

Forum

Pass the Mic Edition

*First-person accounts
by leaders striving for equity*

Read about Healthy Village
Learning Institute on page 10



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ON THE COVER Aundre Kofi Robinson wears a shirt he helped develop and design as part of Healthy Village Learning Institute's program to promote COVID safety among teenagers. Robinson and his twin, Asaad, seniors at McKeesport High School, have been active at the Institute since they were five. Robinson stands in front of an African-centric mural painted on the side of the facility. Image by Joshua Franzos.

President's Message

IN SEPTEMBER, the Foundation invited an advisory committee to convene in order to assist our staff team in creating a new grant-making program for racial justice.

Eleven local activists, organizers and nonprofit leaders from Black and Brown communities agreed to share their expertise and learning in battling racial inequities. In a circle of dialogue that I will never forget, they testified from deep personal experience to the emotional and physical costs to individuals and families in the communities they serve. Most moving was the openness with which they talked about the scars they themselves bear from fighting on the frontlines with few resources.

What they shared deepened our understanding of the enormous challenges faced by leaders of small organizations dedicated to achieving racial justice. What I learned in that session will be forever imprinted on my heart, and it's one of many experiences in our community interactions around racial justice that inspired this special issue of Forum.

We've turned the following pages over to artists and photographers, educators and advocates, a community health care leader, a philanthropist and a Foundation policy officer. All but one are people of color; all are dedicated in their work and personal lives to eliminating racial inequities in the Pittsburgh region.

That September session was supposed to begin with a quick check-in, followed by a detailed review of the proposed program. But that check lasted more than an hour, as raw, emotion-laden descriptions of their own experiences in fighting for racial justice poured forth.

"Doing this work feels like being in a war — bombs in the air, people being shot at. It's like sitting in a foxhole with your laptop, and there is literally a war raging around you — all around you," Tammy Thompson, executive director of Catapult Greater



These are the people who made this special “Pass the Mic” edition of Forum, the people who spoke, as well as those to whom they told their stories, the photographers whose images illustrate those stories, and the artists who provided photo essays for this issue.



Dr. Yinka Aganga-Williams



Kitoko Chargois



Jason Cohn



Joshua Franzos



Dr. Jerome Gloster



Tereneh Idia



Kitty Julian



D.S. Kinsel



Dannys Marrero



Ellen Mazo



Norine Minion



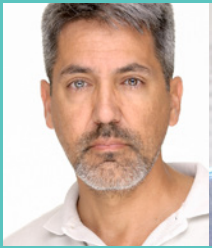
Wasi Mohamed



Cameron Monteith



Keith Murphy



Angel Navarro



Njaimh Njie



Christian Pelusi



Renee Rosensteel



Nate Smallwood



Alisha Wormsley



Virginia Alvino Young

Pittsburgh, which is dedicated to moving individuals and families out of poverty, told the group.

“Sitting there, hunkered down and working, it’s triggering. I have been through what the people are coming to me for support about. It is all triggering and painful, a heavy time, but honestly, I cannot remember it never being a heavy time. Honestly, I cannot remember a time that I didn’t feel that I was in the middle of a war. Trying to find ways to preserve my energy and mental health is a challenge. Folks are putting their bodies on the line every day. Are we even making a difference? That sticks with me. Did I even get anything done today? Am I making a difference at all? I want to believe we are making impact, but it is hard to think we are.”

Others in the group relayed similar stories of exhaustion and frustration in the face of persistent racial inequities, yet they also spoke of their hope, love for community, resolve and resilience, all powerfully apparent in their willingness to join us in trying to achieve maximum impact from the Grantmaking for Racial Justice Fund.

In December, thanks to the work of the Advisory Committee, 24 organizations that are led by and serve people of color received a total of \$1.74 million in grants. I am especially proud that Pittsburgh Foundation donors and the public contributed \$521,000 to enable us to expand our budget to fund more proposals.

For me, a chief lesson from this experience is that so much more is needed. The Fund is the first of several initiatives we’re implementing to significantly increase our investment in fighting systemic racism.

And that is why we have created a platform to “pass the mic”—which is our title for this Forum issue—so that we can listen to and learn from those with lived experience.

We’re grateful to the 10 people who have shared their points of view with us through words and photography. Their truths are invaluable gifts in our work to end racial inequities in the region.



Lisa
Lisa Schroeder
president & CEO

In year of crises

Foundations set records for grantmaking

Last year, when multiple crises rocked cities around the world, The Pittsburgh Foundation and The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County set new benchmarks for community giving, awarding \$67 million in grants. That is the largest amount in their shared history, up from \$65.7 million in 2019.

The Pittsburgh Foundation, which turned 75 last year, raised \$52 million from all sources, including corporations and foundations, donors and the public. The Foundation's affiliate, The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, also set a record, raising \$6.3 million, which is almost four times the \$1.6 million it raised in 2019. That total includes a \$4 million grant to fund CFWC's Comprehensive

\$67 million
awarded in grants
in 2020

Community Investment Strategy, which focuses CFWC investments on improving the health and well-being of people and communities that have a disproportionate number of residents with household incomes less than 200% of the poverty level.

In typical years, the majority of new dollars raised are endowed — that is, funds that maintain a minimum balance in perpetuity. But last year, a total of \$13.5 million was collected through special initiative funds and granted almost immediately back into the community. Of the 7,590 grants issued last year, 5,153 came from donor-advised funds — a total of \$37 million. Donors also gave generously to the Grantmaking for Racial Justice Fund.

