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2021-2022

CONNECTING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



MICHELLE MYLES CHAMBERS

**Senior Program Officer
San Francisco Foundation**

Hometown: Oakland, CA

Michelle's grandparents were part of the Oakland Community Organizations (OCO) for over 40 years where she began organizing and educating her community of their rights to demand our government to provide the same services for low-income communities as it did for upper-class communities. Michelle joined the FAITHS Program as a lay leader of the West Side Missionary Baptist Church and now leads as the FAITHS Senior Program Officer representing the San Francisco Foundation for 24+ years.

Michelle serves on the boards of the Sisters of St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and Episcopal Impact Fund, while still actively involved in the West Oakland community. Michelle is married to Reverend Ken Chambers for 35 years, mother of Ashleigh, Candase, Brittany, and Ken Jr., grandmother to Genesis, Aeryon, Kyle, and Britain building the legacy of social justice, racial and economic equity.

Her motto is "Service to others is simply the price we pay for living." -Marian Wright Edelman

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**AISHA
EDWARDS**

Senior Program Officer

John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Hometown: Hazel Crest, IL

Aisha Cornelius Edwards is a Senior Program Officer at the MacArthur Foundation supporting the Safety and Justice Challenge, a national initiative to reduce racial disparities and jail incarceration. Aisha is also an adjunct at Loyola School of Law, where she coordinates a Criminal Law Practicum and co-leads a workshop that prepares students to be equitable and inclusive social justice leaders.

Aisha has been both a defender, supervising Criminal Defense at Cabrini Green Legal Aid, and a prosecutor in Cook County, IL. She has conducted hundreds of trials & hearings and has argued in front of both the Illinois Appellate and Supreme Courts. Aisha obtained her MBA and undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Illinois. Aisha received her law degree and advocacy certificate from Loyola. She is a 2020 Shriver Center Racial Justice Institute Fellow and a 2021 Omega Psi Phi Woman of Excellence awardee, Chi Lambda Lambda chapter.

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**ALYIA
GASKINS**

**Senior Program Officer
Melville Charitable Trust**

Hometown: Alexandria, VA

Alyia Gaskins is a Senior Program Officer at the Melville Charitable Trust. Her work focuses on land use and housing affordability as key components of preventing and ending homelessness. A public health strategist and urban planner, Alyia has over a decade of experience developing and executing large-scale initiatives and partnerships. Previously, Alyia was the Assistant Director for Networks and Programs at the Center for Community Investment (CCI).

Prior to CCI, as a Senior Associate at the National League of Cities, she helped hundreds of municipalities pass over 3,000 policies to promote health equity through First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative. She is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and has earned a master's degree in public health from University of Pittsburgh and a master's degree in urban planning from Georgetown University. She also holds a Professional Certificate in Municipal Finance. Alyia is an Alexandria Chamber of Commerce's 40 Under 40 honoree.

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**CHYNNA
PHILLIPS**

**Research and Policy Director
Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC**

Hometown: Lexington, SC

Chynna A. Phillips, MSW, MPH is the Research and Policy Manager at the Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC whose mission is aimed to reduce poverty. In this role she works on the Foundation's public policy and advocacy work collaborating with leadership to strategically set policy priorities and bring awareness to systems-level poverty drivers.

In addition to multiple board memberships, she is an adjunct professor in the College of Social Work at the UofSC, and co-owns Regal Lounge Men's Barber & Spa with her husband, Landry Phillips, in the heart of downtown Columbia, SC. She has been named the State.com "Top 20 under 40, Young Adult Honorees" Class of 2020, and Columbia Business Monthly "Best and Brightest: 35 and Under" Class of 2019. Chynna obtained her BA in Sociology from Xavier University and a Master of Public Health and Master of Social Work from the University of South Carolina.

