May 3, 2018:

After five years leading Third Wave Fund (and ten years altogether working at Third Wave), Rye Young will be stepping down as Executive Director at the end of 2018.

Rye’s leadership, vision, and commitment to Third Wave Fund’s mission has transformed our work. Under Rye’s tenure, Third Wave re-launched in 2014 as a community fund in order to move resources towards communities hit hardest by systemic oppression at a time when funds were most needed; mobilized a growing community of grassroots donors and activists to support youth-led gender justice organizing; and remained unapologetically committed to centering the leadership of women of color, trans, queer, and gender nonconforming youth in social justice movements.

Some of our accomplishments during this time include:

Putting a vision of intersectional feminism into practice in philanthropy. Audre Lorde’s sage words, “there is no single issue struggle because we don’t live single issue lives” is alive and well at Third Wave, where we intentionally did away with issue silos and instead fund women, queer, and trans youth of color across all movements. Our gender justice framework explicitly links struggles to end misogyny, transphobia, and homophobia with all other social justice movements and centers the leadership of women of color and Black women in particular who introduced the world to intersectionality.

Building power and systemic change at the grassroots level through our grantmaking. We launched innovative grant programs with ‘power’ in the name of each fund because feminism is fundamentally about the redistribution of power. Our Mobilize Power Fund, Grow Power Fund, and Own Our Power Fund all uniquely support power-building efforts of community-led organizations. These funds have disbursed over $1 million and meet movement needs that are urgent and evolving as well as those that are long-term and persistent.
Creating a space for young people to organize for philanthropic justice. Philanthropy can feel like one giant gate to folks without wealth, and Third Wave is one of the few spaces where those who’ve been excluded from philanthropy can claim agency. We’ve built a cross-class base of 1,000 activist donors including 250 monthly and multi-year donors who have an active role in the redistribution wealth and power. The value of ‘nothing about us without us’ extends into our newly launched Sex Worker Giving Circle, which has created the first opportunity in the U.S. for sex workers to make decisions about funding that impacts their lives.

Third Wave Fund’s board is incredibly grateful for and proud of Rye’s work. While we are sad to see him go, we are also excited about the opportunity to bring new leadership into the organization, and are partnering with Strategies for Social Change to facilitate our Executive Director transition process. Please see here for a letter from Rye about his leadership transition and a job description for the next Executive Director.

Thank you, as always, for supporting our work.

Deesha Narichania & Hana Sun
Third Wave Fund Board Co-Chairs