



REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP FOR LEADERS OF COLOR:

Honoring the Past,
Empowering the Future

A PROGRAM REPORT

Karen Lee Spaulding
Oishei Fellowship for
Leaders of Color



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Prepared By:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color (KLS OFLOC) is a bold and transformative initiative launched by the John R. Oishei Foundation to empower nonprofit leaders of color across the Buffalo-Niagara region. Central to the Fellowship's concept is the commitment to gathering Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders across all not-for-profit business sectors, self-identified heritages and backgrounds, and within all levels of an organization's structure, in the belief that leadership resides in every individual regardless of role or position.¹

This report provides a brief examination of the Fellowship's roots, evolution, and measurable impact, serving both as a celebration of its milestones and a strategic roadmap for its future.

Rooted in the John R. Oishei Foundation's commitment to racial equity and community leadership, the Fellowship responds to an urgent and well-documented leadership crisis among BIPOC professionals in the nonprofit sector. Amid rising burnout, limited support, and chronic underrepresentation in decision-making roles, KLS OFLOC builds, fosters collaboration, and creates safe, culturally responsive leadership development spaces tailored to the lived experiences of leaders of color.

Launched in 2019, the Fellowship grew out of the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color (CCLOC) – an organic, grassroots space where BIPOC leaders in Western New York gathered to build trust, forge relationships, share strategies, and envision systems-level change. These sessions laid the groundwork for a fellowship model that prioritizes self-awareness, healing, mentorship, racial equity, and transformative leadership practices.²

This report is based on quantitative and qualitative data, including over 500 pages of assessments, national research, and reflective testimonials. Five key themes emerged that highlight the need for spaces where leaders of color can co-create and build community-driven solutions: racial leadership gap, authentic networking, root cause analysis, health and wellness, and systems change. The findings reveal that fellowships like KLS OFLOC are not simply professional development programs – they are vital community anchors for systemic change. The Fellowship creates environments where leaders of color feel seen, supported, and empowered to lead with clarity, vision, and purpose.

As the John R. Oishei Foundation aligns with its 2023 strategic direction, the Fellowship continues to serve as a vital resource for leaders of color, strengthening community-rooted networks that advance racial equity throughout Western New York. The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color embodies the principle of Sankofa, a Ghanaian concept of looking backward to learn, so as to move forward with greater clarity and impact. It challenges us to reflect and act on critical questions: What have we learned? What must evolve? How can we, together, build a more just and inclusive future?

**“SANKOFA”
MEANS
RETURN
AND GET IT**

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color (KLS OFLOC), tracing its origins, evolution, and impact. It serves both as a celebration of the Fellowship's past accomplishments and a strategic guide for its future.

The Fellowship's purpose is to empower leaders of color in the Buffalo-Niagara region through power-building, collaboration, and a series of leadership development experiences. These efforts are designed to position Fellows in influential roles, foster networks among leaders of color, and drive systems change. A central component of the Fellowship is preparing leaders to address the root causes of racial inequity and develop sustainable, community-centered solutions.

These efforts come at a time of growing urgency and underscore the pressing need for transformational leadership that reflects the lived experiences of communities most impacted by racial inequity. We are at a critical point in history that extends across the United States, where a leadership crisis is unfolding, particularly among leaders of color.³ In recent years, we have witnessed an alarming trend: a growing number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders in nonprofits, higher education, and government have stepped away from executive roles, citing a lack of institutional support and the toll of navigating racialized environments.⁴ Creating networks that are grounded in grassroots movement efforts defined by the Fellows is key to moving our communities forward in the political, social, cultural, and nonprofit space.

For instance, a recent study conducted by the Building Movement Project found that there has been a decline in the number of individuals, especially people of color, stepping into executive roles in the nonprofit sector.⁵ One of the main reasons cited for the decline is that leaders of color experience a high rate of burnout and lack of support from their boards. In their findings, 70% of white leaders versus 49% of leaders of color reported that they received strong support from their board of directors.⁶ Furthermore, 41% of leaders of color in leadership positions said that burnout was the leading cause of their departure.⁷

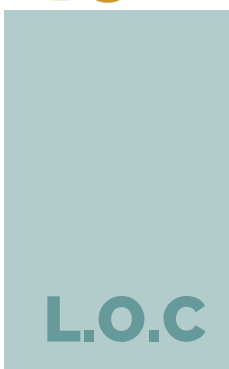
This report matters because it serves as a strategic roadmap – not just for reflection, but for action. It calls for the intentional preparation and support of leaders of color to step into spaces where they can influence policy, reshape systems, and lead meaningful change. Whether in boardrooms, classrooms, government offices, or grassroots organizations, leaders of color need data-driven insights, community-rooted strategies, and institutional support to dismantle barriers and build equitable futures. The Fellowship fulfills a need in the Western New York region; it serves as a think tank that engages leaders of color around these pertinent issues and prepares them to go out and solve these problems as a team.

SUPPORT OF LEADERSHIP

70%



49%



As the John R. Oishei Foundation (JROF) aligns with its 2023 strategic direction, this report, “Reimagining Leadership for Leaders of Color: Honoring the Past, Empowering the Future,” plays a critical role in shaping the next chapter of the Fellowship. It embodies the principle of Sankofa, a Ghanaian word derived from the Akan language meaning “to return and get it.”⁸

By reflecting on the past experiences of the fellowship, it informs the current and future expression, prompting us to ask the following:

- What have we learned from the Fellowship’s inception to today?
- What lessons will guide us moving forward?
- What insights emerged from the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color?
- How can we translate those insights into action through an organic grassroots movement?

This report offers insights that serve as a roadmap for cultivating leaders prepared to advance social justice, dismantle systematic inequities, and foster inclusive community development throughout Western New York and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

This report draws from over 500 pages of qualitative and quantitative data collected by the John R. Oishei Foundation that documents (See Appendix B: Data Catalog) past Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color cohort experiences, Community Conversations for Leaders of Color (CCLOC), literature, and perspectives from the broader leadership field. Through the analysis of fellowship assessments, conversations, reflective testimonials, and national research, this report illustrates how the power of intentional leadership experiences for people of color can serve as a powerful catalyst for change. It examines how fellowships like these can create sustainable change in historically marginalized communities and provide the foundation for a renewed, equity-driven fellowship model that reflects the evolving needs of today’s leaders.

More than a program, the KLS OFLOC began as JROF’s grassroots response to the underrepresentation and isolation of leaders of color in predominantly white nonprofit spaces. It has evolved into a regional force for community mobilization and systems change. It’s foundational development emerged from the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, where leaders affirmed that a BIPOC-only space for conversation, solace, and strength was a compelling, and necessary, concept.⁹

By elevating the voices, experiences, and leadership of people of color in Western New York and beyond, we move from acknowledging the problem to activating solutions. This work is not optional – it is essential to the collective well-being of the region. At the core of this work is power building, whereas the shifting of power in systems to advance racial equity in our communities through a collective of individuals.¹⁰

KEY TERMINOLOGY

For the purposes of this report, please refer to the following definitions of key terms used in the content:

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) – The term emerged in the 2010s. Its first reference was in 2013 on social media, and it gained traction in 2020 as a result of increasing awareness of racial justice issues. The term emphasizes the shared experiences of people of color related to systematic racism.

Buffalo–Niagara Region – The Buffalo-Niagara region incorporates Erie and Niagara counties.

Community Conversations for Leaders of Color (CCLOC) – The Community Conversations for Leaders evolved as a natural next step in the Foundation's racial equity work, drawing inspiration from the models of the Oishei scholars and leaders, resulting in strong relationships, and unexpected collaborations and partnerships. A safe space was established for nonprofit leaders of color in Western New York by the John R. Oishei Foundation to provide networking and capacity building.¹¹

Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color (KLS OFLOC) – The new name of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color is in honor of the first Vice President of Philanthropic Support.

Leaders of Color STEP (LOCStep) – The online community established for nonprofit leaders of color in Western New York as a result of Community Conversations for Leaders of Color.

Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color (OFLOC) – The original name of the leaders of color fellowship that was established for individuals in Western New York.

Purpose, Outcome, Process (PoP) – A framework designed by the Rockwood Leadership Institute, adopted by the fellowship program, to guide discussions and provide strategic direction to the community of leaders of color for developing solutions to community challenges.

Rockwood Leadership Institute (RLI) – An institute whose purpose is to support leaders to transform themselves, their communities, and the world by addressing equity, liberation, and sustainability for all.

Western New York – Western New York encompasses eight counties: Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Allegany, Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming.

