

# PLACES



**10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY**  
*Stories of Impact*







# PLACES

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## 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

*Stories of Impact*



## CONTENTS

- 5** The Power of PLACES
- 6** About this Publication
- 7** About the Author
- IMPACT STORIES**
- 9** Melanie Mitros
- 10** Kris Archie
- 12** Sheena Solomon
- 14** Aaron Robertson
- 16** Nancy Van Milligen
- 18** Bina Patel
- 20** Evelyn Burnett and Mordecai Cargill
- 22** Dion Cartwright
- 24** Erik Takeshita
- 26** Alece Montez
- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**
- 28** Funder Acknowledgments
- 29** Class List





**Patricia Smith**  
TFN President & CEO

“BY THE END OF THEIR FELLOWSHIP, PARTICIPANTS ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO UNDERSTAND, CHALLENGE AND CHANGE.”

The Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) was founded with the purpose to help grow and support philanthropic leadership that creates communities and regions that are sustainable, prosperous and just.

We believe that cultivating, connecting and empowering a diverse cadre of professionals to recognize and work at the intersection of the environment, economy and equity benefits not just individual grantmakers — but the field of philanthropy as a whole.

This year, we celebrate not only the 20th anniversary of TFN, but the 10th anniversary of one of the network’s most significant efforts to foster leadership in philanthropy: the PLACES Fellowship.

Over the past decade, PLACES has welcomed 127 fellows to participate in a year-long learning opportunity to help grantmakers embed the values of racial, social and economic equity into their work.

PLACES — which stands for Professionals Learning About Community, Equity and Smart Growth — uses site-specific learning, coaching and reflections to explore structural racism, community empowerment and equitable grantmaking practices. By the end of their fellowship, participants are equipped with the tools and resources to understand, challenge and change systemic inequities.

Our alumni hail from all corners of the United States and Canada, representing national, regional and community foundations. Their grantmaking portfolios encompass building healthy communities, spurring inclusive economic growth, combatting climate change, improving access to quality healthcare, supporting local artists, and rebuilding civic trust — to name just a few of the areas where PLACES fellows are making an impact.

While these fellows come from diverse professional and personal backgrounds, we’ve noticed that they often use similar language in describing their PLACES experiences: Challenging. Impactful. Transformational.

My thanks to the fellows profiled in this publication for taking the time to share their individual stories and the robust network of PLACES alumni whose passion and commitment to social justice can be seen every day within and outside of philanthropy. You are making a difference.

The generous support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation — and the vision of Scot Spencer, Casey’s associate director for advocacy and influence — made this publication possible. TFN is also indebted to the award-winning journalist Nadege Green, who skillfully extracted the uniqueness and richness of each fellow’s experience.

PLACES’ decade of success would not have been possible without the direction and guidance of its Advisory Board, staff and facilitators and the foundations whose support ensure that this impactful and important program can continue to grow and thrive. This work could not have been done without you, and we are all the better for it.



**Scot T. Spencer**  
Associate Director for  
Advocacy and Influence  
The Annie E Casey Foundation

“IF YOU ASK A PLACES ALUM, YOU WILL HEAR ABOUT THE FUN AND LEARNING IN THE FELLOWSHIP, BUT YOU WILL ALSO HEAR ABOUT DIRECT DIALOGUE ON REAL ISSUES.”

What happens when an investment partner entrusts your stewardship of their resources to help advance your commitment to a more inclusive field? That was the fortunate position TFN was in when former board member and Ford Foundation program director Carl Anthony invested in TFN and a next generation of leadership. With a concept first led by then TFN staffer Anthony Colon, PLACES was created.

It was a slow start, but that first class of seven graduates helped grow a movement that currently boasts an alumni network that is 127 strong. If there’s one thing you learn when visiting the places we have gone, it’s that while many may be similar, no two are alike. The same can be said about PLACES alumni and the PLACES experiences. But whether you were in the first class or tenth, there are similar experiences:

- Hartford Mary. “The Incident” in Wichita. The third world outside Albuquerque. Every class has at least one site visit that provides a bonding memory for that class. Some were laughable in their absurdity, others angering in disbelief. The experiences in the cities, towns and communities fostered lessons of what to do – differently, better, larger – and what should never occur again;
- Little Rock’s Central High School. The Medgar Evers house. The Scott Joplin house. The Vancouver Chinese Garden. These are the places where we learned about history that is too often glossed over, culture that we had a glancing knowledge about and the sometimes-painful past that has shaped our currency and calls out to lead the charge for a better future.

If you ask a PLACES alum, you will hear about the fun and learning in the fellowship, but you will also hear about direct dialogue on real issues. PLACES talks about race. About whiteness. And blackness. Straightness and gayness. Power and privilege. Strength and resilience. PLACES fellows discuss in heartfelt sentences and paragraphs of a new urgency to change the status quo. And they speak of the embrace or hesitation that may greet them upon their return home.

PLACES alumni leaders have been tasked with leading their institutions on the quest to plant racial equity in their place-based work and within their foundations. Others have left their foundations to lead the charge for racial equity closer to the ground. And they are re-writing the rules in their new places of work.

Ten years. Thirty-six site visits. One-hundred twenty-seven alumni. This and much more is what can happen when an investment partner entrusts your stewardship of their resources. To borrow a phrase: ‘Oh, the PLACES we have yet to go.’ Forward.



ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

*PLACES Tenth Anniversary: Stories of Impact*, captures and shares stories from alumni of TFN’s PLACES Fellowship. Interviews were conducted by Miami-based journalist Nadege Green, and may have been edited for length or clarity. This project has been made possible with the support of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. For additional copies, please reach out to TFN Communications Director Tere Figueras Negrete, [tere@fundersnetwork.org](mailto:tere@fundersnetwork.org).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Emily McGovern

Nadege Green is an award-winning journalist who covers social justice issues for the Miami-based public radio network, WLRN. For her, journalism boils down to not only telling the stories of the people who are accessible, but also seeking out the voices we don’t hear from, and telling those stories too.

Her work has received numerous awards, including a 2017 Regional Edward R. Murrow Award about children lost to gun violence, 2016 first place investigative reporting award from the National Association of Black Journalists and Florida AP Broadcaster awards.

In 2018 Green was recognized by the Miami Foundation with the Ruth Shack Leadership award for her body of work that gives voice to communities that are often not heard. Green’s reporting has appeared in the *Miami Herald*, NPR and PRI. Her work has also been cited in Teen Vogue, The Root, Refinery 29 and the *Washington Post*. She previously worked at the *Miami Herald* covering city governments and the Haitian community. Green studied English with a specialization in professional writing at Barry University.



