



A Vision for  
National  
Community

**B** **J** Barbara  
Jordan  
**F** **F** Freedom  
Foundation

For children, for justice, for freedom.

“Let there be no illusion of forming this kind of It’s tough, difficult, not harmony will survive in of us remembers that common destiny.” Bar

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a national community.  
easy. But a spirit of  
America only if each  
we share a  
bara Jordan

**H**ad she lived, Barbara Jordan would celebrate her 75th birthday on February 21, 2011. Instead this date will mark the formation of the Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation. The Foundation's goal is to ensure that her vision for our children, for justice, and for freedom are made tangible and specific.

The idea for the Foundation emerged in early 2010 when a group of individuals began meeting to consider how to carry on Barbara Jordan's legacy. The diverse group was led by William B. Hilgers, Austin attorney and executor of her estate, and consisted of public servants, lawyers, doctors, educators, and friends.

The group decided by consensus to form a private, nonprofit foundation that would continue her fight against injustice. The Foundation will bring together experts to work on campaigns aimed at overcoming injustice and achieving national unity.

Courage

Autonomy

Ethics

Reason

Compassion

Accountability

Leadership

"We are a people in a quandary about the present. We are a people in search of our future. We are a people in search of a national community."

Barbara Jordan



# Mission, Vision and Values

## Mission

The Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation works to further the ideals, principles, and vision that Barbara Jordan exemplified during her life and career by identifying injustices, speaking truth to power, and empowering communities to address these injustices.

## Vision

America has abolished past injustices such as slavery, segregation and voter restrictions. In keeping with this tradition, the Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation seeks to end current injustices by leading campaigns for change.

Change may occur through many means, including community projects that address a specific injustice, media coverage that arouses public action, proposals for new and enlightened public policies, and collaboration with related organizations working on the same issues.

The goal is a national community that ensures freedom for all Americans.

## Values

The Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation embodies the qualities of its namesake:

**Courage.** Standing up for what is right, without shrinking from controversy.

**Autonomy.** Steering an independent course, without regard to political party affiliation or ideology.

**Ethics.** Acting in accordance with the law and the highest moral principles.

**Reason.** Basing discussion and decisions on rational thinking — free of bias, stereotypes, and rashness.

**Compassion.** Caring deeply about the problems and suffering of others.

**Accountability.** Accepting responsibility for ourselves as individuals and for the common good.

**Leadership.** Providing a vision of the future.



“Through the process  
of amendment,  
interpretation, and  
court decision, I have  
finally been included  
in ‘We the people.’”  
Barbara Jordan



The Selma-to-Montgomery March for Voting Rights in 1965 helped end one injustice, but pockets of injustice remain.

# Liberty and Justice for All?

**I**n affirming her inclusion in “We the People,” the opening phrase of the Preamble to the Constitution, Barbara Jordan acknowledged the nation’s history of ending injustice. But for all the progress made over the past two centuries, pockets of injustice remain. Racism is not dead. Women are not always treated fairly. High quality education is not universally accessible.

To get an overview of current injustices, we need look no further than the institutions where our justice resides: our justice system. The facts are revealing:

- The United States incarcerates more people — roughly one in 100 adults — than any other country in the world, including China and Russia.<sup>1</sup>
- When brought before the court, four of five criminal defendants qualify as indigent.<sup>2</sup>
- Roughly half of America’s inmates are functionally illiterate.<sup>3</sup>
- Blacks are incarcerated at seven times the rate of whites.<sup>4</sup>

One might argue that prison is a logical consequence for breaking the law, and lawbreakers should be denied their freedom. But, as Barbara Jordan said, “The rule of law does not ensure justice. Nor does it allow us the easy pastime of avoiding our conscience by just ‘following the law.’ Rather, the rule of law exemplifies and reinforces the spirit of liberty precisely because it constrains our choices and then forces us to choose.”

What choices do we as citizens and community leaders make for our people? Throwing the poor and the uneducated into prison is an ages-old practice. Are we unwittingly perpetuating this injustice? What has happened to our promise of liberty and justice for all?