"The pandemic, economic crisis, racist violence and civil unrest of last year were traumatic for residents across our region," Pittsburgh Foundation President and CEO Lisa Schroeder said in announcing the fundraising totals. "But the resilience of our communities, marked by selfless generosity, gives me great hope for the future and an unshakeable belief that we will recover and rise together."

\$13.5 million

collected through special initiative funds and granted almost immediately back into the community



A child picks out clothes and other necessities at Foster Love Project's free store in Dormont. Image by Renee Rosensteel.



Wish Book

Donors granted every request, and then some

Over the years, the Wish Book has grown into a philanthropic tradition, wherein donors review specific requests from nonprofits at year-end and select organizations to support with their funds. Last year, with so many nonprofits overwhelmed by unanticipated expenses caused by the pandemic, Foundation staff took a new approach. Instead of appealing for funds for specific material items — think kitchen equipment or laptops — the Foundation asked donors to offer unrestricted operating dollars of up to \$5,000 per gift so that nonprofits could meet their most pressing needs. Also, the book was expanded to feature 100 nonprofits, 25 more than usual.

As of this writing, \$700,000 has been raised, and all 100 wishes have been granted, some multiple times over. That was the case, for example, for Foster Love Project, which provides items such as clothing and gift cards for foster children and families. Foster Love hoped for \$5,000 but received \$28,500.

Not long ago, Foster Love Project received a request from a foster parent for a toddler bed, mattress and bedding. “Typically, that is more than we could spend on one child,” explained Executive Director Kelly Hughes. “Because we have extra funding, we were able to say yes. It has eased so much stress being able to say yes, and we are really grateful.”



← Penn Township Ambulance Association Rescue 6 received Wish Book operating funds. EMTs Robert Scott and Jessica Gregory respond to a call near Irwin, Pa. Photo by Jason Cohn.



Artists in residence D.S. Kinsel and Anqwenique Kinsel play the dice game craps at a Feb. 13 event at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art. Image by Kitoko Chargois.

D.S. Kinsel

Forging creativity
and elevating the role
of Black artists in
Westmoreland County

D.S. Kinsel is an artist, art educator and co-founder of BOOM Concepts, a gallery, art and activist hub. BOOM Concepts is, Kinsel explains, “dedicated to the development of artists and creative entrepreneurs representing marginalized communities.” Kinsel and his BOOM family and friends have created a space with a focus on intersectionality beyond representation; a space of caring, celebration and love for under-recognized artists in the Pittsburgh region. BOOM Concepts in Garfield, has received a number of grants from The Pittsburgh Foundation, including awards from the Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh program. The Fisher Fund at the Foundation is also supporting Kinsel’s residency at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Greensburg, which has a history of funding from The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County (CFWC). Kinsel is also leading a community process to guide the creation of a public art installation in Greensburg. The process was funded by CFWC’s Revitalizing Westmoreland initiative. Kinsel and his wife, Anqwenique Kinsel, who is a singer, producer and teaching artist, are the first resident artists at the Westmoreland Museum.



ARTISTS ARE ELEVATED in some ways, and you know, demonized or forgotten in a lot of other ways. That’s something I always want to remember. It’s really important that people know that artists are your neighbors.

Something that’s really important for me is that people know specifically, Black people know, that being an artist is a job, and there are multiple jobs within the field. Growing up, I didn’t know a single artist that was practicing. So we as artists should just share our gifts in the neighborhood like any other responsible adult would — or I hope they would.

My wife and our families are multi-generational Pennsylvanians [urban and rural]. Westmoreland County is not the rural area where our families lived, but the Westmoreland was the first museum my family visited after our baby was born. So we have some pictures that are really near and dear, and they were just very welcoming at all times. So, our

relationship to the Westmoreland is, in a way, on a more personal level. It's a museum that we trusted.

Westmoreland County was in the national news around the election. When we look at that in relation to my political stances, not my, like, stances on humanity because, man... but my political stances, there was also some fear because of the extremism that we found out there. There's an artful Trump house on display, like an old barn that has become a national landmark decorated with Trump ephemera designs. So, you know, it's like, part of me, as an artist, wants to go check that out. But I am also looking for maybe those cultural markers. So there is a barbershop there that I haven't had a chance to make it to, but I want to go holler at brothers at that shop even though I don't necessarily need a cut.

Entering in as artists in this part of the Westmoreland Museum, we've been able to connect with some individuals that don't necessarily have strong pre-existing relationships specifically with Black community members. And so, you know, we're really trying to figure out what's the best way to translate kind of like our purpose and our intentions to folks.

Ultimately, we're looking to really find artists and support them and Westmoreland County as well. So, you know, it's a journey. It's a challenge. But it's a core part of our work. I could foresee that being a larger challenge in that area just based on its history of racism, conservative leanings, and when I do walk around, I haven't seen many Black or Brown people.

So every artist [in residence] will receive space at the museum as a studio, which is really nice. You know, that's been great for us, specifically having our daughter with us. The residence part of the residency, the housing piece, was like a huge, huge, huge part of this to actively combat some of the racial differences, inequities and isolations that Black artists face. Immersed and maybe isolated in a primarily white environment,



“

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that apartment was a key piece of providing respite and care for artists.

Each artist will receive an equitable stipend, and that was really important for us. The museum has stepped up and is showing their care for artists in this program.

The artists can contribute hours to public-facing programming, sharing with the community, sharing with young people. For me, I always want young people to see artists as models. You have to see it to believe it to be it.

The first residency public program was an all-vinyl DJ set. The music was in relation to the extra-beautiful exhibition at the Westmoreland Museum of African American artists.

Chess is another part of my relationship with Anqwenique, and everyone loves things

like the [Netflix TV series] ‘Queen’s Gambit’ right now. So we wanted to have Black folks on the chess board. On Feb. 13, the day before Valentine’s Day, there was a digital chess match we streamed between Anqwenique and me.

The space is really like a mansion. Hmm. So when you even think about that history, and where those funds come from — African American labor — I think it’s really symbolic. Telling your story and being a griot [pronounced “GREE-oh,” a traveling artist practicing oral storytelling in parts of West Africa] as an artist is an indigenous practice to us. It’s important to be heard. ”

As told to Tereneh Idia, a freelance writer and artist



Detail of artists in residence D.S. Kinsel and Anqwenique Kinsel playing a chess game with pieces inspired by the art of Keith Haring. They are playing at the King vs Queen event held Feb. 13 at the Westmoreland Museum of African Art. Image by Kitoko Chargois.

Keith Murphy

A community leader's quest for learning and well-being in McKeesport

Last November, Allegheny County asked The Pittsburgh Foundation to distribute Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds to local nonprofits engaged in COVID-19 relief and serving groups disproportionately affected by the pandemic. In a matter of weeks, the Foundation's Coronavirus Relief Fund issued 31 grants totaling \$1.9 million. The awards, ranging from \$1,200 to \$100,000, went to organizations led by and serving Black, Brown, Hispanic, immigrant and refugee and LGBTQIA people. The Healthy Village Learning Institute, an organization focused on bringing a holistic African-centered experience to Black residents of the McKeesport area, received \$65,395 from the fund. Keith Murphy, founder and executive director of the institute, led the organization through many challenges presented by the pandemic.

“ SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2012, the Healthy Village Learning Institute has tackled helping to educate the lower-income Black community. The Healthy Village Learning Institute gets its name from the adage 'it takes a village to raise a child.' But what if you don't have a healthy village? The pandemic has presented many unique situations that test the institute's abilities to reach the McKeesport community.

Our organization focuses on teaching African history and cultural values before the history of slavery and provides a science, technology, research, engineering, arts and math (STREAM) education program. We look at land, history and culture in teaching those in the community and what it means to be an American African, meaning defining one's identity through their relationship to African land, history and culture before the American qualities that have been forced upon us. Studying the past also means educating for the future, and the institute provides many educational programs to get kids ready to be college-bound.

Our first policy is safety. But that does not mean that the institute has not had difficulties pivoting from being a large-capacity learning environment to a distanced one. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased interest in our services, though we initially never had distanced learning as part of our educational design. We didn't have enough resources to pay an instructor for each classroom. In an ideal world, we'd have 15 to 20 students to a classroom. But with COVID, we've had to limit capacity. Thanks to the Foundation grant, we were also able to purchase industrial sanitizing systems to clean a room in 15 minutes. We adapted.

Along with the physical distancing hurdles that needed to be tackled, we have had to combat the increased social challenges of the pandemic. Substance abuse, depression and isolation have increased. Also, technological and economic barriers have made distance learning impossible for low-income families in the McKeesport community. And when the pandemic first started, some of my students told me, 'Mr. Murphy, Black kids can't catch COVID.'

This pandemic has highlighted a history of medical discrimination against the Black community that is difficult to overcome after it has been internalized over so many years. With the Coronavirus Relief Fund grant, we have been able to achieve a larger community outreach. We have been able to afford and to streamline groupings in order to ensure safe social distancing within the institute. We have also continued to function as a center for the community, offering everything from memorial services to baby showers, while maintaining social distancing practices and other proper health restrictions.

We've been able to reach out to those in McKeesport not aware of the institute's



Keith Murphy holds a few of the thousands of PPE kits that Healthy Village has distributed to the McKeesport community. Image by Joshua Franzos.



services. We've purchased thousands of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and distributed them in grocery stores, churches, bakeries and other public spaces. We've distributed t-shirts that spread a message of social responsibility, encouraging handwashing and social distancing more widely than the institute would be able to do by itself. We also hold public conversations tackling coping skills for depression and anxiety—and conversations on mask wearing and social distancing.

The institute also has collaborated to meet the increased need for human services because of the pandemic. We connected with UPMC McKeesport nearby and to a psychiatrist, Dr. Daniel Salahuddin, who happens to be of African descent, easing emotional communication barriers. We have also collaborated with Penn State Greater Allegheny and the McKeesport mayor's office in fighting racism through partnerships with the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church, The Forbes Funds and other grassroots entities.

One way we've managed to work with other organizations is through our connection with

Comcast. The company gave laptops to every kid in the McKeesport Area School District, and it provided low-cost internet access to families depending on their income. We had to bump up the speed and capacity of our internet here at our building to handle the increased dependency on it. We had kids in the parking lot and on the sides of the building utilizing the space as an internet hub to finish school assignments they needed to do.

The pandemic is something that will not end, even after the vaccines have rolled out and it is safe to hug again. It is a disease where we will all see the after-effects in the future. But in the moment, the most important message I can send to everyone is to remember that we are resilient; we are strong, and we are still here. ■■

As told to Cameron Monteith, a Communications intern who is pursuing his bachelor's degree in creative writing and film studies at Carnegie Mellon University

Early voting at the former Shop 'n Save on Centre Avenue in the Hill District. October 2020.



Two pedestrians at the corner of Penn and Highland avenues in East Liberty. August 2020.



