

# Carry It Forward & Pass It On

Three Decades of The Rosenberg Fund for Children

**30**  
*years*



## 30 years of the RFC

THE BIRTH OF THE RFC

PASSIONATE SUPPORT

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FROM OUR FOUNDER

MISSION & GUIDING  
PRINCIPLES

GRANT GUIDELINES  
& PROGRAMS

BENEFICIARIES

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## The Birth of the RFC

When Michael and Robert Meeropol were seven and three, their happy childhood became a living nightmare. Their parents, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, were arrested and charged with giving the secret of the Atomic Bomb to the Soviet Union. Three years later the government executed their parents.

This horror took place during the McCarthy period. Their relatives were so frightened of being associated with “Communist spies” that they refused to take the boys into their homes. First they lived in a shelter. Later they lived with friends of their parents in New Jersey, but were thrown out of that state’s public school system after the local school board found out who they were. After their parents’ execution, the New York City police seized them from the home of Abel and Anne Meeropol, their future adoptive parents. That time they were placed in an orphanage.

Bad as this was, it could have been even worse. As Robert grew older, he came to realize the debt he owed to so many generous individuals whom he had never met, but who rallied to his support - helping wage the legal battles to reunite him and his brother with the Meeropols and raising a trust fund that enabled them to attend schools and summer camps where progressive values were appreciated. As a result Robert and Michael grew up in the Meeropols’ loving household, and flourished in the supportive environment provided by child-oriented progressive institutions.

In 1990 Robert figured out how he could repay the community that helped him survive. He initiated the Rosenberg Fund for Children to find and help children today who are experiencing the same kind of nightmare he endured as a child. Robert served as Executive Director until 2013, when his daughter, Jennifer Ethel Meeropol, became the RFC’s second Executive Director.



**“...we were comforted in the sure knowledge that others would carry on after us.”**

*Ethel & Julius Rosenberg, in their final letter to their sons, June 19, 1953*



*RFC Founder Robert Meeropol tells his story at the “Celebrate the Children of Resistance” performance in Berkeley, CA in 2000*

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## I've Been a Passionate Supporter...



*"I've been a passionate supporter of the Rosenberg Fund for Children since it was founded. It is so important to nurture the next generation."*

— Angela Davis, Advisory Board member



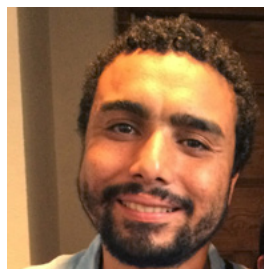
*"As an artist committed to social justice and civil liberties, I am deeply gratified to stand with the family of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and a new generation of political activists, to forge an unbreakable link between the struggles of the past and of the present."*

—V (formerly Eve Ensler), Advisory Board member



*"Our family and Leonard Peltier appreciates what the Rosenberg Fund has done to help keep families close. Without you guys, we would not be able to see our great grandpa!"*

—The Peltier family



*"I am honored to take my grandparents' place on the Rosenberg Fund for Children's advisory board. I am studying to be a social worker and plan to work with incarcerated individuals and their families. I am glad to have this connection with the RFC and with the Meeropol Family."*

—Kitama Seeger Jackson, Advisory Board member



(c) Used by permission Mumia Abu-Jamal/Prison Radio

*"For children of the movement, the Rosenberg Fund and its associates support their vital vision of community and reaffirms the breadth of people's movements to their lives. They're not fed an empty line of metallic poetry, but sustenance to the inner self, so that they may claim a place in the world. For that they are to be commended, supported, and broadened."*

— Journalist and Political Prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal

*"I am making this donation to honor my mother. She named your organization in her obituary and I am following up to honor her wishes. Today would have been her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday. I'm pleased to carry on our tradition to support the fund."*

—second-generation contributor

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## Carry it Forward

by Jennifer Meeropol, Executive Director

My father, Robert Meeropol, started the Rosenberg Fund for Children in September 1990 and served as Executive Director until he retired in Fall 2013. I joined the staff of the RFC in 2007 as the Granting Coordinator, a role I held for six years until I stepped into my dad's (very big) footsteps as the RFC's second leader.

After almost eight years as Executive Director (and more than 14 years as an RFC staff member), I remain amazed by the power and longevity of this organization. My father created the RFC out of both the pain he experienced as a child when his parents were targeted and the enormous positive impact of the community that stood with him and his family. Today, it is not just surviving but thriving.

The past few years were extraordinary ones for the RFC and the United States. On one hand, we launched the campaign to Exonerate my grandmother, Ethel Rosenberg (*more details on pages 17-18*) and were blown away by the support we received both in the U.S. and abroad. We also welcomed new beneficiaries into the RFC community and saw the support of RFC donors continue to grow.

At the same time, we watched in horror as a global pandemic ravaged communities, exposing the ways in which race and class infect our failing health system. We saw the election of what I can only hope is the worst president of my lifetime, and the racist, homophobic, misogynistic, xenophobic and deeply dividing policies he espoused. Ever-present cameras captured and social media-savvy activists (many of them young people) amplified, protests against police brutality and the seemingly endless murders of unarmed Black and Brown men and women. The resulting Black Lives Matter movement has changed the conversation about racism and white supremacy in the U.S. while asking difficult and important questions about policing, safety, and mass incarceration.



PHOTO: HENRY AMISTADI  
HENRYAMISTADI.COM

The RFC has continued to increase our granting budget to support the activists who have rejected the hatred the past administration fueled, and expanded our guidelines to provide grocery gift cards to beneficiaries whose suffering was heightened by the pandemic.

The RFC made its first awards on May 10th, 1991. Two grants, totaling just over \$800, allowed the son and daughter of a political prisoner to attend summer camp. Fast forward three decades, and the RFC has made awards for **almost \$2 million in just the last five years** to help hundreds of children in every region of the country. The RFC has over 10,000 supporters nationwide and is awarding between \$380,000 and \$400,000 in grants annually.

