

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation names 7 Colorado nonprofit leaders for 2022 Class of Livingston Fellows



Denver, CO (December 9, 2021) – Bonfils-Stanton Foundation is pleased to announce seven leaders to be selected to the **2022 Class of Livingston Fellows**. These transformational leaders are working tirelessly to meet the needs of communities across the Denver Metro area and redefining the future of nonprofit leadership in the process.

“The 2022 class of Livingston Fellows speak to the caliber of executive directors both rooted in and working in service to diverse populations across the community,” says Chrissy Deal, Director, Livingston Fellowship Program, Arts & Social Change Grantmaking. “It is widely known that BIPOC leaders in the nonprofit sector are significantly underrepresented, and Bonfils-Stanton Foundation is privileged to support and invest in this cohort of incredible and impactful BIPOC changemakers.”

In considering the 2022 class, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation’s selection panel took into account field of expertise, years in the sector, and how their identities inform their leadership abilities. However, one of the most pressing considerations was how they led their organizations during the pandemic and continue to navigate through this prolonged period of transition.

The Livingston Fellowship Program provides advanced learning opportunities to a promising cohort of nonprofit leaders annually through a \$35,000 investment to support their development journey. The fellows develop a three-year action plan for their personal leadership advancement and join a community of alumni fellows dedicated to realizing a collective vision for deeper community impact.

“Bonfils-Stanton Foundation is proud to welcome these seven extraordinary leaders to the Livingston Fellowship Program,” says Gary Steuer, President and CEO. “This is the first time in the program’s 18-year history that an entire class of fellows has identified as BIPOC and is a clear indication of the extraordinary depth of BIPOC leadership in our community. The Foundation’s investment in them will ultimately have a powerful impact on the communities and people with whom they are connected.”

Since 2005, Livingston Fellows have attended influential academic programs, convened with other prominent leaders in their fields, traveled around the globe and have made a lasting impression on their respective areas of the nonprofit sector and beyond.

Meet the 2022 Class of Livingston Fellows now:

- Elsa Bañuelos – Executive Director, [Movimiento Poder](#)
- Anthony Garcia, Sr. – Executive Director, [Birdseed Collective](#)
- Olga Gonzalez – Executive Director, [Cultivando](#)
- Yessica Holguin – Executive Director, [Center for Community Wealth Building](#)
- SoYoung Lee – Executive Director, [Rocky Ridge Music](#)
- Neha Mahajan – Executive Director, [Transformative Leadership for Change](#)
- Johnnie Williams – Executive Director, Denver Youth Program: [GRASP](#) and [Metro Denver Partners](#)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Erica Boniface, 303.717.8246

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FOR THE MEDIA: The 2022 Class of Livingston Fellows have many wonderful stories to tell your readers and viewers. We are happy to set up the interviews, gather images and b-roll, and help tell their stories. Contact Erica Boniface at 303-717-8246 or email at Erica@ColoradoMediaNetwork.com.

JOHNSTON R. LIVINGSTON FELLOWS CLASS OF 2022



Elsa Bañuelos

Executive Director, [Movimiento Poder](#)

As a first generation, working-class Latina, and the daughter of immigrants, **Elsa Bañuelos** has been committed to improving the lives of her community over the last 22 years. As a high school student, she organized for equity and justice and was involved in campaigns to improve the conditions at her school, West High School in Denver, Colorado. Elsa was the first in her family to graduate from college. She went on to graduate from Metropolitan State University of Denver with a Bachelor's in Sociology and Spanish. Before joining Padres & Jóvenes Unidos (PJU), she was the Program Coordinator for the Promotora project at

Clínica Tepeyac. As a promotora she conducted bilingual, community-based workshops, both in community and in homes, and provided coaching on topics aimed at empowering community members to effectively manage their health.

In the fall of 2003, Elsa joined Padres & Jóvenes Unidos as a youth organizer. She has helped lead youth and parent-led campaigns, as well as building the internal infrastructure of the organization ever since. Elsa later became a Co-Executive Director in the winter of 2016 alongside the founding members, and in November 2019, she became the first solo Executive Director of PJU, now called Movimiento Poder, a significant milestone for the organization.

One of the most compelling projects Elsa has envisioned and brought to life is a leadership development program for young people. Born out of her own personal struggles and journey to healing, Movimiento Poder's Leadership Development is a youth leadership development program serving Latinx youth and parents. The program welcomes all Latinx youth from ages 14 to 30, including parents primarily in Metro-Denver. At its core is the belief that it is important to connect their personal struggles with systemic issues which will allow for meaningful, positive, and potentially transformative experiences with peers in their schools and the wider community. The program will develop leaders who will have a strong sense of personal and collective belonging because of their experience. Elsa's constant commitment to developing youth leaders will forever leave a mark on the Latinx community and social justice movement in Colorado.



Anthony Garcia, Sr.

