

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Voqal Announces 2019 Voqal Fellows

Longmont, Colorado, January 17, 2019 – Voqal is excited to announce the 2019 cohort of its fellowship program, which provides the resources and mentoring needed to bring early-stage ideas focused on progressive and social change to life.

“In this ever-changing political and social environment, we are excited to support a cohort of progressive entrepreneurs as they work to create a more socially equitable world through their innovative ideas,” said Voqal Grantmaking Director Brenda Williams-Sears.

The 2019 class will continue the legacy of Voqal Fellows making a difference in the world. Members of this year’s class are:

Alec Fischer – GenQMedia

Fischer’s project, GenQMedia is a media publishing platform that aims to increase LGBTQ+ visibility and representation for young LGBTQ+ changemakers, entrepreneurs, artists and storytellers. Alec Fischer is an emerging documentary filmmaker, award-winning content creator and nationally featured LGBTQ+ advocate.

Ali Imad Fadlallah – CleffNotes for New Jim Crow

Fadlallah’s project, CleffNotes for New Jim Crow seeks to bring Michelle Alexander’s "The New Jim Crow" to life through the creation of commercial-quality songs. The songs illuminate the book’s key content to not only widen its reach, but also to promote retention of its key facts and garner momentum toward ending mass incarceration. Fadlallah is a Los Angeles based singer, songwriter, mix engineer, actor and producer signed to Avant Artists as well as his own imprint, Rima Records.

Erick Garcia – #GametheSystem

Garcia’s project, #GameTheSystem aims to be a first of its kind, web-based, mobile-ready gamified action dashboard for grassroots organizing that leverages existing interactive organizing platforms, and utilizes mobile technology, texting, email and social media. Garcia serves as Presente.org’s Senior Technologist and helps produce Aliento AZ’s arts and healing podcast.

Kevon Paynter – Bloc by Block News

Paynter’s project, Bloc by Block News, looks to provide individuals a neighborhood news portal and one-stop-shop for the best news sources about their state, county and neighborhood. Paynter is a futuristic thinker, a journalist and comes from a community organizing and solutions reporting background. Most recently, as a journalist at Yes! Magazine, Kevon wrote insightful commentary and fact-based reporting about solutions to the country’s most pressing social issues.

Maria Yuan – IssueVoter Texts & Video

Yuan’s project, IssueVoter Texts & Video, seeks to provide users with custom SMS alerts before Congress votes on issues affecting them and to distill complex bills into concise,

engaging videos aimed at reaching underrepresented and young voters. Maria Yuan is the Founder of IssueVoter, a nonpartisan, online platform that offers everyone a voice in our democracy by making civic engagement accessible, impactful and efficient. In addition to her work with IssueVoter, Yuan has extensive experience in both the private and political sectors including campaign management, recruiting, social enterprise, investment banking, strategy and corporate development.

Richard Wallace – Equity and Transformation (EAT)

Wallace's project, Equity and Transformation (EAT), is an organization that uses an innovative approach to community organizing that harnesses the voices of Chicago's informal economy to advance social change locally and increase equity for those who are the most excluded politically, economically and socially. Wallace is an organizer and artist in the fight to end economic violence and anti-Black racism. He has organized campaigns to end discrimination and exploitation in the temp labor sector and led campaigns to end police violence in Black communities.

Sam Bonar – Inkfluence

Bonar's project, Inkfluence, is an augmented reality (AR) app and a new kind of social media platform focused on pushing physical organizing beyond the virtual while making political engagement casual, fun, collaborative and dynamic. Bonar is a comedic activist, video producer, improviser and citizen lobbyist. Sam has 14 years of theater and comedy experience and has been a headliner, teacher and coach at Washington Improv Theater since 2013.

Allister Chang – Wash and Learn

Chang's project, Wash and Learn, seeks to expand digital access and supports digital literacy development for families in the United States living below 200 percent of the poverty line by installing public access computers and facilitating digital literacy trainings inside coin laundries. Chang is currently a research affiliate at the Berkman-Klein Center for Internet and Society at the Harvard Law School. For the past eight years, Chang has worked to expand access to information and to design better processes to match existing resources/programs with the families and individuals who actually need them.

The Voqal Fellows will start their tenure with a convening in Denver where they will have the opportunity to meet one another and develop the community that is central to the Fellowship. Voqal Fellows will receive a \$30,000 stipend and are expected to complete their projects in six months.

About Voqal

Voqal is a national collaboration of EBS (Educational Broadband Service) licensees that work to advance social equity by creating an educated, empowered and engaged public. Voqal makes grants and impact investments, expands internet access and digital equity, offers fellowships and protects the public airwaves. Our efforts focus on the education and enrichment of all, not just those who are well-off socially, economically and politically.