

The J.M. Kaplan Fund
Social Justice Grantee Convening



COMMON CAUSE

December 3-4, 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In December 2018, The J.M. Kaplan Fund brought together more than 25 grantees of its social justice program to explore innovative ideas at the crossroads of immigration and criminal justice reform.

At a moment when America's justice and immigration enforcement systems are more tightly bound together than ever before, we sought to build connections across our grantees' parallel efforts to dismantle mass incarceration and end mass detention. Through panel discussions, small-group sessions, and unscripted conversations, the convening offered opportunities for organizers, advocates, direct service providers, and others to discover common areas of interest

and spark new strategies as social justice champions. This report distills two days of spirited dialogue into five takeaways and eleven actions funders can take to advance more just immigration and criminal justice policies in America.

THE TAKEAWAYS

1

TO SOLVE AMERICA'S CRISES OF CRIMINALIZATION, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THEIR ROOTS IN A LEGACY OF RACIAL EXCLUSION.

While the federal government has sharply escalated actions to deport immigrants in recent years, such aggressive attacks upon our most vulnerable populations are rooted in a long legacy of racial injustice. From efforts to apprehend fugitive slaves to the wartime internment of Japanese Americans, exclusionary policies against nonwhite immigrants have conjoined the nation's criminal justice and immigrant detention systems. These two realms became deeply interlocked during the 1990s, when punitive laws worked in concert to criminalize communities of color. And after September 11, 2001, large-scale investments were made to monitor and deport those deemed perpetual security threats. Recognizing this interlinked history of racial exclusion and criminalization is key to building strategies that can bring justice to all regardless of racial identity, criminal record, or immigration status.

2

THE MOST POWERFUL CAMPAIGNS UNITE THE DIRECTLY IMPACTED AND ALLIES AROUND COMMON CAUSES.

If there is an overarching strategy for winning campaigns on behalf of immigrants and the incarcerated, it is building bridges among communities and constituencies. The criminal justice system exists, for example, largely because other systems—whether education, housing, health care, or transportation—have failed as social safety nets. Building alliances with efforts to improve these other systems can create new strategies to reduce justice-system involvement. Equally powerful have been efforts that unite the criminal justice and immigration reform communities. As a case in point, Austin-based Grassroots Leadership brought immigrants and the formerly incarcerated together to pass legislation aimed at reducing racial disparities in arrests and limiting pathways to deportation.

3

INTEGRATING DIRECT SERVICE AND ADVOCACY ROLES CAN SPUR MASSIVE CHANGE.

Social justice organizations broadly fall into two camps: service providers that directly assist those impacted, and advocacy organizations that build campaigns to achieve a variety of goals. In practice, however, drawing a line between one role and the other is often impossible to do. And the moment when these two realms intersect can be a powerful opportunity for impact. Legal services provider Safe Passage Project, for example, played a major advocacy role when it helped win a class-action lawsuit on behalf of immigrant children who had been detained without due process. And California-based Freedom for Immigrants helped pass two state laws that put a moratorium on immigration detention expansion, uniting the group's direct service and advocacy efforts in a singular mission to end immigration detention.

4

CULTIVATING THE LEADERSHIP OF THOSE TOUCHED BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS CAN TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES.

To truly empower communities, significant investments are needed in tools and training for those who have been incarcerated or exposed to the immigration enforcement system. To this end, social justice groups are providing training in leadership, positive youth development, and workforce readiness skills to help the directly impacted be effective agents of community change. Other organizations are ensuring their leadership reflects the communities they serve, and enlisting impacted community members for key roles in advocacy and organizing efforts.

5

TO ADDRESS TRAUMA'S PERVASIVE IMPACTS, HEALING WORK IS NEEDED FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE STAFF.

Whether from day-to-day stresses or the "vicarious" trauma of serving system-involved children and adults, workers in the social justice field are often "wounded healers." Consequently, there is a growing interest in addressing staff trauma and creating a more sustainable work environment through supervisory check-ins, monthly support groups, yoga, and other benefits to support the health and well-being of those on the front lines of criminal justice and immigration reform.

INTRODUCTION



CONNECTING SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAMPIONS

Over two days in December 2018, more than 25 grantees of The J.M. Kaplan Fund's social justice program gathered in New York City for a convening of community organizers, youth advocates, immigrant services providers, funders, and others committed to reforming America's criminal justice and immigration systems.

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This convening marked one of the first times we have brought together grantees of a core program area to explore the complex challenges they face every day, and collectively seek solutions that can empower and inspire others across the field. At a moment when America's criminal justice and immigration enforcement systems are more closely conjoined than ever before, we were especially eager to create synergies and build connections across our grantees' parallel efforts to dismantle mass incarceration and end mass detention.

In framing this program, we drew on a legacy of Fund support for both immigration and criminal justice reform. From the 1950s onward, the Fund has lifted nonprofit organizations working with refugees and asylum seekers, as well as those providing critical aid to immigrant workers, youth, and families. The Fund also has a history of supporting direct service and policy initiatives that seek to alleviate the tremendous human impact of the criminal justice system. It has supported work to abolish the death penalty, provide alternatives to incarceration, and advance bold campaigns to close New York City's Rikers Island prison complex and end cash bail.

INTRODUCTION

CONNECTING SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAMPIONS

In 2016, the Fund's social justice program brought together our giving in these two critical areas. The program now focuses on decarceration and decriminalization, drawing upon New York City's unique criminal justice reform and organizing models in the hope of influencing national work to end mass incarceration and challenge immigration enforcement policies. While the Fund's criminal justice and immigration grantees are united in courageous campaigns for social change, they tend to serve different constituencies and rarely come together to find common cause in their own work.

That's why we invited them—along with colleagues from across the philanthropic world—to sit down with us for panel discussions, small-group sessions, and unscripted conversations that would offer opportunities to discover common areas of interest, build collaborations, strengthen existing alliances, and spark new strategies as social justice champions.

The takeaways that follow are drawn from the convening's rich dialogues and debates. They offer historical context for America's mass incarceration and aggressive immigrant detention and removal policies. They highlight the thread of racial justice that runs through both the immigration and criminal justice reform movements. They identify smart local initiatives that have spurred statewide and national action. They explore tensions between direct service and advocacy roles, and the need to cultivate the leadership of directly impacted populations. And they consider the often unacknowledged impacts of trauma on frontline social justice staff as well as the healing support that is required.

