



# Big Apple Turnover


*A Philanthropic Recipe*



Co-Authors:  
Karen Scharff  
& Darren Sandow

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## Executive Summary

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Why are we seeing such rapid policy change in New York State, and what can funders do to maximize and expand the shift toward policies that address racial and economic equity? How do we make New York a national model for a justice agenda?

This paper summarizes the long-term demographic and economic shifts underlying the turnover of the legislature in New York State in 2018, the opportunities that turnover created for policy change in 2019, the lessons learned in 2019 about what it takes to advance a racial and economic equity agenda in this new context, and recommendations for funders on how to effectively support continued movement toward equity. **Our recommendations are aimed at making New York State a national leader on racial equity and a model for state and national policy making.**

### Pre-Turnover Drivers of Change

Runaway inequality has fueled public frustration and anger with the status quo. At the same time, demographic changes across the state have shifted the electoral base in key legislative districts in the NYC suburbs and upstate. These factors, combined with effective civic engagement and electoral work, and an increasingly activist political base, laid the groundwork for the Big Apple Turnover in the 2018 elections and 2019 legislative session.

By 2035, people of color will be the majority in New York State. As people of color move from cities to suburbs and small towns, we are seeing even the most gerrymandered districts become more competitive. The economic and demographic shifts have had a particularly strong impact on the electorate on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley, and we expect similar shifts to impact upstate communities in the coming years.

In addition to economic and demographic change, the national political context has shifted dramatically since 2016, with increasing polarization leading to greater mobilization and heightened demands from primary voters. This too had an impact on New York's legislative races in 2018, and then on the 2019 policy decisions made by the state's lawmakers.

### 2018: Big Apple Turnover

The economic and demographic shifts, new political activism, long-term base-building and civic engagement, as well as dynamic candidates with ambitious campaigns, brought a massive turnover in the NY State Senate in 2018. The Senate gained 15 new members, and went from 31 Republicans, 23 Democrats, and 9 Democrats who worked with the Republicans (63 total) to 23 Republicans and 40 Democrats. The seats that shifted from Republican to Democrat were all in areas experiencing demographic change and intensive organizing.

In addition to the party shift, seven incumbent Democrats were defeated in primaries by community-based challengers. The seven primary winners were all women and/or people of color and ran on an equity agenda, bringing a significant shift to the composition and policy goals of the Senate Democrats. The primaries also put an end to the Independent Democratic Conference, and all 40 Democrats are now unified under one Majority Leader.

Many grassroots groups, community organizations, labor unions and local activists had invested in building the civic engagement, issue demands, direct electoral capacity and energy that fueled the new candidacies and the rare defeats of incumbents. These groups and grassroots leaders were motivated by their determination to end the barrier to equitable policy change that was created by the Independent Democratic

Conference and the power of the Republican Majority. As a result, the electoral victories unleashed ambitious intensive efforts to win major policy shifts in 2019.

### 2019: Fast Progress Toward Racial Equity

The 2018 electoral turnover created an opening for transformational policy change. Many years of intensive base-building, advocacy and strategic organizing, combined with immediate statewide post-election issue campaigns, took advantage of that opening and unprecedented policy changes were enacted during the 2019 legislative session.

In this paper, we examine the experiences of two of those campaigns: Housing Justice for All and Greenlight NY. In analyzing these two efforts, we found shared lessons that can inform future funding decisions. Both campaigns included the following key components:

- ✓ Statewide alliances that brought upstate and downstate forces together in one unified strategy. Intensive work was done to create a shared campaign and prevent the opposition from creating an upstate-downstate divide.
- ✓ Base-building and grassroots leadership development to elevate the voices and power of those directly impacted by the proposed policies. For some of the groups this included civic engagement, and for c4 organizations direct electoral involvement, which in turn gave them leverage with the elected officials.
- ✓ Multi-year funding support that made the base-building, coalition building and policy development possible, so that groups were ready to move fast as soon as the electoral outcomes created an opening.
- ✓ Central coordination. Both campaigns were led by trusted organizations that had the capacity and commitment to build the campaign long before the start of the legislative session.
- ✓ Flexible funding. In addition to long term support, both campaigns benefited from an infusion of project funding at the right moment. They also benefited from organizations using their general support funding to take on the immediate opportunity. Conversely, both campaigns suffered from the lack of c4 funding for grassroots lobbying and direct-action tactics.
- ✓ Local and state/national funders working together. Local funders helped their local grantees connect to statewide coalitions and bring their local voice and perspective to statewide policy discussions. They also funded the statewide groups to coordinate and support the regional work. State and national funders supported the statewide groups who led the campaigns, and in some cases collaborated with local funders and statewide groups to support the involvement of local groups.

### Moving New York State Toward Racial Equity

With the momentum created in 2018-19, plus the upcoming census, and then redistricting that will reflect demographic change, the next few years provide an incredible opportunity to further advance racial equity in New York State. The last sections of this paper provide detailed recommendations for funders and a summary list of ‘ingredients’ needed to capture the full transformational potential of this moment in history. The recommendations fall into three categories:

- ✓ Building the Power of Communities of Color – grassroots organizing, leadership development and training, civic engagement
- ✓ Supporting Coalitions – upstate/downstate collaboration, statewide staffing, regional hubs, unusual partnerships, local and national funder collaboration
- ✓ Communications – shifting the narrative, elevating voices of people of color, media training, educating the public to ensure accountability of policymakers

NY State policymakers are rapidly advancing an equity agenda, but at the same time the forces who oppose these shifts are fighting back. The future of New York's commitment to equity will depend upon the effectiveness of the groups who are demanding equity, and in turn on the investments made by funders in that work. Strategic investments that build upon the work done in 2019, and use the lessons we've identified, have the potential to truly transform NY policymaking for the long term, putting equity and justice at the center of policy decisions.

### National Impact

New York State has a critical role to play in any national strategy to address economic and racial justice and move forward an equity agenda. New York's growing populations of color in the suburbs and upstate, the recent shift of its state legislature to two houses committed to the goal of equity, its unique visibility in the national policy landscape as a media and finance center, and its robust advocacy and organizing infrastructure, give New York State the potential to lead the nation in developing and enacting equitable public policy.

This unrealized, yet growing potential provides an enormous opportunity for local, state and national funders to invest in supporting the groups that are shaping the future of New York, and by doing so, to have an impact not only on local communities and statewide policies, but also on the national agenda. While New York has begun to lead the nation on

some issues of equity and justice, further progress requires significant investment in building the power of the state's communities of color through local grassroots organizing and civic engagement, as well as investment in expanding the state's already robust capacities for statewide movement-building and coalition-building. These investments will be necessary not only to further advance equity, but also to defend New York's initial steps forward in 2019, which are already under attack.

### The Time is Now

The potential is great, but time is short. With the census and redistricting already upon us, and the backlash already building from the opponents of equity (and likely to escalate during the 2020 election cycle), it's essential that New Yorkers build on the momentum of 2018-19 by continuing to push the edge of the possible, further opening the 'Overton Window.' Achieving a long-term equity agenda requires funders and practitioners alike to move quickly to take advantage of the current opportunities and current climate, and to use this moment to solidify New York State as leader in racial and economic equity.



STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS THAT BUILD UPON  
THE WORK DONE IN 2019, AND USE THE  
LESSONS WE'VE IDENTIFIED, HAVE THE  
POTENTIAL TO TRULY TRANSFORM NY  
POLICYMAKING FOR THE LONG TERM, PUTTING  
EQUITY AND JUSTICE AT THE CENTER OF POLICY  
DECISIONS.



## I. Intro/Overview

Earlier this year, Unbound Philanthropy asked Ross Consulting to provide an analysis of what it would take to advance a racial and economic equity agenda in New York State, especially considering the shifts that took place in the legislature in 2018. Unbound had recently started funding in New York State, and wanted to strategically build its funding program and highlight the state's impact in leading and shaping policy-making in states across the country. The Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund added funding to the project so that the consultants could include more regional analysis and recommendations relevant to local, place-based funders. The result is this report, which assesses the long-term demographic and economic shifts underlying the turnover of the legislature in New York State in 2018, the opportunities that turnover created for policy change in 2019, and the lessons learned in 2019 about what it takes to enact transformational policy changes in this new context.

At the end and in various sections throughout, we make recommendations for funders based on those lessons. These are designed to be useful to a wide range of funders, from national foundations, to place-based foundations, from politically engaged funders to strictly non-partisan and non-political foundations.

No less than four years ago, the Hagedorn Foundation<sup>1</sup> wrote a report entitled, Strengthening Democracy Through Voter Inclusion. It lamented the fact that the Pew Foundation had just rated New York the 48<sup>th</sup> worst state in the country for voter participation by 17 performance indicators. The report presented a series of recommended reforms that would elevate the state to the progressive powerhouse it once was. Hagedorn's nonprofit, governmental, and philanthropic partners loved the report but told foundation staff that there was NO WAY the recommendations could get implemented for at least a decade due to the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) and the dynamic of three white men in a room making political decisions on behalf of 19,950,000 residents.

Fast forward to 2019, two of the three white men are in jail and have been replaced by people of color—one of whom is a woman, the IDC was voted out of office and is now just a bad memory, many voting rights reforms were passed and implemented, Housing Justice protections sailed through the senate and were signed into law, and incredibly, undocumented immigrants can now apply for and obtain drivers' licenses.

What was the recipe for the Big Apple Turnover and how do we keep the momentum going? What roles can different types of funders play? How can investments in New York impact communities across the country? The ingredients and suggested cooking recommendations follow:

- Section II provides the context of inequality in New York State prior to the Turnover.
- Section III assesses the demographic changes that drove the electoral shifts.
- Section IV explains the 2018 election results and how they impact NYS politics
- Section V analyzes the ways investment by funders made change possible
- Section VI provides a timeline of key upcoming decisions
- Sections VII and VIII provide recommendations for funding a racial equity agenda

## II. Pre-Turnover: Racial and Economic Equity (and Inequity) in New York State

To understand the significance and causes of the Turnover, some context is necessary. While NY has often led the nation on some steps toward equity, such as the \$15 minimum wage and Paid Family Leave, it is still

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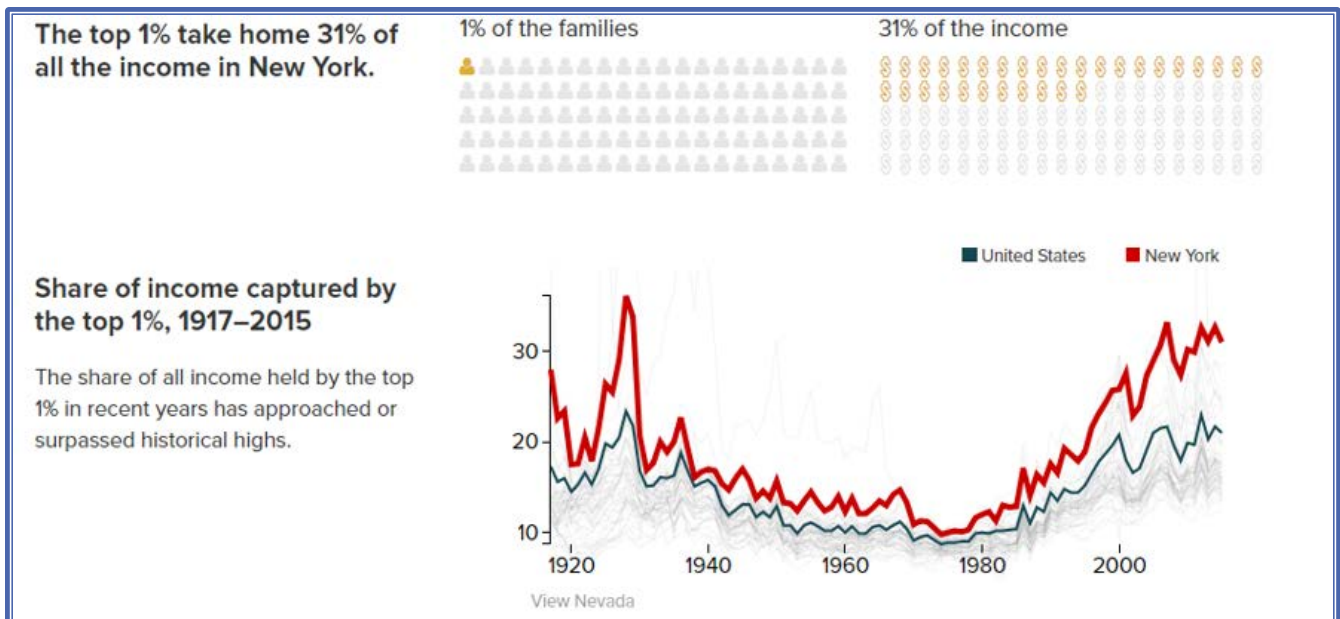
<sup>1</sup> The Hagedorn Foundation was a spend down foundation based on Long Island that closed its doors on 12/31/17.

economically one of the most unequal states in the nation, and many of the policies enacted in the past at the state level have maintained or increased the inequities that deepen both economic and racial inequality.

