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Unwavering in our Vision, Unwavering in our Support: New Grants to Advance Racial Justice

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Today, we are excited to announce that the Dodge Foundation’s latest cycle of grants provides support to over 30 organizations focused on addressing the root cause and repair of structural racism and inequity across New Jersey. These organizations are working on everything from building power among immigrant communities to advocating for housing and environmental justice.

We have been honored to partner with our Imagine a New Way grantees over the last few years, including those we supported in our first grantmaking cycle in 2023. In addition to those we are announcing today, we have been able to fund organizations that have already mobilized meaningful change for communities across the state. Just last week, advocates stood at Perth Amboy’s ferry port where slave ships docked from Africa in the 1700s. During a Juneteenth celebration, our partner, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, launched the New Jersey Reparations Council to measure slavery’s impact, to determine how to repair the damage, and to repay the generations who suffered. The Council will establish nine committees to examine the wealth gap, disparities in health and incarceration, school segregation and more.

The announcement of the new Council builds on the important impacts of NJISJ over the last few years. In 2021, NJISJ was part of a coalition that secured \$8.4 million in state funds to create “restorative justice hubs” in Camden, Newark, Paterson, and Trenton, offering services for young people returning from incarceration. Other Imagine a New Way partners have also had tremendous impact – just last year, our grantee partners at Salvation and Social Justice successfully advocated to require, for the first time, New Jersey police officers to be licensed — as doctors and lawyers are — and set rules for decertifying officers who engage in misconduct.

This is exactly why we are directing our resources to organizations addressing the root cause and repair of structural racism and inequity across the state. And while we have seen signs of progress over the last few years, we know that now, more than ever, we must remain dedicated and committed to standing alongside racial justice organizations and their work. The systemic inequities that have built up over centuries require us to be unwavering in our commitment for the long term.

While this means that we remain steadfast in dedicating our funding to these organizations, it also means that we continue to evolve our own policies and practices. In early May, we launched our first-ever open call for racial justice-focused organizations. With the deadline closed last week, we received more than 120 applications. What this tells us is that the need

remains great, but that the opportunity remains greater. The open call process, one of multiple pathways for support, is intentionally designed to create connections to organizations who have not previously received Dodge Foundation support. We are currently reviewing those applications, and we look forward to announcing new grantees from that process in the fall of 2023.

For us, the last few years have been one step after another to live up to our aspirations of a just and equitable New Jersey. Because of that, we've been intentional about learning out loud, and sharing our lessons as we transition the majority of our funding to support racial justice work. We are so grateful to the organizations who have patiently partnered with us over the last seven years as we put this transition into action, and we're humbled by their generosity of spirit and understanding as we continue our work in our new direction.

Still, we know that many nonprofit organizations have real concerns that the field of philanthropy will retrench or fail to live up to its racial justice-focused commitments. Racial justice and equity issues have been under-resourced and neglected for far too long, and New Jersey is still one of the most inequitable states in the country. As a philanthropic organization, we must remain vigilant and listen to the voices of our nonprofit community – those that hold us accountable to our vision. We must remember that this work requires patience and persistence, every day.

Our Partners

In this most recent cycle, we are pleased to support over 30 organizations and initiatives that strategically build power, dismantle systems of injustice, and strengthen economic resilience for racial justice, as well as crisis response grants and funding to networks and organizations that support the vibrancy of New Jersey. You can see the full list of grantees at our [directory](#). Below are some of the new partners we are supporting this cycle:

- \$50,000 – [Forever Forward Fellowship](#), a program founded and led by the Smith Family Foundation that provides funding and leadership development to emerging Trenton-based grassroots organizations to increase their capacity, deepen their networks in Trenton, and strengthen internal practices, policies, and procedures.
- \$50,000 – [Clinton Hill Community Action](#), an organization that partners with residents to revitalize the Clinton Hill neighborhood, ensure that development is equitable and just, and advocate for what the community needs and deserves.
- \$50,000 – [New Jersey Consortium for Immigrant Children](#), an organization that works with New Jersey's young immigrants and their allies to advance their full, fearless participation in our society.
- \$40,000 – [The New Jersey Citizen Action Education Fund](#), a statewide nonprofit working to empower low- and moderate-income (LMI) people and communities of color through direct counseling and services, research, education, advocacy, and training on public policy issues important to seniors, families, and workers.
- \$40,000 – [Project for Empty Space](#), an organization that provides safe, equitable spaces for artistic innovation and complex public engagement by supporting artists whose work is oriented toward social discourse.

In addition to the racial-justice organizations listed above, we provided support to three initiatives and organizations through our crisis response funding:

- \$75,000 – The New Jersey Abortion Access Fund, a volunteer-run organization that advances abortion access and bodily autonomy by funding abortions for people traveling to, from, and within New Jersey.
- \$50,000 – Paterson Healing Collective, the first Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program in Passaic County that provides support and intervention for survivors of violence.
- \$50,000 – Mental Health First Aid Initiative, a partnership between the Morris Area Funders Group and the Mental Health Association in New Jersey, which will provide training to school staff, parents of school-aged children, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and community members to support a young person who may be developing a mental health or substance use challenge, experiencing worsening signs or symptoms, or are going through a crisis.

Through our Imagine a New Way partnerships, our crisis response funding, and our support to organizations contributing to the vibrancy of our State, we will continue to work towards our vision of a just and equitable New Jersey. Our commitment to this work is unwavering, and we will walk alongside racial-justice organizations with both patience and persistence as we confront injustice and reimagine systems in our State.