



## **ABFE: A PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIP FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES NAME ITS 2018 – 2019 CONNECTING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM RECIPIENTS**

### **The 13<sup>th</sup> Class of Connecting Leaders Fellowship is Comprised of 11 Philanthropic Leaders Dedicated to Effecting Change in Black Communities**

**NEW YORK – September 27, 2018** – Today [ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities](#) announced its 2018 – 2019 class of [Connecting Leaders Fellowship Program \(CLFP\)](#). The program, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, recognizes dynamic leaders with proven track records in promoting effective and responsive philanthropy in Black communities.

Fellows receive a yearlong experience designed to offer customized executive leadership coaching, professional development and personalized service learning projects in their respective communities. In addition, the Fellows will convene in Chicago on November 11 – 16, 2018 for the “CLFP Leadership Summit” which offers various learning sessions, as well as experiential activities centered around Chicago’s Black communities. This year’s Fellows have vast experience across a range of issue areas including racial and social justice, community engagement, family and children, education reform, equitable grantmaking and management.

“Our Fellows explore critical challenges facing Black communities, examine their leadership style and become equipped with new knowledge and tools that we believe are vital to advancing the sector,” said Edward Jones, ABFE’s Vice President of Programs. “What makes our program so unique is the executive coaching, co-learning and mentorship opportunities our Fellows gain that is highly applicable to their work in the philanthropic sector.”

The 13<sup>th</sup> Class of **ABFE’s Connecting Leaders Fellowship** work in diverse fields across various nonprofit/foundation institutions. This year’s Fellows are:

**Melanie Allen** – Network Officer, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation (Winston-Salem, NC)

**Dirk Butler** – Senior Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation (Baltimore, MD)

**Amelia Cobb** – Special Projects Manager, Policy & Strategy, First 5 LA (Los Angeles, CA)

**Dana François** – Program Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Battle Creek, MI)

**Tomeka Hart** – Senior Program Officer (based in Washington, D.C.), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Seattle, WA)

**Candace Johnson** – Community Partner (Denver Metro Area), The Colorado Trust (Denver, CO)

**Caroline McCoy** – Program Officer, Robert R. McCormick Foundation (Chicago, IL)

**Thena Robinson Mock** – Program Officer, Communities for Just School Fund (Washington, D.C.)

**Bonita Robertson** - Director of Civic Leadership and Workforce Initiatives, Greater New Orleans Foundation (New Orleans, LA)

**Rafael Turner** – Program Officer, Ruth Mott Foundation (Flint, MI)

**Tarik Ward** – Director of Music Programs, ELMA Philanthropy Services, Inc. (New York, NY)

“We are excited to welcome this year’s extremely talented Fellows to CLFP,” said Susan Taylor Batten, President and CEO of **ABFE**. “Each year we have the difficult task of choosing only 10 individuals for the Fellowship, but this year we’ve chosen 11 Fellows given the strong pool of applicants.”

Members of this class join over 120 other **ABFE** Fellows whom the program has recognized since its launch in 2005. A selection committee comprised of CLFP alumni and **ABFE** members reviewed application submissions and made final recommendations of the current class. Fellows were chosen based upon a set of criteria covering their experience in philanthropy, their future goals, as well as their interest and passion for making systemic change in Black communities.

For more information on **ABFE's 2018 – 2019 Connecting Leaders Fellowship Program**, visit [ABFE.org](http://ABFE.org). For **ABFE** news, events and more, follow us on Twitter at [@ABFE](https://twitter.com/ABFE) (search [#ABFECLFP](https://twitter.com/ABFE) for real time updates on Connecting Leaders Fellowship); on LinkedIn at [@ABFE](https://www.linkedin.com/company/abfe); on Instagram at [@ABFEPhilanthropy](https://www.instagram.com/ABFEPhilanthropy); and, like us on Facebook at [@ABFEPhilanthropy](https://www.facebook.com/ABFEPhilanthropy).

**About ABFE:**

ABFE is a nonprofit, 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 equality, diversity and inclusion. Established in 1971 as the Association of Black Foundation Executives, the all-volunteer organization was credited with many of philanthropy's early gains in diversity. It since has evolved into a fully staffed, 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 [ABFE.org](http://ABFE.org).

###

**PRESS CONTACTS:**

Kobe Swanson  
Communications Manager  
(646) 392-9869  
[kswanson@abfe.org](mailto:kswanson@abfe.org)

Seitu Jemel Hart  
Vice President, Membership and External Affairs  
[sjhart@abfe.org](mailto:sjhart@abfe.org)