

LIFE COMES FROM IT

APRIL 2019

FUNDER'S REPORT



THE ADVISORY CIRCLE

SUMMARY

We are happy to report that Life Comes From It, the new grantmaking circle created to fund projects in restorative justice, transformative justice and indigenous peacemaking, has made its first annual round of grants.

As long-time practitioners in these fields, Life Comes From It's Advisory Circle members share a vision of addressing harm through community solutions, without reliance on incarceration and punitive systems. Because community-based, often small, projects are at the heart of this movement, it can be hard for foundations to assess which groups to fund. Our Advisory Circle members have the depth of knowledge to assure funders that their contributions are being well placed.

In November, the Advisory Circle chose twenty-two projects around the country from among 180 applicants to receive grants up to \$25,000, for a total of \$347,000. The grants were disbursed in the following weeks.

Going forward, grants will be awarded on an annual basis. The next round of applications will open on May 15, 2019.

IN THIS REPORT WE PRESENT:

1. Maps of the fund's applicants and grantees
2. The fund's origins, values, goals and methodology
3. Our theory of change or "logic model" for evaluating the fund
4. Profiles of four grantees
5. Future Plans

MAP OF THE FUND'S APPLICANTS

180 APPLICATIONS CAME IN FROM ALL OVER THE US.

It was inspiring for the Advisory Circle to see how many projects with creative grassroots energy are making an impact, with or without funding, across the country.



That we could only fund 22 of them energized us to imagine the possibilities in future years.

MAP OF THE FUND'S 2018 GRANTEES

22 PROJECTS RECEIVED GRANTS UP TO \$25,000, FOR A TOTAL OF \$347,000.

We already knew some of these, and others were a surprise. The movement is growing faster than even we knew.



We profile four of these projects after outlining the fund's origins, values, and methodology.

ORIGINS OF THE FUND



Our name comes from an article in which Robert Yazzie (above), then Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation, laid out the major differences between the traditional Navajo system of law and the Anglo-American system. He wrote, "If we say of law that 'life comes from it,' then where there is hurt, there must be healing."

One of the immediate impulses for the fund was the 2017 Listening Project conducted by the Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice. The goal was to engage a cross section of restorative justice practitioners from different communities—urban, rural, aboriginal, east coast, west coast, Midwest and one Canadian territory—to get a feel for “the state of the state” of restorative justice, primarily in the U.S.

Go [here](#) to see the project’s report, a one page summary of it, and an article about it.

The idea for the fund arose from informal discussions among long-time practitioners in the field, who then convened a formal Advisory Circle. Its members are:

- Robert Yazzie | Chief Justice Emeritus of the Navajo Nation
- Sheryl Wilson | MLS, Director of the [Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution](#)
- Troy Williams | Media expert dedicated to helping formerly incarcerated people document their experiences
- Johonna Turner | PhD, Co-Director of the [Zehr Institute for Restorative Justice](#)
- Sonya Shah | Director of [The Ahimsa Collective](#)
- sujatha baliga | Director of [Impact Justice's Restorative Justice Project](#)
- Seth Lennon Nguyen-Weiner | Attorney

VALUES & GOALS OF THE FUND

The Advisory Circle's deliberations in 2018 led to the following insights and goals that determined the fund's nature.

The need to define Restorative Justice (RJ) broadly. While RJ is primarily associated by many people with work within the justice system, the RJ movement has broadened its scope significantly in recent years to include work with youth, schools, communities and families. For RJ to be the alternative to punitive justice and incarceration, we have to resource RJ in all of these different locations.

The significance of Restorative Justice to justice reinvestment. For efforts to reform, diminish, or abolish mass incarceration to build adequate momentum, communities must *already* have developed better ways to maintain their own safety and respond to harms committed. When RJ options are in place and are experienced as effective, they undercut any calls for a return to more punitive approaches. Justice reinvestment therefore requires investment in restorative, non-punitive community initiatives.

