

**U.S. PROGRAMS  
Strategic Opportunities Fund  
Summary of Recommended Grants  
June 2011**

**Strategic Opportunities Fund**

| <b>Organization</b>  | <b>Grant Code</b> | <b>Recommended</b> | <b>Term</b> | <b>2011</b>      |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>Research &amp; Development: Art &amp; Culture Advancing Social Change</b> |                   |                    |             |                  |
| Arts & Democracy Project (fiscal sponsor: State Voices)                      | T1: 21125         | \$ 50,000          | 9 months    | \$ 50,000        |
| Opportunity Agenda (fiscal sponsor: Tides Center)                            | T1: 21125         | \$ 35,000          | 1 year      | \$ 35,000        |
| <b>Total Recommended:</b>  |                   | <b>\$ 85,000</b>   |             | <b>\$ 85,000</b> |
| <b>GRANTMAKING TOTAL THIS DOCKET:</b>  |                   | <b>\$ 85,000</b>   |             |                  |

*Diana Mauer*  
Approval Signature

7/1/11

Date

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Diana Morris  
**FROM:** Erlin Ibreck  
**DATE:** June 21, 2011  
**RE:** Strategic Opportunities Fund – Grant Recommendations

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Attached for your review and approval are grant recommendations to support the Arts and Democracy Project and The Opportunity Agenda. Both these grants are for renewed funding and are recommended as part of our R & D function to explore the roles that art and culture play in advancing social change.

The **Arts and Democracy Project**, fiscally supported by State Voices, is led by Caron Atlas who has an extensive background working at the intersection of art and civic engagement, has consulted with Ford, Nathan Cummings, Surdna and the Leeway Foundations and is a frequent writer about arts activism and cultural policy. The grant will support core programs of the project. The **Opportunity Agenda** is led by Alan Jenkins who formerly oversaw the human rights portfolio at the Ford Foundation. The Opportunity Agenda is a U.S. Programs grantee. This SOF grant will support a third year of the Creative Change retreat, a related fellowship and other relevant activities and will mark our final year of support.

Please let me know if you have questions or would like to discuss either of these recommendations.

## Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) Out-of-Docket – 6/21/11

**Grant ID:** 20033067

**Legal Name of Organization:** Arts & Democracy Project

**Tax Status:** Other

**Name of Fiscal Sponsor:** State Voices

**Purpose of Grant:** To support the Arts & Democracy Project.

**Grant Description:** The grant is recommended in connection to a research and development initiative coordinated by the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) to explore the roles that art and culture play in advancing social change. The Arts & Democracy Project is a lean, nimble, and effective player in advancing the field of art and civic engagement. Its work is rooted in community and collaborative by design, linking other projects and organizations in intentional and impactful ways at the national, regional, and local levels. Thru its core programs, Arts & Democracy helps to build the momentum of a growing movement that links arts and culture, civic engagement, and social change. Renewed Open Society Foundations support will enable the Project to begin implementing its new strategic plan and will lend additional capacity to this small but critically effective player in the art and social justice field. The Arts & Democracy Project is fiscally sponsored by State Voices.

**Previous OSF Support:** Support for State Voices: \$1.9 million from 2006-2011 (Progressive Infrastructure; Democracy and Power Fund; Redistricting Initiative); Support for Arts & Democracy Project: \$50,000 (Strategic Opportunities Fund)

**Organizational Budget:** \$4,095,747

**Project Budget:** \$150,000

**Major Sources of Support:**

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nathan Cummings Foundation | \$58,500                 |
| Surdna Foundation          | \$15,000 pending request |

**Amount Requested:** \$50,000

**Is this a contingent grant?:** No

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b><u>Amount Recommended:</u></b>    | \$50,000                                 |
| <b><u>Term:</u></b>                  | 9 months (July 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012) |
| <b><u>Matching Requirements:</u></b> | None                                     |

### **Description of Organization:**

The mission of State Voices is to connect and support permanent, year-round state hubs or tables for nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organizations that foster collaborative multi-issue policy work, economies of scale, rigorous evaluation, and efforts to engage and empower socially responsible and historically underrepresented communities in our democracy – in and out of election season. State Voices is an innovative national network – built from the states up – that helps over 600 diverse grassroots organizations in states to win shared policy and civic engagement victories and build long-term power.

State Voices, which receives grant support from U.S. Programs' Democracy and Power Fund, serves as the fiscal sponsor for the Arts & Democracy Project.

### **Description of Project**

The Arts & Democracy Project (aka “Arts & Democracy” or “The Project”) was established in 2004 to build the momentum of a growing movement that links arts and culture, participatory democracy, and social change. The Project’s work is rooted in the creative power of arts and culture to serve as a catalyst for action, particularly among people who have been historically disenfranchised, maintaining that those most impacted by social issues must be engaged as leaders in solving them. Directed by Caron Atlas, a longtime leader in the field of art and civic engagement, Arts & Democracy works nationally and regionally through a small but remarkably diverse staff of artists and organizers. Overall the Project supports innovative civic participation models that connect grassroots cultural practice to policymaking.

