



Meet

**ABFE's 2016-2017
Connecting Leaders Fellowship Class
Congratulations!**





Caronina L. Grimble

Passionate About Racial Equity

Caronina has been a Program Officer at Woods Fund Chicago since 2013, where she shares responsibility for the foundation's grantmaking and works to leverage the impact of Woods Fund grantmaking into increased interest and engagement from other foundations. Additionally, Caronina leads the foundation's racial equity work, engaging Woods Fund board and staff as well as other local foundations in advancing racial equity in their grantmaking.

Prior to joining Woods Fund Chicago, Caronina served as Acting Associate Director of the Division of Family and Community Services at the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), managing a suite of human services programs and a federal block grant that funded an array of community services programs.



2016-2017 Fellow



Jeanné Isler

Strong Advocate and Change Agent

As Vice President for Learning and Engagement at the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), Jeanné leads the design of strategies for engaging progressive social justice nonprofit organizations and more than 80 foundation supporters. Her efforts result in a deeply engaged philanthropic sector more open to learning from social justice movement leaders.

Before joining NCRP she was the Director of US Programs at Search for Common Ground, where one major initiative advanced bipartisan conversations among members of the US Congress on the impact of racism on policy. Prior to that, Jeanné built a network of organizations supporting military families. She also led a restorative justice program and worked as a faith-based community organizer. All of these experiences included designing discussions and workshops to advance constructive interaction and social justice for international audiences.



2016-2017 Fellow



Yolanda Knight

Eradicating Social Injustices in Education

Her experience growing up in Chicago's resilient Austin community sparked Yolanda Knight's lifelong passion for social justice and equity for all children. She began her career as a teacher, and went on to improve educational opportunities for Chicago's students through her work in higher education, K-12 schools, and philanthropy. Throughout her career, Knight has made significant contributions to start up organizations and programs, including fundraising and partnership development, program design and the effective use of data for program and organizational improvement. Prior to her first role in philanthropy, Knight developed the Chicago Public Schools' District-wide framework for increasing college matriculation and success. In her current work at the Steans Family Foundation, she launched a multi-year \$4.5MM early childhood-education initiative designed to help students reach the critical milestone of third grade reading proficiency.



2016-2017 Fellow



Kinah Harrison

Incorporating Equity into Grantmaking

Kinah Harrison is a Program Officer for Education & Learning and Family Economic Security at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In this role as a member of the Education & Learning and Family Economic Security teams, Kinah is responsible for identifying and nurturing opportunities for affecting positive systemic change within communities aimed at creating conditions in which children can develop, learn and grow. She works closely with staff to ensure integration and coordination of efforts.

Prior to joining the foundation, Kinah served as the Vice President of Early Learning and Community Engagement with the United Way of Greater Atlanta. In addition to managing an annual early education portfolio of over 10 million dollars, Kinah partnered with cross-sector stakeholders, philanthropic leaders, policy makers, practitioners and community members on identifying and addressing challenges facing the metro Atlanta region. Prior to United Way, Kinah was Senior Site Manager for The New Teacher Project where she led school reform efforts in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools. Kinah also has experience as a school administrator and teacher in addition to working with large nonprofits such as the YMCA of Greater Cleveland.



2016-2017 Fellow



Murray L. Woodard, II

Transforming and Redefining Education Reform

Murray L. Woodard, II is a program officer in Education for the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, where he manages projects around community engagement and ownership. He supports education-focused initiatives through program development, project management, building relationships, and conducting research. He contributes to all areas of education programming and grantmaking.

Earlier, he was an external partnership coordinator for Kauffman Scholars, Inc., serving as an integral part of the operations team. He was involved in all aspects of developing and maintaining external program partnerships, corporate partnerships, and postsecondary initiatives.



2016-2017 Fellow



Tahira Cunningham

Passionate About Moving the Process Forward

Tahira Cunningham is a Program Officer with the Sierra Health Foundation Center for Health Program Management, managing the California Executives' Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color. Prior to joining The Sierra Health Foundation, Tahira was the Health Director with the Greenlining Institute, working to achieve health equity for low income communities and communities of color at the state legislature and state departments. With the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Tahira lead the statewide health work for the California Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, advocacy on the state budget, legislation, and mental health policy for communities of color. Among her successes, Tahira prides herself on the development of California's community clinic and health center Health Care Ambassador Program which educated and trained over 1000 clinic doctors and was recognized as the first state-wide ACA education campaign by the Schwarzenegger Administration.



2016-2017 Fellow



Meka Sales

Making Connections that Bridge the Gap

Meka Sales is a compassionate advocate and activist dedicating herself to enhancing the quality of life of those she encounters. Through the example of her community that nurtured her as a young child, Meka developed a sense of responsibility to use her talents and gifts to give back professionally and personally. Trained as a health educator, Meka's professional career is a testament to her calling where she currently serves as a Health Care Program Officer for The Duke Endowment, a private foundation in Charlotte, NC. Meka's programmatic and strategic oversight aids the development of initiatives that help communities improve conditions so that residents can live healthier lives. This includes supporting efforts and community residents at the grassroots level and working with stakeholders to affect statewide policy. Meka has served as a board chair of Youth Empowered Solutions, is a member of the New Generation of African-American Philanthropists and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. In 2011, she was nominated to serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Southeastern Health Equity Council as a founding council member and is currently a co-chair of the council. Meka also founded the philanthropic organization, Be A Blessing, a giving circle which seeks to develop, nurture and unleash donors to give of their time, talent and treasure to serve their communities through strategic and collective giving.



2016-2017 Fellow



Robert Adams, Jr.

Strategic Leader and Change Manager

Robert Adams Jr. co-leads grant-making programs as the Strategic Leadership and Change Manager at the NEA Foundation in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining the Foundation, Robert served as Interim Chief Operating Officer at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia and as Program Officer at the Fetzer Institute in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Robert earned a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. He has taught and directed research projects at DePaul University, the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center, Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Hunter College (CUNY), and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has conducted research in Brazil, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, Mozambique, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, and the United States.



2016-2017 Fellow



Michelle L. McMurray

Applying a Critical Lens of Racial Justice and Equity

Michelle L. McMurray, MSW is the Senior Program Officer for Health and Human Services at The Pittsburgh Foundation, one of the nation's largest community foundations. Serving as a human service professional for more than a decade, Ms. McMurray's career has been shaped by her belief in a just, healthy society in which every citizen is accorded dignity, respect and the right to achieve their full potential free from stigma and discrimination. Her professional interests are improving access to high quality physical and mental health care for low-income and racial/ethnic minority populations; strengthening small, community-based non-profit organizations; and advancing racial equity within philanthropy. Her professional experience includes academic research, clinical practice, policy advocacy, and organizational leadership. Additionally, Ms. McMurray is the co-author of several journal articles and book chapters addressing the relationship between race, age, and socio-economic status and access to mental health treatment. She has also delivered more than 50 presentations and lectures for diverse audiences and has appeared on both local radio and television.



2016-2017 Fellow



Robert L. Dortch, Jr.

Community Activist and Innovator

Robert is a father and social entrepreneur with 20 plus years of strategic and executive leadership experience in the for-profit, faith-based and nonprofit sector. Currently, Robert serves as Director, Community Innovation for the Robins Foundation, a family foundation based in Richmond, VA. He is co-founder of the Ujima Legacy Fund, a giving circle created in 2013 to facilitate collective philanthropic impact by African American men through investing in youth focused educational initiatives. In addition to his philanthropic work, Robert is a certified leadership coach who partners with individuals and organizations committed to discovering innovative solutions by leveraging assets and designing processes that aspire to produce generational results to complex social issues.



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