



PFAS Statistics

- Some **98% of US Americans** have PFAS in their blood.
- Studies from India, Indonesia and the Philippines found the toxic substances in nearly **all breastmilk samples tested**.
- **Every child in Germany** has forever chemicals inside them, and in a fifth of those cases, concentrations exceed critical levels.

Common Sources of PFAS Exposure

Non-stick cookware 	Drinking water 
Cosmetics 	Clothing 
Carpets /Rugs 	Food packaging 
Dust 	Food 

FIGHTING TO END FOREVER CHEMICALS

What do nonstick frying pans, raincoats, pizza boxes, and frozen vegetable packaging have in common? They all contain perfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS). PFAS are a family of man-made chemicals developed in the early 1900s. Scientists discovered that the chemicals have useful properties, including the ability to repel water, grease, heat, and oil. For decades, manufacturers and industrial facilities have used PFAS in an array of commodities ranging from waterproof clothing and fast food wrappers to cleaning products and firefighting foam.

PFAS contain chains of carbon and fluorine atoms, which together form one of the strongest bonds in nature. This makes PFAS chemicals unlikely to naturally break down, causing them to build up in the human body and the environment. PFAS invasive and interminable nature has landed them the apt title of “forever chemicals.”

In response to this evolving knowledge, US manufacturers started to voluntarily phase out the two most commonly used PFAS, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), in the early 2000s. However, due to decades of past production and products being shipped from countries with no PFAS regulations, PFOA and PFOS remain the most widespread in the environment, most-studied, and best understood. The two chemicals recently made their way into the news after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that PFOA and PFOS have been listed as hazardous. Once official, they will join the list of roughly 800 regulated toxic substances which includes household names like arsenic, DDT, and lead (Ellison 2022).

The proposed designation as “hazardous substance” will have significant ramifications for US government and businesses. Namely, it will require organizations to report when these chemicals seep into water and soil, and could make them responsible for any cleanup costs. **But how do PFAS enter our food and water?** PFAS have been widely used in firefighting foams and have become a major source of pollution in wildlands across the US. These chemicals have also been found in landfills when products containing PFAS break down. Lastly, wastewater treatment plants routinely ship off their toxic sludge to agriculture fields for disposal. It is dumped there under the auspice of ‘fertilizer’ when it’s really just the cheapest way to get rid of their toxic by-product. The Sierra Club has characterized this sludge as “the most pollutant-rich manmade substance on Earth.” All these sources lead to the contamination of nearby drinking water.

A number of Rose grantees have been at the forefront of PFAS mitigation efforts. These organizations work with and represent those most impacted by the problem: frontline communities and endangered wildlife. Read on to learn how our grantees are reducing PFAS pollution and exposure through research, education, community mobilizing, and policy building.

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We are excited to welcome three new members to the Rose Foundation’s Board of Directors: Carlos Zambrano, Laura Fernandez, and Willard Brown. From previous staff members, to grant recipients and long-time community justice advocates the Rose Foundation board will no doubt be strengthened by their experiences and perspectives. Get to know our newest board members!



**CARLOS
ZAMBRANO**

How did you connect and first get involved with the Rose Foundation?

I first started working with the Rose Foundation as an intern with another EJ organization around 2014/2015. I participated in planning workshops for the Summer Climate Justice Academy. Eventually, I found out that they were looking for a coordinator for the New Voices are Rising program. This position was perfectly aligned with who I was and what I wanted to do at that time, and they hired me. 7+ years later and I am still involved!

Do you have a favorite story or anecdote about your community or environmental work you want to share?

When I was still working with New Voices are Rising, I regularly gardened with my students. One year, we revitalized a derelict community garden at a high school in Oakland called Street Academy during our summer program. We grew carrots, tomatoes, watermelons, squash, peppers, sunflowers, and more. I will never forget returning to the garden after several weeks with the crew and seeing the surprise on the youths’ faces. I remember hearing a student remark something along these lines: "Wow, we really can grow our own food!"

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**LAURA
FERNANDEZ**

Tell us about your own background and what is it about Rose that resonates with you?

