



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEADERS RIPE TO DISRUPT FALSE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS & BUILD CLIMATE JUSTICE *February 2, 2022*

NEW YORK, February 2, 2022 – The Tishman Environment and Design Center is proud to announce the inaugural cohort of fellows in the *Ripe for Creative Disruption: An Environmental Justice Movement Fellowship* (EJM Fellowship). Twenty groundbreaking leaders representing 18 frontline community organizations have been selected to design and test solutions at scale for just transition, climate justice, environmental health, and energy democracy. During

the two-year program, fellows will participate in a combination of virtual and in-person retreats, group coaching sessions, and ideation to scaling project phases.

The fellowship was designed to focus on collective leadership models making it distinct from other fellowship opportunities that focus on individual growth and development. During the fellowship, participants will work collaboratively in six groups of 2 to 4 leaders to innovate, test, and deploy contentious, creative, and scalable solutions to address the complexity of the climate crisis. The selected fellows include architects, urban planners, Indigenous leaders, artists, policy makers, green building/sustainability designers, advocates, and organizers, and are multicultural, intergenerational, primarily Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women, and gender non-conforming. Their work spans eight states and five territories, including Indigenous territories, the Mariana Islands of Micronesia, and Puerto Rico.

The Ripe for Creative Disruption: Environmental Justice Movement Fellows are:

Group 1

Rahwa Ghirmatzion, [People United for Sustainable Housing, Inc. \(PUSH Buffalo\)](#)

Maria Lopez-Nunez, [Ironbound Community Corporation \(ICC\)](#)

Dwaign Tyndal, [Alternatives for Community and Environment \(ACE\)](#)

Miya Yoshitani, [Asian Pacific Environmental Network \(APEN\)](#)

Group 2

Julio Morales, [Y no había luz](#)

Juan Rosario, [AMANESER 2025](#)

Jesús Vázquez, [Organización Boricúa de Agricultura Ecológica de Puerto Rico](#)

Group 3

Dr. P. Qasimah Boston, Tallahassee Food Network

Rachel Jefferson, **Groundwork Northeast Revitalization Group**

Melissa Miles, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA)

Taylor Thomas, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ)

Group 4

Valerie Amor, NAACP Centering Equity in the Sustainable Buildings Sector (NAACP CESBS)

Teron McGrew, NAACP Centering Equity in the Sustainable Buildings Sector (NAACP CESBS)

Alice Sung, NAACP Centering Equity in the Sustainable Buildings Sector (NAACP CESBS)

Group 5

Jade Begay, NDN Collective

Kailea Frederick, NDN Collective

Group 6

Rep. Sheila Babauta, Our Common Wealth 670

Moñeka De Oro, [Micronesia Climate Change Alliance \(MCCA\)](#)

Cami Egurrola, [Micronesia Climate Change Alliance \(MCCA\)](#)

Jasmine (Mina) Flores-Cantrell, [Numa'Lo Refillery](#)

The current year is shaping up to be ripe for systemic disruption. COVID-19 is in an upsurge; supply chains are stalling amongst labor shortages, and billions continue to be spent on climate investments that continue to impact and harm Black, Brown, Indigenous, and low-income communities.

“The mix of climate missteps and inaction have proven harmful and deadly, this is especially true for Islands like the Marianas where militarization, climate colonialism, and pollution put our lives at risk in more ways than we’re even aware of, that is why we are designing to scale proven solutions,” said Sheila Babauta, Northern Mariana Islands House of Representatives Member and EJM Fellow.

For decades, EJ communities have directly faced the brunt of the climate crisis and impacts of pollution. EJ organizers and advocates on the ground have been leading the change despite federal setbacks. For example, in New Jersey, the home of two of our EJ Fellows who helped push for important policies, has kept its promise to defend their communities with Environmental Justice Bill S232 – one of the strongest EJ Laws in the nation. However, federal climate legislation is floundering in the halls of Congress and we have yet to see the fruits from the Biden’s Administration’s Justice40 initiatives in communities that are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

“The law has passed but our work is far from done. We have to make sure that the regulatory framework is one that delivers on the hard won laws' promises.” -

