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Voqal Announces 2023 Voqal Fellowship Recipients

Longmont, Colorado, April 18, 2023 — Voqal is excited to announce the 2023 Voqal Fellowship cohort. The Voqal Fellowship is an investment in people as individuals and budding entrepreneurs. It is a talent accelerator that gives bold visionaries a chance to be at center stage. The 2023 class will continue the Voqal Fellowship's legacy of supporting the individuals who are making a real difference in the world yet are often overlooked by traditional funders. Members of this year's class are:

Adamu Chan, *What These Walls Won't Hold* Film Impact Campaign

Adamu Chan (he/him) is a filmmaker, writer, and community organizer from the Bay Area who was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison during one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks in the country. He produced numerous short films while incarcerated, using his vantage point and experience as an incarcerated person as a lens to focus the viewer's gaze on issues related to social justice. The *What These Walls Won't Hold* film impact campaign is dedicated to transforming the representation of incarcerated people in mainstream media and public consciousness. Adamu draws inspiration and energy from the voices of those directly impacted. He seeks to empower them to reshape the narratives created about them through film.

Arielle Newton, The Solidarity Society

Arielle Newton (she/her) is a world-builder, organizer, and movement strategist ready to design our Liberated future's pillars. A Black feminist anchored in the traditions and insights of the Combahee River Collective, she is inspired by the generations of Black women and queerfolk who dared to live freely. The Solidarity Society is an emerging lifestyle organization that will bring direct giving, political education, and research together to facilitate an equitable world that will soon be here. The Solidarity Society will operate like a think-and-action tank that advances reparations, solidarity economies, and participatory democracy as anchors to a queer-affirming Black Liberation. Black Liberation is central to Society's world-building and powers Arielle's curiosities and freedom dreams.

Chino Hardin, *Forgotten Stewards: A Journey of Reconnection and Reclaiming the Land*

Chino Hardin (he/him) not only believes in change but works for it. He leads with love and fights with forgiveness. *Forgotten Stewards* is an anthology of black, indigenous, and queer folks of color reconnecting with and reclaiming nature/land in this country. He will work with this community to document their journeys and analyze how they reconnect with nature and land, including histories about what happened to break those connections and why. They will also collect and share skill-ups and "nature secrets," the healthy and healing things people do in nature that they don't share due to shame, shyness, and other reasons - until now. Chino focuses on black, indigenous, and queer folks to bridge the divide among communities through isms, colonization, and trauma, as these identities have guided his journey and vision.

David Sampe, Healing Liberation Music & Breath

David Sampe (he/him) seeks knowledge and enlightenment, dedicating his life to personal growth and becoming an accomplished teacher, father, and friend. Healing Liberation Music &

Breath (HLMB) is a program to transform social, emotional, and civic education to help at-risk DC middle schoolers participate in their own process of healing and liberation. At this critical and transitional moment in kids' lives when traumas start to compound, and the school-to-prison pipeline pulls them in, we bring participatory music therapy and breathwork to help them do their internal healing work. We then partner with local DC advocacy organizations to help them identify and align on a campaign or community need that they can strategically impact.

jøn kent, Cooperative Community Healing & Building

jøn kent's (he/him) principal aim is to be of help. The theme of his life's work is being a community service actor through acting, activism, and activating sustainable spaces. He is currently working to develop a community land trust to curb displacement in the Riverbend neighborhood, located on the eastside of Detroit. Through this work, they will engage, educate, and empower residents to reinvest in their communities by purchasing and repurposing land to their vision. This participation fosters bonds of safety, solidarity, and trust. Through an equitable cooperative model, we endeavor to create pathways of resiliency, food sovereignty, and economic empowerment by giving residents the foundational tools to collectivize and co-own their community.

Lydia Cutrer, The Village Real Estate Investment Cooperative

Lydia Cutrer (she/her) is a real estate consultant through her firm, The O.W.N. Her life is dedicated to helping clients Build Wealth through Real Estate. She is a licensed real estate salesperson in Louisiana and Mississippi. She has worked across the real estate and financial services industries focused on business lending; affordable housing development; homeownership for first-time homebuyers; small business and non-profit development; and commercial property investment. The Village is a New Orleans community where we sow our resources to grow our neighborhoods. The Village is a community-based real estate investment cooperative that lowers barriers to building wealth by expanding our knowledge and pooling our funds to prosper collectively.

Marcus Şàngódoyin Akinlana, Bulbancha Rise Up

Marcus Akinlana (he/him) uses art to make your spirit fly free, and your soul sizzle and pop! He is Olòrìṣà ŞÀNGÓ, aka African Traditional Priest, ready to serve ọjọ gbogbo (on any given day). He is a drummer to tap into beats to make your body bounce. Bulbancha Rise Up is a series of art concerts and performances intertwined with Afro-Indigenous sacred and powerful ritual communal workshops to shift the energy in the environment, transform consciousness and self-awareness, and popularize and uplift Afro-Indigenous cultural genius. These sacred rituals and community-wide artistic performances will also highlight the roles our illustrious ancestors, like the Maroons of Bayou Sauvage, played in our survival.

Michelle Mondia, BIPOC Death Doula Collective

Michelle Mondia (she/her) has nearly two decades of experience as a public health consultant. She supports families in reclaiming the end-of-life journey and works to decolonize the death and dying experience of BIPOC and other marginalized communities. The BIPOC Death Doula Collective's mission is to resist the racist, capitalist, and discriminatory practices that rob us of a dignified and compassionate end-of-life journey while centering the voices and experiences of BIPOC communities. This project aims to address inequity by organizing death doulas, developing a robust toolkit to serve as a resource, and training members of communities as compassionate companions.

The Voqal Fellowship officially begins with an in-person convening in April in Denver. Fellows will meet each other and start to develop the relationships and connections central to the program. Voqal Fellows receive a \$30,000 stipend and a community of learning to work on their projects for six months.

“In a time where social and racial inequities continue to present challenges for our country’s future, it is more important than ever to support innovative changemakers with bold ideas to advance progressive social change. This year’s cohort exemplifies that ideal, and we look forward to watching their visions become a reality over the course of next year,” said Voqal fellowship program manager, Mary Coleman.

About Voqal

Voqal is a philanthropic organization committed to the promotion of social equity. Voqal makes grants to nonprofits fighting systemic inequity, provides capital to entrepreneurs working to advance social justice, advocates for progressive public policy changes, invests in organizations working to address the educational opportunity gap, and operates a business that expands internet access and digital equity.