More than six decades after my grandparents' executions, we still stand with the hundreds of thousands of people fighting for a more just world and renew our pledge to provide vital support to their children if they face repression because of their efforts.

**For additional reflections on the RFC at 30 from Jenn and Robert Meeropol, visit [rfc.org/rfc30](https://www.rfc.org/rfc30)**

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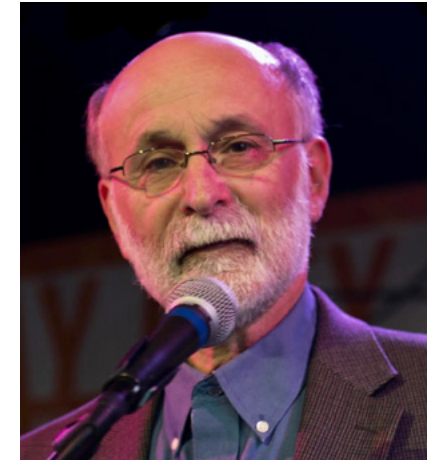
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## Pass It On

by Robert Meeropol, Founder

I wanted to avoid the “founders syndrome.” That is, when a project’s founder fails to recognize the need for new blood and refuses to pass the leadership torch to younger, more energetic people with fresh ideas to engage a rapidly changing cultural landscape. As Jenn, who started working at the RFC in 2007, gained knowledge of all aspects of our program, I felt growing confidence having her succeed me as Executive Director in September, 2013.

In the eight years since my retirement, the RFC has provided more support, more effectively to our beneficiaries. Jenn also managed the difficult tasks of shifting to remote work and finding creative ways to help beneficiaries once COVID struck. Perhaps the most gratifying aspect of my retirement is how well the RFC has functioned in my absence. More than 30 years on, the RFC is flourishing as it never has before.



Rosenberg Fund for Children Executive Director, Jenn Meeropol, and Founder, Robert Meeropol, celebrate 30 years of the RFC.

View online at [rfc.org/30th-video](https://rfc.org/30th-video)

***“To be an activist and to decide to have children is a profound act of hope. The authorities everywhere have often exacted a high price for making that decision. Over the last three decades, I’ve been privileged to see the work of the RFC play a small but important healing role in the lives of activist families. That work has in turn sustained my own hope for a more just future.”***

– Bruce Miller, RFC Founding Board Member & current Board Chair



RFC Founder, founding Board and staff members and workshop leaders at an RFC Gathering

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# Mission & Guiding Principles

Across the U.S., activists are being attacked as they struggle to preserve civil liberties, wage peace, safeguard the environment, combat racism and police brutality, and organize on behalf of workers, immigrants, the LGBTQ community, political prisoners, and others whose rights are under threat. When these activists are parents, their children suffer, too.

The Rosenberg Fund for Children (RFC) is the only organization in this country that supports progressive activist families directly. Its grants pay for services that meet these children's educational and emotional needs.

The Rosenberg Fund for Children was established to provide for the educational and emotional needs of children whose parents have suffered because of their progressive activities and who, therefore, are no longer able to provide fully for their children. The RFC also provides grants for the educational and emotional needs of targeted activist youth. Professionals and institutions are awarded grants to provide services for beneficiaries.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- > All people have equal worth. We actively oppose white supremacy, racism, homophobia, misogyny, and all other forms of oppression by supporting people and organizations dedicated to eradicating them.
- > People are more important than profits
- > Society must function within ecologically sustainable limits
- > World peace is a necessity

## ACTIVISM OF RFC BENEFICIARY FAMILIES IN 2020



Supporters (including targeted activist parents of RFC beneficiaries) at an RFC event

*“Receiving the grant and knowing that the RFC exists validates my experience as a child of an activist and shows me that there are others who know that there have been hardships in my life due to my parents’ activism.”*

— an RFC beneficiary

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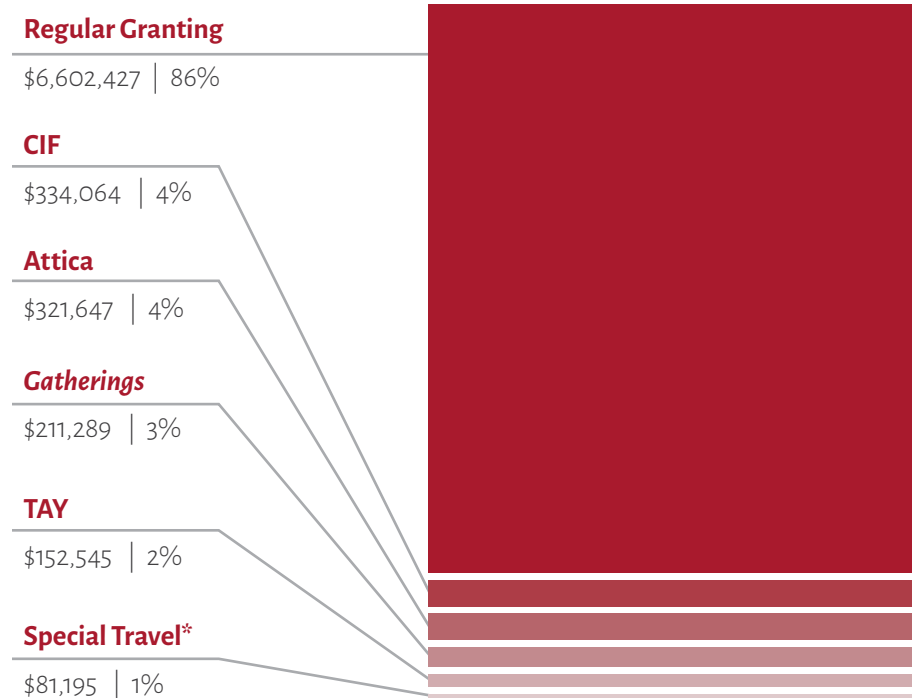
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# Grant Guidelines & Programs

Young people and children whose parents have been targeted as a result of their activism in furtherance of these principles are eligible for RFC funding. By “targeted” we mean someone who has: lost a job, suffered physical injury or mental disability, been harassed or discriminated against, been imprisoned, or died as a result of their activism. RFC Grants cover:

- Counseling & Group Therapy
- Summer Camp & Childcare
- After-School Programs
- School Tuition
- Computers, Internet Access and other Educational Support
- Tutoring & Skills Training
- Recreational, Cultural, & Educational Programs (art, dance, sports, music, theater, gymnastics, etc.)

