



2025

Annual Reflection

Mobilizing Resources for Justice



A Year of Profound Change

The last year has included some of the most profound challenges to our vision of a just world in our lifetimes. Attacks on immigration, climate disasters, rising violence and war in the US and globally, and ongoing assaults on democratic safeguards have all made the need for philanthropy to step up unequivocally clear.

As long-time practitioners who believe deeply in the power of community-led solutions, investing in movement work, and funding justice, we navigated our changed landscape with a mix of feelings. We held two things simultaneously: a sense of familiarity — communities have vocalized and mobilized against these injustices for generations — and profound uncertainty, as attacks on institutions arrived with unprecedented scale and speed.

This was a year of reckoning with one's responsibility to community and the preservation of vital movement work. It demanded nimble action to live into that responsibility.

Our shift away from a traditional impact report and toward an annual reflection was driven by the recognition that in 2025 the practice of sharing knowledge based in humility, trust, and generosity served as a lifeline time and again as members of our field sought to navigate radical new circumstances. We decided to center the lessons, observations, and insights we gleaned as we took bold strides in our work to meet clients, ourselves, and a changing world.

As we continue to show up, live our values, and learn to meet present needs while preparing for a more just future, we offer this reflection as a synthesis of our shared knowledge, underlining that we do not hold all of the answers. Rather our collective liberation lies in the united, imperfect efforts and wisdom of our communities.

On behalf of the entire Ktisis Capital team, thank you for being on this journey with us.

Jason

Jason Franklin
Founder & Principal
Ktisis Capital

About Us

Our Mission

Ktisis Capital advises individual donors, families, foundations, and philanthropic collaboratives to mobilize resources to advance racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

[Learn more about our values-guided work here.](#)

Services

Strategy & Program Design
Research
Program & Operational Support
Learning
Governance
Grantmaking

[Learn more about our services here.](#)



Impact by the Numbers

At Ktisis Capital, we recognize that justice takes many forms and the path to systemic change requires addressing interconnected challenges across multiple sectors and movements.

We believe that moving money better means not just increasing the quantity of philanthropic dollars flowing to progressive causes, but improving the quality of giving through thoughtful strategy, strong partnerships, and nimble approaches that respond to emerging needs and opportunities.

24 clients we've
partnered with

For 2025 philanthropic giving
Ktisis directly advised

\$103 million

Our clients collectively granted

\$1.2 billion

and managed combined assets of

\$14 billion

Themes of our Learning

Foundations & Grantmakers

Disentangling Legal Risk from Reputational Risk

In 2025, some funders became increasingly reticent to support bold work or speak publicly about their values due to political chaos and the heightened risk of unwanted exposure. It's important to note that risk often comes in two forms: legal and reputational.

Legal risk is relatively easy to address by adhering to compliance protocols or listening to legal counsel. Reputational risk, by contrast, requires a different toolkit: proactive communications strategies, messaging, and stakeholder engagement. **When the two forms of risk are conflated, the result is often for funders to pull back in favor of risk mitigation.**

But avoiding risk doesn't make it go away – it just drops it to the shoulders of organizations with less positional power. Funders seeking to maximize their impact must distinguish between each form of risk and develop appropriate response plans.

Legacy Isn't The Point

We advise a family foundation that does grantmaking around climate issues and voter engagement. The patriarch of the family, nearly 100 years old, spent most of his professional, civic, and philanthropic life working on climate justice and environmental issues.

In 2025, he watched Trump 2.0 dismantle decades of regulatory and policy wins in months. But he did not withdraw nor grieve – **he became more engaged, sharper, indignant, and insistent** on the urgency of the crisis we face. He advocated, pushed, connected people, leveraged political capital, and moved hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Institutional Power & Pace

Supporting a foundation team through a highly complex and politically charged moment reinforced for me how sometimes **the most impactful intervention** is slowing the work down rather than accelerating it.

Creating space to step back, examine positional power, and look honestly at what the field and grantees were signaling helped clarify where urgency was real and where it was internally generated.

The experience reminded me that **foundations don't just respond to moments; they set conditions and field instincts**, whether intentionally or not.

Themes of our Learning

Families & Individual Donors

Long Arc Influence

Engaging with a multigenerational family, particularly observing how the founding generation continues to guide the arc of their giving, challenged my instincts. At times, the work felt frustrating. We weren't moving grantmaking in the near term, and progress didn't look like decisions or dollars flowing.

And yet, in conversations with the second generation, we saw early sparks. **They were beginning to name responsibility, wrestle with power, and imagine their future role as agents of change rather than passive inheritors.** The lesson for me is that in family philanthropy, long-arc strategy isn't always inertia, but a deliberate way to steward values, influence, and resources toward lasting change.

Beginning with Basics

Human needs have to be addressed before anything else. We were hired to support a family foundation client with strategic refinement, but the work quickly revealed something deeper. Most of our time ended up focused on helping the newest generation of a family foundation create agreements about how they wanted to exist and work together. **Through listening circles, we surfaced long-held tensions and patterns that had never been talked about openly, a reminder that strategy only works when relationships are healthy and human needs are acknowledged.**

The Dual Nature of Philanthropic Power

Philanthropy carries both privilege and burden, a duality that is often ignored.

Donors wield the power to direct significant resources toward the causes and communities they believe in, a privilege that comes with status and influence. Yet with this power also comes the responsibility of deploying capital wisely, to avoid squandering resources that could otherwise create meaningful change. This dynamic can cause some donors to become **overly metrics-driven, succumbing to "paralysis by analysis"** as they strive to make data-informed decisions.

