



NEWS RELEASES

Barnes & Thornburg Racial And Social Justice Foundation Donates To Los Angeles Nonprofit

New Foundation's \$50,000 Donation Supports the Social Justice Learning Institute's Work With Youth in Local Communities of Color

December 28, 2020 | [Los Angeles](#)

LOS ANGELES – As part of the launch of the Barnes & Thornburg Racial and Social Justice Foundation, a \$50,000 donation has been made to the [Social Justice Learning Institute \(SJLI\)](#), a Los Angeles-based nonprofit dedicated to improving the education, health and well-being of youth and communities of color. The firm's lawyers and staff have funded the foundation launch; the foundation was established with \$75,000 in personal donations from firm leadership and total donations collected in 2020 equaled just over \$200,000.

"We cannot think of a more fitting organization to receive this contribution," said Melanie Mawema Barnes & Thornburg's Los Angeles office administrator. "The institute's tireless work empowers our city's youth to address social injustices through education, a mission that perfectly supports the goals of our foundation." The Los Angeles office is looking forward to providing additional on-the-ground support to SJLI.

Social Justice Learning Institute empowers youth in local communities of color to enact social change through research, training and community mobilization. SJLI partners with organizations and businesses to provide academic support services, transform neighborhood conditions, and rectify injustice. It also provides access to a number of resources that promote education and healthy lifestyles, and helps community members rectify injustices and advocate for policies that address their needs.

“We’re honored to accept this contribution,” said Derek Steele, the Social Justice Learning Institute’s interim executive director. “This year, more than ever, we’ve worked so hard to make sure the youth in our community have access to essential resources. Food insecurity has become an even bigger challenge, and families are faced with the new obstacle of securing resources for at-home learning. This contribution will go directly to these causes, and so many others, that will make a huge difference in lives of our community members.”

Barnes & Thornburg’s Racial and Social Justice Foundation

The Barnes & Thornburg Racial and Social Justice Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, was established in 2020 and funded entirely with personal donations from attorneys and staff of the firm. The foundation’s mission is to promote, advocate, and effect racial and social justice in our local communities and nationally.

The foundation made initial donations of \$50,000 each to four organizations in four of Barnes & Thornburg’s markets – Atlanta, Indianapolis, Los Angeles and Minneapolis. As the foundation continues to grow in 2021, additional nonprofits and markets will be added to the mix.

“It’s time to not just speak out against racial and social injustices, but to translate those words into meaningful and tangible actions and commitments,” said Connie Lahn, the Racial and Social Justice Foundation president and managing partner of Barnes & Thornburg’s Minneapolis office. “As we reach the end of this challenging year, we’re proud to have put a stake in the ground, and we look forward to working with the amazing nonprofits we’ve selected. Their work inspires us to be better, and we hope with our support they can have an even greater impact in our communities.”

To choose grantees, the foundation employed a rigorous scoring system to vet charitable organizations against specific criteria that align with its mission and goals.

The foundation will work hand in hand with Barnes & Thornburg’s Racial Justice Committee, which is tasked with continually looking at how the firm works to address racial justice, both externally and internally. Learn more about the foundation’s work across the country.

With more than 700 attorneys and other legal professionals, Barnes & Thornburg is one of the largest law firms in the country. The firm serves clients worldwide from offices in Atlanta, California, Chicago, Delaware, Indiana, Michigan, Minneapolis, New York, Ohio, Raleigh, Salt Lake City, Texas and Washington, D.C.