

THE FIRST 10 YEARS 2012-2022 IMPACT REPORT



THE KAREL FELLOWSHIP

In Public Interest Communications

A transformative experience empowering first-generation advocates with possibility, skills and hope

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Ten years ago, the big idea of the Karel Fellowship took flight, and a new generation of diverse public interest communicators was born. In the past ten classes, we have had 71 super-impressive first-generation college students bring their energy and intellect to become professional advocates for social change through internships with inspiring nonprofit organizations in Washington, D.C. All were part of the nation's unique program to intentionally engage young people of color to develop the skills required to communicate effectively in defense of social justice.

What difference has the fellowship made? As you'll read, the answer is "an enormous one." For starters, 60% of the fellows we have data on have entered careers in public interest communications. This report explains the intention behind the Karel Fellowship, walks through the story so far, highlights the voices of a few Fellows and describes where the Karel Fellowship story might go next. For even more input from a few Fellows on how the Fellowship impacted their lives, check out the video testimonials on the 2022 Impact Report page of our website, karelfellowship.org.

1 Foreword from the Fellowship's Founder, Andy Burness, a Protégé of Frank Karel

2 Foreword from 2022 Fellow Maria Sailale

3 The Karel Fellowship Story

5 How it Works

6 Timeline

7 Meet the Fellows

11 Alumni Highlights + Testimonials

13 What's Next?

FOREWORD: WHO WAS FRANK KAREL?

By Fellowship Founder Andy Burness

Frank Karel founded a professional field. How many of us can say that about ourselves? He was the nation's first communications counselor, strategist and tactician in American philanthropy. His impact is felt today in the social policies he influenced, in the people he mentored, in the next generation of communicators who are now being mentored and in the growth of the field he created. The most recent Communications Network gathering attracted nearly a thousand disciples of Frank Karel, some who knew him, many more who owe their jobs to his vision for a very important sector in the United States, and indeed, the world.



The field that Frank pioneered in the 1970s is not the field of today. Apart from the passage of time and the changes that come with that, most of us who do this work know that while white Anglo advocates like Frank may very well continue to play vital roles as drivers of social change, their voices cannot be the only ones. Put more bluntly, race matters. We know that there should be “nothing about us without us” for people with low incomes, people of color and people with disabilities, regardless of their economic status.

Additionally, we know that communications know-how can profoundly expand the reach of good ideas and that social change never goes to scale without smart communications strategy and its implementation. Frank understood all of this. I know this from working with him during his remarkable career at the Robert Wood Johnson and Rockefeller Foundations.

Shortly after Frank's death, I thought that his extensive legacy should honor his recognition that the next generation of communicators should be people who could marry their lived experiences with the skills required to be effective advocates for social change. So, I engaged colleagues at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation who enthusiastically provided seed funding and helped design the program. Support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Trellis Fund followed. The communications firms Burness and Spitfire also made substantial contributions.

The Frank Karel Fellowship in Public Interest Communications was born, and 10 years later, 71 lives have been changed for the good, not to mention the lives of those people they have influenced through their work. There is ample evidence that the students we explicitly seek – those who might not apply for more traditional fellowships – have what it takes to be communicators for social justice, scientific discovery and the general betterment of humankind.

I am so proud of the young people who, over our first 10 years, have invested their energy in the adventure that is the Karel Fellowship. They are now taking their learnings into the professional world, many in a field they knew nothing about when they applied for the fellowship as college students. And their success gives me hope and confidence that we can build on their accomplishments to offer this opportunity to many more students from across the United States.

As Frank would cry, “Onward!” There is so much more to do, so much more opportunity to create for young people from all backgrounds to be public interest communicators for our communities, our nation and the world.

FOREWORD: THE TOOLS TO REWRITE OUR STORIES

By 2022 Fellow Maria Sailale

The Fellowship addresses an important truth: First-generation and/or minority students are underrepresented in the growing field of public interest communications because of historical barriers to access. Taking diversity and inclusion efforts into the field, with intention, is the point: Lived experience matters, as do the technical communications skills required to be a change-maker in our communities, our nation and the world.



Grounded in what we learn through our internships as a gateway to the profession of public interest communications, Karel Fellows understand how to uplift underserved communities without devaluing them. Practices like deficit framing and “poverty porn” were commonly accepted in the field until recently, because they confirmed pre-existing negative cultural narratives. I grew up watching images of emaciated African children flash across my screen to compel viewers in the west to save them from their suffering. **How much of their humanity is lost in this translation?**

As an African child myself, I oscillated between feeling frustrated with the convoluted truth presented by these ads and wanting to separate myself as much as possible from the negative stereotypes they pushed. I applied to this Fellowship because I wanted to reclaim my autonomy in shaping a world less harmful for those around me. When you are a part of a community that society devalues, you lose access to your right to self-determination. Others feel entitled to reach through and shape your existence – by telling your stories for you and limiting the paths you can take and the kind of life you are entitled to lead.

