

# Circle for Justice Innovations' Strategic Opportunities Support (SOS) Fund 2019 Grantees of Rapid Response Funding

## Arab American Civic Council

Anaheim, CA

Awarded \$2,500

The Arab American Civic Council (AACC) is a grassroots community-based organization that strives to advance the Arab American community in Southern California by encouraging their civic participation through community organizing, advocacy, public policy, leadership development, cultural outreach, and cultivating partnerships with other communities. CJJ's SOS funding helped AACC fight back against Trump's racist Muslim Ban. AACC conducted meetings and phone calls with community members who are impacted by the ban. They conducted two Advocacy 101 Workshops (in person and online), which helped students and individuals in their community learn how to become better advocates to help end the Muslim Ban. AACC trained more than 50 people to advocate effectively for themselves and their communities which resulted in a team of leaders who will continue to advocate for their rights and help repeal the Ban.

## Baltimore Safe Haven

Baltimore, MD

Awarded \$2,500

Baltimore Safe Haven (BSH) promotes the health, rights, and dignity of individuals and communities impacted by sexual exchange and/or drug use due to choice, coercion, or circumstance. BSH provides compassionate harm reduction services, advocacy, and community engagement that is respectful, non-judgmental, and affirms and honors individual power and agency. They believe that transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning (TLGBQ) people have the right to self-determination and deserve to live healthy, free from stigma, violence, and oppression. BSH works to build positive relationships with the TGLBQ community through active listening, consistent outreach and unconditional support. Their mobile van provides access to condoms, overdose prevention supplies such as naloxone kits, STI and HIV educational materials, case management and counseling. BSH offers the only mobile outreach unit in Baltimore City. With SOS funding, BSH distributed naloxone kits and prevented TGLBQ individuals in Baltimore from fatal overdoses.

## **California Coalition for Women Prisoners**

**Oakland, CA**

Awarded \$2,500

California Coalition of Women Prisoners (CCWP) is a grassroots social justice organization, with members inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people, and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). CCWP monitors and challenges the abusive conditions inside California women's prisons. They view the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC and prioritize the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted in building the movement. CCWP fights for the release of women and trans prisoners and supports women and trans people in their process of re-entering the community. With SOS funding, CCWP held a strategy convening to continue building their campaign against Life Without Parole (LWOP).

## **Choices for Freedom**

**Oakland, CA**

Awarded \$3,600

Choices for Freedom's mission is to intervene and deter youth and adults from entering the criminal justice system and interrupt the cycle of mass incarceration. Their founder Nate Williams, and the entire system-impacted team at Choices for Freedom, work with adults and youth within the juvenile and adult prison systems to help rehabilitate, educate, and prepare individuals for life beyond the criminal justice system. Choices for Freedom delivers programs to help change the justice system and how sentencing, programs, and funding are administered to the people. The programs are trauma informed and the facilitators are system-impacted, credible messengers with lived experiences. They participate in a variety of community fellowships and fight for civil rights and social equity. SOS funding helped Choices for Freedom send six system impacted individuals to a conference on restorative healing and transformation to give a presentation.

## **Coloradans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**

**Denver, CO**

Awarded \$2,500

Coloradans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (CADP) is a single-issue organization whose ultimate goal is to garner the grassroots and legislative support needed to end the death penalty in Colorado. The mission of CADP is to make the justice system more fair and effective by providing the public and elected leadership with accurate information and with diverse voices related to the death penalty so that they can make excellent decisions about ending the fatally flawed policy in the state of Colorado.

## Fort Collins Homeless Coalition

**Fort Collins, CO**

Awarded \$2,500

The Fort Collins Homeless Coalition (FCHC) works with and for people who experience homelessness, and to address the issues that arise from the experience of homelessness. They work to protect and advocate for dignity, rights, and choices for people experiencing homelessness. FCHC fights the criminalization of poverty and homelessness by committing their efforts to goals affirmed and raised by people who are homeless. They strive to add their collective strengths together to create ways of living in which everyone has a place they can call home. FCHC used SOS funding to build a coalition to prevent the expansion of a county jail.

