

# Tostan

## Dignity for All

click a tab  
to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community  
Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and  
Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the  
Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

**2017 ANNUAL REPORT**

Two national councilors from the Basse region of The Gambia, featured at left, learned leadership skills through Tostan's Community Empowerment Program and by serving on Community Management Committees.

**tostan.org**



ELENA BONOMETTI

# Letter from the CEO

click a tab to view ▼

Dear Tostan Community,

I believe that what Tostan does at its very core is uncover the tremendous, often-hidden light that is present in all humans — the energy to contribute to something better.

In partner communities going through our education programs, that energy can quite literally illuminate an entirely new world, for themselves and so many whom they influence. For participants in our training programs, that energy can fuel a new way of working to make change in so many places. In our organization, hundreds of facilitators, staff, leaders, and volunteers ignite themselves everyday to make our programs possible, and this year they have strengthened our organization itself during a transitional period. This is kindled by the passion and action of partners and Global Mobilizers around the world who find creative new ways to apply Tostan's model in their own lives and work.

As you might imagine, it has been a true joy and a deep honor for me to join Founder Molly Melching and the entire Tostan community, to both draw from this energy and contribute my own, as Tostan's CEO.

The human potential that lights up these pages is only a small sample of the bright community we witness every day. Please do take a moment to read, share, and celebrate with us all we were able to accomplish in 2017.

As you read this report, I also hope you will consider anew where your light, your energy, might play a role in Tostan's story in 2018 and beyond.

When we see more clearly what is, we also illuminate what is possible and where we as a community can go next.

To quote a wolof saying we use often here at Tostan,

*ci kaw, ci kanam*

## Onwards and upwards!

Elena Bonometti  
Chief Executive Officer



From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

# The Movement for Human Rights Builds from a Spark to a Fire



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

## The Next Generation of Leadership

"I've been a supporter of Tostan since 2008, previous Board chair and a founding member of the Leadership Circle, so I'm all in for Tostan. Like so many others, I am a great admirer of Molly as a human being and for her genius at creating programs that create change on the ground. When Molly announced her desire to transition out of the CEO role, the whole Board felt that we had to get the process right in order to find the best person for the job and to set him or her up for success within the organization. So the Board created a transition committee, which I chaired.

The Board had already decided that the best possible outcome for Tostan was to find the right person to succeed Molly as CEO, and to have Molly stay on in a new role to create new programs and to share Tostan's approach with leaders at the Tostan Training Center. We realized that in order for the transition to work, Molly's successor needed to be smart, strong, collaborative, respectful and have high integrity. S/he needed to be a natural leader as well as an excellent and experienced manager. Most of all, we needed someone who did not have a big ego and would cherish the opportunity to work together with Molly to amplify Tostan's impact. Put simply, we looked for a way in which 1 + 1 could equal more than 2.

In 2017, Tostan Founder Molly Melching Passed the CEO Torch to Elena Bonometti

We met weekly to iron out the profile, secure the search firm, and interview candidates: The search was world-wide and took over a year. During that time, we also needed to find an interim COO, and got very lucky when one of the CEO candidates, Elena Bonometti, agreed to step into that role. This gave us the opportunity to see her in action. Her inclusive management style, her ability to be both firm and respectful, her strategic bent, her experience and her personality made her by far the most compelling candidate. In addition, we found her to be warm, candid, humble, and decisive, all qualities that would make the transition much easier.

During this period, the committee also worked to establish and clarify Molly's new role, that of Founder and Creative Director, and we finalized the "table for two" approach to Elena and Molly's collaboration that we felt would have the best chance of succeeding.

Nearly a year later, I can confidently say that the transition has surpassed our expectations. It is a joy to see Molly and Elena collaborate and support one another in leadership, and we are already starting to witness some of the benefits of their teamwork. They are working with the rest of the team to create opportunities for millions more people to lead and design change in their communities. 1 + 1 is indeed equalling way more than 2, and we couldn't be happier."

— Gail Kaneb, Tostan Board of Directors and Leadership Circle

In late 2017, celebrating a theme of sharing the light within, we hosted executive leadership torch-passing events in Thiès, Senegal, New York City and San Francisco. Hundreds of cherished partners, Global Mobilizers and friends of Tostan gathered to celebrate Molly Melching's lifetime visionary collaboration with West African communities, a movement for human rights, and welcome the next generation of leadership, Tostan's new CEO Elena Bonometti, who will scale and sustain Tostan's breakthrough impact.