My summer in Washington, D.C., felt like a breath of fresh air. When I got together with the other Fellows, we shared with each other our passions and dreams for our communities. Our experiences were a source of strength that enriched our Fellowships by offering diverse and creative perspectives to solving complex problems. Finally, here was a place where we could take control of our own destinies.

If we are serious about creating lasting policy and behavioral change, we must also seriously examine the truths we take for granted: that suffering is a given for some members of a society, that progress is often stagnant, that there aren’t enough resources to go around. **These are narratives public interest communications gives us the tools to rewrite.**

How did the Fellowship start?

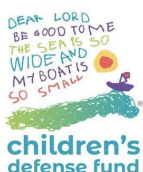
The Karel Fellowship in Public Interest Communications is named after Frank Karel, who pioneered the field of strategic communications in philanthropy. For him, social change was about using smart communications strategies to persuade others to take good ideas that were serving individual people and persuade policymakers and institutional leaders to enact system changes that could build on these ideas to improve the lives of thousands and thousands.

Throughout his career at the Robert Wood Johnson and Rockefeller Foundations, Frank realized that the public would best be served if future generations of advocates could better represent the diversity that is America and the world. He shared his vision with his long-time collaborator Andy Burness, who ran with the idea to create the Fellowship.

How does the Fellowship work?

The Fellowship introduces representatives of the next generation of advocates, consciously diverse and inclusive, to the field of public interest communications. For most, it is their introduction to the field, one that involves conscientious learning about the skills required to move from passionate advocacy to strategies and tactics that can lead to tangible change.

Karel Fellows are asked to contribute to one major communications project or to a series of smaller communications projects with their nonprofit host. The Fellowship is also designed as a “cohort experience,” encouraging Fellows to develop relationships with one another and professional connections with their hosts.



Where do the Fellows intern?

The Fellowship partners with a number of host organizations, all nonprofits advocating a social change agenda, and for the first 10 years, all in Washington, D.C. They include The Food Recovery Network, the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, Greenpeace USA, Mary's Center, National League of Cities, Human Rights Watch, Children's Defense Fund, The Truth Initiative, Families USA, Education Trust, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, Amnesty International USA, Afterschool Alliance, and the International Partnership for Microbicides.

Which colleges and universities have been most active in sending students to apply for the Fellowship?

Many schools and academic programs have participated over the years, but the most active have been the University of Florida (home to the Frank Karel Chair in Public Interest Communications), Franklin & Marshall College, and Montgomery College and the Universities at Shady Grove in Montgomery County, Maryland. The Fellowship has also drawn heavily from Jack Kent Cooke Foundation scholarship recipients at colleges and universities across the country, as well as from partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

How has it gone so far?

10

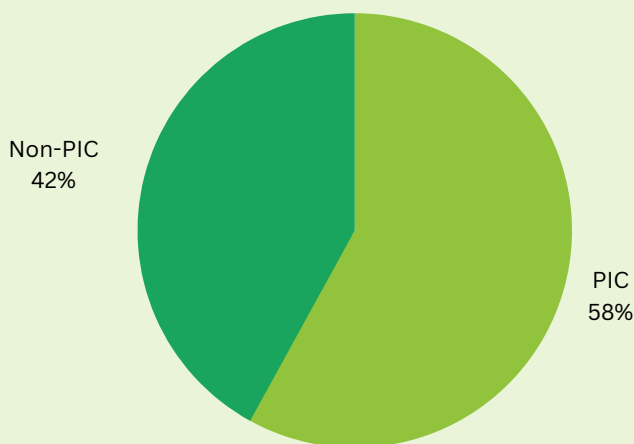
Fellow classes
since 2012

71

Fellows served
in total

40

Partnering
organizations



Alumni at work:

Over the years, many alumni have entered the field of public interest communications (PIC). Currently, of the alumni we have data on (69% of Fellows), **57% of them (28/49) work in PIC**, and the 21 other Fellows work in a variety of fields, including government, law, the arts, medicine and education.

THE KAREL FELLOWSHIP

HOW IT WORKS



The Karel Fellowship is both **a fellowship and an internship**. The internships are designed to give students an introduction to an organization and its people while also strengthening their skill set and workplace acumen.



Each year, the program accepts between **six and eight Fellows** through an application process, from all over the United States. We put **equity and inclusion** first in our recruiting and outreach process. Inclusion to us means many different things – from race, ethnicity, lived experiences and non-traditional student status, to immigration status and more.