Arts & Democracy grew out of the National Voice initiative, which brought together more than 1,000 nonpartisan groups from across the country and coordinated the registration and turnout of over five million voters leading up to the 2004 election cycle. Specifically, that campaign linked groups committed to engaging underrepresented constituencies in civic life across the United States. Subsequently, the Arts & Democracy Project convened groups from the civic engagement field to learn what had been most effective in linking arts and culture, civic participation, and social change. The Project has sponsored sessions across the country including a rural cultural organizer retreat, a meeting of Hip-Hop activists and artists, and a White House briefing on art and social justice. Partners in this work have included Alternate ROOTS, the Center for Rural Strategies, Harlem Stage, the Highlander Center, the Hip Hop Theater Festival, Humboldt Area Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Pratt Center for Community Development.

As a catalyst organization and resource provider, the Project adds value to and connects what are often disparate efforts, helping them become more strategic and transformational. Currently, core program activities for the Project include: the **Bridge Conversation Series** of events and related essays that promote dialogue between artists and organizers working across sectors and issue areas; the **Media Map**, creating an interactive online hub for exemplary programs that connect media and civic engagement; the **Report to the Field**, which in 2011 will document the Project’s knowledge related to the needs, challenges, methodologies, and opportunities available to artists working at the intersection of culture and social change; and the **Learning Community**, which provides a structure for artists, educators, cultural organizers, and community advocates to participate in sustained inquiry and reflection in a peer learning context.

Approaching its work from a social change and civic engagement perspective, Arts & Democracy seeks to

build sustained collaborations that embed arts and culture practices in civic engagement groups and that root organizing strategies in arts and culture organizations. Much of the Project's work involves cultural organizing through strategic partnerships that put culture at the center of organizing and enables people to engage in civic participation as experts about their own communities.

In 2011-2012 Arts & Democracy is focusing on the following objectives in support of its broad mission to highlight, complement, support, and enhance the work of the field:

- **Increase visibility:** Document and make visible the diversity of work in the field that links arts, culture, participatory democracy, and social justice.
- **Increase effectiveness:** Add value to work in the field through capacity building and resource generation.
- **Make connections:** Linking arts and social justice groups, networking networks, connecting with planners and policymakers, and supporting state-level movements.
- **Support reflection:** Create spaces to stimulate dialogue, critical thinking, and innovation.
- **Contribute to field sustainability:** Increase financial and other support for arts and culture tied to participatory democracy and social justice.

The Project's progress towards these 2011-12 goals is informed by its 2010 planning retreat, facilitated by Interaction Institute for Social Change. Specific issue areas of focus will include: economic justice; immigration reform; effective democracy; equitable development and the renewal of U.S. cities and towns; the impact of extractive industries; responding to intolerance and a polarizing climate; and media justice. Their core constituency is a learning community that grew out of a strategy session in early 2008 including people who had actively participated in Arts & Democracy gatherings between 2005 and 2007. It provides a vehicle for Arts & Democracy Project partners and other artists, educators, cultural organizers and activists to engage deeply in an ongoing manner. As advisors, members contribute to project planning and priority setting. Arts & Democracy intends to further formalize this advisory role in 2011-12.

### **Rationale for Recommendation**

A central function of the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) is to conduct research and development related to new areas of learning that address crosscutting issues. This grant advances SOF's exploration of the role that art and culture play in advancing social change. We seek to raise awareness of the power and potential for art as an activism tool to advance a broad spectrum of social justice concerns and issues of specific interest and relevance to U.S. Programs' priorities.

In the past year, with SOF support, the Arts & Democracy Project has expanded its capacity as a lead player in national efforts to connect arts and culture to civic engagement by increasing visibility for this work; generating resources to support documentation and cross-field learning; supporting inquiry and reflection for practitioners in the field; and supporting greater sustainability for arts and culture work that advances participatory democracy. In addition, the Project engaged the Interaction Institute for Social Change to lead staff in a strategic planning process in the fall of 2010. Through this process, Arts & Democracy evaluated its current structure and strategies and developed a timeline for developing its capacity in the years ahead.

While art can be a catalyst for action, more often than not art and culture are not considered to be integral elements of civic participation, relegated instead to serve a communications or fundraising function. At the same time, artists and arts organizations may be committed to social change but often do not play a sustained role or are not granted seats at decision-making tables. In addition the art and social change field is under-capitalized and often unstable, and evaluation of impact is increasingly expected but usually unsupported.