We believe these takeaways offer valuable lessons for those working to shape more just approaches to immigration and criminal justice in America, as well as for funders seeking to advance solutions at the forefront of the field.

We have also highlighted eleven opportunities for philanthropic support that can bolster promising strategies and provide critical tools for social justice advocates.

Above all, we hope these pages convey how incredibly proud we are of our grantees. As our two days together resoundingly affirmed, they are a galvanizing force of innovative ideas and relentless energy, taking aim at our society's most urgent social challenges.



WHAT WE LEARNED



LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

1

To solve America's crises of criminalization, we must recognize their roots in a legacy of racial exclusion.

Since 2017, the aggressive tactics of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to deport immigrants have alarmed advocates, elected officials, and others as a sharp escalation of attacks upon some of our most vulnerable populations. While these actions have undeniably raised the stakes for those fighting on behalf of immigrants and the incarcerated, it is important to recognize their origins in a legacy of injustice that is virtually as old as the United States.

Reviewing the history of immigration and criminalization in the U.S., Carl Lipscombe, Deputy Director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, noted that the nation's modern system of policing can be traced to racially-based enforcement during the earliest days of the Republic. To apprehend fugitive slaves, for example, slave catchers would descend upon free states, demand documents from individuals vouching for their liberty, and return those without papers to slave states—much like immigrants are deported today. "This parallel between the criminal justice system and the immigration system has continued throughout our history,"

Lipscombe added. From the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and beyond, exclusionary policies stepped up actions against nonwhite immigrants, while binding together America's criminal justice and immigrant detention efforts.

These two realms became deeply interlocked during the 1990s, when a series of laws worked in concert to criminalize communities of color. The controversial "three-strikes" provision of 1994—which imposed a life sentence for almost any crime if the defendant had two prior criminal convictions—capped years of punitive crime control measures that led to staggering incarceration rates. Subsequent laws in 1996 created an immigration enforcement system which relied on the criminal justice system to function as a dragnet for deportable individuals. These legislative acts have culminated in an extensive law-enforcement apparatus of identification, surveillance, and deportation.

WHAT WE LEARNED LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. made large-scale investments in systems and tools to track, monitor, punish, and deport those deemed perpetual threats to the nation's security, including Muslim communities and immigrants with criminal convictions.

The escalated convergence of the criminal justice and immigration systems in the 1990s created fertile soil for the vast expansion of the homeland security state after 9/11.

Mizue Aizeki, Immigrant Defense Project

Today, the results of these efforts have wreaked havoc even in places considered immigrant sanctuaries. For example, despite New York City's pledge to protect immigrants by restricting law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration agents, so-called carve-outs have created a class of New Yorkers considered by some in power to be undeserving of protection.

Mizue Aizeki, Deputy Director of the Immigrant Defense Project, explained that the New York City administration has limited legal services for immigrants convicted of any one of 170 offenses, a blow not only to vulnerable populations but to New York's standing as a pro-immigrant place. "We won some protections against ICE in New York," Aizeki said, "but the city lost the political position to say: This is a city that values the human rights of all immigrant New Yorkers." Understanding the interlinked history of racial exclusion and criminalization in the U.S. is key to building strategies that can bring justice to all regardless of their racial identity, their criminal record, or their immigration status.



2

The most powerful campaigns unite the directly impacted and allies around common causes.

If there is an overarching strategy for winning campaigns on behalf of immigrants and the incarcerated, it is building bridges among communities and constituencies. Lorenzo Jones, Co-Executive Director of the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice, noted that all politics are local, meaning that solutions must be created in partnership with local communities. “We are not going to win this at the legislature; we are not going to win it in Washington, D.C.,” Jones said. “We are going to win it in block club meetings, with crossing guards, and with merchant’s associations.” Organizers must make issues real to each community in ways that respond to their own self-interests—whether in Albany, Westchester, or Queens. “You have to build coalitions and alliances that represent those differences,” Jones explained.

If we want to organize powerful groups for criminal justice reform, we have to organize the family members of formerly and currently incarcerated people.

Lorenzo Jones, Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice

This principle promises to inform a range of organizing efforts. To meaningfully advance criminal justice reform, for example, the base must be expanded beyond incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. One motivated and informed constituency already exists, Jones said: the caregivers of those who are system-involved—mothers, aunts, cousins, husbands, wives, and children. On the front lines making appointments and securing support, these family members have a much clearer understanding than most Americans of the desperate need to end what has been called the cradle-to-prison pipeline.

Jones highlighted another opportunity to embrace natural allies. The criminal justice system exists, he argued, largely because other systems have failed as effective social safety nets. Education, housing, health care, or transportation—each of these systems contains a threshold beyond which people deemed undeserving are expelled. “Criminal justice reform is simply the consequence of us not holding these other systems accountable,” Jones said.

