

For immediate release: Tuesday October 22<sup>st</sup> 2013

The Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), the only Black-led organization representing low-income and working-class Black families in the education reform and parental choice movement in the U.S., announced today the inaugural cohort of the Bailey-Sullivan Advocacy Leadership Fellowship (BSALF), a first-of-its-kind, yearlong training program for Black leaders in education reform advocacy. Ranging in age from 24 to 45, the cohort includes professionals, clergy, scholars, parents, education reform change agents, and community organizers collectively representing 13 states. Through a series of four weekend academies, the fellows will develop a solid foundation of knowledge about trends in education reform and education policy, and the advanced skills needed to serve as effective advocates for parental choice and transformational education reform in their communities.

“BAEO recognizes in these 20 dynamic men and women the power to make a lasting difference for our children,” says Bailey-Sullivan Leadership Institute (BSLI) Director Offiong Bassey. “They are some of the best and brightest in our community, and they offer an authentic voice for low-income and working-class Black families.”

BAEO created the Bailey-Sullivan Leadership Institute in honor of two dynamic young and politically astute women, Deirdre Lynne Bailey (1970-2003) and Lisa Yvette Sullivan (1961-2001), who helped found BAEO and guide the organization’s efforts to identify and support leaders. The institute builds on their legacy by addressing the dearth of Black leaders in the education reform sector, with the belief that Black people themselves must drive changes in the way Black children are educated in our country for reforms to be most meaningful and enduring. “Currently, there are no effective and consistent programs in place to train and mobilize the very people whose children are most negatively affected by educational inequity,” explains Kenneth Campbell, President of BAEO, “however, this exciting program will change that.”

The Bailey-Sullivan Advocacy Leadership Fellowship will engage rising leaders from various sectors of the Black community and provide valuable training and networking opportunities to deepen their understanding of education reform advocacy and increase their capacity to effect change. The fellows will participate in four intensive weekend seminars in cities where promising reform efforts are unfolding, observing successful educational practices, meeting with active leaders, conducting case studies, and learning practical reform tactics and strategies. Noted authors and speakers in education reform and advocacy will conduct colloquia specifically designed for the fellows. In addition, the cohort will take part in BAEO’s Annual Symposium, the largest gathering of Black reformers and supporters of parental choice in the nation. The fellowship will emphasize team-building and networking within the cohort and within the greater advocacy network that BAEO provides. Assignments throughout the year will keep fellows engaged with the work, deepening their knowledge base and skillset around education reform, and each fellow will be responsible for an advocacy project designed to impact their community and/or the movement at large.

BAEO is proud to offer the Bailey-Sullivan Advocacy Leadership Fellowship in partnership with The Walton Family Foundation and the Doris and Donald Fisher Fund, whose generous support has been instrumental in the program’s launch.

Following are brief summaries of the 2013-2014 Bailey-Sullivan Advocacy Leadership Fellows:



**Ross Anderson, of Louisiana**, is manager of alumni impact with Teach for America (TFA) in New Orleans and a former TFA corps member. He discovered his passion for education reform and his own potential to effect change as an undergraduate at Georgetown University, where he majored in theology and philosophy and worked for an afterschool program designed to empower the District's adjudicated youth. In his current position, he is able to shape education in New Orleans while pursuing formal ministerial training.

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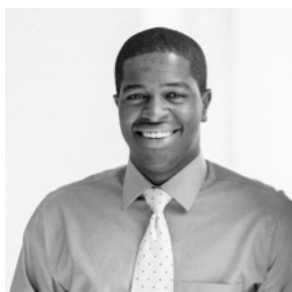
**Jessica Ball, of Tennessee**, is an education program associate at Hyde Family Foundations. A former sixth-grade English teacher, Jessica believes education reform will reach its tipping point when educators and advocates exist in all sectors. She plans to use her seat at the philanthropy table to advocate, unabashedly, on behalf of radicalized education equity.

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**Jamall Calloway, of New York**, is an ordained clergyman with degrees from Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, and Yale Divinity School. Originally from Oakland, California, he is currently pursuing a master's of sacred theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Through his studies and early work experience, Jamall has learned how religion and education can catalyze self-improvement and communal awareness, and he is dedicated to using both to combat injustices in the world.

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**Asa Craig, of Texas**, is an education research and policy analyst at the Laura and John Arnold Foundation in Houston. In this role, he is responsible for the analysis of new prospective grants as well as for the ongoing management of the foundation's education portfolio. Born in Brooklyn, New York, and raised in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Asa attended Cornell University where he double-majored in government and Africana studies, focusing on the way in which governments, policies and society interact with historically underserved communities.

