



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities Helps Philanthropy Retain and Advance African Americans in the Field**

#### *ABFE 9<sup>th</sup> Class of Connecting Leaders Fellowship Program Announced*

[September 12, 2014, New York, NY] The Class of 2015, the 9th Class of ABFE Fellows, is an exciting group of philanthropic professionals. The six men and four women have vast experience across a range of issue areas including youth development, health, education and advocacy. The class is also geographically diverse, with three members from the South, three from the West, one from the Mid-West and three from the NY-DC corridor.

The Connecting Leaders Fellowship Program (CLFP) is a year-long, comprehensive leadership and professional development experience. Fellows will participate in leadership and personality assessments, receive 10 hours of individual executive coaching, and participate in monthly conference calls with their cohort. Fellows will also conduct a personalized project of their choosing.

The CLFP year officially kicks off with a four-day, intensive Leadership Summit, which takes place November 3-7, 2014 in Birmingham, Alabama.

ABFE launched the CLFP in 2005 to improve retention and career advancement for Black professionals in the field of philanthropy. Its track record is impressive. Over 80% of alumni are still in the field of philanthropy and CLFP alumni respondents to a 2012 survey credited the Fellowship in the following positive ways: Getting a promotion--12%; gaining more responsibility in current role--55%; Moving to a new organization in philanthropy--37%; Getting a promotion in a new organization--45%. In 2013-2014, three alumni were named CEO of their foundations.

ABFE's first Leadership Summit in the South is going to Birmingham at the request and considerable planning of Lyord Watson '12. Lyord is a founding member of the Birmingham Change Fund, a board member of the Community Investment Network, and he was recently elected to the Birmingham Board of Education. With a passion for encouraging a more participatory and strategic form of philanthropy in Birmingham, Lyord felt that the Leadership Summit was a natural catalyst to start a new conversation. Lyord regularly speaks in the language of ABFE Responsive Philanthropy in Black Communities framework and he remembers how rich his discussions were with people in Newark, NJ during his own Summit. "Bringing a talented group of experts and leaders who are passionate about change to Birmingham will be a wonderful gift for my city."

A selection committee comprised of CLFP Alumni and ABFE members reviewed the thirty applications and made final recommendations of the current class. Fellows were chosen based upon a set of criteria covering their experience in philanthropy, their goals for the future, and their interest and passion for making systemic change in Black communities.

For a complete list of ABFE's 2014-2015 Connecting Leaders Fellows, see page two or visit [abfe.org](http://abfe.org).

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ABFE is a membership-based philanthropic organization that advocates for responsive and transformative investments in Black communities. Partnering with foundations, nonprofits and individuals, ABFE provides its members with professional development and technical assistance resources that further the philanthropic sector's connection and responsiveness to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. Established in 1971 as the Association of Black Foundation Executives, the organization was credited with many of philanthropy's early gains in diversity. It since has evolved into an influential network. In 2013, the organization shed its descriptor and adopted the simpler ABFE (ab-fee) to better reflect its broadening membership. For more information, visit [www.abfe.org](http://www.abfe.org).