WHAT WE LEARNED LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

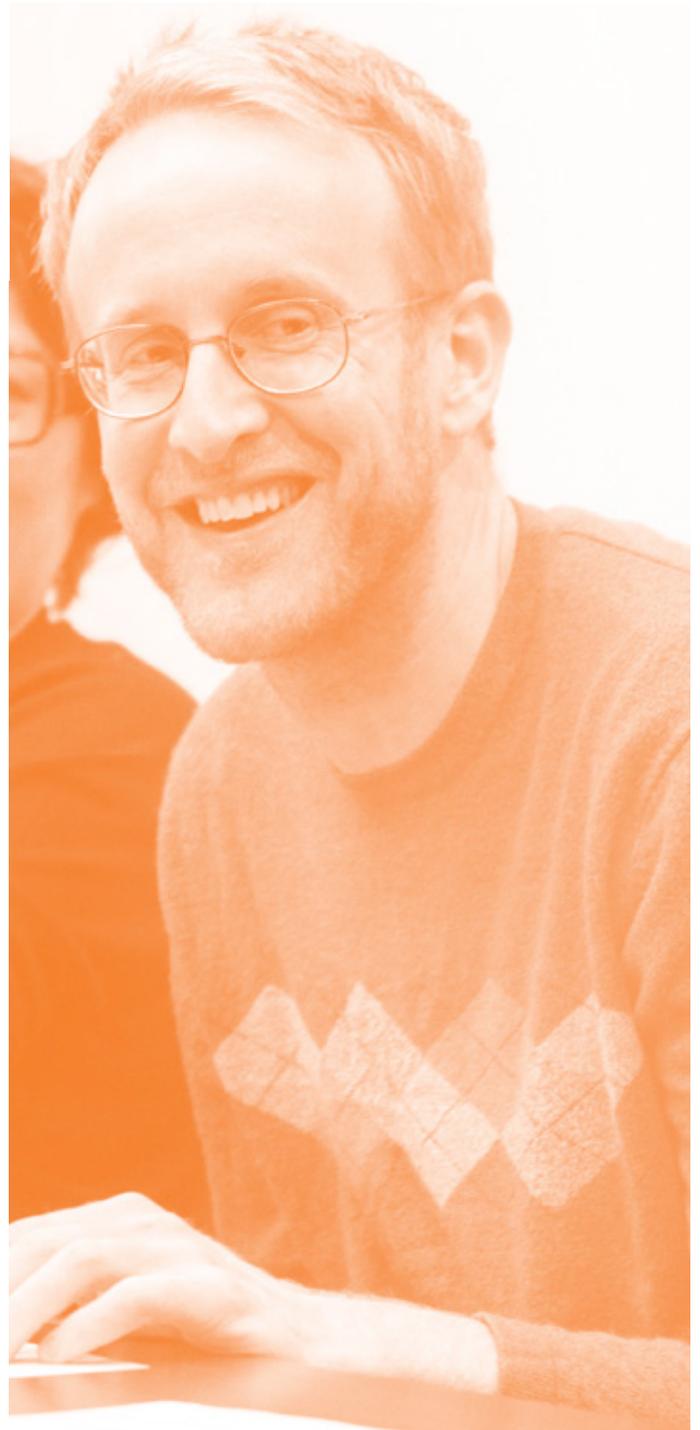
Building alliances with efforts to improve these other systems—from education reformers to tenant rights advocates—could create powerful new strategies to reduce justice-system involvement.

The impact that local organizations have had in the immigration enforcement space and in the criminal justice space on national policy is profound.

Bob Libal, Grassroots Leadership

Equally powerful have been efforts that unite the criminal justice and immigration reform communities around shared interests. “We’re beginning to see campaigns on the ground that are bringing together the bases, and those campaigns are winning,” said Bob Libal, Executive Director of Austin, Texas-based Grassroots Leadership. A case in point is Freedom Cities, a campaign to counter the impacts of statewide anti-immigrant legislation in Texas. Created in the wake of Senate Bill 4, which, among other provisions, mandates local law enforcement collaboration with ICE, the campaign for the first time drew together Grassroots Leadership’s two principal bases: immigrants who are detained and at risk of deportation, and the formerly incarcerated and their family members. Working with local partners, the coalition found that people of color and immigrants in Austin are overrepresented in arrests and detention. They advocated for the city to reduce racial disparities in arrests, and eliminate unnecessary low-level arrests that can lead to deportation. The group also proposed that police inform individuals that they can deny requests for immigration papers, and called on police to complete reports explaining encounters that prompted them to ask for immigration status.

Austin’s City Council passed the Freedom City legislation in 2018. “We had a bunch of formerly incarcerated folks and a bunch of immigrant folks there at City Hall organizing together,” Libal said, “and we won on a unanimous vote.”



3

Integrating direct service and advocacy roles can spur massive change.

Social justice organizations broadly fall into two different camps: service providers that directly assist those impacted with programs such as youth counseling or legal assistance, and advocacy organizations that build campaigns on behalf of those impacted to achieve legislative action, cultural change, or other goals. These two roles tend to be viewed as competitors when it comes to funder dollars—of which there are never enough to support each in equal measure. In practice, however, drawing a line between one role and the other is often impossible to do. And the moment when these two realms intersect can be a powerful opportunity for impact.

It is very hard to separate advocacy from direct services, but most of our funding streams do.

Eve Stotland, The Door

Such a case was illustrated by Rich Leimsider, Executive Director of Safe Passage Project, a direct service provider offering legal services to refugee and immigrant children in the New York City area who face deportation.

In 2017, the organization plunged into advocacy amid an effort to win due process rights for immigrant youth. That summer, one of Safe Passage's clients, a 17-year-old undocumented immigrant, was arrested by ICE agents outside his Long Island home and flown to a secure detention facility in California—with no notice to his mother or attorney. Having finally located the teen, Safe Passage was told he would not be entitled to a hearing or have access to a judge. Working with the ACLU of Northern California and others, Safe Passage helped launch a class-action lawsuit against the federal government, *Saravia v. Sessions*, contending that such immigrant children—arrested on the basis of unsubstantiated gang affiliation charges—deserved an immigration hearing to contest the government's evidence. The teen won a hearing at which a judge ruled he posed no danger and released him. As a result of this advocacy, thousands of children across the country have a right to what is now known as a Saravia hearing guaranteeing them access to a lawyer and a judge.

WHAT WE LEARNED LESSONS FOR THE FIELD



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“This is the intersection of direct service and advocacy,” Leimsider concluded, adding that his team has struggled to clarify whether and how their resources could be deployed to address the enormous need for both types of work. “How do we know when our role begins and ends?” he asked. “Do I build an advocacy department, or do I just keep getting to work with the ACLU and some other incredible partners?” Managing the intersection of these two roles is an area that deserves closer study to support synergies that can bolster social justice efforts.

For Christina Mansfield, Co-Executive Director of Freedom for Immigrants, direct service and advocacy became two sides of a singular mission to end immigration detention. Among a variety of activities, her California-based organization has helped build a network of community-led visitation programs at immigrant prisons and jails across the U.S. After the group initially won access to detention facilities, however, it found direct service an inadequate response to the human and civil rights violations it uncovered.

“The overall experience of direct service in this context is just bearing witness to suffering,” Mansfield said. “And if you have to do that without having an advocacy component, it’s just traumatic.”

Even though advocacy to expose detainee mistreatment would threaten the group’s direct service work—prompting prisons to shut off access, for example, or move detainees who spoke out elsewhere—the group felt they had no choice but to advocate for change. Freedom for Immigrants ultimately helped pass two California laws that put a moratorium on immigration detention expansion. Now, the group addresses every opportunity in terms of whether it will lead to the abolition of the immigration detention system. “If it’s not, we’re not doing it,” Mansfield said.

4

Cultivating the leadership of those touched by the criminal justice and immigration systems can transform communities.

