Third Wave Fund’s Sex Worker Giving Circle Announces First Grantees

Grants from the only U.S.-based sex worker-led fund will total $200,000

BROOKLYN, NY - Today, the Sex Worker Giving Circle at Third Wave Fund announced its first round of one-year grants, to be given over fiscal year 2019. The grants, which range from $6,818 to $21,818, were awarded to Collective Action for Safe Spaces, G.L.I.T.S., Support Ho(s)e, Street Youth Rise Up, The Outlaw Project, Trans Women of Color Collective, the Urban Survivors Union, UTOPIA Seattle, WeCareTN, and Women With A Vision. Each grantee organization is by-and-for sex worker communities that are most impacted by oppression.

The Sex Worker Giving Circle (SWGC) is the first sex worker-led fund housed at a U.S. foundation. The SWGC’s 2018 cohort was cross-class, multi-racial and made up of 10 Fellows who are current or former sex workers, ages 21-54. With Third Wave’s training and support, the SWGC Fellows raised more than $100,000, designed the grantmaking process, and made all funding decisions.

Many of the SWGC grantees report that laws like SESTA/FOSTA make it harder for them to organize and to keep each other safe. At the same time, sex worker-led organizations remain critically underfunded, with just $1.1 million going to funding sex worker rights in the US, according to the most recently available statistics. The $200,000 in new grants from the SWGC represent much-needed resources for sex worker movements, particularly as grantees organize for the upcoming International Day to End Violence Against Sex Worker (IDEVASW) events on Dec. 17th.

SWGC grants will be used for a range of projects to build power and well-being within sex worker communities. In New Orleans, Women With A Vision is using a portion of the grant to organize their second annual Black & Brown Sex Workers Secondline as a part of their IDEVASW programming. A number of grantees, such as WeCareTN (Memphis) and The Outlaw Project (Phoenix), will use grant funds to support trans women of color who do sex work to resist criminalization and have more access to safety, employment, and political power.

“Sex workers are facing increasing discrimination and violence under SESTA/FOSTA, and many are struggling to make ends meet,” said SWGC Fellow Janis Luna, “which means that sex worker organizing is both more necessary and more under-funded than ever. The SWGC is a critical new funding source for sex worker movements.”

“We supported all kinds of projects, from healing initiatives for queer and trans Pacific Islanders at UTOPIA Seattle to safety and decriminalization efforts at Collective Action for Safe Spaces in DC to groups for rural drug users at the Urban Survivors Union in Greensboro, NC. Each one is by-and-for sex workers, because we know what works best for our own communities, and the SWGC Fellows wanted our funding priorities to reflect that,” said SWGC Fellow Sinnamon Love.
Third Wave Fund is an activist fund led by and for women of color, intersex, queer, and trans people under 35 years of age. We work to ensure that young folks are decision-makers at the cutting edge of philanthropy where they are commonly absent.