# The Movement for Human Rights Builds FROM A SPARK TO A FIRE

## Tostan's Vision for Movement Building



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

Tostan believes that movements build from within. Over nearly three decades, Tostan and its community partners have sparked and slowly grown a grassroots human rights movement. It is a movement that continues to rise in West Africa and grow globally, as communities of practitioners, partners and philanthropists connect and share with communities at the grassroots. In 2017 Tostan continued to clarify what our role will be in this movement for human dignity. In African communities Tostan's model can ignite the spark and fire of human rights to support them in defining and achieving their vision for wellbeing.

Tostan seeks to remove imaginary barriers between everyone in our family. We are all a part of this story. The differences that exist, though very real and at times stark, pale in comparison to what connects us, to what unites us.

This means that all of us, wherever we are, are united as the new leaders of the Breakthrough Generation. **Tostan supporters like you are Global Mobilizers whether you contribute time, or talent, or donations of any size. Your contributions of all kinds are not simply fueling the fire, they are an extension of it.** The spark that occurs among Tostan staff in the field and the participants themselves is in fact the same spark that all of you are carrying into the work you do, as we seek to improve our world.

**Global Mobilizers like you are critical to achieving our mission of dignity for all!**

## Leaders on the Rise

In the seven districts of the Upper River Region of The Gambia where Tostan has offered the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) for the past 10 years, all seven women elected as representatives to the National Women's Council had been participants in Tostan's 3-year program. Many are members or the coordinator of their Community Management Committee (CMC) and one of the women was a Tostan facilitator for six years.

The women campaigned in the villages of their specific district and when interviewed, explained that before the Tostan program they had rarely spoken in public and never dreamed they could run for office. They learned that women have the right, but also the responsibility to vote and to run for office and they practiced new leadership skills through their participation in the CMC.

"When I campaigned in the communities of my district," said councilor Fatoumatta Jabbie, "I told the women that I will share on a national level what we have been doing at a local level. Learning about democracy and human rights helped us to know how to campaign and I told everyone that I will advocate for girls and women through promoting their rights to empowering education, health and income generation. I told them I am the one who can best represent their needs and priorities at a national level!"



tostan.org

# 2017 Achievements

Nearly five million men and women throughout West Africa have been empowered through Tostan's 28-year history of focusing on values deliberation for a more empowered future. Our work strengthening citizen engagement has led to more equitable representation: To date, more than 20,000 women have risen into leadership positions, including in elected offices.



## Highlights from Tostan's work with more than 26,000 participants in 417 communities in 2017:

- » 150 new communities in some of the most conservative parts of Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia and 33 in Senegal launched the 3-year Community Empowerment Program.
- » 448 communities in Senegal and Guinea participated in public declarations to abandon female genital cutting and child marriage, bringing our total to more than 8,426 communities.
- » 6,688 women helped resolve 1,600 local conflicts through 240 new community-based Peace Committees.
- » Tostan announced alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals: its singular holistic approach supports the achievement of 12 of the 17 SDGs.
- » Evidence of Tostan's impact reducing intimate partner violence was documented in an external evaluation led by PATH.
- » Participation of Global Mobilizers in the human rights movement rising in West Africa grew by 54%. Global Mobilizers are all of you who give your time, your talent, or your resources to support Tostan.
- » The seeding of the Molly Melching Fund for Human Dignity reached \$577,980.00, including a reserve operating fund designed to help Tostan invest in moving strategically toward greater scale.
- » More than 400,000 people are now living in communities where Tostan programs will lead to measurable positive shifts in attitudes and behaviors related to harmful traditional practices, according to new evidence published by Tostan's monitoring and evaluation team.

Learn more about the new leaders of the human rights movement rising in West Africa and our shared results in our videos:

[New Leaders of the Breakthrough Generation](#)

[Leading with Dignity in The Gambia](#)



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

[tostan.org](http://tostan.org)

# The Community Empowerment Program and the Sustainable Development Goals

## Results of Generational Change in 3 Years

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program (CEP) supports communities in achieving their vision for a brighter future. That vision aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2017 Tostan gathered and analyzed results from its 2013-2016 CEP implemented across 150 communities. This data is providing an exciting window into the impact that Tostan's model and community-led efforts are having on a wide range of globally significant issues.

