

Edward W. Hazen Foundation

New York, NY

www.hazenfoundation.org

Est. 1925



EDWARD W. HAZEN FOUNDATION

MISSION

Since its founding in 1925, the Edward W. Hazen Foundation has focused primarily on the education and development of young people, who Mr. Hazen once described as “those who in the natural course of events will be the leaders of tomorrow.”

Years later, the foundation began to focus on community organizing for education reform and youth organizing, with four goals: (1) effective schools for all students; (2) full partnerships for parents and communities working to reform and restructure their school systems; (3) development of young people; and (4) policies, social systems and public institutions that are supportive, responsible and accountable to youth and their communities.

RECOGNIZING THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES

After witnessing several groups using organizing strategies to analyze and improve their communities’ schools, the Hazen Foundation was drawn

immediately to the groups’ approach for its change-focused agenda and high potential impact. Foundation president Lori Bezahler said, “The power of collective action was very much in the values that we hold as an institution about who controls knowledge, who makes decisions for communities and how that can be realigned in such a way to be reflective of communities and therefore have the real voice and power of communities.”

Hazen feels that community organizing produces innovative education policies and programs, enlightens education funders and strengthens the next generation of social justice leaders.

“On a number of occasions when communities or community organizing groups have brought about change, we have seen that the political will generated from bringing that change into existence helps sustain it, despite the churn of reform. That’s also why we think organizing is a valuable lever for reform,” said Bezahler.

PRIORITIZING RACIAL JUSTICE

Also vital to Hazen’s spirit as an institution is its commitment to racial justice. Encouraging internal and external diversity and equity became a priority for the foundation, greatly due to the tenacity of Jean Fairfax, one of two African Americans who joined Hazen’s board of trustees in 1973. “It was she who was constantly asking the question, ‘If this is serving this community, how is this community in a decision-making position in this organization?’” said Bezahler.

Racial justice continues to be central to Hazen’s work, and the foundation recently rewrote its mission statement to make its commitment even more explicit. Hazen feels a responsibility to challenge other grantmakers on the issue of race and to drive the conversation in the philanthropic community.

“We think it’s really important, perhaps now more than ever, to define what racial justice means,” said Bezahler. “What are the structural issues that go beyond individual prejudice that affect young peoples’ lives? How we do address these as grantmakers in terms of who we fund, how we work with our grantees and how we help them to become more sophisticated and more nuanced in their understanding of those issues?” ■

Meredith Brodbeck, communications assistant at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), prepared this member profile.



Above Left: Photo courtesy of Coleman Advocates, San Francisco. Above Right: Photo courtesy of Padres y Jovenes Unidos, Denver