



## Arts & Culture Leaders of Color 2020 Fellows Bios

### CHICAGO



**Enrique Morales** (he/him/his) is a Chicago based artist, curator, researcher/writer focusing on art media and cultural policy, as well as a cultural strategist. His research interests include the role public space and art have within contemporary art discourse as well as hybrid medium approaches to contemporary art. He is also a social impact entrepreneur within the cultural sector, having co-founded an arts non-profit organization in Chicago, the Northwest Arts Connection, now in its ninth year of operation. He is a passionate advocate for labor rights reform for creative professionals. In addition to his work and passion within the cultural sphere, he is an enthusiast of professional tennis.

Enrique earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and the Visual Arts from the University of Chicago.



**Joseph Medcalf** (he/him/his) is a proud alum of Western Michigan University, earning a B.A. in Marketing from the Haworth College of Business and current resident of Chicago, IL. By day Medcalf serves as a Bid Analyst for Morton Salt and by night produces one of a kind paintings through his J.A.Medcalf visual artistry brand.

Medcalf has often found various ways to channel a love for creative expression. In recent years he decided to source inspiration from the dynamic world around him and dedicate a secondary career to exploring the depths of visual arts. Fueled by a love for culture and present day life experiences the J.A.Medcalf brand was born early 2016.

Medcalf has had the pleasure of partnering with world class brands such as; Cap'n Crunch, Bombay Sapphire, LinkedIn and Twitter. Most recently he's been honored as a 2020 Chicago Scholars 35 Under 35 award recipient. As a self-proclaimed

"Artrepreneur" Medcalf is on a mission to redefine what it means to be a working Artist on your own terms.



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**Keyana Marshall** (she/her/hers) is best known for being prolific, generous and creative. With a B.A. in Communication (PR & Advertising) and professional experience in sales, marketing, development, public relations, and event planning, Born and raised on the Southside of Chicago, Keyana is a creative chameleon and dot connector for many millennials in the U.S.

Keyana's professional resume includes working with a range of different non-profit organizations. She has worked for organizations such as Joffrey Ballet, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Goodman Theatre and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Outside of her current arts administration role at Urban Gateways, Keyana is a freelance photographer and event planner. She has organized concerts, hair expos, panel discussions and networking events.

Keyana's ultimate goal is to bring together the young black leaders of Chicago in order to change the city for the better.



**Mesha Arant** (she/her/hers) is a Chicago-based musician and arts administrator. She is the Manager of Administration & Programs at 3Arts, a nonprofit arts organization that advocates for women artists, artists of color, and D/deaf and disabled artists. She also serves as the organization's accessibility coordinator, assuring that all communications and programs are accessible to their constituents.

Mesha was selected for a 2019 Interfaith Innovation Fellowship, a fellowship awarded to five people who are poised to cultivate ideas and projects that creatively address social issues through an interfaith lens. Her project, In Tune, brings artists from different religious and philosophical traditions together to collaborate and create work around four themes: birth, shame, joy, and suffering/death.

Mesha is a singer-songwriter; her music is situated somewhere between folk and soul, the music she grew up listening to. Her finger-picking style and striking voice have been described as "hauntingly beautiful." Her first major recording project is forthcoming. She received her B.A. from Wofford College in 2012 and a Master of Divinity from Yale University in 2015. To learn more about her work or music, follow her Instagram at @meshaarant



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### DETROIT



**Jainelle Robinson** (she/her/hers) is the Community Engagement Officer of ArtOps, creating engagement activities that connect ArtOps partner organizations to diverse audiences across Southeast Michigan, including leading a community arts development program in the city of Highland Park.

She supports equity in the arts by drawing from a wealth of experience gained by working alongside underserved communities in the Washtenaw County area and a wide range of volunteer work within youth-centric programs offered through University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw County Sheriff's office, and grassroots community efforts. She also is an accomplished artist and has extensive administrative experience working with several nonprofits including The Dispute Resolution Center and SafeHouse Center in Ann Arbor.



**Katelyn Rivas** (she/her/hers) is a poet, teaching artist, community organizer and arts administrator. In 2019, she founded the Detroit chapter of The Free Black Women's Library, a free, black feminist bicycle borrowing and trading library. Her work through the library celebrates black femme authors, writers, artists and activists through representation, education and liberation through literature, community trading and transformational education programming.

Her experience includes program management in literary arts nonprofits and youth-led community organizing and is especially interested in the intersection of arts and equity. As a teaching artist, she facilitates trauma-informed poetry workshops. Katelyn additionally has a passion for research as has compiled the arts-based youth participatory action research study "Poetic Justice: Youth Voices Responding to Policing on Brown Bodies.", and "From Manipulatable Objects to Self-Empowered

Subjects: Radical Self-Care for African-American Women."

Katelyn has a BS in English and Writing from Northern Michigan University, MA in Urban Studies and Community Arts from Eastern University and is currently pursuing an MFA in Writing from Pacific University. Her writing focuses on biculturalism, black girlhood, biracial identity, transracial adoption interwoven with the lyricism of the natural world.