In 2013, Tostan began implementation of its transformational development model, the three-year CEP, in 150 new communities in some of the most challenging regions of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Mauritania; countries with a high prevalence of female genital cutting (FGC) and child marriage. The goal of this four-country initiative, called 'Generational Change in Three Years', was to empower girls and women and significantly expand the movement for positive social norms change through the abandonment of these harmful traditional practices. It represented the first time Tostan had invited multiple funding partners to invest in its at-scale, holistic model, to more effectively spark and measure social norms change.

Tostan participants and whole communities demonstrated significant improvements in multiple issue areas from baseline to the final evaluation in 2017. This provides a snapshot of the results of the internal evaluation Tostan designed and carried out with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The qualitative results, gathered through interviews with Community Management Committee (CMC) focus group members, corroborate the quantitative survey results.

In 2017, Tostan launched a second phase of this initiative, implementing the CEP in 150 new communities in The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. The standard way that Tostan now works is through strategic, large-scale implementation of programs, with multi-issue monitoring and evaluation. The organization's long-term vision is that its rigorous internal monitoring and evaluation system will provide a foundation for more external evaluation partnerships that can document and better understand the full impact of the holistic model across these issues. This would enable further program improvements and also contribute to demonstrating the full potential of empowering education and community-led development.

### GOVERNANCE

- » The proportion of participants who now know their human rights multiplied by 5 from 13% to 70%.
- » There were significant increases in joint decision-making between husband and wife in all four countries.
- » 90% of survey respondents stated that Community Management Committees (CMCs) satisfy community needs.
- » CMC focus group members stated that they had helped resolve conflicts and their communities became more peaceful with fewer, even no conflicts.

*"Women now dare to make public speeches and defend their opinions in mixed meetings. As we are currently doing here, sitting with a man who is a stranger; before we did not dare to do it."* – FOCUS GROUP MEMBER, GUINEA-BISSAU

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 16: Building Peaceful and Inclusive Societies**

### EDUCATION

Across all four countries, increase in the proportion of respondents who believe that there is no age that is acceptable to withdraw a child from school, with this proportion growing three times larger than baseline in Guinea-Bissau (from 15% to 58%)

*"This quest for knowledge projects us forward because we now know how to read and write, and all this contributes to seeing forward."* – FOCUS GROUP MEMBER, MAURITANIA

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 4: Inclusive and Quality Equitable Education**

### HEALTH

More than doubled:

- » % of women who discuss family planning with their husbands
- » # of respondents whose children receive vaccinations
- » % of respondents who used oral rehydration solution

*"We have a health center here...; now when a child gets sick, we bring him to the health center. That is because of the teaching Tostan gave us."* – FOCUS GROUP MEMBER, MALI

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being for People**

### ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

54% increase in proportion of women participants practicing an income generating activity (on average by country)

**Contributes to SDG 8: Sustained, Inclusive Economic Growth**

### ENVIRONMENT

Significant increase in village cleanups (average 14 public cleanups per village over six months in Guinea-Bissau)

*"They are important changes because, for example, with the garden, we eat well and in addition we earn money... With the compost, your garbage is [not] blowing around everywhere [causing] diseases; you water from time to time, you turn it into manure that you bring in your field and it reduces the amount of chemical fertilizer you use and your field gives good yield. It's so beneficial! Where we planted trees, so far no trees have died; within three years we will have a forest. It is we who benefit, not Tostan!"* – FOCUS GROUP MEMBER, MALI

**Contributes to achievement of SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. Also contributes to Goal 2: Zero Hunger**

### WOMEN'S CONFIDENCE AS A CRITICAL AXIS OF CHANGE

Both at home and in public, women's voices and participation in decision-making helped transform attitudes and beliefs around deeply entrenched social norms. Women became more confident speaking up and actively participating in decision-making related to education, family planning, child marriage and FGC.

A total of 358 communities participated in 6 public declarations for the abandonment of FGC and child marriage, organized by 150 Community Management Committees.

click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

“I learned so much about sustainability in development. I wish all development efforts were done this way. Then maybe we'd be solving more problems...”

