CIC ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP TO ADDRESS RACIAL INEQUITIES
Project to Offer University/Community-Based Racial Reparations Solutions

WASHINGTON, DC – CIC today announced it is joining a new initiative that brings together colleges and communities to develop plans to address racial inequities. The “Crafting Democratic Futures: Situating Colleges and Universities in Community-based Reparations Solutions” initiative is led by Earl Lewis, founding director of the Center for Social Solutions (CSS) and professor of history at the University of Michigan. Lewis was honored by CIC during the Presidents Institute in January with the 2021 Allen P. Splete Award for Outstanding Service. The award recognized Lewis’s extraordinary efforts to address critical questions for American society, including the role of race in American history; diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education; and the essential value of scholarship in the humanities.

The Crafting Democratic Futures initiative is funded by a $5 million grant to the University of Michigan from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of the Foundation’s Just Futures initiative. The Mellon Foundation’s “Just Futures: Advancing a More Democratic Society” program awards grants through a competitive process to multidisciplinary, university-based teams across the U.S. that are committed to racial justice and social equality.

The project, which will span three years, will create and leverage a national network of college and university-based humanities scholars working in partnerships with community-based organizations to develop research-informed reparation plans for each location. Four CIC member institutions—Concordia College (MN), Connecticut College, Wesleyan College (GA), and Wofford College (SC)—will participate in the project, along with the University of Michigan, Carnegie Mellon, Emory, and Rutgers Universities, Spelman College, and WQED, a public broadcast television station in Pittsburgh, PA.
In announcing the initiative, CIC President Richard Ekman said, “This project will lead from understanding the deep roots of the country’s major social and political issues to solutions that mobilize the expertise of faculty members and the close, even symbiotic relations between independent colleges and universities and the communities where they are located.”

The network will engage community fellows representing local organizations in collaborative public history projects designed to offer tangible recommendations for community-based racial reparations solutions.

The initiative emerges from the Center’s focus on slavery and its aftermath and is informed by three generations of humanistic scholarship and what that scholarship suggests for all seeking just futures.

In describing the project, Lewis explained that “reparations refers to compensation, which may include a national apology, educational, housing, and healthcare programs, and financial redress from the U.S. government to Native Americans for genocide and African Americans for the detrimental effects of slavery and beyond. The question of reparations for the descendants of enslaved African peoples in the Americas, and especially the United States, had—until recently—been part of a smaller effort seeking a broader audience, lingering on the other side of what is possible until the late 20th century.”

The effort and activities of this project will span the eastern half of the United States, north and south, and have representation in the Midwest and North Central regions. “The success of this pilot will create scalable models for university-community partnerships which focus on social justice, specifically addressing local nuanced reparations solutions,” Lewis said.

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The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers in the United States. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit [www.cic.edu](http://www.cic.edu).