New York has the greatest economic inequality of all 50 states. The Economic Policy Institute analyzed the ratio of the income of the top 1% to the income of the bottom 99% nationally, as well as in each state, and found that New York State was the worst. In fact, the average annual income of the top 1% is 44.4 times as high as the average annual income of the bottom 99%<sup>2</sup>.



Economic Inequality is not new, but it has increased drastically since 1980. In NY, the top 1% of earners take home 31% of all the income. The share of income captured by the top 1% is rising more rapidly in NY than in the US<sup>3</sup>.



The impact of inequality is worse for communities of color. For example, the unemployment rate for people of color in New York is higher than for white New Yorkers, and the median hourly wages are lower (with the gap in wages growing over time)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute, *The Unequal States of America* <https://www.epi.org/multimedia/unequal-states-of-america/#/New%20York>

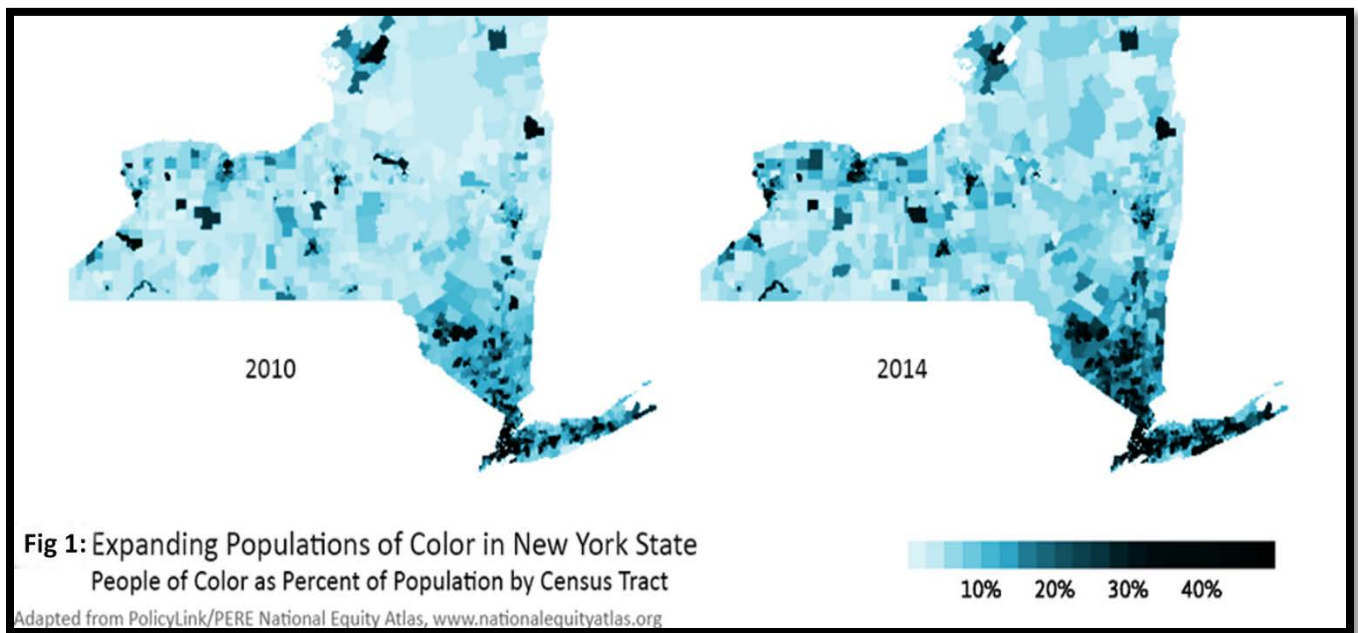
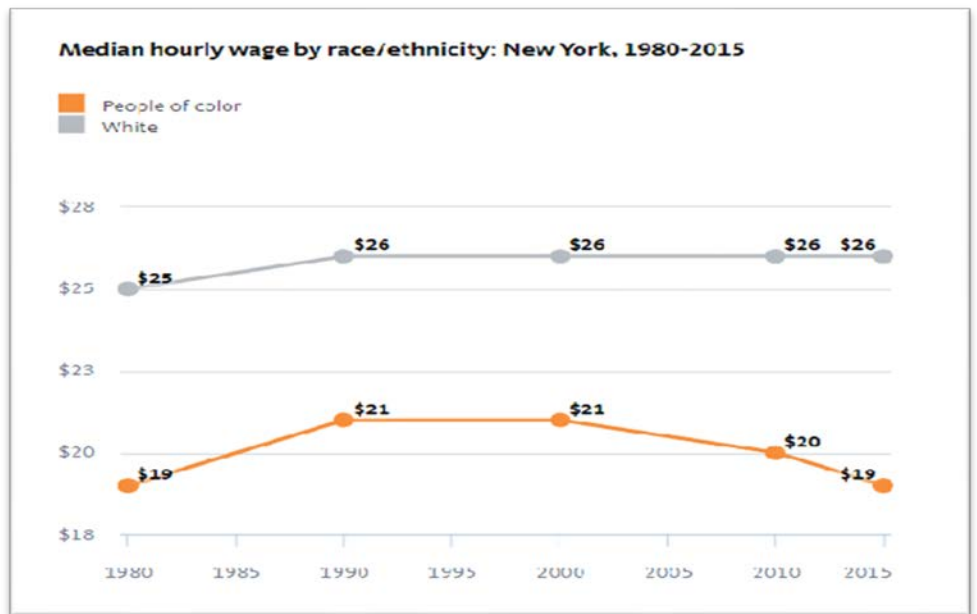
<sup>3</sup> Economic Policy Institute, *The Unequal States of America* <https://www.epi.org/multimedia/unequal-states-of-america/#/New%20York>

<sup>4</sup> [https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New\\_York](https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New_York)

The deep economic inequality and racial inequity in New York State led to dissatisfaction with status quo leadership and helped fuel advocacy campaigns and electoral challenges. The boiling frustration and increased organizing combined with demographic shifts and a rapidly changing national political context to transform election outcomes in 2018.

### III. Pre-Turnover: Demographic Change Underlies Electoral and Policy Changes

Demographic changes have fueled the shifting power dynamics throughout New York, and policymaking is finally reacting to these swings. Over a mere four-year span, you can see (Fig 1 below) the vast changes in Rochester, the Hudson Valley, Syracuse, Buffalo, and Long Island, some of which contributed to the election results of 2018<sup>5</sup>.

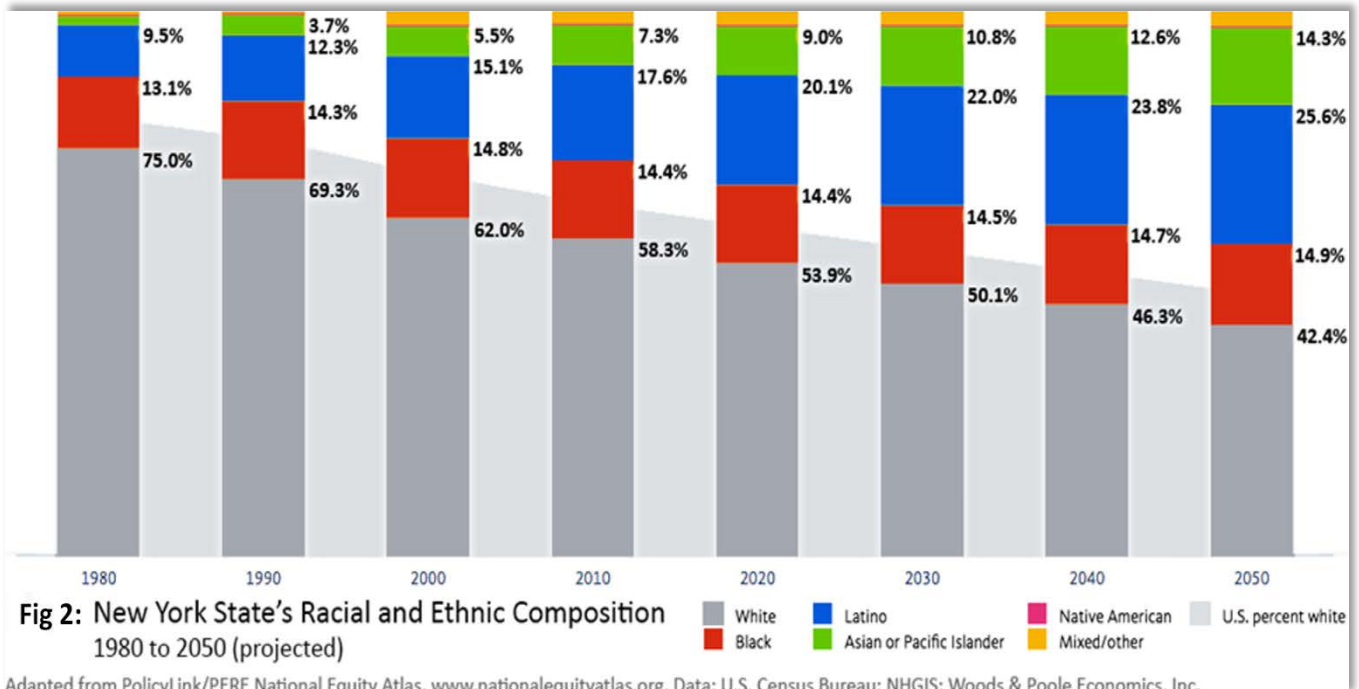


Taking those trends a step further, in Figure 2 below, PolicyLink - PERE National Equity Atlas project that around the year 2035, New York will become a minority-majority state. The white population will hit 48.2% representing a 36% drop in population growth from its peak of 75% in 1980. In direct contrast, the Latino

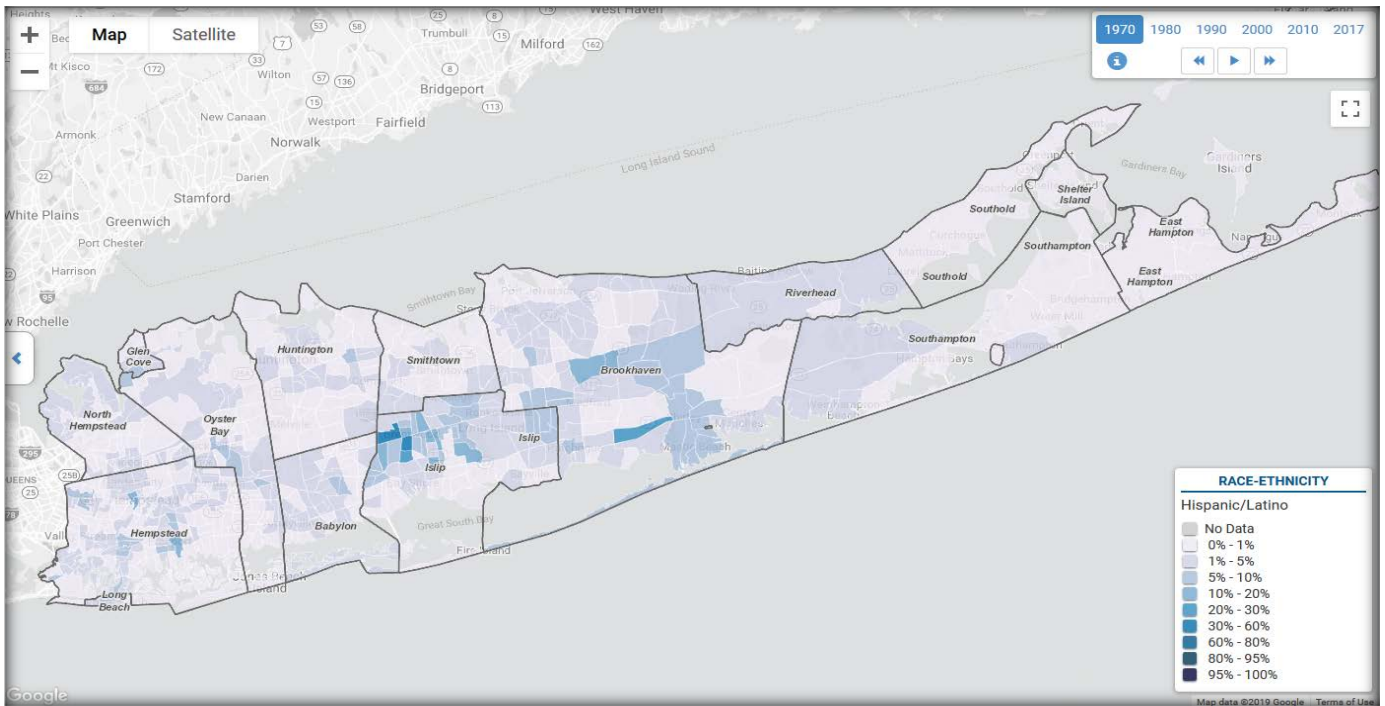
<sup>5</sup> Adapted from data from [https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New\\_York](https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New_York)



population will have grown 141% during the same time period to represent 22.9%, from its low of 9.5% in 1980. Blacks will be 14.8% and Asians, 11.7%<sup>6</sup>.