CHARTING A NEW PATH: OISHEI'S RACIAL EQUITY-DRIVEN MISSION

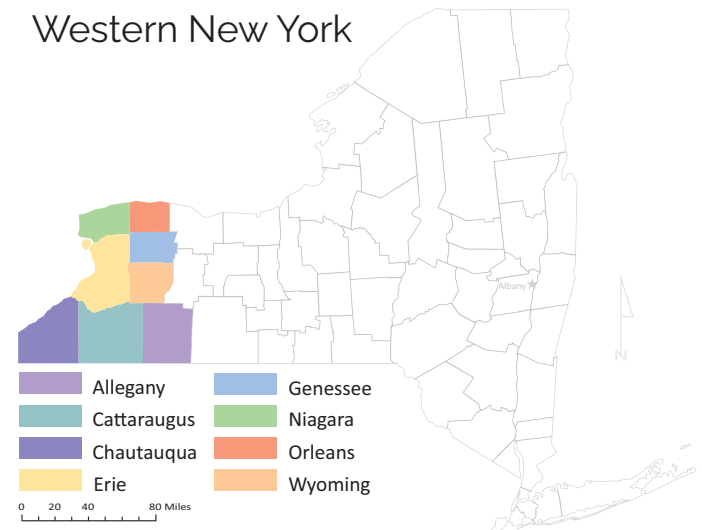
The John R. Oishei Foundation is well known in the Western New York community for its dynamic work and philanthropic support. With a legacy of service dating back to its founding by John R. Oishei in 1940, the Foundation has remained deeply committed to enhancing the quality of life for all residents, especially those who are underserved. What began with a focus on healthcare has evolved into a far-reaching mission that supports nonprofit organizations through leadership development, strategic planning, and operational sustainability. As a cornerstone of the Buffalo-Niagara community, the Foundation partners with over 200 organizations each year, contributing to the community's growth and strengthening the region's social wellness indicators.¹²

The Foundation's collaborative efforts span a wide range of sectors, including education, healthcare, and community development, with racial equity becoming a formal area of focus in 2017. This intentional shift marked a significant turning point. Racial equity, distinct from equality, focuses on the fair treatment of all people, regardless of race. It recognizes the socio-cultural, historical, and structural disparities that are embedded in our everyday life and actively seeks to eliminate the barriers that disadvantage people of color. Achieving racial equity is not a simple process; it requires addressing the root causes of racial disparities, implementing inclusive policies and practices, and intentionally redistributing access to power, opportunities, and resources.

The John R. Oishei Foundation began its shift toward racial equity in 2017 in response to the deep-rooted challenges in the Buffalo-Niagara community. That meant shifting from transactional grantmaking to transformational change. This strategic pivot has allowed the Foundation to look inward as well as outward, examining its policies and practices while deepening its partnerships with nonprofits, grassroots leaders, and community coalitions that are driving systemic change. One powerful example of this commitment is the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color, which provides leaders of color with the space, support, and networks to co-create solutions rooted in community knowledge and experience.

In January 2022, Christina Orsi was appointed as the Foundation's first woman president, ushering in a new era of leadership aligned with its equity-driven vision.¹³ Later that year, the Buffalo community was shaken by the devastating racist attack on May 14, 2022,¹⁴ followed by a historic blizzard in December.¹⁵ These tragedies laid bare long-standing issues of poverty, segregation, and racism, compelling the community to reckon with these challenges and call for structural change. This united the community and sparked conversations around how these racial disparities could be eliminated at a systems change level.

In 2023, Oishei pivoted to a strategic direction with a powerful mission: "work with communities to change systems and build financial prosperity for a racially just, vibrant Buffalo-Niagara region."¹⁶ Oishei's racial equity-driven mission is not a standalone initiative. It is integrated across education, healthcare, financial prosperity, and community development – guiding how the Foundation listens, learns, funds, advocates, and implements change in collaboration with partners.



HISTORY OF THE KAREN LEE SPAULDING OISHEI FELLOWSHIP FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color was founded to address a longstanding need to create dedicated spaces where leaders of color in nonprofit organizations could connect, strengthen their leadership skills, and drive systematic change. For too long, leaders of color in Western New York have navigated predominantly white spaces, where access to mentorship, funding, and leadership opportunities has often been limited.

The Fellowship's roots can be traced back to a series of conversations in the community led by Karen Lee Spaulding, who sought to understand how the John R. Oishei Foundation could better support leaders of color in Western New York.¹⁷ These conversations ultimately led her to read Kelsey Blackwell's powerful article, "Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People," which underscores the importance and value of creating safe, affirming spaces where leaders of color can gather free from bias and discrimination.¹⁸ It became pivotal in the John R. Oishei Foundation's thinking regarding leadership programs for leaders of color.

WHY SPACES FOR LEADERS OF COLOR IN NONPROFITS MATTER

Historically, nonprofit leadership in WNY – like many other regions – has been predominantly white, even though communities of color are often the primary recipients of nonprofit services. This disconnect has created systemic challenges for leaders of color, including:

1. **Lack of Representation in Decision-Making Spaces** – Leaders of color are often underrepresented in executive and board leadership roles, leading to decisions that do not always reflect the lived experiences of the communities being served.
2. **Barriers to Funding and Resources** – Nonprofits led by people of color receive significantly less philanthropic funding compared to their white-led counterparts, making it harder to sustain programs and services.
3. **Limited Access to Mentorship and Professional Networks** – Leaders of color often lack access to mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership development opportunities, which are critical for career advancement.
4. **Emotional Tax and Burnout** – The emotional labor of advocating for racial equity while leading in spaces that may not always be inclusive can lead to burnout and isolation.
5. **Need for Leadership Development Tailored to Their Experiences** – Traditional leadership development programs do not always address the unique challenges that leaders of color face, such as navigating racial bias in the workplace and managing expectations in predominantly white spaces.¹⁹

Recognizing these challenges, Karen Lee Spaulding began researching leadership programs for nonprofit leaders of color. In 2019, Spaulding and consultant colleague Lisa Olszak Zumstein, who had introduced her to Rockwood Leadership Institute’s leadership work in Pittsburgh, traveled to California to meet with the Rockwood Leadership Institute – a nationally recognized leadership development organization – to explore a partnership that would provide transformative leadership training for leaders of color.²⁰

THE ORIGINS OF IMPACT: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

Following the initial meeting with Rockwood Leadership Institute, Spaulding and Olszak attended a weeklong, intensive, in-person leadership workshop at Rockwood Leadership Institute’s Art of Leadership program in Briarcliff Manor, NY. Inspired by Rockwood Leadership Institute’s leadership model, which begins with deep self-reflection as the foundation of self-leadership and leadership of others, Spaulding was convinced that this training could be a game-changer for WNY’s BIPOC community. “Critical would be the affirmation, interest, and trust from within the BIPOC Not-For-Profit community itself.”²¹

Thus, the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color in Western New York was launched as a first step in supporting BIPOC-only spaces where nonprofit professionals of color could network, mentor one another, and discuss challenges and opportunities.²² This vital community provides a safe and supportive space for leaders of color to engage in meaningful dialogue and serves as the place of origin of the fellowship program. The concept of CCLOC built upon and strategically expanded the significant examples of the Oishei Scholars (the Foundation’s longstanding initiative of providing support for BIPOC students to attend independent secondary schools for four years) and the Oishei Leaders (informal yet powerful gatherings of not-for-profit business leaders across all sectors to refresh and renew together, leading more often than not to strong relationships and unexpected collaborations and partnerships).²³ It evolved as a natural next step in the foundation’s racial equity work, drawing inspiration from the models of the Oishei scholars and leaders, resulting in strong relationships and unexpected collaborations, and partnerships.²⁴

The first Community Conversations for Leaders of Color session was held on May 21, 2019, at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site,²⁵ in Buffalo, New York. The CCLOC sessions evolved into quarterly sessions for leaders of color, consistently drawing an average of 35 nonprofit leaders per session to participate in the conversations. By the second session, the group adopted Rockwood Leadership Institute’s Purpose Outcome Process (PoP) framework, which focused on three areas: why, what, and how.²⁶

By the third CCLOC session, the group established the POP framework to guide the group moving forward:

- **Purpose:** An opportunity to see and connect with talent and resources to build unity, education, and power.
- **Outcome:** Decrease in the racial leadership gap.
- **Process:** Establish trust and respect through honesty and humility.²⁷

Through intentional networking and dynamic workshop sessions, led by Karen Lee Spaulding, Curtis Robbins, Franchelle C.H. Parker, and other guest speakers, key themes emerged that shaped the pathway for the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color’s development. These themes included but were not limited to dismantling racialized practices, the co-creation of agendas in preparation for meetings alongside the Oishei Foundation, the creation of healing spaces exclusively for leaders of color, establishing a mentoring pipeline for navigating career options, and building bridges across racial/ethnic lines. What sets these sessions apart from other leadership programs is the integration of a graphic recorder, Yen Azzaro, an experienced graphic artist from Detroit, Michigan, who compiled the main themes and ideas of the audience. According to Azzaro, “I believe in presenting content in the most palatable and accurate way possible but not conveying emotions in the room. Anyone seeing the recording can then enjoy the aesthetic elements and draw his/her/their own conclusions.”²⁸ This holistic approach allowed for creative expression and ideologies to emerge authentically for the leaders engaged in the session.

The Community Conversations for Leaders of Color not only serves as a sacred space to converse, but it also helps leaders of color and the Oishei Foundation administrators chart out their roles in this collaborative work on systems change in the Buffalo-Niagara region. This resulted in a mutual understanding of the way John R. Oishei would function, which included:

- Investing financially in the efforts while ensuring the sustainability of conversations
- Leveraging their network to gain additional investors as contributors and more resources for the initiatives
- Moving from an allyship relationship to an accomplice relationship
- Advocating for CCLOC initiatives and assisting with the increase of recruitment of leaders of color in nonprofit organizations²⁹

The CCLOC experience laid a powerful foundation for reimagining leadership development through a culturally responsive lens. It not only sparked the creation of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color but also demonstrated what’s possible when trust, collaboration, and community voice drive systems-level change.