Njaimeh Njie

Documenting ordinary life in extraordinary times

Njaimeh Njie is a photographer, filmmaker and multimedia producer. Her work chronicles Black experiences, with a particular focus on how the past shapes contemporary life. Her work has been exhibited at spaces that include Carnegie Museum of Art and Pittsburgh International Airport, and she has presented at venues such as TEDxPittsburghWomen and Harvard University. Njie was named the 2019 Visual Artist of the Year by Pittsburgh City Paper and the 2018 Emerging Artist of the Year by Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. She earned her bachelor's degree in film and media studies in 2010 from Washington University in St. Louis.

I CARRIED MY CAMERA WITH ME quite a bit during the summer and fall of 2020. I wanted to make images that captured a daily perspective of an incredibly kinetic cultural and political moment.

The images I've selected are of three different scenes, featuring people moving through three different Pittsburgh neighborhoods. The first photo is of individuals coming in and out of early voting at the former Shop 'n Save on Centre Avenue in the Hill District. In the second photo, two people stroll through an East Liberty that continues to gentrify, even in the midst of a pandemic. In the third image, a man emerges from a Squirrel Hill store, the death toll from that day of the pandemic hanging directly over his head.

I think each of these photographs represents some of the ways we've had to go about living our day-to-day lives in the context of extraordinary times. I also believe they speak to long-standing issues that racism and economic inequality have fostered in Pittsburgh. I think we have to acknowledge that pain, and the scope of people's needs, if we're ever going to move forward. 🗣️

211453

DEAD



A patron exits Discount Tobacco & News on Murray Avenue in Squirrel Hill, November 2020.





Alisha Wormsley

Envisioning
abundance for
Black artists

Alisha Wormsley sparked controversy in 2018 when she posted the words “THERE ARE BLACK PEOPLE IN THE FUTURE” on a billboard in East Liberty, a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood in Pittsburgh. The multidisciplinary artist has received international acclaim for her work that questions what we want that future to look like and how we get there. Since 2011, The Pittsburgh Foundation has awarded numerous grants to Wormsley totaling \$108,000 for creative works, including \$24,000 directly related to the “There Are Black People In The Future” project and \$50,000 for Sibyls Shrine artist residency project for Black mothers. Throughout that time, Wormsley has archived objects, video footage and rituals for her ongoing project “Children of NAN,” which documents the ways Black women care for themselves, each other and the Earth. In 2020, she created Sibyls Shrine, an artist residency program to uplift Black mothers with a safe space and opportunities for skill sharing and financial support. And in Pittsburgh, the need for that support is great. A 2019 study conducted by Pittsburgh’s Gender Equity Commission and a University of Pittsburgh research team found that the city is “arguably the most unlivable for Black women” in the country because Black women in Pittsburgh suffer from among the highest rates of poverty, unemployment and maternal mortality. Wormsley shares her approach to supporting Black women and artists, as well as realizing her dream of a radically new social and economic system.

↑ Alisha Wormsley selects prints in August of 2018 from a storage drawer at Artists Image Resource on the North Side. Image by Njaimh Njie.



IT FEELS LIKE BLACK WOMEN are constantly put in a place to just survive. But we need the space to think about the future. How do we want to exist? What are we taking with us? COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement have shined a light on the systems that don't work, and we have to envision a different way forward.

'There are Black people in the future' is a fact. Some people don't think we will be. But I began thinking about how I can support Black people in the future, and the obvious way to start is by supporting Black moms.

The Sibyls Shrine residency program was started with philanthropic support, but how is that sustainable? As Black women, we're designing our own ways to sustain ourselves through the new Sibyls Shrine network. Through memberships and supporting each other's businesses, the network directly supports more than 60 moms. Because of my track record as an artist, I have access to a larger amount of money, and it's a radical act to redistribute that money in a capitalist world.

The art I make is personal and comes from me and my existence and my environment. Because I'm in Pittsburgh, you can't separate the city from the work. And it's different sustaining as an artist in other cities. When I lived in New York City, there was a much larger community of artists who were all looking to the same pools of support.

There's a need for arts and culture in a capitalist society. There's a lot of capital that comes out of art. Philanthropy is a part of the capitalist model, and while I've benefited from the support of philanthropy, I won't say it's the only solution. On one level, I think of philanthropy as a version of reparations to people who have been exploited by billionaires. It is a way to serve the communities that have historically been sources of labor.

But I'm slowly seeing the system of capitalism unfold in front of me. All the problems. All the inadequacies. We're seeing that the western capitalist model does not work. It's killing people from stress. There is an abundance of wealth, and I feel like the methods in which money is distributed could evolve. It could change. Greater equity would allow people to create. We should be supporting each man or woman becoming a whole person, not just a laborer. That's what's going to take us forward as a species.

Through the Black Lives Matter movement, there's been something of a reckoning. But to be honest, right now people aren't really getting it. Rather than asking how they can take some labor off of me as a Black artist, people want more labor from me. It's a common misconception to call things opportunities when they're really just more labor. Artists should be asked how they can be supported in ways that allow them to imagine and manifest what they need to exist and be sustainable.

The breakdown of a lot of our existing systems is getting a lot of us to question how we're going to get into the future, and to question in the present, 'What can I do right now?' I'm not the only one thinking about this. I'm not the only one doing this work. We're a collective existence.