Melissa Miles, Executive Director of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance

“Billions of dollars are being wasted on Carbon Capture Sequestration (CCS) and other fantastical and failed geo-engineering climate mechanisms that only delay the phase out of a crumbling fossil fuel infrastructure. If we want to see results, we need to invest in frontline groups that are innovating real solutions to the climate crisis, so that we can multiply and scale these solutions.” - Miya Yoshitani, Senior Strategist, Asian Pacific Environmental Network

“We need to understand and practice collective leadership if we are to radically reimagine the changes needed for the next 20 to 100 years. We as leaders don’t often get this level of opportunity and support to join forces across organizations, sectors, and collectively innovate. It is about time we “remix” design in the vision of EJ communities.” - Jacqui Patterson, Founder and Executive Director of The Chisholm Legacy Project and EJM Advisory Committee member.

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Ripe for Creative Disruption: An Environmental Justice Movement

Fellowship embodies design and collective leadership to support frontline leaders to transform political, economic, and social systems; reclaim power; and scale people-centered solutions for climate justice futures across local, Tribal, national and global scales. The Fellowship seeks to co-create the conditions, coaching, and curriculum that can best support groups of movement leaders in their efforts to generate and pilot these strategies for movement impact.

The [Tishman Environment and Design Center](#), as part of The New School, is a university-wide center committed to fostering the integration of bold design, policy, and social justice approaches to environmental issues to advance just and sustainable outcomes. Following the [Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#), the Tishman Center serves as a hub for climate and environmental justice

research and practice, with a specific focus on critical, participatory action-based research produced in collaboration with frontline, grassroots and community based organizations and coalitions. Through our collaborative efforts, we impact research, practice and policy.

EJ Fellowship Press Kit

- [About Ripe for Creative Disruption: An Environmental Justice Movement Fellowship](#)
- [EJ Movement's Landscape Assessment \(strategies, priorities, what lies ahead\)](#)
- [EJ Fellows](#)
- [EJ Fellowship Advisory Committee](#)
- [EJ Fellowship Overview Video - Download here](#)

Additional Quotes from the EJ Fellows

*"More than four years after the devastation caused by hurricane Maria the country is literally for sale. Puerto Rico has become a showcase of Disaster Capitalism. The energy transformation model has been directed towards the privatization of the public utility in which US companies will pocket billions of dollars including much of the long-awaited FEMA's recovery funds. While community models are neglected, public funds are used to enrich private companies." - **Juan Rosario, AMANESER 2025, San Juan, Puerto Rico***

*"I deeply appreciate the thoughtfulness and intentionality that the Fellowship designers have brought to the formation of this cohort. The intense focus on setting and following through on process goals as opposed to a singular focus on outcomes is evident through the deliberate ways in which members of the cohort are being engaged. I am energized to learn, unlearn, practice with my fellow cohort members over the next two years." - **Rachel Jefferson, Groundwork Northeast Revitalization Group, Kansas City, Kansas, United States***

"We are honored and excited to be a part of this Fellowship journey in an amazing cohort of powerful environmental justice leaders with broad and deep expertise.

Central to our work is how to best support and accelerate equitable community-led decision-making processes for environmental and climate justice, building local capacity and community resilience. We see the need for institutional and governmental systems, built with embedded structural racism and oppression, to change policies and develop new systemic models. The time is indeed "Ripe for Disruption," and the co-creation of new programs centering equity and justice for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), low-income, and other communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis, wealth inequality, and systemic marginalization." – Valerie Amor, Teron McGrew, & Alice Sung, Member-Leaders, NAACP Centering Equity in the Sustainable Buildings Sector (NAACP CESBS), New York & California

"We need to be skilling up our movements so that we can become more strategic in shutting down extractive projects that are harming our communities and further exacerbating the climate crisis." - Kailea Frederick, NDN Collective, Petaluma, California, United States

"The EJ Movement's critique of political, social, and economic systems and focus on frontline solutions for those most vulnerable to climate change make it prime to disrupt the status quo and advance transformative climate solutions." - Ana Baptista PH.D, Co-Director, Tishman Environment and Design Center, New York, New York, United States