“I will recommend this training to others because it provides very unique insights and perspectives with regard to program development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Its focus is on the community itself to actively participate and realize its full potential and not those implementing a project or program.”

“Overall this training exceeded my expectations. I left empowered and enriched with brand new knowledge which I will most certainly use in my line of community-led work.”

“I loved every moment, I grew, and I deeply appreciate every thoughtful decision made to make this an incredible ten days!”

— Tostan course evaluations, 2017

# The Tostan Training Center

## Growing the Movement for Human Rights

In response to years of requests from partners, Tostan is now sharing its transformational model for community-led development through a seminar called “Promoting Community Wellbeing” at the Tostan Training Center (TTC) in Thiès, Senegal. The course provides development practitioners and civil society leaders with a comprehensive overview of Tostan’s non formal, human rights-based education program that has been implemented in thousands of communities throughout West and East Africa. Over a 10-day period, participants are introduced to Tostan’s model, discuss the connection between Tostan practices and relevant development theories, experience key sessions from its Community Empowerment Program (CEP), visit villages that have participated in the CEP, and learn tools for monitoring and evaluation of holistic, human-rights based programs. Tostan conducted this standard course twice in 2017, once in English in March and once in French in November. Tostan also hosted two 10-day, customized trainings for religious and influential leaders from Ghana and Nigeria sponsored by the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Carter Center and other Tostan partner organizations including Girls Not Brides, Orchid Project, UNICEF, and UNFPA are increasingly booking spots for the standard Tostan course or requesting customized trainings to offer for their local partners or to train staff. In addition, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Segal Family Foundation, and the San Clemente Book Club provided Tostan with a number of scholarships in 2017 in order to invite leaders from small to medium-sized local African organizations with limited resources to attend the 10-day Tostan course.

### PARTICIPANT PROFILE

**Nub Raj Bhandari, Program Director, Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS), Nepal**

At Janaki Women Awareness Society, an NGO in Nepal, Nub Raj and his team strive to empower marginalized community members through education and development activities. Through a scholarship from Girls Not Brides, Nub Raj attended the March 2017 training. He connected with another participant, Zimbabwean Cosmos Rongoti,

a leader of the community-based organization: Shanduko Yeupenyu Child Care. They decided to develop a joint child marriage exchange program, based on their learnings from Tostan, to be implemented in both Nepal and Zimbabwe. Nub Raj traveled to Zimbabwe in April 2018 as a first step in their partnership.



### Tostan Training Center in numbers in 2017

- Trainings: 4
- Attendees: 88 (69 women, 19 men)
- Nationalities: 19
- Organizations: 40
- Attendees from African countries: 55
- Scholarships awarded: 17



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

# Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

## Tostan's Post-CEP and adapted CEP programs

For many years, Tostan has been challenging itself to answer several difficult questions:

- » **How can we ensure that previously trained communities have access to vital skills and information included in new programming approaches?**
- » **How can we responsibly meet demand from communities for continued Tostan presence?**
- » **How can we ensure that communities committed to making change are able to sustain momentum and find other partners as they continue their journey beyond Tostan?**

Tostan's post-CEP programming efforts continued to evolve answers to these questions in 2017.

Perhaps most significant in 2017 was the inclusion of post-CEP programming in a major initiative. Through our partnership with Tostan's Leadership Circle and broader support from Global Mobilizers, Tostan was able to roll out its Peace and Security modules and also support post-CEP projects within 120 of the communities that had just completed the CEP at the end of 2016.

The Peace and Security Program reinforces conflict prevention and management skills learned in the CEP through additional classes over six months and establishes a community-led structure to lead and strengthen peace-building and human security at the community level.



Tostan's Social Mobilization Program trains community members to educate and advocate within their own and connected social networks, long after the CEP has ended. In Senegal in 2017, 28 Social Mobilization Agents and 45 Youth Leaders reached more than 7,800 community members with basic health and human rights information from a trusted source. In Gambia more than 1,500 people were reached through 30 Social Mobilization Agents and 259 community leaders were trained to monitor their own regions for child protection and FGC abandonment.