Social justice advocates have found that transformative impacts on communities are only possible when those who are directly impacted are empowered as agents of change. Making that happen requires a substantial investment in tools and training for those who have been incarcerated or exposed to the immigrant enforcement system. Consider the case of “credible messengers,” or formerly incarcerated individuals who return to build communities through youth mentorship, conflict mediation, violence prevention, and other efforts. Drawing on life experiences with poverty, trauma, incarceration, gangs, and the child welfare system, credible messengers have helped create highly successful models like New York City’s Arches program, which connects young adults on probation to mentors with similar life experience in their own neighborhoods, or CeaseFire (now Cure Violence) in Chicago, where violence interrupters prevent shootings by mediating potentially lethal conflicts.

As interest has grown in credible messengers, research revealed that these formerly incarcerated men and women had challenges

copied with their own trauma, in addition to adapting to entirely different norms as employees of human services agencies. “For some, it was the first time they had an opportunity to work on their own healing, while learning how to effectively provide trauma-informed youth mentorship and other services,” said Saj Rahman, Program Director of the Institute for Transformative Mentoring (ITM). “Providing credentialed programs that honor their experiential knowledge and its application to the youth development work is an essential piece in cultivating the leadership of those directly impacted.” In response, ITM was formed in collaboration with The New School to provide training in positive youth development, leadership, and workforce readiness skills that would give credible messengers tools to be more effective agents of healing and community change. The semester-long course, grounded in restorative justice and trauma-informed approaches, now counts graduates employed by more than 25 organizations across New York City who spearhead youth mentorship in their own institutions as outreach supervisors, lead mentors, program coordinators, and more.

WHAT WE LEARNED LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

To correct the issues our communities are facing, people who are directly impacted have to lead the institutions.

Javier Valdés, Make the Road New York

At JustLeadershipUSA, a national fellowship program, Leading with Conviction, has also sought to advance the leadership of those impacted by harmful criminalization and incarceration policies. The year-long, cohort-based program offers leadership training for formerly incarcerated individuals with a track record in advocacy and community organizing. Meanwhile, directly impacted communities have played key roles in campaigns supported by the organization, such as JusticeLA, which helped stop the construction of a \$3.5 billion women's jail in Los Angeles County, and the #CLOSEthecreek campaign in Philadelphia to close the House of Correction and cut the local prison population in half.

"All these campaigns are rooted in the principle that those closest to the problem are closest to the solution," said Brandon Holmes, New York City Campaign Coordinator for JustLeadershipUSA. But devoting staff resources to training can be challenging. For example, Holmes noted, advocates are often under pressure to move quickly and rely on senior staff, instead of providing the support needed to pass tasks on to people who may be doing them for the first time. "One of the challenges is, you've just got to slow down, and that's scary for grassroots organizations," Holmes said. "I could do this all on my own, but that is not leadership development, and that's not supporting our campaigns in the long run."

Other groups have empowered the directly impacted by ensuring their leadership reflects the communities they serve. Javier Valdés, Co-Executive Director of

Make the Road New York, noted that the organization's bylaws call for the majority of its Board to be members of the community. Make the Road New York has also vowed that by 2021, 80% of its staff will represent the communities where it works. Reaching this mark will require new kinds of structures—with dedicated training in organizing, embodied leadership, and supervisory skills—for the directly impacted to thrive. "You have to be patient," said Valdés. "If we actually create the time and the support structure, everybody can succeed."

The people who are most impacted by our work need to feel like they have ownership. Ultimately, they are the folks who decide what victory means.

Brandon Holmes, JustLeadershipUSA

Elevating expectations for those directly impacted is central to the work of exalt, which combines learning, professional internships, and mentoring for court-involved youth between the ages of 15 and 19. The Brooklyn-based program has offered new pathways for people like Michael Davis, who credits exalt with opening his eyes to skills and career opportunities. "I was getting locked up every other week for hanging out with the wrong crowd," Davis recalled. "I had no intention of going back to school, getting a job, or looking forward to my career." Now, having completed exalt's curriculum and taken on internships with local employers, Davis hasn't been to jail in over a year. "Once I was at exalt, I was getting a paycheck every week, building my skills, and building my resume," he said.

Not only that, but Davis, now 20, has taken on a leadership role in helping his peers return to school and build their own resumes, while working toward his dream of launching a clothing brand as a fashion designer. Gisele Castro, exalt's Executive Director, explained that Davis embodies the organization's approach to nurturing agency in youth who can then help transform the lives of others.

"We can never forget that we're not the experts in the field," Castro said. "Our youth are the experts." That's a winning philosophy for social justice advocates who aim to empower the directly impacted—of any age or background—to bring change back home, where it counts the most.





5

To address trauma's pervasive impacts, healing work is needed for social justice staff.

Whether from day-to-day stresses, intergenerational violence, or the “vicarious” trauma of serving system-involved children and adults, workers in the social justice field are very often “wounded healers” deeply impacted by their own trauma exposure. If left unacknowledged, trauma can undermine the emotional well-being, physical health, and success of those on the front lines of criminal justice and immigration reform.

“For those who do this work on the advocacy, organizing, direct service side, or in-between, you have to figure out a vicarious trauma plan for your workers,” said Bridgette Butler, Chief of Staff of Common Justice, which seeks to address violence through alternatives to incarceration and efforts that center the experiences of crime survivors. With a staff largely comprised of formerly incarcerated people and/or survivors of crime, Common Justice has sought to put in place supervisory structures that support staff wellness, while acknowledging that there is no quick fix for the complex task of healing the healers.

Indeed, there is growing interest among social justice organizations in addressing staff trauma and creating a more sustainable work environment. Supervisory check-ins with staff, monthly support groups, yoga, and wellness benefits that address individuals’ needs are all making a difference. Some organizations have applied restorative justice models to their own workplace, such as greeting new staff members with a welcome circle, or holding restorative justice circles at staff meetings, where “talking pieces”—a special object passed from person to person—allow each participant to share in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Others have used art to address trauma, whether through writing, painting, or performance that can engage staff and community members in a collective healing process. By emphasizing sharing and respect, social justice advocates can surface often buried experiences and begin to heal. As one participant explained, “It’s about bringing the shadow to the light.”

Every day we are learning more and more about this thing called trauma.

