



DEAR COMMUNITY,

I write to you today feeling proud and humbled by the strength of our community as we share Root & Rebound's 2020 Annual Report: *Justice. Liberation. Healing*. This has been a year of resilience for our team and for the people and families we serve, whose strength and courage astound me every day.

When I think about 2020 as a whole, I am reminded of a quote from the great James Baldwin: **“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”**

This year has presented a choice to us as a nation: to face the truths about our country's history and the inequities underpinning our society, now rising to the surface—or to look away. We are facing the dual pandemics of the Coronavirus, which has caused greater illness and death in communities of color, and ongoing police violence against Black people all around our nation, with justice denied again and again. In the midst of these entwined pandemics, the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and so many others sparked a global awakening, with the 2020 election providing us the opportunity to commit to change.

Root & Rebound's vision for justice, liberation, and healing has never been stronger or more exact. Everyone on our team - two-thirds of whom are directly impacted by mass incarceration - does this work because we understand how the legal system harms people disproportionately—how low-income people and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color face a system of injustice while people with financial means and people who are white encounter a system where justice is possible.

While this year has been one of the most challenging yet, it has revealed the strengths of our model, our team, and our impact. At Root & Rebound, we understand all the ways a criminal record keeps people locked out of opportunity—barred from housing, jobs, food security, and so many other basic tenets of human life, long after they have served their sentence.

Every day of this most difficult year our work has contributed to changing this reality for individuals, families, and communities in California and South Carolina. As COVID-19 broke out in the U.S. and spread inside prisons and jails, we joined coalitions in both states to fight for the release of people whose voices are silenced by the prison walls that surround them, and we filed a lawsuit in a South Carolina jail, demanding protections for the extremely vulnerable people inside whose health and safety is at risk.

As we saw that thousands of people with records and their families lost jobs, housing, and access to health care, we quickly rolled out virtual programming, clinics, and services and opened a Family Support Fund to anyone with a record in need of cash for basic necessities. This money went to food, groceries, diapers, and medicine; it went to emergency shelters and housing costs. It helped keep people alive and safe.

Through this report, you will learn more about Root & Rebound's work through the eyes of our clients Andrew, Van, and Monica, and their families. These three amazing people represent the thousands we are honored to support, who are trying, against all odds, to live lives of dignity in a world that often denies them even the most basic opportunity. As you read their stories, we hope you can feel the impact of the work we do—work that you make possible.

Thank you for joining us in this work and for your continued support and partnership. Our work for Justice, Liberation, and Healing has never been more important. As we face collective truths together, let's stay focused on the reason why we are engaging in this deep learning and understanding: to bring about change.

Onward,

Katherine Katcher
Executive Director
Root & Rebound