Executive Director, [Birdseed Collective](#)

Anthony J. Garcia Sr. was born and raised in Denver, Colorado, more specifically in the Globeville community. Beginning as an urban street artist, Anthony has since grown into a multifaceted creative entrepreneur and community leader, and is now most recognized for his public artwork, community outreach programming, and his leadership in championing emerging artists from Denver and abroad.

His aesthetic pays homage to cultural, geographical, and historical contexts through the implementation of modern techniques and exploration of pop trends. While Anthony most commonly is referred to as a contemporary artist, he could additionally be considered a traditionalist, especially in terms of his interpretation of and relationship to the mainstream art world.

In 2008, Anthony co-founded BirdSeed Collective – an organization committed to improving their community using their exceptional artistic skills and deeply rooted connections to their local community. BirdSeed attained 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 2015 and has built an immense infrastructure of art and humanitarian resources within our community as well as abroad. The community of Denver already has a close, long-standing relationship with BirdSeed Collective, and they are the city's preferred choice for implementing many public outreach programs involving public art as well as food relief programs.



Olga Gonzalez

Executive Director, [Cultivando](#)

Olga González (she/her/ella) has been working in the nonprofit sector in Colorado for over 27 years. She is the Executive Director of Cultivando, a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating the leadership of the Latinx community to advance health equity through advocacy, collaboration, and policy change. She believes that her work in the nonprofit space, is not so much a profession as it is a calling.

Olga is also the CEO of O.G. Consulting Services where she facilitates equity and racial justice and healing trainings and workshops nationally and throughout the state of Colorado. Her leadership and coaching has resulted in creating more diverse staff and boards, stronger teams, and explicit policies that center the communities most impacted by social inequities.

Olga has participated in numerous racial justice and leadership programs such as; the *Visiones Multicultural Leadership Program*, *Leadership Denver*, *Undoing Racism*, the *Transformative Leadership for Change* fellowship, and the *Executive Directors of Color* program at the Denver Foundation.

Olga has earned several awards for her work in the areas of inclusiveness, equity, and social justice, including; the *Award for Excellence in the Promotion of Health Equity* from the Public Health in the Rockies Conference, the 2021 *Soul of Leadership (SOL) Award* from the Latino Community Foundation of Colorado and was recognized by Moms Clean Air Force and EcoMadres for her leadership in local environmental justice efforts.



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Olga holds a dual bachelor's degree in Psychology and Chicano studies from Scripps College in Claremont, CA. She also earned a master's degree in nonprofit management from Regis University as a Colorado Trust Fellow.

Olga is the proud descendant of Indigenous Yaqui/Otomi people who survived Mexican slavery, forced relocation, and European land theft. She was born in Monterrey Nuevo León, Mexico and grew up in Los Angeles, California. She considers herself a child of Mother Earth and makes her home wherever she plants her roots and her prayers. She is the mother of three amazing children, who along with her husband, is raising to be the next generation of fierce and compassionate social justice warriors.



Yessica Holguin

Executive Director, [Center for Community Wealth Building](#)

Yessica Xytlalli Holguín is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Center for Community Wealth Building, an organization that promotes strategies for a sustainable economy and works to transform the current economic development system to a more inclusive and equitable model that prioritizes democratically-owned businesses, emphasizes local procurement, and ensures social, environmental, and institutional sustainability.

Most recently, Yessica was the Country Director at Project Gettysburg-León (PGL), an international sister-city organization that works to empower Nicaraguans to be the leaders of their own development. In this role, Yessica worked with local leaders, organizations, and government agencies to build capacity and create partnerships that leverage resources and promote sustainable development.

Prior to PGL, Yessica served the United States of America as a Small Business Development Specialist in the city of Estelí in northern Nicaragua through the Peace Corps. In this capacity, Yessica worked with small businesses to help them grow from micro enterprises to small and medium-sized businesses. She also worked with local leaders to organize savings and lending circles to promote savings and affordable access to credit in their community.

Prior to her work in Nicaragua, Yessica worked at the Denver Scholarship Foundation where she was among the initial staff of the organization that helped design the college and financial aid advising program in Denver high schools. Yessica earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Information Systems, a minor in Latin American literature, and a Master of Science in Management and Organization with a track in Human Resources from the University of Colorado Denver.

Yessica grew up in the Swansea neighborhood in Denver and has done grassroots community organizing with immigrant groups and low-income communities across the Denver Metro area since 2000. She has dedicated her life to empowering disenfranchised communities to break the cycle of poverty through education and entrepreneurship. She enjoys running, reading, and spending time with friends and family while drinking coffee.



SoYoung Lee

Executive Director, [Rocky Ridge Music](#)

SoYoung Lee currently serves as Executive Director of Rocky Ridge Music. Previously, she has held director positions at Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory Adult Education & Preparatory Department, Millikin University Preparatory Division, and the Boulder Arts Academy & Boulder Ballet. A strong believer in the concept of artist as entrepreneur, she co-founded Colorado-based AirTurn, a company dedicated to empowering musicians through technology. She is passionate about building community through the arts, and serves as a trustee of the Boulder County Arts Alliance, National Guild for Community Arts Education, and is an advisory member of Upbeat Colorado, and Americas for Conservation + the Arts.

