

# Announcement from the NoVo Foundation

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## *NoVo Foundation Announces \$90 Million Investment in Girls and Young Women of Color Across the United States*

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Dear colleagues:

We issued an exciting announcement this morning and I wanted to be sure that you heard about it directly from us. We are proud to make a seven-year, \$90 million commitment to support and deepen the movement for girls and young women of color in the United States. The funds will support grassroots programming and advocacy, as well as national-level policy and culture change efforts, that are girl-led, girl-driven and designed to address the systemic and institutional challenges faced by girls and young women of color across the country. I've included the press release below, but I also wanted to share some important context.

First, this commitment is only possible because of the leadership of women of color who have worked for years to further this movement. We are very grateful to count you as a partner, and are deeply honored to support this work. We hope that our announcement can help to bring even more philanthropic funders to the table to support our collective efforts. That's the goal of the announcement we released today.

Second, as you know very well, NoVo has long supported work with adolescent girls, going back to its inception in 2006. Most of that work has focused on girls in the Global South, and the foundation's board has also committed to deepen our work in the Global South for the next seven years. Today's announcement complements this longstanding work.

Finally, over the long term, all of our support, both in the United States and across the Global South, is designed to deepen a transnational movement to address the challenges faced by girls throughout the world. All of our work is deeply interconnected, and together we can build a truly global movement that makes lasting and meaningful change in the lives of girls everywhere.

More information about today's announcement can be found in the press release below. As you will see, we are now entering a phase of listening and learning in order to determine the priorities and grantmaking strategy for this work. We will announce the funding process in 2017 and will be sure to share that with you, and know that you will also be a part of this journey over the next few months.

Thanks again for your continued partnership. It is an honor to work with you, and we could not be more optimistic about the future of our shared work.

With gratitude,

Jody Myrum

## NoVo Foundation Announces \$90 Million Investment in Girls and Young Women of Color Across the United States

*Largest Commitment Ever Made by a Private Foundation To Address the Structural Inequities Facing Girls and Young Women of Color in the United States*

*Foundation to Kick Off Regional Learning Sessions to Hear Directly from Girls and Young Women of Color, and Their Advocates, What They Need to Grow the Movement*

**[New York, NY - March 23, 2016]** The NoVo Foundation, created in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, today announced a seven-year, \$90 million commitment to support and deepen the movement for girls and young women of color in the United States. The funds will support grassroots programming and advocacy, as well as national-level policy and culture change efforts, that are girl-led, girl-driven and designed to address the systemic and institutional challenges faced by girls and young women of color across the country. This commitment builds on the leadership of women of color who have worked for years to further this movement.

As part of the process for identifying how to invest this \$90 million commitment, NoVo will launch a series of regional learning sessions across the country to hear directly from girls and young women of color, as well as advocates. The sessions are designed to engage and invite ideas from local communities on what is needed to grow the movement in a lasting and meaningful way.

"Inherently, girls and young women of color already hold incredible power and potential. This work is about dismantling the barriers that prevent them from realizing that potential and leading us toward a truly transformative movement for change," said Jennifer Buffett, co-president of the NoVo Foundation. "Our goal is to create the conditions for change by advancing the work of the real experts in this movement: girls and young women of color and the advocates working with them," added Peter Buffett, co-president.

NoVo has long supported work with adolescent girls, going back to its inception in 2006. Most of that work has focused on girls in the Global South, and the foundation's board has also committed to deepen its work in the Global South for the next seven years. In the United States, the foundation first began working with girls and young women of color, including trans and gender nonconforming youth, over four years ago, beginning with exploratory grantmaking and the launch of an initial strategy in 2014. Today's announcement represents a commitment to substantially deepen this work across the country.

Over the long term, all of these efforts will help to deepen a transnational movement to address the challenges faced by girls throughout the world.

### **Regional Convenings to Learn from Young Women and Girls of Color**

Central to the design of NoVo's emerging work is the belief that girls and young women of color are experts in their own lives and must be invested in as they lead efforts to transform systems of inequity. As the foundation works to learn directly from young women and girls of color (and their advocates), it will be traveling to regions in the country that have remained largely isolated from philanthropic attention and from the chance to engage in national conversations on gender and racial justice.

To ensure that the foundation is gathering a wide range of perspectives to inform its national strategy, NoVo staff will over the next several months travel to the South, Southeast and Midwest to meet with young women, advocates and activists working to create change in their communities. The foundation is also engaging leaders in New York City, New Orleans, Washington DC and other cities where it has ongoing partnerships. Following these regional meetings, NoVo will determine the priorities and grantmaking strategy for this new work and in early 2017 will announce the funding process.

## **A Growing Movement**

Over the last several years, the leadership of advocates and organizers, the vast majority of whom are women of color, has elevated a national conversation about the structural inequities faced by girls and young women of color. NoVo grantee partners such as Girls for Gender Equity, The African-American Policy Forum, A Long Walk Home and others, have organized town halls and hosted discussions to hear directly from girls about their lives and priorities for the future.

Building off of this work, the White House Council of Women and Girls recently announced two milestone commitments totaling \$118 million from various women's foundations and academic institutions across the country to improve the lives of young women of color through new programs and research. Yesterday, the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls, the first ever caucus devoted to advancing public policy that eliminates the specific disparities facing Black girls and women, was announced.

Last year, the Foundation for a Just Society, Ms. Foundation for Women, New York Women's Foundation, Communities for Just Schools Fund, and NoVo partnered to launch Grantmakers for Girls of Color, an online platform that brings together the latest research, data and news to promote collective strategizing and partnership across philanthropy. NoVo, in partnership with Grantmakers for Girls of Color, will host a national convening on May 19 in New York City with over seventy funders to discuss efforts to address structural inequity facing Black girls and young women.

"Across philanthropy and far beyond, we see unprecedented potential to ensure that girls and young women of color finally move from invisibility to investment," said Pamela Shifman, executive director of the NoVo Foundation. "Now is our chance to work together to harness this moment and ensure it is translated into long-term, meaningful change."

## **About Girls and Young Women of Color**

In the United States, girls and young women of color face deep-seated disparities. From birth, girls of color are more likely to face poverty than white girls: over 60% of girls of color are born to families living on low incomes or below the poverty line. They're also more likely to suffer child sexual abuse, be sexually harassed on the street and at school, and experience dating violence. Distinct differences in the ways in which class, race, immigration status, sexual identity, youth, and other identities intersect in the lives of girls of color also drive unique disparities. Black girls, for example, are six times more likely to be suspended in school than their white peers. Native American girls experience the highest rate of physical assault by an intimate partner. Twenty-two trans women and girls were murdered in 2015, with women and girls of color making up a disproportionate number of the victims.

"Despite the data, there is a persistent and widespread notion that girls and young women of color in the United States are doing fine," said Pamela Shifman, executive director of the NoVo Foundation. "That's an incredibly dangerous myth, and it's standing in the way of ensuring that girls and young women of color are the focus of the research, investment and action they so urgently deserve."

For more data, research and other resources, please visit [www.grantmakersforgirlsofcolor.org](http://www.grantmakersforgirlsofcolor.org)

### **About the NoVo Foundation**

The NoVo Foundation is dedicated to building a more just and balanced world. Founded in 2006 by Jennifer and Peter Buffett, NoVo has become one of the largest private foundations in the world to support initiatives focused explicitly on girls and women. It also works to advance social and emotional learning and promote local living economies. Learn more at [www.novofoundation.org](http://www.novofoundation.org).

#### **Jody Myrum**

Director, Initiative to Advance Adolescent Girls' Rights

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