



# Criminal Justice Initiative

A project of the Solidago Foundation  
in partnership with

Open Society Foundations U.S. Programs

## 2018 Arrest Diversion MicroGrants to Support Equity & Inclusion

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# Criminal Justice Initiative

## Our Vision

We envision a world in which all people are acknowledged, valued, and supported to maximize their potential and share their innate gifts. We envision a world in which incarceration and prisons are not the first response to harm caused, but rather that harm is addressed in ways that affirm the humanity of both those responsible and those who have been harmed. We are all interconnected and interdependent, and we envision a world in our systems acknowledge this interdependence by affirming all our humanity.

## Our Mission

CJI's mission is to end Mass Criminalization and Mass Incarceration in the United States by building and strengthening the infrastructure of the grassroots criminal justice movement. We fund where the movement is developing, shifting and growing. CJI believes this movement should be led by those most impacted by the injustices of the current system, working in alliances across race, class, faith, gender, gender identity, sexuality, immigration status and age.

## Our Values

Funding for movements should be accountable to those movements. People directly impacted by injustice, especially formerly incarcerated people, should be leaders of their own liberation movement. We cannot move forward as a society without the transformation of both systems and selves. We value our funding model as a way to do both. Our work is based on the belief that each of us has more to bring to social justice work if we bring our whole selves. We each have more to offer than expertise, money, connections, or only one part of our identity. We believe that part of the violence of privilege and oppression in our society is that it cuts us off from our humanity and our ability to see others as their full human selves. We value the CJI process as one that affirms the wholeness, gifts and strengths of each of us in our uniqueness.

# Arrest Diversion MicroGrants to Support Equity and Inclusion

For decades, oppressed and marginalized communities in the U.S. have been targeted, victims of a Drug War declared for them, yet waged on them. Treatment and harm reduction options were not available to people who are poor, black and brown; LGBTQI, especially trans; undocumented; uninsured; or suffering from physical, mental, addictive, and emotional illnesses. By design and by neglect, the toll of destroyed lives has risen, decade after decade.

CJI is honored to work in partnership with the Open Society Foundations to support and encourage these same communities to design and implement a pre-booking, pre-arrest drug diversion grants program for their own people, the **Arrest Diversion MicroGrants to Support Equity and Inclusion**. The realization is finally dawning that blame and punishment are getting us nowhere while compiling more lost and devastated lives, greater national debt, and swelling numbers of people in cages. In an effort to decrease the number of incarcerated people who are in need of treatment and alternatives, this "Starving the Beast" program was launched to provide micro-grants of \$15,000 to 20 organizations in diverse communities around the country.

These grantees were selected by the Starving the Beast Circle, a circle that includes people directly impacted by drug use and/or the War on Drugs, as well as impassioned donors with a justice orientation. This is CJI's grant-making model, which we have practiced since our inception. We believe in activist-advised grant-making because the expertise of those closest to the problem is necessary to create truly effective solutions.

## Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions • Brooklyn, NY • \$15,000

The Bed Stuy Human Justice Initiative (BSHJI) at the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions works with black and brown youth who are targeted, arrested, and incarcerated for drug use and possession at exacerbated rates. Led by formerly-incarcerated and directly-impacted individuals, BSHJI works to divert youth from the criminal justice system entirely, decrease arrests, and end cycles of



repeated incarceration, by building community relationships. CJI's microgrant will support partnerships with local organizations bklyn boihood, InVision and HOLLA to engage youth, especially young men, with multi-media educational materials and events to help them discuss and heal from oppression and violence. It will also support educating local law enforcement on community resources as alternatives-to-arrest, and trainings on implicit bias, procedural justice, de-escalation, and youth development.

