

## **The Delaware Racial Equity & Social Justice Fund at United Way of Delaware**

### **The Challenge**

More than 400 years after Africans were first brought to North America as slaves, African Americans are still experiencing a level of brutality, often at the hands of police, that belies the principles upon which our nation was formed.

Unfortunately, 57 years after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King made his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, racism and classism still feed the cancerous hatred of black and brown people in the United States. At a time when our nation is mourning the loss of more than 120,000 souls, a disproportionate number of whom are black, to the non-discriminating disease of COVID-19, America must now also mourn the brutal death of yet another African American whose life was snuffed out in a vicious act of police brutality, televised for the world to see. George Floyd’s murder will forever mark a crossroad in American history. The question before us now is, which road shall we follow?

United Way of Delaware (UWDE) believes that *part* of the answer to this question must be an open, peaceful dialogue about interconnected issues like racial and ethnic inequity, generational poverty, resource and economic development, and social injustice. These problems have been haunting Delaware for decades and will only grow more intractable if left unaddressed, holding back not just those who are impacted directly, but all Delawareans in every corner of our state. We need every sector--young people, civic leaders, politicians, educators, business people, labor leaders, faith leaders, nonprofits and concerned individuals from all political affiliations--to join us on this road to racial equity and social justice.

*But dialogue is only the first step. True change will require action.* We do not need another commission, blue ribbon panel or study group. We need system-wide, sustainable reform, and financial resources, and we need these quickly. This will require that people of goodwill transform dialogue into policies and systemic changes that uproot the entrenched racism that threatens our mutual progress. Dr. King once said, “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.” This is the road UWDE has chosen. And now we invite YOU to join us on this journey and, in so doing, to make Delaware one place in America where my children and yours are judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

### **The Response**

UWDE has convened a diverse, multi-generational group of partners and leaders from all sectors of our Delaware community to join forces in the *Delaware Racial Equity and Social Justice Collaborative* (the Collaborative). The goal of the Collaborative is to be the backbone of our community in imagining and building a more just future for *all* Delawareans, regardless of skin color or zip code. Our strategy is to use our collective infrastructure to provide a unified, powerful voice for meaningful changes in policies and practices that promote true racial equity and social justice in Delaware.

The Collaborative's operational guidelines will be informed by community feedback and developed in partnership with grassroots leaders, civic leaders, and community-based organizations. In practice, the *Delaware Racial Equity and Social Justice Collaborative* will:

- Address root causes of racial and social inequities
- Foster courageous conversations and actions regarding racial equity and social justice
- Increase engagement and influence of grassroots groups and others mobilizing for action
- Mobilize disenfranchised communities to create awareness and action regarding social justice issues
- Actively engage youth and young adults
- Develop collective messages based on dialogue with grassroots groups
- Promote healthy connections among diverse community groups
- Map racial equity and social justice initiatives in Delaware
- Ensure the Collaborative operates statewide, inclusive of local engagement
- Develop procedures for joint accountability, transparency, and communication amongst investment partners
- Foster resource development to fund specific actions aimed at addressing racial and social inequities

### **The Fund**

To support this work, the Collaborative has established the *Delaware Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund at United Way of Delaware* (the Fund), to be supported through individual, foundation, government and corporate contributions. UWDE will serve as the fiscal agent of the Fund. Donors will be asked to commit to being allies by committing time, knowledge, and skills, as well financial contributions. Allocation decisions will be made by a community-based steering committee of the Collaborative.

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