Bridgette Butler, Common Justice

WHAT WE LEARNED

WHAT FUNDERS CAN DO

Over the course of the convening, participants identified actions that social justice funders can take to advance innovative approaches to end mass incarceration and challenge immigration enforcement policies. Here are eleven that stood out:

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BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MOVEMENTS ADDRESSING DETENTION AND MASS INCARCERATION, INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR COLLABORATION AND CROSS-LEARNING AMONG IMMIGRATION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES.



DE-SILO THE ROLES OF DIRECT SERVICE AND ADVOCACY, RECOGNIZING THAT SOMETIMES THESE ARE MOST EFFECTIVE IN TANDEM.



EXAMINE THE ROLE RACIAL INEQUITY PLAYS IN THE CRIMINALIZATION OF COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS, AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NATION'S LEGACY OF RACIAL EXCLUSION.



SEED OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATIVE WORK AMONG ADVOCATES, ORGANIZERS, AND DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS, BRINGING LEADERS IN THESE DIFFERENT REALMS TOGETHER TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER AND CREATE COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS.

5 

FUND NARRATIVE CHANGE EFFORTS THAT FOCUS ON HUMANIZING IMMIGRANTS AND INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS TO COMBAT CRIMINALIZATION.

8 

IDENTIFY AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICING-FOCUSED REFORMS TO STOP THE FLOW OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

6 

LIFT UP SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES THAT CREATE LEADERSHIP SPACES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE, THOSE IMPACTED BY IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT, AND THEIR FAMILIES.

9 

PROVIDE MULTI-YEAR FUNDING TO ORGANIZATIONS THAT WILL ALLOW FOR MORE PREDICTABLE AND SUSTAINABLE PROGRAM AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT.

7 

PROVIDE FUNDING TO CREATE NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ALLIANCES WITH EFFORTS TO IMPROVE OTHER SOCIAL SYSTEMS—FROM EDUCATION REFORM TO TENANT RIGHTS ADVOCACY. THIS WILL HELP ADDRESS THE LACK OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS IN HOUSING, EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MASS INCARCERATION AND DETENTION.

10 

TAKE MORE RISKS AND SUPPORT INNOVATION, INCLUDING PILOT PROGRAMS THAT CAN TEST NEW IDEAS AND ADVANCE PROMISING SOLUTIONS.

11 

SUPPORT HEALING AND RESILIENCY PRACTICES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF AND THEIR CONSTITUENCIES WHO ARE IMPACTED BY SYSTEM-GENERATED TRAUMA.

GRANTEE PARTICIPANTS



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Bridgette Butler
Chief of Staff, Common Justice

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Insha Rahman
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Dorothy Tegeler
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Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)

Javier Valdés
Co-Executive Director,
Make the Road New York





PANELLIST BIOGRAPHIES



Mizue Aizeki

is the Deputy Director at the Immigrant Defense Project (IDP), where she focuses on ending injustices at the intersection of the criminal and immigration systems, including criminalization, imprisonment, and exile. Mizue also coordinates IDP's community defense work. Mizue has organized around racial justice, workers' rights, and the policing and deportation of immigrants in the interior and at the U.S.-Mexico border since 1995. She is also a photographer whose work has appeared in *Dying to Live: A Story of U.S. Immigration in an Age of Global Apartheid* (City Lights Books, 2008) and *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter* (Verso, 2016).

Bridgette Butler

is the Chief of Staff at Common Justice, where she draws on extensive experience working on behalf of young people impacted by violence. Prior to rejoining Common Justice, Bridgette was the Deputy Director at the Criminal Justice Initiative (CJI), where she helped secure a partnership with Open Society Foundations to increase CJI's grantmaking to include and focus on sex-workers' rights, harm-reduction initiatives, and pre-arrest and pre-booking diversion programming. Bridgette previously served at Common Justice as the National Survivor Specialist, where she led a collaborative effort to support grassroots organizations in building their organizational and advocacy capacity. Earlier in her career, Bridgette worked at the W. Haywood Burns Institute, where she provided technical assistance to jurisdictions around the country on addressing racial and ethnic disparities within the youth justice system.

She has also served as a case manager for youth returning from secure confinement with the Youth Empowerment Project of Louisiana; as an education advocate at the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana; and has facilitated a collaborative process to reduce the number of youth detained in New Orleans. Bridgette received her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from Xavier University of Louisiana.

Gisele Castro

is the Executive Director of exalt. Gisele has more than 20 years of experience creating and leading organizations that focus on ensuring equity in justice for court-involved youth. She holds a Master's of Public Administration and Non-Profit Management from Pace University, and graduated as a member of the Pi Alpha Alpha National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. She studied at the graduate level at Oxford University, where she researched U.S. and U.K. juvenile justice systems. Gisele has strong roots within exalt, having served previously as Director of Programs and External Relations from 2010-2013, Board Member from 2013-2015, and former Board Chair. She was also the Director at CASES, Family Court division, and was instrumental in redesigning the program model and structure. Gisele has taught courses on leadership development at Bank Street College and advises students in the Master's in Education and Leadership in Community-Based Learning program. As she leads exalt through its inaugural scaling initiative, Gisele is poised to position the organization to become a thought leader and use compelling data to prove that our most marginalized young people have an important place in society.

Michael Davis

is a graduate of exalt's youth mentorship and internship programs. Now 20, Michael lives in Cambria Heights, Queens, loves cars, and has wanted to be a mechanic since an early age. He has recently grown interested in becoming a fashion designer and opening his own clothing line. Before coming to exalt, Michael dropped out of high school, but through his determination and exalt's continued support, he enrolled in a GED program at the Queens Library and is on his way to obtaining a GED. Michael earned his first internship through exalt at Made in Brownsville (MiB), a Brooklyn-based nonprofit organization providing access and entry into STEAM professions for teens and disconnected youth. While at MiB, Michael worked with Brownsville youth to help them increase their experience and competencies in design, screen printing, and marketing, all while learning marketable hard skills in the STEAM disciplines. For Michael's graduate internship, exalt placed him at Inside Out Tours, where his tasks included seeking out new attractions that could be incorporated into walking tours highlighting hidden New York history. His future goals are to become a fashion designer and create a widely successful clothing brand.