*When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak.*

AUDRE LORDE



### Melanie Mitros, 37

Vitalyst Health Foundation  
Director of Strategic  
Community Partnerships  
Phoenix, Arizona  
PLACES 2017 Cohort

**M**elanie Mitros had an important job when she was 4 years old: helping out in her mother's research lab, organizing plastic pipettes and caring for the occasional rodent.

Her mom was deep into her doctoral research and the lab was filled with various works-in-progress, including lab rats and mice.

"I felt important because she always made a point for me to find something to do and made me feel that, even though I was a little kid, I had role in helping," said Mitros, who grew up in a small farm in Greenwood, Alabama, where her family planted and harvested most of the food they ate.

She said those early years in the lab — learning to find pride in purpose and watching her moth-

er follow her passion to tackle difficult but potentially impactful work — built a foundation that roots her still today.

"I am so incredibly thankful for her perseverance and setting that example for me as a kid," said Mitros, who works with disease-specific groups, coalitions and community boards as part of her work at the Vitalyst Health Foundation. "These experiences made me feel I could do whatever I wanted."

### Why did you get into philanthropy?

I had an opportunity to become the founding executive director for a nonprofit in Phoenix, Arizona. While I quickly realized college inadequately prepared me for this role, I was fortunate to have a mentor in the program officer overseeing the first grant I received.

This mentorship led me directly to the role I hold now. I continue to be intrigued by the intellectual freedom that comes from working in philanthropy.

### You were a PLACES fellow. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?

Looking back, I realize that I initially lacked the skills to navigate the transition between my internal fire which was set ablaze in PLACES to shifting our organization.

It was difficult starting to unpack my own biases around race and history and segregation and injustices. The history I learned in school was so sanitized. I remember as a PLACES fellow really learning and talking about the history of red-lining, and how veteran benefits that were not extended to veterans of color.

How many other things had I learned in school that weren't really what happened? A lot of

questions percolated from what I learned in PLACES.

I oversee our grantmaking at Vitalyst, so I automatically started shifting our grantmaking process to be more equitable.

### What is one of the biggest challenges you're facing right now in this work?

It's not protecting time and space to be thoughtful in how we do work and how we engage with other people — as an individual, as an organization, as a nonprofit culture. It's something I've really been scratching my head about. How do I change my behavior to take the time to get to know the person in front of me before we dive into whatever work we came together to do?

It's a constant push back against the dominant culture of engaging transactionally — get the meeting done and go to the next thing.

### If you could write a very short letter — "Dear People In Philanthropy..." What would it say?

**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
Do you know where the money for your philanthropy came from? And what are you doing to help or support the communities — those on whose backs the money was built?

### Is there an internal question you're constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?

One that is always in my head since I finished the PLACES fellowship is, "Why me?"

Who am I to be able to help make this change? It's an internal struggle, but at the same time I've gotten really good at answering. It's because I am the one here. And at the moment, I'm in this position. I have to say something and I have to do something.





**Kris Archie, 37**

The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples  
Executive Director  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
PLACES 2016 Cohort

From a very young age, Kris Archie learned from her mom that giving was not something one did just a few times a year. It was embedded into their way of life. Archie, a Secwepemc and Seme7 woman from the Ts'qescen First Nation, was raised by her single mom off of a reservation in the small town of 100 Mile House, located in the South Cariboo region of central British Columbia, Canada. At home, she said her mom had an open-door policy for people who needed a little extra help.

"I have memories of my mom coming home and bringing someone who experienced homelessness or women fleeing domestic violence and we always had a meal for them," she said. "Our home was always a welcoming place for people to be." Looking back, Archie says she is in awe of her mother, a single woman with three children who really didn't have much to begin with. "That instilled in me a sense of gratitude and abundance," said Archie. "There was always enough to have someone else around the table and it was important to demonstrate that."

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**  
I got in kicking and screaming. I had been a consultant for several years doing work to support organizations. I kept running into this

fellow I knew who was the director of a local community foundation. He kept telling me, "You'd be fantastic." I was like, "No way." He kept telling me how they would benefit from my involvement and I was pretty resistant. I was enlisted to help them on a homeless initiative and to rebuild a completely new strategy to help them rethink what that work could look like. I was able to bring in my lived experience as someone who had been in foster care and who has been a foster parent, and my passion for legislative change all into this space. What really struck me was that I had the opportunity to work with others and with the financial resources to fund this work in communities.

**You were a PLACES fellow. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?**  
It fundamentally shifted how I see the world. I was given the tools and the leadership skill-building to activate my sense of power. It seemed many of our visits coincided with some sort of state violence — such as a black man shot by police — and we would be devastated. This is the world we're living in and this is the space I could bare my soul and let my grief breathe. I remember [PLACES facilitator] Bina Patel telling us, "This is tough, sad and horrifying, but we have work to do here. We have to wipe our tears and be prepared to walk into the boardroom and build equity." And there was something really powerful in that. I really appreciated that. That was transformative for me because I can feel the pain of the world and still get my work done.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you're facing right now in this work?**  
I get really anxious about how quickly the language of this

learning is co-opted and therefore losing its meaning. I'm hearing more organizations in Canada talking about diversity and inclusion, but they can't have a conversation about race, white supremacy and Indigenous communities. I find myself trying to suss out whether the person is saying these words because they're the right words to use, or are they prepared to do the work to make these words come to life? One of the challenges quite specific to Canada is this rhetoric around reconciliation about past wrongs to Indigenous people. There's a missed opportunity for remembering that the word gives us a pathway to shift what is possible for the future of this country in an age where people just want to check off boxes and pat themselves on the back. If folks aren't serious about working through their privilege and power, if they can't have that conversation at their dinner tables and where they live and work and play, building equity isn't actually going anywhere. That's the work.

**If you could write a very short letter — "Dear People in Philanthropy..." What would it say?**

**Dear People in Settler Created Philanthropy,**  
It's time for folks to come clean on whom and on whose land their wealth is built on and to find opportunities for reparations. Consider taking your lead from Indigenous world views because Indigenous people from the beginning of time have had a relationship with reciprocity and giving and the land. If you're in this space and



"IT'S TIME FOR FOLKS TO COME CLEAN ON WHOM AND ON WHOSE LAND THEIR WEALTH IS BUILT AND TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REPARATIONS."

you want to do better, move out of the way and let Indigenous people and people of color take the lead and relinquish power. The real solutions for some of the biggest social issues will be led by Indigenous organizations and Indigenous people.

**Is there an internal question you're constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**  
Am I in right relationship here? It means, have I done the work to take care of my body and mind to be fully present here and now? Am I in good connection with my family? Am I in the right connection to my community in order to make decisions about philanthropic behavior? When I find myself feeling shaky or having to give some feedback, this helps me get really grounded in my deepest sense of purpose. And it helps me weed through the noise of, "What is the right thing to say? What is the polite thing to say?" It offers me a moment of clarity.





