



Young Leaders For Social Change Fellowship Awardees



With a historic young voter turnout in this election, the need to bring our young leaders more closely into the fold is more important than ever. Believing in the power of and strategic need for committed and skilled organizers, SPF is pleased to announce the first class of Young Leaders for Social Change Fellows at SPF!

Young Leaders for Social Change (YLSC) was born out of the necessity to increase skillsets, advocacy, and civic participation amongst our youth. YLSC strives to give voice to young, rural-based, emerging community organizers, non-profit professionals, and philanthropic practitioners, aged 18-35, who are committed to social change in the Southeast.

Through an application/nomination process, the YLSC committee selected 11 individuals as its new fellows. The fellowship program is designed to help individuals become grounded and more effective leaders in their communities. This program is an opportunity for individuals to enhance their leadership skills, while learning new ones to apply in their communities.



Wayne Borders has cultivated an enthusiasm for the civic and legislative processes of our American democracy throughout the course of his life. Born in Houston, TX, and raised between the Northeast and the South, Wayne now calls South Carolina home. In high school, he joined the speech and debate team, concentrating on legislative debate. Never missing a beat, Wayne chose to deepen his political education and understanding when Hurricane Katrina interrupted his university studies in 2005. Today, Wayne serves on the South Carolina Progressive Network executive committee, where he also helped found its New Legacy Project. In 2014, he was among the first ACA Navigators in South Carolina. Wayne has also served as the Executive Director and President of Columbia NORML, and as the Advocacy Coordinator for the South Carolina HIV Task Force. In addition, Wayne worked as a staff organizer on both of Senator Bernie Sanders' Presidential campaigns.

Hausson Byrd is a student, author, and spoken word artist who has traveled the

country spreading his craft when not at home in Greensboro, NC. A self-published author working on his second book, Hausson started a campus poetry club during his tenure at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University where he majored in multimedia journalism. When not performing poetry, hosting events, or facilitating workshops, Hausson spends his time focusing on how he can better himself while helping his peers reach the best possible position from which they can succeed. Since the beginning of Summer 2020, he has been working with organizations in North Carolina such as Emancipate NC, and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to help build Black political power and dismantle the systems of oppression that have continuously held people of color down. He now spends his time employing his creativity and art to keep fueling the revolution.



Shaq Cossé is a writer, filmmaker, and activist for juvenile justice. Currently, Shaq is the Activities Coordinator at Son of a Saint, a non-profit organization in New Orleans, LA serving over 100 boys who have lost their fathers to death or long-term incarceration. Shaq gained a passion for this work during his undergraduate tenure at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. While there, a young man that he was volunteer tutoring was tried as an adult and incarcerated for allegedly stealing a pair of \$12 headphones. Since then, he's gone on to work in several spaces for incarcerated juveniles, and was nominated for the Screenwriter Award at the 2018 New Orleans Film Festival for his original script, 'Swanson,' an hour-long television pilot examining one of Louisiana's most oppressive juvenile justice facilities. This led to a number of community organizing opportunities in which Shaq became a point person for peers, creatives and young activists interested in joining the fight for juvenile justice reform.

Daniel Deweese is a political organizer residing in Columbia, South Carolina. He became politically active in 2014 with the South Carolina Progressive Network. The majority of his organizing activity centers on local and state issues, spanning from Medicaid Expansion to ending the racially segregated political districts which render democracy a farce in South Carolina. He is primarily interested in the problem of human freedom and how it manifests (or doesn't) in individuals and the political economy. Daniel contends the American

Revolution remains unfinished and that we are tasked with its ultimate completion.



Judson Garner of Montgomery, AL is a journalist and defender of democracy who believes in the fight for equal justice. Judson took part in the documentary, *“The Prison’s Professors,”* which shed light on one of the few beneficial programs in one of the nation’s most violent, overcrowded, and understaffed prison systems. Judson believes that positive change occurs when meaningful policy meets perseverance to fight for the will of the people and their best interests and when we are all on the same page to the point that we can make decisive calls at the voting polls. Judson hopes to dismantle political miseducation and sees his acceptance into the YLSC fellowship as a stepping stone toward reaching this goal. Over the next year, Judson plans to develop support systems in communities of color in Selma and Montgomery in conjunction with building a youth movement to share and solve today’s problems as one united front.

