related Mortality in the United States, 2011-2013. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 130(2), 366-373. Retrieved 4 April 2018

DuMonthier, A., Childers, C., & Milli, J. (2017, June 26). The Status of Black Women in the United States. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-Status-of-Black-Women-6.26.17.pdf>

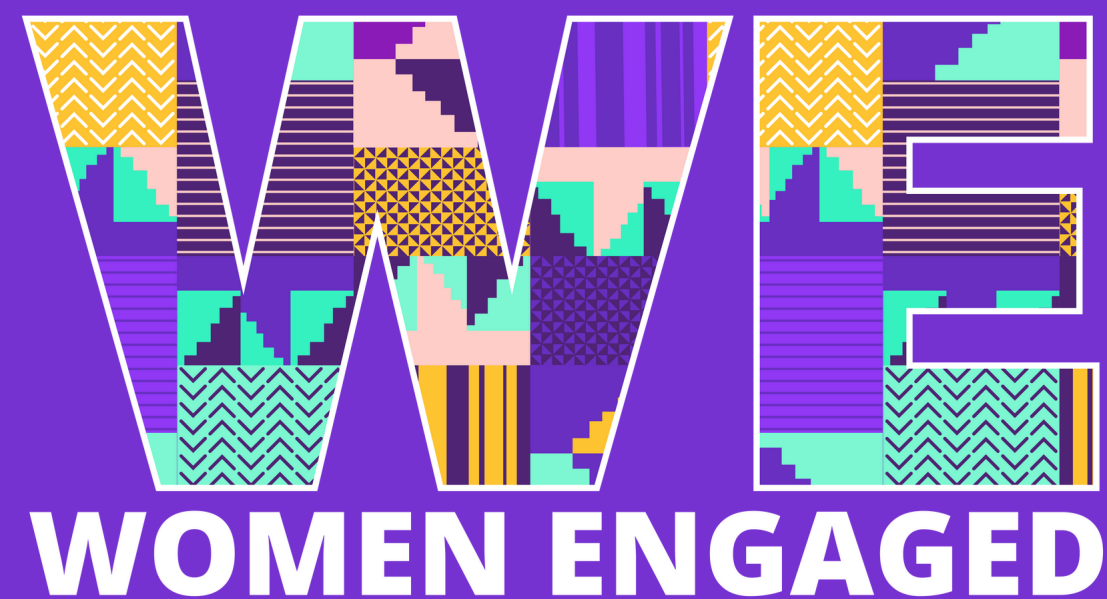
Harris, M. (n.d.). Women of color: A growing force in the American electorate. Center for American Progress. Retrieved September 17, 2021, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2014/10/30/99962/women-of-color>

“Black voters in Georgia had the largest increase in registration since 2016,” Pew Research Center, December 21, 2020; https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/21/Black-latino-and-asian-americans-have-been-key-to-georgias-registered-voter-growth-since-2016/ft_2020-12-21_garegisteredvoters_01/

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” 43 *Stanford Law Review*. 1241, 1245 (1990-1991)

Abrams, Abigail. “‘We Are Grabbing Our Own Microphones’: How Advocates of Reproductive Justice Stepped into the Spotlight.” *Time*, 21 Nov. 2019, time.com/5735432/reproductive-justice-groups

Collins, Patricia Hill. “Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought”, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge. 21-43 (2000)



WOMENENGAGED.ORG
404.474.2900
INFO@WOMENENGAGED.ORG

MISSION

Supporting the power-building of Black women and young adults
creating a world where compassionate, fact-based, equity-centered
approaches are used to develop and implement public policy and
actualize social transformation.