The Arts & Democracy Project is a lean, nimble, and effective player in advancing the field of art and civic engagement. Its work is integrated, rooted in community, and collaborative, linking other projects and organizations in intentional and impactful ways at the national and local levels. In its core program work, Arts & Democracy addresses problems from multiple angles as it shares exemplary practices, supports sustained collaboration, and reinforces connections between leading networks to increase impact. The Project's organizational partners are leaders in their respective fields and sectors and have strong track records of success. Their artist-partners demonstrate excellence in both their participatory processes and their creative practices and products as they draw upon the power of arts and culture to link positive social change strategies to the values that people bring to civic life.

Renewed Open Society Foundations support for Arts & Democracy will enable the Project to begin implementing its new strategic plan and will lend additional capacity to this small but critically effective group working at the intersection of art and civic engagement. USP staff will continue to identify opportunities to engage closely with the Project in the months ahead, as we have in the past year, and as we continue to build our collective understanding of the role that art and culture play in advancing social change and expanding civic participation in communities of core concern. SOF is pleased to recommend a grant in the amount \$50,000 to support the Arts & Democracy Project.

## Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) Out-of-Docket – 6/21/11

**Grant ID:** 20033048

**Legal Name of Organization:** The Opportunity Agenda

**Tax Status:** Other

**Name of Fiscal Sponsor:** Tides Center

**Purpose of Grant:** To support the Opportunity Agenda’s work at the intersection of the arts, activism, and social justice, including its annual Creative Change retreat.

**Grant Description:** The grant is recommended as part of a research and development initiative coordinated by the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) to explore the roles that art and culture play in advancing social change. The Opportunity Agenda works to develop a stronger, more strategic communications capacity and voice for the social justice community, connected to applied research and advocacy. The grant will support the Opportunity Agenda’s work at the intersection of the arts, activism, and social justice, including its annual Creative Change retreat and a new Creative Fellow staff position.

**Previous OSF Support:** \$1,630,000 as follows: \$730,000 from Racial Justice & Progressive Infrastructure Initiatives; \$200,000 from Democracy and Power Fund; \$200,000 from Seize the Day Fund; \$450,000 from Equality and Opportunity Fund & Campaign for Black Male Achievement; \$50,000 from Strategic Opportunities Fund

**Organizational Budget:** \$3,260,978

**Project Budget:** \$450,000

**Major Sources of Support:**

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Compton Foundation         | \$10,000 |
| Ford Foundation            | \$25,000 |
| Nathan Cummings Foundation | \$75,000 |
| Time Warner                | \$25,000 |
| Unbound Philanthropy       | \$75,000 |

**Amount Requested:** \$50,000

**Is this a contingent grant?:** No

**Amount Recommended:** \$35,000

**Term:** 1 year (May 1, 2011 – April 30, 2012)

**Matching Requirements:** None

**Description of Organization:**

The Tides Center serves as the fiscal agent for The Opportunity Agenda. For the past 30 years the Tides Center has provided back-office services, a legal framework, and capacity-building support for progressive projects across the country. These projects vary in size from a single volunteer to a staff of hundreds. Tides' projects work to effect change in the areas of social justice, economic development, civic engagement, environmental sustainability, environmental justice, human rights, community development, and nonprofit capacity building, among others.

The Opportunity Agenda was founded in 2006 to engage social justice leaders and organizations in connecting with core American values and growing a sustained base of support for opportunity and human rights in the United States. Specifically, the organization works to develop a stronger, more strategic communications capacity and voice for the social justice community, connected to applied research and advocacy. Based in New York City, the organization works collaboratively with other advocacy groups spanning isolated issues and constituencies across the U.S. as it seeks to build the national will to expand opportunity in America. The Opportunity Agenda regards this collaborative approach as crucial to amplifying public support for social justice, building an effective movement, and developing long-term communications strategies to change hearts, minds, and policy.

**Description of Project**

The Opportunity Agenda requests renewed support from the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) to support work at the intersection of the arts, activism, and social justice. The organization's activities in this area will include the convening of its annual Creative Change retreat, promotion of promising practices in the field, and support to a small number of arts-advocacy collaborations. Specifically, The Opportunity Agenda will:

- Produce the Creative Change 2011 retreat in August 2011, to be attended by 50-60 leading artists, advocates, media-makers, and donors.
- Host a Creative Fellow in a new year-long fellowship, with a focus on dissemination of findings of the organization's *Immigration: Arts, Culture, and Media 2010* report; participation in artists' and advocates' efforts to preserve immigration due process rights and foster economic opportunity; helping develop and produce elements of Creative Change 2011; and helping to build a network that supports Creative Change alumni.  
Betsy Theobald Richards (formerly a program officer at the Ford Foundation in the Media, Arts and Culture division) has been selected as the Creative Fellow.