LAUNCH OF THE OISHEI FELLOWSHIP FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

With the collective voices of the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, the John R. Oishei Foundation officially partnered with Rockwood Leadership Institute in 2019 to launch the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color in the Buffalo-Niagara region. The Fellowship's purpose was clear: to provide nonprofit leaders of color with a transformative, five-day intensive retreat where they could develop essential leadership skills, including vision planning, strategic decision-making, coaching, public speaking, and collaborative leadership.

Fellows were selected through a rigorous vetting process managed by the Rockwood Leadership Institute and attended the retreat at no cost, ensuring accessibility for those leading impactful nonprofit work in the region.³⁰ The fellowship was guided by Rockwood's Purpose/Outcome/Process framework, which emphasized why the fellowship exists, what impact the Fellows will create, and how the Fellows will be trained through their leadership methodology. The team selected 24 leaders of color for the first cohort who participated in the five-day intensive leadership program led by the Rockwood Leadership Institute from November 19-22, 2019, at Beaver Hollow.³¹

By 2020, COVID-19 had hit our community, which led to a hybrid experience for the second and third cohorts of the fellowship. But, in the midst of it all, the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color continued to meet quarterly via Zoom, and as a result of their dialogue, an online networking platform for leaders of color was created.³²

The exhaustive efforts and guidance of Curtis Robbins, the JROF Director of Strategy, Research, and Evaluation, Susan Kirkpatrick, JROF Chief Communications Officer, Karen Lee Spaulding and a five-person team of the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color led to the development of LOCStep, an online networking platform (built by Mobilize) specifically designed for leaders of color to engage in mentorship, resource-sharing, and professional development.³³ In 2021, Tala Harden was hired as the Community Manager to oversee the platform's growth and engagement.

The group grew its membership, shared meaningful conversations, shared meals, and utilized the platform to network and to collaborate, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

In January of 2022, Karen Lee Spaulding retired, leaving behind a legacy of leadership development and equity-driven philanthropy. To honor her contributions, the fellowship was renamed the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color. This renaming signified the institutionalization of the program, ensuring that its impact would continue beyond her tenure.

At this stage, the Office of Philanthropic Support outlined four key goals for the John R. Oishei Foundation's Operating Plan in 2022, with the latter two focused on BIPOC leaders:

1. Support nonprofits through strengthening Governance and Executive Director partnerships.
2. Provide direct services to community organizations (grantees and non-grantees) or linkages to outside providers in all areas of nonprofit practice.
3. Support and sustain innovative programs for nonprofit leaders to refresh, renew, learn, grow, and share lessons learned.
4. Convene Community Conversations for Leaders of Color.³⁴

The Fellowship continued to evolve and expand its impact under the leadership of Dr. Mark Scott, who was appointed as the new Vice President of Philanthropic Support. Professional development opportunities continued throughout the year. Highlights included the celebration of the retirements of Jose Acevedo, Rockwood Leadership Institute trainer and facilitator for Cohorts 1-3, and Lisa Olszak Zumstein, Fellowship Administrator. Additionally, the fourth cohort was held on October 24-28, 2022, at Beaver Hollow. Ekua Mends-Aidoo and Kim LaVare of the Clementine Gold Group were contracted as Fellowship Administrators shortly thereafter.³⁵

In 2023, the Fellowship's fifth cohort was held, and an Advisory Council was formed to ensure that the Fellowship's direction remained aligned with its mission and the evolving needs of the Fellow community. In the same year, the John R. Oishei Foundation redefined its strategic direction to center on addressing the root causes of racial inequity, with an emphasis on fostering financial prosperity, particularly for Black communities in Buffalo's East Side.

Christina Orsi, president of the John R. Oishei Foundation, along with the board members, met with the leaders of color during the Fellows Alumni gathering to share the Foundation's strategic direction. They also presented it to Cohort 5 at Beaver Hollow after their weeklong immersive experience and to the Community Conversation for Leaders of Color. Christina followed up with a heartfelt letter, outlining the Foundation's next steps and reaffirming its commitment to meaningful, community-driven impact. Other initiative transitions included the continuation of both the Karen Lee Spaulding Fellowship for Oishei Leaders of Color and Community Conversations for Leaders of Color.³⁶ No new cohort was launched in 2024; however, Wil Green, a Cohort 3 Fellow of the KLS OFLOC Fellowship, facilitated a crossroads conversation to continue engagement and dialogue.³⁷

A new chapter is unfolding for Oishei and the Fellows as partners engaging in systematic change in the Western New York community. Through a series of unplanned events, seeds were planted that brought forth the beautiful building of a community of scholars who have the opportunity to transform the community through power-building with the JROF and the community. Conversations in coffee shops to reading Blackwell's (2018) article to the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color and the creation of the Karen Lee Spaulding Fellowship for Leaders of Color were all seeds for future possibilities of what this movement can be – a power-building network in the Buffalo-Niagara community collaborating to transform systems.

FUTURE FORWARD LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR WNY

The locality in which the work of racial equity and systems change takes place is the heart of the collaborative work being done with the John R. Oishei Foundation and the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color. One of the most visible challenges in the Buffalo-Niagara region is the persistent and racialized nature of poverty. With 30% of Buffalo residents and 14% of Niagara Falls residents living below the poverty line, the region faces a complex web of structural inequities that extend far beyond income disparities.³⁸ These conditions are deeply entrenched in the systems that shape daily life – healthcare, education, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system. Poverty in Buffalo is not racially neutral; over 70% of those living in poverty are people of color, a reality shaped by historical segregation, exclusionary policies, and disinvestment in Black and Brown communities.³⁹

The structural inequity has been extensively examined in *The Harder We Run* (2021), a pivotal report by Dr. Henry Louis Taylor Jr., Jin-Kyu Jung, and Evan Dash. The study outlines seven core factors that drive the economic stagnation of Black Buffalo: racial residential segregation, underdevelopment of the East Side, structural joblessness, low wages, limited educational attainment, gentrification risk, and poor health outcomes. These root causes not only perpetuate poverty but restrict pathways to opportunity, power, and wealth for communities of color.

Anna Blato’s *A City Divided* (2020) builds on this foundation by documenting the enduring consequences of Buffalo’s segregated past and its influence on the present-day landscape. Meanwhile, Keeanga-Yamatta Taylor (2022), in her article “Hiding Buffalo’s History of Racism Behind the Cloak of Unity,” underscores the danger of symbolic gestures that obscure the systemic and ongoing racial divisions that shape the city’s neighborhoods, politics, and economic opportunities. She argues that to dismantle inequality, communities must confront the institutional conditions, not just isolated actions, which maintain the racial status quo.

These local insights align with the national frameworks offered by scholars such as Heather McGhee. In *The Sum of Us* (2021), McGhee outlines how zero-sum thinking about race has eroded public goods and policies, producing widespread harm across racial lines. Her argument, centered on the social and economic costs of racism for all communities, makes a compelling case for multiracial coalitions rooted in shared interests and mutual benefit. McGhee’s work expands the equity conversation to emphasize how everyone loses when systems are designed to exclude.

Adding depth to the economic dimensions of racial justice, authors such as Claude Anderson, Amos Wilson, and Jawanza Kunjufu emphasize the importance of economic self-determination, grassroots wealth-building, and culturally grounded leadership development. Their writings advocate for strategies like community land trusts, access to capital for BIPOC entrepreneurs, cooperative economics, and mentorship models that foster generational leadership. These approaches seek to build local ecosystem ownership, education, and empowerment, countering the limitations of mainstream economic and educational systems.

**70% OF THOSE
LIVING IN
POVERTY ARE
PEOPLE OF
COLOR**

As the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color moves forward, crucial to its growth is the continuation of creating safe spaces for leaders of color, mapping out root causes with actionable solutions, dismantling systematic barriers (i.e., education, healthcare, criminal justice, etc.), and cross-collaboration with allies.

Across five cohorts, a total of 118 scholar-leaders completed the fellowship.⁴⁰ Each of the fellows continues to navigate their professional journey on their own terms, in unique and impactful ways, creating opportunities for power-building and collective influence within the community.⁴¹ For example, Kelly Dumas, Fellow from Cohort 2, started a nonprofit, Dumas R.I.S.E. Providers, Inc., for Black mental health professionals as a result of the resources provided by Oishei to build capacity for Black mental health professionals.⁴²

Alongside the Fellowship is the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, which serves as a critical foundation for generating ideas for engagement, advancing racial equity, deepening community connections, and amplifying the voices of leaders across Western New York. Through a series of facilitated gatherings, leaders of color shared insights and affirmed the strength of shared lived experiences.

In collaboration with the John R. Oishei Foundation, these leaders participated in a variety of discussions, professional development workshops, celebrations, and outings to local events centered on racial equity and systems change. The sessions included but were not limited to a variety of topics on government, advocacy, wellness events, board pitching, overcoming imposter syndrome, how to build your own table, the Congressional Black Caucus, and many more.

