



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Takes Anti-Racism and Additional COVID-19 Response Actions

DENVER, CO (July 20, 2020) – Like many in our community, and most funders, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has worked to respond to the impact of COVID-19, and is appalled by the scourge of racism in our country, and our community. We have a moral obligation to respond to both “plagues”, in a way that best aligns with our mission, which focuses on arts and culture, as well as nonprofit leadership in metro Denver.

We realize that as a Foundation we have our own legacy of White privilege and must do all we can to be an anti-racist organization. This is a path the Foundation has been on for several years, with a wide array of actions taken, and strong support from the Foundation’s Board.

“This is a time to re-examine practices, to take bold action to reassess our priorities and practices,” says Gary Steuer, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation President & CEO, “to look at what more we could be doing. We have already developed an immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis affecting the arts, first with some immediate emergency grants in March, and then with a lead \$1 million gift to create the COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund, which has seen over \$600,000 in additional gifts. In April we also made an array of equity-based changes in our grantmaking, including a new program that funded for the first time 19 small organizations that are led by and serving BIPOC people or other historically marginalized communities..” Some of the other equity-related changes in our grantmaking that have already taken place are articulated [here](#).

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has been planning additional responses for the past few months, both on COVID-19 and on combating racism, some of which have already been taken, and on July 15th our Board of Directors met and approved some grantmaking actions. We are pleased to report the following actions:

- **Commissioning an anti-racism assessment and training for the organization** - An RFP had been in development for several months and has recently been issued for comprehensive assessment of the Foundation, its policies and practices, from the perspective of how to more deeply embed both DEI principles and active anti-racism work in our organization. The scope of work will include both staff and board training.
- **Racial Justice Grants** – We have committed to three specific new anti-racism grant programs, each designed to target a specific issue or opportunity:
 - **Investing in Our BIPOC Fellows Organizations** – The issue: leaders of color have inequitable access to philanthropic support for the organizations they lead. The Foundation already operates the Livingston Fellowship Program, which since 2005, has been fostering extraordinary leaders in our community. In recent years the program has dramatically increased the number of leaders of color benefitting from the program. With this change has also come the need to recognize that our leaders of color face special challenges in terms of inequitable access to resources. We will create a \$150,000 grant program that each year for three years will provide five \$10,000 general



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operating grants to organizations led by BIPOC Fellows. We will encourage the Fellows to think about ways to utilize these funds to cultivate future BIPOC leaders within their organization. The first-year grants will be given to five Black Fellows currently leading or employed by nonprofit organizations:

- Yoal Ghebremeskel – Street Fraternity
- Hassan Latif – Second Chance Center
- Deidre Johnson – The Center for African American Health
- Malik Robinson – Cleo Parker Robinson Dance
- Barclay Jones – The Chinook Fund

In the following two years we will support five BIPOC Fellow-led organizations within each year, for a total of 15 grants over three years.

- **Creative Investment in the BIPOC Community** – The issue: Denver has many neighborhoods with deep BIPOC history and culture, and many of these neighborhoods have been threatened with gentrification, displacement and/or have received inequitable investment in their community. We know that for these neighborhoods arts and culture are critical to community identity and vibrancy. Through a competitive process, the Foundation will pick two such neighborhoods, at least one of which will be historically Black, and will fund community efforts that integrate the arts into holistic community development efforts. With each community we will make a \$30,000/year three-year commitment, for a total commitment of \$180,000.
- **Imagining a Just Denver** – The opportunity: Artists are uniquely equipped to help us imagine the just community that we want Denver to become. To make racial justice a reality, we must be able to envision the future, it must become real to us. Modeled on a program recently launched in Oakland, “Imagining a Just Denver” will be a competitive grant program that will award five artists \$25,000 each to create a public artistic expression of what a “Just Denver” would look like. It could be a public work of art, a play, a dance, a spoken work piece. While initially a one-year pilot investment, we hope this effort will attract other partners, and have an ongoing life.
- **The total grantmaking commitment between these three new efforts is \$455,000 over three years, which is over and above the Foundation’s other commitments to equity in our grantmaking.**
- **Ongoing grantmaking in response to COVID-19** – At its April Board meeting, the Foundation made a commitment to potentially double its typical IRS mandated 5% payout this year to respond to the devastating impact the coronavirus was having on the cultural sector. This amounts to roughly an additional \$3 million in grantmaking. Some of that commitment is being fulfilled through our \$1 million commitment to the COVID-19 Arts & Culture Relief Fund at The Denver Foundation. Some of that additional grantmaking capacity is also now being invested in these new racial justice grant programs. We are also responding to the impact of COVID through our general operating support and project support grants to individual arts organizations. In many cases we are increasing support for these organizations that do so much for our community. A total of \$807,000 was awarded this quarter to a total of 17 organizations,



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including four new grantees. For our general operating support grantees, almost all are receiving additional funding this year. [A full list is attached.](#)

- **Building staff capacity** –To most effectively operate our Livingston Fellowship Program and our growing roster of Art & Social Change Grantmaking, we have determined that we need a new professional position to manage that work. We have therefore created a new “Manager, Livingston Fellowship Program, Art & Social Change Grantmaking” position and are actively recruiting to fill it as soon as possible.

“Bonfils-Stanton Foundation recognizes that these efforts are a continued commitment towards being a more impactful anti-racist organization that preserves its dual focus on the arts and leadership,” says Harold R. Logan, Jr., Chairman of the Board. “It is clear that these societal issues will not be solved by our work alone, given our small scale and focused mission. But it is also evident that there is a greater role we can play. Historically, the Foundation has been proud of its ability to collaborate with others to address significant needs of our community. We hope that our efforts can have that same influence today.”

FOR THE MEDIA: To interview Gary Steuer from Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, please e-mail Erica Boniface at Erica@ColoradoMediaNetwork.com or call 303-717-8246.

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