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**Aphia Griffiths, of Connecticut**, is working toward a bachelor's degree in social work while serving as an administrative assistant in the state department of correction's education department. The single parent of one son, she is an active advocate for educational quality and volunteers to support underserved youth in her community. Having seen firsthand through her work the impact of a failed system of education, Aphia is dedicated to effecting the positive changes needed to afford every child the opportunity to succeed.

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**Chanelle Helm, of Kentucky**, is an education and child advocate with two young children. She is currently pursuing a degree in education. Chanelle's experience studying abroad to evaluate education within developing nations deepened her understanding of alternative instructional methods and underscored the importance of quality education to combat oppression. Chanelle serves as a parent representative on her local Head Start Policy Council; chair of the parent committee at her daughter's school; board member of Women in Transition, an organization for low-income women operated by low-income people; and is a member of the Kentucky Alliance

Against Racist and Political Repression, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, and BAEO.

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**Victor Jones, of Louisiana**, is an attorney who has represented charter schools in New Orleans in special education matters and charter school governance. Before exploring the legal aspects of education, Victor focused on education policy in graduate school and gained practical experience in the field as a kindergarten teacher. His interest in education reform was fueled by his experience mentoring Black male youths in college and strongly influenced by his childhood in Pascagoula, Mississippi, where his mother

raised him and two brothers as a single parent and early childhood educator.

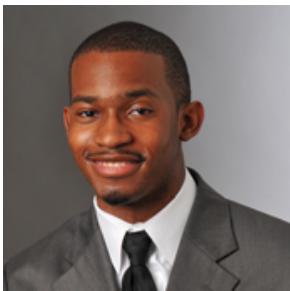
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**Marlon Jones, of Alabama**, is senior pastor of Franklin Street Baptist Church in Mobile, and second vice president for the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Mobile, in which role he is responsible for church and community relations. A former music educator, Pastor Jones continues to make weekly visits to local schools to serve as an advocate and mentor for students. A graduate of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, he completed the prestigious Leadership North Carolina Program in 2008; and while in North Carolina, he founded *The Proclamation*, a community newspaper

that voiced the concerns and focused on the achievements of the Black community. He is a member of the NAACP and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and he and his wife have two sons.

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**Victor Kwansa, of Maryland**, is a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School and a published poet whose youth-oriented writings focus on social justice issues and historical figures. Building on his experience as an undergraduate working with afterschool and enrichment programs for New Haven youth, Victor participated during law school in street law workshops for juvenile offenders and interned for the Afterschool Alliance and the “I Have a Dream” Foundation, a nonprofit organization that prepares low-income children for college. He has contributed his views on the educational achievement gap in televised, print, and online media. In 2010, Victor was

featured in *The Root*’s online gallery of up-and-coming artists and entrepreneurs.

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**Danielle LeSure, Ph.D., of Georgia**, is director of education policy at the Georgia Center for Opportunity. In this role she leads the center’s public school reform efforts and parent outreach for school choice options. Previously, Dr. LeSure served as associate program officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; policy advisor in education for the U.S. Conference of Mayors; and director of policy and communications at the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, a nonprofit focusing on education equity issues in New York City. She holds a doctorate in educational policy from

Michigan State University and a bachelor’s in educational studies from Emory University.

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**Martha Liddell, Ed.D., of Mississippi**, is an educator with 25 years of classroom and administrative experience. She began her career as a middle-school teacher and has since held roles as assistant principal, principal, curriculum director, grant writer and coordinator, assistant superintendent, and superintendent of education. Believing that parents and educators must work together to advocate for the effective education of their children, Dr. Liddell has dedicated herself to fighting against low expectations for children of poverty and of color, adopting the mantra, “Every child, every chance, every day.”

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**Mykia Long, of Washington, DC**, works in teacher recruitment and selection for the DC Public Schools and volunteers as a GED instructor at the YWCA. Her commitment to education advocacy stems primarily from her own experience as a struggling student in Detroit Public Schools and as a guardian of her teenage brother during her college years. Mykia overcame many obstacles to earn her bachelor’s degree in sociology at the University of Michigan and a master’s in policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University. She has worked with several urban school districts, including Detroit Public Schools and Pittsburgh Public Schools.

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**Tony Lowden, of Georgia**, is executive director of STONE Academy, an afterschool program that serves at-risk children aged 5-12. Formerly co-pastor of Strong Tower Fellowship, he currently serves as youth pastor at Lundy Chapel Missionary Baptist. Having grown up in North Philadelphia in a single-parent home, Tony understands the plight of poverty and illiteracy; and living and ministering in a community devastated by drugs and crime, he is dedicated to transforming lives through spiritual and academic enrichment. He is the former executive director of Campus Clubs, a Christian-based outreach program for students in grades 1-12. Earlier in his career, Tony ran the Democratic Caucus and later the Republican Caucus for the state of California; led the national government affairs divisions of Eli Lilly and AstraZeneca; and was youth pastor of Beulahland Bible Church, the largest African-American church in Macon, Georgia.