Typically offered at the post-graduate level, a fellowship is an **education-based** program that offers deeper exposure to a particular field of study or profession. Fellows are expected to take on increased responsibility, **draw connections** across experiences and share their experience with a cohort.



Core to the intention of the Fellowship, Fellows are taught the **skills they need to become advocates** in the public interest communications field. Fellows learn how to collaborate on specific projects, how to communicate content through the voice of the organization they work with, different strategies to effectively reach audiences and how to use new platforms for mass communication, among others.

FELLOWSHIP TIMELINE

Although two months might seem like a short amount of time, it's remarkable what the Fellows both experience and accomplish in that window. Over the course of a summer, the Fellows live in a new city, make connections with a community that often stays bonded for years, and make their mark on their host organizations. Fellows also get to experience the public interest communications field and try it on for size. For a glimpse of what these two months feel like, take a look at a testimonial on page 12.



JAN

Fellows Apply

APR

**Fellow Class is Selected
and Paired with Host
Organizations**

JUN

**8-Week Internships Begin
and Karel Programming
Starts**

AUG

**Fellows Present on Their
Experiences**

FEB

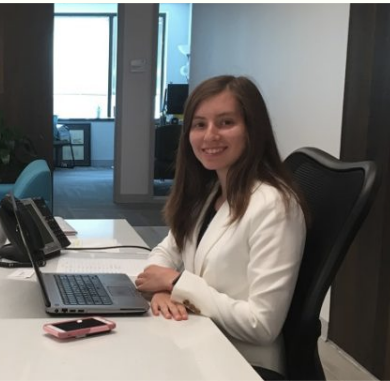
**Select Fellows Present at
the *frank* Conference**



MEET THE FELLOWS

Over the past 10 classes of fellows, the program has developed a rich alumni network that enriches the experience for each new class and keeps connections that last for years.

2012
-
2022



CLASS OF 2012 - 2022

Over the past 10 classes of Fellows, the program has developed a powerful alumni network that enriches the experience for each new class and keeps connections that last.

"The Fellowship gave me exposure that helped me make better informed decisions about my future, which led to greater fulfillment not only in my career, but in everyday life."

Michael Stanley
2012



Michael graduated from Duke University, was a Fellow at DC Votes, and now heads up his own creative agency, GSD Creatives.

"It ended up essentially shaping my career, especially when I ended up going back to my host organization in a full-time role."

Mina Radman
2013



Mina graduated from the University of Florida in 2014 with a degree in journalism, was a Fellow at the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and is now a director of public affairs at SKDKnickerbocker.

"In all of my professional and personal work, I have weaved in core teachings and principles from my Fellowship and carry these lessons wherever I go."

Yoo-Jin Kang
2014



Yoo-Jin graduated from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, was a Fellow at Trust for America's Health and now heads up her own trauma-informed consulting practice.

"I have re-discovered my own city, explored what I would like my future career to be like and explored what it really means to be an advocate."

Kindra Nicol
2015



Kindra graduated from Trinity Washington University, interned with Save the Children Action Network as a Fellow and now works as an engagement associate at the Children's Defense Fund.

CLASS OF 2012 - 2022

Over the past 10 classes of Fellows, the program has developed a powerful alumni network that enriches the experience for each new class and keeps connections that last.

"The Karel Fellowship made me completely reevaluate my family's history in America... and put me in an incredible position to study the intricacies of how our society needs to change"

Adrian Cibran

2016

Jeanette graduated from the University of Florida, interned with Amnesty International USA, and is now a notary public & loan signing agent.



"I cannot overlook how these accomplished professionals are making me feel like a valued team member and taking the time to help me get to their levels."

Lauryn Fanguen

2018

Lauryn graduated from the University of Maryland, interned with Spitfire Strategies and is now a federal advocacy communications manager at the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.



"I learned how to develop authentic connections with the diverse audiences. I learned how to bridge the wealth gap and communicate a story across vastly different worlds with empathy."

Z Estimé

2019

Z graduated from the Mount Holyoke College, interned with the Martha's Table, and is now the South Berkshire Community Health Coalition (SBCHC) Program Coordinator for the Railroad Street Youth Project.



"I found a mentor who navigated me through my workplace, connected me to others within my organization and helped me branch out."

Fatimah Abu-Sbeitan

2020

Fatimah graduated from the University of Florida, interned with Families USA and is now working as part of the frank social media team and the National Press Photographers Association.



CLASS OF 2012 - 2022

Over the past 10 classes of Fellows, the program has developed a powerful alumni network that enriches the experience for each new class and keeps connections that last.