**Sheena Solomon, 36**  
The Gifford Foundation  
Executive Director  
Syracuse, New York  
PLACES 2012 Cohort  
PLACES Advisory Board

Sheena Solomon had to defy expectations when she gave birth to her son just a few days after her 16th birthday. “Everyone made an assumption that I would fail,” she said. Solomon said all of the stereotypes of being a black, teenage mom who grew up in a poor neighborhood were thrown at her. “People said that you wouldn’t finish school and that you’re going to be just another typical teenage mom,” she explained. But Solomon graduated from high school and went on to earn her bachelor’s degree soon after. For a time, she had to rely on

social service benefits to get by as a single mom. She saw the inner workings of a system that regarded the people who needed it the most with very little dignity or care. “I didn’t like how they treated me, and I didn’t like the invasiveness of it. So my focus was about, ‘How do I get to a point where I no longer needed them?’” When she landed a job in the nonprofit sector, she wasn’t quite sure how to navigate the system — or how she was going to grow in it. “I didn’t know the rules of the game, quite frankly,” said Solomon, who became executive director of The Gifford Foundation in 2019, after more than a decade with the organization. “I was just trying to make a better life for me and my family.”

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**  
I learned about an opening and took a leap of faith to better myself. I didn’t know what philanthropy was when I applied. However, I knew of The Gifford Foundation and I knew they gave out money to the community. I also knew I didn’t have all the credentials that the foundation was looking for, but they decided to give me an opportunity and the ability to bring a different perspective to the organization

**As a PLACES alum, what was your fellowship experience like and how has it impacted your work?**  
It was a true eye-opener and a game-changer for me. Going in, I thought it would be a good networking opportunity, but I did question how they were going to teach me about equity. A lot of leadership development-type of programs don’t take into account your lived experience. They teach you theory, but they’re not really talking about what’s going on today, and how you apply it today.

A game-changing piece for me was having a few coaching sessions to see how other people viewed me, and helped me learn the language I needed to get the foundation I work for to make changes. Before, I wasn’t using the word “equity.” We were using “social justice” or “diversity.” We weren’t saying equity. I didn’t have the data and the language to fix some of things I knew weren’t working at the time. After PLACES, I made a PowerPoint presentation for our board and shared what other people are doing around the country. Our board was having issues with the lack of diversity on nonprofit boards. We would send diversity letters, but we were not holding their feet to the fire to actually implement diversity. We began to wonder, what if we trained people in the community to be board members and connect nonprofits on how to meet people out of their circles? That led to a program called Nourishing Tomorrow’s Leaders. In this training program, we look at all types of diversity, making sure we’re bringing in young people, people of color, women and people with disabilities.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?**  
I think one of the largest challenges in this work is the inability to be more innovative. I feel like we’re getting there, but there’s still a lot of Jurassic philanthropy happening. It’s old. It’s dinosaur-like. We are starting to get more innovative leadership, but we’re not changing the old guards of the boards. You can get an innovative leader, but if the board wants to do the status quo, it’s hard to innovate.

**If you could write a very short letter —“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**  
**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
Can we admit that we don’t know everything? That we don’t have all the



answers and that philanthropy cannot solve all the problems in the world? Can we admit the systems that we are trying to fix are intentionally this way? This is not an accident. And can we admit that philanthropy is part of the problem? Let’s work on doing more good than harm. As history has shown, good intentions have done a lot of harm.

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**  
I ask myself: “Why?” Why are we doing this? Who is it affecting? And have we talked to those people before we decide to do this? I ask those questions of nonprofits we’re funding, but also internally. Community is people. As the new executive director, I’m just trying to figure how we can do better and be better.

“I THINK ONE OF THE LARGEST CHALLENGES IN THIS WORK IS THE INABILITY TO BE MORE INNOVATIVE.”





**Aaron Robertson, 33**  
Seattle Foundation  
Managing Director,  
Policy & Civic Engagement  
Seattle, Washington  
PLACES 2016 Cohort  
PLACES Advisory Board

**A**aron Robertson grew up in High Point, Seattle, when the area was still a predominantly low-income community made up of public housing. As a white teen in High Point, he realized that while he and his non-white peers in the neighborhood shared similar economic conditions, they were treated differently when encountering authority figures. “There was a fair amount of getting my skateboard confiscated by the police for skating in the supermarket parking lot,” said Robertson, who would wear a backpack with a picture of President George W. Bush and the words “not my president” affixed to it. His interactions with police always ended with a warning. “I was pretty brash and outspoken,” he recalled. But his friends who weren’t white didn’t always share his penchant for pushing the boundaries.

“Being outspoken carried less risk for me,” said Robertson. “The level of punishment or engagement I had with authorities would look different than the experience of my peers who didn’t look like me.” Robertson said those experiences helped lead him to a career that examines social justice and his role in addressing the systemic challenges that lead to a two-tiered system: one for white people and another for people of color.

**Why did you get into philanthropy?** Philanthropy stuck out as a way to look at injustices that exist in society and address it on a systemic level. What is the connected set of investments that address the root of the issues? I was definitely very naive to what that actually looks like. I thought, “They get to decide how resources are allocated.” There’s so much more complexity beyond that.

**You were a PLACES fellow. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?** There was a moment that became infamous in our cohort. On our second trip to Connecticut, we were given a tour about the history of Hartford. Someone in our cohort raised a question about displacement and gentrification and the person giving us the tour was quick to deny race plays a role in what gets preserved. She said she doesn’t see color, she sees brick. That moment galvanized many in our cohort. There was a short pause of silence and then immediate push-back. It created a call-to-action, and I saw folks step up in that moment. There was a collective commitment to challenge assertions along those lines, and to support each other in doing that. Focusing on equity and race is not something you get perfect, especially in institutions like philanthropy, and especially when you have white-identifying staff in those roles. I credit PLACES for making me a more effective advocate and helping me with how I show up in supporting others.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now?** As an organization, Seattle Foundation has made a public commitment to address racial equity, but it has to be more than just stated. How do you put that into practice? It’s going to require long-term commitment — not only rethinking our investments, but being willing to walk into that knowing that structural and institutionalized racism is not something we’re going to realize change in anytime soon. How do we bring this practice of patient urgency? We need to be urgent in how we address our resources because people are impacted now, but patient knowing large-scale change takes time. We can’t abandon things



because goals aren’t met in a year or two. That is a particular tension that exists.