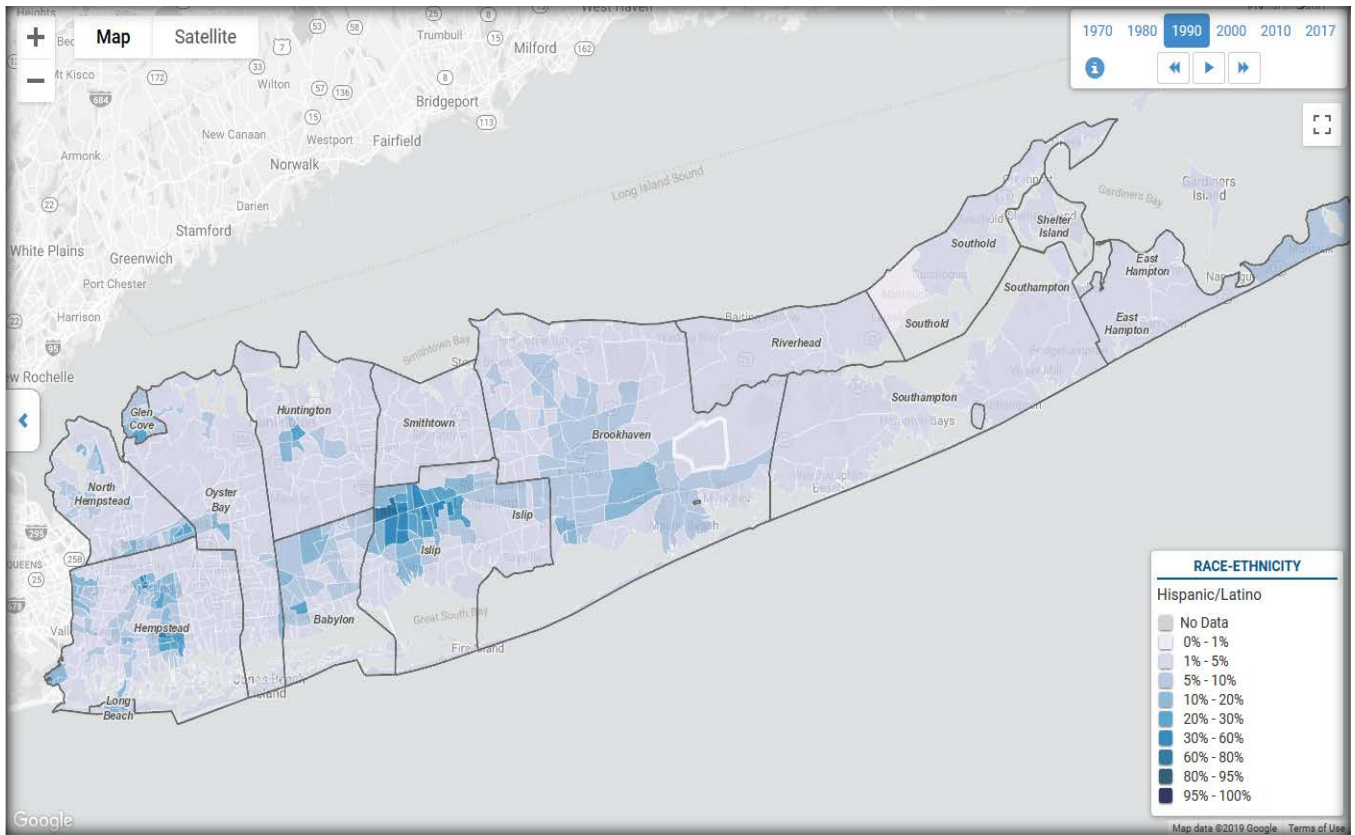


If you have doubts about these projections, look below at the growth of the Latino community on Long Island since 1970.

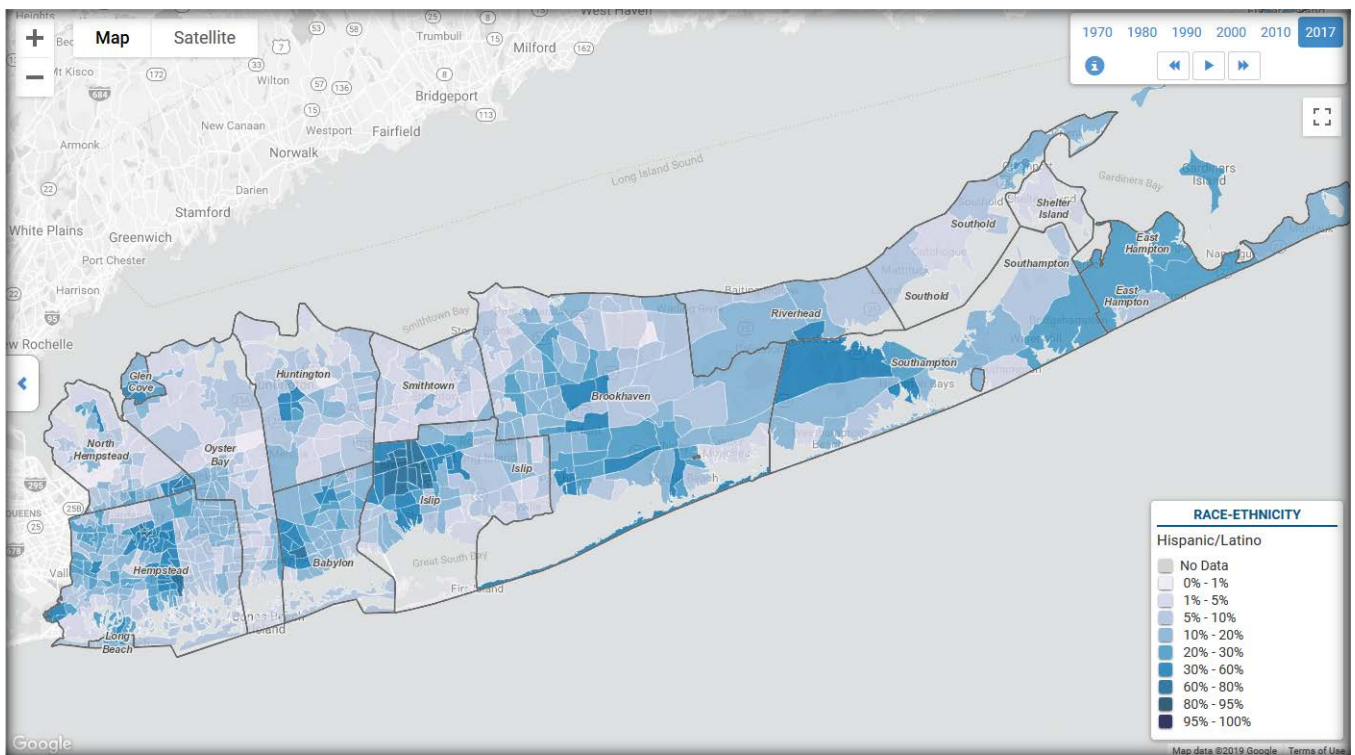


Long Island 1970

<sup>6</sup> [https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New\\_York](https://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries/New_York)

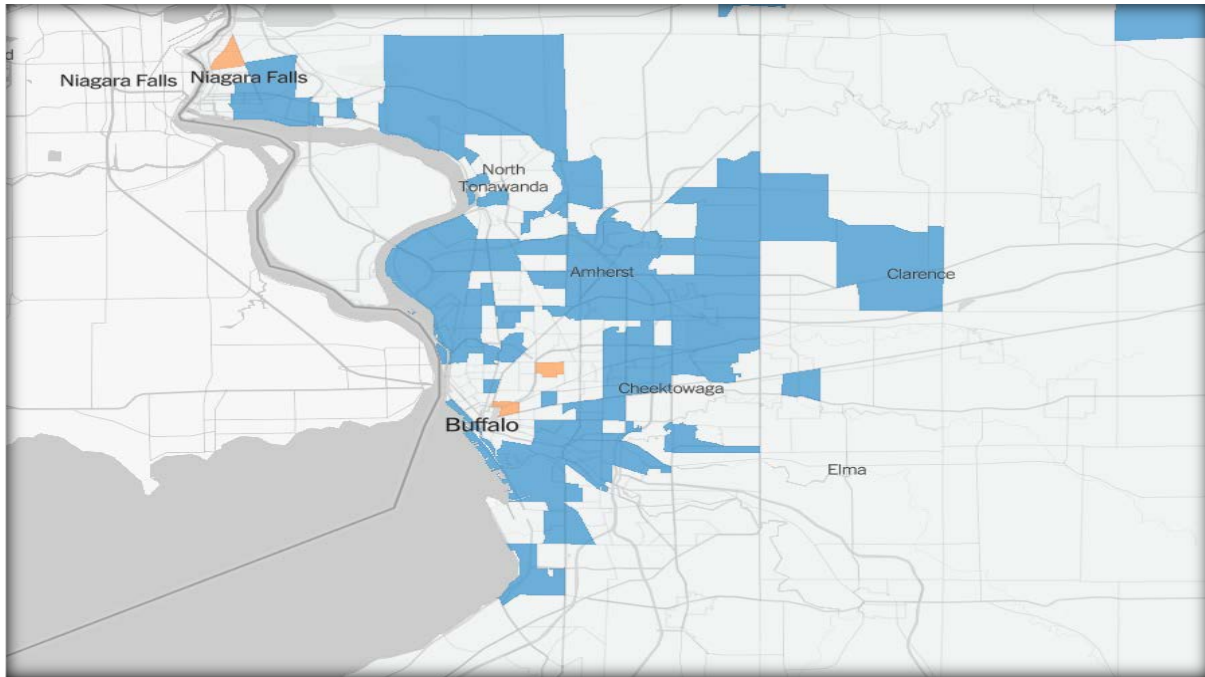


Long Island 1990



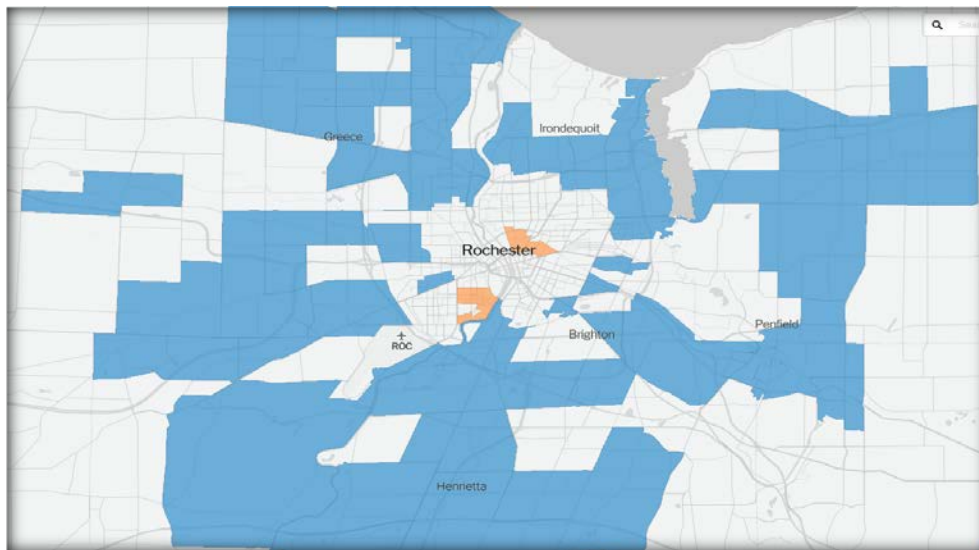
Long Island 2017

One might think these trends are merely a phenomena limited to downstate New York, however a recent series conducted by the New York Times will quickly dispel that myth. Below, you'll see a series of charts demonstrating the growth of the nonwhite populations in the suburbs of some of the largest cities throughout upstate New York<sup>7</sup>.