The Reinforcement of Parental Practices module works with caregivers through classes and home visits held over an 18-month period to build on knowledge gained in the CEP and show them how to create an enabling environment for improved early childhood development and learning, allowing children to perform better and stay in school. In 2017, Tostan was able to bring this module to 120 new communities in Senegal.

Tostan's Empowered Communities Network within Senegal continued its efforts to support partnerships long after the end of the CEP by working with more than 80 Community Management Committees and Federations of CMCs across Senegal.

Tostan also continued its long history of working to improve the conditions of talibé children in Koranic schools in Senegal, in partnership with Anti-Slavery International.

Tostan also continued its work on adapted CEP models in 2017, in which Tostan implements revised versions of its model for specific audiences. Tostan's Prison Project offered a modified CEP in six prisons in Senegal, including classes and mediation activities for current and former detainees and their families.

click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org



# Your Support Ignites the Movement

Our great gratitude to all who gave in 2017 at all levels of support.



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

## THANK YOU GLOBAL MOBILIZERS

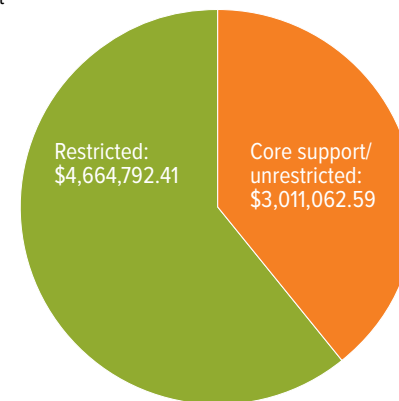
Tostan's grassroots innovation is driven by the generosity of individuals and foundations, an increasing number of whom make strategic support gifts. These unrestricted donations go directly to support our well-validated theory of change. In 2017 Global Mobilizers made 1,565 gifts of all sizes, constituting 39% of all funds raised! This generosity is marked by a deep trust and alignment with Tostan's leaders in West Africa. Your belief in us is a vital and joyful driving force, and the momentum is building.

**Leadership Circle members offer multi-year strategic support to scale and sustain Tostan for greater impact.**

Bryan and Kelly Baxter  
Cynthia Baxter  
The Gem Foundation  
The Greenbaum Foundation  
Imago Dei Fund  
Leslie Decker  
The Long Road Foundation  
Mary Ellen Cunningham  
Orchid Project  
Pathy Family Foundation  
Ripple Foundation  
Tom and Gail Kaneb Family Foundation  
The You Have Our Trust Fund

**Tostan receives grants from many partners who build our capacity and drive our programs. An increasing number give strategic support alongside Global Mobilizers.**

Anonymous	Segal Family Foundation
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	SIDA
Branson Family Foundation	Snowbird Foundation
Cartier Charitable Foundation	Social Investors, Partners for Social Impact
Comic Relief via Anti-Slavery International	Susan Boggio
Donner Foundation	Svenska Petroleum Exploration AB
Flora Family Foundation	UNFPA Guinea
Fredrik Öhrn	UNFPA Mali
HM Queen Silvia's Foundation	UNFPA Senegal
James Family Foundation	UNICEF The Gambia
Joan and Lewis Platt Foundation	UNICEF Guinea
Johnson and Johnson	UNICEF Senegal
The Lester Fund	United States Fund for UNICEF
Mao Family Foundation	US Embassy in Senegal
Margaret Gada Slosberg Charitable Foundation	Wallace Research Foundation
Moxie Foundation	World's Children's Prize Foundation
NORAD	
Planet Wheeler	<b>Tostan Sister Organizations</b>
Radio Sweden	Tostan Canada
Ray A. Hunt Foundation	Tostan Denmark
	Tostan Sweden



**Total income:**  
**\$7,675,855**

# Financials

## CURRENT ASSETS

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Cash and cash equivalents	2,835,015	2,146,093
Investment	4,374	46,151
Grants receivable	4,624,864	4,500,752
Employee receivables	25,444	28,787
Other receivables and advances	8,484	99,366
Prepaid expenses and other assets	17,612	45,794
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>7,515,793</b>	<b>6,866,943</b>

## PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Land	271,433	271,433
Buildings and improvements	451,750	451,750
Furniture and equipment	110,308	110,308
Computer equipment and software	344,792	344,792
Vehicles	298,598	298,598
Less: Accumulated depreciation and amortization	(942,711)	(831,291)
Net property and equipment	534,170	645,590
Noncurrent assets and grants receivable	2,602,819	1,932,065
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>10,652,782</b>	<b>9,444,598</b>

## CURRENT LIABILITIES

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	109,164	101,895
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>109,164</b>	<b>101,895</b>

## NET ASSETS

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Unrestricted	1,464,759	1,415,037
Temporarily restricted	9,078,859	7,927,666
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>10,543,618</b>	<b>9,342,703</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>10,652,782</b>	<b>9,444,598</b>

## EXPENSES

	2017 \$	2016 \$
Program Services	5,319,631	6,961,893
General and Administrative	1,024,643	1,446,814
Fundraising	296,276	410,856

click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

# GLOBAL MOBILIZERS INSPIRE US

## Profile: Our Circle Book Club

The impetus to forming this club was the sudden loss of Judy Miller, my mother. Judy was a humanitarian, mother of three daughters, grandmother of five, sister, friend, mentor, and the Director of the Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize. Judy's relationship with Molly Melching began when Tostan was nominated for the Hilton prize. There was a natural friendship that grew out of mutual respect and a shared wicked sense of humor. After losing her, I naturally leaned on my support group made up of an amazing network of friends in San Clemente, California. As a way to thank them for their undying love, I gave each one a copy of *However Long the Night: Molly Melching's Journey to Help Millions of African Women and Girls Triumph* by Aimee Molloy. Little did we know that this gesture would be the seed that would grow into Our Circle – a breakthrough book club. Forming the club was a natural idea. There was only one rule: to read inspirational, eye opening, soul searching books.

But we were still missing something and wanted to give back, so the decision was made to collect dues at our club and donate 100% to Tostan for the Tostan Training Center (TTC.) Judy was passionate about the TTC and we could see why. The vast number of lives that one can potentially touch after going through the TTC program is truly staggering. Therefore, sending women to the TTC who will learn the Tostan model and teach it in their own countries seemed the smartest way to stretch our dollars. We are very proud that in less than two years we have raised enough funds to send three women to the TTC!

**Forming a club like ours is easy to start. Anyone can do it. No matter how small a group, and no matter the amount you collect and donate, you can make a difference by creating your own club with your own network.**

We began as a way to heal after losing Judy. But somewhere along the way, we learned that we never lost her at all. She lives within all of us.

Sincerely,  
Colleen Graves



**Our Circle:** A Breakthrough Book Club — Colleen Graves, Julie Merlino, Tawni Burns, Alyssa Garrett, Shelly Ryan, Stacey Wendling, Linda Tanouye, Julie Andersen, Claudia Ryley, Tracy Ravera, Maureen Garrett, Jean Oleson, Cara Miller (Judy's daughter), Cathey Jackson (Judy's daughter) and Honorary Member Sandra Burns

Reach out to [Breakthrough@Tostan.org](mailto:Breakthrough@Tostan.org) for support for bringing *However Long the Night* to your book club, including a discussion guide!

## Join the Movement!



Partnership ideas: [Breakthrough@Tostan.org](mailto:Breakthrough@Tostan.org)



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

[tostan.org](http://tostan.org)

# VOICE FROM THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

## The Power of Community



Karen Mercaldo, featured at center in peach, with participants in Tostan's "Promoting Community Wellbeing" seminar

by Karen Mercaldo

I was inspired, on my first village visit with Tostan five years ago, by the power of community. My return, as a member of the Leadership Circle, for the 25th Anniversary celebration, deepened my sense of belonging to a community of engaged philanthropists and practitioners who believe, like Tostan, that people and communities can find the solutions they seek.

But I was still surprised when I returned this year, to learn more about Tostan's Community Empowerment Program, to find myself drawn in, literally and figuratively, circle after circle, to a growing global community. At the Tostan Training Center (TTC), I learned how powerful it is to bring all voices into the room, to listen deeply, and to be open to discovery – not just about others, but about yourself. It reminded me of the time and energy it takes to “walk the talk” of community empowerment.