**If you could write a very short letter — “Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**

**Dear People in Philanthropy,** We have had a role in creating the systems that we are working against. That creates a responsibility to show up thoughtfully, engage the communities we serve and learn from them. Our knowledge and biases need to be constantly questioned. We have had literally decades of repeating the same efforts without changing things on the ground. Shifting those outcomes will require fundamental change in how we approach this work.

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**

For me as a cisgender, straight, white man trying to do work on racial equity, it’s constantly trying to identify my personal biases: “Why do I think that? And what would be different if my personal experiences looked differently?” There is a fundamental assumption of who deserves to be decision-makers and inform processes. In being tasked with making judgements about what strategies are likely to be effective in furthering the goals of my programming, I need to distance what I believe would be effective because, “This is what works for me.” I need to have trust in the perspective of others and figure out how to reset our decision-making process to be more inclusive of a lot more voices and not just my perspective. Slowing down to bring other voices in always strengthens results.





**Nancy Van Milligen**  
Community Foundation  
of Greater Dubuque  
President and CEO  
Former Chair, TFN Board of Directors

While institutions often pride themselves in knowing how to fix problems, Nancy Van Milligen found that measurable outcomes show that institutions like the foster care system consistently fail. When Van Milligen first became a foster mother in Chicago she had two small children of her own and was pregnant with her third. But she and her husband recognized they had the room and ability to provide a safe

home for additional children in their community. Van Milligen said her experience after years as a foster parent gave her a clear view of a system that was broken for the children who need it to work the most. “The state takes children from families and becomes the parent — and fails 60 percent of them,” she said. “It continues to be a broken, flawed system across the nation.” She fostered 14 children before moving to Iowa. She said the most striking lesson she learned was seeing the deep and positive impacts that come when families actually get the access and resources to thrive. “I’ve learned that families are best served with community support that empowers families to overcome their challenges,” said Van Milligen.

As the leader of a community foundation, Van Milligen has extended that philosophy to support and empower not only the communities she serves, but also to staff members looking to embed the values of equity and inclusion into their work through involvement in the PLACES Fellowship and other TFN programs and initiatives.

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**  
For a while in Iowa I was a political science instructor at the local college. I was appointed to two state commissions and during one of those experiences I was on a panel with the CEO of a community foundation. She was telling me what she did and I was like, “Oh my god, you have my dream job. We did not have a community foundation in Dubuque, but as luck would have it my neighbor was working with a bank that was trying to start a community foundation and I was like, “I want that job.” In February 2003, I was hired as the President and CEO — and only employee — of the newly formed Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque.

**In the past, you’ve supported and encouraged your foundation staff member who was accepted as a PLACES Fellow, Eric Dregne. You’ve also served as a board member for the Funders’ Network, which counts equity and inclusion among its foundational values. How has that impacted your work?**  
Dubuque, Iowa, is a German, Irish, Protestant, Catholic, white region. But our demographics are changing and often people are not understanding or embracing the change. It’s a tap dance. How do you bring people along to think differently about differences and embrace it where equity is the model? This is a difficult conver-

“FAMILIES ARE BEST SERVED WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT EMPOWERS FAMILIES TO OVERCOME THEIR CHALLENGES.”

sation and not one that everyone buys into. PLACES helps participants to understand the history of segregation and red-lining. It helped me learn how to talk about institutional racism in a way that isn’t threatening to a corporate leader. We have donors that have left us and told us they were leaving because we are tackling this work. That’s tough. TFN has been my rock and my courage.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?**  
I have found that it’s the current political climate, where everything is politically charged. I had a beautiful story around our work with immigrants in small rural communities. In Cascade, Iowa, there were a lot of people from the same small city in Mexico. They wanted lessons to learn English as a second language and to get their high school diplomas. We funded the classes and got families to bring meals and offer child care so their Mexican neighbors would be able to go to class. Relationships were formed. But throughout the year, ICE targeted the students and their families as they were coming to class or going home. It became one more way to detain them. Typically, the husband/bread winner



was deported, leaving behind a wife and children with no support. From a policy (and common sense!) perspective, it made no sense. We ended the program in mid-November because people were too afraid to come. Certainly, when we work in a community, we try to “do no harm.” This was heartbreaking.

**If you could write a very short letter—“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**  
**Dear People in Philanthropy,** Believe in the organizations that are doing good work. When you find good leadership and good outcomes, fund it generously with as few restrictions as possible. Let’s learn to be generous and flexible and empower our non-profits to do great work. Don’t get so hung up on evaluations. When the evaluation costs more than the program, what are we accomplishing?

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**  
I have two. I believe that in a town the size of Dubuque, which has a population of 60,000 and is a rural region, we need to be a high-performing community that’s working together at all levels. How can I be a better partner and how can I help others — especially people in power — see the value of partnering? We have a strong community voice, which is a powerful tool. How do we make sure we use that power in a way that builds community instead of building our organization? I think it’s charting a path and staying true to our values. Every time we’ve successfully tackled an issue, it was when people came together, shared resources and took off their “who gets the credit” hat.





**Bina M. Patel, 43**  
Saathi Impact Consulting  
CEO  
PLACES Facilitator  
PLACES 2012 Cohort

**A**s a child of immigrants, Bina Patel has found a way in her daily work to honor her family’s roots.

“My parents, my grandparents and my ancestors are a big part of how I see the world,” said Patel, whose family hails from various parts of India, most notably the coastal city of Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay. “I’m very thankful my parents made space for us to know our culture and traditions.”

Growing up, Patel said she had to tackle the “model minority” myth of how Asian-Americans are perceived — that of a group that is studious, polite and self-reliant — and it’s something she still encounters when she’s teaching about racial equity and anti-racism.

Patel said she feels at most first encounters, she’s usually given a

“pass” in predominantly white spaces.

“I show up, and because I’m brown in white spaces, I’m credible. But because I’m not black, I’m not threatening,” said Patel. “But when I say things about white supremacy in these very white spaces, then I’m too brown.”

Patel is not only a PLACES alum, she is also one of the fellowship’s lead facilitators — known for helping create a space for fellows to feel both safe enough to share, yet challenged enough to grow. She said her experience building her consulting company and teaching sessions around anti-racism has meant learning to be comfortable speaking about uncomfortable truths.

“I say what needs to be said,” said Patel, formerly of the Grand Victoria Foundation in Illinois. “I don’t censor the information, but as a facilitator I find different way to bring it forward.”

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**  
Philanthropy has tremendous power to do better and to do good. And it has a long legacy in this country’s history around wealth, dignity and justice.

Issues of justice and identity and wealth — they all live in this sector.

**You were a PLACES fellow. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?**  
What has stayed with me most from the fellowship: The need for organizational change. It’s not enough that I had the amazing experience and learned so much. Figuring out how to bring others along in the journey was important in order to catalyze change in the foundation.