Neighborhood Growth: 2000 to 2017

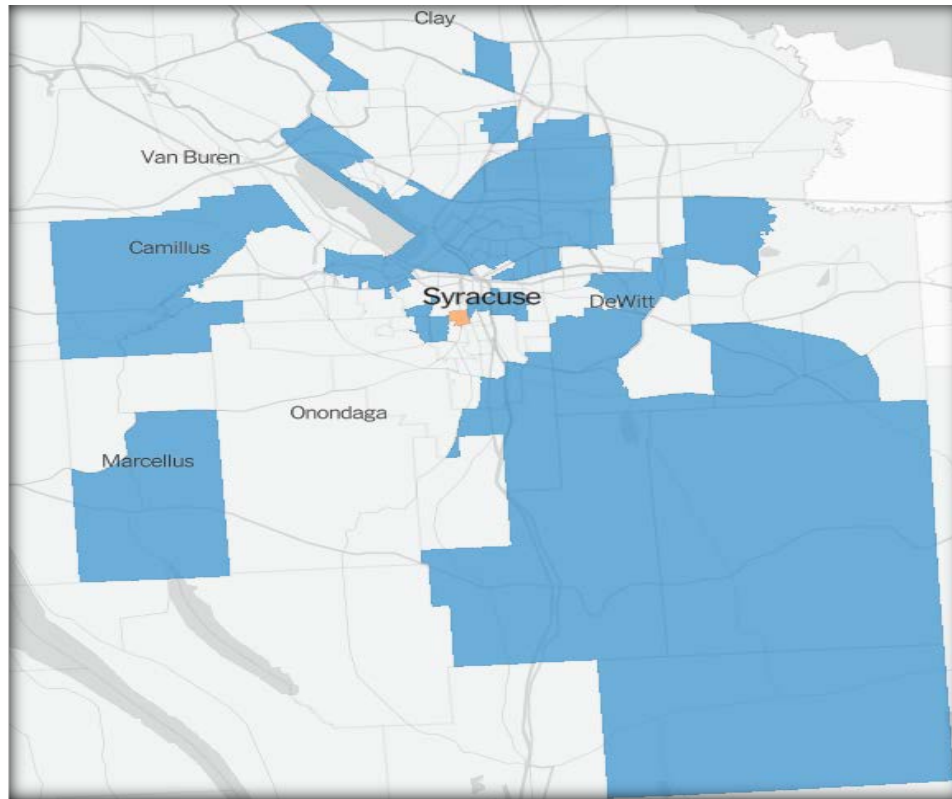
 Growth of White Community    Growth of Nonwhite Population



Neighborhood Growth: 2000 to 2017

 Growth of White Community    Growth of Nonwhite Population

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/27/upshot/diversity-housing-maps-raleigh-gentrification.html>



Neighborhood Growth: 2000 to 2017

- Growth of White Community
- Growth of Nonwhite Population

Even though demographic analyses project that a majority of New Yorkers will be people of color by 2035, this does not mean that racial equity will magically become the status quo. One need not look further than Texas, Arizona or New Mexico to see how the Latino populations are treated in those states despite their outsized numbers. Investments by funders now, and over the next few years, would not only continue the transformational momentum that began in 2018, but would also strengthen groups’ capacity in critical ways including: building the capacity for coalitions to continue holding officials accountable to their constituents; strengthening ongoing leadership development, including preparing diverse candidates to run for office; and enabling groups to build public support for policy reforms that can help bring about true equity throughout the state.

#### IV. 2018 Elections Transform the State Senate

The New York State Senate changed dramatically in 2018. Seven incumbent Democrats lost their primaries to community-based challengers who ran on issues of equity and fairness, and eight previously Republican seats were won by Democrats, most of whom ran on an agenda of change. The Senate went from a Republican majority to a Democratic majority, and more importantly, it shifted to a majority that is dominated by senators committed to racial equity.



The Nation<sup>8</sup> summed up the electoral impact in its post legislative session article about the transformation of the senate by saying:

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*“A year ago, any of these policies would have been impossible to achieve. What changed? The big shift that enabled such massive wins for tenants, for immigrants, for the climate, and for all New Yorkers came last September when seven Working Families Party candidates ousted seven Democrats who had thrown control of the state Senate to Republicans.”*

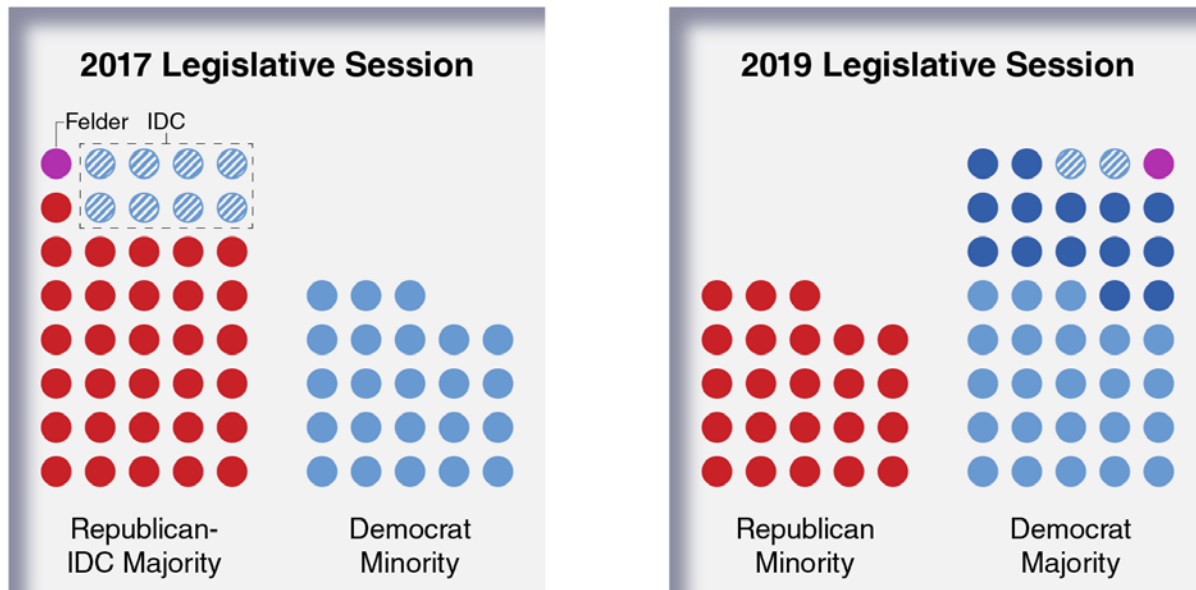
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### Change in Majority

Since the NY legislature operates with rules that give the majority party virtually full control of the process and the proceedings, the shift to a Democratic Majority meant new leadership, new committee chairs, and a shift in the policy agenda of the Senate and therefore of the legislature.

- Prior to the election, the Republicans in the senate held 31 seats, and 1 Democrat supported the Republican leadership, providing the 32 votes necessary for Republican control. In addition, the ‘Independent Democratic Conference’ (IDC) of 8 Democrats worked in coalition with the Republicans to run the Senate. The mainstream Democratic conference had 23 members.
- After the 2018 election, the IDC is gone, and there are now 40 Democrats and 23 Republicans.

The eight seats that shifted from Republican to Democratic were all in areas experiencing demographic change and intensive organizing. Four were on Long Island, three in the Hudson Valley, and one in a changing area of Brooklyn/Staten Island.



<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thenation.com/article/working-families-party-albany-new-york-state-senate/>



### [Change within the Democratic Conference of the Senate](#)

While a shift in which party controls the majority impacts the policy agenda, who is part of that majority is just as important to advance an equity agenda. Six of the eight members of the Independent Democratic Conference were defeated by community-based challengers, as was a seventh incumbent Democrat. The seven primary winners were all women and/or people of color (4 women; 3 men of color; 2 women of color), and all ran on an agenda of change, especially on issues that impact low income and working-class people, and communities of color. This significantly impacted the discussion and dynamics within the Democratic conference – from changing what issues are brought to the table, to what ends up under serious consideration with a possibility of passage.

### [Diverse, Inclusive, Leadership](#)

It is also worth noting the major demographic shifts in leadership. Leadership plays a key role in moving, or blocking, a racial equity agenda, especially in Albany which still has a ‘three men in a room’ structure of top-down decision-making. The partisan breakdown is no guarantee – both parties have long enacted policies that drive systemic racism. What is crucial is legislators and leaders who are committed to equity.

For the first time ever, a woman (Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Yonkers, District 35) is now part of the ‘three men in a room’ negotiations between the Governor, Senate and Assembly. For the first time ever, both houses are run by African American leaders (Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Bronx, District 83, and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins). The Senate shifts have also meant more women and more people of color leading key senate committees.

Less noticed, but equally as important, the Speaker chose Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Buffalo, District 141, as Assembly Majority Leader (the top leader under the Speaker). The Assembly Majority leader has traditionally been from upstate. In the past that has meant a white man, reflecting the traditional view of upstate as white and conservative. With Assembly-member Peoples-Stokes ascension to Majority Leader, upstate is now represented by an African American woman from the state’s second largest city -- a very different lens on upstate that can help drive an equity agenda.

### [Regional Differences](#)

With 40 members, the Senate Democrats have a solid majority and can pass legislation even when a few members disagree. However, the differences between their districts lead to some regional tensions between New York City, upstate, and the suburbs. The deliberation on housing issues, drivers’ licenses for immigrants, legalization of marijuana and other issues revealed the importance of those regional differences as new policies are put forth. As funders and advocacy groups consider statewide strategies, it will be important to take these regional differences into account, and to consider ways to engage communities in each region in key policy debates. Local funders often have deep knowledge of their region and can provide state and national funders with information, insights, and opportunities for collaboration.

## **[V. Strategic Investments that Turbocharged Transformation](#)**

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In early 2019, the Governor and state legislative leaders began to shift state policymaking toward increased racial and economic equity. For example, when the Governor announced his agenda for the first 100 days of his new term, he called it the “2019 Justice Agenda.” The newly elected legislature similarly came into office with the goal of passing early legislation to address critical inequities in the state.

As a result of policymakers’ commitment long-term advocacy and strong organizing work by many constituencies in every part of the state, significant new policies were enacted during the 2019 legislative session. Each of these policy changes reduced barriers to racial and economic equity, and there were several

significant structural reforms enacted that will create long term shifts in power and equity. From expanded voting rights to criminal justice reform, from tenant protections to climate justice, from drivers' licenses to farmworkers' rights, New York State became a leading state on policies that will advance equity.

The New York Times article summing up the session captured the momentous nature of the shift with its headline: "A Profound Democratic Shift in New York: We Seized the Moment." And their quote from the Working Families Party summed up the nature of the shift: "For far too long in New York, our government was the best government real estate and Wall Street donors could buy," said Bill Lipton, the New York director of the Working Families Party, a progressive third party. "Time and time again, the interests of the many were ignored, and the agenda of a wealthy few was enacted. That era is over."<sup>9</sup>

FROM EXPANDED VOTING RIGHTS TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM, FROM TENANT PROTECTIONS TO CLIMATE JUSTICE, FROM DRIVERS' LICENSES TO FARMWORKERS' RIGHTS, NEW YORK STATE BECAME A LEADING STATE ON POLICIES THAT WILL ADVANCE EQUITY.

Demographic changes helped fuel electoral shifts, but those shifts would not have happened without long-term strategic investments in civic engagement and base-building. Further electoral shifts will continue building momentum for more policy changes that will move the state toward deeper racial equity. At the same time, even with electoral change, the dramatic policy shifts in 2019 would not have happened without substantial and

relentless organizing by grassroots groups across the state. Long-term (and short-term) investments by foundations made that organizing possible.

We took a closer look at two of the biggest policy victories in 2019 – the new rent laws and driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants – to identify key lessons for funders on what worked, and what more was needed. These examples also show two different approaches to how groups collaborated at the statewide level, how the upstate-downstate divide was bridged, how funding was shared, and how narratives were shifted to create the climate for such far-reaching policy shifts. There were similar statewide coalitions on the other big issues, including criminal justice reform, climate justice, and fair elections (campaign finance reform); we chose housing and drivers licenses as examples to show larger lessons.

