

Annenberg Innovation Lab Welcomes Sixth Cohort of Civic Media Fellows

Fall 2025

The **Annenberg Innovation Lab** (AnnLab) welcomes its **sixth cohort** of **Civic Media Fellows** to the USC community. These 10 remarkable and powerful practitioners come from around the continent, representing many communities, interests and approaches. They join an amazing group of over 80 **Senior Fellows**, who form the backbone of the Civic Media Fellowship community.

Generously supported since its inception by the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**, the Civic Media Fellowship serves and celebrates those who use wide-ranging media to connect communities, inspire action and sustain social change efforts. The work and experiences of these trailblazers and those who came before them literally drive our understanding of civic media and are embodied in the recent fellows-authored book **We Are Civic Media** (Northwestern University Press, August 2025).

These fellows build on the efforts of their predecessors in the ongoing co-design of the program, ensuring that it responds to both emergent needs and individual priorities. From reflecting on past experience, to exploring new practices, this eight-month fellowship supports fellows as they recharge and accelerate into the next stage of their lives and careers. The cohort-based model invites them to learn with and from each other, while developing relationships and collaborations among Fellows, Senior Fellows, USC students and faculty, and our broader network.

The program's recent two-year hiatus, in which AnnLab staff focused on engaging Senior Fellows in novel ways, helping Senior Fellows to write a book and revamping the Fellowship, gave way to its most competitive application process. The team of staff and Senior Fellows selected the new cohort from an incredibly strong pool of over 1300 people, reflecting the growth and resonance of this field and the dynamism of these



Fellows, while connecting us with a talented and passionate group of emerging practitioners.

Each cohort and program are unique, and the onward steps of fellows are, too, with the through line being that they are impressive, meaningful and novel. Their areas of engagement and practices run the gamut from driving change in diverse corners of the entertainment and technology industries to fighting for immigrant rights using media and technology. Some are bringing novel approaches to academia and journalism, while others are using fashion, art and music as forces for social progress. Senior Fellows are both changing existing cultural institutions and creating new ones.

"Our fellows never cease to amaze me with their vision, commitment and execution. With no roadmap and more barriers than supports, they are bravely confronting many of society's greatest challenges with empathy, compassion and creativity," said Colin Maclay, research professor of communication and executive director of AnnLab. "Not everyone knows it yet, but this is what genuine and effective 21st century leadership looks like."

The 2025-26 Civic Media Fellows are:

Rana Abdelhamid (she/her): an Egyptian Queens-born organizer, black belt, and founder of Malikah, with a forthcoming book *Get Home Safe: A Guide to Self-Defense and Building Our Collective Power* (Algonquin, 2026).

Ty Carter (she/her): a grower, lover of knowledge, and ancestral conversationalist, honoring Afro-Indigenous wisdom and cultivating love for the earth, community, and generations to come.

Karin Chien (she/her): an award-winning independent producer and distributor who works globally and across sectors, to innovate revenue models, financing solutions, and equitable production structures.



Franklin James Fisher (he/him): an artist, songwriter and musician based in New York City who spends his time marauding around different scenes.

Bernadette Lim, MD, MS (she/her): a first-generation Filipino-Toisan community physician, social entrepreneur, musician, artist, and creator.

Qudsiya Naqui (she/her): a teacher, legal scholar, and disability media-maker dedicated to centering disability justice and the disabled experience as tools that catalyze transformative cultural, legal, and policy change towards a more just and equitable society; creator and host of *Down to the Struts*, a podcast about disability, design, and intersectionality.

Steve Pargett (he/him): A futurist, producer and creative architect who use film, cultural strategy, and exponential technologies to spark cultural imagination and prepare communities of color for the future.

Erin Michelle Washington (she/they): a Creative, Scholar, and Waymaker from Montgomery, Alabama whose ecosystem of SoulCenter, Clarke Street Fund, FreshGreens Market, and HBCUx advances art, food, and justice in the South; and currently developing Alabama Hold On.

Allie Redhorse Young (she/her): a Diné (Navajo) activist, storyteller, and founder of Protect the Sacred, dedicated to empowering Native youth, strengthening civic engagement, and preserving Indigenous culture and sovereignty.

Maysoon Zayid (she/her): a Palestinian comedian, actress, best selling author, and disability advocate.