"Our work is powerful because it can actively disprove dangerous misconceptions in science and policy."

Katherine Marin
2021



Katherine graduated from the University of Florida, interned at the National Wildlife Federation and has since interned with the ACLU and the DNC.

"I hope to continue learning ... ways of communicating my story and the story of MCAAD while providing input on the growing brand and messaging of our constituents."

Mateo Latorraca Rodrigo 2022



Mateo is a rising senior and a Posse Miami Scholar at Franklin & Marshall College, and interned at the Milken Institute for Advancing the American Dream.



Fellow Spotlight: Kaytlin Brown

Being a young mother has not been an easy journey for me. I strive every day to make sure my son is well-taken care of and try my best to teach him how to become a strong Black man in today's society. I feel like I'm doing a great job at doing so, however, I thought I lost myself in the process. **This journey has allowed me to challenge myself to reach my full potential**, so I can be the best version of myself for my son. As a 2022 Fellow, I now realize that my background and story are what got me here today and will continue to be the reason for who I will become. **Being in an uncomfortable position in life will be my motivation to use Public Interest Communication to make the community around my son and me better.** It is now my time to keep the Frank Karel legacy stay alive.

**2022
FELLOW**

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

New Mentorship Program

New this past year, the 2022 Fellows had the chance to participate in a mentorship program with former Fellows who shed light on what lies ahead. In the past, Fellows have gotten to interact with alumni through events and the alumni network, but this new program allows for lasting mentor relationships to form and benefit Fellows for years to come.



Alums Giving Back

While the mentorship program is new, alumni support for new classes of Fellows is not. During the annual presentations, when the current Fellows present their work and all that they have learned, program alumni



return to judge the presentations. They then select top speakers to present to a larger audience at the annual frank gathering. Alumni also offer their expertise to the Fellows during Ask Me Anything (AMA) panels throughout the program, sharing advice on navigating the Fellowship, job searches, first jobs and whole careers. Some alumni also appear at networking and professional development events throughout the program, providing many opportunities for all Fellows, past and present, to connect. Networking opportunities for the Fellows start during the Fellowship, and extend far past it. Each Fellow is introduced to every other Fellow's organization, learns something about the communications thinking at that organization and in the process, begins to soak in common threads for effective communications that cut across the nonprofit fields. These common threads continue to be woven together through alumni connections after the Fellowship concludes.

THE ANNUAL FRANK GATHERING

Each year, hundreds of communications professionals and scholars descend onto downtown Gainesville, FL, for the annual *frank* gathering. It is a multi-day gathering bringing together change-makers from all over the world to celebrate and learn from each other how we can use public interest communications to make the world a better place.

The Frank Karel Fellowship has had the honor and privilege to participate each year. We nominate our Fellows to share their valuable summer experiences with the field.

We are constantly amazed by the growth and introspection they have contributed to the PIC field.

Scan to watch



ALUMNI: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

2016
FELLOW

Luisa Guaracao

"For me the biggest value add of the Fellowship is that it gives first-generation, BIPOC students an opportunity to dip their feet in a field **that they had probably never heard of**. Growing up in an immigrant household, my view of the career opportunities that were out there was very limited and also heavily influenced by my parents, who expected me to be either be a lawyer, doctor or engineer. This was conflicting for me because I did not identify with any of those fields but felt pressured to pick one.

Choosing what to major in was very hard for me. I ended up picking communications, albeit my parents advice, and I second-guessed the choice for many years until I found the Fellowship. That's when it all clicked for me. **That "aha" moment is what makes the Fellowship so special.** As program manager, I got to see many Fellows experience their own "aha" moments, and it was extremely rewarding. The Fellowship has had a huge impact on my career trajectory. It's how I got my job at Burness. And without that job, I would've never gotten the job I have now at Instacart.

Public interest communications is still, relatively, a very new field. When I tell people in other industries about it, the response is often "wow I had no idea that field existed!" **Programs like the Fellowship are super important because they help get the word out about PIC. Without it, people like me, would probably never get exposure to careers in this area.**



THE KAREL FELLOWSHIP: WHAT'S NEXT?



Ten years after the Karel Fellowship started, we are setting our sights on expanding our impact. We will be speaking with more colleges and universities and more nonprofits, enhancing our alumni mentoring and maybe even expanding beyond Washington to other cities in the process.

The Fellowship has made a profound impact on the people we have been able to reach and the nonprofits that have benefitted in the process.

Now, we want to explore what going to scale might mean for more students, while maintaining and even improving the quality of the experience we offer the Fellows wherever they are contributing their newly honed communications talents for a better world.