What choices are we making for our economy and standard of living? The cost of incarceration has risen exponentially, robbing resources from education, health care, transportation, parks, and other treasured areas of American life. What will happen to our way of life if some segments of our people are barred from achieving self-sufficiency?

Fighting injustice may seem an overwhelming task. But Barbara Jordan shined a beam of hope with her boldness, optimism and pragmatism. Following her lead, the Foundation will focus on clear injustices with real solutions.

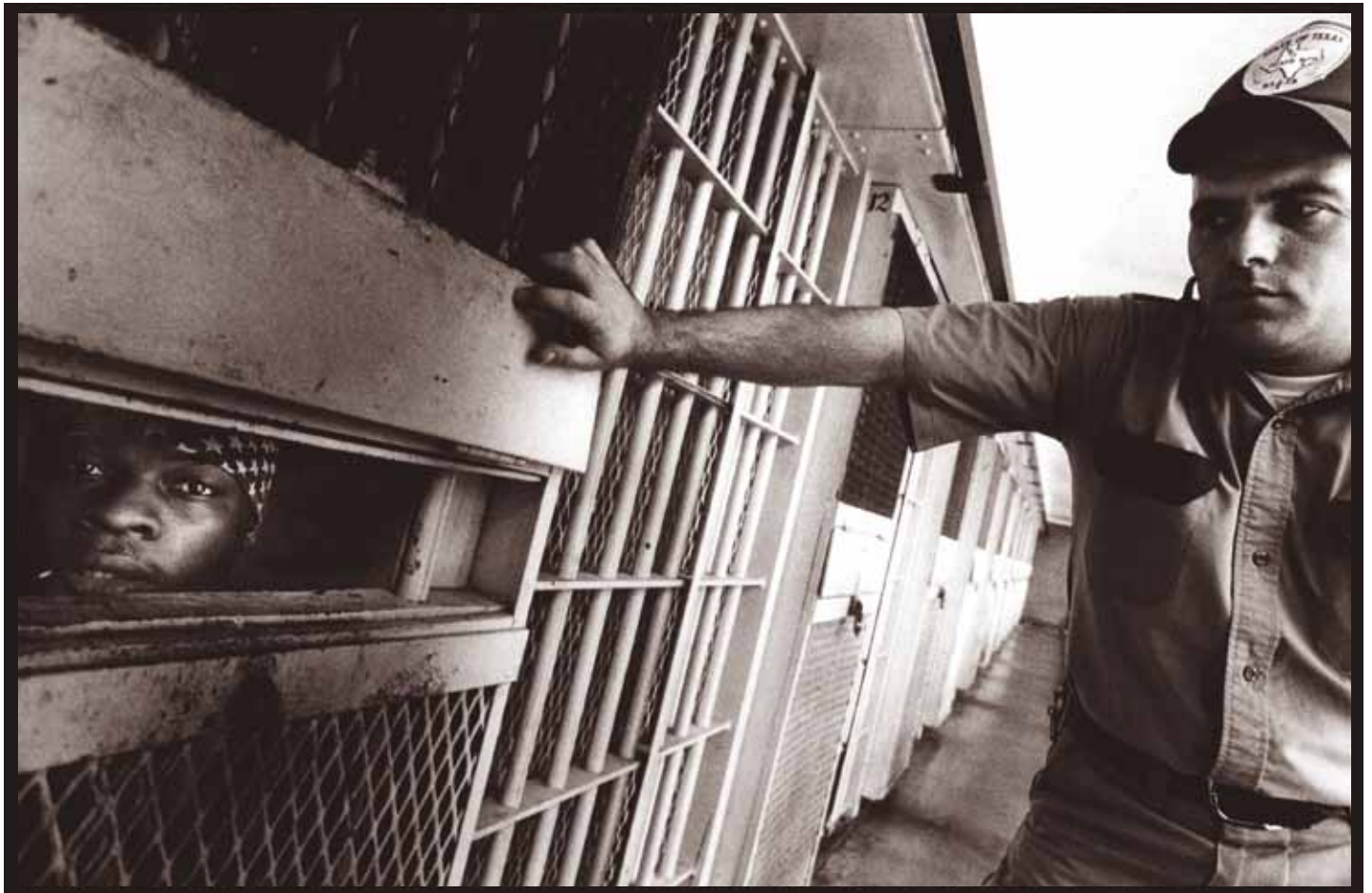
Solutions will arise as Americans become better informed and rally behind the promises of liberty and justice for all. The Foundation will not fund new academic research but rather assemble the abundance of research findings that already exist. The Foundation will not operate specific programs but rather direct campaigns to bring about change and help America live up to its promise. Three proposed campaigns appear on the following pages.

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1. The Pew Center on the States. 2008. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*, p. 5 [www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report\\_detail.aspx?id=35904](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report_detail.aspx?id=35904).  
2. Robert Perkinson. 2010. *Texas Tough: The Rise of America’s Prison Empire*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, p. 2-3.  
3. Perkinson.  
4. Perkinson.

“ Let us heed the voice of the people and recognize their common sense. If we do not, we not only blaspheme our political heritage, we ignore the common ties that bind all Americans.”

Barbara Jordan



Estimates indicate we are paying more than twice as much per year to house an inmate in prison as to educate a child. Does it make sense to continue paying for this trade-off?



## What the Criminal Justice System Really Costs

**M**any common-sense Americans question the role and efficacy of prisons. Popular culture portrays them as bastions of brutality that only harden offenders. Many prisons offer schooling, treatment for addiction, and other rehabilitative services, but the existence and effectiveness of such services is often questionable. Recidivism rates are still far too high: By one estimate, half of those released from prison return within three years.<sup>5</sup>

One reason for high recidivism is the array of barriers to re-entry in the community. Ex-offenders are barred from getting public housing, occupational licenses, and educational loans. Their criminal records make it almost impossible for them to get jobs. In some communities, especially rural areas and urban ghettos, they cannot find social services.

In recent years, the impulse has been to punish rather than to rehabilitate — and to punish harshly, even for low-level property and drug-related crimes. Consequently, incarceration has grown by leaps and bounds and, by some accounts, far in excess of population growth and the actual crime rate.<sup>6</sup>

The monies that go into building and operating prisons have given rise to a new economic enterprise — the prison-industrial complex. Many communities have invited public and private entities to locate prisons nearby to spur economic development. The enterprise has created jobs, but the for-profit motive has reduced services to inmates. Although convict leasing has long been abandoned as unjust, many prison operators have exploited inmates as free or cheap labor. Prisoners have become commodities. A number of counties, for example, have expanded jails solely for the revenue from renting beds to other jurisdictions, including immigration authorities.

A move is underway to revamp current laws, enforcement, sentencing, confinement, and parole. Some have proposed alternative consequences, such as fines, restitution, electronic monitoring, and community-based programs. How does the cost of these options compare to incarceration?

At a more basic level, does the threat of prison really deter a person from committing a crime? Do all offenders have access to adequate legal counsel and mental health services? Do sentences logically fit the crimes, or do they unfairly target minorities (crack vs. cocaine, for example)? Certainly we need to confine the most violent offenders, but under what conditions and for how long? Given the recent episodes of executing the innocent, is capital punishment a just and humane option?

In the current system, lawbreakers have been punished, but so have taxpayers. Estimates indicate we are paying more than twice as much per year to house an inmate as to educate a child.<sup>7</sup> Are most Americans aware of this trade-off? Are we willing to sustain this injustice?

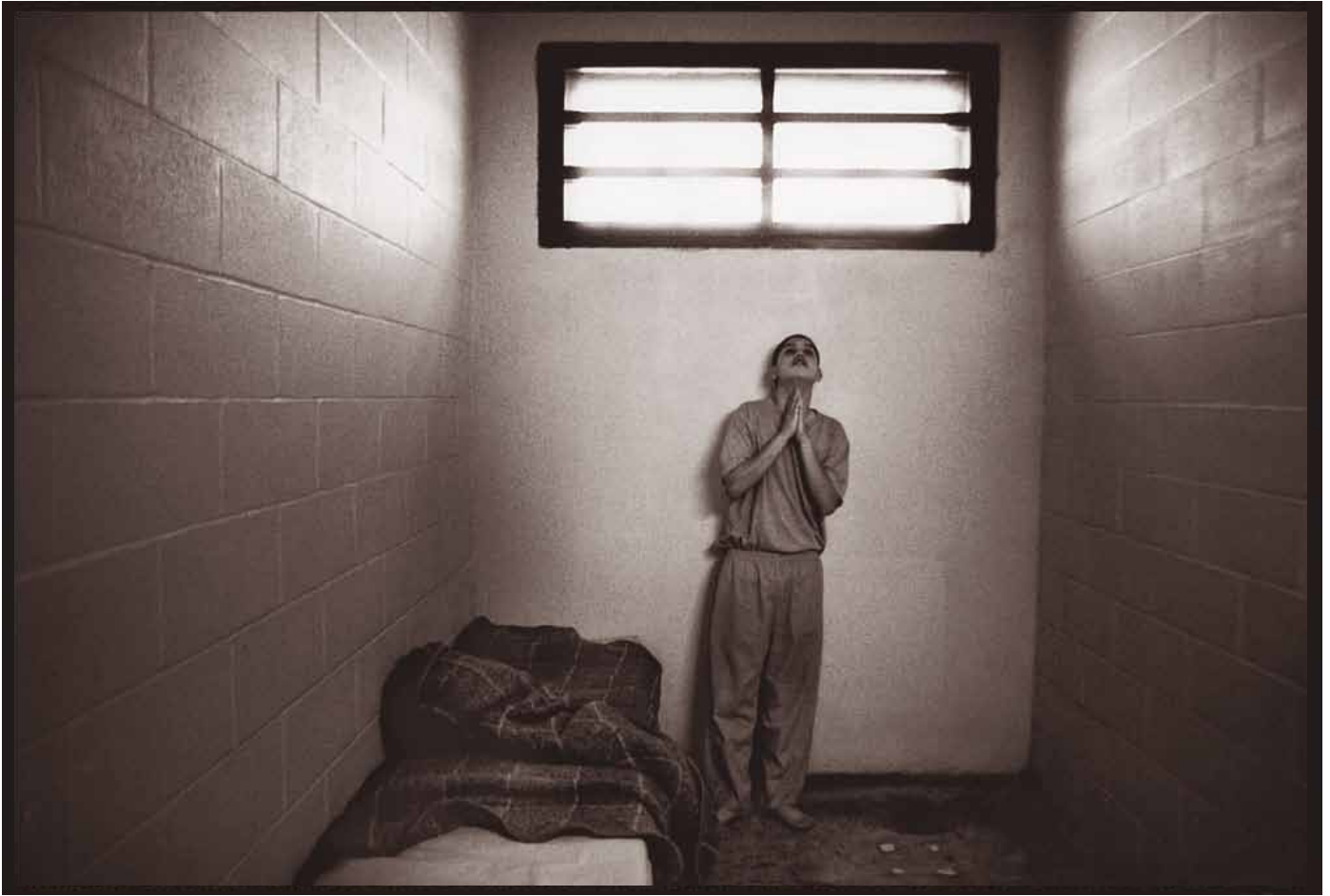
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5. The Pew Center on the States.

6. The Sentencing Project, 2005. *Incarceration and Crime: A Complex Relationship*, p. 1-2, [www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc\\_iandc\\_complex.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_iandc_complex.pdf).

7. James Stephan, June 2004. "State Prison Expenditures 2001," Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, p.1, <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/spe01.pdf>; and National Education Association, December 2009. *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010*, p. xi, [www.nea.org/assets/docs/010rankings.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/010rankings.pdf).

“If the society today allows wrongs to go unchallenged, the impression is created that those wrongs have the approval of the majority.”  
Barbara Jordan



The juvenile justice system is on the receiving end of problems in homes, schools, and communities. Can't we find ways to take poor and minority youth out of the "cradle to prison pipeline"?

## What's Wrong with Juvenile Justice

**P**erhaps the most striking feature of our juvenile justice system is the predominance of minority youth. Minorities make up a third of the nation's youth, yet they account for more than two-thirds of youth in juvenile facilities.<sup>8</sup>

Why this racial disparity? Research suggests that minority youth receive harsher treatment than their white peers at nearly every stage of the juvenile justice process.

