

As a youth community foundation, Youthprise acts as a catalyst for policy and systems change, working with and for Minnesota youth to reduce racial disparities. As evidenced by deep partnerships with community-based organizations and investments in the Somali community, we are committed to supporting Somali-led organizations and sustaining existing efforts in the community to increase opportunities for Somali youth. It is our goal to fight against islamophobic practices which limit Muslim youth's access to basic rights to safety, education, and employment.

In 2014 we accepted \$216,000 in funding from the Department of Justice under the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiative. We saw it as an opportunity to more deeply invest in the Somali community, which faces some of the largest disparities in educational access, employment, and economic opportunities. Though the money we granted went exclusively to organizations that do positive youth development in the Somali community, we now recognize that CVE as an initiative is problematic and divisive to the communities we wanted to serve.

While we wanted to use our position as an intermediary to pass the funding through to positive youth programs and we support the organizations we funded, we also acknowledge that CVE hurt many members of the community and disrupted community cohesion. We are sorry for the role we played in causing hurt and harm to community members, especially youth. Many believe the framework of CVE perpetuates dangerous stereotypes about the Somali community in Minnesota, and casts suspicion on Muslim communities across the United States, negatively impacting Muslim youth.

Equally as important as acknowledging our mistake, is acknowledging the organizing and advocacy efforts by young people that have changed our perspective on an issue which impacts them the most. A group of young people has been a vocal opponent of CVE since the start, were clear that this program harmed them. When they protested a Somali Youth Development Fund grant information session at our offices, and picketed with signs, we heard their sense of urgency—this was a turning point for us. We have subsequently shifted our stance on CVE, acknowledging that we will no longer take any funds attached to countering extremism or anti-radicalization work. This experience serves as a reminder that we can only work *for* Minnesota youth if we work *with* Minnesota youth, and as a youth community foundation we have work to do when it comes to centering the youth most impacted by our work. We are sorry that we did not hear you sooner.

Though an important first step was ensuring that our funding is no longer attached to CVE initiatives, we are additionally dedicated to continued investment in Somali youth and using our resources to work toward healing the harms caused by this initiative through convenings centered around youth voice. Below are our commitments as an organization.

We are committing to continued investment in the Somali community. We are committing to working with Somali youth to make decisions about what these investments should look like. We are committing to helping dismantle Islamophobia and to supporting Somali youth. We are committing to seeking funds aligned with our values rooted in

positive youth development. We are committing to not seeking funding that is tied to deficit-driven anti-radicalization purposes.

Youthprise denounces the surveillance of youth. We do not support labeling young people as inherently criminal. We do not support efforts that prey on vulnerable communities. We will continue to work with youth, community members and other organizations to dismantle narratives that criminalize and stigmatize the Somali community. We see islamophobia and the stigmatization of Somali youth as connected to the systemic racism that young people of color face across the state and our country. When we work to combat these forms of oppression, we are working to make Minnesota better for *all* youth.