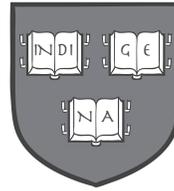


# INDIGENOUS ADVOCACY & RESEARCH PROGRAM

## ITALY

SOUL OF NATIONS FOUNDATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION  
TO PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS



## COVERSHEET

**Organization name:** Soul of Nations Foundation, Inc. (Fondazione Soul of Nations)

**Project title:** Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program

**Location:** Italy (national)

**Brief purpose of the concept:** The Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program will provide a platform for young research Fellows from Italy to lead as a catalyst for conscious thought, inclusive discourse, and advocacy to impact the migrant community and African diaspora in Italy through youth-led research initiatives that focus on countering Afrophobia and increasing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Research Fellows will identify ways to best leverage civil society's skills, tools, and access to investigate and monitor the systemic treatment of Afro-Italians and the migrant population in Italy of African descent, and support peaceful and intellectual advocacy efforts through a variety of media. Fellows will also develop and support a sustained virtual discussion forum to devise ways of engaging the public and relevant stakeholders involved with ongoing human rights reforms in Italy.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Soul of Nations Foundation is a for-purpose 501(c)3 organization that aims to uplift Indigenous peoples through various forms of media, innovative strategy, and youth-led initiatives. Our mission is to progress Indigenous youth and communities through the arts, research, and scholarship. We envision a world where all Indigenous communities and people of color are respected as contemporary societies and have greater access to equal opportunities in the following sectors: socially, creatively, academically, and economically.

Incorporated in November 2016, the Soul of Nations Foundation has a four-year track record of successful programming for lower- and middle-income Indigenous and African communities. Our level of organizational expertise for positive youth development is enhanced by partnerships with governments, policy-making and opinion leaders, academic and research institutions, and like-minded grassroots organizations; all of which are key influences on shaping initiatives that ensure the possibility to collaborate and connect authentic community voices at the local, national and international level.

Over the past four years, the Soul of Nations Foundation has held national and international research exchange programming in Europe, East and West Africa, South America, and the United States. The Soul of Nations Foundation envisions the Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program to attract young Italian, African, and American scholars to strategize and organize movements for progressive change in their respective communities so that Italy can be driven forward.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

For almost a decade, the ‘migrant crisis’ of southern Europe has caused much tension and violence across the Mediterranean, and more specifically — in Italy, against immigrants and EU Citizens with origins from Sub-Saharan Africa. These targeted communities are often very vulnerable to social and political abuse, and have weaker access to legal support systems.

Too often, the relationship between African communities and the Western world is characterized by inertia: the same old, paternalistic policies and the corresponding apathy and neglect. Yet, the resilience of African people continues to manifest, and today, there is a universal acceptance that change is needed for future generations. The challenge is ensuring that the direction of this change is progressive and fair. The Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program can play an important role by thoroughly examining data, advocating for the rights of African peoples in Italy, and creating innovative models of change to counter Afrophobia and encourage reform.

Successful advocacy, research, and inclusion program development and delivery must include all affected parties and be based on real dialogue and cooperation between government agents and local community members. Achieving this goal will require bottom-up, culturally appropriate, local engagement, rather than short term, top-down, centrally designed, and imposed models. Through the Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program, research Fellow will have the opportunity to broaden their perspective of human rights and freedom by exploring methodologies of impact and effectiveness.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program is a virtual fellowship program designed to provide opportunities for young research Fellows from Italy to identify ways to best leverage civil society's skills, tools, and access to investigate and monitor the systemic treatment of Afro-Italians and the migrant population in Italy of African descent, and to support peaceful and intellectual advocacy efforts.

The objective of the program is to increase Italian civil society's awareness by providing access to new capacity development and discoveries that will counter Afrophobia and increase the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Italy.

During the project term, each research Fellow will be responsible for the following activities and outputs (according to the tentative milestone timeline on page 7):

- Participating in a one-week training
- Enlisting young community volunteers to assist with advocacy work according to the work-plan and to identify ways that civil society and government entities can best apply new knowledge and skills in practical efforts
- Conducting interviews with community leaders or key stakeholders involved in countering Afrophobia and policy reform efforts in Italy
- Engaging in public critiques for report reviews to reflect progress against the work-plan
- Presenting one final report highlighting research outcomes that will be included in a digital publication
- Leading community workshops with youth-led volunteer committees
- Participating in a webinar/public forum series with key partners, stakeholders, and community members to discuss research findings and to enhance collaboration efforts

## METHODS

The Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program will provide a platform for young research Fellows from Italy and the United States, to lead as a catalyst for conscious thought, inclusive discourse, and advocacy to impact the migrant community and African diaspora in Italy through youth-led research initiatives that focus on countering Afrophobia and increasing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Research Fellows will identify ways to best leverage civil society's skills, tools, and access to investigate and monitor the systemic treatment of Afro-Italians and the migrant population in Italy of African descent and support peaceful and intellectual advocacy efforts through a variety of media. Fellows will also develop and support a sustained virtual discussion forum to devise ways of engaging the public and relevant stakeholders involved with ongoing human rights reforms in Italy.

The Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program will provide financial and technical resources, relevant mentoring and learning opportunities, and exposure to leadership opportunities for all Fellows and volunteers. Formal education should not be a limitation to participation given the socio-economic barriers confronted by many Indigenous and African peoples that limit access to formal educational institutions. However, researchers who are undergraduate and graduate students or recent graduates with relevant work experience are highly encouraged to apply for the program. All prospective Fellows are encouraged to have an adequate command of Italian or English, both written and verbal, and be 18-35 years old by the closing of the application period.

Italian Fellows should represent one of the three geographic regions of Italy, which have been classified as northern, central, and southern. Northern geographic regions include: Aosta Valley, Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol. Central geographic regions include: Marche, Tuscany, and Umbria, with priority given to Tuscany, and more specifically, Florence. Southern geographic regions include: Abruzzo, Apulia, Basilicata, Campania, Calabria, Lazio, Molise, Sicily, and Sardinia.

Fellows should have an undergraduate or graduate level education in fields related to public policy, political science, community development, and law. All Fellows should also identify with a BIPOC community.

In order to be selected as a Fellow, candidates must meet the eligibility requirements, submit an application, and develop statements of interest that address both of the following research topics:

1. Ways that civil society can best approach “loopholes” in Italian policy that can be perceived as being rooted in anti-blackness and/or policies that can be perceived as having aggressive undertones toward the migrant population in Italy at the local, regional and national level
2. Way to leverage Italy’s transition to countering Afrophobia and increasing the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms through advocacy and outreach, and providing this information through a variety of media

Once approved, each Fellow will engage in a one-week virtual training, led in-part by program partners, where through guest lectures, written work, and small working groups, the participants will begin to transition their proposals into comprehensive work-plans that will then become the foundation of their research during the remainder of the project term.

During the project term, each Italian research Fellow will be responsible for (1) participating in a one-week training, (2) enlisting community volunteers to assist with advocacy work according to the work-plan and to identify ways that civil society and government entities can best apply new knowledge and skills in practical efforts, (3) conducting at least three interviews with community leaders or key stakeholders involved in countering Afrophobia and policy reform efforts in Italy, (4) engaging in two public critiques for report reviews to reflect progress against the work-plan, (5) presenting one final report highlighting research outcomes that will be included in a digital publication, (6) leading two virtual community workshops with youth-led volunteer committees, and (7) participating in a webinar/public forum series with key partners, stakeholders, and community members to discuss research findings and to enhance collaboration efforts.

Ultimately, three work-plans and one national statement for change will be drafted collaboratively among the research Fellows and youth-led regional volunteer committees. The final outputs of the Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program will be shared online through a virtual forum and digital publication. The publication will include discussion and working papers through various forms of media. Web-based communication strategy and electronic publications will deliver research outputs promptly and freely to a wide audience. The Soul of Nations Foundation’s website and social media channels (Twitter and Instagram) will be the primary methods of communication and information dissemination, and will contribute significantly to widespread knowledge. All research, analysis, and community resources will be released online, downloadable, and readily archived for free public access. The target audiences for all workshops, forums, and general communications will be Italian community members, civil society advocates, community leaders, formal and non-formal educators, and the general public — with an emphasis on youth and women.

Although Fellows may engage in physical activity and in-person interaction for the completion of research work-plans, all programmatic outputs will be shared digitally. Web-based communication strategy and electronic publications will deliver research outputs promptly and freely to a wide audience. The Soul of Nations Foundation's website and social media channels (Twitter and Instagram) will be the primary methods of communication and information dissemination, and will contribute significantly to widespread knowledge and impact. All research, analysis, and community resources will be released online, downloadable, and readily archived for free public access.

The target audiences for all workshops, forums, and general communications will be Italian, African, and American community members, civil society advocates, community leaders, formal and non-formal educators, and the general public — with an emphasis on youth and women. Although Fellows may engage in physical activity and in-person interaction for the completion of research work-plans, all programmatic outputs will be shared digitally.

Through galvanizing diverse and young intellectual human capital, Indigenous progressive thought can help drive Italy forward. To this end, the Indigenous Advocacy and Research Program will aim to cultivate long-term partnerships, grounded in reciprocity, to prioritize community needs; and contribute to building the capacity and expertise of representatives and mechanisms to strengthen synergies between Italian and American leadership, and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant communities and the African diaspora in Italy at the local, regional, and national level.

# TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

## 1. INDIGENOUS (noun)

Indigenous communities are groups which have historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, and consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now functioning on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions, and/or legal systems.

other terms for INDIGENOUS include: AFRICAN, AFRICAN-AMERICAN, AFRO-INDIGENOUS, AFRO-CARIBBEAN, AFRO-DIASPORIC, NATIVE AMERICAN, ABORIGINAL, and FIRST PEOPLES

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