The seeds have been planted, watered, and are now brimming with possibilities for the creation of roots with boots on the ground to begin collaborative work in the community. In order to build power, it requires the collaboration of diverse groups who have built trust with one another to walk in a new direction. Gigi Barsoum noted that “Power building relies on an ecosystem of diverse organizations that each contribute a range of important strategic capacities.”⁴³ What we’ve seen is the interconnectedness of community- JROF, Fellows, and CCLOC walking together to build the foundation for gaining a deeper understanding of the problems and being the solutionists for them.

At the culmination of these efforts with CCLOC and KLS OFLOC, professional development opportunities, and “connect-the-dots” conversations, five key themes emerged that form the foundation for addressing barriers to entry in predominantly white spaces in nonprofits. These themes include racial leadership gap, authentic networking and belonging, root cause analysis, health and wellness, and systems change (See Appendix B: Data Catalog of Documents). These interconnected themes reveal not only the challenges but also the pathways toward real, lasting change in our communities. The table below reflects key themes that have emerged through CCLOC discussions and experiences.

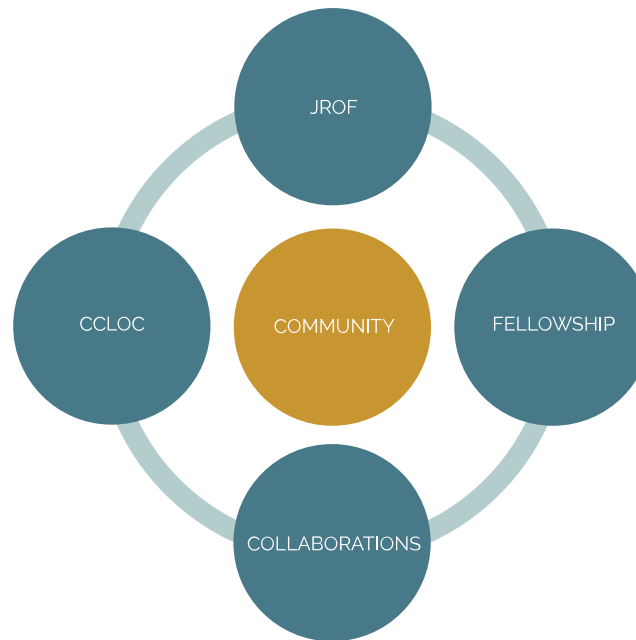
Table 1. Key Reflections and Patterns from CCLOC Dialogues

Theme	Definition + Impact	Participant Insights
Racial Leadership Gap	<p>BIPOC leaders are underrepresented in executive and decision-making roles across sectors, including healthcare, education, government, and philanthropy.⁴⁴</p> <p>CCLOC and the fellowship have been instrumental in addressing the underrepresentation of leaders of color in senior leadership positions within nonprofits and other sectors.</p>	<p>“Even when we are present, our voices are sometimes muted. Representation alone is not equity.”</p>
Authentic Networking & Belonging	<p>The value of shared spaces for trust, vulnerability, and collaboration among leaders of color.</p> <p>BIPOC leaders often feel isolated in predominantly white spaces.</p> <p>CCLOC helped reduce silos and created culturally safe, affirming networks.</p>	<p>“This was the first space where I didn’t have to code-switch. That kind of connection is rare.”</p>
Root Cause Analysis	<p>Addressing the root cause of issues in society with an emphasis on historical context.</p> <p>Conversations moved beyond surface-level symptoms to focus on historical injustices, institutional policies, and structural racism.</p>	<p>“We have to get comfortable naming white supremacy culture if we’re serious about change.”</p>
Health and Wellness	<p>Prioritizing mental, emotional, and physical health as part of leadership sustainability.</p> <p>Leaders acknowledged the toll of racial trauma, burnout, and generational responsibility. Wellness and rest were reframed as acts of resistance.</p> <p>Fellows highlighted the importance of mental and physical wellness in their leadership journeys, incorporating self-care into their leadership practices.</p>	<p>“We are carrying our communities. Self-care is not selfish – it’s leadership preservation.”</p>
Systems Change	<p>A call for structural shifts in how leadership, power, and equity are defined and practiced.</p> <p>Participants emphasized the need for equity to be embedded in policies, funding, data, and leadership culture, not treated as an add-on.</p> <p>Fellows have actively worked on dismantling barriers to equity in the nonprofit sector, promoting initiatives that focus on racial justice, economic empowerment, and social equality.</p>	<p>“We must shift power, not just share space.”⁴⁵</p>

The themes that emerged from these conversations reflect the urgent need for bold, systemic change in leadership development for BIPOC leaders. First, participants powerfully illuminated that representation without influence is not enough – real equity demands that leaders of color have decision-making power, and their voices are respected at every table. Second, the CCLOC and Fellowship created a space of belonging that broke through isolation and offered authentic connection, proving that culturally grounded networks are critical for sustainable leadership. Finally, BIPOC fellows and CCLOC weren’t afraid to name hard truths – whether addressing white supremacy culture or the toll of racial trauma – while also lifting wellness and structural change as essential parts of the leadership journey.

The work of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color and the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color represents models of leadership development rooted in history, community, and systems-level change. As the Buffalo-Niagara region continues to grapple with the legacy of structural racism and the racialized impacts of poverty, they are uniquely positioned to advance local solutions through collaborative leadership. The voice, insights, and lives of the experiences of BIPOC leaders across the cohorts reveal an urgent call to action that requires sustained investment in leaders of color, deeper cross-sector partnerships, and bold action on structural inequities. The themes of racial leadership gap, authentic networking, root cause analysis, health and wellness, and systems change are an opportunity for power building. The framework focuses on four areas: building power (Ecosystem capacities), exercising power (Strategies), having power (Outcomes), and expanding power (Growth).⁴⁶ A diverse ecosystem could start with the model below and continue to reflect and recalibrate along the way.

Figure 1. Four Aspects of Building Community Power



JROF, CCLOC, Fellowship, and Community’s work collectively demonstrates a powerful model for systems change by building ecosystem capacities through trusted networks and culturally grounded leadership development centered on root cause analysis. Power building heavily relies on an ecosystem of diverse organizations, and it is built with and by communities.⁴⁷ The CCLOC and Fellowship were born out of deep conversations with people in the Buffalo-Niagara region to understand local needs and ensure the work reflected the realities leaders of color face. Building power began with strengthening ecosystem capacities – centering trust, shared learning, and culturally grounded leadership development. Exercising power has meant using a range of strategies and actions within the ecosystem, and the Fellowship didn’t stop at a retreat; Fellows were consistently invited back to engage in workshops and conversations aligned with the five key themes. Having power is the outcome of this collective process – evident in policy shifts and systems-level outcomes, as JROF launches a bold new direction rooted in equity. Expanding power means building the long-term capacity and influence to move critical initiatives forward, ensuring leaders of color are not just in the room but also shaping the agenda.

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

The work that JROF continues to lead in the community builds layer by layer – like Legos, each piece is interconnected and aligned with racial equity and systems change. These challenges are not new, and many nonprofit organizations are also navigating how to respond meaningfully. For some, the solution has included creating intentional, exclusive spaces for BIPOC leaders – sometimes through fellowship – that are directly shaped by the needs of the communities they serve. Nationally, the picture remains sobering: only 29% of BIPOC leaders are CEOs or Executive Directors of nonprofit organizations, and they are often at the helm of those with the fewest resources.⁴⁸ According to Candid’s report, *The State of Diversity in the U.S. Nonprofit Sector*, white-majority leadership continues to dominate larger nonprofits, with white-led organizations reporting a median income that is 54% higher than that of BIPOC-led organizations, which highlights the significant financial disparities BIPOC leaders face.⁴⁹

The CCLOC and Fellowship experiences align with the broader national movement in centering BIPOC leadership. One of the core challenges that both seek to address is to increase the number of BIPOC leaders in executive positions through equipping them with the tools and resources needed to bring change to the community landscape. It is important to note that these organizations reflect the local histories, demographics, and current challenges of the communities in which they live and serve, some extending to multiple locations once their model has developed a blueprint for duplication.

To explore how we can continue advancing racial equity and systems change in alignment with JROF’s strategic direction, we reviewed six standout organizations: Aspen Institute, Greenlining Institute, the Institute for Nonprofit Practice, Hue, iF, A Foundation for Radical Possibility, and Leaders of Color. Each of these organizations has developed an innovative model for cultivating BIPOC leadership – ranging from civic engagement initiatives and academic fellowships to cultural healing spaces and digital networks. While their structures differ, they share a collective mission: dismantling systemic inequities and building powerful ecosystems where BIPOC leaders are supported, connected, and positioned to thrive.

The Aspen Institute’s Civil Society Fellowship,⁵⁰ a part of the Aspen Global Leadership Network, uses a place-based model to cultivate values-driven leadership across sectors. This nonpartisan program connects a diverse group of influencers—including leaders from various racial, geographic, and political backgrounds work together to solve community problems. The Fellowship’s strength lies in its expansive, national network and its commitment to fostering civic engagement rooted in shared values. However, its broader scope and highly selective nomination process may limit access for grassroots leaders who are deeply embedded in communities but less connected to national circles of influence. Still, Aspen’s model successfully advances leadership through intentional networking and cross-sector collaboration, providing a strong framework for power building grounded in civic values. However, what’s missing is a sacred space for leaders of color to share experiences, heal, and connect.