## GRANTING BY PROGRAM, 1990 - 2020



**\$7,703,166.62** | Total granted as of the end of 2020



### Grocery Gift Card Program

When the COVID-19 crisis began in the spring of 2020, the RFC relaxed our granting guidelines to address our beneficiary families’ most immediate needs. The RFC Board of Directors approved a grant of \$18,400 that spring to provide \$200 grocery gift cards to every current beneficiary family. Since then, the Board has approved a new grant each cycle to continue providing grocery gift cards to our grantees; through the end of 2020, these grants total \$45,700\* with an additional \$15,000 awarded in 2021 and more grants likely to follow. \*This amount is included in the regular granting total.

\*Our Special Travel program ran from 2000–2010.

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## Beneficiaries

The Rosenberg Fund for Children is proud to have played a role in the support of these young people and their families. They are the embodiment of our efforts to “*Carry It Forward and Pass It On*” to the next generation.

In keeping with the RFC’s goal of providing ongoing, stable support to families in need, a substantial portion of beneficiaries receive multiple awards over many years. Each grantee’s situation is unique, but the following profiles collectively illustrate the essence of the project: both the type of circumstances that gave rise to the need for the support and the ways in which grants are used.

**Note:** The RFC believes that it is best for children to be free to be children. The glare of publicity and even the well-meaning attention of supportive, but unfamiliar, adults can be disruptive or even harmful to the children and young people we support. Therefore, the RFC does not release the names of beneficiaries, pseudonyms are used here to protect grantees’ privacy.

## CIVIL LIBERTIES

**First grant received: Family 2004**  
**Number of years supported: 17**

*Minnesota*

Both Matthew and Spencer currently receive RFC funds and their older sisters previously received RFC support as well. Now 14, Spencer has spent most of his life watching his dad deal with terminal heart failure, a direct result of his work to protect people on a reservation from chemical attacks. Spencer’s dad was deliberately exposed to life-threatening toxins in retaliation for his organizing. Spencer has suffered greatly seeing his dad battle through multiple hospitalizations and surgeries and has had a very hard time with anxiety. He has discovered a love and appreciation for the outdoors, RFC grants allowed him to go snowboarding in the winter and camping in the summer. Matthew currently receives a Carry it Forward award that helps pay for his books as he completes his fourth year of college.



***“Thank you. You are the best. I was thinking this morning of where [my children] would be were it not for RFC’s help. You guys have done so much to help my kids. The girls are grown and are strong and fantastic young women as a result of their youth activities. And Matthew has grown from a shy boy into a six foot tall, smart, popular, and athletic young man. I’ve encouraged all of them to remain socially aware and active, and RFC has given a strong platform from which to do so. We love you guys!”***



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## Beneficiaries

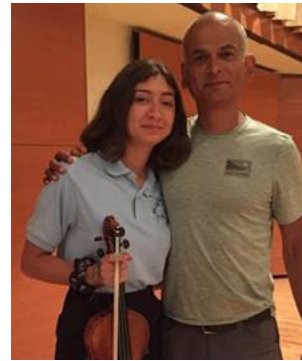
### ENVIRONMENTAL/ANIMAL RIGHTS

**First grant received: 2007**

**Number of years supported: 14**

Marissa's father is an environmental and animal rights activist who was previously imprisoned for destroying traps for mountain lions and now advocates against the hunting of wolves. RFC funds have allowed Marissa to participate in various art programs including acting and voice lessons. Over the past ten years, Marissa has developed a passion for the violin, and the RFC has been funding her lessons ever since! She started college in the fall of 2021.

Arizona



*“Thank you for the grant for music lessons. My daughter and I recently traveled [across the country to visit her activist father], and following our return were contacted by the FBI to further question us on our relation to Marissa's dad... we live in a constant state of surveillance and it creates anxiety and fear. Marissa has used the violin as her main coping mechanism.”*

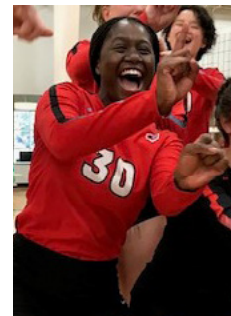
### GENDER EQUALITY / LGBTQ+ / REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

**First grant received: 2010**

**Number of years supported: 11**

Mary's mom is a human rights activist who advocated for and provided assistance to women whose rights had been violated in their home country. She was frequently harassed for speaking out against the regime and after being arrested and detained, sought refuge in the U.S. Mary's mom continues her activism within the U.S.; RFC support has allowed Mary to participate in various art and music lessons, summer camps and sports. Currently, an RFC grant is making it possible for Mary to play volleyball.

Illinois



*“My daughter Mary has been a beneficiary of the Rosenberg grant for quite a few years. The support has been helpful and has made a significant positive impact in her life ever since; my family is grateful and continue to be grateful.”*

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## Beneficiaries

### RACIAL JUSTICE



**First grant received: 2019**

**Georgia**

**Number of years supported: 2**

Derek and Damon's father was targeted for advocating for fair treatment of a student who reacted physically to a classmate's racist comments. He was forced to leave his job, was subsequently blacklisted, and faced so many death threats and other forms of harassment that the family had to move. The RFC now provides support for both brothers, ages four and 16, which allows them to attend a school that reflects their father's progressive values and makes it possible for both children to learn in a safe environment.

