



**ABFE**

A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities

**2018 - 2019  
CONNECTING  
LEADERS  
FELLOWSHIP  
PROGRAM**



# MELANIE ALLEN

Melanie Allen is a Network Officer at the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation where she manages the Foundation's South Carolina and Energy Equity grant portfolios, co-learns with grantee partners, identifies investment opportunities, and helps build effective partnerships.

Allen came to the Foundation from the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, where she served as Diversity and Equity Director. Allen developed a program to help families create wills, access legal services, retain land assets and make them profitable. She has developed curricula to help organizations identify and dismantle systemic inequality, and co-taught a graduate-level course on diversity, inclusion and equity at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment.

Allen is co-chair of the Environmental Grantmaker Association's 2018 Retreat Planning Committee and serves on the steering committee of the South Carolina Grant Makers Network. Allen studied History and African-American Studies at Columbia University. She is a native of Greensboro currently residing in Durham.

# DIRK BUTLER



Dirk Butler is a Senior Associate within the National Community Strategies unit at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In this role Dirk oversees the foundation's evidence based collective impact initiative called Evidence2Success (E2S) which is a framework designed to bring elected officials, public systems, schools and communities together to invest in healthy child development. Originally from New York City, Mr. Butler came to the foundation from the federal government, specifically the Administration on Children and families, where he worked on an extensive evidence based research and programmatic portfolio. Prior to joining the federal government, Dirk founded and ran his own consulting firm called the Opportunity Institute and was a director of service and strategic partnerships for several years in the Atlanta area. Dirk's areas of interests include Children and families, multi-sector partnerships, community development, and race equity.

Dirk holds a BA in psychology from Hunter College and a Masters degree in Social Work from Clark Atlanta University. Currently, he is completing his PhD in social service administration at the University of Chicago. Dirk lives in the Bowie Maryland area with his wife and three children (Jabari, Sania and Nkosi).



# AMELIA COBB

Amelia serves as Manager for Special Projects at First 5 LA where she leads the organizational-wide sponsorship initiative to support First 5 LA's four outcome areas: Family Supports, Communities, Early Care and Education Systems, and Health-Related Systems. In this role, Amelia is responsible for analyzing emerging opportunities for partnership and brand-building. First 5 LA is a leading early childhood advocacy and public grantmaking organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in Los Angeles County. In addition to leading the agency's sponsorships and connecting internal leaders and staff to relevant external engagements, Amelia also leads First 5 LA's Conference/Event Funding Grants Initiative. The initiative supports knowledge sharing activities that advance the field of early child development through increasing community or provider capacity, disseminating promising practices and sharing new research findings.

# DANA FRANÇOIS

Dana François is a Program Officer for Haiti for the W.K Kellogg Foundation with the Latin America and the Caribbean team. She provides leadership and oversight for executing programmatic and field-building efforts, partnerships, collaborations and coalition-building, promoting economic security for vulnerable children, their families and communities through an income generation strategy.

Recently, François served as the Haiti Program Manager for the Kellogg Foundation where she managed over \$77 million portfolio across employment equity, health, education.

Prior to joining W.K. Kellogg Foundation, François was a research assistant at the Center for Social Policy her work advanced development policy recommendations in support of minority families. As the project coordinator at the William Monroe Trotter Institute, she managed Haiti initiatives supporting their higher education system.

For the last 12-years, François has contributed to numerous development efforts. She received many citations acknowledging her leadership including “Who’s making Massachusetts Strong” recognition, the Boston Beacon Leader award.

François is pursuing an MBA at Babson College and holds degrees with distinction, from UMass Boston, in economics and political science. She is a native Haitian Creole and French speaker and a staunch advocate for animal rights and veganism. François resides in Wellesley, Massachusetts.



# TOMEKA HART



Tomeka Hart serves as a senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In prior roles she served as VP of strategic partnerships at the Southern Education Foundation, VP of African American community partnerships for Teach For America, and as the president/CEO of the Memphis Urban League.

Tomeka served two terms on the Memphis school board, including a term as Board President. She currently serves on the board of the Data Quality Campaign, where she chairs the Board/Staff Development Committee. Additionally, she serves as co-chair of the Grantmakers for Education Equity Impact Group, and as a member of the University of Tennessee College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences Dean's Advisory Board.

