

The Mertz Gilmore Foundation

New York, N.Y.

<http://www.mertzgilmore.org>

Est. 1959



Joyce Mertz established the Mertz Foundation with her parents, LuEsther and Harold, in 1959 and began managing the foundation's affairs with her husband, Robert Wallace Gilmore. The Foundation was renamed The Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation shortly after Joyce's death in 1974. In 2002, the foundation adopted its current name, the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, to recognize the many contributions of Mr. Gilmore. The foundation uses a variety of philanthropic strategies to strengthen civic institutions and dance presenters throughout New York City, to support human rights work in the United States and to address the climate crisis.

Through the NYC Communities program, the foundation aids New York City's underserved communities with struggles such as homelessness, domestic violence, workplace violations and lack of safe housing. The program began in 2006 and supports "community-based organizations working on multiple fronts, technical assistance providers that help community organizations address organizational needs, and collaborative campaigns."

In 2010, four years after the current funding program began, the foundation decided to evaluate the program and determine how the landscape may have changed. Vice President Lukas Haynes said, "We consulted widely and reviewed recent studies, investigative reports, and news coverage of economic and social conditions in low-income communities. The heart of the review was a series of interviews with grantees, fellow funders of those grantees, and discussions with community leaders involved with organizations we support." The foundation also examined the financial health, management and internal governance practices of organizations.

"The No. 1 conclusion of the review was that we, as a foundation, continue to play an important role for a community of grantees that are struggling against great odds and often making great headway," said Haynes.

The NYC Communities program review also reminded the foundation of the importance of multi-year grant support for grantees. Haynes said, "The more we consulted and the more we

took stock of the financial health of organizations and their fundraising prospects, especially given the recession and cutbacks in grantmaking in the last few years, we felt that the responsible thing was to recommend at least a seven-year arc of funding for our core grantees. In the next couple of years, we also want to focus more attention and resources on this age-old conundrum of how grassroots groups working on tough issues in marginalized places can grow their fundraising and revenue-generating capacities."

The Mertz Gilmore Foundation is now making a more concerted effort to canvas the national landscape for best practices and new ideas around grassroots fundraising, and be as responsive to its grantees' needs as it can be. Haynes said, "All we can do is try—and to go about it in a collaborative and participatory way involving the foundation's grantees at every step." ■

This Member Spotlight is written by Meredith Brodbeck, communications associate at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP).

NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

Americans for the Arts
Basic Rights Oregon
Bay Area Blacks in Philanthropy
Brett Family Foundation
California Endowment
Cricket Island Foundation
Discount Foundation
Environmental Support Center
Equal Justice USA
Got Green
Highlander Research & Education Center
Interfaith Worker Justice

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Justice Works
King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence (KCCADV)
Leadership Center for the Common Good
Legal Voice
Levi Strauss & Co.
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN)
Nashville Public Library
National Center for Transgender Equality

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)
National Council of La Raza
National Institute on Money in State Politics
Native American Rights Fund
Nonprofit Assistance Center
Partnership For Safety and Justice
Robert Bowne Foundation
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
Statewide Poverty Action Network
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance