



ROXBURY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## SOCIAL IMPACT CENTER

# HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Fostering Growth, Education, and Trauma Healing

**2000 - 2023**

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## Our Mission:

Love, compassion, and community are principles that guide the Roxbury Presbyterian Church Social Impact Center (RPCSIC).

The Social Impact Center (SIC) serves as the 501(c)(3) non-profit arm of the Roxbury Presbyterian Church.

The SIC seeks to develop and implement educational, social, cultural, mental, and physical well-being programs designed to promote and serve the surrounding communities of Roxbury, Massachusetts, and beyond.

SIC programs are **spiritually inspired, community-based, artistically infused,** and **clinically supported** to foster recovery and healing from all sources of post-traumatic stress, including exposure to violence, poverty, and racism.

## Our Programs:

Historically, the SIC has responded to community needs through varied approaches, including tutoring and summer youth programs, as noted in the historical overview chart below and explained in more detail in the [historical narrative](#).

Beginning in 2014, SIC established the **Cory Johnson Program for Post-Traumatic Healing**. CJP tailors a range of supportive programs to specific needs, such as

- Support groups for mothers who have lost children
- Support groups for men processing trauma and living in recovery
- 12-week program aimed at exploring what it means to be a young black man in America
- Groups for teen youth, including peer-led, focused on offering safe spaces and open discussions
- Arts Activation & Healing
- Trauma Education
- Individual support offered by trusted peers trained in trauma healing-centered care

Our signature program, **Can We Talk...<sup>®</sup> Community Sharing on Trauma & Healing (CWT)**, offers a safe and sacred space for individuals to share their stories of trauma, loss, and healing. Through listening to others, CWT encourages participants to increase trust, foster connection, and reorient their sense of meaning and purpose.

In response to requests, we have shared the CWT model in multiple communities. Through these replications, we are fostering a Trauma Healing Network that is both a learning and healing space.

### Our Three P's:

Through responsive Cory Johnson Programs and the CWT Network, the SIC aims to enliven three guiding principles:



PROVIDE A  
SAFE **PLACE**



BE AN ABIDING  
**PRESENCE**



SUPPORT THE  
TRAUMA HEALING  
**PROCESS**

**Ultimately, SIC is dedicated to supporting individuals and communities in their ongoing healing journey.**

### Our Unique Approach:

**All are welcome in all ways they identify.**

- Programs are drop-in without the need for referral, anonymous, and without cost.
- Since 2014, we have been here for the long haul as a kind of ongoing second responder.
- We offer support that adds to the care a person receives from traditional medical/service providers.
- In addition to our group programming, individual support is offered by trusted peers, trauma survivors themselves, trained in the impact of trauma and the healing process.
  - Individual support is offered by trusted peers, trauma survivors themselves, trained in the impact of trauma and the healing process.
  - Community Companions provide emotional support, presence, and active listening while meeting individuals where they are in their journey.
  - Community Trauma Healing Specialist offers advocacy and referral support that can include accompanying individuals to appointments, abiding with them between multiple service providers, and outside of typical service hours if necessary.
- Perhaps most unique, we offer spiritually-integrated mental health support.

# HISTORICAL NARRATIVE 2000 - 2023

## Organizational Development to Support Growth and Healing for Individuals and Communities

**Rev. Hurmon Hamilton** helped found the **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)** and remained very active in the organization until he left his role as pastor in 2011.

### 2000

**Rev. Hamilton** served as President of GBIO, working on improving housing, healthcare, criminal justice reform, racial disparities, and rebuilding schools and neighborhoods.

SIC became an affiliate of the **Black Ministerial Alliance's Victory Generation After School Program** that provided academic support and nurturing for elementary and middle school students.

**Rev. Hamilton** created the **Dream Again Campaign: The RPC Adopt a School Program** and SIC adopted **Higginson-Lewis and Dearborn Schools**. SIC became affiliate of **Trinity Education for Excellence Program (TEEP)**. SIC joined partnership to lead efforts for future **Dearborn STEM Academy**. Project **MCAS Success** supported students.

Hired **Director of Development**, created tutoring services for students called the **Saturday School**. **Adopt a School, TEEP, Dearborn STEM Academy partnership, Project MCAS Success,** and **Computer Technology Center** continued to grow.



**Rev. Liz Walker** led an anti-violence effort and was named **Crimefighter of the Year**. Saturday School renamed **Learning Out Loud**. **Adopt a School, TEEP, Dearborn STEM Academy partnership, Project MCAS Success,** and **Computer Technology Center** continue their success.

### 1998-2007

**Roxbury Presbyterian Church Social Impact Center (RPCSIC)** founded by Rev. Hurmon Hamilton as the nonprofit arm of the church with the mission to create and implement educational and economic development programs to strengthen the Roxbury community.

### 2004-11



### 2008

**Sheila Gunn** became the Executive Director of the SIC. After School Program phased out; **Computer Technology Center** created.

### 2009



### 2010

SIC continued to build on its existing programs, updating the **Adopt a School, TEEP, Dearborn STEM Academy partnership, Project MCAS Success,** and **Computer Technology Center** initiatives to enhance its service delivery and address emerging community needs.

### 2011

### 2012

SIC hosted major event to celebrate contributions of **Rev. Hamilton**. **Rev. Liz Walker** became **RPC Transitional Pastor** and **SIC Board President**. **Aarti Miller** and **Nancy Kilburn** replaced **Sheila Gunn**, when she left as Executive Director. **Adopt a School, TEEP, Dearborn STEM Academy partnership, Project MCAS Success, Computer Technology Center** and **Saturday School** evolved. SIC received a **White House Together for Tomorrow School Impact Champion Award** given by **US Dept. of Education** for work done on Dearborn project.