I grew up in a country and city hit by social-environmental conflicts and in need of peace. From an early age and before emigrating from Colombia, influenced by my parents’ advocacy and support for human rights, I became fascinated with human and political geography and initiated my journey to understand why people suffer and are deprived of their freedom. This quest, complemented by educational and lived experiences in the Global South, Europe, and the US helped me understand that climate change is an intersectional crisis to other issues affecting people that are often seen as separate from the protection of the natural environment. Thus, I feel I identify with and love what Rose stands for. It’s in the name: for communities and the environment. I see the youth and grantmaking programs as a bridge of community power, advocacy, and climate solutions.

As a board member, what do you hope to accomplish in your service to Rose? What would you like to learn?

As Sherri Mitchell says in the essay Indigenous Prophecy and Mother Earth: "the more diverse a group or community, the greater the perspectives and innovations that arise and the greater the success rate for all". By bringing my practice of radical honesty and empathy I hope to elevate the organization’s role as an epic philanthropic partner and community resource. I would like to learn in more depth about governance and finance, and in tandem with fellow board members the leadership style(s) I most thrive in.

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New Voices Are Rising (NVR) is a Rose Foundation program that nurtures the next generation of environmental leaders. The components of the program include a six-week Summer Academy for students and "pod" leaders, and academic year fellowships that create a pipeline of experience for young leaders, primarily from communities of color. This fall, seven fellows will join us for the academic year to work on community-based environmental justice projects of their choosing. Read on to learn more about the Fellowship and meet this year's cohort!

What is the New Voices Are Rising Fellowship? The NVR Fellowship is an opportunity for graduates of the Summer Academy to deepen their knowledge of environmental justice through greater involvement with the New Voices program. From Fall 2022 to Spring 2023, fellows develop and implement an individual capstone project focused on an environmental justice topic of their choosing. They work with community-based partners who guide them in addressing environmental challenges and leading environmental justice themed projects that engender community action. Fellows are employees of the Rose Foundation and work closely with NVR program staff to design and follow individual workplans to complete their projects. This paid position helps frontline youth develop work-based skills and gain direct experience in guiding local policies and decision making.

How is it structured? The fellows meet as a cohort every Wednesday to explore various environmental justice topics in-depth. These meetings help the fellows better understand how challenges facing their respective communities intersect and are connected. The youth choose a topic to explore more deeply in their individual capstone projects and are connected with a community-based organization to help deepen their understanding and impact. NVR Youth Coordinator Mars Keith and NVR Program Manager Mykela Patton, both of whom are previous fellows, host weekly one-on-one check-ins with the youth to guide their workplans and answer specific questions. Youth who complete the Fellowship are offered additional leadership opportunities within the program. By design, New Voices Are Rising is led by BIPOC youth from their communities who understand their challenges.

Who are this year's fellows and what are their positions? New Voices Are Rising is welcoming seven fellows for the academic year!

Nicole Hong - Regional Air Quality Fellow - from San Pablo

The Regional Air Quality Fellow will focus on air quality across the Bay Area communities that NVR works (Richmond, San Pablo, BVHP, and neighboring cities). This fellow will work on policies and learn more about actions- and activities related to improving indoor and outdoor air quality across the wider Bay Area.

Mindy Leung - East Oakland Air Quality Fellow - from East Oakland

The East Oakland Air Quality Fellow will work on specific air quality concerns related to East Oakland and Deep East Oakland. Specifically, this Fellow will work in supporting the AB617 process in the East Oakland community as a way to recommend community solutions to toxic air pollution.

Angela Pineda - Food Justice Fellow - from East Oakland

The Food Justice Fellow will focus on food (in)justice and food insecurity around the Bay Area and a specific region of their choice. This Fellow will work to increase knowledge and awareness around the root causes of food injustice and food apartheid. Most importantly, this fellow will work on active solutions related to food justice and food sovereignty.



Manuel Ochoa - Climate Resilience Hub Fellow - from Pinole

The Climate Resilience Fellow will focus on building capacity and climate resiliency for youth and impacted residents of the Bay Area. This Fellow will work on issues related to climate and disaster preparedness and learning how to make our communities more resilient in the face of emergency.

