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**DEEP SOUTH CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE RECEIVES \$4 MILLION FROM THE BEZOS EARTH FUND TO SUPPORT JUSTICE40 INITIATIVE**

NEW ORLEANS, LA (September 8, 2021) - Today the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) announced it has received \$4 million from the Bezos Earth Fund to support its *Activating Justice40: The Justice40 Community Engagement Project*. This project will leverage the *Communiversality Model* developed by DSCEJ Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Beverly Wright, to support community-based organizations (CBOs) and environmental justice (EJ) groups in the local implementation of Justice40.

The Justice40 Initiative was announced by President Joe Biden as part of his whole-of-government approach to embedding environmental justice in the operations of the federal government. It requires that historically disadvantaged communities receive 40 percent of the overall benefits of federal investments in the areas of clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of critical clean water infrastructure.

“We are excited to receive funding from the Bezos Earth Fund to support our Justice40 Community Engagement Project,” said Dr. Wright. “For more than 30 years, we have been dedicated to building the capacity of community-based environmental justice organizations to engage in the decision-making process on issues that directly affect their quality of life. This is the first time that our funding acknowledges systemic racism and sufficiently invests, with monetary resources, in a way that will break through barriers that have historically denied equal access and protections for African Americans and other People of Color. We are grateful for this support and look forward to an ongoing partnership.”

The *Communiversality Model* expands the knowledge and develops the capacities of CBOs and EJ-focused organizations to effectively engage in local decisions on the Justice40 Initiative. The Justice40 Engagement Project will support these groups in a way that elevates their voices in the development of state and local processes for directing the federal funding made available by the Justice40 Initiative, so that their communities are not overlooked or otherwise excluded from these benefits.

Launched in 2020, the Bezos Earth Fund is a \$10 billion commitment to fund scientists, activists, NGOs, and private-sector entities that are taking critical action to combat the climate crisis, preserve and protect the natural world, and support climate justice.

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families harmed by pollution and vulnerable to climate change in the Gulf Coast Region through research, education, community, and student engagement for policy change, as well as health and safety training for environmental careers.