### 2013

**Cory Johnson Program (CJP) for Post Traumatic Healing**, named in honor of **Cory Johnson**, a young church member who was murdered in 2010, was established by **Rev. Liz Walker**, the newly installed Pastor of Roxbury Presbyterian Church and new Executive Director of the Social Impact Center.

The **Dearborn STEM Academy** celebrated a groundbreaking ceremony for the **\$72 million STEM school**.

**Can We Talk... Community Sharing on Trauma and Healing (CWT)**, initially known as Our Voices, Our Stories, launched on **September 11th, 2014**. The initiative was made possible through a two-year grant from **Partners HealthCare**. CWT is a monthly, free, anonymous event that requires no referrals or registration, encouraging participants to increase trust, foster connection, and reorient their sense of meaning and purpose. **Church members** and a **Licensed Mental Health Counselor** form the CWT and CJP team.

**Common Unity Nights for Youth Peace** is formed while **Adopt A School, TEEP, Project MCAS Success, and Computer Technology Center** continue their success.

## 2014



## 2015

**Trauma Education, Art & Writing**, and **Mind-Body** movement began monthly in the evenings. **Common Unity Summer Intensive Program (CUSP)** was formed for teens. **Learning Out Loud, Adopt A School, Dearborn STEM Academy** partnership, **Common Unity Nights for Peace, Support Group for Mothers** and **Men's Support Group** all continued to grow and expand.

Additional supports evolved for individuals and community. Updates to **Learning Out Loud** continued. Success continued in the **Adopt A School, Dearborn STEM Academy** partnership, and the **Common Unity Nights for Peace initiatives**. Two new groups formed: **Support Group for Mothers Who Lost Children** and **Men's Support Group**.

## 2016



## 2017

**First Replication:** Can We Talk replicated in Gary, Indiana and South Boston

**Two Conferences:**

1. Presented at Bessel van der Kolk's Boston trauma conference: **"Abiding in Community: A Model of Community-Based Spiritually-Integrated Trauma Intervention in the Midst of Individual and Collective Trauma."**
2. Hosted first national conference: **"Abiding in the City: A Faith-Based Response to a Neighborhood in Pain,"** sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Region 1.

SIC hosted first joint major fundraiser called **Faith in Fashion; Imago Dei Fund** gives large increase to yearly grant.

**Dearborn STEM Academy**, grades 6-12, opened with 580 students.

The **Licensed Mental Health Counselor** became the first Director of Cory Johnson Program.

CJP programming, **Learning Out Loud, Adopt A School, Common Unity Nights for Peace** and **CUSP** continued.

**Professional Development:** CJP leadership team received **Certificate of Traumatic Stress Studies** from **Bessel van der Kolk's' Trauma Center** at **Justice Resource Institute**.

**Conference:** First CJP conference: **"Abide & Persevere: The Spiritual Essence of Post-Traumatic Healing."**

**Evaluation:** Initial program evaluation completed.

CJP programming, **Learning Out Loud, Adopt A School, Dearborn STEM Academy Partnership, Common Unity Nights for Peace** and **CUSP** continued.

## 2018



**CJP Program Expansion:** A monthly community-based trauma education curriculum explained the basics of the impact of trauma and the healing process

**Recognition:** William Boyan Award for Excellence in Community Health from Boston Children's Hospital received.

**Evaluation:** Started planning for larger program impact survey in collaboration with **Mass General Hospital's Center of Excellence for Psychosocial and Systemic Research**

Hired a Program and Development Assistant

CJP programming, **Adopt A School**, and **CUSP** continued.

## 2019



## 2020

**COVID-19 Impact.** Transitioned to online programming: For Can We Talk... and support groups, CJP offered drop-in Zoom series, with guest speakers, such as Dr. Anthony Fauci and Rep. Ayanna Pressley.

**Recognition: American Psychiatric Association Foundation Award** for Advancement of Minority Mental Health received.

**Funding: Partners HealthCare** funded full-time Community Trauma Healing Specialist for two years

**Replication:** CWT sites added in Lowell, MA and Chattanooga, TN

**Funding:**

- **The Liz Walker Legacy Fund** raised over \$2,000,000.
- **Mass General Brigham** provides additional funding for the Community Trauma Healing Specialist position for five years.

**Replication:** CWT replication sites added in Providence, RI and Dorchester, MA

Contracted with new accounting/finance organization

## 2021



## 2022

**New CJP Programs: Support Group for Young Black Men, The Exchange** (CWT for teens)

**Funding: Cummings Foundation** provided 10-year grant

**CWT Program Expansion:** Lynn, MA, Dorchester, MA, Saugus, MA

**Staffing:** New full-time Director of Cory Johnson Program; previous one became SIC Associate Director, and new part-time position of Expressive Arts Coordinator

**Program Status:** Can We Talk...® was given trademark status by federal government.

Louise Packard became Chair of the SIC Board.

**Return to In-Person:** Can We Talk® offered twice monthly in-person and twice monthly on Zoom

**Strategic Planning:** SEED Impact hired for strategic visioning and evaluation systems design

**Replication:** CWT replication sites added in Brockton, MA, Boston, MA, Providence, RI, Sarasota, FL

**CJP Program Expansion:** 2nd teen Exchange launched at Dorchester YMCA

**Funding:** Major donor gives \$1M

**Staffing:** New position of Director of Operations added. Colleen Sharka, LMHC, shifted from SIC Associate Director to Director of Replication & Trauma Education.

Search began for a new SIC Executive Director as Rev. Liz Walker will shift to Founding Director role in 2024.

## 2023



Read more: [Narrative details](#) of our rich history providing **spiritually inspired, artistically infused, community-based, and clinically supported** programs.