Christie Fok - Clean Energy Fellow - from El Cerrito

The Energy Fellow will learn more about energy usage and energy solutions in the Bay Area. This Fellow will focus on the current use of dirty energy across the Bay Area while also working to learn about clean energy solutions for individuals and communities.

Ahnaya Mclean - Community Health Fellow - from El Cerrito

The Community Health Fellow will work to understand the direct and indirect community health effects of environmental injustices. This Fellow will focus on communities that are experiencing the long-lasting impacts of toxic pollution such as Bayview Hunters Point.

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Research – Toxic Free Future

Rose grantee Toxic-Free Future (TFF) is using research to shift PFAS policy in the Puget Sound region. TFF plans to test Chinook salmon, key orca prey, and potentially other food web elements to better understand Southern Resident orca exposure to PFAS that may be impacting their health. Many products on the market today contain toxic chemicals that can contaminate waterways, fish, and wildlife. These toxic chemicals have been identified as a threat to Southern Resident Orcas. As part of the 2019 orca recovery package, Safer Products for Washington was adopted, giving the Washington Department of Ecology (WDE) the authority to ban classes of chemicals in products and address the first five classes of chemicals that threaten sensitive populations and species by 2023.



Funded by the Rose Foundation, TFF is working quickly to research the extent to which orcas are exposed to PFAS and flame retardants, both of which are in the first class of threatening chemicals. This will provide urgency for the WDE to adopt bold restrictions on those chemicals in products identified under Safer Products for Washington to protect orcas. It will also help the public and research community better understand how orcas and their food sources are contaminated by everyday products and enable us to engage communities in solutions. TFF demonstrates how organizations can use research to inform the fight for stricter PFAS regulations.

TFF is on the forefront of other PFAS-related work, including a call to action against REI's use of PFAS in rain jackets, amplifying political candidates who stand against PFAS in packaging, and several groundbreaking studies including findings of PFAS in breastmilk and in most products labeled stain- or water-resistant.



Education – Center for Environmental Health

If you are a child of the 90s or early 2000s, the term “hot lunch” may conjure memories of mac n cheese, cookies, and other pre-Michelle Obama era foods served in microwavable containers. As it turns out, those black, hand-burning, peel-off plastic trays most likely contained PFAS. For decades PFAS chemicals have been added to single-use food service ware to make it grease and water resistant. The chemicals have been known to migrate from packaging into our food, and eventually, our bodies.

Rose grantee Center for Environmental Health (CEH) is working to reduce PFAS exposure in school cafeterias through their “Ditching Disposables toolkit.” According to CEH, “the toolkit helps K-12 schools transition from harmful single-use foodware to healthier options, with a long-term goal of switching to safer reusables.” The initiative includes a 12-step planning guide, cost calculators, how-to guides on collecting and reporting data, and engagement strategies. By educating schools about the dangers of PFAS and providing a framework for a transition to healthier options, CEH is upending the traditional hot lunch.

Policy – Clean Water Fund

Clean Water Fund (CWF) has been working to address the PFAS crisis in the San Francisco Bay since 2020. The organization initially set out to develop stricter regulations for firefighting foam containing PFAS. In 2021, after successfully building demand for tighter restrictions, CWF followed up with a program funded by the Rose Foundation to further reduce PFAS pollution in the Bay Area. Their workplan includes 1) coalition building with non-traditional collaborators to address PFAS, 2) phasing out the use of at least one new major source of PFAS in the environment, 3) exploring long term strategies to address current PFAS in the Bay and other waters, and 4) building public support for source reduction actions.

A main tenet of CWF's plan is to shift policy in order to reduce the amount of PFAS entering Bay Area waterways. To achieve this goal, CWF is facilitating collaboration with local scientists, wastewater agency personnel, residents, regulators, and advocates to address PFAS in the Bay. This includes engaging the wastewater community to develop solutions for the PFAS in their collection systems, which discharge into the Bay. Currently, the State Water Resources Control Board is primarily focused on human exposure to PFAS through drinking water. This makes CWF's work evermore pertinent as the state fails to establish standards for surface water and fish consumption which can also lead to human exposure to PFAS. Surface water protection and fish consumption standards would specifically protect the health of subsistence fishers from low-income communities and communities of color who rely on the Bay for food and income. By connecting key decision makers and impacted groups, CWF is creating a unified voice against PFAS pollution, effectively shifting policy towards a toxicant-free future.