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**Meccah Martin** (she/her/hers) is a Detroit native, and recent graduate from the Maggie Allesee Department of Theatre and Dance at Wayne State University. She has interned at many arts organizations including Sidewalk Detroit, Downtown Detroit Partnership, and the Fox Theatre, where she sharpened her skills as an event organizer, arts marketer and administrator, as well as a cognoscenti of public arts and programming. She hopes to further develop her knowledge in the arts and culture field to help elevate and cultivate art in the Detroit area, particularly in areas where art is inaccessible. She strives to exercise her beliefs that art should be available to everybody for consumption and continues to seek creative methods that could come into fruition.

Meccah received her bachelor's degree in Marketing and Advertising from Michigan State University, and holds Master of Fine Arts from Wayne State University.



**Miah Davis** (she/her/hers) is the Development Assistant for Institutional Advancement at the College for Creative Studies (CCS). Her interests focus on addressing the lack of diversity within fundraising and building bridges between people of color and institutional investment within the arts. While advancing her skills in development operations and donor relations, Miah also serves in leadership capacities across campus to advance institutional change including on CCS' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Council, Staff Assembly Executive Committee, and Strategic Planning committees. Miah strives to make sure that people of color see themselves reflected in the institutions they support.

Miah holds a bachelor's degree in Painting from Wayne State University. She has previously held positions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Kresge Arts in Detroit, and Wayne State University's Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department. Outside of work, her hobbies include ornamental horticulture, discussing American politics, and sharing her love of North America's only marsupial, the Virginia Opossum, with friends.



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### MILWAUKEE



**DeMar Walker** (he/him/they/them) is the Artistic Director of Ko-Thi Dance Company and Ton Ko-Thi Children’s Performing Ensemble. He is trained in Hip Hop/Street, West African, & Afro-Caribbean techniques. He has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Journalism and Theatre Arts from the University of Central Arkansas. He is also an original cast member of the Milwaukee theatrical production “Pieces: In My Own Voice” which raises awareness about mental health in the African-American community.

With a passion for service, the Milwaukee native has worked at various local non-profit organizations including Cardinal Stritch University’s Lifetime Learners Program, Social Development Commission, and the Free & Community Clinic Collaborative. He is a two-time participant of the apprenticeship program Public Allies Milwaukee and three-time recipient of the Danceworks Intensive Study Scholarship receiving training in ballet, contemporary, & hip hop. In 2017, he was selected to participate in the inaugural cohort for the Building Beloved Community Leadership Fellowship through the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, as well as, the 2018 mentee cohort for the Dance USA Institute for Leadership Training Program. DeMar has performed with Wildspace Dance Company and Fist & Heel Performance Group. Since 2014, DeMar has been an Associate Artist/Lecturer in the Peck School of the Arts/Department of Dance at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



**Leah Harris** (she/her/hers) is a Dallas native, with a Bachelors in Theater Arts, with a focus on directing and education, from St. Edwards University in Austin, Texas. In Austin, Leah worked in a variety of artistic capacities; including, professional education programs as a teaching artist at the ZACH Theater and stayed actively engaged in her theater community on campus as Producing Director for Transit Theater Troupe (2012-2013) and Alpha Psi Omega, a national theater service fraternity. Shortly upon receiving her Bachelor’s degree, she returned to Dallas and began work at The Dallas Theater Center in the education department. Soon after, Leah began to focus her work on community engagement and partnerships, while gradually laying the groundwork for Public Works Dallas, which is the participatory community engagement arm of the Tony Award winning Dallas Theater Center. Public Works is founded on the belief that the culture of theater belongs to everyone,

so her work in Dallas is focused on creating equitable, joyous spaces for community and rigorous art making to live hand in hand. Leah has presented at numerous universities in Texas on racial equity in the arts and best community engagement



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practices. Most recently, she served as the Director of Community Engagement at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Lastly, you can find her writings in the form of a manifesto published to [howlround.com](http://howlround.com).

### MILWAUKEE



**Marcella "Xela" Garcia** (she/her/hers) is a Xicana artist, innovator and cultural warrior that was born in Guadalajara and raised in Milwaukee. She currently serves as the Executive Director at Walker's Point Center for the Arts and brings broad experience in arts and culture, education, philanthropy and organizational sustainability with more than ten years of systems and program development, implementation and evaluation. As an advocate of racial and cultural equity she serves on local and national arts, education, and foundation boards, serving as a mayoral appointee to the City of Milwaukee Arts Board. Xela is a founding member of the art collective Raices Revolucionarias, was awarded Board Sources' National Emerging Non-Profit Leader Award in 2012, was recognized as Wisconsin's Most Powerful Latinos in 2018, and was selected to the 2020 class of the Milwaukee Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award.

She earned her BA in English Literature with an emphasis in Creative Writing, Chican@/Latin@ Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and also holds a certification in Nonprofit Leadership from UW-Milwaukee.