Kesi Foster

is a Lead Organizer at Make the Road New York, where he supports the growth of the Youth Power Project across New York City and Long Island, and advances campaigns for educational justice and community safety and justice. Prior to organizing with Make the Road, Kesi was the Coordinator for the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), the largest youth-

led educational justice coalition in New York City. UYC brings together young people from across New York City to organize for racial justice and equity in the public school system. Previously, Kesi worked at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, supporting grassroots community organizations to build campaigns for educational justice and advocate for community-led solutions including community schools and ending the school-to-prison pipeline. Before joining educational justice campaigns, Kesi worked with the Right to Vote Campaign, and with formerly incarcerated individuals and public housing residents in New York City, where he facilitated back-to-work skill-building workshops.

Brandon J. Holmes

is the New York City Campaign Coordinator at JustLeadershipUSA. He oversees city-based advocacy campaigns, engaging the organization's members, fostering partner relationships, and developing campaign strategies. Previously, Brandon served as an organizer for the New York Civil Liberties Union and as the civil rights organizer for VOCAL-NY. He is currently the Board Chair of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC, a creative advocacy organization that empowers communities to tell their stories in order to spark legislative action and cultural change in New York City. Brandon is committed to amplifying the voices of directly impacted communities through unconventional forms of political and social advocacy. His grassroots campaigning experience includes organizing returning citizens and criminal justice-involved youth. Brandon has also been a part of the training team for People's Action, a national organization made up of 600 organizers and over 1 million members from 29 states.

Lorenzo Jones

is the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director at the Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice. He has more than 25 years of experience mentoring community leaders and organizing communities to make systemic change. As a trainer, strategist, and coach, Lorenzo has worked with groups including People's Action, Open Society Foundations, the Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People and Families Movement, Perrin Family Foundation (in which he now serves as a member of their Strategy Council), Public Welfare Foundation, Students for Sensible Drug Policy, Drug Policy Alliance, and more. Lorenzo began his organizing career in 1991 in Hartford, Connecticut as a community organizer with the Asylum Hill Organizing Project. In 1994, he joined United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods, where Alta Lash and Jack Mimnaugh mentored him for nearly 15 years. From 2005–2016, Lorenzo served as the Executive Director of A Better Way Foundation, a Connecticut-based organization seeking to build power in urban, suburban, and rural communities most affected by mass incarceration, the drug war, and inequitable access to resources. In 2013, Lorenzo was honored by the Drug Policy Alliance in recognition of his efforts to make democracy work in drug law and policy reform.

Rich Leimsider

is the Executive Director of Safe Passage Project, a nonprofit that provides free lawyers to refugee and immigrant children in the New York City area who face deportation.

Safe Passage Project currently represents more than 800 children with over two dozen full-time staff and the help of hundreds of pro bono attorneys. Earlier, Rich developed and ran programs for social entrepreneurs at Echoing Green, created the Aspen Institute's Center for Business Education, and failed at an attempt to create a national service alumni organization. He serves as a board member of the West African agricultural finance organization myAgro. Rich is a graduate of Williams College and Harvard Business School, and has most of an MSW from the University of Texas.

Bob Libal

is the Executive Director of Grassroots Leadership. He has worked for more than 15 years on issues of prison privatization, immigration detention, and criminal justice reform. Bob is author or co-author of many reports and articles for Grassroots Leadership including Operation Streamline: Costs and Consequences and The Dirty Thirty: Nothing to Celebrate About 30 Years of Corrections Corporation of America. Bob is regularly interviewed by national, regional, and local press on issues related to prison privatization, immigration detention, immigration enforcement policies, and the business of prisons. In 2017, Bob was named one of 15 people changing the nonprofit world by the Chronicle of Philanthropy. The following year, he was named to The Frederick Douglass 200, a project to honor the impact of 200 living individuals who best embody the work and spirit of the celebrated abolitionist.

Carl Lipscombe

is a Bronx-born human rights defender with over 15 years of experience advocating around issues of policing, mass incarceration, immigration enforcement, and the rights of prisoners and detainees on the local, state, and national levels. As Deputy Director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Carl oversees the organization's policy campaigns, research, and impact litigation initiatives. Previously, Carl served as a staff attorney in the criminal defense practice at The Bronx Defenders. Carl's experience also includes work as a community organizer and as a campaign strategist for labor unions, worker centers, and national coalitions including Jobs with Justice, Right to the City, and National Guestworker Alliance. Carl studied public policy at the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University and received a Bachelor's degree in philosophy from Brooklyn College and a law degree from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Christina Mansfield

is the Co-Executive Director of Freedom for Immigrants, formerly Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC), which she co-founded with Christina Fialho in 2012 to abolish immigration detention. She is a cultural anthropologist, trained in applied and advocacy research that is attentive to power dynamics, such as Participatory Action Research.

She was awarded the 2012 Echoing Green Fellowship in recognition of her innovation and entrepreneurship. She also is a recipient of the 2018 James Irvine Leadership Award and the 2013 Rockwood Fellowship for a New California.

Daranee Petsod

is the President of Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR). In a career spanning more than 30 years, Daranee has played a variety of leadership roles to advance justice and equity for marginalized communities. At GCIR, she leads a national organization that has leveraged hundreds of millions in philanthropic funding to protect the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and cultivate their contributions to our society. Prior to joining GCIR, Daranee served as Interim Executive Director at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and was a program officer at the Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc. and the Sophia Fund, one of the first women's funds in the United States. She previously worked with Southeast Asian refugee women, counseled abused and neglected children and their families, and mentored inner-city youth. Daranee serves on the boards of directors of United Philanthropy Forum and Northern California Grantmakers. She has authored and co-authored research reports on immigration issues, as well as opinion pieces on the role of philanthropy in advancing the rights and inclusion of immigrants. She earned a MA in social policy from the University of Chicago and is a recipient of the 2014 Professional Development Fellowship from the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation.

Saj Rahman

directs the Institute for Transformative Mentoring, a training program for credible messengers who use their experience to work with young adults to reduce incarceration and violence. Saj has more than a decade of experience in youth development, community-based research, curriculum development, advocacy, and nonprofit management. He has designed and implemented programs in New York City that foster personal transformation and build leadership skills among formerly incarcerated credible messengers. Saj previously served as the founding director of Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement at Community Connections for Youth. Saj graduated with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Psychology from Wesleyan University. He received the 2006 Holzberg Fellowship in Clinical and Community Psychology.

Javier H. Valdés

is the Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York (MRNY) and Make the Road Action. He leads MRNY's organizing and supervises the youth program, as well as the group's administrative and operations functions. Javier has been critical in securing new policies that limit the local presence of federal immigration enforcement, improve the quality of affordable housing, expand translation and interpretation services at government offices, and reduce biased policing. He was also critical in securing the creation of the largest municipal identification card program in the U.S. and dramatically expanding guaranteed paid sick days for low-wage workers in New York City.