## SisterReach • Memphis, TN • \$15,000

SisterReach provides comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education for women and girls, and advocates for public policies that support reproductive health and human rights. They have recently fought coercive birth control and sterilization initiatives targeting incarcerated people in Tennessee who are drug-dependent or using, and advocated for expanded behavioral health and rehabilitative residency programs for women struggling with opioid addiction. CJI's microgrant will support the Anti-Sterilization and Coercion Project, which will provide **comprehensive reproductive and sexual health education for women using drugs**, an anti-sterilization and anti-coercion advocacy campaign, and ongoing efforts to shift punitive legislative action, **expand behavioral health and housing services**, and humanize women impacted by existing laws.

## Barrios Unidos • Santa Cruz, CA • \$15,000

Santa Cruz has been targeted for concentrated ICE operations, which has traumatized the community and made engagement with the existing criminal justice system dangerous or impossible, especially for undocumented and migrant community members. Barrios Unidos is a trusted authority on culturally-based healing, restorative justice and racial equity based in the barrio. They challenge narratives of criminalization and disposability, create safe space, **provide tools to reduce criminalized behavior—especially substance abuse and underground economic activity**—and foster empowerment. They provide social and legal resources for immigration processes, gang involvement and violence prevention. CJI's microgrant will support strategic planning for Barrios Unidos' Sanctuary and Restorative Justice Outreach, including the hire of a Community Engagement Coordinator, who will organize ongoing



community events to increase undocumented participation, and focus on individualized support plans, including **probation completion as a means of deterring further contact with systems.**

### **Behavioral Health System Baltimore • Baltimore, MD • \$15,000**

Bmore POWER (Peers Offering Wellness Education and Resources) is a group of people in Baltimore City who have been impacted by the war on drugs, especially the fractured relationship between law enforcement and the communities most impacted by policing. Bmore POWER builds community capacity and advocacy, and **provides harm reduction outreach (including overdose education and naloxone distribution).** With CJI's microgrant, Bmore POWER will collaborate with the existing Baltimore LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) program, with the goal of strengthening voices of people directly impacted by criminalization and incarceration for drug use and sex work. Together, they will address **reducing obstacles to eligibility (such as open warrants, current probation, former felony for a violent crime), removing abstinence requirements for peers involved in LEAD, increasing involvement of directly impacted people, and incorporating clients involved in sex work.** The microgrant will also support Bmore POWER partnering with SPARC Drop-In Center for Sex Workers to understand and remove barriers to sex workers benefiting from LEAD.

### **La Plazita Institute • Albuquerque, NM • \$15,000**

La Plazita serves areas in Albuquerque that have the highest rates of youth detention, incarcerated families, gang affiliates, and chronic illnesses related to drug addiction, among other highest rate disparities in New Mexico. La Plazita is a point of diversion, pathway navigation, intervention and prevention, alternatives to detention and incarceration, and culturally-based support and restorative justice. CJI's microgrant will support the D.I.V.E.R.T. (Detention Interventions Validating Experiences of Recovering Teens) program to **reduce incarceration, recidivism, and adjudication of high-risk youth and adults,** especially from Latinx and Native American communities, through prevention work, systemic policy efforts, entrepreneurship, art, and educational development. **D.I.V.E.R.T. will provide counseling, mentorship, meaningful job opportunities, Acu-Detox Therapy, cultural healing, drug-free spaces, case management, and follow-up support.**

### **American Indian Prison Project • St. Paul, MN • \$15,000**

Diversion programs in Native communities are rare, limited, narrow in scope, and lack financial sustainability. The American Indian Prison Project provides cultural services to support healing in Minnesota and South Dakota with Native youth and adults prior to, during, and after incarceration. CJI's microgrant will support the "Decolonize (thinking), Reclaim (voice), Revitalize (community engagement)" **arrest diversion project.** The program seeks to inform and educate law enforcement and

justice administrators on **the root causes of drug, alcohol, violence, and human trafficking as they pertain to Native communities, along with developing culturally-based diversion programs.** It will increase urban and reservation grassroots involvement in current pre-arrest and arrest diversion programs, create advisory boards to co-lead strategic planning, and provide training and resource support for formerly-incarcerated people to enter leadership roles. This will ensure authentic voice and vision in the design of new diversion services and programs for Native youth and adults.