In communities, Tostan facilitators start by drawing people in, exploring values and grounding conversations in personal experience. The TTC shares this model with influential civil society leaders. Tostan develops each individual's ‘capacity to aspire’, using a human rights-based approach to frame community deliberations. Civic leaders explore, for example, what the right to be free from violence means to them, as individuals and together. Importantly, they also address the responsibilities that accompany each human right, leading to the examination of practices in the community that uphold or violate those rights.

Tostan has become known for the fact that thousands of communities it has partnered with have decided to abandon harmful practices, transforming the lives of generations of girls and women. And while focusing on problems and solutions has historically led to philanthropic support, the real power is in the community-building.

I had “joked” that I was going to Senegal to learn how to build a functioning democracy. I was not disappointed. And it is no joke. In the most recent issue

of *Blueprint*, an industry forecast on philanthropy and digital society, Lucy Bernholz refers to civil society as the “immune system” of democracy, adding “It is no coincidence that experts see signs that the space for civil society is closing, that those monitoring Internet freedom see rising threats, and that those monitoring the health of democracies fear for the future.”

I came back convinced I could apply what I learned to “humankind”, an initiative to forge deeper human connections across boundaries in an increasingly fragmented and divisive San Diego/Tijuana region.

Now, a small team of us, together with Tostan, are building a new community, of and for communities, called “C-Cubed”. We hope that our conversations, spanning traditionally siloed sectors, will lead to more effective philanthropy and truly sustainable change. We plan, like Tostan community members, to “put on our shoes”, share our learnings within and across our spheres of influence and find ways to work together that tap into everyone's highest selves to realize our dreams for a better world.

Tostan's intentional, inclusive community- and skills- building make it an exemplar of opening and empowering civil society. It is my great pleasure to learn from and with them.

We hope you'll join us in building the movement of dignity for all!

click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

# Voice from the Board

In 2017 I have been closely following a new effort underway at Tostan. This new programming, which for now is called “Bridging the Gap,” is a way to build on Tostan’s program to educate and empower communities by training them and their local elected representatives, so they can better work together to achieve their common goals.

That may not sound like much, but it has huge potential. In recent years, across Africa, many once-centralized resources and services have been decentralized to the local level. This means that significant funds, services, resources and powers now exist in the very places where they are needed most. The challenge is that they are often going unused, underused, or misused.

Watching Tostan first explore and then start developing a program to support better use and management of local development resources has been fascinating. We have been carefully building a curriculum to help people understand and engage with new concepts and information, while also grappling with some of the biggest challenges facing Africa: little transparency and accountability; norms of acceptance of corruption, and of poor or absent services. As always, it is building upon Tostan’s existing programs, meaning that women and girls are deeply involved as well.

What has emerged is very promising. It is a model that, if it works, could be taken to a significant scale and help millions of people. Of course, I’m a data scientist. I won’t judge this program fully until Tostan continues evolving it to the place where we can measure it concretely. That said, the exploration happening now at Tostan is already a contribution to this field.

Before I am a demographer, before I am a Board member, I am a citizen of this world and of Senegal. I have close personal ties to both rural and urban areas here in West Africa where this work is very much needed. I am certain that it would transform many parts of Africa if educated communities and individuals, especially women, could achieve their goals in partnership with the local officials and resources designated to support local change. It just makes sense, and I am so excited to watch in 2018 as Tostan brings to bear its expertises in local education and shifting social norms on this tricky issue.



**In closing, as we look ahead to 2018, I want to thank you for the role you play in Tostan. It is through your partnership that we are able to build innovative new programs and also continually improve and extend our existing ones. On behalf of the Tostan Board of Directors, thank you for all that you do.**

Warmly,  
Cheikh Mbacké  
Chair, Tostan Board of Directors



click a tab to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

tostan.org

click a tab  
to view ▼

From the CEO

Passing the Torch

From a Spark to a Fire

2017 Achievements

SDGs and the Community  
Empowerment Program

Tostan Training Center

Sustaining and  
Renewing the Flame

Your Support

Financials

Join the Movement

Voice from the  
Leadership Circle

Voice from the Board

With Gratitude

[tostan.org](http://tostan.org)



## Thank you to all of Tostan's Global Mobilizers!

We are grateful to be your partners igniting change through participatory, human rights-based education so that communities may design futures that lead to dignity for all.

— The Tostan Staff