



## **A Message from RHI Leadership**

### **June 2020**

Our society is finally trying to address its original sin of slavery. American racism is felt and seen on a daily basis. The rage, the screams, the anger, and the tears of protesters are necessary as they march for the liberation and freedom of Black people - and so, for the liberation of us all. A new beginning can start when the senseless deaths and constant clutches of oppression end.

Red Hook Initiative (RHI) recognizes the constant and consistent dehumanization of a Black body requires a loud response. Our Black communities in Red Hook and across New York City cannot be expected to “just live” under the constant fear of state-sanctioned and vigilante racial violence. The murders of Deion Fludd, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tony McDade and Ahmaud Arbery (and the many unsaid) deserve a response that is better than just a heavy heart. Now is the time for RHI to work and walk differently to be in true solidarity with our young people.

Our work in the areas of health, housing, youth development, food access and job readiness will continue. Our #FUNDSYEP and #FULLYFUNDNYCHA campaigns will not be put on pause. Yet we have to ask ourselves, “What have we done at RHI to say Black Lives Matter?” Yes, all of our work speaks to some aspect of racial justice, but what steps have we taken toward becoming an anti-racist organization? To truly be in partnership, we need to be willing to look within and root out the ways anti-Black racism shows up in our own operations. These are hard questions and ones we carry daily but we can immediately commit to the following: resist and confront “everyday racism” in our workplace and board; intentionally create and open up decision making for people of color with a focus on our Black staff; and identify how racial bias may impact wage differences and advancement opportunities within RHI for people of color with a focus on our Black staff.

Over the years, each of us has advocated for and alongside communities of color and marginalized communities more broadly. And, it is clearer than ever in this moment that we have to name and fight anti-Blackness specifically. We cannot move forward as a society otherwise.

To the Black people of Red Hook who have trusted generations of families to be part of our RHI community, we are here to amplify your power, create space for your voice, and apply your vision. Every Black child in Red Hook deserves to have the future their ancestors dreamed about.

With renewed purpose, clarity and responsibility,

Chris Cardona  
Board President

Jill Eisenhard  
Executive Director

Javier Lopez  
Chief Strategy Officer