Community Mobilizing – La Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua (AGUA)

La Asociacion de Gente Unida por el Agua (AGUA) is a grassroots coalition of impacted community residents and allied non-profit organizations dedicated to securing safe, clean, and affordable drinking water for communities throughout California. In 2021, AGUA was awarded a grant from the Rose Foundation for their water advocacy work in the San Joaquin and Central Valley. Here contaminated drinking water disproportionately affects rural, low-income, and largely Latino farmworker communities. The vast majority of this contamination is a direct result of unsustainable practices by irrigated agriculture and animal factories, including the use of PFAS-contaminated sludge from municipal treatment plants as fertilizer. These irresponsible practices have an outsized impact on the nearby drinking water systems of the San Joaquin and Central Valley, rendering the community water supplies unsafe to drink, cook with, and bathe in. Without the basic public amenity of clean water, public health suffers and economic development stagnates.

AGUA has been helping these communities realize their Right to Clean Water through PFAS and 1,2,3-TCP regulation, water justice movement building and community-led campaigns for safe and affordable drinking water; and groundwater protection efforts. To secure PFAS regulation, AGUA has started to provide free well testing for the prevalence

of PFAS in the San Joaquin Valley and Central Coast. The group continues to advocate for more data on PFAS contamination in drinking water in California's rural communities, with the ultimate goal of getting the state to set maximum contaminant levels for PFAS.

AGUA empowers the communities they serve by educating residents on the history, the science, and their rights to water. By elevating stories of impacted residents, AGUA brings attention to the unacceptable drinking water conditions in historically marginalized communities across California. Together, these tactics put pressure on elected officials to provide safe and affordable water to all California residents.

It is still unclear how many of the roughly 5,000 PFAS that exist today are toxic. However, a growing body of research involving humans suggests high exposure to any PFAS may lead to a host of health effects including cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility, and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease (Health Risks 2018). US manufacturers have replaced PFOA and PFOS with newer PFAS chemicals. According to Elsie Sunderland, a PFAS researcher at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the effects of low-level exposure and newer PFAS chemicals are still unclear, but scientists have reached a consensus that PFAS chemicals affect "every major organ in the human body."

While the EPA's new ruling is a step in the right direction, it is still an end-of-pipe solution. It holds polluters accountable for the damage they created, but does not stop the damage from occurring in the first place. To find solutions to this intractable problem we look to those that have been at forefront of PFAS research and regulation: grassroots and community-based organizations. Our grantees demonstrate the varied and necessary approaches to mitigate the threat of PFAS and protect future generations from these toxicants.



TIPS FOR REDUCING EXPOSURE

- Continue to support Rose and our grantees working to reduce PFAS use and exposure
- Learn more about treatment systems that have been certified by NSF International to reduce PFOS and/or PFOA in drinking water and consider installing an in-home water treatment (e.g., filter).
- Avoid PFAS in products when you shop:



Replace nonstick cookware with stainless steel, cast-iron, glass, or ceramic alternatives.



Avoid “PTFE”, “fluoro”, “Scotchgard”, and “GoreTex” treatments.

Avoid clothing, furniture, bedding, and other household items marketed as stain- and/or water-resistant.



Minimize fast food when possible. Avoid heating up food that is wrapped in grease-resistant packaging.



Make popcorn on the stovetop instead of in PFAS-treated microwave bag

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WILLARD BROWN

Tell us about your own background and what is it about Rose that resonates with you?