### ATTICA

**First grant received: 2017**

**Colorado**

**Number of years supported: 4**

Patricia and Susan's father, Arthur, is a prison abolitionist. While incarcerated, he has continued to use his poetry and writing to share his political views. This has resulted in prolonged periods in solitary confinement, violent attacks by prison guards, threats against his daughters, additional charges and denial of communication with his family. In addition to grants that have funded Patricia and Susan's recreational activities, Attica grants have allowed the family to visit Arthur when it is possible for them to do so.



***"I want to say thank you...  
from the bottom of my heart  
for our grant. You all change  
the lives of these kiddos,  
allowing them to relax and  
helping them be strong."***

Artwork created by Susan

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## Beneficiaries

### IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

**First grant received: 2018**

*Location withheld*

**Number of years supported: 3**

Angel and Marco, ages five and 12, have lived in sanctuary with their mother, an immigrants' rights activist, since 2017. Angel and Marco's father was detained by ICE in probable retaliation for their mom's activism. RFC grants have allowed Angel to go to preschool and Marco to explore his love for the outdoors and physical activity. Recently, RFC grants allowed Marco to go snowboarding and attend an indoor obstacle course gym and summer camp.



### HUMAN RIGHTS

**First grant received: 2019**

*New Mexico*

**Number of years supported: 2**

Aiyana and Denali's mother is an Indigenous rights activist who was repeatedly stalked and threatened for her efforts to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day and still faces harassment for her continued activism. The targeting the family faced has been difficult for the children, ages five and seven, but RFC grants have helped them receive tutoring and participate in sports.

*"The tutoring has been such a great help to Aiyana and Denali's learning experience, they are already getting so bright and picking things up more quickly, it's incredible... Thank you so much for all of your help. I cannot tell you enough how much your support has meant to my family."*

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## Beneficiaries

### PEACE

**First grant received: 2011**

**Illinois**

**Number of years supported: 10**

The RFC made its first grant to Maria in 2011 for dance lessons and summer camp. In recent years, Maria has become a talented and passionate basketball player and the RFC has continued to fund her participation in various basketball teams and programs. Her dad is a peace activist who refused to testify before a grand jury that was investigating anti-war activities, even after having his home raided and being threatened with arrest. He continues his peace and anti-war organizing despite the lingering threat of prosecution.

***“Basketball is playing a huge role in her life, not only for her physical health, but also her emotional health. She has been the starting point guard on a very advanced team for the past two years, and it has helped her strive for success in everything she does. RFC’s support for her basketball playing and singing has increased her confidence and self-assuredness exponentially.”***

### PRISONERS’ RIGHTS/U.S. POLITICAL PRISONERS



*RFC beneficiary siblings with recently released political prisoner Oscar López Rivera*

**First grant received: 2014**

**Massachusetts**

**Number of years supported: 7**

The RFC first funded the twins in 2014 when they were just six years old. Since then, RFC grants have helped pay their tuition every year, which allows them to attend school in a safe, supportive environment. Their father was incarcerated for 11 years for anti-apartheid efforts and upon his release became active in anti-death penalty work and organizing to free political prisoners. He continues to be harassed for his activism work, including being followed and called a “terrorist” by the media.

***“The support from RFC is making a significant impact in my ability to support my children’s tuition and I am very grateful for it.”***

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## Beneficiaries

### LABOR & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**First grant received: 2017**  
**Number of years supported: 4**

*Mississippi*

Kayli's mom is a workers' rights activist who has organized for fair employment practices at Walmart. As a result, she was harassed at work, her hours were cut and she was subsequently fired. The financial strain this put on the family had a significant emotional impact on both Kayli and her mother. Kayli found an outlet in soccer, and the RFC has been funding her participation in various soccer camps for several years. Most recently, the RFC purchased a computer for Kayli, as soccer camp was not possible during the pandemic.

*"We eat, sleep, breathe soccer. She is goal oriented and is already discussing colleges and wants to become a professional women's soccer player. She is dedicated, driven, and passionate about soccer. It is her best therapy. It helps to have her focused on her soccer because it doesn't keep her head fogged up with our situation at home."*

### TARGETED ACTIVIST YOUTH



**First grant received: 2017**  
**Number of years supported: 3**

*Massachusetts*

Hannah is a second-generation human rights activist who grew up overseas. She founded a non-profit in her home country that fights against female genital mutilation (FGM) and for gender equality, has spoken out against FGM at the United Nations and has helped lead campaigns against FGM. When she returned home from the UN Summit, she was arrested and unlawfully detained for four days. She was able to return to the U.S., where she is currently seeking asylum as she fears continued government persecution in her home country. RFC grants helped Hannah participate in the UN Youth assembly delegate program.

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## Gatherings

The families of activists often feel very isolated, and that isolation makes them more vulnerable to the effects of repression. The RFC was founded to protect and nurture the children of these families, and to envelop them in the embrace of a supportive community. In 1999 the RFC began its *Gatherings* program to make this network of support more tangible.

*Carry It Forward Gatherings* serve current and former beneficiaries ages 18-24, and *Family Gatherings* are for activist parents and their school-age children who currently or recently received grants from us. These four-day retreats are held in western Massachusetts, not far from the RFC office. To date we've held a total of nine *Gatherings*. The most recent one (held in August 2017) brought together twenty-three of our college age beneficiaries and three peer leaders from 11 states around the country together with RFC staff and Board members and workshop leaders.

*Gatherings* create a supportive environment for young adults to get to know others living through similar events, and explore their feelings about their families' situations. They also provide a chance for participants to have fun and relax—opportunities that are often in short supply for families in the midst of traumatic circumstances.

Both the youth and the family programs offer participants a combination of structured arts workshops such as drama, visual art, writing, dance and music; recreational activities; evening entertainment; and unstructured free time. Most *Gatherings* have included peer leaders, allowing these “alumni” to mentor younger attendees throughout the event.