Before joining MRNY, Javier was the Director of Advocacy at the New York Immigration Coalition. He is Board Chair for the Center for Popular Democracy, Vice-Chair of the Movement of Immigrants in America, and sits on the boards of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, El Museo del Barrio, and Fair Immigration Reform Movement. He is also the Secretary of the Working Families Party in New York State. In 2013, President Barack Obama awarded Javier the White House Champions of Change Cesar Chavez Award.

Prachi Patankar

is the Social Justice Program Director at The J.M. Kaplan Fund. She plays an instrumental role in shaping the Fund's grantmaking strategies for criminal justice reform and immigrant rights. She convenes leaders from social justice advocacy fields, and across community-based organizations, legal advocates, public agencies, and philanthropy to seed innovative projects and collaborations to shape long-term change. Prachi grew up in rural India, where she established a school for children of people displaced by dams. Most recently, she worked at Brooklyn Community Foundation, where she helped create and implement grantmaking strategies through a racial justice lens. She has also worked at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Tenement Museum, and DRUM. She currently serves on the board of CAAAV and on the Steering Committee for the New York chapter of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP). Prachi is also the inaugural Co-Chair for the Justice Reform Working Group at Philanthropy New York and is a proud graduate of the Coro Leadership New York Program.

ABOUT THE GRANTEES





The **Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)** prevents wrongful deportations by connecting asylum-seeking families to community support and emergency legal aid. ASAP provides rapid representation at a distance, reaching families who could not otherwise access legal services. The organization's clients have traveled thousands of miles and braved dangerous terrain to bring their families to safety. Through a network of experts across the nation, ASAP fights alongside them to keep their families in the United States and safe from harm.

asylumadvocacy.org



The **Black Alliance for Just Immigration** is a racial justice and migrant rights organization which engages in organizing, education, advocacy, and cross-cultural alliance-building in order to end the racism, criminalization, and economic disenfranchisement of African American and black immigrant communities. The organization's flagship project is the Black Immigration Network, a national alliance that brings together black-led organizations and programs to advance just immigration policies and promote cultural shifts our communities need.

baji.org



The **Brownsville Community Justice Center** works to prevent crime by investing in local youth and improving the physical landscape of central Brooklyn. The Center also seeks to forge better responses after crime occurs, offering meaningful alternatives to incarceration. Among its programs, the Center provides judges in Brooklyn with alternative sentencing options; assists young men and women on probation; offers a range of youth development initiatives; and engages local businesses and community residents in reimagining and redesigning public spaces.

courtinnovation.org/programs/brownsville-community-justice-center



Common Justice develops solutions to violence that secure safety, healing, and justice for survivors while fostering racial equity without relying on incarceration. In Brooklyn and the Bronx, Common Justice operates the first alternative-to-incarceration and victim-service program in the United States that focuses on violent felonies in the adult courts. Nationally, it leverages lessons from direct service to transform the justice system through partnerships, advocacy, and elevating the experience and power of those most impacted.

commonjustice.org

ABOUT THE GRANTEES



Community Connections for Youth (CCFY) is a Bronx-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower grassroots faith and neighborhood organizations to develop effective community-driven alternatives to incarceration for youth. CCFY believes that by empowering parents and families to advocate for themselves and others, and providing training and technical support to community-based organizations and system stakeholders, we can create opportunities for young people to remain in and be supported by their communities, and deter future involvement with the juvenile justice system. cc-fy.org



The Door empowers young adults to reach their full potential by providing comprehensive youth development services in a diverse and caring environment. At The Door, 10,000 New York City youth each year access health care and education, mental health counseling and crisis assistance, legal assistance, college preparation services, career development, housing support, arts, sports and recreational activities, and nutritious meals—all for free and under one roof. door.org

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Drive Change provides returning citizens with opportunities to cultivate their genius through workplace learning. The organization provides paid fellowships in the food truck and hospitality industries for returning citizens ages 18-25 years old. Tapping into the talent and energy of young New Yorkers, Drive Change fosters an environment for returning citizens to learn the tools to succeed in the food service industry and become leaders in their community. drivechangenyc.org



exalt was created to address three areas that typically fail New York City youth: criminal justice avoidance, educational attainment, and employability. exalt's four-month model combines learning, professional internships, and mentoring for youth ages 15-19 who have been involved with the criminal justice system. exalt instills a love of learning through voluntary participation, and blends court advocacy approaches to achieve long-term positive change, specifically justice system avoidance and educational reengagement. exaltyouth.org



Freedom for Immigrants is devoted to abolishing immigration detention, while ending the isolation of people currently suffering in the immigration detention system. It is the only nonprofit in the country monitoring the human rights abuses faced by detained immigrants through a national hotline and network of volunteer detention visitors, while also modeling a community-based alternative to detention that welcomes immigrants into the social fabric of the United States.
freedomforimmigrants.org



Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees is a network of local, state, and national funders who seek to leverage their grantmaking to expand opportunities for and address challenges facing immigrants, refugees, and their communities. Founded in 1990, the organization works with nearly 130 member foundations and, each year, reaches over 1,000 funders to inform and engage them on a wide range of immigration and immigrant integration issues.
gcir.org



Grassroots Leadership is a civil and human rights organization based in Austin, Texas working for a more just society where prison profiteering, mass incarceration, deportation, and criminalization are things of the past. Grassroots Leadership strives to transform the criminal justice and immigration systems through organizing, research, advocacy, and public education; by building bridges between communities to increase the capacity of local leaders and coalitions; and by mobilizing those most impacted by incarceration and deportation.
grassrootsleadership.org



The Immigrant Defense Project fights to end the current era of unprecedented mass deportation through interconnected strategies that attack both the racially biased criminal legal system and the immigration system. Its programs strengthen immigrant defense through training and expert advice, challenge unfair laws through impact litigation, shape just policies through advocacy, and empower communities through alliance building and education. The project also seeks to change negative perceptions about immigrants through communications and messaging.
immigrantdefenseproject.org