“WHO AM I IN SERVICE OF TODAY? THAT’S MY QUESTION.”

I love that I am still in touch with fellows from my class, and we’ve stayed connected as friends, colleagues and thought partners.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?**  
The idea that racial equity is “sexy” right now and in a couple of years it’ll go away and the work will still not be done. People often say, “We hired a consultant, did a year of training, we have a strategic plan — aren’t we done?”

How do we sustain this work when it is clearly “not done”?

What’s next when this work is not done? Are we really naming what our real problems are, or just using coded language to make it comfortable?

**How are you building for equity?**  
One of the most frequent feedback I get is, “We really want to stop talking about it and get to work.” What I realized is that when you do this work, and you don’t talk about white supremacy and whiteness, you’re not giving them the truth.

When we say “racial equity,” you close your eyes and you see black and brown faces. This isn’t a problem of black and brown, it’s whiteness and white supremacy. And I’ve found that there are white people who are willing to talk about it. If we create a space that’s about justice, everyone can come into it.

**If you could write a very short letter —“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**

**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
Reimagine the future. Reimagine what’s possible. Examine the world around you and what you practice differently.

Get fixated on humanity and the collective good. And ask yourselves, what are you withholding? And who are you protecting?

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**  
Who am I in service of today? That’s my question.

My dad, since I was about 6 or 7, would ask me, “Are you helping people?” He instilled in me the purpose of helping people.

Am I helping people find joy? Am I helping people find healing? Am I helping people be healthier?

People who are told they don’t belong here, people who are traditionally marginalized: those are my people.





Evelyn Burnett, 34

ThirdSpace Action Lab  
Co-Founder  
Cleveland, Ohio  
PLACES 2011 Cohort

One of the missions laid out on the website of ThirdSpace Action Lab is to encourage people to “consider what will be possible if we insist on the beauty of forgotten places.”

Places like neighborhoods in the City of Cleveland.

The nonprofit is the result of a professional partnership forged between two PLACES alumni: Evelyn Burnett and Mordecai Cargill, who met while working together at Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, a community development nonprofit that helps direct funds from larger foundations into the region.

Burnett and Cargill recently left the nonprofit to start the Cleveland-based ThirdSpace Action Lab, a research, strategy and design cooperative with a focus on “co-creating more liberated spaces for people of color.”

Burnett grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, in a pro-union and activism-driven family.

“Folks would talk about the wonderful place it used to be,” said Burnett. “It used to be a town with lots of shops, restaurants and good jobs at the steel mill, GM or Packard.”

But in her home and neighbor-



Mordecai Cargill, 27

ThirdSpace Action Lab  
Co-Founder  
Cleveland, Ohio  
PLACES 2017 Cohort

hood, the good times were always spoken of in the past tense.

“The story I was raised under and through was a story of struggle, and fight to get some type of normalcy for folks,” said Burnett. “I remember vividly a conversation my mom and grandmother used to have about my mom having me out on the picket lines when I was still in a baby carriage.”

Cargill, who was born and raised in Cleveland, also understands the dismay inherent in referring to prosperity as a thing of the past.

“One thing about Cleveland that probably isn’t unique to American urban centers is that Cleveland is very segregated,” he said. “The majority of the black folks live on the East side.”

After studying at Yale, Cargill returned to Cleveland in 2013. He encountered a city he barely recognized in the aftermath of the national foreclosure crisis.

“I didn’t fully grasp the severity of the foreclosure crisis. I knew that if America has the sniffles, black America has the flu,” said Mordecai. “I assumed it would be worse, but when I got to Cleveland I saw the revitalization starting to happen on the other side and I was thinking to

myself, ‘When is this going to reach my community?’”

That led him to think more about neighborhood stability.

“I wanted to figure out how I might be able to add my ideas to make neighborhoods better.”

Why did you get into philanthropy?

**Burnett:** It was an accident. I went to undergrad and got into grad school and was introduced to philanthropy there. I met a woman through one of my organizations in college and she worked with the Cleveland Foundation. She encouraged me to apply for a fellowship.

Then I got a deep-dive into philanthropy, and at first I liked it a lot. Like, man, these cats have all the juice and they have a lot of money. If anyone can change the world, it’s them.

Then I started to understand philanthropy, and it opened my mind more about how it’s being deployed for transformation and for whom.

**Cargill:** My first job was at the United Way. It was my first job out of college, a temporary job asking people to give to the campaign, but I was unfulfilled. I was essentially a salesman, and it left me distant from the problems I wanted to work on.

From there I started working at Cleveland Neighborhood Progress and that was really my first real exposure to philanthropy. They were at the epicenter of an ecosystem that was improving neighborhoods.

And I found there was this incredible opportunity to bridge the gap between the foundation and the people in the neighborhoods. Philanthropy has an interesting role in cities. There is an entire sector that has a lot of free rein in how it allocates its resources and how it uses its influence to solve some of the trickiest problems of our time.

You were both PLACES fellows, albeit in different cohorts. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?

**Burnett:** I did PLACES the first year I was living in New York City. PLACES came at the perfect time for me in my career. I was in a big city, in a big organization, and my first year of big-city philanthropy was hard. I didn’t even understand their language.

I knew inequities existed and considered myself woke. But it’s in PLACES I really started to understand power. I was from a town of fighters, but not necessarily a town of winners or losers. They just moved on to the next fight and there hadn’t been any movement. So to see people talking about their portfolios and how they were moving investments to fight gentrification—PLACES put power on the table.

I never thought about power at all, even though my mom was an activist with a civil rights organization. It had not been framed for me in that way. It has completely changed how I work and it gave me a confidence I didn’t have. It made me start to think about systems in a rigorous way that was very real and not just abstract.

**Cargill:** When we went to Miami on a PLACES site visit, that really blew my mind. It hit me that public art is not objective and it’s not just paint on the wall. Riding around Miami, going from Little Haiti and then to Wynwood, you see the city transform drastically from neighborhood to neighborhood. I started to understand how public art in some ways is a harbinger of neighborhood change.

We went to Miami, Charleston, New Orleans. Even though the places themselves were quite different, some of the problems the nonprofits and community organizations were working to solve were all very similar. It was



at once disturbing and also encouraging that there were people doing the work who wanted to solve these problems.

What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?

**Burnett:** We’re a business where racial equity and racial inclusion is nonnegotiable. People like us as people. They say they want to be anti-racist, but that falls off the agenda real quick when you’re talking about market-rate apartments in the hood. We’re trying to operate at the systems level and changing systems is not easy.

**Cargill:** The challenge is going from awareness to action. I think the most difficult part of making that shift is that there is still some cognitive dissonance: How do we wrestle with what you now know if you didn’t know it before? And how do you begin to inform interventions and solutions uniquely tailored to neighborhoods?