Participants of all ages form bonds that often translate to ongoing friendships, and for the parents, to allies in their social justice organizing. *Gatherings* have become an important part of our project. They embody three core RFC beliefs: children and young adults in difficult circumstances deserve the chance to just be in a safe and happy environment; people committed to progressive beliefs want to transmit their values to younger generations; and a community of support is vital for activists and their families to thrive.

For a report on the 2017 *Carry It Forward Gathering* (including photos, video and participant testimonials), visit [rfc.org/2017gathering](http://rfc.org/2017gathering)



***“I really enjoyed being among cool, passionate, resilient young people who came from diverse backgrounds but shared a common childhood exposure to activism. The solidarity and love between participants was amazing. Peer leaders were wonderful too!”***

— a *Gathering* participant



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## Art & Activism Events

The RFC has a long history of staging cultural events to share information about our work, engage potential new supporters, and build community.



Guy Davis performs at an RFC benefit in Brooklyn

We launched the RFC with a concert in Northampton, MA in 1990. We presented *Celebrate the Children of Resistance* and *Carry it Forward* in 2000, 2003, 2007 and 2013 in Berkeley, NYC, Boston and NYC (again), and in smaller-scale versions on other occasions.

The late Pete Seeger (a founding advisory board member) and his grandson Tao helped us celebrate our 10th anniversary. An amazing cast of “local hero” artists, activists, politicians and other notables marked our 15th anniversary with a staged reading of *GUANTÁNAMO: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*. For our 20th anniversary, a long-time member of Sweet Honey in the Rock and a former U.S. political prisoner helped us tell the story of the first two decades of RFC support for families of targeted activists. We marked our 25th anniversary milestone with an [event spotlighting Artists as Activists](#) with Erin McKeown, Gina Belafonte, Ellen Meeropol and A Besere Velt. COVID forced us to re-imagine our planned [30th anniversary celebration](#) with Angela Davis, The Nields and former beneficiaries David Morales and Leah Grady Sayvetz as a virtual gathering.

As we continue to broaden our connections to emerging progressive movements, potential grant recipients, simpatico organizations, and a new cohort of donors, we’ve convened house parties and concert and sponsored events large and small that are in line with our values. Since 2015, some of the gatherings we’ve hosted include: a house party with a dramatic reading of Ethel’s letter by advisory board member Kathleen Chalfant (who originated the role of Ethel in *Angels in America* on Broadway) and a concert by bluesman Guy Davis, both in Brooklyn; numerous concerts with The Nields in both MA and VA (in some cases with [Local Chorus, a children’s chorus](#)); a house concert in Boston with Jean Rohe; a [concert by The Mammals](#) at Valley View Farm in Haydenville, MA; and a celebration of [Pete Seeger’s centennial](#) at the RFC office.



Attendees at The Mammals concert with RFC Executive Director Jenn Meeropol



Audience at The Nields benefit concert in Northampton, MA

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## Art & Activism Events

We sponsored [Sankofa.org](http://Sankofa.org)'s groundbreaking “Many Rivers to Cross” Social Justice Music and Arts Festival outside of Atlanta, GA; Camp Kinderland's first ever “Arts and Activism Festival” in Tolland, MA; [Millpond.Live](http://Millpond.Live), which helped bring activist artists [Sophia Dawson](#), [Climbing Poetree](#), [Sweet Honey in the Rock](#), and [Rebel Diaz](#), to our backyard in Easthampton, MA for a free art and music festival in 2017 & 2018; and the Dissident Arts Festival's Cabaret of Dissent in Brooklyn, NY. We were also the recipients of funds raised from a number of performances by generous activist artists, including “An Alternative 4th of July” at the New York chapter of the National Writers Union, HotHouse's “From Robeson to Brown” concert in Chicago, IL, and concerts by former Board member José Ayerve and his indie rock band SPOUSE and Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Seth Glier.

The following is a *partial* list of the incredible array of artists and activists who have publicly supported the RFC in our 30 years, with our Advisory Board noted with “AB,” including in memoriam members. We thank them, and all the others not mentioned here.

<b>A Besere Velt Workmen's Circle Yiddish Chorus</b>	<b>Evelyn Harris</b>	<b>Mandy Patinkin (AB)</b>
<b>Ed Asner (AB)</b>	<b>Richie Havens (AB)</b>	<b>Leonard Peltier (AB)</b>
<b>Gina Belafonte</b>	<b>Mumia Abu Jamal</b>	<b>Utah Phillips</b>
<b>Harry Belafonte (AB)</b>	<b>Gaye Theresa Johnson</b>	<b>John Randolph (AB)</b>
<b>Kathleen Chalfant (AB)</b>	<b>Bill T. Jones</b>	<b>Toshi Reagon</b>
<b>Noam Chomsky</b>	<b>Si Kahn (AB)</b>	<b>Rebel Diaz</b>
<b>Angela Davis (AB)</b>	<b>William Kunstler (AB)</b>	<b>Adrienne Rich (AB)</b>
<b>Guy Davis</b>	<b>Shola Lynch</b>	<b>Jean Rohe</b>
<b>Ossie Davis (AB)</b>	<b>Country Joe McDonald</b>	<b>Jane Sapp</b>
<b>Chuck D (AB)</b>	<b>Erin McKeown</b>	<b>Susan Sarandon (AB)</b>
<b>Ani DiFranco</b>	<b>Pamela Means</b>	<b>Pete &amp; Toshi Seeger (AB)</b>
<b>Martín Espada (AB)</b>	<b>Ellen Meeropol (AB)</b>	<b>Cotter Smith</b>
<b>Tovah Feldshuh</b>	<b>Mike &amp; Ruthy Merenda (AB)</b>	<b>David Strathairn</b>
<b>Foundation Movement</b>	<b>Janice Mirikitani (AB)</b>	<b>Studs Terkel (AB)</b>
<b>Ronnie Gilbert (AB)</b>	<b>Michael Moore</b>	<b>V (formerly Eve Ensler) (AB)</b>
<b>Danny Glover</b>	<b>Peter Mulvey (AB)</b>	<b>Haskell Wexler (AB)</b>
<b>Suheir Hammad (AB)</b>	<b>Holly Near (AB)</b>	<b>Peter Yarrow</b>
		<b>Howard Zinn</b>