Effective donor organizing requires that we wrestle with this burden – the fear of making mistakes and the pressure felt from peers or advisors. By naming these internal dynamics explicitly and creating spaces where donors can grapple with the emotional and strategic weight of their choices, we can help them move into fuller alignment.

Themes of our Learning

Collaboratives & Networks

Trust Drives Progress

Strategy is only as strong as the trust that undergirds it. Across client engagements, the most durable progress came not from perfectly designed plans, but from clarity about decisionmaking, shared expectations, and an honest reckoning with power. I saw how quickly credibility can erode when process feels opaque, even when intentions are sound. The field continues to evolve, but the throughline is clear: **institutions that invest in transparency and relational accountability are better positioned to move from ambition to impact.**

Sharing Community & Clarity

This year's work with a network illuminated how much people in our sector want to be connected and how complicated it is to sustain that connection well in practice. In a moment of political fragility and deep uncertainty, people are not just seeking information sharing or proximity; **they are looking for partnership in facing what feels unstable and unresolved.** The experience highlighted how ambiguity about goals, roles, and decision-making can create quiet pressure, even in spaces grounded in deep trust and shared values. People are looking for more than connection; they want shared purpose and clarity about why they're together.

You Get What You Pay For

The philanthropic left's inadequate response to Trump 2.0 and rising authoritarianism is mostly framed as a failure of political will, coordination, or resources. Those diagnoses are not wrong, but often don't sufficiently state how decades of structural forces—market-based logic, business consulting hegemony, the vocationalizing of higher education, and white supremacist organizational culture—have quietly reshaped the sector's workforce, systematically eroding the specific competencies the moment most requires.

The result is a sector genuinely skilled at synthesizing research, producing reports, and articulating values with sophistication, but critically **deficient in organizing, power-building, and the relational capacities required to move people, shift institutions, and sustain coalitions under pressure.**

The sector needs to reckon honestly with what it has been paying for, institutionally and culturally, and to ask whether the workforce it has built is capable of the work the moment demands – particularly those at the top, CEOs and trustees, who have outsized power and influence.

Clients

Afeyan Foundation
Besen Family Foundation
Democracy Fund Voice
Freedom Together Foundation
Frey Foundation
Funders Committee Action Fund
Global Greengrants Fund
Hopper-Dean Foundation
Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University
Lohengrin Foundation
Movement Voter Fund
Movement Voter Project
National Center for Family Philanthropy
Ottinger Foundation
Peterffy Foundation Inc
Impact Drive Philanthropy Collaborative
TEW Foundation
The Carmack Collective
Why Not Initiative
WK Kellogg Foundation
Anonymous Families and Individuals

Thought Leadership



Funding Communities

[What Communities Teach Us About Power and Belonging](#)

[Narrative Work Matters Now More Than Ever For Immigrant Communities](#)

Fostering Change

[Reflections for Philanthropy Practitioners Working with Families and Staff](#)

[How to Give Better in 2026: Some Ideas to Kick the Year Off Well](#)

Rising to Defend Democracy

[A Funder Action Guide](#)

[A Donor Action Guide](#)

[Democracy Learning Community](#)

Funding Nonprofits

[Funding Healing: Why Philanthropy Should Center Mental Health and Wellness](#)

[When Nonprofits Are Under Attack, Security Must Be Funded](#)

Staff



Estevan Muñoz-Howard (he/him)
Senior Director

In 2025, I expanded my thought leadership, publishing pieces that explored the practice of philanthropy and provided guidance to funders navigating the challenges of our democracy.



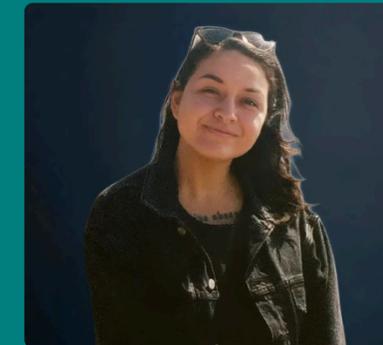
Michael Pratt (he/him)
Associate Director

In 2025, I joined a growing community of folks working to organize white men to join movements for racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice.



Alison Upton-López (she/her)
Senior Director

In 2025, I participated in a bootcamp to learn more about organizational change management.



ari vargas (ari/they/ella)
Learning Fellow

In 2025, I launched my own end-of-life and grief support consulting business!



Jakki Behan (she/her)
Executive Assistant

In 2025, we hatched the first chicks on the homestead.



Michele Bookie (she/her)
Operations Manager

In 2025, I continued to learn about myself as life kept moving forward and my oldest daughter graduated from high school. As she stepped into what comes next, I had to reconcile what that transition meant for me.



Cindy Mathew (she/her)
Senior Director

In 2025, I transitioned from Movement Voter Project to Ktisis. I'm excited to work with colleagues who share a vision for philanthropy as a force for social good, while continuing to grow in a new environment.



Raquel Gimeno (she/her)
Senior Associate

In 2025, I completed my master's degree and spent the year writing, facilitating learning, and supporting philanthropic partners through moments of reflection, transition, and growth.



Sonja Hansen (she/her)
Associate

In 2025, I moved from Communications Fellow to Associate!



Jason Franklin (he/him)
Founder & Principal

In 2025, I got married!

Affiliates



Letarik Amare (she/her)



Anna Baetan (she/her)



Ricky Benavidez, MPA
(he/him)



Vanessa Daniels (she/her)



Hali Lee (she/her)



Mijo Lee, JD (she/her)



Georgia Matthews, MA-SI
(she/her)



Jason McGill, PhD
(he/him)



Marjorie O'Hanley
(she/her)



Ayushi Vig (she/her)



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