## Healing Communities USA

**Philadelphia, PA**

Awarded \$2,500

Healing Communities is a framework for a distinct form of ministry for men and women returning from or at risk of incarceration, their families and the larger community. Healing Communities challenges congregations to become Stations of Hope for those persons affected by the criminal justice system.

Healing Communities provides support and technical assistance to communities of faith by:

- offering seminars in restorative justice, family reintegration and family support
- identifying resources and building networks for capacity building, service delivery and advocacy
- offering opportunities for peer learning from other congregations and expert learning at local, regional and national conferences
- customized programming for local congregations
- Connecting congregations with credible criminal justice reform campaigns.

## Highlander Center

**New Market, TN**

Awarded \$5,000

The Highlander Center serves as a catalyst for grassroots organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the U.S. South. Through popular education, participatory research, and cultural work, they help to create spaces — at Highlander and in local communities — where people gain knowledge, hope and courage, expanding their ideas of what is possible. Highlander is a place where leaders, networks, and movement strands come together to interact, build friendships, craft joint strategy and develop the tools and mechanisms needed to advance a multi-racial, inter-generational movement for social and economic justice. Highlander is also a

source of political continuity, across both geography and history, linking current movement efforts to movements across the globe and to the history of movements across multiple generations. Highlander's work – convening workshops; scouting for emerging leadership and political action; 'relationship-building'; connecting across difference; documentation; cultural engagement – marks, shapes and forms the trajectory of political action by helping to create a common understanding of the work to be done by supporting and connecting actual and potential doers of that work.

### [I.ndigenous Am.erician Legacy](#)

**Rapid City, SD**

Awarded \$5,000

I.ndigenous Am.erician Legacy is a non-profit organization based in Rapid City, South Dakota, offering training, resources and support to all indigenous relatives seeking healing, support, and stability both locally and nationally. I.ndigenous Am.erician Legacy is committed to providing a safe space and environment conducive for individuals and community to gather, connect and empower one another. They believe equity to be an absolute necessity in fostering empowerment and community progress. One of their primary goals is to foster lasting change that would provide not only equal access to opportunities but the necessary resources to support their success. They stand upon the foundation that healing is necessary to create lasting change and progress, and their goal is to replace trauma and survival with culture and wellness.

### [La Plazita Institute](#)

**Albuquerque, NM**

Awarded \$5,000

La Plazita Institute (LPI) engages New Mexico's youth, elders and communities in a comprehensive, holistic and cultural approach. Designed around the philosophy of "La Cultura Cura," or culture heals, LPI's programs engage New Mexico's youth, elders and communities to draw from their own roots and histories to express core traditional values of respect, honor, love, and family. LPI supports them in leaving behind violence and destructive lifestyles. LPI provides cultural healing services to Albuquerque's most vulnerable youth populations and their families. Most of our youth are of Hispanic/Latino, Chicano, and Native American heritage, are previously incarcerated and/or gang involved, and come from families with multigenerational legacies of poverty, gang involvement, and substance addiction. There is an enormous need for this work as the population tends to fall through the cracks of conventional social service institutes. LPI provides whole family, culturally appropriate support so as to facilitate the healing and development of core identity and self-esteem.

### [Love Not Blood Campaign](#)

**San Jose, CA**

Awarded \$5,000

The Love Not Blood Campaign (LNBC) works to build a broad-based and vibrant network of families affected by homicide, whether affected by police brutality, community violence, or the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). The LNBC Family Crisis Team, all victims of homicide, recognizes the importance of additional advocacy services, and utilizes multiple approaches in its efforts to promote a healthy family support-based discourse to bring about real and sustainable positive recovery. Their focus is placed on supporting the capacity of parents, families, children, and community members utilizing the support group framework to advocate for their loved ones and on strengthening their ability to work collectively to achieve their goals. LNBC has trained advocates who can accompany homicide victims to hearings, trial proceedings, meetings with coroners, etc., providing emotional support and information about the process.

