This U.S. Programs portfolio review will focus on two significant inflection points that mark the voting rights and elections landscape since the Democracy Fund began the work embraced by this portfolio in late 2008: (1) The 2011-2102 “war on voting,” waged to disenfranchise those who elected Barack Obama, and (2) the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* which followed in June of 2013. At the suggestion of Chris Stone, we reflect on our grantmaking and programmatic responses to these events using critical incident analyses. We examine our actions prior to, during and following these events. Reviewing the portfolio employing this chronological guide may help more easily explore the issues involved in this somewhat expansive topic (including voting rights generally, voter registration, registration modernization, voter suppression and fraud/integrity, and specific litigation and policies).

The political backdrop for this work could be described as highly partisan and racially motivated. Voter suppression measures were introduced in states that in 2008 saw high Black voter turnout, significant increases in Latino population, and the national election of a black President. The states previously covered by Section 5, before the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision, were jurisdictions with a history of racial discrimination in voting practices. We therefore needed to resource work that adjusted itself to the changing political and demographic landscape. The field—a combination of civil rights, good government and grassroots advocates, and legal, research and communications groups –would need support to collaborate to defend harmful policies, and to analyze and reverse the other side’s “election integrity” narrative, in order to protect minority voting rights, expand the electorate and develop a successful long-term voting rights narrative of its own.

OSF’s grantmaking supported collaborative efforts, through both c3 and c4 grants and the creation of a donor collaborative—with some success and many challenges. This review attempts to understand how our grantmaking has affected the field’s ability to respond effectively to the assault on voting rights. We look forward to discussing whether pressing the field to advance affirmative reforms - when organizations were stretched just playing defense, and implementing new communications tools - was the best approach to have taken in an especially partisan and racialized period. We also look forward to analyzing whether our substantial response—both in advance of the *Shelby* decision, and after it—was the best way to meet the new needs.

**Looking Ahead/Questions to Consider:**

1. Could the field have moved the policy change we seek? Why or why not?
2. Has our grantmaking affected the field’s ability to respond to the assault on voting rights?
3. Was pressing the field to advance affirmative reforms while organizations were stretched just playing defense (together with furnishing the field new communications tools), sound?
4. Was our response to the *Shelby* decision the best way to meet the new needs?
5. Is the notion of developing an acceptable voter ID proposal worthwhile?

**Portfolio Review Roles:**

Lead Staff: Laleh Ispahani (Incident One); Erica Teasley Linnick (Incident Two)

Discussant: Julie Fernandes & Damon Hewitt (tentative)

Moderator: Ken Zimmerman

Rapporteur: Rachel Hamalainen