Jessie Lloyd O’Connor Scholar—Jasson Perez

Each year the Fund selects a grantsee who honors the legacy of commitment to peace and justice modeled by Jessie Lloyd O’Connor, a labor journalist, organizer and an early and beloved member of our Board, who with her husband Harvey, opened heart and home to activists seeking respite. Our Jessie Lloyd O’Connor Scholar this year is Jasson Perez, a survivor of drug addiction and incarceration with a deep passion for working for justice. Post incarceration, he became involved with the South West Youth Collaborative, organizing to stop zero tolerance policies, militarization in the schools and gentrification, and then became a union organizer with SEIU Local 73. His primary work is as co-chair of the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100) - Building a Black Freedom Movement from Chicago to New York to DC, New Orleans and Oakland and creating justice and freedom for all Black people within a feminist queer praxis. He lives and performs music at the Stone Soup Housing Cooperative where he and his daughter collectively work for justice. His goal is to be an activist/scholar, building a movement for social, political and economic liberation. Jasson is currently pursuing a BA in Economics and Black Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago. We’re sure Jessie and Jasson would be quick comrades, both with revolutionary spirits and a desire to create a thriving community while organizing for racial and economic justice.

The Marilyn Buck Award – Sandra Brown

Marylind Buck was a political prisoner and poet who worked in solidarity with Black Liberation struggles to end white supremacy. She received grants from the Fund in 2003 and 2004, and died of a rare cancer in 2010. Marilyn supported the Fund with regular donations and supportive notes from her jail cell, and with a generous bequest of her personal library and legacy. The Marilyn Buck Award is given to an incarcerated or formerly incarcerated activist working for justice. This year, the award is given to Sandra Brown, an incarcerated student committed to promoting social change through personal rehabilitation and development. She was encouraged to begin her path of transformation while performing with the Acting out Theatre Troupe within the prison. She has pioneered educational opportunities and earned six internships as editor of Within These Walls, a newsletter for incarcerated people, which has encouraged many women to join her in academic pursuits, transforming their lives. She leads A Woman’s Voice, developing leadership and communication skills, and hopes to teach Humanities courses in correctional facilities, once she is released. She says, "As an incarcerated woman, I understand how education and knowledge transcend barbed wire and bricks." While incarcerated, she completed the Cultural Arts Program and is now working on an MA in Humanities and Literature at UC Dominguez Hills.

Julian Bond, Rest in Power! (1940 - 2015)

In 1977 when our board discussed creating a sponsor list of activists who personified the work of the Fund, Julian Bond was at the top of the list. As a founder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), his name and his work are synonymous with building and supporting student-led movements in the south and across the nation. His tenure as chairperson of the NAACP solidified his place among civil rights icons and he is often named among the personal heroes of so many of our past grantees. We are forever grateful for his support of the Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund and our grantees. His ongoing message to them and all student activists, "I tell young people to prepare themselves as best they can for a world that grows more challenging every day-get the best education you can and prepare to help others." His goal is to be an activist/scholar, building a movement for social, political and economic liberation. He was encouraged to begin his path of transformation while performing with the Acting out Theatre Troupe within the prison. He has pioneered educational opportunities and earned an MA in Liberal Studies, a BA in Specialized Studies at Ohio University and is now working on an MA in Humanities and Literature at UC Dominguez Hills.

DPSF Board Update

We would like to thank Simone Weil Davis, Clarence Lang, Davarian Baldwin and Mónica Enriquez, and for their years of commitment to the Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund. Although we will miss the energy and presence of these amazing folk, we are thrilled to welcome three new members to our board. Carlos Jimenez is the Midwest regional field organizer for Jobs with Justice, building worker justice. He has served as a coordinator of JWT’s Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) and the Young Worker Project. Carlos wants to connect the dots between people, resources and DPSF, helping people blaze their own trail toward justice. Beth Rose Middleton Manning, PhD is the Yocha Dehe Endowed Chair in California Indian Studies in the Dept of Native American Studies at UC Davis focusing on the tribal land, water and cultural rights of indigenous peoples. Beth Rose says, "I am excited to support emerging scholar-activists, and to carry forward the courageous legacy of the DPSF’s founders who, like us today, were passionate about working for racial justice, economic justice, human rights and equality and access to high-quality education." Kai M. Green, PhD, was a grantee in 2013/14 and is a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University in Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies. His writing and research is focused on issues of gender identity, Black resistance and resilience. Kai says, "I was very grateful to receive the support from DPSF and it is an honor now to pay it forward, helping build with a group of people who support folks getting education."
Davis-Putter grantees speak through action, “We Rise, we dream, we heal, we build...toward peace, justice and liberation!” As revolutionary Black youth across the country challenge the police state and lead the growing Movement for Black Lives with women, trans and queer voices at the forefront, our grantees say, “Together we rise! As fierce immigration struggles continue with students challenging deportation and wage theft, our grantees say, “Together we rise!” As we witness victories for workers and the Fight for $15, indigenous rights and a turning of the tides of environmental racism, our grantees say “Together we rise! Together we rise!”