The Greenlining Institute,⁵¹ based in Oakland, California, focuses specifically on advocacy and systems change for communities of color. It’s Leading for Racial Equity Fellowship, part of its larger leadership academy, supports early-career professionals in developing the skills needed to dismantle structural barriers. One of Greenlining’s most innovative practices is offering their fellows a non-exempt salary and robust benefits, signaling a commitment to equity not just in rhetoric but in compensation. Greenlining’s focus on economic, climate, and transformative community equips leaders with the tools to advocate at the policy level, making it a critical engine for exercising power within and beyond nonprofits.

The Institute for Nonprofit Practice (INP)⁵² offers the Black Leadership Institute, an academic and mentorship-driven model that supports senior Black leaders in fields like education, health, and justice. With a presence in major cities across the country, INP's strength lies in regional customization and its emphasis on joy, wellness, and sustainable leadership. By prioritizing mentorship and centering wellness, INP recognizes the emotional toll of leadership while reinforcing resilience and retention in BIPOC-led organizations. The academic structure may appeal to leaders looking for rigor and reflection, though its formal nature could be a barrier for those seeking more flexible grassroots entry points. Still, INP's investment in both personal and systemic transformation exemplifies holistic power building.

Hue, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit, has created an innovative community network model using a membership platform to bridge the network gap often experienced by BIPOC leaders in professional spaces.⁵³ Hue's strength lies in its ability to connect individuals to organizations they might not otherwise access using data, storytelling, and its State of Inequity report to document systemic barriers in the workplace. While its digital focus increases accessibility, scaling impact beyond individual support into structural change may be a future challenge. Hue's work is particularly strong in fostering community power and leveraging collective voice, key components in building lasting influence.

iF, A Foundation for Radical Possibility, offers one of the most comprehensive and justice-centered frameworks for BIPOC leadership development. Based in Washington, D.C., iF engages communities through five strategic pillars: community power, culture, institutions and structures, healing justice, and reparations and economic justice.⁵⁴ From producing documentaries like *Diminishing Returns* to funding local government equity initiatives and hosting healing-centered learning labs, iF innovates at the intersection of philanthropy, policy, and narrative change. iF's biggest strength is its systems-level approach to leadership and racial equity. However, the complexity of its framework might require more localized guidance for replication in other cities. Still, iF's commitment to long-term impact and structural transformation positions it as a model for expanding power and redefining what philanthropic leadership looks like in communities of color.

Leaders of Color, a program housed within Education Reform Now, is a civic engagement model based in Memphis, Tennessee, that equips Black and Latino leaders with the skills and tools needed to influence education equity from preschool through higher education.⁵⁵ With a growing footprint in Louisiana, New York, and Washington, D.C., the initiative operates like a think tank, blending policy advocacy with leadership development to prepare BIPOC leaders for meaningful political and civic engagement. One of Leaders of Color's major strengths is its focus on local and state-level education systems, offering participants practical pathways to influence public policy and address systemic inequities in real time. Its website serves as a hub for visibility and accessibility – featuring alumni stories, application resources, and ways to support the movement.

Across all these organizations, the common thread is their commitment to equipping BIPOC leaders with tools, networks, and platforms to not only enter positions of influence but to lead with purpose and impact.

Table 2. Organizations that Develop and Strengthen BIPOC Leaders

Organization	Location	What Sets Them Apart
Aspen Institute https://www.aspeninstitute.org/ Aspen Global Leadership Network https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/aspen-global-leadership-network/	Washington, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values-based, cross-sector leadership model • Diverse, national network of fellows • Focus on civic engagement and social impact
The Greenlining Institute https://greenlining.org/	Oakland, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy training for systems-change • Paid fellowships with benefits • Focus on economic, climate, and community equity
Nonprofit Practice https://www.nonprofitpractice.org/	Boston, MA (multi-city)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic model with regional hubs • Emphasis on wellness and joy in leadership • Mentorship-driven approach for senior Black leaders
Hue https://www.wearehue.org/	Brooklyn, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership-based BIPOC leadership network • Online platform connecting leaders to opportunities • Grounded in storytelling and equity data reporting
iF, A Foundation for Radical Possibility https://www.iffdn.org/	Washington, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five-pillar framework: power, culture, institutions and structures, healing justice, and reparations • Funds grassroots racial equity work • Innovative content like documentaries and learning labs
Leaders of Color https://www.leadersofcolor.net	Memphis, TN (with sites in NY, LA, D.C.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic engagement and policy training for Black and Latino leaders • Focused on education equity from pre-K through higher ed • Think tank model with statewide and national impact
Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color	Buffalo, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally driven, culturally responsive leadership model • Builds community through shared learning and trust • Focused on wellness, power building, and systems change

The models examined offer valuable insights into how leadership development programs can be structured to effectively support leaders of color. Whether through fellowships, community networks, or academic initiatives, each organization prioritizes equity, cultural responsiveness, and sustainable impact. These programs demonstrate the power of intentional design, local investment, and national connectivity in equipping BIPOC leaders to drive systems-level change. These models open up the possibilities for the weaving in of key elements such as adopting a hybrid model, integrating a center for healing and wellness, emphasizing joy as a component for leaders of color, offering paid fellowship opportunities, investing in an alumni network using a mentorship pillar, and creating a public knowledge base.

What makes the KLS OFLOC stand out among these other fellowships are four areas: it responds to the specific history and community needs of the Western New York region, in particular Buffalo, NY, their authentic connection and collective learning is grounded in trust and shared leadership fostering a sacred space for BIPOC leaders to heal, reflect, and grow together, the role of the John R. Oishei Foundation is not just a funder but a co-creator, convener and strategic partnering moving from ally to accomplice, and it doesn't only focus on professional advancement or technical skills but goes deeper into both individually and collectively as Fellows are encouraged to explore how power shows up in their roles, relationships, and systems.

The KLS Oishei Fellowship is more than a program- it's a foundation for what's possible. With each cohort, it has planted seeds of change that will take root across sectors, shaping a stronger, more equitable leadership landscape with the opportunity for power-building at the center. As the Fellowship evolves, its future will be defined by how it continues to build power, nurture community, and inspire systemic change.

STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED RECOMMENDATIONS

The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color has had a tremendous impact on leadership, culture, and equity in the Western New York community, especially the nonprofit sector. The culmination of a dynamic group of leaders through the John R. Oishei Foundation has created a critical space for community engagement around systems change, analysis of root causes of disparities, food access, and so much more.

The John R. Oishei Foundation boldly shifted its strategic direction to focus on systems change that advances racial equity and prosperity in the Buffalo-Niagara region, particularly on Buffalo's East Side. This approach aims to address deeply rooted challenges such as poverty, inadequate housing, and limited food access, while intentionally dismantling the systemic and structural barriers that have historically marginalized communities of color and prevented their full participation in and access to opportunities to help them thrive.⁵⁶ In his blog, "The Importance of Systems Change: A New Approach for the Oishei Foundation," Dr. Mark Scott states, "systems change marks a major evolution in how we work: moving beyond immediate relief to address the underlying root causes that create and sustain inequities."⁵⁷ In other words, while food insecurity may be solved by offering access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the neighborhood, the root cause goes much deeper than this, and to get to the bottom of this problem, we must collaborate to create more equitable outcomes as a team.

With the current political and cultural shift in government that has arisen this year, 2025, including the dismantling of the federal Department of Education, imposing tariffs on imports and exports, and withholding federal funding from organizations that support diversity, equity, and inclusion, there is more of a need for leaders of color to stand and advocate for our communities.⁵⁸

At this pivotal moment in history, there is a need for action that empowers and strengthens our communities to come together in unity to build a brighter future for us all. The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color is a group that is in a position to ignite the fire for change of systems through the dismantling of barriers and rebuilding of community.

The seeds have been watered and have blossomed with vibrant roots of leadership within our communities – ready, ripe, and deeply grounded in helping Buffalo thrive. What we’re witnessing is more than individual growth; it’s the emergence of a social movement – one where leaders, in their own powerful ways, come together to advocate for justice, equity, and the lives of those they serve. The possibilities for opportunities are endless, and the strategies below serve as a starting point for mobilizing the fellowship into action.

STRATEGIES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. **Expansion of the Fellowship:** Create a multi-year leadership engagement for the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color that focuses on tiered professional development learning opportunities.

Each pathway would be tailored to the needs of leaders of color to build power in the Western New York Community. The foundation of the new expression would start with the Fellowship, then once Fellows graduate, they can choose a pathway that fits their needs.

Example Pathway:

Community Organizing: A series of structured committees formed using the PoP method to frame their focus on dismantling systems based on areas of need in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

Subcommittees are led by two co-chairs who rotate every two years. Areas of these subcommittees are drawn from the data and strengths of the Fellows:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Employment
- Criminal Justice Systems

2. **Strengthening Infrastructure & Sustainability:** Create an organizational infrastructure for the Fellowship and the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color. This would support long-term sustainability, leadership development, and strategic impact while staying grounded in racial equity and systems change.