The need to broaden the fund beyond Restorative Justice to include Transformative Justice and Indigenous Peacemaking. Those who practice healing as opposed to punitive modes of responding to conflict and harm do not all describe themselves as RJ. Indigenous people have practiced their own modes of peacemaking from time immemorial, while "Restorative Justice" is a new coinage by Western non-indigenous people. Some community efforts committed to pre-trial, community-based solutions operate under the term Transformative Justice. The Advisory Circle members quickly realized that there is a deep kinship between these three approaches, and that to limit the fund to the ones that call themselves RJ would be to follow an arbitrary distinction. To fund each of the three fields will help to break down the current divisions between them, and to cross-fertilize the fields.

The need to state clearly that the fund will prioritize grants to people of color. Life Comes From It elevates the work of people of color rooted in their own communities, who have culturally specific responses and solutions. Supporting leaders of color who do deep, real and hard-hitting grassroots work across the country is important to the future of RJ and its success as an alternative to incarceration. In addition, while restorative justice has sometimes been practiced within an individualistic, Western frame, as if crime and harm were a matter of purely individual responsibility and as if white RJ practitioners were saviors, Transformative Justice and Indigenous Peacemaking hold central the understanding that all violence and harm have systemic roots and dimensions. The central fact of systemic oppression in the US is the history of genocide, slavery, Jim Crow, colonialism and patriarchal white supremacy. Only 0.3% of US philanthropic dollars go to Native communities, let alone to Native-led initiatives. Recognizing this fact, the fund will prioritize Native people and other people of color.

The need to design the fund so that it prioritizes and supports people working at a grassroots community level. We had much discussion about how to ensure that those people who know a community best because they live in it, and who are doing excellent work without perhaps having the means, time, confidence, or writing skills to apply for grants from conventional sources, will be able to apply to Life Comes From It. We decided on the following methodology.

METHODOLOGY

TO ENCOURAGE GRASSROOTS PROJECTS TO APPLY WE:

Make it easy to apply

We ask just two questions, to be answered in text or by a cellphone video. We encourage those without 501 (c)(3) status or a fiscal sponsor to apply, and assist them in obtaining a fiscal sponsor.

State that we will support people where they are at, for the needs they have

Some may need to pay themselves for the first time, get health insurance, or put up a website.

Offer two kinds of grants

for 1) Individual Projects and 2) Networks, Convenings and Collaborations that enhance movement building. It became clear that the Advisory Circle shared a strong commitment to movement building.

Keep the maximum grant amounts low

up to no more than \$25,000 per organization. We recognize that this is just a start and in no way the ideal—that organizations need a lot more funding and multi-year funding. These small grants serve as a way to elevate work that hasn't been seen, and to build our movements from within.

Created a website

for the fund at www.lifecomesfromit.org. The challenge here was to maintain, both verbally and graphically, the simplicity and clarity of our goals for the fund and its application process.

Publicized the fund appropriately

The wide national connections of the Advisory Circle members enabled news of the new fund to circulate widely and deeply through the relevant communities, via social media, emails and word of mouth. We received 16,000 clicks to our first announcement, and 300 people signed up for two video conference calls at which we presented the fund and answered questions.

THEORY OF CHANGE OR LOGIC MODEL

To assess how well our grants are being used as we go forward, we are developing a simple and powerful evaluation tool. Angela Irvine of Ceres Consulting has helped us construct a Logic Model that describes our theory of change in terms brief enough to be captured in a few straightforward survey questions.