### Strange Fruit

Time Magazine's “Song of the Century,” “Strange Fruit,” was written by Abel Meeropol (aka Lewis Allan) in the late 1930s. Billie Holiday made an iconic recording of the song in 1939, and numerous other artists have since released their own versions. In the past five to 10 years, there's been an explosion in the song's popularity and relevance; it is an excellent example of the activist art the RFC celebrates and seeks to make possible for our beneficiaries.

Visit [rfc.org/strange-fruit](http://rfc.org/strange-fruit) to learn more.



Many of these events were made possible by the generous underwriting support of the Puffin Foundation Ltd., for which we are profoundly grateful.



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# Exonerate Ethel



PHOTO: SCOTT LANGLEY

In July 2015, previously secret government material at the heart of the case against Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, most notably chief prosecution witness [David Greenglass' Grand Jury testimony](#), was made public. It demonstrates that the U.S. government knowingly manufactured the case against Ethel to pressure Julius to cooperate.

As a result of this release, the Rosenberg Fund for Children – in concert with Julius and Ethel's family – launched a petition calling on President Obama to Exonerate Ethel before he left office.

U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey, Michael Moore, Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, former MA Governor Michael Dukakis, U.S. Congressman Richard Neal (1st District, MA), U.S. Congress-



man Jim McGovern (2nd District, MA), V (formerly Eve Ensler), Dar Williams, Jim Jarmusch, Ed Asner, Dave Zirin, Kathleen Chalfant, Holly Near, Lynne Stewart and Ralph Poynter, John Sayles, Vince Warren, and [more than 60,000 other concerned people](#) around the world supported the exoneration effort.

The campaign received [extensive media attention](#) that had global reach. And remarkably (given the history of negative bias towards the Rosenberg case) all of the prominent, mainstream news reporting cast the exoneration campaign in a very positive light. *60 Minutes* aired a rare, double-length story interviewing Ethel's sons Robert and Michael Meeropol and exploring the mis-

carriage of justice in the Rosenberg case. In the wake of that broadcast, media built to a crescendo by the end of 2016.

On December 1st, 2016, Robert and Michael brought their effort to the gates of the White House. With news cameras rolling, they stood in the same spot where they had been photographed in 1953 as six and 10-year-olds (*photos on left*). As children, they delivered a handwritten letter for President Eisenhower to the guards at the gate, five days before their parents were killed. This time, the brothers issued a statement calling on President Obama to rise to the challenge and do the right thing, not just for Ethel but for the country.



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# Exonerate Ethel

The press took notice. NPR's *Morning Edition* and *Here and Now*, CBS News, *The Washington Post*, CNN, *Democracy Now!* and *The Nation* were among the many national outlets that did original reporting about the Exonerate campaign. Newspapers and radio shows from Canada, England, Israel, Germany and Austria interviewed the Meeropol brothers. An Associated Press article appeared in more than 30,000 newspapers. *The Boston Globe* wrote about the campaign repeatedly and its editorial board endorsed the effort with a full-page call for Obama to act. Even Fox News covered the campaign favorably, with a story on a stunning report from the Seton Hall School of Law about the government's egregious actions towards Ethel, published in mid-December. Fox's headline read, "Legal scholars claim new evidence shows Ethel Rosenberg was innocent in infamous spy case."

Although President Obama did not ultimately Exonerate Ethel, the campaign was resoundingly successful at changing the narrative about Ethel Rosenberg and educating the public about the dangers of government overreach. In the process, tens

of thousands of new people were introduced to the Rosenberg Fund for Children's work aiding activist families who are under attack in this country today.

See [rfc.org/exonerate-ethel](http://rfc.org/exonerate-ethel) for a full report on the effort to Exonerate Ethel.



The screenshot shows a CBS 60 Minutes video player. The main video frame displays a man in a suit sitting in front of a backdrop that reads "the Brothers Rosenberg" and "produced by Andy Court". To the right of the video, there is a "RELATED VIDEO" section with three thumbnails: "The Brothers Rosenberg", "From the archives: Rosenberg witness says he lied", and "The Rosenberg boys: The Cold War's most famous orphans". Below the video player, the title "THE BROTHERS ROSENBERG" is prominently displayed, followed by a subtitle: "Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's sons tell Anderson Cooper how it felt to be the children of the infamous spies, in a story that sheds new light on a central event of the Cold War". A "Watch Now" button and a "RECENT 60 MINUTES ALL ACCESS" link are also visible.

## New RFC Strategic Plan

The RFC spent 18 months in 2017 and 2018 engaged in a strategic planning process. [The document](#) that came out of that process, approved by the RFC Board in January of 2019, identifies key goals, as well as strategies and resources, for the next five years of the RFC. The process was a deeply engaging one, which began with a survey of current and former Board, staff and consultants, and resulted in a plan that we are committed to using in our daily work to help guide key decisions.



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## Our Supporters

The RFC community is composed of over 10,000 people from every region of the country. They are a remarkably dynamic and engaged group, many of whom have initiated creative ways to support our work.