[Upstate-Downstate Housing Alliance and Housing Justice for All](#)

The Upstate-Downstate Housing Alliance was formed in 2018 to lead the campaign to win strong tenant protections in the state legislature in 2019. It describes itself as "a diverse coalition of tenants, homeless people, manufactured housing residents, and advocates from across New York." It included groups from every part of the state: Long Island, New York City, Westchester County, the mid-Hudson Valley, the Capital Region, the Southern Tier, the Mohawk Valley, Finger Lakes, and Western New York.

New York Communities for Change brought together a core group of 12 statewide and regional groups and unified them around a shared statewide platform that called for "stronger tenant protections, an end to evictions, and an end to homelessness in New York."<sup>10</sup> Robust statewide outreach brought over 70 organizations into the coalition, and with them, brought the varying needs of tenants and homeless people in each region of the state into the first ever truly statewide strategy for housing equity.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/nyregion/albany-wrapup-legislature-ny.html>

<sup>10</sup> Core groups are listed here: <https://actionnetwork.org/groups/upstatedownstate-housing-alliance>.

The coalition's success in passing expanded rent regulation and new tenant protections far exceeded anyone's predictions. The real estate industry in NYC had long been one of the largest funders of election campaigns, including the Governor's re-election campaign, the Senate Republicans, the IDC, and key Assembly members. Albany watchers knew the political shifts of 2018 had reset the table, but still expected the real estate industry to successfully block major changes. In fact, after the legislative agreement was announced, the New York Times headline read: "*Titans of Real Estate in 'Shock' Over New York Rent Law Deal.*"<sup>11</sup>

### *Factors of Success and Impediments*

The key factors that led to success were: 1) True upstate-downstate collaboration and engagement; 2) long-term base-building among tenants; 3) a surge of additional funding for the final 6 months of the campaign, and an additional surge for the final month; 4) an organization that drove the creation and growth of the coalition and provided central staff for the coalition as a whole; 5) a wide range of groups involved from those who could do aggressive direct actions in multiple cities to those who could put a personal face and story to the fight in smaller communities, and 6) the strength of the electoral side of the movement.

**Upstate - Downstate collaboration** - Business interests, landlords and politicians in New York are all expert at using the upstate-downstate divide to weaken movements for justice and provide excuses for failing to address policies that increase inequality. As NY Communities for Change looked ahead to the expiration of rent laws in 2019, they knew that had to overcome that divide or it would be used to defeat them. They took several steps that created the level of deeper collaboration and solidarity that made victory possible:

- Investment by coalition leadership in relationship building among groups and grassroots leaders. They held four retreats before the campaign started with 40 to 80 leaders from across the state. The retreats built trust, helping to overcome the concerns from upstate groups that NYC leaders didn't understand upstate needs, and wouldn't fight for them. The groups all made an explicit commitment to fighting for each other's needs.
- Understanding regional differences. Coalition leaders took the time to learn about the issues in each community and build a shared understanding of the differing needs in different parts of the state.
- Building a rural-urban-suburban coalition, and building a multi-racial coalition, including white rural tenants (including manufactured homes), while also maintaining a racial justice lens. This made it so that all legislators could 'see' their constituents in the campaign.
- Organizing to get legislative hearings across the state. The hearings the legislature held were an effective tool for engaging people statewide, and enabled legislators to hear and see the voices of impacted people in each region.

**Long term funding for building a base and leadership of directly impacted people** - The victory was largely due to the consistent, persistent and large base of tenants who were organized and vocal, mostly in NYC. While the upstate-downstate alliance was crucial, the depth and breadth of the tenant base in NYC drove the issue and made it impossible for NYC legislators to come home without passing strong tenant protections. This type of transformational policy needs legislative champions who won't back down, and the NYC tenant base (and electoral history, see below) made that possible. This tenant base existed and was mobilized because NYC housing/tenant groups were consistently funded, enabling them to build a base

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/12/nyregion/landlord-rent-protection-regulation.html>

over many years. Key funders included Ford Foundation, Neighborhood Funders Group, Mertz Gilmore and the City of NY. It's an important side note that many groups had significant NYC government funding over the years - this funding was primarily for tenant assistance, and those assistance programs helped create a strong base of active tenants who knew their rights and wanted to fight for more rights.

Upstate, there were only a few pockets of a long term strong tenant base, (most notably Rochester Citywide Tenants Union, United Tenants of Albany, and Community Voices Heard in Newburgh), but the Public Policy and Education Fund of NY (PPEF) had built a base of low and moderate income people through their parent-organizing and criminal justice reform work in many upstate communities, and was able to engage that base in the campaign. PPEF's Upstate Housing Coordinator was also able to engage smaller housing groups in communities across upstate and support their involvement in the Alliance, including tenants in cities like Binghamton, Kingston, and Syracuse. For example, PPEF provided the new Syracuse Tenants Union with member training, leadership training, policy information, and campaign materials. In addition, the Upstate Coordinator traveled there several times to meet with local elected officials with the tenants, to help tenants provide testimony to the City Council, and to help facilitate member meetings. With that support and training, STU was able to play an important role in the campaign including testifying at the Senate hearing in Syracuse, hosting an Upstate Convening (with PPEF support), and having their members share their stories, which helped galvanize other upstate groups and helped anchor the work in the direct experience of upstate tenants.

**Surge of funding at the time when there is an opportunity to win** - It was critical that a set of funders had the flexibility to put significant resources into the coalition to make it possible to quickly scale up in late 2018, after it became clear that a new Senate majority created the possibility of significant steps toward housing equity. It was also important that funding went to the shared effort, that the coalition leadership was able to decide how to best allocate and distribute it, and that funders (national, state and place-based) were aligned. The added funding paid for a statewide coordinator and media team and was shared with key groups via subgrants. In addition, the NoVo Foundation provided support for an Upstate Coordinator (via Public Policy and Education Fund of NY) and some upstate organizing on short notice with a grant in late 2018. This was not a project they had planned to fund, and they had not previously funded statewide work in this way. NoVo's ability to provide this funding on short notice was critical to the success of building upstate involvement and voice in the Alliance.

What else could have helped? There were several important funding challenges that weakened the campaign and put added pressure and stress on the leading organizations in the Alliance:

- Amount - While fundraising was successful, there was not enough money raised to pay for all the work that was really needed. The coalition desperately needed more central staff, including a full-time digital coordinator and a logistics coordinator, but could not afford either. In addition, every group at the core of the campaign had to supplement the project funding by using general support resources to do enough work to win. This not only placed stress on the groups, but it also meant that in those regions where groups were not already engaged enough to put their own resources into the fight, there was a lack of adequate mobilization. Earlier and more substantial funding of smaller and local tenant groups upstate would have significantly strengthened the campaign's ability to win policies that met the needs of upstate tenants.
- Timing - The campaign would have been stronger had the surge of funding come earlier. The Alliance raised \$650,000 into the coalition plus additional money that went directly to groups, but a lot of that funding came at the end when donors saw the campaign in the news every day. They

needed earlier money to build the coalition relationships and structure, and much earlier to build a strong enough base upstate.

- **Limitations on Funding for Grassroots Lobbying** - The limited amount of funding available for the lobbying activities of the campaign was a barrier for many groups. Many human services providers are particularly cautious about lobbying and advocacy due to their funding sources, and this was even truer of groups outside NYC. The groups that had general support c4 funding used those funds to pay for their lobbying costs, but that put heavy demands on their limited general support resources. Other groups, especially 501(c)3 groups outside NYC, were not able to do the level of grassroots lobbying work that was necessary.

**Early commitment and central coordination from a lead organization** -- New York Communities for Change put their resources into developing, creating and driving forward the Alliance. While having a broad coalition is important to moving transformational policy change, it is often the case that there needs to be a core organization (or two) for whom the issue is their top priority. The investment made by NYCC (and their sister organization NY Community Organizing Fund, Inc.) in senior staff time to build relationships and trust, raise funds and kick off the coalition was essential.

It was also important that the Alliance decided to dedicate some of the shared funding to pay for a statewide coordinator and an upstate coordinator. Groups felt those coordinators were accountable to the whole coalition, and they had the capacity to work with all the groups consistently.

**A wide range of organizing tactics and organizational capacities** - The coalition included a range of groups that had different styles and approaches to the work. This proved to be an important asset, since different tactics worked at different stages of the campaign and in different regions.

AT THE SAME TIME, IT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT TO HAVE LOCAL, GROUPS THAT WERE ABLE TO BRING MEMBERS TO MEET WITH POLICYMAKERS AND SHARE THEIR PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT HOW EXISTING PRO-LANDLORD POLICIES WERE IMPACTING THEIR FAMILIES. THIS ENABLED LEGISLATORS OUTSIDE NYC TO LEARN ABOUT THE IMPACT CHANGE COULD HAVE FOR THEIR OWN CONSTITUENTS.

Aggressive direct-action tactics played an important role. There were groups within the Alliance that were able and willing to use direct action tactics that put significant community pressure on legislators. Not many groups could, or would play this role, but it was crucial that a few could and did. NYC legislators knew they had to deliver, and as the campaign built, key legislators outside NYC were feeling the heat too. Having c4 funding was crucial for this type of lobbying activity to be possible, and so was the willingness of some groups to suffer the backlash from elected officials and other insiders.


At the same time, it was also important to have local, groups that were able to bring members to meet with policymakers and share their personal stories about how existing pro-landlord policies were impacting their families. This enabled legislators outside NYC to learn about the impact change could have for their own constituents.

**Electoral power was critical** - No matter how strong the Alliance, or how smart and strategic the organizing campaign, no victory would have been possible had the Senate not been transformed by the 2018



elections. The victories in both the general and primary elections were crucial and would not have been possible without many years of civic engagement, base-building and direct electoral work by grassroots organizations, by labor unions and by the Working Families Party.

- Winning the Senate - The Republican majority had made clear that they were on the side of the real estate industry and intended to block reform as they had in every previous rent fight. Only a Democrat-controlled Senate would have been open to significant policy change on housing.
- Winning 2018 senate Democratic primaries - Even with a Democratic majority, the policy victories would not have been possible had those Democrats who were, backed by the real estate industry, remained in power. The defeat of seven incumbent Democratic senators by tenant champions not only eliminated some of the most pro-landlord Democrats, it also created a strong block of senators firmly committed to tenant protection. At the same time, the primaries also created the fear among the rest of the legislature in both houses that they too could be primaried if they failed to deliver for tenants in their district.
- It is also worth noting that many of the 2018 senate primaries were run on the narrative of fighting real estate (including the challenger's decision to refuse to accept real estate money for their campaigns). This narrative and commitment helped establish the pro-tenant framing and narrative for the legislative fight, which was a crucial factor.



AGGRESSIVE DIRECT-ACTION TACTICS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE. THERE WERE GROUPS WITHIN THE ALLIANCE THAT WERE ABLE AND WILLING TO USE DIRECT ACTION TACTICS THAT PUT SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY PRESSURE ON LEGISLATORS. NOT MANY GROUPS COULD, OR WOULD PLAY THIS ROLE, BUT IT WAS CRUCIAL THAT A FEW COULD AND DID.

### [Green Light NY Campaign](#)

Since the 2007 tragic rollout and calamitous capitulation of former Governor Eliot Spitzer's Executive Order to allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses, New York officials have been terrified to raise that specter again. Yet despite the ghost stories, in 2015, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) began laying the foundation for what would become the "Green Light NY" campaign at the National Immigrant Integration Conference, held in NY and hosted by NYIC.

It decided to tackle this issue because immigrants from across the state cited this as their number one need and request to the advocates with whom they worked, not because the political moment was right. Yet if it was going to be successful, NYIC would build the campaign on many of the key lessons learned from 2007: 1) There would need to be a truly statewide coalition with real participation and leadership from outside New York City. 2) It would need to create a phalanx of unlikely allies and messengers that would stand strong even during the inevitable pushback, and 3) It would need to build a durable and rapid response media campaign that would be both capable of educating the public and pushing back on misinformation.

To start, NYIC hired several new organizers – in Buffalo, Syracuse, Westchester and Long Island - with its own funds, as well as a \$100,000 seed grant from the Hagedorn Foundation. It worked with key allies such as the Fiscal Policy Institute to conduct an analysis of states with pro-driver's license policies and develop

both a fiscal impact study and an industry-specific impact analysis. At the same time, it worked with several key anchor groups in strategic locations across the state to form a group that would become the Campaign's official Steering Committee – a group that was critical throughout the campaign, managing different regions throughout the state with the NYIC leading as the state convener. (<https://greenlightnewyork.org/get-to-know-the-coalition/>).