Drug offenses offer a prime example. Surveys show that white youth are just as likely as minority youth to use and sell illegal drugs. Yet black youth are arrested at twice the rate of their white peers. One contributing factor is that police target low-income urban neighborhoods. While white youth tend to use and sell drugs in their homes, minority youth are more likely to do so on street corners.<sup>9</sup>

When brought before a judge, a white teen is more likely to appear in a coat and tie with a parent and private attorney, while a black teen appears alone with an overworked public defender. The white teen's parents offer to place their child in a drug treatment program or military school, while the black teen may be advised to plea bargain. Having poor social skills and little understanding of the situation's severity, the black teen may appear disrespectful and indifferent, which increases the likelihood of incarceration.

Another factor is the increasing volume of juvenile cases — more than 1.5 million cases a year nationwide — that overburdens the system.<sup>10</sup> Judges, pressured to dispose of as many cases as possible, have only minutes to consider a juvenile's individual circumstances. Even when circumstances warrant a lesser sentence, punitive laws lessen a judge's ability to use discretion. Harsher laws also make it easier to try and sentence youths as adults.

In reality, the juvenile system is on the receiving end of problems in homes, schools, and communities. Minority youth are more likely to attend failing schools that cannot teach them to read, write, or compute. When they can't read at grade level or fail a grade, they often lose interest in studying and misbehave. Zero-tolerance discipline policies lead to suspension or expulsion. Forced out, these students hang out and get into trouble. From the moment of birth, they are trapped in a "cradle to prison pipeline."

Many minority youth stay out of trouble but drop out of school simply because they cannot see beyond the perimeter of their neighborhoods. According to one estimate, about half of black, Latino, and Native American youth drop out of high school, compared to 30 percent of their white peers.<sup>11</sup> Without intervention, minority youth are relegated to minimum-wage jobs and a life of poverty.

Research shows that the likelihood of living in poverty can be cut in half by earning a high school diploma.<sup>12</sup> At a time when the nation desperately needs well-educated workers, what can we do to keep students in school? Going further, what can we do to create a "cradle to college pipeline"?

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8. Jeff Armour and Sarah Hammond. 2009. *Minority Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: Disproportionate Minority Contact*, Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures, p. 4.

9. Armour and Hammond.

10. Carol J. DeFrances and Kevin J. Strom. March 1997. *Juveniles Prosecuted in State Criminal Courts*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, p. 4, <http://bj.s.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/JPSCC.PDF>.

11. Education Week. June 4, 2008. "1.23 Million Students Will Fail to Graduate in 2008: New Data on U.S. Congressional Districts Detail Graduation Gaps" (news release). [www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/DC08\\_Press\\_FULL\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2008/DC08_Press_FULL_FINAL.pdf).

12. Christopher B. Swanson. April 2009. *Closing the Graduation Gap: Educational and Economic Conditions in America's Largest Cities*, Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. [www.americaspromise.org/~media/Files/Resources/CiC09.ashx](http://www.americaspromise.org/~media/Files/Resources/CiC09.ashx).

“Education remains the  
key to both economic and  
political empowerment.”  
Barbara Jordan



A person's potential is largely formed by what happens from the prenatal period through age 5.  
Is it right that many babies and preschoolers don't have access to quality care and education?

## How Early Childhood Intervention Prevents Future Problems

**I**t was once believed that every person is born with a certain level of intelligence. But we now know that genes account for only a small part of the picture. Recent research in brain development has shown that a person's potential is largely formed by what happens from the prenatal period through age 5.<sup>13</sup>

Experiences during these formative years create neural connections, or synapses, that lay down circuits for future learning. Babies who are cuddled, rocked, and engaged in play, for example, develop larger brains with stronger learning pathways than babies who are not. Children whose caregivers are constantly talking and interacting with them develop broader vocabularies and enriched concepts about the world than children who rarely engage in conversation or sit passively watching TV.

Likewise, infancy and the first years of life are critical for identifying and alleviating impairments. A toddler born with hearing loss and fitted early with a hearing aid, for example, is more likely to develop normal language skills than a child whose hearing loss goes undetected.

With more than two-thirds of American mothers in the labor force, the task of caring for babies and preschoolers through their most formative years has fallen largely on unemployed relatives, child care workers, and preschool teachers.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately, research has shown that high quality preschool enables children to flourish. Longitudinal studies reveal that even the poorest children who participate in good early childhood programs are more likely than their unschooled peers to complete higher levels of education, earn higher incomes, enjoy better health, have more stable relationships, and be more law-abiding when they become adults.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, many children in America don't have access to high quality care and education. One in five children grows up in poverty.<sup>16</sup> Their mother is often single or teenage, and their father is absent or incarcerated. These children lack proper nutrition, health care, and interaction with adults. With little or no stimulation for their developing brains, these children start to school way behind their peers.

One in four American children, including those in middle class and affluent families, lives with alcoholism or alcohol abuse in their families. These children are at risk for behavior problems, poor school performance, and economic hardship.<sup>17</sup> In some families, regardless of alcohol or drug problems, children are abused or neglected — by family members who themselves were abused or neglected as children.

Children have no choice about where or how they grow up. Powerless to speak or act in their own behalf, they are the most vulnerable of all our people. Is it right that they are stuck in a cycle of poverty and illiteracy because their families can't afford better?

13. Zero to Three. n.d. "Brain Development." [http://main.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key\\_brain](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_brain).

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17. U.S. National Library of Medicine. 2000. "Estimates of U.S. Children Exposed to Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse." [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10630147](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10630147).



# A Challenge and an Opportunity

**B**arbara Jordan understood how poverty and ignorance can enslave children and families. She knew from her own experience the liberating power of education. What's more, she believed the best way to solve problems is to prevent them from happening.

The Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation offers a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to see and claim the roots of injustice. The opportunity is to overcome them and forge a national community.

If you have been touched by Barbara Jordan's example, if you yearn to make a difference, we invite you to join the efforts of the Barbara Jordan Freedom Foundation in ending injustices in America. How you can help:

- Bookmark the Web site, [www.barbarajordanfreedomfoundation.org](http://www.barbarajordanfreedomfoundation.org). Watch for news, information, and updates.
- Tell your friends. Download copies of this brochure from the Web site. Share the brochure with community leaders, organizations to which you belong, your local media, schools, businesses, faith groups, family, and friends.
- Mark your calendar for February 21, 2011. Plan how you and your community might celebrate Barbara Jordan's 75th birthday.
- Contribute. The Foundation needs funding, volunteers, and ideas. Funding to cover the first year of operations is estimated at \$1.5 million. Gifts of all sizes are welcome.

The Foundation is exploring many ways to end injustice and forge a national community. Here are three proposed ideas:

## Barbara Jordan Freedom Fellows

Heading up each campaign will be a Barbara Jordan Freedom Fellow, appointed by the Board and advised by a separate steering committee of additional experts. The Fellows will commit to a one- to three-year term, devoting a significant portion of their time to the campaign. Their duties will include collecting existing research on an issue, gaining the cooperation of community leaders, and generating support from ordinary Americans.

## Barbara Jordan Master Teachers

Research shows that the single most important determinant of successful learning is the interaction between student and teacher. As a University of Texas professor, Barbara Jordan changed the lives of hundreds of students through her wisdom, engagement, and charisma. In an effort to expand this kind of teaching in the public schools, the Foundation will develop a master teachers program.

The Barbara Jordan Master Teachers will be chosen for their innovative instruction and charged with training other teachers in how to best help students learn. Master Teachers will receive a stipend to support their work and have appointments lasting up to several years. The goal is to have several Master Teachers working at any given time.

## Barbara Jordan Next Generation

Barbara Jordan recognized that significant people and events in her youth influenced her decisions to enroll in law school, participate in voter drives, give speeches to community groups, and run for political office. The Foundation will undertake a project to develop a new generation of leaders among our youth. The Barbara Jordan Next Generation project will strive to inspire young leaders to follow in her footsteps and take up the fight against injustices that persist in our daily lives.

The challenge is to  
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