**Mikey Murry** (She/her/hers) is a poet, writer, filmmaker, cultural curator, and Black feminist creative from Milwaukee, WI. She is also a 2020 Artist-Activist Fellow with Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT), a youth of color led independent nonprofit that focuses on direct action, advocacy, and leadership development. Mikey's love of programming began while she was a student at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She worked in Student Involvement as the Sociocultural Programming Undergraduate Assistant. Shortly after graduating with her B.S in Community Engagement & Education, Mikey began working for Milwaukee Film as their first-ever Cultures & Communities Project Coordinator.

Currently, Mikey is working on her first film, as well as a social media and spoken word campaign for LIT. She is hoping her work will continue to amplify and celebrate the voices of Black women and Queer & Trans People of Color.



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### MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL



**Adaobi Okolue** (she/her/hers) is the executive director at Twin Cities Media Alliance (TCMA), a nonprofit media arts organization equipping people, organizations with the power of media arts to shape narratives that advance equity and justice. Adaobi is also the publisher of TCMA's flagship project, the Twin Cities Daily Planet, an award-winning online news publication dedicated to amplifying and connecting marginalized voices.

Adaobi is often seen as an instigator for thinking of fresh, smart ways for solving problems, and is known for exploring the intersections of multimedia, creativity and innovation, story and activism in her work. She has been a featured guest speaker on MPR News' discussion about Black Lives Matter and media, Minnesota Women's Economic Roundtable, The Loft Literary Center's Curated By series, and The Common Table's Writing and Art for Justice. Adaobi has served on countless committees, panels, boards and commissions for organizations in the Twin Cities like Minneapolis Arts Commission, Minnesota State Arts Board, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, among others. She is also a former Roy Wilkins Policy Fellow.

Adaobi is also known as a writer, visual and performance artist, and producer. She was a contributing artist to renowned Sha Cage's and Signe Harriday's Mama Mosaic, where she was featured in critically acclaimed Blacker the Berry ensemble and exhibit at Intermedia Arts and Playwright's Center. She is a Givens Foundation Black Writers Collaborative Fellow and VONA Writing Workshop alum. Currently, Adaobi serves as a board member (vice-chair) for the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council.



**Adrienne Doyle** (she/her/hers; they/them/theirs) is a Minneapolis writer, curator, and fund development professional whose creative practice centers the collective, connective, and vulnerable aspects of blackness and queerness. She works as a Teaching Artist and Institutional Giving Manager at Juxtaposition Arts. Here, she supports the vision of the organization through building institutional support for its annual fund and through the facilitation of youth-directed research projects that highlight issues affecting the Northside's built environment and its residents. She is a co-founder of Burn Something Collective, a Black and POCI femme, nonbinary, and trans artist collective working at the intersection of curation, publishing, and peer-to-peer mentorship. Adrienne is a 2020 IDEA fellow with AFP-MN, a 2019 fellow with the Emerging Curators Institute, and a new board member to the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council. She is committed to creating opportunities for queer and trans Black Minneapolis artists to invest in their craft, show their work, and build infrastructure to

support the healing and self-determination of their communities.



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**Jovan H. Johnson** (he/him/his) is currently serving as the Program Director of Experiential Learning at Carleton College where he coaches students through the career development process and manage several experiential learning programs that prepare students for life after college. Jovan's work is rooted in helping people create meaning, purpose, and progress in their work.

Before relocating to Minneapolis, Jovan lived in Des Moines, Iowa where he served as chair of the Black Urban Professional Group which helped recruit and retain young professionals of color in the city of Des Moines. Jovan also was a leader in the community by serving on several non-profit board and community initiatives. Additionally, Jovan is a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. where he serves in several different capacities both regionally and locally. Jovan has been worked with American for the Arts in several different capacities such as serving as Program Coordinator for the Diversity in the Arts Leadership (DIAL) Internship program and

coordinating with them for the Art in America Scholars Program (specific to Carleton College).

Jovan is a native of Atlanta, GA and received his Bachelor's degree from Paine College and a Master's degree from Iowa State University. Jovan's passion and service lies in supporting people in their professional advancement, breaking down barriers to finding sustainable employment, and community building through the arts.



**Natalie Kennedy** (she/her/hers) is a program officer and accessibility professional who works at the Minnesota State Arts Board. Raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, Natalie has spent years in arts education, outreach, and community engagement at several Twin Cities nonprofit arts organizations. Inspired by her history as an aspiring classical French hornist, she is passionate about eliminating lack of representation and resources as barometers for success or access to opportunity. She has committed her career to empowering potential, providing opportunity, and dismantling barriers. Natalie has led and facilitated several professional development sessions at the Kennedy Center's annual Leadership in Arts and Disability conference as well as with the Minnesota Access Alliance, which she co-founded and currently co-chairs. Natalie has woven accessibility as a priority into all Arts Board grant programs and manages arts grant programs designed to diversify access and promote lifelong learning in the arts. Natalie has a master's

degree in nonprofit management from Hamline University and a bachelor's degree in music from Carleton College.





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