

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 23, 2023

CONTACT: nal@sunshinesachs.com

Johnson Family Foundation Launches New Multi-Year Fellowship to Support Democracy-Building Efforts

Initial grants to Center for Popular Democracy, New American Leaders, and Riders Alliance will support advocacy, electoral engagement, and movement building in New York City

As part of its work to support the development of healthy, vibrant, and just communities, the Johnson Family Foundation announced earlier today the launch of its Johnson Justice Fellows Program. This two-year fellowship, based in New York City, focuses on preparing emerging leaders from diverse communities for careers in public service.

“It is a goal of JFF to multiply our grants' impact by finding specific points of leverage. We believe that this fellowship targets a key point in the career path of rising leaders where many are faced with high hurdles to continue their journey,” **Asa Johnson, trustee of the Johnson Family Foundation**, stated. “By training, connecting, and supporting them at this critical time we hope to have a long lasting impact on the landscape of progressive activism.”

“Johnson Family Foundation’s goal is to support these social justice fellows so they can deepen their leadership capabilities,” said **Dylan Hoos, executive director of the Johnson Family Foundation**. “Our hope is that these leaders feel supported and inspired to work in the service of public good for the duration of their careers. It’s motivating to think about the immeasurable positive impact that this could help catalyze over decades.”

Fellows in the program will be selected by Johnson Family Foundation and its three inaugural host organizations—the Center for Popular Democracy, New American Leaders and Riders Alliance—to work in either grassroots movement building, policy change and advocacy, or electoral engagement. In addition to their work with the host organizations, fellows will be matched with a mentor, participate in an ongoing speaker series, and have access to a network of other leaders within the democracy building, public service, and social justice spaces.

“The New American experience is seen everywhere in New York from its art, food, and music to its neighborhoods and landmarks. But for too long, the New American experience has been underrepresented in places of power. The Johnson Justice Fellowship is working to change that, opening the door to public service for the next generation of authentic, community-centered leaders,” said **Ghida Dagher, president and CEO of New American Leaders**. “This fellowship is a gamechanger for immigrants, women, people of color, and others who have been traditionally excluded from public service. It will open the door for new opportunities to strengthen our democracy and ensure all people are represented and included in our communities and our democracy. We are honored to be one of the inaugural organizational hosts and are thrilled to work alongside the Johnson Family Foundation to nurture and support the diverse leaders our communities—and our democracy—need.”

"As New York's grassroots organization of subway and bus riders, Riders Alliance is excited and proud to join the Johnson Justice Fellowship's inaugural class as a host organization," said **Betsy Plum, executive director of Riders Alliance**. "There is no greater tool of democracy than well-organized communities and the Grassroots Organizing Fellow will join a team of passionate and strategic organizers to build the power of everyday riders and win the transit system we need and deserve in New York City. The Johnson Family Foundation's investment in community organizing as a career path with a dedicated fellowship has transformational potential and will seed a new generation of civic leaders ready to deliver on a shared mission for all of us: a more just and equitable New York."

"This is a great opportunity to give young scholars and activists real-life experience working to get a better understanding of how to build grassroots organizations," said **DeMareo Cooper, co-executive director of Center for Popular Democracy**. "We're excited for them to share their talents and learn from experienced frontline organizers in the modern social justice movement."

Applications to join the inaugural cohort of the Johnson Justice Fellowship program are accepted through March 31, 2023, with fellows starting in September 2023. All individuals with a deep understanding of the diverse communities, issues and opportunities that make up the current social and political landscape in New York City, regardless of their current location, are encouraged to [learn more and apply](#).

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About the Johnson Family Foundation

Through place-based and national grant-making programs, JFF works to develop healthy, vibrant, and just communities where individuals, families and the next generation of leaders will thrive, with an emphasis on LGBTQ rights, education and entrepreneurship, and promoting equality and social progress. JFF has staff in New York, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. More information can be found at www.jffnd.org.

About New American Leaders

[New American Leaders](#) (NAL) is the only national, nonpartisan organization focused on bringing New Americans into the political process by preparing first and second generation Americans and all who identify closely with the immigrant experience to use their power and potential in elected office.

About Riders Alliance

[Riders Alliance](#) is New York's grassroots organization of subway and bus riders fighting for reliable, affordable, accessible, and world-class public transit. We believe that elected officials and public agencies will prioritize transit riders' needs only if riders are organized and prepared to hold them accountable. Our mission is not only to win better trains and buses; it is to make our city more equitable, more inclusive, more compassionate, and more sustainable.

About Center for Popular Democracy

[The Center for Popular Democracy](#) is the largest multiracial network in the nation. CPD and CPD Action have over half a million members in 48 state and local community organizations across 38 states dedicated to achieving racial and economic justice through local grassroots organizing. CPD/A trains and supports leadership, staff, and members to grow base-building organizations to scale and leverage that strength to win cutting-edge policy victories at the federal, state and local level.