| Values | Short Term Goals | Long Term Goals |
|--|---|--|
| <p>We support projects, organizations and collaborations that embody these values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to working towards replacing criminalization and incarceration with alternative approaches to address violence and repair harm rooted in community solutions • Prioritizing peacemaking development and indigenous initiatives led by Native people • Rooting the work in the community's own culture(s), language(s), place(s), faith(s), and belief system(s) so it reflects the people that engage in it • Guided by the wisdom of people, families and communities of color • Commitment to anti-oppression practices • Supporting the creation of new thinking and language that is holistic, intersectional, interdependent, and liberatory • Promoting and sustaining collective leadership, collaboration and partnership • Living the values of the work internally and externally to build community and heal harm within and against communities • Intergenerational inclusivity - people of all generations: youth, adults, elders are encouraged to apply | <p>With this funding, grantees as communities of color and other marginalized and working class communities will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build the operational capacity and presence of individual organizations led by POC/indigenous leaders across multiple geographic regions (i.e. community meetings, websites, general operating costs) (a1, a2, a3) • Develop community alternatives to incarceration and/or processes that create safety, justice, and self- determination (b3) • Create or expand community-led responses to harm (b2) • Amplify voices and work of leaders of color/indigenous leaders (b1) <p>The Life Comes From It grantmaking circle will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the first funding cycle • Bring in two additional advisors with connections to financial resources • Distribute \$300,000 in funding • Develop a \$3 million endowment | <p>With this funding, grantees as communities of color and other marginalized and working class communities will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be liberated from systems of criminalization (b3) • Create safety, justice, and self-determination (b2) • Expand language, practices, vision, and analysis as a result of enhanced relationships between organizations and movements (b2) • Amplify communities of color and indigenous communities in the RJ, TJ, and peacemaking movements (b1) <p>The Life Comes From It grantmaking circle will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a full advisory circle • Create a sustainable fund that supports new practices |

EVALUATION TOOL

At the end of the grant year, grantees will respond to these simple evaluation questions. Each question below is keyed to the specific short or long term outcome in the chart above that it is designed to evaluate. The grantees are told about the evaluation tool when they receive the grant, so that they can collect the necessary information, notably for question (a3) which would otherwise be hard to answer at year's end.

Life Comes From It's Evaluation Questions

Life Comes From It will ask the following questions at the end of each grant period:

A. Describe your work by answering these three questions:

- (a1) Write the city and state where you do your work.
- (a2) What activities did you work on with this funding (i.e. meetings, convenings, circles, trainings, planning/organizing, programming)?
- (a3) How many hours did you spend on each of the following activities funded by this grant?
 - Meetings:
 - Circles:
 - Trainings:
 - Planning/Organizing:
 - Programming:

B. Explain how your work helped the broader restorative justice, transformative justice, and indigenous peacemaking communities by answering these three questions:

- (b1) How did this grant help elevate leaders of color/indigenous leaders?
- (b2) How did this grant help you build community-led responses to harm?
- (b3) How did this grant help you build community alternatives to incarceration?

PROFILES OF GRANTEES

Because a remarkable variety of projects were funded, the following profiles are hardly representative, but they give a taste and we encourage you to check out [the full list](#). We profile three individual projects and one convening below.

INDIGENOUS PEACEMAKING



THE INDIGENOUS PEACEMAKING INITIATIVE BASED IN COLORADO AND FOR NATIONAL ORGANIZING

The grant will assist the Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative's mission of providing written resources, training, technical assistance, and advocacy to support U.S. Tribes' peacemaking efforts, as well as to support outreach into, and collaboration with, the broader Restorative Justice movement worldwide. This is an effort to support a movement in tribes that are trying to throw off the tribal court systems that were imposed on them by the United States government as part of massive efforts to exterminate the tribes' own cultures. The grant will support work to develop peacemaking systems in Native communities—but only at their request and only by working with each community to develop a system of their own, based on their own culture, situation, and people—and to connect tribal peacemakers with each other and with the global restorative justice movement. The Indigenous peacemaking initiative is run by Native people for Native people.

Three other indigenous peacemaking grants were made to:

- *In the Absence of Justice, American Indian Prison Project in Minnesota*
- *A project in support of the Yurok Tribal Court in Northern California*
- *Uplifting Indigenous Based Restorative Practices in Los Angeles, CA*

PROFILES OF GRANTEEES

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE DIVERSION PROJECT NASHVILLE, TN

This, by contrast to AIPP, is a small, new project. Restorative diversion programs, which keep youth who are responsible for crime out of the justice system, are well established in some cities, but entirely new to Nashville. The Raphah Institute uses Restorative Community Conferencing (RCC), an evidence-based, restorative approach to resolving harm and finding justice. It is a highly supported and coordinated, in-person conversation between youth who have caused harm, those whom they have harmed, and their impacted communities. In the RCC process, all parties work together to understand the impact created by the harm, understand the historical trauma associated with the harm, and create a plan that supports the young person's transformation as they work to repair the harm according to the victim's stated need.

Raphah is so new it doesn't have a website yet. But Life Comes From It's Advisory Circle members, deeply knowledgeable about RCC, were impressed and made a grant of \$10,000.

Eight other restorative justice projects were funded:

- *Five are youth centered*
- *Two support and are run by formally incarcerated adults*
- *One supports criminal-justice-impacted Black women or those at risk.*

PROFILES OF GRANTEEES

TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE



TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE TRAINING INSTITUTE OAKLAND, CA

Compared to indigenous peacemaking and restorative justice, transformative justice is relatively unknown. It uses similar healing practices and insights to develop community responses to harm without recourse to the criminal legal system. Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective ([BATJC](#)) are a group of queer, migrant, disabled, gender non conforming, indigenous, people of color who organize for transformative justice (TJ) towards ending child sexual abuse. As survivors and as people who have caused harm, they understand and know at first hand the importance of transforming justice and reimagining healing collectively. They want to advance and formalize their educational work as well as their hands-on skill building 'labs' into a Transformative Justice Institute. Their work centers communities of color and prioritizes indigenous and people of color leadership. Through having resources towards a TJ institute they can cater their work to reach focused communities, i.e. youth, migrant and disabled communities. Where the criminal legal system prioritizes punishment, and is especially harsh for sexual crimes, thus driving those harms further into the shadows, transformative justice enables healing and thus enables those suffering and causing harm to come out of the shadows to seek help.

The four other transformative justice projects funded:

- *are in Chicago, New Orleans, South Florida and Queens, NY.*

PROFILES OF GRANTEEES

CONVENINGS



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO CAUSE HARM TO TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY | CHICAGO/NY

On April 26-27, 2019, dozens of people will gather together at Barnard College in New York City to discuss how to work with and support people who cause harm to others. This two-day convening is timely in light of the current conversations about the #MeToo movement. The convening will bring together 50 restorative and transformative justice practitioners for skill-sharing. 35 practitioners have already confirmed their interest in attending. The grant will be used to cover travel costs for participants who need that support to attend, to cover food costs for the convening, and to offer stipends for those who are presenting (if possible). They plan to create a document to capture some of the learning that happens over the two days. They will also be filming short video interviews with key stakeholders. These will allow the gathering to live beyond the two days and also be shared with people who cannot attend.

Three other convenings were funded for:

- *Somali Americans to build transformative justice in Minnesota and surrounding states*
- *Six RJ and TJ organizations to collaborate in Rhode Island*
- *An alliance of 30 youth-led and intergenerational grassroots groups across 12 states and 14 cities to meet and share skills.*

FUTURE PLANS



OUR LONG-TERM VISION IS:

- To grow the fund over time as a multi-year re-granting fund. We intend to slowly, gradually, through relationships and networks, demonstrate to various funders the value of sustained investment in these alternative modes of justice.
- We aim to build the RJ, TJ and Indigenous Peacemaking Movements together and from within. We have a unique opportunity as leaders in these fields to help shape the movements. Because we are not funders, we aren't seen as people coming from the outside to help develop movements, but leaders from the inside developing the movements. We plan to add a once a year gathering for grantees and the Advisory Circle to learn and grow and build our movements.
- We will continually review and analyze how well our methodology is working to achieve our goals.
- We are actively seeking out foundations and individual donors who can increase the size of the fund and thereby the number of grantees and perhaps the size of grants. We know that some potential funders are already monitoring the fund and we trust that we will be able to showcase to them the tremendous value of the work being done by our grantees and by those who we were not yet able to fund in the first round. We hope to include funders in fields of health, wellness, education, and not just criminal justice reform. We would greatly value any recommendations or introductions you would like to provide to other potential funders.

