

U.S. Programs Mission Statement

An open society is one that protects fundamental human rights, guarantees impartial justice, provides opportunities for people to make the most of their talents, and makes public decisions through a democratic process that is open to full participation and constant reexamination.

The mission of the Open Society Institute is to promote these values in the United States as well as in emerging democracies around the world. Although the U.S. aspires to the ideal of an open society, in many respects we fall short and in others we are losing ground.

An open society requires a public sphere shielded from the inequalities of the marketplace, but in the U.S., the dominant values have become those of market fundamentalism, which rejects a role for government and poses a threat to political equality, public services, racial justice, and the social safety net. An open society requires an unbiased system of justice that stands apart from political pressures and social inequality, but in the U.S., the pressures of money, bias, and politics undermine the independence of the courts and the fairness of the criminal justice system. An open society is one in which individuals and communities can make the most of their talents and assets, but in the U.S., too many people face barriers posed by failed schools, a dead-end criminal justice system, or the sharp inequalities in our provision of healthcare and economic security. And too many communities are isolated from full participation in democratic decision making or the mainstream of the economy.

Through our grantmaking and our policy initiatives, the Open Society Institute's U.S. Programs seek to restore the promise of our pluralistic democracy and bring greater fairness to our political, legal, and economic systems. We seek to protect the ability of individuals to make choices about their lives and to participate fully in all the opportunities—political, economic, cultural, and personal—that life has to offer.