### New Mexico Asian Family Center

**Albuquerque, NM**

Awarded \$5,000

The New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC) helps to provide culturally tailored and trauma informed programs and services to the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community of Central New Mexico, although our services are open to anyone in New Mexico. Clients served through NMAFC identify as low to extremely low income, undocumented and or mixed status, victims/survivors of domestic violence, and immigrants and refugees. Most of the families NMAFC supports are directly impacted people who were involved with the criminal justice system, some due to DUIs, wrongful convictions, and other issues associated specifically around domestic violence. NMAFC has also been engaged in restorative justice work, attempting to work with individuals who have sexually assaulted or otherwise done harm to others in an understanding that our criminal justice system does not benefit survivors or abusers.

### OneFam

**Oakland, CA**

Awarded \$5,000

One Fam is a community-based organization and cultural center in the Lower Bottom neighborhood of West Oakland. Their mission is to empower residents to utilize political education and culture, and to inspire young people and their families to be leaders in the neighborhood as community organizers. OneFam has an intergenerational, diverse base of young adults committed to keeping space for women and youth at the center of leadership throughout the organization and to empowering new leaders and artists who utilize culture to educate. The SOS grant helped defend residents against the gentrification of San Francisco and the displacement of working class and low-income residents.

### Racism Stinks

**Tulsa, OK**

Awarded \$2,500

#RacismStinks is a coalition of diverse people unified in the task of healing racial divisions in their community. #RacismStinks was founded as an answer to the #BlackLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, and #BlueLivesMatter feud. "People hoped their efforts would ignite empathy from outsiders to their respective causes and promote unity, but they ended up causing more division," explains #RacismStinks founder Richard Baxter. "So, we seek to address the submerged undertones of why these movements have spread like wildfires across the US - racism. And #RacismStinks." The SOS grant helped fund the 5th Annual Celebration of Reconciliation. The purpose of the Celebration of Reconciliation is to unify a diverse coalition of people with the task of healing racial divisions in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

### Reign 4 Life/M&M Re-entry

**Hempstead, NY**

Awarded \$2,500

Founded in 2017, Reign 4 Life (R4L) is a collaborative effort of professional, community organizers who have been working for many years in the area of gang prevention, intervention, and alternatives to incarceration in Nassau County, NY. Their mission is to educate and motivate youth and adults not to take the wrong path, to help returning citizens re-enter society by mobilizing them to get their rights back for voting, housing, education, and to help them deal with the trauma of returning. SOS funding allowed R4L to address long-term suspension trends and its correlation to the school-to-prison pipeline by using a restorative justice and creditable messengers' approach. Their next steps are to present to school officials and keep the pressure on this issue until the school-to-prison pipeline in Nassau County is disrupted successfully.

### Release Aging People in Prison

**New York, NY**

Awarded \$2,500

Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) is an independent grassroots organizing and policy project that works to end mass incarceration and promote racial justice through the release from prison of older and aging people and those serving long and life sentences. RAPP challenges a fundamental pillar of mass incarceration: reliance on a system of permanent punishment, a culture of retribution and revenge rather than rehabilitation and healing. They mobilize currently and formerly incarcerated people, their families, and other concerned community members. From this united base and through the RAPP Coalition, they work to raise public awareness about the destructiveness of mass incarceration and the benefits to society in releasing aging people, including those convicted of violent crimes. RAPP promotes the use of key mechanisms for release, such as parole, compassionate release, clemency, and policy changes.