### **Urban Peace Movement • Oakland, CA • \$15,000**

California's Alameda County is currently in a major overhaul of its probation department's juvenile justice division, which has failed to address systemic barriers through its diversion programs or meet the needs of young people, especially youth of color. Urban Peace Movement focuses on building the leadership of these youth in Oakland, especially young Black



men, who are significantly impacted by mass incarceration and criminalization. The DetermiNation Black Men's Group is a **community-based rehabilitation program addressing crime, violence, and recidivism.** With CJI's microgrant, the group can move from Determined to Diversion by developing relationships with systems leaders and case management support. **The program will decrease the number of youth charged and prosecuted by increasing access to healing-oriented, community-based, culturally-competent diversion and leadership development, with systems-impacted members involved in program creation, implementation and evaluation.**

### **Sex Workers and Allies Network (SWAN) • New Haven, CT • \$15,000**

SWAN serves the needs of sex workers, advocates for their human rights, and diverts them from the criminal law system. With funding from CJI, SWAN will convey sex workers' wisdom to the city diversion program leadership of the City of New Haven's diversion program pilot, involving as many active sex workers as possible, allowing them to inform, execute, and evaluate the program. The microgrant will also support Diversion through Peer Mentoring and Harm-Reductive Services, bringing resources, services, and support to sex workers on the streets, without any carceral strings attached. The program provides health empowerment resources such as safer use crack/heroin kits to the community, as well as operating a needle exchange, which has become a critical resource for many local sex workers to actively

protect their health by engaging in safer drug use. SWAN will continue to provide local sex workers with harm-reductive personal care kits that help to minimize theft and subsequent arrest, and offers referrals and peer support for participants seeking drug treatment. SWAN will **continue to divert individuals from arrest by providing requested services**, and **introduce impacted voices into the planning of New Haven's diversion program**.

### **Women with a Vision (WWAV) • New Orleans, LA • \$15,000**

WWAV has worked with sex workers since its inception, and addresses systemic issues, including financial insolvency as one of the root causes of women's involvement in sex work and survival sex. With a number of criminal justice partners, WWAV developed Crossroads, a trauma-informed, client-centered sex worker diversion program to interrupt the cycle of arrest and incarceration for cis and trans women. WWAV's Emerge project will utilize CJI's microgrant to reduce the cycles of arrest and incarceration. This will continue WWAV's partnership with the Vera Institute and strengthen its relationship with New Orleans Police Department to reduce over-criminalization in New Orleans' African American communities. Through Emerge, WWAV will seek formal diversion agreements to **decrease the number of sex work arrests and the time served by women involved in sex work**.

### **The Chosen Few/HIPS • Washington, DC • \$15,000**

As a drug user union, The Chosen Few understand the necessity of diversion programs and their effectiveness effective in community. The current informal LEAD Coalition in Washington D.C. has focused on speaking to policymakers rather than the community on the need for diversion programs, and has not actively engaged with community members with lived experiences. CJI's microgrant will be used in Empowering Local Communities in the Development of Washington D.C.'s LEAD Program to draw



attention to the **thousands of arrests for drug offenses**, the **racial disparities** in such arrests, and the **importance of diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration**. The Chosen Few will continue work as public health advocates in community, providing syringe exchange, **community overdose prevention, naloxone, and harm reduction trainings** in areas of the city that are **the most in need**.

### **New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE) • New York, NY • \$15,000**

East Harlem and the South Bronx have zero harm reduction diversion programs for active drug users and sex workers. Stigmas against them result in unlawful arrest and harassment. NYHRE provides direct services in the overdose epidemic's epicenter. Their drop-in center receives over 9,500 visits per year,



and **UPRISE (Uniting Peers for the Rights of Injectors and Sex Works Everywhere) Peer Educator Training Program** trains people with experiences of drug use, sex work, and incarceration to **deliver harm reduction services**. CJI funds will support: NYHRE's Speaker's Bureau curriculum to educate drug users and sex workers on their rights, and build self-advocacy skills by creating participant narrative videos, emphasizing that "First of all, I'm a person!"; **policy campaigns**; an **"Alternatives to Incarceration"** program; **training public officials and police at local precincts on syringe carry laws, overdose reversal, and the rights of drug users to divert unlawful arrests**; and **advocating decriminalized possession of used cookers and tourniquets**.