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**RYCHETTA
WATKINS**

**Director, Grantmaking & Capacity Building
Memphis Music Initiative**

Hometown: Memphis, TN

Rychetta Watkins, a Memphis native, completed her undergraduate degree at Washington University and her PhD in English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Currently, she serves as the Director of Grantmaking and Capacity Building for Memphis Music Initiative. In a past life, Dr. Watkins was an Assistant Professor of English. Her research on contemporary African American and Asian American literature and civil rights movements of the 1960's fuels her work for increased equity and access in education, the arts, and philanthropy. The relationship between political identity, cultural expression, and power are central to her 2012 book, *Black Power, Yellow Power and the Making of Revolutionary Identity*, and her 2016 play, *Iola's Southern Fields*, which depicts Ida B. Wells' early years in the Mid-South and the roots of her activism in Memphis.

Rychetta has served in various leadership capacities within Memphis non-profits including Whole Child Strategies, Inc., City of Memphis AmeriCorps Program, and Stand for Children Tennessee. Rychetta is the proud aunt of Nia, Elle, Tasha, Kiya, and B.

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**COLLINUS
NEWSOME**

Senior Program Officer

The Colorado Health Foundation

Hometown: Denver, CO

Informed by years working with students and schools, Collinus is a trusted leader in the education landscape where she has worked to bridge the gap between policy and classroom practices to build diverse, welcoming spaces for all students.

Collinus began her career as a middle school teacher before working with teacher education licensure candidates at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Later, at Aurora Public Schools, she served as the policy advisor to the superintendent's office, evaluating policy, programs and leading special projects to implement equitable practices across the district.

As director of education at The Denver Foundation, she helped community leaders and educators maximize their impact and witnessed the ways community investments can either curb or exacerbate health and racial inequalities. At the Colorado Health Foundation since April 2020, Collinus leads the Foundations School-based Solutions bodies of work.

Collinus is a Denver native. Collinus earned a track and field scholarship to the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana where she was a 7-Time Big Ten Champion and 6-time NCAA All-American. Collinus lives in Park Hill, where she grew up, with her three daughters Grace, Faith and Rubie.

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**JAMESHA
SHACKERFORD**

**Program Officer
Central Carolina Community Foundation**

Hometown: Columbia, SC

Jamesha is a Program Officer at Central Carolina Community Foundation. A Columbia College (SC) graduate, her love of philanthropy and civic engagement led her into a career of assisting donors and nonprofits with their philanthropic goals. In her role, she manages a diverse portfolio of competitive grants, such as Hootie & the Blowfish Foundation, Connected Communities, as well as field of interest funds, such as the Catalyst Award and General Operating Support grants.

Additionally, Jamesha serves as the staff liaison for the African American Philanthropy Committee. In this role, she works with community members to promote, increase, and support Black philanthropy throughout the Midlands of South Carolina.

Outside of work, Jamesha serves as the small group coordinator for her church and is an executive board member for the Columbia College (SC) Alumnae Association. She is a recent Leadership Columbia Class of 2021 graduate and was recognized as a 2018 Best & Brightest 35 and Under from Columbia Business Monthly.

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**JULIAN
THOMPSON**

Director of Strategy

Institute for Capacity Building, UNCF

Hometown: Atlanta, GA

Julian Thompson is Director of Strategy for UNCF (United Negro College Fund) and its Institute for Capacity Building, and is based in Atlanta, Georgia. As Director of Strategy, Julian is responsible for the cultivation of programs and innovations that improve the resilience and sustainability of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and the broader Black community. During his time at UNCF, he has worked on initiatives related to executive leadership, online learning, workforce development, data management, and teacher pathways.

Julian began his career focused on the intersection of education and policy, with positions at City Year Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia and Philadelphia City Council. As a Senior Policy Advisor in City Council, he led a portfolio that included education, environmental protection, minority business development, housing quality and women's rights. Julian holds a bachelor's degree in history from Morehouse College and a law degree from Harvard Law School.

