

Ford Foundation

New York, NY

www.fordfoundation.org



NCRP: *In a widely-shared open letter, Ford Foundation President Darren Walker declared the foundation's commitment to battling inequality and increasing general operating support. What reactions have you received to this announcement so far, and have any surprised you?*

Ford Foundation: We're proud of our FordForward strategy – and pleased that the response it generated from colleagues, partners and grantees has been overwhelmingly positive. At the same time, we all understand that Darren's letter was just the next in a series of communications, and that many still are asking the very real question, "Will I get funding?" No doubt, some uncertainty remains – uncertainty that will dissipate during the weeks and months ahead. But, overall, our community of stakeholders seems excited and optimistic about the direction we're heading in together.

NCRP: *Why has the Ford Foundation reinvigorated its work promoting social justice philanthropy?*

Ford Foundation: The Ford Foundation's board of trustees just returned to Detroit, our birthplace, for the first time in more than half a century – and reconnecting with our roots reminds



A grantee site visit. Photo courtesy of the Ford Foundation.

us that our institution has always worked, as our founder Edsel Ford put it, "for the public welfare." To us, reinvigorating this work is about continuing our decades-long legacy of supporting visionaries on the front lines of social justice. We also recognize that, as a social justice foundation, we have a unique responsibility. For one thing, social justice is much harder to quantify than other forms of impact. It's messy and doesn't have the same kind of linear trajectory you can fit neatly in a PowerPoint. With this in mind, we've developed new program areas and new ways of working that disrupt our tendency to create silos – this project is X, and this project is Y – and instead encourage a more holistic, integrated approach to promoting social justice. More broadly, we have the ability to be patient and

invest long term in institutions that are leading meaningful change, which is why we're committing \$1 billion over the next five years to general operating support.

NCRP: *In June, the Supreme Court issued major rulings upholding the Affordable Care Act and expanding marriage equality to all 50 states. What role did the Ford Foundation and its grantees play in the movements that led to these decisions?*

Ford Foundation: Without question, both decisions represent enormous victories for people and organizations that care about social justice – and we're proud to support many of these visionaries. When it comes to LGBTQ issues in particular, many of our grantee partners worked long and hard to make this June's decision a reality, including the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Movement Advancement Project and the Civil Marriage Collaborative. Ultimately, our history shows that successful social movements need strong ideas, institutions and individuals, and we're committed to supporting leaders like these in the fight against inequality. ■