I am educated in the sciences and have a strong interest in sharing my love of science with our youth and especially with youth living in BIPOC

communities here in the Pacific Northwest. I began working with STEM while I was leading the Delridge Wetland Restoration and Stewardship Project at Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association (DNDA), and I continue that relationship even after my retirement from DNDA. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I have continued to assist DNDA in connecting our BIPOC youth to their environment. The outdoor classroom approach has worked to connect the students there to their environment through visits and scientific monitoring of the waters at the Delridge Wetland and more recently, pursuing an outdoor laboratory approach with the Roxhill Elementary School and connecting youth to Roxhill Bog Head Waters Restoration Project. What makes this so amazing is that Rose Foundation has supported/funded both projects. I am proud to be associated with the Rose Foundation over these many years, as a grant recipient, as a funding board member, and now as a member of the governing Board.

What's your favorite wild place?

This is so difficult to answer. I love Rain Lake, high up in the Cascade mountains because it is such an undisturbed habitat. To access Rain Lake, you must hike uphill approximately 4 miles and that contributes mightily to undisturbed and well-preserved condition(s). It's a beautiful drive to get there, through the forest on 2 lane highway. It's a beautiful hike, and it's a glorious adventure that ultimately inserts you into the heart of an old growth forest, fallen trees, creeks, moss and mist abound. It's a site to behold, especially for our youth and those who do not get to enjoy nature often.

Secondly, on a much larger scale, I love the Columbia River Gorge, in part because our family would visit the Gorge to fly kites and camp out when my kids were young. It's a beautiful stretch that has been well preserved and protected by our communities for many decades now. The winds there are epic, and ideal for kite flying, frisbee, (especially for kids) windsurfing and enjoying being on the beach or in/on the water. 



It's a wrap! The Rose Foundation's 5th Annual Grassroots Film Fest, which ran from September 15th-29th, is officially over. As we say a bitter-sweet goodbye to this year's selection of films and our wonderful filmmakers, we want to thank everyone who attended: we are grateful

that you could share in these stories with us, and we hope you enjoyed, learned from, and felt inspired by this year's films.

But what is the Grassroots Film Fest, you ask?

Every September, the Rose Foundation curates a collection of exceptional independent films about grassroots activism and environmental justice. The Film Fest is first and foremost a celebration of community, and this is reflected in our films in a multitude of ways—from stories of neighborhood solidarity to interspecies collaboration.

In the spirit of community, this year we were thrilled to invite you all to our first in-person Film Fest kick-off since 2019! It was a smashing success, and included the screening of four short films, delicious tacos, and a thought-provoking Q&A from filmmaker Palmer Morse.

The Live Event was followed by two weeks of online streaming, which enabled festival attendees to watch their pick of 39 films at their leisure.

None of this, by the way, would have been possible without our amazing Bay Area-based corporate supporters, including our title sponsor Community Bank of the Bay. Visit our website to learn more about these steadfast supporters! rosefdn.org/2022filmfest.

So what now?

Though this year's Film Fest has ended, please take a look at our Resources and Action page: rosefdn.org/2022-film-fest/resources-and-action/ to see how you can get involved with our films and their topics of focus.

Believe it or not, 2023 will be the Rose Foundation's 30th anniversary. In that vein, we are setting our sights on a series of in-person community events and activities in the Bay Area—which of course includes the 2023 Grassroots Film Fest next September. Keep your eyes peeled for more information! 



NEW VOICES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Jeanette Iglesias - Media and Comms Fellow - from Vallejo

The Media and Communications Fellow will use communications, technology, and social media platforms to raise awareness on environmental injustice. This Fellow will manage all NVR social media platforms and develop relevant and engaging content related to EJ.

Our Fellowship program serves as a pathway to authentic leadership. With lessons grounded in the deep history of social and environmental advocacy in the Bay Area, fellows learn how to define community problems through the lens of their own lived experience. This paid opportunity to create real change helps our youth build the confidence and skills to organize others and serve as stewards of their community.

Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment's New Voices Are Rising Program was founded on the idea that local knowledge and youth advocacy are core to the environmental justice movement. We are proud to have designed a program that puts those impacted first and worst by the climate crisis—disadvantaged, low-income, youth of color in urban areas—at the center of leadership efforts. 



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grassroots action to
protect the environment,
people's rights, and
community health.



Over the past few months, the Rose Foundation has hosted several in-person events. Thanks to those who have been able to join us, and stay tuned for future opportunities!