### Operating Fund Campaign

The RFC has a unique structure. It has two major funds: Operating and Granting. 100% of Operating Fund (OF) donations help pay for salaries, rent, postage and other overhead expenses. Almost all OF donations come from major donors whose multi-year pledges play a key role in supporting our entire project. Approximately 100 individuals and couples collectively contribute over \$100,000 annually to this campaign. The size of individual OF donations in 2020 ranged from \$250 to \$10,000/year. The steadfast participation of these key supporters is essential to our success, because even though we can't make any grants if we can't sustain our operation, it is more difficult to raise operating money. All other gifts go into the Granting Fund (GF). 90% of all money donated to the GF is placed in a separately maintained account and either awarded immediately or invested to provide for future granting needs. The remaining 10% is placed in the OF to cover the cost of processing donations.

### Bequests

Since receiving our first bequest in 1992, the RFC has received legacy gifts totaling almost \$4,000,000 from the estates of more than 120 individuals. The following comments accompanying three bequests are typical of many others: "My father, one of your strongest supporters, died on October 2. As a grassroots advocate for world peace, he felt your organization was particularly important in achieving peace;" "[My husband] especially liked the RFC because of the attention it gave to the needs of people standing up for their rights who have children;" "As a red diaper baby I take particular personal pleasure

in conveying this check to you." Ethel and Julius Rosenberg wrote in their last letter to their sons, "We were comforted in the sure knowledge that others would carry on after us." Bequests to the RFC justify that trust. **If you are interested in including the RFC in your estate planning, information is available at [rfc.org/bequest](https://rfc.org/bequest).**



### Attica Fund Endowment

In 2001 the RFC received two major donations from one of the survivors and two attorneys who won compensation for the victims of the brutal attack on inmates at New York's Attica State Prison. Gifts from Attorneys Elizabeth Fink, Daniel Meyers, and Daniel's wife Joan Reinmuth Meyers, and survivor Frank "Big Black" Smith, enabled the RFC to endow its Attica Prison Visit Program. To date the Attica Fund has awarded more than \$320,000 to enable the children and grandchildren of political prisoners to visit imprisoned loved ones.

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### Named Funds

Several families have created another kind of tribute. In December 2005, Edith Ziefert, the widow of George Ziefert, endowed the RFC's first memorial fund. The Herman Warsh Memorial Fund followed in the spring of 2006, when his wife Maryanne established this award after Herman's death. Additional named funds followed. Most recently, in the fall of 2019 Harry Flemming's daughter and son-in-law established a fund in his memory to make it possible for children and grandchildren of prisoners to visit their incarcerated loved ones. As they explain, "Dad was a high school student in 1927 when he was sentenced to thirty years in prison for defending himself and his friends from an armed attack. During his years in prison he saw his family very infrequently because it was so expensive and so far away to visit. We hope grants from the Flemming Fund will allow other children to remain connected to their loved ones in prison and help their parents/grandparents live similarly full and satisfying lives." **To learn more about all the RFC's Named Funds and find information about honoring a loved one in this manner, visit [www.rfc.org/namedfunds](http://www.rfc.org/namedfunds).**

### Marking Milestones

The RFC receives hundreds of donations each year in honor of special occasions or in memoriam. Donations honor those who have passed, and mark birthdays, weddings, anniversaries or other events. One RFC supporter explained her decision, "I just completed a master's program and a party was held for me to celebrate. I asked people to make donations to the RFC instead of giving me any gifts. I know that right now finances are hard for all non-profits and I think the work you are doing is so important that I wanted to try to help out in some small way." These contributions strengthen a web of interaction among donors, honorees and the RFC, and deepen connections within our multi-generational progressive community.



Supporters at an RFC benefit



Actress & RFC Advisory Board member Kathleen Chalfant (second from left) with guests at a benefit she hosted for the RFC

### Annual Support

The bedrock of our support comes from the thousands of contributions we receive each year in response to our June and December reports, and our spring and fall newsletters. The vast majority of our contributions range from \$25 to \$100. We salute the thousands of people ranging from the elderly on fixed incomes, to working adults, to children, whose collective generosity enables us to award hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants every year. One supporter summed up the spirit of these donations by writing, "This contribution is given not in pity or charity but in thanks for service to the community and in solidarity with the struggle for true freedom for all people." Another included the succinct, "For good, important work" with their donation.

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## Our Supporters

### Sustainers

Sustainers spread out their annual giving into budgeted monthly or quarterly payments, via automatically recurring donations. Because sustainers provide the RFC a reliable source of support throughout the year, and let us reduce the amount of fundraising mail we send (which is good for the environment as well), the RFC is able to devote even more of our resources towards our granting work.



*Singer songwriter Jean Rohe (center) signs CDs for fans at an RFC benefit concert*

### Other Ways to Help

**RFC donors are not passive.** They've helped us by telling friends about the RFC; referring potential beneficiaries or providers to us; hosting receptions; attending public events, house parties or concerts; connecting with the RFC on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; commenting on the RFC's blog; and sharing our video clips on YouTube. Such actions have increased our base of support and spread the word throughout progressive activist communities to those who might qualify for our assistance.



### Peer-to-Peer Fundraising

In the spring of 2021, the RFC launched a new way for community members to support our organization - through Peer-to-Peer (P2P) fundraising! Our P2P platform allows supporters to fundraise on behalf of the Rosenberg Fund for Children and helps ensure kids whose parents have been targeted because of their activism can attend summer camp, hire a tutor, receive therapy, attend a dance program, or participate in other activities that allow them to have fun, process their experiences and heal. **Learn more and start your own fundraiser at [rfc.org/p2p\\_fundraising](https://rfc.org/p2p_fundraising).**

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# Financials

## Expenses

Based on figures from our accountant's<sup>1</sup> most recent audit, the RFC's expenses in 2020 totaled \$706,139 (including grants awarded); \$591,115 (84%) of this was for "Program", \$41,783 (6%) was spent on "Fundraising"; and \$73,241 (10%) went to "Management and General."

## Revenue in 2020

Contributions	\$517,770
Interest and Dividends	\$86,758
Planned Giving	\$57,562
Realized Gains on Investments (net)	\$122,651
Speaker Fees & other income	\$16,366
<b>TOTAL<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$801,107</b>

<sup>2</sup> Not including unrealized gains on investments

The RFC's net assets increased from \$5.95 million at the end of 2019 to \$6.76 million as of the end of 2020.