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**Kenneth Mason, of Georgia**, is the director of Urban Initiatives for the Southern Regional Education Board on the Georgia State Board of Education. A former Teach For America corps member, he has extensive classroom experience and a passion for grassroots reform. Kenneth earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from Hendrix College where he launched a youth empowerment afterschool program. As an entrepreneur, he provides education consulting services thorough his organization, Mason Education. He is also a founding board member and advisory council chair for KIPP STRIVE Academy in Metro Atlanta. Kenneth lives with his wife and son.

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**Nikotris Perkins, of Wisconsin**, is director of programming at Lead2Change, Inc., a nonprofit designed to support the time, talent, and treasure of Milwaukee's young people. Nikotris has served various nonprofit organizations in Milwaukee, including the TRIO programs at Marquette University, Children's Outing Association, and The Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, and developed and implemented leadership development programs in Baltimore and Dallas as well. An Americorps alumna and graduate of Alverno College, she has completed graduate studies with emphasized research on Black women and their leadership role in Milwaukee as well as curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup>- century educational policy. Nikotris volunteers through many leadership and community service organizations, including The National Urban League, The Links, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and The Young and Powerful Group.

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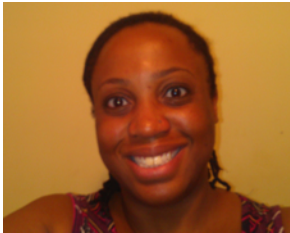
**Jessica Ross-White, of Pennsylvania**, is co-founder and chief executive officer of The Purple & Blu Xchange (PBX), a nonprofit organization founded in 2008 to improve the quality of life, spread awareness, and provide supportive services for children, young adults, and their families within minority communities diagnosed and affected by lupus, arthritis, and other rheumatic diseases. In her role as CEO, Jessica plays a key role in defining PBX's identity as it expands and in shaping the organization's culture. A career educator, she previously worked within a nationally recognized Philadelphia-area charter school network, serving as administrative assistant, classroom teacher, school-based teacher leader, and academic coach for literacy. Jessica is currently enrolled in the Master of Science degree program in the science of instruction at Drexel University where she is also completing the teacher preparation program for Grades Pre-K-4.

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**Curtis Sails III, of Wisconsin**, is director of teacher leadership development for Teach for America Milwaukee. In this role, he is primarily responsible for creating programming and professional development for 120 teachers in public, charter, and choice schools citywide. He has led the effort to design a scope and sequence for culturally responsive teaching on both regional and national levels. Curtis holds a master's of education (educational policy and leadership) from Marquette University and a bachelor's from Florida State University. He is passionate about providing Black students an education that values who they are, their history, and their potential.

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**Ojiugo Uzoma, of New York**, is a progressive community organizer with 12 years of experience dating back to her involvement as an undergraduate at Washington University in St. Louis in movements to end the war and ensure living wages for service workers. While in college, Uzoma was also intensively involved as a mentor for at-risk middle-school youth, which sparked an interest in education. Uzoma's professional experience includes roles in the external relations department of a charter management organization and later, through the Industrial Areas Foundation, organizing parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community leaders during the fight for mayoral control of New York City public schools in 2009. More recently, she has been organizing with Families for Excellent Schools, working with parents in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn on issues affecting their children's safety and prospects for the future.

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**Sherita Walls, of Mississippi**, is a mother, wife, and early childhood educator, who has experienced firsthand the deep concern and sense of powerless plaguing parents whose children are trapped in failing schools. "I wholeheartedly understand the dire need for education reform in Mississippi and in the area where I reside...I am sending my daughter to a public school...and words cannot express how disappointed I am in the local school system." Determined to help secure better options for Black families, she has begun to arm herself with effective advocacy tools, having become an active BAEO member and attended two Annual Symposiums.

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**Remington Wiley, of Texas**, is the feeder pattern manager for KIPP Houston Public Schools' southeast campuses. Previously, she founded the Spanish department at KIPP Liberation College Preparatory where she also served as the Project L.I.F.E. Campus Coordinator. As a 2010 Teach for America alumna, she raised the bar not only for her students but for herself as well, as she has spent three years developing her leadership skills. Remington is dedicated to closing the opportunity gap in her hometown of Houston, Texas, and aspires to have an impact one day on education reform on a global scale. Remington is a graduate of Spelman College and remains active as the Houston chapter historian for college's the National Alumnae Association.