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## New Virginia Health Equity and Justice Fellowship Program Links Health Equity and Art

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Contributed photos

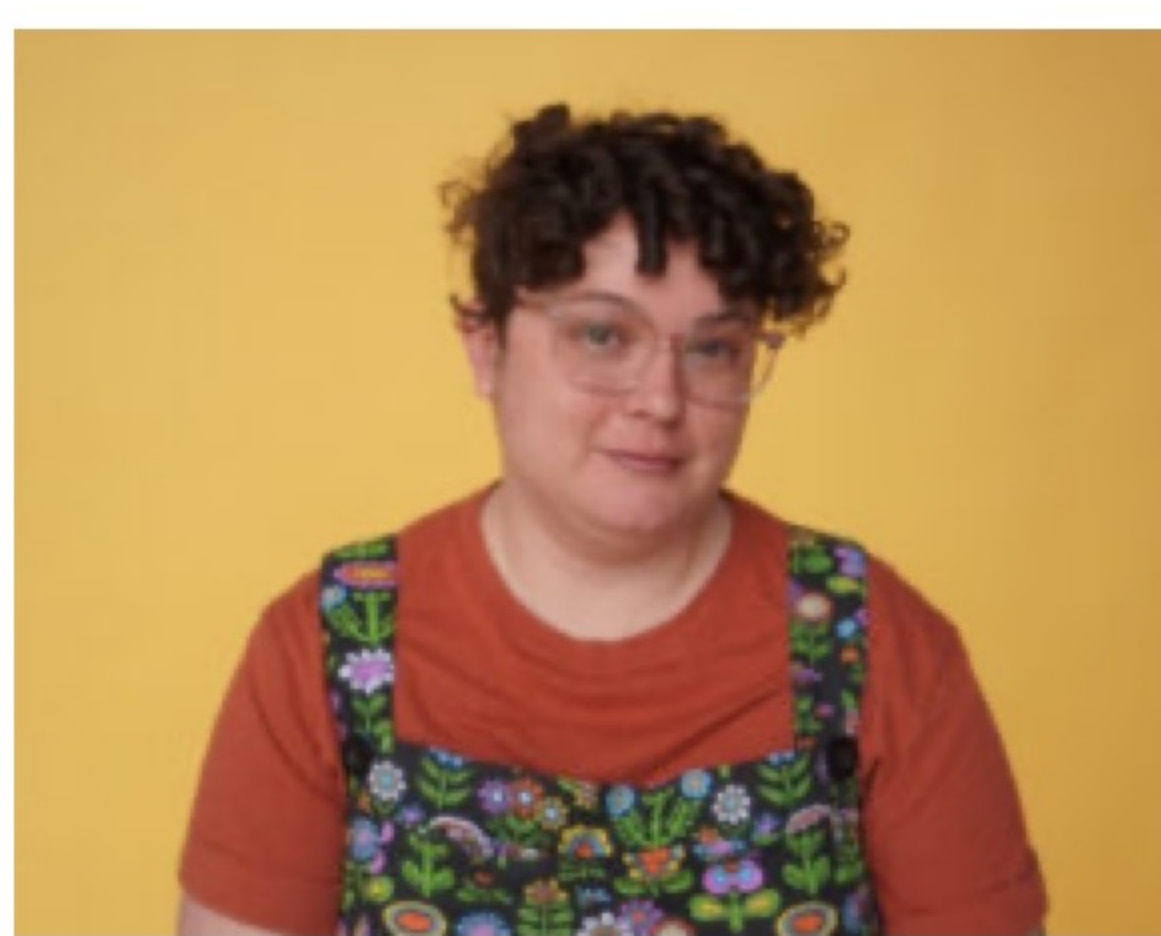
The UVA Center for Health Humanities and Ethics, UVA Health’s Office for Diversity and Community Engagement, and Virginia Humanities are thrilled to announce the launch of the Health Equity and Justice Fellowship program. The program seeks to support scholars, artists, and clinicians whose work centers the arts and humanities to advance health equity.

Leaders from the involved entities described the context for creating the new program. “In 1966 the **Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** called attention to the fact that injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman. Health justice moves us beyond merely adopting social justice as a “core value” of public health to a form of systemic advocacy, and community capacity building with an equity mindset,” said UVA Health’s Chief Diversity and Community Engagement Officer **Tracy M. Downs, MD.** “The fellowship, along with each fellow’s scholarly work, will build upon the mission of UVA Health to transform health and inspire hope for all.”

“The intersection of health and the humanities offers an opportunity to explore the human condition and its connection with medicine, illness, wellness, and healing,” said Virginia Humanities’ executive director **Matthew Gibson.** “We’re inspired by the work of these new fellows and the enhanced understanding that will result from their scholarship.”

The inaugural fellows, **Jess Walters** and **Fancie Terrell,** are artists who exemplify and advocate for health equity and justice in their art, their community engagement, and their daily lives. Over the next 18 months, in addition to their innovative projects, Jess and Fancie will participate in the educational missions of all three sponsoring organizations. We are honored to welcome them!

Jess Walters (they/them) is a mixed-media artist, disability justice advocate, and independent scholar from Charlottesville, VA. They serve their community as Vice Chair on the Board of Directors at The Bridge PAI and have exhibited artwork at The Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Second Street Gallery, and New City Arts Initiative. As a deaf and disabled multiple-neurodivergent queer person, Jess brings a unique perspective to their creative practice and collaborative endeavors.



Jess’ work focuses on the intersections of art and health. Through lived experience and academic study, Jess has encountered innumerable inequities and identified systemic social and economic barriers for disabled and chronically ill populations. Their creative practice centers on removing these barriers for the cultivation of inclusive opportunities for communal reverence, and Jess will be using the time and resources as a Health Equity and Justice Fellow to improve accessibility accommodations for local arts organizations and events in Charlottesville.

When Jess is not continuing their research, sharing their story, or making art, they enjoy spending leisure time with their partner and two cats, going on walks near bodies of water, and baking sweet treats.

Fancie Terrell (they/them) is a Black/ADOS/indigenous mother, creative and community organizer living in the Richmond-Petersburg, VA, area. They identify as a trans non-binary queer person. Growing up in a community that was challenged by poverty and racism shaped Fancie’s view of the world at an early age as many close members of Fancie’s family were directly affected by unemployment, substance abuse, mental and physical health disadvantages, mass incarceration, and more. At an early age, Fancie made a deep connection with art, social justice work, reading and travel which opened their eyes to the world around them and sparked the desire for change.



Fancie has worked for nonprofits and organizations that focus on social justice and electoral politics on the local and national level, including working on both President Obama’s election and re-election campaigns. Fancie studied at University of Central Florida for Mass Communications and Community and Social Sciences at Midwest Academy in Chicago, IL. They now serve as the Local Project Director for Petersburg Healthy Options and Partnerships (PHOPs) as well as the coordinator for the Healthy Community Action Team (HCAT) and supports other local community organizations by volunteering.

Fancie has used art as a creative outlet and way to fight systems of oppression over the years, this includes painting, woodworking, and performing in drag and burlesque. They are one of the founding members of the Richmond-based Queer artist collective “Nu Rodeo Caldonia.” With this fellowship opportunity, Fancie is focusing on highlighting the voices and experiences of queer people and the access they have and don’t have to health-related resources. Fancie’s goal is to develop a podcast with visual components to share these stories.

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