Tomeka is an Aspen Institute fellow of public leadership, and an education fellow. She holds a B.S. from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; an M.B.A. from Kennesaw State University; and a J.D. from the University of Memphis.



# CANDACE JOHNSON

Candace Johnson works as a Community Partner for a health equity foundation called The Colorado Trust supporting resident-led change and grantmaking. Before working in philanthropy, she was the Organizing Director for Colorado Jobs with Justice. Candace believes that building power in communities through grassroots organizing is the best way to achieve structural change.

# CAROLINE MCCOY



Caroline McCoy is a Program Officer at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, where she leads the Communities program's health and wellness funding strategy and a place-based initiative in a historic African-American neighborhood in Chicago. She manages relationships with corporate partners to help them achieve impact in their local communities. Her professional interests include supporting community-driven strategies that influence services, systems, and practices and advancing racial equity in philanthropy.

Prior to joining the McCormick Foundation, Caroline was an Associate Director at Arabella Advisors where she supported family and individual clients to build and implement grantmaking strategies across several issues. Previously, she worked at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, where she managed projects and advocacy efforts to improve services for young children in Illinois. She holds a BA in political science with a minor in African-American studies from the University of Illinois and a MS in public service management from DePaul University.

# THENA ROBINSON MOCK

Thena Robinson Mock is the Program Officer for Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF). CJSF is a national donor collaborative that funds grassroots organizations that transform schools through community organizing. In this role, Thena manages CJSF's grantee partner portfolio and is a strategic thought partner for groups working to create healthy school climates, address structural racism in education, and nurture the genius of youth of color.

Thena is also a civil rights and community lawyer with over a decade of experience in racial justice advocacy. Prior to joining CJSF, Thena served as Director of Advancement Project's Opportunity to Learn Program. Thena also served as Executive Director of Rethink, a youth organizing and leadership group based in New Orleans and as a Staff Attorney for the New Orleans office of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Thena is a graduate of Hampton University and Loyola University New Orleans College of Law.



# BONITA ROBERTSON

Bonita A. Robertson is the Director of Civic Leadership and Workforce Initiatives at the Greater New Orleans Foundation. As Director of Civic Leadership she works to align grantmaking and programmatic initiatives to increase impact and highlight the Foundation's voice. As Director of Workforce Initiatives, Robertson oversees the Foundation's workforce investments including the employer-led workforce initiative New Orleans Works and New Orleans Workforce Innovations which provides onsite post-hire supportive services to employees.

A native of New Orleans, Robertson holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Healthcare Management from Howard University and a Juris Doctorate from Loyola University College of Law. She currently serves as a commissioner of the Ernest N. Morial New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, is a previous co-chair of Emerging Philanthropists of New Orleans, and served on the transition teams for Governor Jon Bel Edwards and Mayor LaToya Cantrell.



# RAFAEL TURNER



Rafael Turner is a Program Officer at the Ruth Mott Foundation. The Ruth Mott Foundation (RMF) is dedicated to cultivating community vitality and inspiring hope and pride in Flint, Michigan. The grant making arm of the Foundation supports that through funding projects and organizations that advance priorities in youth development, public safety, economic opportunity and neighborhoods and by convening partners to address pressing community needs.

Prior to his work at the Foundation, Turner served as Deputy District Director in the office of United States Congressman Dale E. Kildee and as Regional Director in the office of United States Senator Carl Levin. Turner worked closely with senior elected officials in both the U.S. House and Senate to build synergies in the public sectors to help Michigan communities thrive. Rafael implemented strategies of value to Flint, Genesee County and the East Michigan Prosperity Region.

Rafael is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communication and Media Studies, and of the University of Michigan, with a Master's in Public Administration in Non-Profit and Public Organizational Management.

# TARIK WARD



Tarik is the first ever Director of Music Programs for The ELMA Philanthropy Services. Tarik is leading the expansion of The ELMA Music Foundation's portfolio, reach, and impact, particularly in the United States with organizations that are using music as an effective youth development tool.

Tarik's career includes seven years as a Senior Systems Flight Controller for the International Space Station at NASA, two years consulting at Deloitte, including a special focus on consulting with non-profits focused in education and early childhood development, and, two years as COO of The Commit! Partnership, a Dallas-based non-profit focused on expanding access to quality education for all children and youth from cradle to career.

Tarik has a BS in Aerospace Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an MBA and Masters in Education from Stanford University. He also plays the trumpet and is an avid music collector.