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CONTACT: AMY CLARK  
PHONE NUMBER: 703-527-8300  
EMAIL: ACLARK@ASHOKA.ORG

## **Ashoka Welcomes 14 Social Innovators Taking on Society's Big Challenges**

*Ashoka U.S. and Canada Announce 2017 Class of Fellows*

DETROIT, MI — Today, Ashoka announces and welcomes its 2017 class of Ashoka Fellows from the United States and Canada.

Announced at Independent Sector's Our Common Future Conference, these 14 systems-changing social entrepreneurs are celebrated for their innovative solutions and awarded a lifetime, non-residential Fellowship, the first three years of which include targeted strategic and financial support and participation in in-person convenings.

“This group of Ashoka Fellows proves that good ideas can emerge everywhere,” noted Simon Stumpf, Director of Venture and Fellowship at Ashoka. “The diversity of experiences that these leaders draw upon, their depth of understanding of the challenges we face as a country, and the optimism, creativity, and energy they pour into their solutions not only inspires us, but also instructs us. These new Ashoka Fellows show us how to champion real, transformative change in a world that desperately needs it.”

Ashoka evaluates more than 500 promising nominations per year and conducts hundreds of hours of in-person interviews across North America before selecting the final list of Ashoka Fellows. This year's Fellows come from small towns and urban centers all across the U.S. and Canada. They are tackling complex challenges and reimagining talent, economic identities, academic research, childcare, elder care, isolation, eating, and ecological justice as they help us all identify lasting solutions.

“Ashoka welcomes Fellows into a community of social innovators whom I have grown to trust completely,” said Aleta Margolis, Founder of Center for Inspired Teaching and an Ashoka Fellow. “Ashoka understands what the Fellows are trying to accomplish and helps provide a path to get there, and that is of tremendous value.”

Through a \$100,000 contribution, AT&T supports Ashoka's All America initiative to create a more diverse field of social innovation. “We support ideas that positively impact our communities,” said Nicole Anderson, assistant vice president of social innovation at AT&T.



“Organizations like Ashoka are providing crucial resources to game-changing ideas and entrepreneurs, wherever they are, to help close representation gaps in the entrepreneurial community.”

As part of the global community of more than 3,000 Ashoka Fellows welcomed since 1981, these more recently elected social entrepreneurs are able to learn from each other while Ashoka learns from them. With each success, Ashoka includes more and more people in a different kind of future: One where everyone looks inside themselves and finds a changemaker.

The 2017 Fellows include:

- **ANNE BASTING** TimeSlips | Milwaukee, WI Anne Basting is reimagining the experience for those dealing with aging, dementia and memory loss by transforming institutions of care into cultural and community centers of creative expression and growth.
- **GINA CLAYTON** Essie Justice Group | Oakland, CA Gina is building a loving community for the millions of women with incarcerated loved ones, and harnessing their collective power to end mass incarceration’s harm to families and communities.
- **SHARON DANKS** Green Schoolyards America | Berkeley, CA Sharon Danks inspires and enables communities across the U.S. to turn asphalt schoolyards into green living spaces that improve children’s wellbeing and learning, while contributing to the ecological health and resilience of cities.
- **FAGAN HARRIS** Baltimore Corps | Baltimore, MD Through a new model for developing and retaining talent, Fagan is positioning talent as a city’s main “architecture” in which to invest. By doing so, cities and communities are empowered to solve their most pressing challenges.
- **DANIEL KISH** World Access for the Blind | Los Angeles, CA Daniel Kish is transforming the blindness profession and the lives of people around the world through a model of perceptual navigation that is more respectful of blind dignity and purpose; easier to teach, learn, and use; and more diversely applicable to all ages, cultures, backgrounds and ability profiles.
- **DENISA LIVINGSTON** Diné Community Advocacy Alliance | Navajo Nation Denisa is combatting food deserts and diabetes in Navajo communities by empowering community members to take control of food policy—shifting the focus from unhealthy people to systemic challenges, and the solution from personal choices to food sovereignty.
- **CANDICE LYS** FOXY | Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada Candice is cultivating a new generation of young leaders through a novel form of public health education that encourages expression through the arts. In doing so, Candice supports historically marginalized and isolated communities to address deep-seated challenges through evidence-based holistic practices and experiential ways of learning across generations.
- **MICHELLE MASCARENHAS-SWAN** Movement Generation | Oakland, CA



Michelle is helping to build a vibrant and proactive movement for ecological justice in the U.S. by equipping frontline communities with a unifying framework and a national network of support.

- **JESSICA SAGER** All Our Kin | New Haven, CT Jessica Sager is transforming and professionalizing the field of family childcare by supporting providers in radically reimagining how they see themselves.
- **LAURA EMIKO SOLTIS** Freedom U | Atlanta, GA Laura Emiko Soltis leads a modern-day freedom school for undocumented youth, where students receive free university classes, college application assistance, and social movement leadership training.
- **GREGG TREINISH** Adventure Scientists | Bozeman, MT Gregg is harnessing the skill and motivation of people across the country who recreate in the outdoors—hikers, surfers, kayakers, mountain bikers and more—and applying it to rigorous data collection for the purpose of environmental stewardship and conservation.
- **REBECCA VAN BERGEN** Nest | New York, New York Rebecca van Bergen is transforming the lives of millions of home-based workers in the apparel and home design industries by bringing their profession into the formal economy.
- **DAVID WILEY** Lumen | Provo, UT David is championing the concept of ‘open educational resources’ to reinvent how educational content is created, licensed, used, and improved—ultimately enabling college and university students to access their class materials for free.
- **HAMSE WARFA** BanQu | Minneapolis, MN Through BanQu, a disruptive innovation in the digital identity and financial inclusion spaces, Hamse is creating a paradigm shift in the way individuals and organizations (large and small) engage with refugees.

You can find more information about the 2017 Ashoka Fellows at <https://www.ashoka.org/en>.

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*For 35 years, Ashoka has pioneered social entrepreneurship – an entire field dedicated to fostering energetic problem-solving right in the communities where the problems exist. Through its time-tested growth platform, it finds, vets, and supports thousands of changemakers – in the U.S. and around the world – with this unique mindset and ability.*