If you could write a very short letter — “Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?

**Burnett:**  
**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
You cannot solve systemic problems with programmatic solutions within a grant cycle. Please stop.

**Cargill:**  
**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
Please continue to think beyond what is immediately possible and consider new ways of empowering people — people who are rarely brought to the table.

Empower people to envision radical new possibilities for their communities.

Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?

**Cargill:** Who do I need to solve this problem? I answer that question by constantly looking for collaborators and by trying to allow myself to be surprised by what comes from connecting with people, talking with people, and observing how people interact with space.

**Burnett:** Can I continue/Can I make it?

I’ve answered that with a reminder about abolishing chattel slavery in America. The more I’ve learned over the years, I believe there was no incentive at all for these white men to allow for the system of slavery to be destroyed.

A lot of things I’m working on feel insurmountable, I’m reminded that there were people that got rid of slavery, both black and white. There were everyday people that kept at it. And that drives me forward.





Dion Cartwright, 40

The Funders' Network  
Director of Equitable Initiatives  
and Leadership Development  
Baltimore, Maryland  
PLACES 2011 Cohort

Dion Cartwright found her calling to lead at an early age, inspired by her experiences at her family’s church — as well as on the basketball court.

“My grandfather was the Pastor,” said Cartwright, who grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia. “I had to pretty much go to church four days out of the week. Bible study, Friday night special services, choir rehearsal, youth night.”

Even at a young age, adults noticed she was exceedingly responsible, tapping her as a youth leader.

“And that pretty much carried with me all of my life,” said Cartwright. “Certain people just naturally become leaders and that happened to me in an organic way.”

On the basketball court, where she played forward and center, Cartwright also honed her skills as a team leader and eventually as a youth basketball coach. Working with young people gave Cartwright

the opportunity to become a leader across generations. She was not only a leader to the young men and women on her teams, but she was also positioned to be a leader working with many of the parents to address major issues impacting their child.

“After college I started mentoring and volunteering in places like the Y because that’s something I realized I was passionate about — working with young people,” she said.

Even years later, Cartwright notes those skills she learned both on and off the court translated well to her work in the community, as well as her work in the philanthropic sector.

Cultivating leadership skills is one of the key elements of the PLACES Fellowship, and one that Cartwright can attest to with confidence.

She occupies a singular position in the PLACES alumni network: Formerly of the Baltimore Community Foundation, she joined TFN in 2016 as the network’s director of equitable initiative and leadership development — heading the PLACES fellowship program and leading the organization’s work to address equity, inclusion and structural racism. She also chaired the PLACES Advisory Board for four years before joining TFN.

“After all my years involved in

this fellowship, I’ve realized that PLACES is a gift,” she said. “It’s the gift of time to reflect on our work and our impact, and the gift of connecting with others.”

Why did you get into philanthropy?

By accident, like most people do. When I moved to Baltimore I had a roommate who volunteered at a youth grant making program at the Baltimore Community Foundation. There was a job that opened up, a mostly administrative role, and I was very young and just really happy to have a job.

In taking that job, it introduced me to philanthropy — and it’s not a world I was familiar with. In my family we were givers, but I didn’t know giving equated to the word “philanthropy.” Many in the black community do their giving through their religious institutions. We aren’t traditional philanthropist, but we often give.

You were a PLACES fellow. What was that experience like and how has it impacted your work?

I was a PLACES fellow in 2010. I was part of the second class and now I actually run the program. It’s been an interesting full circle.

I went into the fellowship trying to better understand the issues around race and equity myself. What I didn’t realize was that the fellowship also dealt with you, the person. Your own thinking, your own biases and how you yourself are doing things to perpetuate certain systems and structures.

I don’t think I really understood all of the systemic racism stuff, and it’s weird to say that when I think about it now. Even though I grew up in the South, in a city that’s majority white, and I grew up in a low-income community literally across the street from the city jail, I didn’t feel like I grew up with many issues relating to race.

And that probably sounds weird for a black person growing up in



the South. What I realized is it’s not that I didn’t experience racism, it’s just I didn’t know what to call it. Now, I know that it’s not cool that the city jail is across the street from where I grew up, and the impact that can have on a person’s psyche. In a lot of ways, I believe my engagement in activities in school, in church and on the basketball court protected me from what many others had experienced.

PLACES also gave me a more grassroots approach to my work in the community. You would find me in community leaders homes, in their living rooms and really being a thought partner. I wanted to be a resource beyond the grant dollar. That’s what you learn in PLACES: more equitable approaches to engaging community. And now running the program, I get to make sure other people have opportunities to shift their thinking and approach.

What is one the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?

After the 2016 presidential election, we saw a major shift in how people showed up. You can feel the lack of trust that exists more between black, brown and white people. Before, people would come into the fellowship with a little anxiety, not knowing what to expect, and you could see them after a couple months building relationships and trust.

But in the current political climate, people are coming in with anger and heaviness. And as a

facilitator, we had to recognize the heaviness and create the space to talk about it. People of color, family members of immigrants, needed a space to mourn and then realize, “This is the reality now, and how can I continue to help my community?”

You also saw white fragility show up more. More white folks would come into this space and they were dealing with some stuff internally. Often feeling ashamed or discovering that they may contribute to racial inequalities or uphold many of the racist structures in our society.

There was some real racial tension in this space. And we’ve had to shift our curriculum to really focus on some of those things. But at the same time, we’ve had a record number of applicants for the fellowship. That shows not only how much this program is needed, but also the sense of urgency in the field of philanthropy to address what we’re facing as a nation.

How are you building for equity?

We try to look at some of the inequitable things in our society and how we help shift some of those issues. How do you do it from your position?

If a fellow doesn’t have the power to change their organization as a whole, we look at what you can do from your position and develop that lens. The hope is that over time you’ll begin to see changes in the way your foundation is approaching their grantmaking work.

My old job embraced this learning experience. I began to

implement changes internally, but I realize not everyone will get that opportunity. Some foundations are cool with the word equity but don’t want to talk race. Talking about race begins the real work.

If you could write a very short letter —“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?

Dear People in Philanthropy, Move out of the way. As a field, we do a really great job at upholding a lot of these racist structures that exist and which we’re supposedly trying to dismantle.

We just need to give the resources that have been given to us to support communities and let the work get done. We’re so quick to want to check boxes and look at data, we make things harder than they have to be.

There are people in need of basic resources, and we are creating more barriers that are inequitable and that do not serve low-income people and people of color. So, get out the way.

Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?

I feel extremely responsible, being in this new role of leading the fellowship. I feel responsible for helping to shift people’s thinking. So one question I have to constantly ask myself is, “Am I doing this work right?” and “Am I doing more harm than good?”