I'm reading a book right now by an Indigenous woman who talks about the origin story of Turtle Island. One version of the story describes a woman falling from the sky onto the back of a turtle, who lives on an Earth that has been flooded. The woman becomes the gardener of the island that grows around her, and everyone works together to care for the land. Now think about the Garden of Eden story. Think about banishment and exile. Our stories are the base consciousness for all of us. And now we have this time where we can create and start a new origin story in this pandemic. I think that's what these mass reckonings can achieve. The more people see and understand that the system isn't working, the more we can talk about it collectively — on Zoom — and try for something else. ”

As told to Virginia Alvino Young, a freelance writer



Wasi Mohamed

Experienced
grassroots advocate
joins Foundation's
public policy team



Wasi Mohamed at
the Pennsylvania
State Capitol
Complex in
Harrisburg,
Pennsylvania.
Image by Joshua
Franzos.

Last May, two months after the pandemic hit, Wasi Mohamed, 28, of Homewood, joined the Foundation's staff as its senior policy officer. He is working with Phil Koch, who was named vice president of Policy and Community Impact in December, and with the Foundation's lobbying firm, Buchanan Ingersoll Rooney, to encourage policy change that aligns with the Foundation's agenda. He comes to the organization from the Pittsburgh hub of Forward Cities, a national nonprofit that equips communities to grow more equitable entrepreneurial opportunities. From 2015 to 2019, he was executive director of the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh and earned numerous awards for his advocacy and activism. Mohamed shared his thoughts about the role of policy and advocacy, how his time as a grassroots community advocate prepared him to work for systems change and why, in spite of all that 2020 has wrought, he still has hope.



WORKING IN PUBLIC POLICY at a community foundation, my job is to ask: What can we do, through advocacy and policy change, to make a difference the same way we do with our grantmaking? I

work with Phil and our lobbyist to put strategies and relationships in place that support those efforts. Food insecurity is a good example. The Foundation makes grants to agencies and food banks, but we are also advocating for policy changes that will increase food security, such as more public benefits and job creation. The Foundation cannot grant or project-manage its way out of oppressive systems, but we can advocate in ways that lead to power-sharing and provide people with the tools they need to become changemakers.

To paraphrase one of my favorite quotes from Dr. Cornel West: If success is defined as being well adjusted to injustice and well adapted to indifference, then we don't want successful leaders. We want great leaders—who love the people enough and respect the people enough to be unsought, unbound, unafraid and unintimidated to tell the truth.

My coworkers at the Foundation are definitely not adjusted to injustice nor adapted to indifference. They strive to be the great leaders Dr. West says we need.

When I think about philanthropy now, it has authenticity. We are centering Blackness in a way that has not happened before. I was surprised to find that how we do philanthropy is an open question, that we are constantly rethinking what we do. That is really good to see.

I was a bit hesitant to join the Foundation because it would be my first time working for an institution. Prior to this, I was an organizer and activist working on behalf of marginalized communities. The Islamic Center of Pittsburgh is a faith-based organization and is very grassroots. I am really grateful to have started there because it showed me what people in the community are up against. I have names, faces and families associated with the issues we are dealing with in policy.

Take eviction, for example. I knew families who were facing eviction, and I worked with their landlords to make



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sure they and their kids didn't end up out on the street. The people who benefit from these policy changes are not faceless to me, so it gives me the motivation to keep going.

There is an avalanche of evictions being held back by the moratoria. If we are not able to put rental relief in place before the moratoria end, that's a crisis that will reverberate for generations to come. We are working to make sure that rental relief actually reaches the people who need it and quickly.

In the first round, an average of \$4,000 was awarded to families for rental assistance in Allegheny County. That is enough to help many families get caught up on back rent and potentially avoid eviction, and it helps landlords, many of whom are small, family-owned businesses, survive. But, because the application process was so complicated, only \$52 million of the first round of \$175 million actually reached the community. The remaining \$108 million was redirected to the Department of Corrections. We are working with service providers and legislators to ensure this does not happen again.

It's a very heavy time now. Hundreds of thousands have died from the pandemic. There is massive economic harm and terrible systemic inequity and injustice. But also tens of millions of people marched for racial justice. There was astounding, record-breaking turnout at the polls. To make real change, you need passionate, committed people. That's what we have.

I think it was T. S. Eliot who said, 'If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are?'

So, I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful because despair is too great a burden to bear. 🍀

As told to Kitty Julian, director of Communications

Nate Smallwood

Capturing Black joy and resilience

Nate Smallwood is a photojournalist and documentary filmmaker based in Pittsburgh. Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1994, Smallwood earned a degree from Ohio University's School of Visual Communication. Following internships with the Columbus Crew Major League Soccer team and the Detroit Free Press, Smallwood became a staff photographer at the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review in 2016. He is a member of Diversify Photo, National Association of Press Photographers (NPPA) and The Video Consortium.

“ **MY MOTIVATION** in documenting the lives of all the people who call Pittsburgh home is to make a record of the times we're living in. Completing that task seems more important now than ever. Powerful images have been made of the ongoing struggle toward equality for Black Americans showing the bravery and steadfastness of the fight. However, when looking back at this time, 50 or 100 years from now, in addition to those images, whether they be of Freedom Riders or Black Lives Matter activists taking to the streets this past summer, I also want there to be a wealth of images apart from those to add context to what it means to exist as a Black American. That includes photos showing daily life, joy and love, and quiet times of levity, as well as photos that show hope, optimism and resiliency in the midst of such struggle. Most of life often happens outside the viewfinder of a camera, and I am privileged to have been allowed to capture the lives of some of Pittsburgh's most resilient residents, be it in gardens, on basketball courts or while the sun sets on a walk home. **”**

➔ Deshawn Hodges, 13, plays basketball with friends in Homestead on a Sunday evening.