Like Housing Justice for All campaign, the passage of Green Light NY in 2019 came as a welcomed surprise to supporters, funders, and officials. The elements of success were:

**Strong, Transparent Central Coordination:** NYIC knew that if it was going to take the lead, it would have to be transparent, collaborative and willing to negotiate compromises across the Coalition. Once the steering committee was formed, most campaign-related expenditure decisions would be made collaboratively, fund-raising efforts were shared by the Coalition and engaged Steering Committee members, and members knew what funds were available and how they were being spent. Still, there were tensions throughout: who's making the decisions? Should money go to TV ads, or to local organizing? Which organizations should get resources? Etc. By the end however, the tensions had largely diminished – enough trust had been established that the key coalition members were acting (often at major political cost) on behalf of the Coalition, instead of for their own organizations.

**Multi-year Investments in Statewide Infrastructure:** Several foundations including the Brooklyn Community Foundation, Ford, Four Freedoms Fund, Hagedorn, NY Community Trust, NY Foundation, North Star Fund, NoVo Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock invested in statewide organizations and resources. Among the organizations were the NYIC, the NY Civic Engagement Table (NYCET) and the Advocacy Institute (AI). Examples of resources that they invested in were media buys, a statewide coordinator, and polling. This crucial support formally established local to statewide coordination and helped provide the basis for true upstate-downstate collaboration.

Locally, the Long Island Community Foundation, the Westchester Community Foundation, Hagedorn Foundation, Dyson Foundation, and the Fund for New Citizens recognized the opportunity as well and made significant investments supporting local grassroots organizing and other critical actions that made the campaign a success.

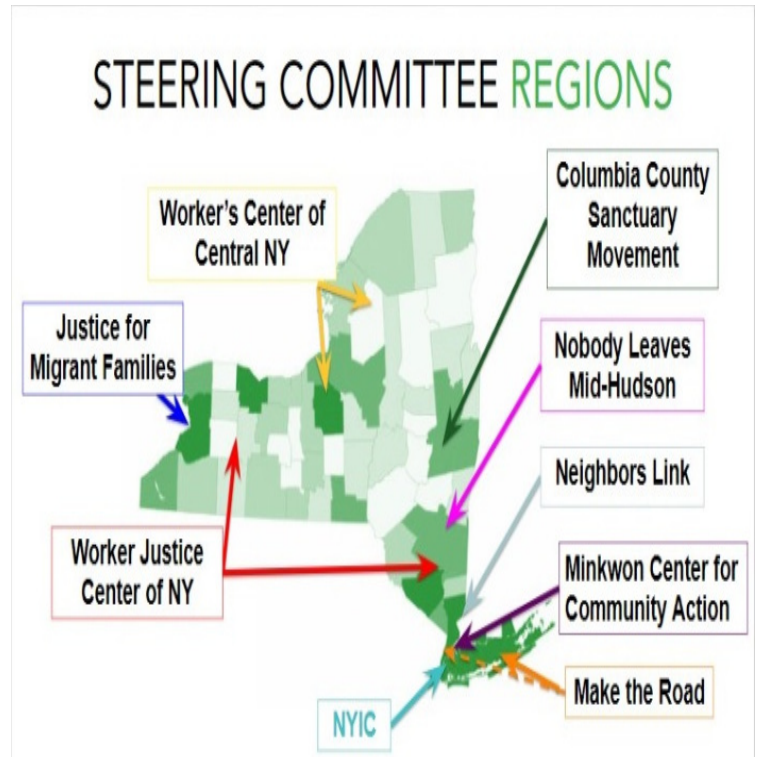
In the end, the leadership and true partnership by several key funders with the NYIC ended up as an important factor. The initial Hagedorn investment signaled to the philanthropic community that driver's licenses was a live issue again, in a way that reinforced the NYIC's efforts to build the Green Light NY Coalition, which in turn validated the growing funder support. By working as true partners in a carefully coordinated strategy, funders played a critical role from the beginning of the campaign.

**Broad, Inclusive Truly Statewide Coalition:** From the beginning, the Steering Committee was dedicated to a truly statewide approach, and lifted the importance of actions in the Syracuse, Buffalo, Rensselaer, Hudson Valley, Westchester, and Long Island. In the graphic on page 15, the hub leaders helped coordinate messages, actions, and pushback in real-time to almost every single local oppositional event - which both surprised local officials who did not expect resistance and demonstrated the seriousness of the campaign to other elected officials.

Critical to the success of the campaign was the robust membership that the NYIC has built over the past 6 years across the state, from Erie County to the East End of Long Island. By the time Greenlight was signed into law, over 300 groups from across the state had joined and fought with the coalition, holding nearly 100 different actions and engaging thousands of supporters. From service providers who turned out clients to events to grenade throwing organizers that overtook key officials' offices, all coalition members had a lane in which to work and build support or pressure for the legislation.

**Creative Campaign Strategies - Unlikely Allies, Messengers and Tactics:**

The Coalition successfully recruited outspoken supporters from law enforcement, business, and religious institutions – critical in demonstrating that the coalition truly had a broad base from many different sectors. The support and flexibility of funders was critical - JM Kaplan provided support for TV and media buys that helped increase support among suburban communities by 10%, and the



Four Freedoms Fund provided c4 support for targeted media and efforts that put elected officials on alert that this fight was not going to be easy. A funder that wishes to remain anonymous provided its own polling, a lobbyist, and access to a high-end marketing firm, and while these were not direct dollars for the campaign, they were invaluable contributions that helped pass the bill.

This creative, broad approach – ranging from grassroots tactics, to conservative business support, to creative TV and media – is becoming more of a necessity in a politically complex state like New York and will probably become the norm for future campaigns. In fact, the New York Times coverage cited many of these actions as essential to the final win.<sup>12</sup>

**Sharp Electoral Tactics and 501(c4) Strategy:** Repeating what was written for Housing Rights, this victory would not have been possible had the Senate not been transformed by the 2018 elections. The victories in both the general and primary elections were crucial and would not have been possible without many years of civic engagement, base-building and direct electoral work by grassroots organizations, by labor unions and by the Working Families Party, plus the surge of new activism from groups like Indivisible, No IDC and True Blue NY. Recruitment of these newly elected progressive champions to the driver's licenses cause happened early and often, and the boldness and outspoken nature of these new legislators helped drive the issue forward.

501(c4) activities and the threat of future electoral efforts also played a critical role in the success of the campaign. Make the Road Action drove consistent direct actions and other hard-hitting tactics that put intensive public pressure on legislators throughout the campaign. It had also established immigrant

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/17/nyregion/undocumented-immigrants-drivers-licenses-ny.html?fbclid=IwAR3V9fuGJjt7ZTwwUbcokPYKS1Kr-AVbqocaZhLLw-0VLp0BiBXbwYk0qFc>

organizing as a critical force in key elections in 2018 (and previously) and had successfully made support for immigrant rights a criteria for progressive support of candidates. Make the Road Action's ability to demonstrate the electoral consequences of lack of support from vulnerable legislators was a necessity - without the flexibility to hit directly and hard from the c4 side, advocates doubt or strongly question whether they would have been able to move either the Senate or the Assembly to a winning majority. While c4 activities were critical to this victory, there was a lack of adequate c4 funding – a gap that needs to be addressed to keep New York State moving toward racial equity.

#### [Common Elements of Support that led to Victory from both Campaigns](#)

Not only do these hard-fought wins benefit thousands if not millions of New Yorkers but they also provide some valuable insights to funders throughout the state.

**Upstate-Downstate Alliances:** Transparent, multi-racial coalitions with shared decision making has taken away the legislative wedge tactics of old—pitting upstate organizations and officials against downstate, and vice-versa. By sharing a common strategy and establishing the ability to rapidly respond to attempted political peel-offs in different parts of the state, housing advocates and the Green Lighters stunned officials in Albany with quick, consistent, and on-message counter punches. Now that legislators are aware of these new dynamics, they will adapt their strategies accordingly which means that philanthropy must provide support to strengthen these statewide networks.

**Local Grassroots Support:** In both campaigns, the base was seemingly omnipresent, resilient, creative, and relentless. NYS foundations deserve a lot of credit for investing in the growth of this important organizing infrastructure over the years. Continued support of this type is crucial, as is funding for the connective tissue provided by collaborative structures such as the New York Civic Engagement Table and the Advocacy Institute. These institutions increase the strength, sophistication, and political acumen of all nonprofits that are or want to be engaged at the state level. Lastly, while both bills passed, they could have used more support from off-the-funding-radar, small towns, and rural communities. Moving forward, it would benefit everyone to build bases of support in those communities as well, and to build the capacity of local organizations to be involved in statewide campaigns and coalitions.

**Multi-Year Support for Long-Term Campaigns, if clearly stated on both ends, pays dividends:** The Housing Stability and Tenant Protections Act and the Green Light NY Bill were not expected to pass in 2019 but the grantees fighting for these bills knew that they would win eventually.

In 2015, when Darren Sandow was the Executive Director of the Hagedorn Foundation and Steve Choi approached him for support to kick off the Green Light NY campaign, Steve very clearly stated that this would be a multi-year campaign with no real expected chances of passage until 2020. Each year when Darren had to report to the board, Steve would give him odds on the bill being introduced in that session. It became a running joke at board meetings because those odds rarely got above 25%. However, what wasn't a joke was the depth and breadth of the statewide coalition being built to support the effort. Reporting this progress and growth made the foundation's board less hesitant to renew Hagedorn's commitment to the campaign.

In addition to the long-term support, it was crucial that some foundations had the flexibility to provide significant last-minute funding to the coalitions as it became clear that victory could be possible.

**Central Coordination:** Both campaigns benefitted from a trusted organization that was willing to take the lead, invest its own resources, tackle the early fundraising, and build shared leadership with members of the coalition. Long-term support for the core organizations that have this capacity and play the connecting role

in multiple campaigns and statewide (or at least in multiple regions) is an important part of building the infrastructure that can move transformational policy change.

**Flexible Funding:** Both campaigns benefited from long-term support that enabled them to build strength when they were not in the midst of an intense campaign, and they also needed an infusion of project funding for the final 6 to 9 months. General support funding was especially important to the long-term base-building, leadership development, relationship building among groups and strategy development. Funders who provided that general, flexible support enabled the groups to build these capacities long before anyone knew there was going to be a moment when rapid change would be possible. General support for the connective tissue in groups like the NY Civic Engagement Table also enabled the core groups to be ready to go when the time came. Conversely, both campaigns suffered from the lack of c4 funding available. It's clear that the electoral work, grassroots lobbying, and direct-action tactics are essential drivers of policy change, yet there are few sources for this type of funding.

## **VI. Timeline for Maximum Impact**

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The combination of demographic changes, changes in the national political context, and intensive investment and work have led to rapid changes in New York State over the past year. The changes in representation have already led to significant steps forward toward equity. Yet, at the same time, there are not yet the right factors in place to move a full equity agenda. This will only happen when communities of color can move beyond inclusion to real empowerment.

There are key milestones over the next few years that create an opportunity to make major steps forward in enabling communities of color to be fairly represented so that an equity/justice agenda can move more fully forward. These include the Census in 2020, redistricting in 2021, and the potential for building increased civic engagement in communities of color in each election cycle from 2020 - 2022. It will also be important that communities win structural reforms that make it more possible for their voices to be heard. This will include further voting reforms: ballot measures for the constitutional amendments to allow vote by mail and same day registration will have to pass in 2021; automatic voter registration and felon re-enfranchisement have not yet been passed; and NY desperately needs campaign finance reform to limit the impact of big money on elections so voters have an equal voice. It may also include changes in other rules, such as greater powers of home rule, or more equalization of power between the Governor and the legislature, or other ways of making it easier for communities to have a say over their own future.

Investment in the New York groups during the next 3 years, as the state moves through the census, redistricting and the following electoral cycles, will be crucial in enabling communities of color in the state to solidify the gains from 2018-19, and achieve real and lasting power. This will make it possible to defend the 2019 policy achievements, move New York toward greater equity with more transformational policy change, and provide a model for other states and for the nation.



## VII. What will it take to keep NYS moving toward justice?

Given this timeline, investment in community-based groups during 2020 can be especially impactful. Strong work on the census will increase the impact of redistricting on the power and representation of communities of color. Strong organizing on redistricting will further enhance the voice of communities of color. Intensive base-building and civic engagement over the next 2 - 3 years in the regions with the greatest demographic change will increase the power of the growing communities of color, making a racial equity agenda much more achievable.

