National Fellowship for Education Leaders of Color Welcomes 2021 Indianapolis Cohort

16 Black and Latino leaders were selected for the inaugural cohort of the Surge Academy Fellowship in Indianapolis, supported by The Mind Trust

Indianapolis, IN - (August 25, 2020) - The Surge Institute, a national nonprofit organization, whose mission is to elevate and invest in leaders of color who create transformative change in urban education, has selected 16 Black and Latino leaders for the 2021 inaugural Indianapolis cohort of their Surge Academy Fellowship.

Earlier this year, the Surge Institute announced the Surge Academy’s expansion to Indianapolis thanks to the partnership of The Mind Trust, an education focused nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide every student in Indianapolis, no exceptions, with access to a high-quality education. The Mind Trust’s investment in the Surge Academy’s launch in Indianapolis is rooted in its organizational commitment to prioritize efforts that address racial equity and elevate leaders of color.

Since its inception in 2019, the Surge Academy has had the opportunity to work with 28 education and youth-serving leaders in Kansas City, Missouri, all of whom have since joined the Surge Institute’s nationwide alumni network of mission-driven leaders.

"These Surge Academy leaders will realize and operationalize their power to build systems and movements that bring meaningful change for Indianapolis children," said Patrick Jones, The Mind Trust's Senior Vice President of Leadership and Equity. "The Mind Trust is proud to support the Surge Academy experience for these exceptional leaders of color, and we look forward to the ways their fellowship experience will create deeper community, amplify their leadership, and impact our city."

The following is a list of the 2021 Indianapolis Surge Academy Fellows:

Rick Anderson; Founder & Head of School, Allegiant Prep Academy
Javier Barrera Cervantes; Executive Director, The Latino Youth Collective
Theodore Brannum; Director of Finance and Operations, URBAN ACT Academy
Ava Fenelus; Assistant Dean of Online Programs & Associate Professor of Science, Relay Graduate School of Education
Geoffrey Fenelus; Founder/Executive Director, PROMISE PREP
Carolina Figueroa; Bilingual Community Organizer, Stand for Children
India Hui; Executive Director, Thrival Indy Academy
Allissa Impink; Founding Indianapolis Regional Manager, Enriched Schools
Ma’at Lands; Executive Director and Founding School Leader, Rooted School
Indianapolis at Eastern Star Church
Designed by the Surge Institute, the Surge Academy provides an intensive fellowship experience, packed with powerful content that explores executive skills such as finance, strategic planning and change management. The experience also includes a deep and unflinching dialogue about personal growth, trauma and the true state of diversity, equity and inclusion in America.

The Indianapolis cohort will meet beginning in September 2020 through March 2021, with sessions beginning virtually. Upon graduating the Academy, fellows join a national network of Surge Alumni consisting of rising education leaders of color, from Oakland to Chicago to Washington D.C. and beyond.

“In meeting these brilliant leaders, it is clear to me that there is a hunger in Indianapolis for a movement that will push people in the education ecosystem into a more creative and equitable way of educating youth. These leaders are ready to reimagine their work and I am excited to be on that journey with them; helping to build a space that will allow them to freely and boldly dream about the future of education for our youth and communities in Indianapolis,” shared Noemí Cortés, Program Director for the Surge Academy.

Furthermore, the Surge Institute believes that navigating and leading change relies not only on building the necessary executive leadership skills but also knowing the landscape of the city in regards to its Black and Latino populations. The program journey will be dedicated not only to unpacking and deconstructing this landscape, but also reimagining the systems and practices that have long left the genius within communities of color neglected and uncultivated.

"Surge has created a space where we can focus on personal and professional growth and be agents of change in our communities of Indianapolis," shared Nicole Montiel, 2021 Surge Academy Fellow and CEO at Anda Spanish. “We need healing. We need disruptive leadership. We need each other. This is an opportunity to build each other up and drive each other to sustainable change for our people. I cannot wait!"

White supremacy culture continues to be rooted deeply within education policies and youth-serving practices, which have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Though such justice-based shifts will not happen overnight, the Surge community knows that the movement-makers of the 2021 Indianapolis cohort will continue to unapologetically plant and nourish the seeds of change for a just and free tomorrow.

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About the Surge Institute
The Surge Institute was established in 2014 with a simple but important mission to develop and elevate leaders of color who create transformative change for children, families, and communities. Founded by Carmita Semaan in 2014, the organization’s signature program, the Surge Fellowship, was designed to empower emerging diverse leaders to change the landscape of education by providing them with a unique, authentic leadership development experience. To learn more about The Surge Institute, please visit: https://www.surgeinstitute.org/

About The Mind Trust:
The Mind Trust is an Indianapolis-based education nonprofit organization that works to build a system of schools that gives every student in Indianapolis, no exceptions, access to a high-quality education. The Mind Trust does this by building a supportive environment for schools through policy and community engagement, empowering talented educators to launch new schools, and providing existing schools with the support they need to hire world-class talent and achieve excellence. Since 2006, The Mind Trust has supported the launch of 38 schools and helped place more than 1,600 teachers and school leaders in Indianapolis classrooms. More information can be found at themindtrust.org.

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