### **Philadelphia Overdose Prevention Initiative (POPI) • Philadelphia, PA • \$15,000**

POPI's GAPProject (Girard Avenue Arrest Prevention Project) will address a specific high-risk "opioid corridor," anchored on the west by a methadone clinic, and on the east with a connection to the largest open air heroin market on the East Coast. Its primary goals are to **develop a harm reduction-centric intervention that reduces arrests by creating an inclusive process**, and help people address life challenges by diverting them to better outcomes than the criminal justice system. The long-term impact is a **decrease in drug-related morbidity and mortality**. With CJI's microgrant, GAPProject will run workshops and meetings to build confidence and skills, heal trauma, reduce conflict, and create artistic narratives of lived experiences to bridge divisions between users and non-users. A parallel process will include stakeholder meetings to build social cohesion, composed of people who use drugs, at-risk individuals, residents, business owners and service providers. Rather than a clinical intervention logic that isolates community members and removes people from community resources and supports, GAPProject focuses on the need to act in terms of what reduces the risk of arrest, by working within the community that is experiencing the arrests and violent crime.

### **People's Justice Project (PJP) • Columbus, OH • \$15,000**



**Columbus, Ohio** sits at the center of the opiate and human trafficking crises, has the **highest number of police killings of Black people per capita**, and the aggressive policing models used with addiction, mental health crises, gun violence and poverty simply aren't working. The Columbus Division of Police pre-arrest diversion program, the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training, lacks racial analysis, has only reached 13% of officers, and lacks accountability when protocols are not followed. PJP was created as a vehicle for directly-impacted people of color to lead the fight against mass incarceration and criminalization. **CJI's microgrant will expand PJP's work around police accountability by convening people directly impacted by aggressive**



**policing and criminalization to identify potential improvements of CIT and develop other pre-arrest diversion options.** PJP will construct new models of organizing that include restorative and healing practices, transformational leadership development, and political and organizing training for directly-impacted youth and families.

### **Power Inside • Baltimore, MD • \$15,000**

Women in the street economy, particularly Black women, are targeted for police abuse and criminalization. One third of women in Baltimore's jail report having traded sex for money, drugs, food, other commodities, or to avoid arrest. Power Inside, an independent peer-led harm reduction organization, proposes a voluntary intervention project to divert people from arrest and re-arrest, without the police or coercive methods. Through CJI's microgrant, **Power Inside will improve release and reentry practices for women with histories of substance abuse, mental illness, and trauma**, as well as **reduce new arrests, violations of conditional release, and violations of probation**. They will work to **stop the expansion of legislation and policies that further criminalize sex work and impede police accountability**, and increase sex worker-led organizations' access to funding and input into policy-making. They will also **document police abuses** against sex workers, lesbians, and transgender women, to contribute to the Department of Justice investigation of the Baltimore Police Department.

### **Best Practices Policy Project (BPPP) • Morristown, NJ • \$15,000**

BPPP, a sex worker-led organization, convenes community members to articulate policy concerns and community-centered evaluations, and ensure that all policies defend sex workers' health and rights. With CJI's microgrant, they will work with community partners in Newark, Atlantic City and Philadelphia to evaluate, understand and advocate for best practice harm reduction elements to divert sex workers from incarceration by "Putting Sex Worker Rights and Harm Reduction into Diversion Program Policies." They will also explore environmental changes needed for sex workers and people in the sex trade to have other options to arrest and incarceration. The funding will support: convening representatives and leadership of impacted community members to plan actions for linked localities; training and resources for community-centered evaluation; and meetings and events to raise awareness and prioritize harm reduction and rights-based elements needed in best practices policy for sex workers.