- Establish a website that includes pertinent information about the fellowship, CCLOC, events, and ways the community can be involved.
 - Build a communication strategy that consistently engages stakeholders, fellows, CCLOC, and the community. Possible communication channels include email campaigns, newsletter, social media, website, podcast, blog/vlog, text alerts, press releases, webinars/live events, etc.)
 - Secure multi-year funding streams to support leadership development, racial equity, and systems change initiatives.
 - Develop a digital leadership resource hub that houses toolkits, case studies, grant opportunities, and leadership development materials.
 - Scale the model regionally by building a blueprint to expand into other communities facing similar equity gaps.
3. **Grassroots Movement for Leaders of Color:** Co-create the steps it will take to assist the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color and Community Conversations for Leaders of Color to begin to take action through community organizing from a grassroots movement, collectively centered around identifying and dismantling systematic barriers in the Buffalo-Niagara communities. By establishing a process, it can be refined and replicated across the cohorts for various projects.

The process could include a 7-step grassroots action process:

- Deep Listening and Community Sensing Session
 - Root Cause Mapping
 - Visioning and Values Alignment
 - Choose a Focus Area + Organizing Goal
 - Form Working Groups
 - Mobilize with Care
 - Reflect, Measure, and Replicate
4. **Healing through Restoration:** Develop a series of opportunities for leaders of color to heal traumatic experiences (i.e., burnout, toxic work environment, etc.) resulting from racial inequity and systems change throughout the year.
- The theme could focus on Restorative Leadership: A Year of Healing for Leaders of Color, and possible activities could include meditations, guided journaling, storytelling circles, burnout recovery lab, rest and retreat, collective healing dialogue, mid-year reflection, etc.
5. **Data Collection Process:** Data tells a story – it captures experiences, reveals patterns, and highlights the impact of decisions over time. Behind every data point is a human experience, a community need, or a strategic opportunity. Data can uncover root causes, challenge assumptions, and inform more equitable and effective solutions. It gives voice to trends that might otherwise go unnoticed and offers leaders a roadmap for making informed, intentional choices.

It is a narrative tool – a way to connect the what with the why and the how. Whether it's measuring the fellowship's success, tracking organizational progress, or evaluating community impact, data helps us not only understand where we are but also envision where we want to go.

While there is significant data that has been collected to assess the progress and value of professional development offerings, there is a need for a streamlined system that tracks the progress towards outlined goals, which is analyzed quarterly and shared annually.

- Compile surveys using one system that allows for the disaggregation of data and aligns with the goals. (i.e., name of event, date of event, number of attendees, overall satisfaction rate, etc.)
- Gather data quarterly and draft an annual report shared across all groups.

6. **Alumni Chapter for Leaders of Color:** Create a formal alumni network where Fellows can engage in ongoing mentorship, peer support, and collaboration beyond the Fellowship year. Alumni could be engaged as co-creators in shaping future programming and community-based initiatives.

- Establish a comprehensive directory of the Fellowship leaders with their biography and contact information.
- Share stories about the impact that leaders are making in the community via social media, website, etc.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color, along with its foundation in the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, represents more than a program – it is a movement rooted in racial equity, leadership, and systems change. What began as a powerful idea inspired by the need for safe and affirming spaces for leaders of color has grown into a dynamic network of over 100 empowered changemakers across Western New York. It's more than a program – it's a call to reimagine equitable leadership in practice.

By centering the voices, experiences, and expertise of leaders of color, this initiative has laid the groundwork for lasting systems change in the Buffalo-Niagara region and beyond, but the work is far from over. Now is the time for funders, institutions, and community stakeholders to deepen their commitment by investing in culturally grounded leadership pipelines, co-creating solutions with those most impacted, and boldly dismantling the barriers that have long held equity at bay. The path forward is clear – and it starts with action. The journey is far from over – together, leaders of color and their accomplices are rewriting the narrative of what is possible. The work continues, with vision, purpose, and unity lighting the way forward.

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APPENDIX A: KAREN LEE SPAULDING OISHEI FELLOWSHIP FOR LEADERS OF COLOR COHORTS

This table contains a comprehensive list of KLS OFLOC Fellows who completed the program between 2019-2023, along with their retreat facilitators. The listed titles and organizations reflect each Fellow’s role when they joined the community and may not represent their current position. (See the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color Yearbooks 2019-2023)

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Cohort #1	Cohort #2	Cohort #3	Cohort #4	Cohort #5
Trainers	Trainers	Trainers	Trainers	Trainers
Jose Acevedo Chrissie Castro	Jose Acevedo Helen Kim	Jose Acevedo Helen Kim	J.K. Nelson Helen Kim	Pamela Chiang J.K. Nelson
Talib Abdullah, MSW Executive Director, <i>Access of WNY</i>	Durgham Alyasiri Director of the Work/Life Solutions Program, <i>United Way of Buffalo and Erie County</i>	Natasha Almonte Director of Parenting Services, <i>Pinnacle Community Services</i>	Nancy Abdelhaq Executive Director, <i>RAHAMA</i>	Maria Cruz President, <i>Liga de Mujeres Hispanas</i>
Esther Annan, MSW Program Officer, <i>The John R. Oishei Foundation</i>	Tia Brown Community Engagement Coordinator, <i>Preservation Buffalo Niagara</i>	Brian Archie Team Integrator, <i>Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborators</i>	Bobby Anderson Founder and President, <i>F BITES</i>	Kenyana David President, <i>National Black MBA Association, WNY Chapter</i>
April Arman Co-Founder, <i>Resources and Help Against Marital Abuse (RAHAMA)</i>	Danielle E. Burruss Owner, <i>EvrythingBranding</i>	Brandi Barrett Community Coordinator – Mission Ignite, <i>Project Overcome Fruit Belt Access 4 All</i>	Maxwell Anderson Deputy Director, <i>Open Buffalo</i>	Rahsaan Delan Project Coordinator of Health Equity, Community Health Center of Buffalo <i>Executive Director, COPE WNY</i>

<p>Phuong Brady Domestic Violence Supervisor, <i>Child and Family Services of Erie County</i></p>	<p>Terrell Chambers Financial Empowerment Advisor/Housing Intake Specialist, <i>Catholic Charities of Western New York</i></p>	<p>Thomas Beauford, Jr. President, Chief Executive Officer, <i>Buffalo Urban League</i></p>	<p>Daysi Ball Director – BFNC Hope Center, <i>Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Leanthony Freeman Executive Director, <i>Y.A.L.E. Academy</i></p>
<p>Leah Angel Daniel Institute Administrator, University at Buffalo – <i>Community Health Equity Research Institute</i></p>	<p>Stephanie Drzymala Volunteer and Employee Engagement Coordinator, <i>Buffalo Museum of Science</i></p>	<p>Kimberly Brown Executive Director, <i>Community Access Services of WNY, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Jasmine Fluker Executive Director, <i>Teach for America Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Daniella Gallego Community Engagement Coordinator, <i>Homeless Alliance of WNY</i></p>
<p>Kathryn Franco Data Analyst, Western New York Law Center Coalition Chair, <i>Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition</i></p>	<p>Kelly M. Dumas, LCSW Chief Strategic Initiatives Officer, <i>BestSelf Behavioral Health</i></p>	<p>Timothy Chen Program Manager, <i>Grassroots Gardens of WNY</i></p>	<p>Angelica Hernandez Housing Coordinator, <i>Belmont Housing Resources for WNY</i></p>	<p>Adamaah Grayse Food Justice Organizer, <i>Grassroots Gardens of WNY</i></p>
<p>Jazmine Frazier Executive Assistant, <i>Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI)</i></p>	<p>Collin Gehl Talent Acquisition and Development Manager, <i>Child & Family Services of Erie County</i></p>	<p>Lashawn Chinn Director of Sister Mary Josette Food Pantry, <i>Villa Maria</i></p>	<p>Tiffany Lewis Founder & CEO, <i>Confident Girl Mentoring Program</i></p>	<p>Keesha Habeeb HUD Certified Housing Counselor, <i>Belmont Housing</i></p>
<p>Sarajane Gomlak-Green Director of Museum Programs, <i>Buffalo Museum of Science</i></p>	<p>Jillian Hanesworth Director of Leadership Development, <i>Open Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Sirgourney Cook Executive Director, <i>King Urban Life Center, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Marthe Limage Homeless Outreach Case Manager, <i>Heath, Love & Soul</i></p>	<p>Hagar Hafez Manager of Organizing and Strategy WNY Region, <i>New York Immigration Coalition</i></p>
<p>Kyla Gordon Development Coordinator & Curatorial Assistant, <i>Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center</i></p>	<p>Jalonda Hill Paralegal/Community Organizer, <i>Western New York Law Center</i></p>	<p>Alessandra Paola Duarte, MSW Project Coordinator, <i>West Side Thrives</i></p>	<p>Dwight Lowe Executive Director, <i>Home Beneath Our Feet, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Tala Harden Digital Media Specialist, <i>The Buffalo History Museum</i></p>