Alexa Bailon began organizing in high school for access to affordable education for undocumented students and has worked for an end to the school to prison pipeline, for marriage equality and against fracking, while attending Metropolitan State University in Colorado. Brittany Brathwaite mobilizes young women of color to examine and influence the impact of institutional racism on their lives and has led efforts to make police violence a public health issue at the Columbus University where she is working on a dual JD/MSW degree. Recognizing the power of media as a tool for social justice while organizing with farm workers and the youth movement of Santa Ana, Mariana Bruno is now seeking an MA degree in Social Documentation and Oral History at Cal State Fullerton.

Johnny Buck works to strengthen Yakama Nation communities through cross cultural and intertribal relationships and is developing a new generation of tribal leaders committed to the environment, decolonialization and self-determination while pursuing a BS in Environmental Science at Northwest Indian College. Lindsey Chen has worked for economic justice through UNITE-Here, co-founded Parsol, an anti-capitalist, anti-racist, Chinese Diaspora organization committed to environmental justice, resisting heteropatriarchy and ableism and organizes #Asians4BlackLives while working on an MSW/FTD at the University of Washington. Mariana Bruno, an Undocuqueer activist and leader with Familia: Mexicanos Unidos por la Resistencia, began organizing in high school for access to affordable education for undocumented students and now works with Students of Color Activating/Building with the Latino youth movement of Santa Ana, was a lead organizer with the DREAM Act and the National Immigrant Youth Alliance and the National Immigrant Youth Coalition and Union Salvadorena de Estudiantes Universarios working to politicize Chicano Studies at UCLA. Discovering a passion for social and environmental justice in Minnesota, Romilly Tsinhnahjinnie learned about immigration rights, health disparities and anti-militarization/recruitment from Southwest Organizing Project, educates Indigenous communities about the health impact of nuclear weapons and working in solidarity with local movements to restore felon voting rights and leads faith-based organizing in New Mexico.

Anthony Sandusky is building a movement against police brutality, gun violence and mass incarceration, has worked to restore voting rights and leads faith-based organizations in New York around #BlackLivesMatter, immigration and affordable housing, while working on his MA in Ethics at Yale University. Working on economic, racial and gender justice for 10 years, Nayantara Sen mobilizes and politicizes through storytelling and a collaborative story telling project with the Wisconsin Badger Forward and Color of Change, her work on connection between racial justice and LGBTQ movements, while working on an MA in Post-Colonial Literature and Social Movements at New York University. Myra Soliday works with community organizations to bring awareness and change the conditions for incarcerated women and provides legal assistance to fellow inmates while completing a Psychology degree at Ohio University—just in time for her release in June 2016.

Bashaw Stewart co-founded with FIERCE, a New York-based queer youth of color leadership organization and aims to strengthen the Movement for Black Lives by healing systemic trauma in a social justice collective framework while completing a BA in Sociology and Trauma at Hampshire College. Eric Tolson Solis co-founded the Young People’s Action Coalition, dedicated to liberation and radical social change, focusing on popular education to develop individual and collective analysis of oppression and working in solidarity with local movements led by people of color.

Jodi Lynn Maracle challenges the false histories, racist policies and disparaging stereotypes of her people, the Mohawk and all indigenous people through campaigns such as to rename “Squaw-Island” to Ganigecioyih (Unity Island), while working on a Ph.D. at the University of NY at Buffalo. Alexa McNemar has led organizing efforts against police brutality as a Social Justice Leader at the Dorothy Day Center for Service and Justice at Fordham University where she is working on a BS in English and Political Science. A leader with the Radical Angry Asian Alliance, Swati Rayasam is focused on intersectional activism, organizing for the DRM Act, LGBTQ rights and worker justice and researching green tobacco sickness in migrant farmworkers, while beginning a MPH in Global Health & Environment at UC Berkeley.

Dashamelle Robinson co-founded a Black liberation group called BREAKAWAY, traveling to Ferguson and planning solidarity actions in NYC, training cop-watchers in Bushwick and leading tenant’s rights organizing with plans to open Freedom Schools after completing an MSW at the University of Southern California. Ernesto Rodriguez organized for the DREAM Act and then with SEIU where he learned the importance of storytelling as an organizing tool, founded the Coalition to end Wage Theft in Long Beach and is completing a BA in Political Science and Chicano Studies at UCLA. Discovering a passion for social justice at the age of 11 after her parents were deported. Seleny Rodriguez organized for worker justice and education of undocumented students and now works with Students of Color Solidarity Coalition while seeking a BA in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley.

The Davis-Putter grantee community is building a movement for peace, justice and liberation, with an eye towards bringing an end to the school to prison pipeline, fighting for the rights of undocumented students, working to end institutional racism and decolonizing the American university. We rise!”

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