⬇ Adreonna Rawlings, 5, stops to wait for her mother and sister while they walk home in Wilkinsburg on a Saturday evening.





← Zinnia Scott poses for a portrait in her vegetable garden outside her home in the Homewood neighborhood of Pittsburgh in August of 2020.



Dr. Yinka Aganga-Williams

Twenty years of creating refuge
for immigrants in Pittsburgh

Dr. Yinka Aganga-Williams first came to Pittsburgh in 2000 to settle one of her daughters at Duquesne University. Twenty-one years later, she's still here. It all started after Mass at St. Benedict the Moor Church in the Hill District, where Fr. Carmen D'Amico was pastor. D'Amico invited her to a meeting about helping South Sudanese young men who had spent most of their lives in refugee camps before being resettled in Pittsburgh. Aganga-Williams has lived in 18 African countries, where she worked with governments on youth and women's policies. She possesses the cultural sensitivity to help these young men feel at home. In 2004, Pastor D'Amico and Aganga-Williams formalized their work with refugees by co-founding Acculturation for Justice, Access & Peace Outreach (AJAPO), which helps as many as 300 immigrant and refugee families a year make Pittsburgh their home. AJAPO is now governed by an eight-member board of trustees and is an affiliate of the Ethiopian Community Development Council, one of nine national resettlement agencies in the U.S.

Over the years, The Pittsburgh Foundation has awarded grants totaling \$310,500 to AJAPO. Aganga-Williams discusses AJAPO's origins and why she believes that no human beings, no matter how far from home, should be considered lost.



IN THE BEGINNING, Catholic Charities partnered with St. Benedict the Moor, a predominantly African American Catholic parish. We began working with South Sudanese young men who were from 3 to 6 years old when their parents sent them to Ethiopia and Kenya to keep safe. When they arrived in Pittsburgh in 2001, they became known as the Lost Boys of Sudan. I had to reassure them several times that they were not lost boys but human beings just like all of us and must never accept that they are lost.

By 2002, there were 40 of them; the oldest was 26. The federal government provides special funding for the first 90 days of resettlement, but we work with them far longer as that is what's needed for people to find their feet. We assist them with social services coordination and job placements. Five years from when they arrive, they are eligible to become citizens, and that is why AJAPO also provides legal immigration services to see them through.

In 2006, AJAPO was asked by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services to help 40 families resettle, which turned out to be over 200 families. These types of surprises show why governments cannot work in isolation—we need philanthropy to bridge the gap.



Dr. Yinka Aganga-Williams has lived and worked in 19 countries, including the United States. Here she is dressed in the traditional Yoruba, Buba and Iro clothing of her homeland of Nigeria. Image by Joshua Franzos.

When the last administration cut back on refugee admissions to the U.S., some resettlement agencies had to shut down. Foundation funding kept us open. We are doing more for those who are here. When people are displaced for over 20 years, they need more to grow and become citizens.

We are working with people who came from trauma, looking for freedom in our country, and now they are dealing with COVID trauma. With COVID, all our clients lost their jobs and everything that goes along with that. But, to be honest, I think we have every reason to give thanks, as COVID spread was very low among this population. Due to early intervention, they have all gone back to work, thanks to Allegheny County and city government, philanthropy and community leaders.

What worries me now is education for refugee children. The government requires us to enroll them in school within 30 days of arrival. But who is bridging that gap between a child coming in as a refugee and the mainstream children and their teachers? I would truly like to see a program that provides our kids with orientation and prepares them for the school system here.

Roughly 80% of our refugee parents have little education or are pre-literate, meaning they cannot read or write in their own languages. Who is helping their kids now that they cannot be in class? The stress placed on these kids means that they cannot get the education they should be getting. This is a matter of injustice and opportunity. We cannot just move these kids up a grade based on their age.

For refugee kids, education is a priority, and it is important to help those who complete high school to access future career and college education planning. Parents may not realize how much debt they are accumulating for their kids to attend college, so we can easily create poverty out of ignorance. If we can guide them toward community colleges and trade schools, it greatly reduces future poverty in families resulting from school loans. I want the world to hear this, and I want the world to help. It's a question of leadership, of how we help children academically but also with good character and good citizenship so they know what it takes to become contributors. We will all be happier when that happens. ”

As told to Kitty Julian, director of Communications

Dr. Jerome Gloster

Resilience at
the forefront of
community-based
health care



If there is an expression that defines Dr. Jerome Gloster, colleagues and friends agree, it is “realistic optimist.” Dr. Gloster, chief executive officer of Primary Care Health Services Inc., immediately after his appointment in 2018 focused on expanding the patient population at the nonprofit that provides an array of medical services to minority communities across Allegheny County. He developed an ambitious plan to build out clinic spaces and create state-of-the-art centers at Primary Care’s nine facilities, including the Alma Illery Medical Center in Braddock. “The glass was more than half full,” he said. “We were expanding our services, including behavioral health, and offering medication-assisted treatment for opioid abuse. We were letting our patients know, ‘We value you.’”

Then, the thunderbolt of 2020 — the coronavirus pandemic — struck.



LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, this is something we’ve never faced before. As an FQHC (Federally Qualified Health Center), we receive funding from public and private organizations. At the same time, we’re expected to generate revenue to cover at least half of our expenses. And, unlike private medical practices that can turn away people who don’t have insurance, or if Medicaid doesn’t cover the costs, we accept all patients — no matter their ability to pay. For that reason, in any given year, predicting patient flow and revenue is challenging. As we plunged into COVID-19, it’s been — wow! What do we do now to generate revenue just to keep our doors open for all the people who need us?