Through this work, the organization aims to foster the types of arts-advocacy collaborations that amplify the voices of underrepresented communities and create a stronger and more socially just society. Its longer term outcomes are to:

- Develop and implement a core set of best practices on arts-advocacy collaboration, which become an integral component of the design process for social justice arts and culture projects across a growing field. A cohort of social



justice leaders and organizations, artists, and/or funders use strategies outlined in The Opportunity Agenda's report on immigration and successful arts-advocacy efforts.

- Help Creative Change participants develop new projects, and deepen and improve existing ones that advance key social justice goals.
- Through the efforts of the Creative Fellow and The Opportunity Agenda staff, develop one or more arts and culture projects around economic opportunity and/or immigrant due process, bringing together activists and artists around a shared vision.

The Creative Change retreat serves as the core of The Opportunity Agenda's work at the intersection of art and social justice. Beginning in August 2009, the organization has coordinated this annual convening of a diverse and rotating group of leaders – advocates, artists, media makers, organizers, donors, and policy makers – linked by their commitment to transformative social change. The goals of the gathering are to connect, reflect, share ideas, and brainstorm innovative ways of inspiring and mobilizing support for social justice values and solutions.

As in previous years, the retreat will include a mixture of larger conversations, smaller self-selected sessions, and informal networking time. In response to a recent survey, participants expressed interest in hosting conversations about evaluating the impact of arts and culture work; popular culture; building synchronicity between production and distribution channels; and practical ways for social justice organizations to integrate the arts into their advocacy. This year the retreat will feature dynamic collaborations and strategies that have emerged from past retreats, as well as provide a spotlight on new artistic voices.

In response to an idea generated at the two prior retreats, in 2011-12 The Opportunity Agenda will host a one-year Creative Fellow position to model an arts and advocacy integration approach, nurture key collaborations, and deepen efforts that build and mobilize specific audiences – and serving overall as an integral member of the organization's staff. Taken together, the retreat and the fellowship will serve the organization's efforts to move hearts and minds on issues of importance in the short-term, and in the long-term build the capacity of artists, advocates, and allies to collaborate in advancing social justice.

### **Rationale for Recommendation**

A central function of the Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) is to conduct research and development related to new areas of learning that address cross-cutting issues. This grant advances SOF's exploration of the role that art and culture play in advancing social change. We seek to raise awareness of the power and potential for art as an activism tool to advance a broad spectrum of social justice concerns and issues of specific interest and relevance to U.S. Programs' priorities.

The Strategic Opportunities Fund (SOF) provided a grant to The Opportunity Agenda in 2009 in support of the inaugural Creative Change retreat, as well as renewed support for Creative Change 2010. Overall we have viewed this project in alignment with our research and development priority of exploring the role of arts and culture in advancing social justice advocacy, and as a space in which to engage deeply with our grantee partners, colleague funders, and new contacts. We recommend a third consecutive and final grant in support of this work as we prepare ourselves to pivot our research and development work to new areas of focus.

As a USP grantee through the Equality and Opportunity and Democracy Fund, The Opportunity Agenda works to move large numbers of what they call "persuadables" – those unaffiliated people who share values but are not reliably supportive of social justice policies or positions. Now more than ever advocates and organizers need innovative and impactful strategies for mobilizing stakeholders in social change work.

Despite aggressive advocacy and quality research on social justice and human rights issues in the U.S., the building of public understanding, support, and political will to address those issues has proven to be a persistent challenge. The rise of anti-immigrant policies is among the latest symptoms of that problem, as has been the rancorous and unproductive public debate over health care reform.

Artists have always contributed mightily to social justice movements and transformative social change with their abilities to provoke, inspire, and mobilize. In this dynamic and tumultuous time, The Opportunity Agenda understands that it is crucial for artists, new media leaders, organizers, and advocates to invest time in reflection, planning, and exposure to new ideas that bridge strategies, communities, and issues. Creative Change provides a unique opportunity to convene artists as change-makers in an environment that promotes reflection towards action and that builds upon national momentum around art and social justice. The Opportunity Agenda's expansion of this work – through its support for an embedded Creative Fellow serving on its staff – offers a compelling demonstration project as we consider the sustainability of art for change work within the broader social justice arena.

The Strategic Opportunities Fund is therefore pleased to recommend renewed funding to support the Creative Fellow position and related organization activities. While we acknowledge that the organization already receives significant support from the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and the Equality and Opportunity Fund, SOF joined a small pool of funders that helped launch the Creative Change retreat as a discrete initiative two years ago. Collectively the funders saw the convening of multiple actors working at the intersection of advocacy and art as an opportunity to foster networking and to connect communities, practitioners and funders to each other's strategies, successes, and movements. The initiative was regarded as experimental, providing a forum for idea generation and to incubate collaboration. This will mark the final year of our partnership with colleague funders to support this work. We therefore recommend a grant to The Opportunity Agenda for project support in the amount of \$35,000.