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**KATLEGO
CHIBAMBA**

**Global Programme Officer, LGBTI Programme
Free To Be Me at Positive Vibes**

Hometown: Johannesburg, SA

Katlego Chibamba is a Johannesburg based human rights defender, born in Kimberley, South Africa. He is a fellow of the Human Sciences Research Council & University of Central Los Angeles leadership in stigma reduction programme. An alumnus of the Young African Leadership Institute Southern Africa (YALI), and a qualified LILO Master Trainer through Positive Vibes Trust. He holds a bachelor of laws degree (cum laude).

During his student activism years, Mr. Chibamba, then a student radio producer and broadcaster at Unisa Radio, amongst other responsibilities, founded two LGBTQI+ rights organizations, namely - Gays and Lesbians of Rustenburg; and Gays and Lesbians of the University of South Africa. He was previously a Grants Officer at the Other Foundation, an African trust that works as a grantmaker and fundraiser in 13 southern African countries, while advancing equality and freedom in southern Africa, with a particular focus on sexual orientation and gender identity. Mr Chibamba is currently the Global Programme Officer for the LGBTI Programme at Free To Be Me at Positive Vibes.

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2021-2022**CONNECTING LEADERS
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM****TIFFANY
JACKSON****Manager, Inclusive Solutions
Prudential Foundation****Hometown: Newark, NJ**

Tiffany Jackson, of Newark, NJ, is committed to make her community more livable, vibrant, and filled with more opportunity than it is today. As manager, social responsibility and partnership, with Prudential Financial, Jackson is a passionate and thoughtful grant maker who seeks to address the inequities in education, employment, and economic development.

A Newark native, working in partnership with non-profit organizations, anchor institutions, and local government, she works to dismantle systems that has historically excluded residents from financial stability while increasing access to quality programs and resources. Executing the foundation's strategy with a racial equity lens is of utmost importance to Jackson - she led the data analysis of the diversity of organizations within Prudential's philanthropic portfolio and facilitated the discussion on setting portfolio diversity goals.

She received her B.A (2009) from Rutgers University in Journalism and Political Science. She previously served as Program Manager of Schools That Can Newark, an education non-profit and Director of Operations for Uncommon Schools.



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**TRACI
JOHNSON**

**Program Officer
POISE Foundation**

Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA

A lifelong problem solver, Traci Johnson has a passion for filling in the gaps that she identifies in the workplace and in the community. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University with a Master of Public Management and an experienced leader in the non-profit space, she is highly adept at capacity building. She can help to strengthen an organization's ability to fulfill its mission over time, thereby enhancing the non-profit's impact on lives and communities.

As the Program Officer at POISE, Traci assists Black-led, Black-serving organizations in bringing change to their community. She accomplishes this by managing the Foundation's grantmaking portfolio, leading strategic initiatives, developing strategies, and engaging community stakeholders. She is a trusted thought-leader, who is passionate about creating unconventional solutions to complex problems. At the end of the day, Traci is impassioned by her ability to make genuine change in the community through relationship building and organizational transformation.

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**WHITNEY
WADE**

**Program Officer, Women's Economic Security
Chicago Foundation for Women**

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Whitney currently serves as the Program Officer for Women's Economic Security at the Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) with a focus on workforce development, job training, and wraparound supports for women of color. Before joining CFW, she managed the McCormick Foundation's grantmaking with its professional sports team partners (Chicago Bulls, Blackhawks, Cubs, and White Sox) and A Better Chicago making investments primarily in college access and persistence, career pathways, and health and wellness.

Prior to transitioning to program officer roles, she spent several years in talent acquisition at the McCormick Foundation and Cantigny Park, Arabella Advisors, and executive search firms. She began her career in nonprofit fundraising and development.

Whitney holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and African and African American Studies Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. She is an advisory board member at Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP). Whitney is also an inaugural member and former co-chair of the South Side Giving Circle at CFW, which invests in organizations led by and supporting Black women and girls.

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