### Short-Term Opportunities

Some geographic areas of the state provide greater opportunity to defend or elevate the voices of communities of color in the next few years. Here are our recommendations for Short-Term Opportunities:

1. **Rochester** - As the map on page 19 demonstrates as well as the fact that Green Light NY made it one of its hubs, funders should provide resources for Civic Engagement work in the city of Rochester. Out of a population of 206,284, 46.6% of the population is white, 35.9% is black or African American, 13.5% is Latino, 3% is Asian, and 1% is Native American. It is one of the only minority-majority cities in the state. Building leadership and civic engagement skills now will not only be transformative in the future but can further empower the political leadership of people of color.

While the City of Rochester government reflects the demographics and racial equity agenda of the majority of Rochester residents, their voices are not as well heard at the state level. Increased civic engagement and outreach will make the needs of communities of color in Rochester more relevant to state policy-making, which will benefit communities statewide.

2. **Hudson Valley** - As stated many times throughout this report: without the hard-fought, political, victories of 2018 in the Hudson Valley, New York State would most likely still be conducting business with three men in a room. Yet, those victories are not without risk.

We can expect a backlash in the Valley on driver's licenses, tenants rights and criminal justice reforms; so, it will be important that groups have the capacity to educate the public about these new policies and build public support. Several of the new officials that were elected into office throughout the Valley are considered vulnerable—especially during a presidential election where turnout is traditionally higher than usual.

We are again recommending civic engagement investment throughout the Valley, maintaining previous levels of support for current grantees, but also providing for expansion into many rural and small town areas where grant support is non-existent but hardened organizers have been working for years—as the Engage NY site visit demonstrated for all who attended. We consider these investments to be the second most important of our short-term opportunities.

3. **Long Island** - Once regarded as the fortress of white, male, leadership in the senate, Long Island is no longer that bastion—but it's close. All Long Island senators voted against Green Light NY. This is due in part to the rural constituencies in the east but it is also a product of one of the major funding sources for civic engagement work spending-out at the end of 2017. The Hagedorn Foundation helped create the Long Island Civic Engagement table to the tune of \$400,000+ annually. Needless to say, that level of funding has dropped significantly and could use an infusion of dollars to sustain and augment the work of local nonprofits in the civic engagement arena as well as to provide for the statewide

coalitions that provide local support. Long Island will also be home to a backlash similar to what we described in the Hudson Valley, and resources for outreach and public education on the issues is critical to defending hard won policy changes.

4. **Implementation of New Policies** – As we’ve discussed throughout the paper, 2019 was a year of transformative policy change at the state level – laws were passed that have the potential to significantly increase racial equity over time. However, the new laws will have little impact without effective local implementation. For example, the housing bill allows localities to enact rent control, but the localities have to pass those laws. Raise the Age requires handling young people in family court, but the localities have to create the local court capacity to do that correctly with all of the accompanying services. Same for other criminal justice reforms. Early voting requires a minimum amount of early voting locations, but the counties choose how many and where they are to be located.

Local and statewide organizations are eager to work with elected officials to develop strong local implementation plans, and to advocate for local policies that will maximize the racial equity impact of the new state policies. Therefore, expanded and continuing support for these nonprofits to do the implementation work is urgent and crucial.

Funding for this work will also provide a path for local grantees to start connecting to statewide work and vice-versa. The groups that led the statewide campaigns will also need resources to support local groups working on implementation.

5. **Engage NY** – With only part-time consultants, Engage NY had limited success for several years. However, since funders invested in full-time staff, Engage has picked up momentum and successfully connected

both issues and funders from upstate and downstate. We encourage continued support for FTE staffing.

#### [Racial Equity Fund \(REF\)](#)

As NY Counts 2020 comes to an end, funders are discussing establishing a pooled Racial Equity Fund (see depiction on page 25).

As the statewide census work has proven, when funders from across the state join forces, not only does this lead to the cumulation of significantly more grant dollars, but it also promotes the creation of coordinated, strategic, and focused funding strategies that include input from traditionally geographically bound funders. It also helps leverage millions of public dollars and resources.

Based on our conversations with funders from across the state, not only have there been serious discussions about the concept of a REF, but there have been some early investments, and overall strong statewide support for its creation. Establishing such a fund, and having it managed by Engage NY, a trusted organization both upstate and downstate, would provide an effective mechanism for many of the recommendations in this report. Housing the funds at community foundations throughout the state would demonstrate state unity for racial equity.

Drilling down, funders stated that any such Racial Equity Fund should be comprised of four core elements: A Statewide Grants Committee, Regional Flexibility, an Annual Funders Summit, and Priority Regions/Hubs.

#### *Statewide Grants Committee*

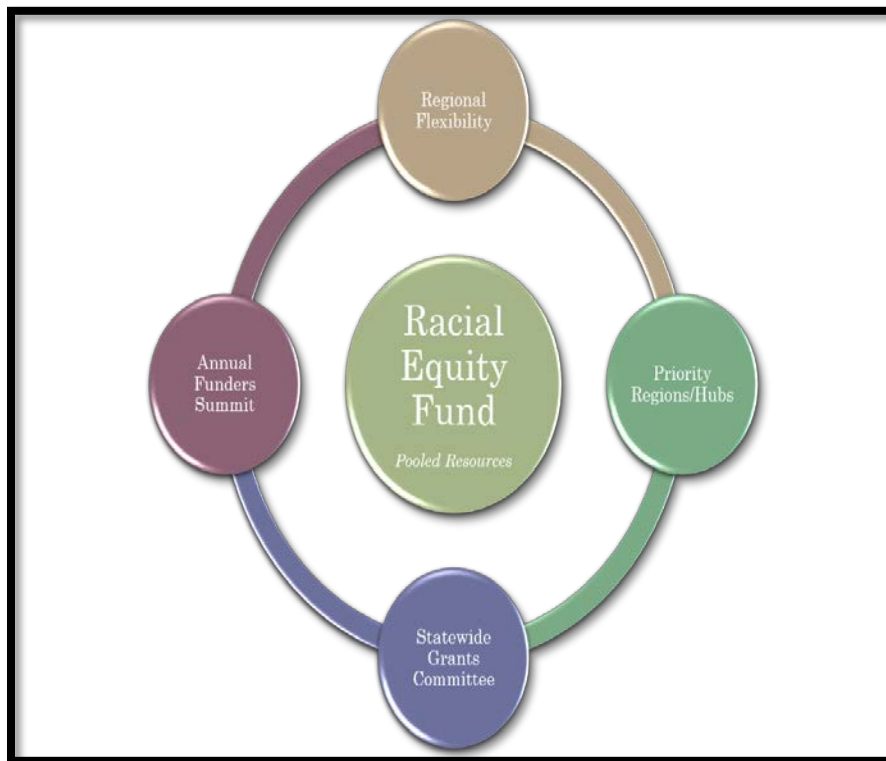
NY Counts 2020 has developed a structure for setting priorities, coordinating activities, and re-granting that engages voices from across the state and provides a balance of power in the decision making on all levels. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we would suggest that a REF use the same statewide decision-making elements that worked best from the census work and mold it into the leadership structure for the Racial Equity Fund.

Within that framework, we would recommend the creation of regional committees to establish priorities and a regional set of grant recommendations that run parallel to the overall goals of the Racial Equity Fund (see picture below).

This structure also provides a natural link for national foundations to work with local and regional funders to identify critical funding voids and opportunities for investment.

*Priority Regions/Hubs*

With Green Light NY, regional hubs were critical for providing coordinated state actions, rapid response feedback and action, and an echo chamber back to the central steering committee as to needs and priorities. Although major investments that will require sustained support, regional hubs are a necessity in a state with a population of 19.88 million people.



*Regional Flexibility*

For those foundations that find it difficult to support initiatives outside of their service area, they could still participate in statewide work and strategic thinking by either serving on a regional committee, or by agreeing to directly support pieces of the regional recommendations produced by the committee, or both.

This flexibility would go a long way on bringing community foundations, smaller foundations, and

geographically bound family foundations into discussions which have traditionally been out of range for them.

*Annual Funders Summit*

Providing program staff, senior management, and critically, members of philanthropic boards from across the state, a safe space to grapple with and learn from one another and experts about how to address these complex issues.

*Building Power in Communities of Color*

Fundamentally, a racial equity agenda can only be achieved when communities of color have the power to demand it. Even with the electoral shifts in New York (which themselves would not have happened without empowered communities of color increasing their participation), the policy shifts would have been far more modest had there not been the relentless community demand for transformational change. Three

types of investment create the core conditions for empowerment: leadership development, civic engagement, and base-building through community organizing.

Nonprofits across the state and in each region provide leadership development and training. We encourage foundations to provide targeted resources to focus on developing the skills, political education and voices of leaders of color. This recommendation can be accomplished through

direct support to local groups, support for training conferences, or through the Racial Equity Fund.

Without grassroots organizing, tenants would have significantly less rights and power, and immigrants would not be entitled to receive driver's licenses. Organizing provides directly impacted people a pathway to activism and collective action, and it provides a context in which leaders get the 'on the job' training that classroom leadership development cannot provide. It is the core of any empowerment strategy and it's what creates a collective demand for change, with community support to back it up.

Grassroots organizing was key in both victories, and in all the other major policy changes passed in New York in 2019 and needs to continue to be supported. If foundations find it difficult to support this type of work, here again, the Racial Equity Fund can play a key role in helping grant dollars reach these organizations.

Civic engagement is the third pathway to empowerment. It is a systematic approach to increasing participation through regular and consistent mass outreach in communities with low participation rates, particularly in communities of color where low participation has resulted in lack of power to shape public policy and electoral outcomes. Outreach led by community members, either as volunteers or as paid canvassers, has proven to be effective in building the trust and engagement necessary to increase voter turnout and public participation in other ways. Support can be provided directly to groups that organize mass outreach programs, or through the New York Civic Engagement Table, or through the Racial Equity Fund.

Key to this recommendation would be providing support for the NY Civic Engagement Table (NYCET) to provide shared services, training and quality control, and/or providing scholarships for local nonprofits to become members of the NYCET. Members receive access to the Voter Activation Network, Catalist, and training on how

to use all these advanced civic engagement tools. Plus, and equally as important, they become part of a statewide network of organizations working for change.

Finally, even though the housing bill that passed is a huge victory for tenants, it will only be effective for individuals and families if local officials pass legislation putting the state law into effect in their communities. The same is true of implementation of many of the new policies. Funding for Local Progress, which provides support to pro-equity local elected officials, will help them with implementation. Holding local officials accountable will also be important, which is best achieved through funding grassroots organizations who can provide public support for those officials that do stand strong and take principled stances on important issues, and public accountability for those who don't. These groups are often underfunded and invisible to larger social justice funders but an integral part of the recipe. Partnering with community and placed based foundations is a useful strategy.

#### *Supporting Coalitions*

The lessons from 2019 clearly show that coalition building is critical, that it needs to cross regional barriers and unify upstate and downstate, and that requires support for the staff time and meetings that make deep collaboration possible. Funds need to be available to host policy and strategy retreats between upstate and downstate organizations. Again, we think that the Racial Equity Fund could play that role.

Several organizations, including New York Immigration Coalition, Make the Road NY, and Public Policy and Education Fund, are looking to expand their work statewide, into rural areas, small towns, and other under-organized parts of the state. They are seeking to expand the base and support the growth of upstate-downstate coalitions, but often, they are expected to make these expansions with 100% of their own resources which slows down this process significantly. As we saw with the Green Light campaign, just a few staff

made a world of difference in a relatively short period of time. In the case of the housing work, the funding for a statewide coordinator and an upstate coordinator were essential for teaming up with smaller grassroots groups. If funders made grant dollars available for groups to expand statewide staffing, success on many other issues will continue.

It's also clear from the case studies that regional hubs can make a big difference. There are three approaches that have worked effectively: 1) funding a local anchor group in a region to support and coordinate collaboration, as happened in Green Light NY; or 2) funding statewide groups to support and coordinate joint work in multiple regions, as was done in the Upstate Downstate

leadership and training, civic engagement, capacity building, and communications. Regional support can also help local grassroots groups engage in statewide coalitions effectively.

We would recommend: Buffalo/Western NY, Hudson Valley, Long Island, New York City, Rochester/Finger Lakes, Syracuse/Central NY, and Westchester. LICET and NYCET have already created the core of these hubs in the Hudson Valley and Long Island.