I don’t know that there’s an answer to that, but everything that I do I try to do in a very thoughtful way. If you don’t approach this work the right way you can really do more harm. I’m helping to shape leaders.

And back to my faith-based roots, it’s in a prayerful and mindful way. I’m not going to save the world, but if I can shift one person’s way of thinking I can make the world better.





**Erik Takeshita, 50**  
Bush Foundation  
Community Creativity  
Portfolio Director  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
PLACES 2014 Cohort

Erik Takeshita remembers a theater experience that stuck with him while growing up in St. Paul, Minnesota, where race was often regarded in the binary of black and white.

Takeshita is fourth generation Japanese-American. There was a burgeoning Asian-American arts scene at the time and he saw a play at a local theater based on Japanese folklore, called Peach Boy.

“Being able to have this organization present work that was about me, by people like me, was a place to find myself in this community,” he said. “It was a way to locate myself in this place.”

Takeshita said even though he was from St. Paul, at times people made him feel like an outsider.

“Being asked, ‘Hey, where did you learn how to speak English so well?’ and other dumb questions people ask you,” he said.

Seeing the Asian-American experience portrayed through the

spoken word on stage made him realize he wasn’t alone. “Just knowing that other people experience this, that resonated,” he said.

Takeshita is also a ceramic artist who’s worked in community revitalization and development work for more than 20 years. Building stronger and equitable communities, he said, is a lot like trying to transform a lump of clay into a cereal bowl.

“The journey of envisioning something that doesn’t exist and making it real — that’s what artists do,” he said. “And I think that can be applied in creating healthier communities.”

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**

For me it’s all about platforms. What is the best platform to pursue my passion?

People try to pigeon-hole me as the “arts guy,” but what I tell them is the unit of change is community and the unit of intervention is the arts and culture.

To me, arts and culture give people that confidence they need for community problem-solving. It expands people’s thinking about what is possible. Art and culture can lead to better economic outcomes and health outcomes.

We’re looking to make the region better and build people’s capacity to solve problem on a regular basis.

**What was your PLACES experience like and how has it impacted your work?**

That experience was really transformative for me. It helped me identify some of my experiences as a person of color, in the Midwest in particular. PLACES helped me understand I have this double privilege of understanding what it means to be a person of color, but also what it means to be accepted by the dominant culture as a “model minority” because I’m

Asian-American. I’ve been given access to whiteness, but I have also experienced blatant racism.

I exist in a sea of white supremacy and PLACES was an opportunity for me to exist on land, where I was in a place not centered in whiteness. It was somewhat odd and it could be disorienting at times. The activities and exercises in PLACES created an environment where we could engage in hard conversations.

I have an acute awareness of my role in a private foundation that has really been centered and grounded in dominant culture. It also gave me a community of support that says, just because it’s always been that way doesn’t mean it has to be that way in the future — that something new is possible.

**How are you building for equity?**

From 1970-2015, our foundation invested \$120 million in arts and culture. Almost 60 percent of our investments had gone to a handful of organizations. Twelve to be exact. Less than 5 percent of our funding had gone to organizations led by people of color or Indigenous people. And less than 5 percent had gone to rural communities and small towns.

It’s like going to the gym and working out your left arm only. Turns out, we needed to build a new set of muscles.

This last year, 2018, we rolled out a new program: \$5.4 million over three years to serve people of color and Indigenous people in small and rural communities and towns. The requirements are that half of your board has to be people of color or rural, your executive director has to be a person of color or rural, or the same for half of your supervisory staff. You have to meet two out of the three.

That’s how you do it. You start asking different questions and

tracking data and being sharper and clearer about how you design programs. There’s something about making it explicit to communities and organizations that have historically been marginalized: “We want you, we want to work with you.” We haven’t done that in the past.

**If you could write a very short letter —“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**

**Dear People in Philanthropy,**  
We can make different choices. It takes courage. We need to be clear-eyed about data. We need to be intentional about the changes we’re seeking. And quite frankly, we need to tackle systemic changes. Racism in America has existed as long as America has existed, and in order to make changes we have to be honest about how long that will take.

I’m acutely aware that I work in a private nonprofit on the 25th floor of a literal white ivory tower. I always remind myself, “Remember where you sit.” I have something to contribute to the conversation, but whose voices aren’t here? How can we include those voices in the conversation?

The answer exists, but I don’t have the answer just because I work at a foundation. I can contribute to the conversation. That’s our role as people in philanthropy: We are stewards of resources.

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**

If we’re going to ask our community and grantees to think bigger, how are we thinking bigger?

To the extent that we as a foundation meet the needs, hopes, dreams and desires of our community members, I’m interested in that.



“WE NEED TO BE CLEAR-EYED ABOUT DATA. WE NEED TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT THE CHANGES WE’RE SEEKING. AND QUITE FRANKLY, WE NEED TO TACKLE SYSTEMIC CHANGES.”





**Alece Montez, 44**  
Orton Family Foundation  
Programs Director  
Westminster, Colorado  
TFN Board Member and  
PLACES Advisory Board  
PLACES 2013 Cohort

A few years ago, Alece Montez was told in a work setting that she was “too strong.” Montez said she sat with that comment for a bit and realized the truth had little to do with her perceived strength — it was more of a veiled rebuke for overshadowing someone in a position of power. “For me, it means I was asserting myself,” said Montez, who said she learned at a young age to find unexpected reservoirs of strength within herself, even when others underestimated her. Montez describes her childhood as one of survival in the coal-mining town of Lafayette, Colorado.

She was twice diagnosed with cancer as a young girl. Through her teenage years, she would navigate a household that wasn’t always stable. “I pretty much lived the whole story of poverty,” she said. Montez said she was always a self-starter and pushed herself even when she didn’t have the backing of a strong support network. She gave birth to her first son when she was in high school and was living on her own by the time she was a junior, all while balancing pre-collegiate courses. “You tell me I can’t go to college, I’ll show you that I can go and be the best at it,” said Montez, who not only earned a bachelor’s degree but a master’s in public administration. The Colorado native also once served as a firefighter on a high-angle rescue team, which uses special techniques and equipment on steep, mountainous inclines. She says those moments are integral to who she is today.

“All my life I’ve had to be strong,” she said. “You fend for yourself. This is who I am.”

**Why did you get into philanthropy?**  
I was working at a local city and had only municipal experience and planning. One thing I always gravitated toward was community engagement — going out into the community, having conversations and getting feedback. One day, I noticed in the police storage locker they had all these bikes they collected and I was like, “Why don’t we fix these bikes and give them back to the community?” And the city manager was like, “I don’t need you to engage with the community.” And if I kept doing that he would reprimand me. I searched online and I saw the Orton Family Foundation was looking for someone in community engagement. I thought, “This is me. I have to get this job.” I left the city and that was my entry-way into philanthropy.