Jessica “Jess” James is a graduate of Jackson State University (JSU), where she received a B.A. in Political Science. A Mississippi Delta native, Jess was a member of G.I.R.L (Gathering Information Related to Ladies, a JSU campus organization) and a 2016 JSU Global (Study Abroad) Scholar. Jess is also a charter member of Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity at JSU. Jess has experience as an activist and organizer, speaking on social justice issues as they relate to Black lives, while raising awareness around Black women and girls’ validity, their issues, and humanization. Jess is also a freelance writer who has blogged for Hood Hippie, a Jackson, MS-located culture and entertainment blog site, and most recently for another Black media outlet, Black With No Chaser. Jess has worked as the Operations and Events Coordinator for Higher Purpose Co., an economic justice non-profit in Jackson, MS, and as the Programs Coordinator for the People’s

Advocacy Institute. Jess is a member of Southerners on New Ground (SONG) and the Black Youth Project 100's Jackson Chapter, having served as their Communications Chair and Co-Chair. Jess is also a published playwright whose work has reflected the lives of Civil Rights Activists throughout the Mississippi Delta.



Jackie Lipscomb, a Gainesville, GA native, is a community organizer and changemaker. She currently serves as the Administrative Assistant for the programs department at Newtown Florist Club where she is also the Program Director for Bright Teens United for the Future A.K.A. “B-TUFF,” and a board member. Jackie believes that progress occurs when people feel strongly enough about their conditions to get creative, apply ingenuity, and employ shrewd problem-solving skills. She enjoys listening to music, dancing, fostering her creative talents, spending quality time with family, and seeing JOY in those around her. She believes that being a YLSC fellow is a wonderful opportunity to continue her journey and grow as a leader in her community.

Jason Lowe has been organizing since 2018, while simultaneously pursuing a degree in Political Science with a special concentration in Citizenship and Social Justice at Western Kentucky University. He has organized state and local political campaigns, most recently working with Kentuckians for the Commonwealth as a part of their Voter Empowerment Program. Jason finds purpose working in rural communities via mutual aid, network building, and electoral work to help empower those whose voices have historically been silenced. As a YLSC

Fellow, Jason will continue organizing in his community around issues that are still not being fully addressed, such as access to affordable housing, economic justice, climate change, LGBTQ rights, and racial justice.



Alona Norwood is a Johnson City, TN native and graduate of Berea College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Social Justice with a particular interest in sustainability and is currently a historical researcher with *Black in Appalachia*, an East Tennessee PBS special. She is the co-founder of the New Generation Freedom Fighters, a grassroots organization in Johnson City, TN that works toward legislative reform with a focus on police brutality and racial justice. She is currently running for a seat on the Johnson City Commission to help the area better serve its youth, aging population, and diverse newcomers. As an activist and community organizer who is passionate about legislative reform that safeguards human rights, Alona hopes to inspire the next generation of Black, Brown, and poor White youth to take action and create transformative solutions that result in tangible outcomes for a better future.

Karla Palma began her community organizing and engagement career after witnessing the rights of her community, and those of other immigrants, compromised on a regular basis. She joined the movement by helping a local organization advocating for DACA recipients and immigrant rights. This rewarding experience motivated Karla to become a more visible representative within her community. Karla is currently pursuing a nursing degree and plans to become a pediatric oncologist. *“Thanks to DACA, I can pursue my dreams and continue my education. This program has opened so many doors for me.”* A very excited new YLSC fellow, Karla believes the fellowship will provide numerous opportunities to add necessary skill-sets to her social justice toolbox—all the better to help and effect positive change within her community.



Elaine Williams, a Richmond, VA native, is a community activist, organizer, and advocate for equity and justice for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities. Elaine currently serves as the Director of RVA Thrives with Virginia Community Voice, and is highly skilled at incorporating an equity lens when working on issues such as housing, homeless services, and community engagement. As such, Elaine is passionate about equipping Black, Indigenous, and People of Color individuals with the tools to make decisions on issues that impact their community daily. Elaine's passion in life is helping people tap into their inner light to awaken and fully realize their full, free and authentic selves. It is from this position that Elaine believes her fellow social justice warriors can be most compassionate and exacting in bringing about positive change that endures.

We are incredibly excited to follow the work of these promising young leaders and will be sharing their work in the coming months.

With deep gratitude,

The Staff at Southern Partners Fund

ADVANCING SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE RURAL SOUTH

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