ABOUT THE GRANTEES



The Institute for Transformative Mentoring is a training program focused on the development of credible messengers—formerly incarcerated men and women—working in the social services fields throughout New York City. These mentors help young people navigate community violence and avoid the criminal justice system. Credible messengers are gaining systems-level recognition as an effective strategy to reduce crime and criminal justice involvement. At the same time, mentors improve their own job performance and enhance their personal development.

centernyc.org/itm-home



The International Refugee Assistance Project organizes law students and lawyers to develop and enforce a set of legal and human rights for refugees and displaced persons. Mobilizing direct legal aid, litigation, and systemic policy advocacy, the project serves the world's most persecuted individuals and empowers the next generation of human rights leaders.

refugeerights.org

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JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA) is dedicated to cutting the U.S. correctional population in #halfby2030. JLUSA empowers people most affected by incarceration to drive policy reform, and has inspired a movement of people and new organizations to advocate for decarceration. From closing toxic jails and prisons to reforming pretrial laws, barriers to employment, and the wider system of mass criminalization, JLUSA's bold campaigns with partners across the U.S. amplify the voices and expertise of directly impacted people.

justleadershipusa.org



The Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice for everyone. As a community organization and collaborative partner, Katal deploys expertise in organizing, advocacy, leadership development, and research to end mass criminalization, advance evidence-based solutions to promote health and safety, and build leadership and organizing capacity to effectively drive change.

katalcenter.org



Lineage Project brings mindfulness programs to incarcerated, homeless, and academically vulnerable youth to help them manage stress, build resilience, and cultivate compassion. Having worked with adolescents on Rikers Island, the project now serves youth across New York City's five boroughs. It also offers professional trainings to teachers, social workers, frontline staff, and caregivers, helping them gain competency in providing trauma-conscious mindfulness programming for vulnerable youth.

lineageproject.org



The Long Island Community Foundation, a division of the New York Community Trust, educates donors and other funders on the social, economic, and environmental issues affecting the region and its residents. Through donor collaboratives, the foundation has tackled issues such as racism and inequality, sustainable and equitable land use, immigrants' rights, civic participation, and more. Since philanthropic resources that support social justice efforts are scant on Long Island, these collaboratives raise needed awareness and maximize the impact of the foundation's giving.

licf.org



Make the Road New York builds the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, survival services, and more. As the largest immigrant base-building group in New York, with over 21,000 members, Make the Road New York spreads information, provides legal representation, and organizes to secure justice for immigrant communities. While operating storefront community centers across the region, it also works with sister organizations around the country to support communities of color.

maketheroadny.org



The National Domestic Workers Alliance is the nation's leading voice for dignity and fairness for the millions of domestic workers in the United States, most of whom are women. The alliance works to gain respect, recognition, and inclusion in labor protections for domestic workers. Its state, regional, and national campaigns are powered by over 60 affiliate organizations of over 20,000 nannies, housekeepers, and caregivers for the elderly in 36 cities and 17 states.

domesticworkers.org

ABOUT THE GRANTEES



The New Sanctuary Coalition is an interfaith network of congregations, organizations, and individuals in New York City building a movement of families and communities resisting detention and deportation. With a specific focus on preserving family unity, the coalition works with New York City's major immigrant organizations to reform immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation practices and policies. Its projects include legal clinics, a bond fund, and the creation of Sanctuary Congregations willing to house those facing immediate deportation.

newsanctuarynyc.org



The New York Immigration Coalition is an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for more than 200 groups in New York State. It brings together multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-sector constituencies to pursue a common agenda. The coalition represents the collective interests of New York's diverse immigrant communities and organizations, and devises solutions to advance them; advocates for laws, policies, and programs that lead to justice and opportunity for immigrant groups; and builds the power of immigrants and the organizations that serve them.

nyic.org

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Safe Passage Project provides free lawyers to refugee and immigrant children in the New York City area who face deportation back to life-threatening situations, despite strong legal claims to stay in the U.S. With a budget of \$2 million, Safe Passage Project represents more than 800 children through the work of two dozen full-time staff and 400 pro bono attorneys. The project wins over 80% of its cases, whereas children without attorneys win only 17% of the time, with tragic consequences.

safepassageproject.org



Terra Firma is a groundbreaking comprehensive program that meets the complex needs of unaccompanied immigrant children. Founded in 2013, the program is built around a medical-legal partnership in which pediatricians, mental health professionals, and pro bono attorneys are co-located in a community health center in the South Bronx, an area rich with immigrants from the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and West Africa.

terrafirma.nyc



Vera Institute of Justice works with government and civil leaders to improve justice systems in more than 40 states. The Institute's core priorities include aggressively shrinking the jailed population in the U.S. and supporting cities across the country that are providing effective legal representation to immigrants who can't afford it. The Institute also seeks to transform the conditions of confinement by ending America's widespread use of solitary confinement, restoring the opportunity for post-secondary education to prisoners, and advancing efforts to respond in developmentally appropriate ways to young people convicted of an offense. vera.org



Vernon Avenue Project/Reconnect seeks to address the root causes of poverty for young men of color in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood. In response to social exclusion—a primary cause of intergenerational poverty—Reconnect fosters social integration for Brooklyn youth by building economic, social, and intellectual capital. Its programs provide entry-level employment through social enterprise, which leads to further employment and education opportunities for young men looking for change. reconnectbrooklyn.org



Youth Represent provides criminal and reentry legal representation to youth ages 24 and under who are court-involved or experiencing legal problems due to past involvement in the criminal justice system. With 11 full-time staff working in partnership with private and public community partners, Youth Represent annually provides reentry legal services and education to more than 1,000 youth across New York City's five boroughs, while helping to advance important legislation to protect system-involved youth. youthrepresent.org

ABOUT THE J.M. KAPLAN FUND



The J.M. Kaplan Fund champions transformative social, environmental, and cultural causes through inventive grantmaking. Established in 1945 by philanthropist and businessman Jacob Merrill Kaplan, the Fund has since its inception been committed to visionary innovation.

Over more than three generations of family stewardship, the Fund has devoted \$250 million to propel fledgling efforts concerning civil liberties, human rights, the arts, and the conservation and enhancement of the built and natural worlds. Today, the Fund is active across the United States and beyond, operating grant programs focusing on the environment, heritage conservation, and social justice. To continue its legacy of catalytic giving, in 2015 the Fund launched the J.M.K. Innovation Prize, reaching across America to provide early-stage support for entrepreneurs with twenty-first-century solutions to urgent social and environmental challenges.

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www.jmkfund.org

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