Resist
Organizational Principles
HISTORY

Resist has always been a different type of foundation.

Our story begins in 1967 when the "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority" was issued to support draft resistance in opposition to the war in Vietnam. Signed by over 20,000 people, the Call mobilized activists and academics across the country and became a central document in the 1968 conspiracy trial of Reverend William Sloan Coffin, Dr. Benjamin Spock, Michael Ferber, Marcus Raskin, and Mitchell Goodman, who became known as the "Boston Five" and soon after became five of Resist’s founders. Other signers and founding members include Grace Paley, Noam Chomsky, Robert Lowell, Barbara Guest, and Allen Ginsberg.

During the course of the Vietnam War, as grassroots activism exploded across the country, Resist evolved too and supported radical visionary activists from coast to coast. Throughout this history, Resist has provided critical early funding to some of the most influential progressive organizations in the US – many of which have gone on to make history themselves.

Resist has since granted more than $7 million to over 5,000 dedicated groups across the United States.
MISSION

Resist is a foundation that supports people's movements for justice and liberation. We redistribute resources back to frontline communities at the forefront of change while amplifying their stories of building a better world.

WE PRIORITIZE...

cultivating relationships within and between frontline communities, as well as the partners and accomplices who support them.

Our principles guide us in this work.
ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

EMERGENCE

We will grow through continual self-reflection, connection, experimentation and integration. We believe growth (and magic) happens through critical connections and so we work to build and sustain relationships with all life. The principles and elements of Emergent Strategy have become the north star of this practice.

TRANSFORMATIVE, NOT TRANSACTIONAL

We practice emergence through cultivating transformative not transactional relationships within and between frontline groups, donors, supporters and foundations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We will be accountable and transparent to frontline movement leadership from people most impacted by oppression. An accountable relationship requires an ongoing process of feedback, learning and transformation in both directions. This feedback is used to improve our organizational processes, which we then communicate to the wider Resist community.

LIBERATION FROM NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Foundations, as part of the non-profit industrial complex, often enact organizational and funding strategies that replicate the logic of the systems causing harm. Resist is committed to breaking free from this system and modeling liberating ways foundations can disrupt philanthropy and resource movements. Read more in our theory of change.
FUNDING PRINCIPLES

"We believe that communities most directly impacted by systems of oppression have a claim to the financial resources historically and currently denied to them. We actively shifting from top-down grantmaking to bottom-up resource redistribution by recognizing that frontline community members should have ownership over the decision making in our fund allocation process. We commit to getting as much money as possible to frontline organizations.

REVERSING POWER DYNAMICS
We believe that philanthropy has replicated and reinforced patriarchy, racism, classism, cisgender heterosexism, ableism, and other destructive power structures. As a foundation, we will intentionally strive to reverse institutional power dynamics. We’re committed to doing so from a deep sense of trust in the expressed needs, approaches, insights, and experiences of frontlines communities. We hope to shift in ways that allow us to concede power to communities leading the work and remove ourselves as the gatekeepers to financial resources.

CULTIVATING A MOVEMENT ECOSYSTEM
We believe we have a unique role to support innovative and transformative movement building work. We’re committed to contributing to movement building in ways that honor frontline leadership. Our work includes support for frontline groups seeking to convene regionally and nationally to share resources, best practices, and collectively envision transformative change. In doing so, we contribute to building a stronger movement.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
We believe that building deep, intentional relationships with and between frontline communities is at the core of our resource distribution work. We look frontline groups to shape our evolving understanding of movement building and how to redistribute resources in the most impactful and accessible way.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING
Historically, Resist has funded groups that don’t have access to traditional streams of funding because of the radical, emergent, and transformative nature of their work. We’re committed to providing sustainable multi-year funding for such groups, while actively seeking out new groups engaged in bold, experimental movement building models.
We aim to practice anti-capitalism at Resist. Not just as a moral stance against the injustices brought about by global capitalism, but as practical action towards building a more people-centered world, organization, and fundraising program. Capitalism affords a level of attention, care, and power to the wealthy not often extended to poor and working-class communities. Running an anticapitalist and class-conscious fundraising program means that our donors, no matter the size of their contribution, receive equitable treatment.

In order to conserve our donors’ resources for our grantees and improve our environmental impact, we are committed to reducing the amount of paper we send out by making a concerted effort to, whenever possible and accessible, communicate with our donors electronically.

Resist is a people’s foundation. Our donors don't just redistribute their financial resources, they are also agents of change supporting the shaping of a new future. Our development strategy is a community organizing strategy that aims to move our donors and our organization from transactional relationships to transformative fundraising. We do this by implementing a grassroots fundraising strategy that ensures our organization is sustained by many individual donors from all socioeconomic backgrounds with a deep commitment to justice and liberation.

Read more about the political framework for Grassroot Fundraising here.
We believe we are winning. Resist has the unique vantage point of bearing witness to incredible feats by organized communities across the country. “What we pay attention to grows” and we want to amplify how we’re winning in the most beautiful ways. While many organizations rely on despair, despondency, and crises as their emotional vehicles for communications and fundraising, we believe in sharing the reality that we see: although frontline communities are facing multiple oppressions, they are radical stewards pushing the boundaries of what we deem is possible and winning.
FINANCE AND BUDGETING PRINCIPLES

When making these decisions we continuously ask, “Does this make more resources available to the movement for justice and liberation?”

MISSION ALIGNED, MOVEMENT CENTERED
We prioritize expenses that will bring us closer to meeting our organizational mission of redistributing resources and amplifying the stories of the frontlines. We hold our internal value of centering communities most impacted by systemic oppression when choosing vendors and consultants. When making these decisions we continuously ask, “Does this make more resources available to the movement for justice and liberation?”

HONORS CORE MISSION SUPPORT
We consider ‘overhead’ as core mission support. We acknowledge that resourcing our organizational strengthening work, paying our staff a living wage and investing in our fundraising efforts are integral parts of our organization’s success. Focusing our resources on programmatic work and not investing in ‘overhead’ leaves a gap that ultimately affects our ability to meet our mission. Learn more here.

INTERCONNECTED AND INTERDEPENDENT
We understand that our work lives within an organizational ecosystem that is connected to, and dependent on, our finances and budgeting. We ensure that our staff collective members are in open conversation with our Director of Finance to identify budget implications for our work and ensure coordination.

RESPONSIVE AND INTERGENERATIONAL
At Resist, we acknowledge that our resources have spanned generations of movement builders, artists, and healers and likely will continue to do so. If we want to be here for another 5 decades, we’ll have to use an intergenerational lens in our budgeting practices to ensure the health and sustainability of the organization.

Our budget is used as a roadmap and a tool for internal accountability to ensure we’re being accountable to our internal processes and priorities, we maintain a nimble budget through a phantom line item that allows us to be responsive to the immediate needs of the movement that may not have been budgeted for previously. This allows us to better live into our mission-aligned, movement centered principle.

SIMPLE, TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE
We’re committed to transparency and accountability. We commit to: using language that’s accessible, creating spaces for learning, and ensuring we have two-way exchanges for information and feedback between all members of the staff collective. We are committed to implementing learning into our finance process to ensure we’re being accountable internally and externally.