## **E.P.O.C.A. (Ex-prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement) Worcester, MA • \$15,000**

E.P.O.C.A. primarily consists of formerly incarcerated men & women, many having struggled with homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges. On the front lines of the "treatment not incarceration" movement, E.P.O.C.A. provides outreach, needs assessment, resource referrals and relationship building. CJI's funding of the Putting Unity Back into CommUNITY arrest diversion project will build on partnerships with Black & Pink, AIDS Project Worcester, Jobs Not Jails and a wide spectrum of other community groups to ensure additional street-based outreach to those most impacted. Funding will also provide bail support, follow-up contact and community building, assistance in sealing Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), trauma care, anger management, skill building, and employment training, all focused on ending cycles of incarceration.

## **Abba Leadership Institute • Levittown, NY • \$15,000**

Abba's Reign 4 Life Violence Intervention And Prevention will implement and evaluate a holistic, culturally-relevant diversion program that reduces harm, provides healing, and affirms at-risk youths' and unaccompanied minors' indigenous cultural identity, focusing on individuals who were not successful in the Adolescent Diversion Program. Abba will work with Youth Justice Coalition to help participants organize around policies affecting them, and with Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice to transform participants' views of themselves from perpetrators to having been themselves victims of crime. A school safety committee will address violence in high schools and middle schools, where at-risk youth are frequently on aftercare, probation or parole. Abba's cultural healing diversion model will address recidivism, the harms of policing, and harmful personal behaviors such as substance abuse, substance-based trade, violent responses to problem solving, and loss of loved ones. A community advisory committee will oversee program development, implementation and evaluation.

## **Gideon's Army: Grassroots Army for Children • Nashville, TN • \$15,000**



Nashville has few diversion programs; none of them offer trauma healing and reparation of harm. Gideon's Army is developing a collaborative and inclusive diversion model, Restorative Justice in Nashville, to provide space for individuals beyond first-time and level offenses, and specifically including offenses that have a victim, which most current programs do not address.

**Gideon's Army designs programs based on restorative justice, which involve community building, crisis de-escalation, trauma and healing, as well as restorative pre- and post-arrest diversions. CJI's microgrant will allow Restorative Justice in Nashville to address low-level offenses including drug use, to more serious crimes which have an identifiable victim such as robbery, burglary, car theft, and assault/battery.**

### **Reverse the Cycle of Incarceration (RTCOT) • Atlanta, GA • \$15,000**

Pre Arrest Diversion (PAD) is a recent partnership between Atlanta law enforcement and social service providers that allows police to divert people with mental health, drug abuse, and extreme poverty into social services instead of arresting them. With a focus on "communities not cages," Reverse the Cycle of Incarceration will partner with PAD to address the needs of LGBTQ, transgender, or previously convicted or incarcerated people of color, and implement social services to promote self-empowerment before arrest, after arrest, and during transition. **CJI funding will support RTCOT in drafting legislature promoting decriminalization and diversion, build community alliances to reduce gender and racial-based profiling and harassment, and training Atlanta police in trans competency, harm reduction, and the benefits of diversion and declining arrests.** Funding will also support implementation of RTCOT's curriculum for pre-release individuals throughout Georgia prisons, providing convicted or formerly incarcerated individuals with tools, skills, and education, and reducing recidivism.

### **TRANScending Barriers • Atlanta, GA • \$15,000**

The pre-arrest diversion programs that currently exist in Metro Atlanta do not provide direct assistance or holistic care to the transgender and gender non-conforming community. TRANScending Barriers' Survival Crime Pre-Arrest Diversion Project will address these gaps for the community by **providing trusted resources and assistance to help prevent arrests based on sex work, survival crimes, and drug abuse.** The program will compile trans-friendly resources for counseling, rehabilitation, and housing, and organize groups including the Trans Peer Empowerment Support Group. They will provide ongoing case management in safe space to holistically uplift, counsel, and connect participants with resources, alternatives, and opportunities. The program will also meet regularly with community leaders to build supportive relationships that recognize a shared goal of significantly diminishing survival crimes in the community.