An award-winning pianist and a Regents scholar, SoYoung is a recipient of the Ernő Dohnányi Piano Prize and the Gwendolyn Koldofsky Accompanying Fellowship at University of Southern California. She recently released a CD, *In This World*, with flutist Claudia Anderson. Equally at home as a teacher, she served on the music faculty at Millikin University and State University of New York, Fredonia, and was a visiting Piano Pedagogy and Arts Administration faculty at the University of Colorado, Boulder. SoYoung enjoys her multi-faceted career as a performing artist, administrator, teacher, producer, and arts advocate.



Neha Mahajan

Executive Director, [Transformative Leadership for Change](#)

Neha Mahajan is the daughter of South Asian Punjabi immigrants and brings nearly 20 years of experience fighting for social justice. As a young activist, she developed political consciousness in movements such as immigrant justice, youth organizing, ending violence against women of color, and dismantling the prison industrial complex.

Over the last 13 years, Neha has led multiple philanthropic and community organizations in the Colorado ecosystem. She served as Co-Executive Director of Chinook Fund, Co-Executive Director of Survivors Organizing for Liberation, and State Director of 9to5 Colorado. Neha has supported a number of local organizing campaigns, from police accountability to housing justice; she played a critical leadership role in building the campaign that won paid family and medical leave for Colorado workers. She also worked as the National Organizing Director for Family Values at Work, where she helped their national network center the leadership of women of color, invest more deeply in grassroots organizing, and work more intentionally at the intersection of race, class, and gender.

In 2017, Neha helped to co-found Transformative Leadership for Change (TLC), an organization built by and for BIPOC leaders to transform ourselves, our organizations and the larger movement ecosystem so we can thrive in our leadership, build real power for our communities and see our visions of liberation come to life. TLC's core program is a year-long fellowship for BIPOC leaders in Colorado-based social justice organizations. She was honored to step into an Executive Director role in 2020 to steward the vision of TLC.

Neha is currently Board Treasurer for Cultivando (Commerce City, Colorado) and on the coordinating committee of the NorthStar Network (national). She is a graduate of the Satya Yoga Cooperative BIPOC teacher training program; a certified coach through the Coaching for Healing, Justice and Liberation school; and weaves together social justice, healing, and spiritual practices in her business – NehaDevi Consulting.



Johnnie Williams

Executive Director, Denver Youth Program: [GRASP](#) and [Metro Denver Partners](#)

Johnnie Williams joined GRASP in July 2008 and has over 25 years of experience working with youth in the community by supplying constructive alternatives to gangs and other destructive activities. Some of Johnnie's other duties at GRASP are facilitating support groups and healing circles, managing a black and brown unity grant, managing the outreach team for a 2 million dollar OJJDP grant and managing a hospital based intervention program. He is actively involved in several non-profit organizations within the community that focus primarily on educating teenagers on gaining and preserving self- respect, finding a positive purpose in life, learning to be more responsible, learning to make good choices as well as becoming community contributors and future role models.

Johnnie is skilled in crisis intervention, group facilitation, child abuse prevention, life skills, building communities, violence prevention, alcohol, and drug counseling, eventually becoming a criminal justice specialist and addiction counselor. Johnnie was instrumental in developing successful program curriculums and group activities for Faces (Family advocacy Care Education and Support) , Shaka Franklin foundation, GRASP and The Gilliam youth program clients that contributed to the increased success rate for these organizations. Johnnie also has exceptional skills in overall event management, coordination, marketing, public relations, financial management, and security implementation for the non-profit, local government and private sectors.

Johnnie is a founder for the Violence Prevention Initiative (Peace-N-The Streets) and has collaborated with organizations including YouthRoots, Tony Grampsas Youth Services, Denver Foundation, Beehive Production, G.O.A.L. Academy, United Way, and Brother Jeff's Cultural Center. He is the recipient of "The Citizen Award" from the Martin Luther King Day Commission, The Conflict Resolution Award from The University of Denver, and the Denver Foundation's Swanee Hunt Individual Leadership Award.

Mr. Williams has an extensive background working with gangs on the West and South sides of Chicago, IL As well as Gangs in Denver. He published "Gangs From The Cradle To The Grave" in 2003.

Given his extensive and varied experience, Johnnie quickly recognized the importance of working with the whole family when treating youth. With this in mind he developed a curriculum to educate young people about taking responsibility for their actions. This curriculum helps youth to see which choices they have made in their lives that may have hurt their future; it also promotes healthy parenting and family support. However there is no greater reward for the work that he does than to see one of the youth that he has work with change their life for the better.

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