[View our profile on Charity Navigator](#)

## Fund Managers

The RFC's investment accounts are managed by Lee Tawil of The Kamen Group at Neuberger Berman and Julie Goodridge at NorthStar Asset Management, both Socially Responsible Investment advisors.

**An audited financial statement may be found at [rfc.org/about-us](http://rfc.org/about-us).**

<sup>1</sup> The RFC's 2020 audit was conducted by Boisselle, Morton & Wolkowicz, LLP, Certified Public Accountants, Hadley, Massachusetts

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## Board & Staff

### Board of Directors

**Michael Ford**

*Retired College Administrator, Educational Consultant*

**Nina-Alani Lessin-Joseph**

*Teacher, Activist*

**Jennifer Meeropol**

*Executive Director, Rosenberg Fund for Children*

**Robert Meeropol**

*Founder, Rosenberg Fund for Children*

**Bruce Miller**

*Professor of Constitutional Law*

**William Newman**

*Director, Western Office, American Civil Liberties Union of Mass.*

**Christina Platt**

*Retired Senior Portfolio Manager*

### Staff

**Jennifer Meeropol**

*Executive Director*

**Stella Chan**

*Bookkeeper*

**Rachel Harb**

*Communications Manager*

**Victoria Montemurro**

*Granting Coordinator*

### Advisory Board

**Anthony Arnove**

**Gina Belafonte**

**Harry Belafonte**

**Kathleen Chalfant**

**Chuck D & Gaye Theresa Johnson**

**Angela Y. Davis**

**Martín Espada**

**Suheir Hammad**

**Richard Healey**

**Si Kahn**

**Ellen Meeropol**

**Michael Meeropol**

**Rachel Meeropol**

**Mike & Ruthy Merenda**

**Peter Mulvey**

**Holly Near**

**Mandy Patinkin**

**Leonard Peltier**

**Will Potter**

**Susan Sarandon**

**Kitama Seeger Jackson**

*V (formerly Eve Ensler)*

**Rabbi Sheila Weinberg**

**Robert Zevin**

**Gilda Zwerman**

### In Memoriam

**Edward Asner**

**Ossie Davis**

**Hon. Ronald H. Dellums**

**Ronnie Gilbert**

**Richie Havens**

**Dorothy Healey**

**William Kunstler**

**Betty & Herman Liveright**

**John Randolph**

**Michael Ratner**

**Adrienne Rich**

**Pete & Toshi Seeger**

**Studs Terkel**

**Edith Tiger**

**Haskell Wexler**

***“I give my whole-hearted endorsement to the Rosenberg Fund for Children. Our community needs an organization that aids children whose parents have been targeted in the course of their progressive activity, and also youth who have been targeted for their own progressive actions.”***

—Pete Seeger

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## Thanks

The Rosenberg Fund for Children is grateful to the tens of thousands of contributors whose generosity during our first 30 years has made all our work possible.

### *We would like to extend a special thank you to:*

**Our Operating Fund Campaign Contributors** whose multi-year pledges and annual donations have covered the lion's share of our operating expenses since our first day.

**Our nationwide network of “key contacts,” artists** who have performed on our behalf, **kindred organizations** that have collaborated with us, and **skilled consultants** who have enhanced our work.

**The 60,000+ people across the country and around the world who signed the petition calling on President Obama to Exonerate Ethel**, along with the artists, public intellectuals, editorial boards, and elected officials who advocated for justice for Ethel and the correction of the historical record in the Rosenberg Case.

**Our sustainers** (who have set up monthly, quarterly or annual gifts) as well as those who have included the RFC in their **estate planning**, established **named funds**, asked others to contribute to the RFC to **mark milestones**, or joined the **endowment campaign**.

**Our all-volunteer Board of Directors** who have given us their time, thoughtful guidance, and extraordinary annual support.

**The Puffin Foundation**, whose generous support funded the production of this publication, and other materials and programming around our 30th anniversary, helped launch our endowment campaign and supported numerous special events and programs throughout our history.

**Our peer-to-peer fundraising experimenters** who helped us launch this new program and the donors who made their efforts successful.

**Our Advisory Board** members who have signed letters, appeared for us, and provided us with professional expertise and advice despite the tremendous demands upon their time and generosity.

**Our Founder, Robert Meeropol**, whose vision continues to inspire our commitment to standing with the children of targeted, progressive activists.



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## Then & Now

*"We are so excited that John has taken an interest in gardening and learning to be a beekeeper. Thank you so much for helping him - he is learning so much and developing confidence from all of the projects he has been able to do because of RFC."*



*"...throughout this journey The Rosenberg Fund for Children has helped me realize that my dreams can become a reality and have helped me in my pursuit of creating social political change."*



*"This is Luis, this is my first time writing to you all but it will not be the last. I am so thankful for all these years that you've been contributing to my development and education. On the behalf of my father and my family, I'd like to say thank you again for everything, and a happy and healthy new year. I will write more about my life and all the benefits and all the good things you all have provided to me."*

ACTIVISM IS NOT TERRORISM - BLACK LIVES MATTER  
NO HUMAN BEING IS ILLEGAL  
FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS - NO GMOS  
STAND FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS  
HATE IS NOT A FAMILY VALUE - ¡VENCEREMOS!  
CIVIL RIGHTS ARE NOT DEBATABLE  
KEEP YOUR LAWS OFF OUR BODIES - IDLE NO MORE  
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IS TORTURE  
NO MORE GUANTÁNAMOS - END U.S. DRONE WARS  
CORPORATIONS ARE NOT PEOPLE  
END CLIMATE SILENCE - STRIKE FOR HIGHER PAY  
EQUAL RIGHTS ARE NOT SPECIAL RIGHTS



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