TESTIMONIALS

WHAT GRANTEES ARE SAYING...



"The Life Comes From It fund has a beautiful and urgent vision of people of color leading self determined efforts to repair harm and end criminalization. Their application was truly an outlier in the philanthropic world: we found out about it the day it was due and the process was simple enough, and the values clear enough, that we could successfully apply that same day. We are using this grant to fund Black youth organizing to end the school to prison pipeline through transformative justice practices in New Orleans. Thank you for supporting this vital work."

- Rachel Lee
Jo Power Collective, New Orleans | (Transformative Justice, Youth)



"As a grassroots alliance formed after the 2016 presidential election, AMOR was formed by community members in response to an increase of state/hate violence in Rhode Island. Although we emerged in reaction to past and present violence, at the core of our work is faith in a future where any instance of violence can be mediated by an empowered community response. Receiving this grant from Life Comes From It has greatly expanded our capacity to do the visionary work we believe is necessary to respond to instances of immigration violence in the short-term and work towards community power in the long-term. Thank you for supporting and believing in us!"

- Submitted by Arley Diaz-Loza
AMOR, Rhode Island | (6 org collaboration)



Receiving the Life Comes From It grant has been an awesome experience for our young organization. The Life Comes From It grant was only our second grant but it was extremely meaningful in that it is the first funds given to us in order to hire our first employee. Currently, our capacity is limited because the organization is 100% volunteer run. An employee will ensure that we are able to meet our 2019 goals of increasing our capacity. This support of our growth encourages us to reach for our dreams.

- David Cowan
Bonafide Life, San Francisco, CA | (RJ in Community & Reentry)

TESTIMONIALS

WHAT GRANTEES ARE SAYING...



"Starting is hard - starting anything. Early support is often the difference between a new thing thriving and a new thing failing. Raphah Institute is a new organization taking on a work that is new to our juvenile justice system in Nashville. We are lucky in that we have the support of our system partners. While moral support is key, so is funding. This grant is helping us start. Since July, we have accepted 16 cases. Just last week, we held our very first restorative community conference between a young citizen and a person they stole a car from. It was simply amazing to see the courage of both parties and their supporters. They worked for 3 1/2 hours together and were hugging one another at the end. This experience serves as but a first fruit of what is to come and your funding has made it possible.

- Travis Claybrooks

Restorative Justice Diversion Project, Nashville, TN | (RJ and Justice)



"This funding is critical to help us foster change within systems that are already chronically and severely underfunded. To illustrate, it has become increasingly clear that justice systems are underfunded, and also that meaningful access to those systems is cost-prohibitive to many people. Tribal justice systems are funded at about a third of THAT level – meaning the underfunding is three times worse! We are trying to help tribal nations recover their own, more appropriate, justice systems within that context. In effect, we are adding a program, in areas where there is already arguably the most severe underfunding around. Simply put, funding must come from elsewhere, in order for us to help tribes make changes that will give their community members more effective and more appropriate justice systems. Funding like that from Life Comes From It helps those communities develop and formalize systems and practices that are more appropriate to them, and rooted in their own centuries-old wisdom. The current system is set up for failure and to supplant ancient traditions and wisdom; Life Comes From It funding helps us step around those barriers in real time, and build something new based on superior old knowledge."

- Brett Shelton

Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, Boulder Colorado | (Indigenous Peacemaking)

CONTRIBUTORS TO LIFE COMES FROM IT



Thank you...

We are particularly grateful to the early believers and first contributors to the grantmaking circle - Open Philanthropy Project, Heising-Simons Foundation, The Libra Foundation and anonymous donors. We are equally thankful to the other foundations and individual donors who support this work including the Barton Family Fund, Community Investments Fund, Faegan Donor Advised Fund, and the Sobelstein Fund — a donor-advised fund of North Star Fund; as well as to the Tides Foundation for holding the fund.