

I Dream Detroit Project Advisory Committee

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Institute for Policy Studies is a progressive think tank dedicated to building a more equitable, ecologically sustainable, and peaceful society. In partnership with dynamic social movements, we turn transformative policy ideas into action.

The Black Worker Initiative at the Institute for Policy Studies is committed to helping achieve both the historical and contemporary aims of the labor and civil rights movements. Through conferences, published reports, public education materials, mainstream and social media, the Black Worker Initiative seeks to highlight how Black worker organizing can be an ongoing vehicle for the promotion of civil rights and racial and economic justice.



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The Voice and Vision of Women of Color on Detroit's Future



71% of citywide survey respondents do not feel included as part of Detroit's revival and economic development

Engaging Women of Color in Crafting Detroit's Economic Development Plans

As Detroit's resurgence continues to garner local, regional and national attention, a new groundbreaking report and project seek to amplify the voices of those most absent from the public discourse on the city's future—women of color.

The **I Dream Detroit** project works to bring the experience and ideas of women of color from all walks of life more fully to bear in shaping Detroit's development plans. In Detroit, women make up 53 percent of the city's population. Among all women, 91 percent are women of color (Black, Asian and Latina) and a substantial portion of them live below the poverty line (56 percent of Latinas, 55 percent of Asians, and 40 percent of African Americans). Despite these odds and others, families led by women of color are self-employed and employ others as business owners, run nonprofits, hold public office, pick themselves up after incarceration and help those in need. Detroit-based social activist Grace Lee Boggs called these everyday waymakers "solutionairies."

I Dream Detroit launched in spring 2016 with a series of meetings with direct service providers, small business owners, community activists, union leaders and elected officials from across the city. These leaders now serve as ongoing advisors and partners. Last summer, **I Dream Detroit** held six focus groups with partner organizations in different neighborhoods that attracted more than 100 women. Additionally, nearly 500 women offered their opinions through a citywide survey.

The project is grounded in the belief that amplifying the voices of women of color—both those most affected by poverty and those implementing effective strategies for change—is essential to Detroit's long-term progress. "How is it that the images I see about Detroit's revival don't often include these women?" asks **I Dream Detroit** report author Kimberly Freeman Brown, a Washington, D.C.-based expert on gender and racial equity and inclusion issues. "Imagining and building a new Detroit without their meaningful

participation will prevent Detroit from fully coming into its potential and promise."

We also believe that focusing on the economic well-being of women is a way of securing the well-being of children. Toward this end, the overarching goal of the project is to reimagine Detroit's approach to addressing economic development by putting women of color and their children at the center. Ideally, doing so will demonstrate the need for a more balanced economic change in Detroit and what it will take to achieve economic security for more of its citizens.

I Dream Detroit, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is a project of the Institute for Policy Studies' Black Worker Initiative, a national think tank based in Washington, D.C. "The eyes of our nation are watching what happens in Detroit," says Black Worker Initiative Director and **I Dream Detroit** Project Director Marc Bayard. "As cities begin to climb out of the hole created by the Great Recession, emerging opportunities to prosper can't be for a select few. We must innovate and build economies that allow everyone to thrive. And that requires surfacing fresh ideas from new voices."

I Dream Detroit will culminate with the October 2017 release of a photojournalistic report featuring the results of the survey and focus groups. Additionally, the report will document the struggles and successes of 15 women whose lives reflect the travails and triumphs of women of color in Detroit.

"We believe the report will greatly inform Detroit's ongoing economic development planning," says Brown. "And we'll introduce to some, or re-introduce to others, new partners that economic development leaders should be working with more closely."

For more information on **I Dream Detroit**, contact: Delora Hall Tyler, First Media Group (248) 354-8705 or delorahtyler@firstmediagroup.net