We were left to figure out new ways to ensure safety and good outcomes for our patients — all 14,000 patients. How do we do that, especially with my goal to reach 20,000 patients in the next few years? It hasn’t been easy. A lot of these concerns keep me up at night. Will we be able to continue to pay our staff? What happens if we lose staff? We had to limit the number of people coming into the offices because of COVID, and we had to keep those we thought to be infectious out of the offices. At the same time, for their health and safety, we needed to continue to care for them.

Thankfully, The Pittsburgh Foundation has been a godsend. The \$100,000 from its Emergency Action Fund helped ensure that all nine of our clinics remained open despite the lower number of in-person patient visits. We also benefited from the federal PPP [Paycheck Protection Program] loans and other grants designed for COVID-related things.

Making it even tougher, however, was trying to get through to the patients who were told they shouldn’t go out, even if they were feeling sick. A lot of people in our Black and Brown communities let us know that the message circulating was that going to the hospital was a death sentence, that they should stay home, no matter what. So, even if their blood pressure

was high or their diabetes got out of control, they stayed home. Our daunting challenge was to make a point of contact with all our chronic disease patients.

With the loosening of telehealth regulations, thanks to the emergency waivers, we have been able to provide more telehealth visits. And, thanks to the emergency waivers, we are being reimbursed for telephone visits with patients who don’t have internet access. We’ve been able to visit with more patients during this difficult time. I hope these waivers become a permanent part of how we conduct these vital telemedicine visits.

With all that, it has been paramount for me to continue to encourage my staff, all 130 of them, to stay strong. Most of them are part of our minority communities. They feel the tremendous stress to fulfill our mission and our calling to help all who live in their communities. They have families, too, and they’re wondering what’s going to happen to them if someone comes to the clinic coughing all over the place. So, we set aside time to talk with them. We’ve held Zoom calls at all of our sites just to allow them to tell us about their concerns, about their families — whatever they need to say. We surveyed our staff and found there was a lot of trepidation about the vaccine. So, our medical director, who is African American, prepared a scientific presentation addressing many of the myths and misconceptions. We started with 20% to 30% willing to get the vaccine. By the time we were ready to provide the vaccine to our staff, over 90% got it.

With our patients, as well, we take the time to talk with them, to hear them out. We’re facing challenge after challenge, but we’re learning and we’re getting better. We communicate regularly with our staff and with our patients. I’ve said this from the start: Let’s accept this as an opportunity to provide the best medical care all our patients deserve. ■

As told to Ellen Mazo, a freelance writer

← The “realistic optimist” Dr. Jerome Gloster, CEO of Primary Care Health Services, stands just outside the Homewood location. Image by Joshua Franzos.

Dannys Marrero

Images of protest and progress

Dannys Marrero is a Puerto Rico native, Army Reservist and political science student at Point Park University who now calls Pittsburgh home. For this photo essay, he selected images of civil unrest in Pittsburgh as residents protested killings by police and demanded equity and justice. He shared his thoughts on why these pictures are emblematic of the struggle and beauty of life during the pandemic and civil unrest.

“I’VE BEEN A MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST for a few months, mainly focusing on protests and establishment accountability coverage. I’ve been a resident of the city of Pittsburgh for a bit over five years now. I am a lover of all things politics by day and a sparkling drag queen by night. **”**

→ “Not a Riot: A white protester attends the ‘Justice For Romir Talley’ demonstration on Aug. 23 carrying a ‘not a riot’ sign. Police have often treated the Black Lives Matter movement protests as unlawful gatherings and categorized them as riots, not just here in Pittsburgh but also across the country.”





← “Inverted Flag: A protester carries an inverted flag during a Black Lives Matter protest in East Liberty on Sept. 12. An inverted flag is an official sign of distress. The Flag Code states: ‘The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.’ This use of the inverted flag in the context of Black lives is very appropriate. After the police killings of Black people last year, the Black Lives Matter movement was emphasized not only just by the community, but media and political entities as they tried to drive progress.”

→ “Man with Microphone: Jimmy Reise, one of the leaders of the group Black, Young & Educated (BYE), delivers remarks to the crowd of protesters during the last ‘Civil Saturday’ event on Sept. 12. Reise was one of the most prominent figures leading the protests for four months in the city. He is a symbol of progress coming from the younger generation with the ambitions to make up for the failed policies of past generations not just toward Black Americans, but also all people of color in the country who continue to be mistreated and marginalized.”





Norine Minion

Endowed with a commitment
to equity and justice

Norine Minion and her husband, Greg, don't believe in second chances. Instead, they believe, as she explains, in "giving everyone a safe, stable, healthy environment with unlimited chances. If you don't feel safe, and are only trying to survive, none of us knows how we would act." Challenging cultural mores and institutionalized injustices underpins her dedication to equity and racial justice—and her connection to The Pittsburgh Foundation. A retired psychotherapist and counselor, Norine volunteers at the Allegheny County Jail through the Hope Foundation as a facilitator for mindfulness and meditation training as well as at the Amachi Pittsburgh program, which matches mentors with children who have an incarcerated parent. In 2018, the Minions put their money where their philosophy is, giving \$10,000 to endow the Social Justice Fund, and they continued their giving with \$2,000 for the Racial Justice Fund in 2020.