**What was your PLACES experience like and how has it impacted your work?**  
I got into PLACES three years into my work in philanthropy. The fellowship called to me with its focus on equity and connecting with my colleagues in the U.S. doing the same work. One of the “ah-ha” moments I had at PLACES was seeing that I’m not alone. I would see other people outraged about the things I was outraged about. I saw that it’s OK to be vulnerable. I heard really smart people say, in a really authentic way, “I don’t know what I’m doing, either.” Then all your guards are down and you’re willing to say what’s on your mind without worrying about being judged. I’ve been able to leverage the connections and strong relationship I have with people from

other organizations when I have what some might call a “wild, hare-brained idea.” I can show that other organizations are doing similar work, or I can say there are other organizations who want to do this work. That has given me a lot of leverage in asserting myself.

**What is one of the biggest challenges you’re facing right now in this work?**  
For Orton, a barrier we work with quite often is that we developed a social cohesion model: If a community knows itself and knows what matters most to them, they can collectively be better prepared for current and future challenges. However, funders don’t want to help fund the development of social cohesion, but they love to fund the outcomes of communities that have strong social capital. We are missing the mark and not funding what towns truly need and value. I understand that many funders are restricted to fund what their donors want or endowments might require, but it puts us in a predicament of not always being able to move the needle.

**How are you building for equity?**  
When I came to the foundation, we were in the beginning stages of building our signature community program, Heart & Soul, which focuses on small towns and rural communities. When we started working with communities 10 years ago, people were asking, “How do you get communities to show up to council meetings?” You get people to care about city council meetings by first caring for them, showing up for them, and being where they are. There was an economic development official from a community who lived there his entire life and he had no idea there was a mobile home park there. They ended up doing pot-lucks at the mobile home park and getting people to tell their stories. Storytelling is our way of helping



“LET’S MOVE AWAY FROM GRANTMAKING AND LET’S MOVE TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE.”

towns build empathy for each other that in turn activates the community for one another. It’s the modern-day way of activating communities. We’re helping to build leaders without saying you’re going through a leadership program. People find ways to work together when they get to know each other.

**If you could write a very short letter —“Dear People In Philanthropy...” What would it say?**  
**Dear People in Philanthropy,** Let’s move away from grantmaking and let’s move to making a difference. We need to be part of the change. Time and time again, as funders, we’ll get together and ask, “Are we moving the needle?” And the reality is, no. We use the same ways of operating while expecting a different outcome. We have to be on the ground. We have to change the way we fund and the way we think about our grantees. They are the real change agents.

**Is there an internal question you’re constantly asking yourself while doing this work? What is it and how do you answer it?**  
For me it’s, “How do we make sure we’re not creating more inequities?” I don’t want to walk away from our work knowing that we made things worse.



The Funders’ Network would like to express its appreciation and gratitude to the many funders and partners who have supported the PLACES Fellowship over the past 10 years.

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We also want to acknowledge The Annie E. Casey Foundation for its leadership and support in making possible the publication of *PLACES 10th Anniversary: Stories of Impact*.

Recognition is also due to the many funders who have devoted their time and talents as members of TFN’s Board of Directors and the PLACES Advisory Board, including these current members.

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CLASS LIST

2009

- Zainab Hassan
- Sarah Hernandez
- Brian Moore
- Toya Randall
- Michael Shaw
- Todd Vogel
- Susanna Weckerle

2011

- Willie Barney
- Len Bartel
- Timothy Block
- Evelyn Burnett
- Dion Cartwright
- Mark Hallett
- Katy Locker
- Michael Maroney
- Vi Ngyuen
- Carolina Quezada
- Mary Skelton Roberts
- Jasmine Thomas
- Kristin Williams
- Elisa Wong
- Sylvia Zaldiva-Sykes

2012

- Lynn Coriano
- Susan Dobkins
- Jennifer Downing
- Edward Egnatios
- Briget Flood
- Sarah Gillespie
- Beth Herz
- Monica Lyle
- Meisha McDaniel

- Bina M. Patel
- Kirsten Scobie
- Sheena Solomon
- Eric Stoller
- Terri Thao

2013

- Juan Sebastian Arias
- Julie Brown
- Caitlin Brune
- Eric Dregne
- Tamu Jones
- Margot Kane
- Bryna Lipper
- Craig Martinez
- Jean McKeown
- Curt McPhail
- Tyronda Minter
- Alece Montez
- Susie Seidelman
- Kurt Sommer
- Sandra Chappelle

2014

- Alison Corwin
- Jonalyn Denlinger
- Jose Garcia
- Christopher Goett
- C.J. Hager
- Jasmine Hall Ratliff
- George Jacobsen
- Lauren Johnson
- Amoretta Morris
- Mary Rose Navarro
- Erik Takeshita
- Eula Tatman

- Sharmila Rao Thakkar
- Danielle Torain
- Geri Yang-Johnson

2015

- Chan Brown
- Michael Coffey
- Alfredo Cruz
- Fabiola Greenawalt
- Anneliese Grytafey
- Kimberly Jones
- Tom Linfield
- Evelin Montes
- Surabhi Pandit
- Heather Pontonio
- Tobi Printz-Platnick
- Mia Ramirez
- Dan Soliman
- Chris Stallworth
- Lauren Taylor
- Maranda Witherspoon

2016

- Gilbert Achay
- Kris Archie
- William Corderly
- Punita Dani Thurman
- Jill Fuglister
- Davian Gagne
- Janel Hines
- Bryan Hogle
- Mac Howison
- Sana Jafri
- Michelle Jaramillo
- Jaime Love
- Aaron Robertson

2017

- Alex Camardelle
- Mordecai Cargill
- Camille Cyprian
- Mekaelia Davis
- Michelle Huttenhoff
- Lisa Jacobson
- Patrick Johnston
- Melanie Mitros
- Tyler Nickerson
- Anne Laplante Phillips
- Marisa Aurora Quiroz
- Chantel M. Rush
- Kelly Thompson
- Heather Smith
- Jalonne White-Newsome
- Cheri Wright-Jones

2018

- Ajeev Bahatia
- Andrea Hulighan
- Cara Ferrentino
- Ciara Coleman
- Jaime Arteaga
- Joanna Trotter
- Kumar Raj
- Maarten Jacobs
- Maha Freij
- Marvin Carr
- Natalia Swanson
- Nina Holzer
- Randy Lopez
- Rebecca Chan
- Suganthi Simon
- Thomasina (Tomi) Hiers



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