Finally, having learned the lesson from Gov. Spitzer's failure, the Green Light campaign recruited and lifted representatives from the insurance industry and police to speak about the advantages of having immigrants with licenses. This made it more difficult for skittish

## Ideas



Figure 3

Housing Alliance; or 3) funding the NY Civic Engagement Table to support a network of groups doing outreach and civic engagement in a region as has been done in the Hudson Valley, with the LI Civic Engagement Table (LICET), and also for census work. We have no doubt that with a network of regional hubs, New York State would become the leader of Racial Equity in the country. Regional Hubs would serve as the nerve centers of

representatives to get on the wrong side of the issue and helped blunt pushback. However, recruiting this new flank to the battle required dedicated time and effort and resources. If funders were to dedicate a pool of funds for nonprofits to reach out to unusual allies, this would be a tremendous new resource.



### *Communications and Message Development*

If funders in NYS want to increase the power of communities of color, they should invest in communications work by grassroots groups and communications training for grassroots leaders. It was clear in both case studies that shifting the dominant public view of the issue was necessary in order to move transformational public policies. The communications work to educate and shift the public and will also be critical to defending those policies from backlash.

Again, the Racial Equity Fund could play a significant role in moving resources to groups that could most effectively elevate the voices of people of color, begin to shift the narrative, provide media training, and ensure that the hard fought victories of 2019 are implemented by holding officials accountable, in part, through communications and messaging work.

A number of the grassroots groups and coalitions in New York State are already working together to strengthen their shared communications capacity, especially in relation to shifting the public narrative.

National organizations like the Spin Academy (now part of ReFrame Mentorship) could be brought in through the Racial Equity Fund or the regional hubs to provide this training, or groups could be provided with funding to send staff to national training programs or existing statewide training like the Justice Works Conference or NYCET's bi-annual training conference. ◆



## VIII. Our Ingredient List for Short- and Long-Term Success

### Short-term Opportunities (\$500,000+)

1. Provide civic engagement support for organizations in the City of Rochester (p. 23)
2. Sustain and strengthen civic engagement support in the Hudson Valley (p. 23)
3. Bolster civic engagement funding throughout Long Island (p. 23)
4. Fund work on local implementation of statewide policy gains (p. 24)
5. Give grant dollars to Engage New York to ensure full-time staffing and support (p. 24)

### Maintaining Momentum (Annual support of \$2.5 million+)

6. Build support for statewide connective tissue (p. 19 & 20)
  - a. Advocacy Institute—general support and scholarships to nonprofits
  - b. NY Civic Engagement Table—general support and scholarships to nonprofits
  - c. Statewide staff and coordination capacity in anchor groups (p. 21 & 26)
7. Create a Racial Equity Fund to support: (p. 24)
  - a. Core Local Support: building power in communities of color (p. 25)
    - i. Leadership development (p. 26)
    - ii. Grassroots organizing (p. 26)
    - iii. Civic engagement (p. 26)
  - b. Supporting Coalitions (p. 26)
  - c. Communications and Message Development (p. 28)
8. Maintain and bolster civic engagement support throughout Long Island (p. 23)
9. Support for Engage New York (p.24)
10. Continued funding for Local Implementation (p. 24)

### Longer Term and Aspirational

11. Develop and support Regional Hubs in key areas of the state (p. 25)

### Bottom Line

In 1994, California Governor Pete Wilson placed and passed Proposition 187 on the ballot. Proposition 187 sought to stem illegal immigration and address its costs by cutting off state services, including healthcare and public education, to those in the country illegally. Ultimately, the courts stopped the implementation of this measure but it galvanized and united communities of color throughout the state. The funding community came together as well and after eight years of working together, supporting the grassroots infrastructure, civic engagement, and communications work through pooled funds and regional collaboratives, it is now one of the most equitable states in country.

Now is the time to invest in New York State: demographics, political shifts, solid organizing work, inspired leadership, and statewide connectivity have all contributed to monumental changes in the power dynamics of Albany, and in the way New York now conducts business. To continue this momentum while at the same time ensuring many of the 2019 policy changes are implemented at the local level, reliable, scaffolded funding from the bottom up will once again thrust our state into the leadership role that it stopped playing many years ago.

## **VIV. Acknowledgements**

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Without the support of Unbound Philanthropy, The Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund, and an Anonymous Donor from upstate New York, this report would not have been possible. Thank you! We'd also like to extend special gratitude to the Engage NY steering committee for its advice, thoughts, and support during the opening of its fun, eye-opening, and impactful Hudson Valley tour in May 2019. Finally, if you find the content, tone, and recommendations of this report helpful, it's only because of the over-the-top support we received from Cara, Jerry, Julia, Lisa, Maria, and Sol. Many thanks to all...

## **X. Bios**

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### Karen Scharff

Karen Scharff is a lifelong community organizer with over forty years of experience in grassroots organizing, social movement building, and political activism. Karen was the director of Citizen Action of New York and the Public Policy and Education Fund of NY from 1984 - 2018, where she played a pivotal role advancing grassroots power at the state and national levels, and empowering people to voice their demands for racial, economic, social and environmental justice. Karen built Citizen Action of NY into New York State's preeminent statewide grassroots advocacy organization, with eight regional chapters and over 20,000 members.

Karen has also created many successful state and national coalitions and collaborations, including serving as a founder and long-time chair of the Alliance for Quality Education, a founder and board member of the national organizing network Peoples' Action, a founder of the New York Civic Engagement Table, and a founder and co-chair of the NY Working Families Party.

Karen has been knocking on doors and listening to people's concerns and hopes since 1978, when she got her first taste of community organizing as a Harvard undergrad on a summer internship. Before joining Citizen Action in 1983, she organized cotton mill workers for the Carolina Brown Lung Association and was a community organizer in Hartford with the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. Karen has been a regular guest on Albany's Capitol News Tonight and Capitol Pressroom, and a contributor to the Huffington Post.

### Darren Sandow

Served as the founding Executive Director of the Hagedorn Foundation from 2005 until it sunset at the end of 2017. The Foundation used Long Island as its lens to support and promote social equity on Long Island. Along with several national foundations, Darren served on the board of the Four Freedoms Fund. He also was the longest serving Co-Chair for Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees.

He is a graduate of the Master's Program for Nonprofit Management at New School for Social Research. His background is diverse beginning as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Costa Rica, later working at the Health and Welfare Council of Nassau County, and as the CFO for the People's Firehouse in Brooklyn. Darren served as the Program Director for the Long Island Community Foundation and the Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund (LIUUF).

In 2013, The Council on Foundations selected him to receive the Robert Scrivner Award for being one of the most creative grantmakers in the country.

Since founding Ross Consulting in 2018, his clients include: Carnegie Corporation, First Choice Community Healthcare, New Mexico Counts 2020, Santa Fe County, The Grove Foundation, The Jaggar Foundation, The Kellogg Foundation, Unbound Philanthropy, and Western States Center. He still serves on the board of NEO Philanthropy in New York.

## **XI. Big Apple Turnover**

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We couldn't bring this paper to a close without a tasty full-circle bonus. To continue spreading the turnover across the state, we present you with the Classic Apple Turnover recipe from Erren's Kitchen, (<https://www.errenskitchen.com/apple-turnovers/>) Enjoy!

The best apple turnover you will ever have. Made with a buttery, flaky puff pastry shell that's filled a sweet, tart apple & cinnamon filling and glazed with a cream cheese icing.

- Course Dessert
- Cuisine Baking
- Keyword apple dessert, apple turnover, apple turnover recipe
- Prep Time 15 minutes
- Cook Time 20 minutes
- Cooling Time 5 minutes
- Total Time 40 minutes
- Servings 8 turnovers
- Calories 306kcal
- Author [Erren Hart of Erren's Kitchen](#)

### **Ingredients**

- 4 medium-sized cooking apples of choice peeled, cored, and diced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ tablespoon butter - melted
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 package frozen puff pastry thawed
- For the Cream Cheese icing:
- 2 tablespoons softened cream cheese
- 1 tablespoons butter melted
- ¼ cups powdered sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla

### **Instructions**

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F
2. Combine the lemon juice and diced apples in a bowl to prevent them from turning brown. Add sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, and melted butter. Mix to combine. Set aside.

3. On a floured surface, roll each sheet of puff pastry to a 12-inch by 12-inch (30cm by 30cm) square. Cut each sheet into 4 squares and make sure they stay chilled until you are ready to use them.
4. Transfer to a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper/greaseproof paper. Brush the edges of each square with the egg wash and neatly place 1/3 cup of the apple mixture on half of the square.
5. Fold the pastry diagonally over the apple mixture and seal by pressing the edges with a fork.
6. Brush the top with egg wash, make a small slit on the top of each turnover, and bake for 20 minutes, until browned and puffed. Let cool for 5 minutes.

### **For the cream cheese icing:**

Mix the cream cheese butter, sugar, and vanilla and beat until smooth. Drizzle each turnover with icing. Serve warm.

### **Notes**

- *Apples brown quickly, so be sure to coat them with lemon juice while you prepare the dough.*
- *Make a small slit on the top of each turnover to keep them from bursting the seam.*
- *Be careful not to overfill - Overfilling the turnovers may cause them to break open.*
- *Don't overwork the pastry. Puff pastry is delicate if you over-roll or use too much force, lose some of the flakiness and it may not puff up when baked.*
- *To easily trim the pastry, use a sharp paring knife or pizza cutter.*
- *If the dough becomes too soft to manage, just place it in the fridge for a few minutes and it will firm back up.*
- *Allow the apple turnovers to cool slightly before serving - The filling will be hot.*

### **Why this recipe works:**

- *Using a mixture of brown sugar & granulated gives the perfect amount of sweetness.*
- *The cinnamon & nutmeg marry perfectly with the apples in the filling.*
- *To save time, puff pastry is used for the crust.*

The best part is that these **Apple Turnovers** are really simple to make. Kids will love helping make this easy cinnamon-spiced dessert, so get them to join in!

### **It's All About the Apples**

Whether you like them sweet or tart when baking with apples be sure to choose the right variety. Look for an apple with a crisp bite so they stay firm when cooked.

### **Some Good Examples:**

- Golden Delicious (my favorite)
- Granny Smith
- Gala
- Honeycrisp

### **How to Prep the Apples for the Turnovers:**

Start by peeling, coring, and chopping the apples. When Apple peels are cooked, they tend to get chewy. It's always best to peel the apples first.

**Apples brown quickly**, so be sure to coat them with lemon juice.



## Using Frozen Puff Pastry

*The best way to thaw frozen puff pastry is in the fridge, overnight.*

Frozen puff pastry is a convenient choice, but it does require a little planning since it can't be used frozen. It needs to be thawed before it can be baked and doing it overnight in the fridge best approach.

This allows the puff pastry to become pliable without over-softening.

**Plan B** If you forgot to take your pastry out of the freezer and need to use it quite soon, all hope is not lost!

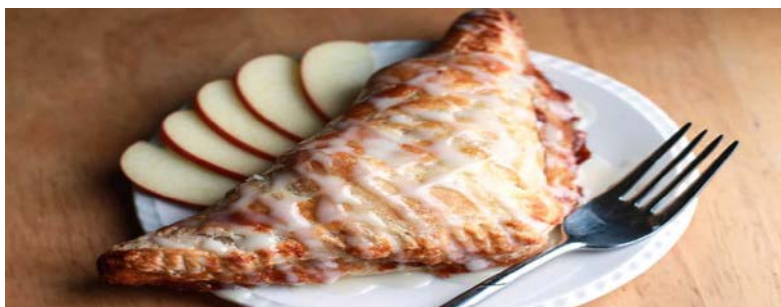
You can thaw it at room temperature. The key is to use it when it's just ready to be rolled, but before it softens so much that the dough is limp and the butter is melting.

### How to Make Apple Turnovers:

1. Add the apples to a bowl and coat with orange juice.
2. Add brown sugar, granulated sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cornstarch.
3. Add melted butter and stir to combine.
4. Next, roll each sheet of puff pastry to a 12-inch by 12-inch (30cm by 30cm) square. Cut each sheet into 4 squares and make sure they stay chilled until you are ready to use them.
5. Brush the edges of each square with the egg wash.
6. Neatly place  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of the apple mixture on half of the square.
7. Fold the pastry diagonally over the apple mixture and seal by pressing the edges with a fork.



8. Place on a pan and brush each one with the egg wash.
9. Bake for 20 minutes, until browned and puffed.
10. Allow to cool 5 minutes and then drizzle with the cream cheese icing.
11. These are best served warm, but they're wonderful leftover too!



Enjoy every last bite!