

LISC announces 2019-20 Rubinger Fellows

Year-long fellowships will support new models and research projects that advance economic opportunity, strengthen communities

NEW YORK (Nov 21, 2019)—As part of its work to fuel broadly shared prosperity throughout American communities, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has named 10 local leaders as winners of the Rubinger Community Fellowship award, an annual program that invests in nonprofit talent and new ideas to spur growth.

LISC will award \$40,000 to each fellow, who will spend the year modeling programs and researching new ideas focused on a wide range of local issues like gentrification, generational wealth transfer, cooperative business development, housing and employment.

“The Rubinger Fellows are innovators who are willing to test new ideas and build replicable models that will have an impact well beyond the year of their fellowship,” said Maurice A. Jones, LISC president and CEO. “Our hope is to energize these leaders for the work of 21st century community development and catalyze opportunities for thousands of people across the country that have not been able to fully participate in our national economic growth.”

The new cohort of Rubinger Fellows includes:

April Boyle, *executive director of the Build Institute, Detroit*

- Supporting entrepreneurs with a new approach to microlending.

Veralisa Hunter, *asset coach/housing counselor, Covenant Community Capital, Houston*

- Advancing social justice through housing education that helps families protect their largest asset, especially in the face of significant economic challenges.

Eric Anthony Johnson, *community development director for Bloomington, Minn.*

- Conducting research and developing a guidance tool that will integrate a “shared values” framework into city development plans to help mitigate economic inequality.

Aviva Kapust, *executive director of the Village of Arts and Humanities, Philadelphia*

- Launch a new cooperative business strategy to prepare low income residents for employment in the tile industry.

Mei Lum, *director of the W.O.W Project, New York*

- Implementing creative placemaking strategies to combat the negative effects of gentrification and build stronger communities in and around Chinatown.

Cherie Ong, *co-founder, Good Places, Atlanta*

- Helping property owners and developers create community spaces that align with local needs and opportunities.

Assata Richards, *executive director of the Sankofa Research Institute/chair of the Emancipation Economic Development Council, Houston*

- Developing a values-driven cooperative business that will provide services to people with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities, and improve the lives of caregivers.

Syrita Steib, Operation Restoration founder, New Orleans

- Offering opportunities to formerly incarcerated women by connecting them to meaningful employment and addressing long-term housing and other needs.

Charnette Trimble, CEO of Grandmama's House, Atlanta

- Educating seniors about real estate, home repair, tax relief and wills so they can pass on their assets to the next generation.

Ryan Watley, executive director of Go Forward Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff, Ark.

- Connecting underemployed rural residents to a local innovation hub for small businesses, while also expanding small business participation in the industrial supply chain.

The Rubinger Fellowship program is named in honor of Michael Rubinger, LISC's long-time CEO, who pioneered new approaches to revitalizing communities throughout his 40-year career. One of LISC's first employees at its founding, he stepped down in 2016 after 17 years at the organization's helm.

"It is critical that local expertise and engagement are not just quietly nurtured but actively and persistently supported," Rubinger said. "This group of 10 local leaders has demonstrated an ability to lead and, just as importantly, the capacity to push the boundaries of the community development field so it can do more, do it faster and do it better."

Jones said the fellowship recognizes the talent of individuals to drive lasting change, while at the same time serving as an investment in communities and the field of community development as a whole. Previous Rubinger fellows have taken on such diverse challenges and opportunities as disaster recovery in Puerto Rico, the affordable housing crisis in California, financial stability for domestic violence survivors, and out-of-school-time services for youth, to name just a few.

"These folks are already breaking down barriers and blazing new trails," Jones said. "With this fellowship, as well as with LISC's broad efforts on health, housing, economic development, safety and jobs, we want to help them do more."

In addition to financial support, LISC convenes the cohort of fellows three times a year to facilitate peer-to-peer learning experiences and provide leadership development training and additional program resources.

Support for the Rubinger Fellowship is provided by Lisa & Dick Cashin and LISC Chairman Robert E. Rubin, with additional support from Nancy and George Walker; Bank of America; Citi Foundation; Ford Foundation; The Kresge Foundation; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; MetLife Foundation; Morgan Stanley; State Farm; The Greater Milwaukee Community Foundation; and New Jersey Governor Philip D. Murphy.

For more information on the winners and their fellowship projects, [click here](#).

About LISC

With residents and partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, visit, do business and raise families. Since 1979, LISC has invested \$20 billion to build or rehab 400,500 affordable homes and apartments and develop 66.8 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. To learn more, visit www.lisc.org.