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22 BLACK-LED ORGANIZATIONS AWARDED GRANTS THROUGH VEGFUND'S \$50,000 SOCIAL JUSTICE FUND

Washington, DC: In the wake of George Floyd's killing and the resulting Black Lives Matter protests, VegFund launched their Social Justice Fund in June 2020 to recognize organizations across the United States for their contributions to Black communities.

- VegFund's grantee community and supporters nominated more than 50 compelling candidates.
- During this time of funding uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the VegFund Social Justice Fund prioritized small organizations that operate on \$225,000 or less in annual support funding.
- VegFund recognized 11 vegan organizations for their excellence in advancing vegan living among Black communities, and 11 community development nonprofits for their excellence in furthering racial, economic, and political justice among Black individuals and families.

Collectively, these groups focus on a range of initiatives that include shaping community models and institutions that advance Black inclusion and prosperity; providing resources to reduce incarceration and prison recidivism through mentorship and employment; incorporating hip hop therapy as a form of trauma reduction and personal expression into programs for boys and young men of color, who as a group demonstrate disproportionate health disparities; and taking a public health approach to creating safe communities.

Awardees chosen for their work advancing vegan living among Black communities

Dr. Amie "Breeze" Harper, founder of [The Sistah Vegan Project](#), an initiative promoting equity and inclusion in the vegan movement, speaks to the progress of Black vegan scholarship and the importance of supporting Black leaders to advance racial equity for veganism.

Dr. Amie "Breeze" Harper says that fifteen years ago, her work was:

"very much on the margins, with some vegan and animal rights affiliated individuals and organizations equating my anti-racist, Black feminist, and racial justice vegan focus with 'racism,' 'divisiveness,' or even 'white-hating.' 15 years later, I've seen a tremendous paradigm shift from many vegan and animal rights organizations. They are finally acknowledging that systemic speciesism cannot be dismantled without understanding and dismantling systemic racism and creating racial equity in the USA."

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The other awardees in this group are [Encompass](#), whose mission is to foster a racially inclusive vegan movement; the [10,000 Black Vegan Women](#) initiative by best-selling author and award-winning public health nutritionist Tracye McQuirter; the [Black VegFest](#) of New York, the [Black Vegetarian Society of Maryland](#), [Black Vegetarian Society of Georgia](#), and [Black Vegetarian Society of Texas](#), which encourage Black communities from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to learn about and try veganism; [AfroVegan Society](#), which works to bring healthy, nourishing plant-based foods to marginalized neighborhoods in Baltimore; [Vegans for Black Lives Matter](#), a platform for Black vegans to connect and share their stories and ideas about social justice; and [Grow Where You Are](#) in Atlanta, Georgia, and [Be More Green](#) in Baltimore, Maryland, both of which offer wage-earning opportunities to Black people who want to work in local produce agriculture and learn about the health benefits of plant-based diets.



ADUM⁷ (left) and Dr. Milton Mills (right), Black VegFest 2019

Awardees chosen for their excellence in furthering racial, economic, and political justice among Black individuals and families

Leslie Barcus, Executive Director of VegFund, commented:

“I was thrilled to learn that a number of the organizations nominated for the VegFund Social Justice Fund who were not expressly vegan already include access to healthy foods and nutrition education as a cornerstone of their programmatic strategies. Certainly racial, economic, and political justice intersect with an individual’s choice of vegan living.”

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On the West Side of Detroit, [Auntie Na's Village](#) advocates for plant-based nutrition as a holistic approach to preventive health care. Working with chronically underserved low-income residents, Auntie Na's provides food boxes containing fresh produce and plans to offer cooking demos and plant-based nutrition education through a planned build-out of their Nutrition House. Auntie Na's has a solid start on these plans thanks to their existing relationship with Food for Life Instructors of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM).



Auntie Na's Food Box Program



Gangstas to Growers/The Come Up Project participants

[Gangstas to Growers](#) in Atlanta, an initiative of [The Come Up Project](#), provides resources to gang members and other formerly incarcerated youth ranging from 18 to 24 years old, with the overarching goal to reduce prison recidivism. Mentored by local farmers, the participants learn skills to grow and cultivate produce on Black-owned farmland for the local food market while earning income for their efforts. Participants also have access to vegan cooking classes and financial literacy training.

Abiodun Henderson, founder of Gangstas to Growers, said that the VegFund grant “*will help our youth who have their hands in the soil, growing themselves and a better future for us all!*”

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Another awardee of the Social Justice Fund, [The Homeless Children's Playtime Project](#) in Washington, DC, partnered with [Urban Beet](#) in the Summer of 2019 to provide biweekly bags of fresh vegetables to homeless families. Children planted, tended, and harvested their own small vegetable garden with the aid of Urban Beet, and they took potted vegetable plants to grow at the shelters where they live.

The other community development grant winners are [Beats Rhymes and Life](#), [The Village Method](#), and [Black Organizing Project](#) (Oakland, California), [Girl Vow](#) (New York, New York), [Beloved Community Center](#) (Greensboro, North Carolina), [VIP Mentoring](#) (Detroit, Michigan), [Newark Community Street Team](#) (Newark, New Jersey), and the [Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color](#) (Cambridge, Massachusetts).

VegFund has completed the first-ever round of its Social Justice Fund awards and is grateful to its grantee and supporter community for their excellent nominations. A second funding round is possible in early 2021.

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About VegFund: Founded in 2009, VegFund exists to support vegan advocates in their efforts to educate the public about the benefits of vegan living. VegFund provides grant funding for vegan outreach that inspires people to choose and maintain a vegan life. Our most popular grantee activities include food samplings, film screenings, vegfests and health fairs, conferences, learning events, vegan challenges, and online campaigns. VegFund also develops and curates the very best resources available on plant-based living and effective advocacy and facilitates information sharing among activists in the vegan community.

For media inquiries, contact: Kari Hallenburg, Communications Director, VegFund, Inc., kari@vegfund.org • 503.867.7211

Note to editors: VegFund logo can be found at <https://vegfund.org/press>. For additional photos, please contact Kari Hallenburg.