<p>De'Jon Hall Manager, <i>The MOCHA Center/Trillium Health</i></p>	<p>Pete Hill All Our Relations Special Initiatives Coordinator, <i>Native American Community Services of Erie and Niagara Counties, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Wilbert R. Green II Director of School & Community Partnerships, <i>Center for Urban Education, Canisius College</i></p>	<p>Jerrell Mason Director of Community Engagement, <i>BestSelf Behavioral Health</i></p>	<p>Sam Hill Chief of Mission Advancement, <i>Heritage Ministries</i></p>
<p>Andrea Harden Director of Human Resources, <i>Albright-Knox Art Gallery</i></p>	<p>Pamela Jackson HUD Certified Housing Counselor and Financial Coach, <i>Belmont Housing Resources for WNY</i></p>	<p>Dejia James Manager of Member Engagement for Western New York, <i>The New York Immigration Coalition</i></p>	<p>Purnima Mohan Food as Medicine Program Coordinator, <i>Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus</i></p>	<p>Asantewa Holley Vice President of Operations, <i>Northland Workforce Training Center</i></p>
<p>Paulette D. Harris Casting Director, <i>Gayle Keller Casting</i></p>	<p>Sarah Johnson People and Operations Manager, <i>City Year Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Nekia Kemp Executive Director, <i>Police Athletic League of Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Dalia Caraballo Muller, PhD Executive Director, <i>The Impossible Project</i></p>	<p>Antoine Johnson Program Manager, <i>Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network</i></p>
<p>Patricia Howling, LMSW, MPA Clinical Advisor and Coordinator of Managed Care Services, <i>Native American Community Services</i></p>	<p>Erika Kastel Director of Development, <i>Literacy Buffalo Niagara</i></p>	<p>Kim Berley Lavare Associate Vice President – Strategy & Planning, <i>Evergreen Health</i></p>	<p>Kamalah Poles, PhD Youth Director, <i>Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology</i></p>	<p>Amiyah King Director of Operations, <i>Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center</i></p>
<p>José A. Latalladi Jr., MBA Senior Disaster Program Manager, <i>American Red Cross</i></p>	<p>Brandy Loveland, LMSW Achievement Coach, Buffalo Women's <i>Economic Mobility Hub</i>, Western New York Women's Foundation</p>	<p>Stephani Miranda Program Director, <i>Community Access Services</i></p>	<p>Stephanie Rivera Director of Student Success Program, <i>Buffalo Prep</i></p>	<p>Jennifer Loughran Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, <i>Horizon Health Alliance</i></p>
<p>Jonathan Ling Director of Justice Bus Project, <i>Neighborhood Legal Services</i></p>	<p>Robin Mann, LMSW Executive Director, <i>Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse</i></p>	<p>Marie Moy Director of Operations, <i>Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition</i></p>	<p>Kaamalal Robinson Refugee Services Manager, <i>Jewish Family Services of Western New York</i></p>	<p>Luis Maisonet Domestic Violence Advocate, <i>Child & Family Services – Haven House</i></p>

<p>Stephanie Mejia Housing Program Supervisor, <i>Catholic Charities of Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Sherrell McLean, LMSW Care Coordinator, <i>Buffalo Prenatal Perinatal Network</i></p>	<p>Kenya Peoples Financial Coach, <i>Buffalo Promise Neighborhood</i></p>	<p>Daphne Ross Senior Director, Postsecondary Success and Communications, <i>Say Yes Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Anna Miller Director of Clinic Services, <i>Native American Community Services</i></p>
<p>Nadia S. Pizzaro Homeless Services Program Director, <i>BestSelf Behavioral Health</i></p>	<p>Seeta Persuad Director of Development and Communications, <i>Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Rene Petties-Jones President, <i>National Federation for Just Communities of WNY, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Digna Saad Executive Director, <i>The Oneness Project</i></p>	<p>Yuki Numata Resnick Director of Arts and Culture, <i>Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo</i></p>
<p>Deborah A. Porter Director, Adult Workforce Programs, <i>Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology</i></p>	<p>Elhanna Porter Employment and Training Manager, <i>Visually Impaired Advancement</i></p>	<p>Simone Ragland Executive Director, <i>WNY STEM Hub, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Loc Tran Community Gardens Coordinator, <i>Grassroots Gardens of Western New York</i></p>	<p>Cecelie Owens Founder/President, <i>G.I.R.L.S Sports Foundation</i></p>
<p>Casimiro D. Rodriguez Sr. President Emeritus/Founder, <i>Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Yanush Sanmugaraja Economic Development Director, <i>Westminister Economic Development Initiative (WEDI)</i></p>	<p>Dr. Cassandra L. Salter-Smith Care Coordinator, <i>Niagara Falls Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative</i></p>	<p>Brittany Triggs Senior Immigration Staff Attorney, <i>ECBA Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.</i></p>	<p>Tesha Parker Executive Director, <i>Rooted in Love</i></p>
<p>Zainab Saleh Program Coordinator, <i>Partnership for the Public Good</i></p>	<p>Renata R. Toney Communications Manager, <i>Burchfield Penny Art Center</i></p>	<p>Melissa Schindler Director of Services, <i>Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagara Counties</i></p>	<p>Tiffany Valentin Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager, <i>Evergreen Health</i></p>	<p>Daniel Robertson Director – Boys and Men of Color Initiative & Mentoring, <i>Say Yes Buffalo</i></p>
<p>Dr. Cord Stone Director of Community Impact, <i>Evergreen Health</i></p>	<p>India Walton Founding Executive Director, <i>Fruit Belt Community Land Trust</i></p>	<p>Melissa Sommerville, LMHC Multisystemic Therapy Program Coordinator, <i>Catholic Charities of Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Denise Walden-Glenn Executive Servant Leader/ Director, <i>VOICE Buffalo</i></p>	<p>Courtney Santasero Director of Residential Programs, <i>Peaceprints of WNY</i></p>
<p>Dina Thompson Executive Director, <i>Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition</i></p>	<p>Richie Wills Program Assistant and Teaching Artist, <i>Just Buffalo Literacy Center</i></p>	<p>Maiko Tanaka Executive Director, <i>Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center</i></p>	<p>Bradford Watts Associate Vice President of Community Relations and DEI, <i>People Inc.</i></p>	<p>Dewan Stroud Chief People Officer, <i>BestSelf Behavioral Health</i></p>

<p>Rebekah Williams Community Organizer, <i>Massachusetts Avenue Project</i></p>	<p>Travis Wood Administrative Coordinator, <i>Safety Net Association of Primary Care Affiliated Providers of WNY</i></p>	<p>Dionne Williamson Executive Director/ President & Founder, <i>Upward Design for Life</i></p>	<p>Alexis Webster Community Relations Coordinator, <i>Gerald Place</i></p>	<p>Sonya Tareke Senior Program Manager, <i>The Exchange at Beverly Gray</i></p>
<p>Jane I. Yoon Chief Attorney – Appeals and Post-Conviction Unit, <i>Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc.</i></p>		<p>Deirdre Wright Director of Environmental Stewardship, <i>Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc.</i></p>		<p>Chad Williams Founder/CEO – <i>dooProcess Manager, Launch NY</i></p>

APPENDIX B: DATA CATALOG OF DOCUMENTS

This section includes the catalog of documents utilized from the John R. Oishei Foundation to capture the data from the fellowship program’s inception to the present.

Title of Document	Author(s)	Date	Document Type
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color – Session #3	The John R. Oishei Foundation	November 6, 2019	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color – Session #4	The John R. Oishei Foundation	July 31, 2020	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color – Session on Networking	The John R. Oishei Foundation	January 12, 2023	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color – Session Survey #4	The John R. Oishei Foundation	June 21, 2022	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation	February 1, 2022	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation	April 4, 2024	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation	March 22, 2023	Survey Results
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, Session #2	Curtis Robbins	January 14, 2020	Workshop Assessment
Community Conversations for Leaders of Color, Session #3	Curtis Robbins	October 21, 2019	Workshop Assessment
Supporting Leadership within our Communities of Color	Karen Lee Spaulding	December 2021	Case Study

Developing Nonprofit Leadership through Conversation and Connection	The John R. Oishei Foundation	February 2022	Case Study
Loc Reflections Breakfast	The John R. Oishei Foundation	November 1, 2021	Summary with Pictures
Oishei Fellowship Buffalo/Niagara Region	The John R. Oishei Foundation	October 21, 2021 – October 22, 2021	Group Discussion Facilitated by Karen Lee Spaulding and Jose Acevedo
The John R. Oishei Foundation Chronology of BIPOC Leadership Initiatives	The John R. Oishei Foundation	June 21, 2024	Timeline of Events
“Opportunity in the Queen City” Community Outreach and Engagement Full Report	Make Communities The National Witness Project NeuWater & Associates, LLC Open Buffalo	September 2022	Research Report
The Harder We Run The State of Black Buffalo in 1990 and the Present	Henry-Louis Taylor, Jr. Jin-Kyu Jung Evan Dash	September 2021	Research Report
Oishei Fellowship for Nonprofit Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation Rockwood Leadership Institute	November 2019	Yearbook
Oishei Fellowship for Nonprofit Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation Rockwood Leadership Institute	October 2020	Yearbook
Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Nonprofit Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation Rockwood Leadership Institute	October 2021	Yearbook
Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Nonprofit Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation Rockwood Leadership Institute	October 2022	Yearbook

Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Nonprofit Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation Rockwood Leadership Institute	October 2023	Yearbook
Building a Foundation for Racial Equity Our New Direction	The John R. Oishei Foundation	October 2023	New Strategic Direction
Oishei Fellows Letter	Christina Orsi, President, The John R. Oishei Foundation	October 2023	Letter
Karen Lee Spaulding Leaders of Color Summary Meeting	The John R. Oishei Foundation	February 2023	Summary Meeting
KLS Oishei Leaders of Color	The John R. Oishei Foundation	June 2024	JROF 2022 Operating Plan for the Office of Philanthropic Support
Fellow Convo – Needs and Contributions	The John R. Oishei Foundation	No Date	Meeting Summary
Oishei Six-Month Internal and External Events	The John R. Oishei Foundation	No Date	List of Calendar Events

APPENDIX C: TIMELINE OF THE KAREN LEE SPAULDING OISHEI FELLOWSHIP FOR LEADERS OF COLOR

This timeline was created using the 2019-2023 KLS OFLOC yearbooks and the John R. Oishei Foundation Chronology of BIPOC Leadership Initiatives data document.