## Resentence and Decarcerate

**Oakland, CA**

Awarded \$2,500

The Resentence and Decarcerate (RAD) project is an informal group of individuals, impacted people, formerly incarcerated people, and organizations who voluntarily come together to ensure that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) passes policy to implement the new penal codes that allow early prison release. Their mission is to win the re-sentencing and release of thousands of incarcerated people by maximizing the reach and efficacy of new California laws (Penal Code 1170(d)(1) amendments of 2018 and 2019) and mobilizing incarcerated and released people, loved ones, attorneys, advocates, and organizations to ensure equitable policy promulgation and implementation, and effective litigation.

## Sovereign Bodies Institute

**Eureka, CA**

Awarded \$2,500

Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI) builds on Indigenous traditions of data gathering and knowledge transfer to create, disseminate, and put into action research on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people. SBI is committed to: conducting, supporting, and mobilizing culturally-informed and community-engaged research on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people; uplifting Indigenous researchers, knowledge keepers, and data visualists in their work to research and disseminate data on gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people, and empowering Indigenous communities and nations to continue their work to end gender and sexual violence against Indigenous people, through data-driven partnerships that enhance research efforts, develop best practices, and transform data to action to protect and heal their peoples. SOS funding supported a project called United Against Femicide (UAF). UAF is designed to bring Indigenous and Black communities together to organize against femicide of Black and Indigenous women and girls collectively.

## The Ohio Organizing Collaborative/UnHarming Ohio **Youngstown, OH**

Awarded \$1,000

UnHarming Ohio is a union of leaders committed to restorative and transformative solutions for public health and justice that defy the isolation of incarceration, the impacts of racialized drug policies and violent policing, and empowering and strengthening the health and morale for all. They are creating a multiracial, multicultural, working class organization that radically builds community outside of existing institutions and exclusively centers the leadership of affected

members and organizes them into power. SOS funding helped kick off the UnHarming Ohio Drug War Survivors' quarterly statewide retreat.

### **The Ordinary People Society**

**Dothan, AL**

Awarded \$5,000

The Ordinary People Society (TOPS) is an innovative, faith-based community program founded in 1999. TOPS offers hope and creates an environment that provides a continuum of unconditional acceptance and care to individuals and their families who suffer the effects of drug addiction, mass-incarceration, homelessness, poverty, unemployment, hunger and illness--without regard to race, sex, creed, color, religion or social status. TOPS helps restore people holistically, i.e., spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally. It works with the most disenfranchised members of their community that others exclude.

### **Unheard Voices OTCJ**

**Birmingham, AL**

Awarded \$2,500

Unheard Voices OTCJ is a non-profit organization led from the inside--from behind the prison walls--working to end prison slavery and the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. Together, inside and outside, they amplify the voices of those surviving and exposing the corruption and violence within the Alabama Department of Corrections, demanding common sense solutions that will lead to the closing, not the construction, of prisons. Unheard Voices OTCJ used SOS funding to mobilize a group of women and children with loved ones incarcerated in Alabama to travel to Washington D.C. for a rally. At this rally, those most impacted by the violence--wives, children, the formerly incarcerated, and the currently incarcerated put their lives on the line, demanded that the Department of Justice take immediate action and file suit in the wake of their April report finding cruel and unusual conditions in Alabama prisons.

### **Voices of the Violated**

**Dothan, AL**

Awarded \$5,000

Voices of the Violated (VOV) Reproductive Justice Project is a movement led by women of color organizing throughout the south, addressing injustices faced by women and girls. They engage in deep advocacy for women who are currently and formerly incarcerated, poor, and homeless, organizing on various social justice issues that plague the Black community. The mission of VOV is to empower women challenged by traumatic experiences such as abuse, violence, sexual assault, and discrimination, to provide concrete alternatives to mass incarceration. VOV aims to restore the dignity of all sisters and create a space of acceptance, equality, respect and love. SOS funding supported VOV in challenging laws that contribute to the incarceration of women.



VOV has been able to advocate for women who were facing criminalization due to the National Abortion Ban and to provide supportive services to a homeless woman who was shot in the stomach and leg and lost her baby during a senseless robbery.