"I love Norine," says Vice President of Development and Donor Services Lindsay Aroesty. "She is passionate about equal rights for all. She is cool as can be, cares a whole heck of a lot, and cries every time I see her because she is so passionate about helping others."

While Norine does not characterize her work and philanthropy as passions, they are filled with inspiration, optimism and love.



FOR ME, I WOULDN'T DESCRIBE EQUITY, social equality and social justice as passions; they are based in a core belief that everyone deserves a safe and healthy environment in which to learn, play and live, which our country currently is not providing. Because of the inherent inequities in our systems, supported by the distorted and missing pieces of the version of American history that we have been taught, we have built ghettos of fear—urban and rural—where basic opportunities are thwarted. Until we look at how dysfunctionally our society is structured, all of us will continue to pay the price of inequality. It is not too much to ask to have basic needs met and viable education for all. It boils down to respecting each and every human being, no matter their color or life choices.



Instead of teaching fear when we see someone who may not look or act like us, we need to be teaching how to embrace diversity yet see ourselves in the other. It really is time for us to wake up and realize we are all in this together."

In 2000, I was visiting family in Pittsburgh, and as I rode to the airport to catch my flight back home to Albuquerque, I noticed a Pittsburgh Foundation billboard. Its caption—"Put your money where your heart is"—resonated with me, as did its image: a ballfield in the Spring Hill neighborhood where I was born. A few months later, my husband, Greg, and I contacted the Foundation to set up a fund: the We Are Family Fund in honor of the 1979 World Series champion Pirates and my love of the team and baseball.

A few years after establishing the fund, I discovered that a scholarship I received at Springdale High School—the Katherine and Emma Uhlinger Trust Fund scholarship—was through the Foundation. It is a scholarship based on need and merit. I would be the first and only member of my family to attend college. My family and I were not sure how we were going to pay for college, and that scholarship not only helped



Norine Minion stands before the mural "See You When You Return" by artist Michael Parker. The mural near her winter home in Bradenton, Florida, depicts the region's changing identity and its next generation. Image by Angel Navarro.

financially, but it was a significant confidence boost that gave me the courage to continue on that path.

After a successful career running my own insurance agency in Albuquerque, I wanted to help others on a deeper level. Giving and volunteering were things I witnessed my mom doing. She was always active in her church and community volunteering. She taught my siblings and me to help those less fortunate than ourselves whenever possible. In 2001, I went to school at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Carpinteria, California, to get a graduate degree in psychotherapy and counseling. There, I was once again inspired by something I saw: a sculpture at the juvenile justice center in Albuquerque of a girl playing baseball. I applied and received an internship there to provide counseling to convicted youth and their families.

After moving back to Pittsburgh, we were excited to be more closely involved with the Foundation. In 2017, I attended a Youth Undoing Institutional Racism seminar at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in East Liberty. I wanted to get the seminar on the Foundation's radar to help with grant money. I shared my experience with Lindsay and Kelly [Urunker, vice president for the Center for Philanthropy] a few weeks later. Those discussions led to a similar seminar for Foundation employees later that year. The seminar spurred the Foundation to offer a juvenile justice giving circle, which I attended. By then, Lindsay and Kelly were well aware of my interest in helping with any programs related to social justice and equality. So in 2018, when the Foundation was launching the Social Justice Fund, they approached us, and we were honored and elated to provide a \$10,000 endowment.

Knowing that the Foundation is backing these initiatives, I am very hopeful and trust that positive changes will occur. I am also impressed with [Foundation President and CEO] Lisa Schroeder's optimism, wisdom and concern for the issues at hand. I trust her leadership.

It is very rewarding talking with them. I truly appreciate how open, understanding, eager and hopeful they are. They also are pragmatic. We all understand this is just the beginning of an arduous undertaking. We have over 400 years of racial injustice to undo, so it is going to take time. However, I am excited to see a sense of urgency and priority for programs and funding to help balance the scales of injustice. ■

As told to Christian Pelusi, senior Communications officer



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Alex S. Higie Memorial Fund
Alexander Moreland Memorial Scholarship Fund
Andson Fund
Andy Solan Memorial Scholarship Fund
Certo Family Fund
Charles & Paula Brethauer Charitable Fund
Danowski Family Charity Fund
David and E. Gay Travaglio Scholarship Fund
Delbert H. Blose, Jr. Fund
Designated Fund for Hempfield Parks and Recreation
Dr. Steve and Raine Theis Charitable Fund
FLS45 Fund
Fred C. and E. Maxine Bruhns Trust
H.S.S. Family Fund
J&K McKinney Charitable Fund
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Kallen Family Fund
Karen A. Shapira Memorial Fund
Kennametal Scholarship
KSMD Fund

Lauro Family Charitable Fund
LVE/Craig Family Fund
LVE/Joan Kistler, Jeanne MacDonald and Teresa Tuscano Fund
LVE/Marvin and Mary L. Gantz Scholarship Fund
Lynn Emanuel and Jeffrey Schwartz Fund
Marin-Kahn Charitable Fund
Metosky-Gallagher Family Fund
Mortimer Family Fund
Neighbor to Neighbor Fund
Newton Metcalfe Family Fund
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Norwood A. McDaniel Charitable Fund #2
OMG Fund
Pagano Heck Philanthropy Fund
Penny McKenna Oakland Catholic Scholarship Fund
Phil and Linda Theis Charitable Fund
Quatrini Family Fund
Richard and Sondra Filiaggi Charitable Fund
Round Hill Mission Fund
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Tony Hruza and Annette Vella Fund
Tuscano Ledgard Family Fund
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