Year	Activities
2013	<p>The John R. Oishei Foundation establishes the Office of Philanthropic Support.</p> <p>Karen Lee Spaulding was appointed as the first Vice President of the Office of Philanthropic Support.</p>
2013 - 2017	<p>The John R. Oishei Foundation initiated capacity-building efforts focused on professional development, national/local networking, and nonprofit service enhancement.</p> <p>At the Grantmakers for Effective Organizations conference, Karen Lee Spaulding connected with Barr Foundation leaders to learn about the Barr Fellowship model.</p> <p>At the BoardSource conferences, Karen Lee Spaulding engaged with peers and trustees to explore BIPOC representation and equity issues in nonprofit boardrooms.⁵⁹</p>
2017-2018	<p>The John R. Oishei Foundation’s Office of Philanthropic Support began research and development of leadership initiatives centered on BIPOC leadership.</p> <p>Lisa Olszak Zumstein (a consultant from Bradford, PA) introduced Karen Lee Spaulding to Rockwood Leadership Institute programs in Pittsburgh.</p> <p>Karen Lee Spaulding, along with Foundation colleagues Paul Hogan and Larry Cook, met Aradhna Oliphant, President/CEO of Leadership Pittsburgh, and Lisa Olszak Zumstein to learn about their partnership with Rockwood Leadership Institute.</p> <p>Karen Lee Spaulding and Larry Cook met with program directors at the United Way of Rochester and the Finger Lakes to explore African-American and Latino/a leadership initiatives.</p>

<p>2018</p>	<p>Kelsey Blackwell’s article (2018), “Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People,” published in <i>Arrow Journal</i>, becomes pivotal in Karen Lee Spaulding’s thinking around BIPOC leadership programs.</p> <p>Community Conversations for Leaders of Color was spearheaded by the John R. Oishei Foundation as quarterly gatherings to build networks among nonprofit leaders of color and assess the need for BIPOC only spaces. The conversations were held at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site, facilitated by Franchelle Parker (Executive Director, Open Buffalo), and visually documented by Yen Azzaro.</p> <p>With input and affirmation from Community Conversations for Leaders of Color participants, targeted research begins on BIPOC only leadership development programs.</p> <p>Karen Lee Spaulding and Lisa Olszak Zumstein meet with the full Rockwood Leadership Institute team in California to deepen relationships and begin strategy and program design.</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>Karen Lee Spaulding and Lisa Olszak Zumstein attend the Rockwood Institute Art of Leadership weeklong, in-person workshop in Briarcliff Manor, NY, to experience and participate in the program.</p> <p>The Community Conversations for Leaders of Color serves as the place of origin of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color. The Fellowship was launched “in response to a recognition that the Buffalo Niagara region would benefit tremendously by having more people of color in positions of nonprofit leadership to offer their perspective.”⁶⁰</p> <p>May 21, 2019, was the first meeting for the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site.</p> <p>July 18, 2019, was the second meeting for the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site. Out of this meeting, the Leaders of Color directory was created.</p> <p>November 4, 2019, was the third meeting for the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site.</p> <p>November 19-22, 2019, the first cohort of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color launched at Beaver Hollow. The intensive leadership retreat for the 24 fellows was led by the Rockwood Leadership Institute.⁶¹</p> <p>The Community Conversations for Leaders of Color continue to meet quarterly.</p>

<p>2020</p>	<p>The second cohort of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color was held on October 26-30, 2020, in a hybrid model using Zoom and the Hampton Inn in Buffalo, New York, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶²</p> <p>The Community Conversations for Leaders of Color continue to meet quarterly via Zoom, focused on the design of workshops on CCLOC met via Zoom quarterly. The sessions focused on design workshops, establishing the purpose of the group, social gatherings, formidable action steps, and a desire for an outline networking platform.</p> <p>A five-person group of the Community Conversations for Leaders of Color was established to research and develop an online networking platform for leaders of color.</p> <p>Curtis Robbins, the John R. Oishei Foundation Director of Strategy, Research, and Evaluation, provides an exhaustive amount of research support and identifies five options for consideration.</p> <p>A mobile platform was selected after interviewing and testing.</p>
<p>2021</p>	<p>The third cohort of the Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color was held on October 25-29, 2021, in a hybrid model using Zoom and the Hampton Inn in Buffalo, New York, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶³</p> <p>The Community Conversations for Leaders of Color continue to meet quarterly via Zoom.</p> <p>The online networking platform was named LOCStep through the CCLOC design workshops, and Tala Harden was hired as the community manager.</p> <p>The fellowship program was renamed the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color upon her retirement in 2021.⁶⁴</p>

<p>2022</p>	<p>In 2022, Mark Scott, Ph.D., was appointed Vice President of Philanthropic Support for the John R. Oishei Foundation.⁶⁵</p> <p>The fourth cohort of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color was held on October 24-28, 2022, at Beaver Hollow.⁶⁶</p> <p>Professional development opportunities and social gatherings for the Karen Lee Spaulding Fellowship Leaders of Color continue.</p> <p>Jose Acevedo of Rockwood Leadership Institute, a trainer and facilitator for the Karen Lee Spaulding Fellowship Leaders of Color Cohorts 1-3, and Lisa Olszak Zumstein, Fellowship Administrator, retire. Both are celebrated at the September gathering of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship Leaders of Color.</p> <p>LOCStep, the online networking community, continues to build out with greater membership and participation.</p> <p>The Clementine Gold Group, Ekua Mends-Aidoo, and Kim LaVare, KLS OFLOC Fellows from Cohort 3, succeeded Lisa Olszak Zumstein as Fellowship Administrators.</p>
<p>2023</p>	<p>The fifth cohort of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship Leaders of Color was held on October 16-20, 2023, at Beaver Hollow.⁶⁷</p> <p>The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship Leaders established the Advisory Council.</p> <p>The John R. Oishei Foundation set a new direction focused on building financial systems change through systems change for the Buffalo-Niagara region.</p>
<p>2024</p>	<p>The Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship Leaders of Color held a Crossroads conversation, facilitated by Wil Green of Cohort 3.</p> <p>Clementine Gold Group, Ekua Mends-Aidoo, and Kim LaVare, KLS OFLOC Fellows from Cohort 3, conclude as Fellowship Administrators for the fellowship.</p>
<p>2025</p>	<p>The new Expression of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Leaders of Color is in the process of being co-reimagined with the Fellows, the John R. Oishei Foundation, and J.K. Nelson of Be Inspired Consulting.</p>

ENDNOTES

1. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding, May 27, 2025.
2. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding, May 27, 2025.
3. Erika H. James and Lynn Perry Wooten, *The Prepared Leader: Emerge from any Crisis More Resilient than Before* (Wharton School Press, 2022).
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5. “The Push and Pull: Declining Interest in Nonprofit Leadership,” *Building Movement Project*, Last Accessed June 2, 2025, <https://buildingmovement.org/reports/push-and-pull-report/>
6. Nick Lynch, “The Leadership Pipeline Crisis in Nonprofits: A Call for Action,” *Forbes Nonprofit Council*, April 19, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesnonprofitcouncil/2024/08/19/the-leadership-pipeline-crisis-in-nonprofits-a-call-for-action/>
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8. Adisa Preston, "Sankofa in Action: Reclaiming Our Future," *Tapestries: Interwoven Voices of Local and Global Identities* 14, no 1 (2025).
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10. Kantahyane W. Murray, “What Practices for Shifting Power Are Core to Advancing Racial Equity?” *The Foundation Review*, Last Accessed June 5, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.9707/1944-5660.1710>
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17. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding.
18. See Appendix C: Timeline of the Karen Lee Spaulding Oishei Fellowship for Leaders of Color
19. Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, and Frances Kunreuther, "Trading Glass Ceiling for Glass Cliff: A Race to Lead Report on Nonprofit Executives of Color." *Building Movement Project*. February 8, 2022. <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://buildingmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Race-to-Lead-ED-CEO-Report-2.8.22.pdf>
20. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding, May 27, 2025.
21. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding, May 27, 2025.
22. In Conversation with Karen Lee Spaulding, May 27, 2025.
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