



ACLS LEADING EDGE FELLOWSHIP

Project:	Assessing the Cultural Impact of <i>Our Stories: In Vivid Color</i> , a Multimedia Project
Organization:	Breakthrough
Location:	New York, NY [Fellow will work remotely]
Stipend:	\$60,000 per year, plus health insurance and professional development funding
Start Date:	January or February 2021

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

For twenty years, Breakthrough has harnessed media and popular culture to spark conversations and cultural transformation at the intersection of gender, sexuality, racial justice, and immigrant rights. Through nuanced, authentic storytelling, we uplift the voices and experiences of marginalized people, to challenge systemic barriers and build their cultural power. The building blocks of our campaigns are the instruments of pop culture: social media, music videos, video games, comedy shows, podcasts, documentary films, narrative fiction, and more. Using these mediums, we reach audiences at scale, inspiring people to empathize and take action in support of a fairer and safer world, free of violence and discrimination—especially the forms that disproportionately harm women, girls, and people of color. To learn more about Breakthrough, visit www.letsbreakthrough.org.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Leading Edge Fellow at Breakthrough will take a leading role in scaling a project that is at the center of our current work: *Our Stories: In Vivid Color*. A multimedia initiative, *Our Stories* amplifies the first-person narratives of girls and gender non-conforming (GNC) youth of color, ages 14-24, across the United States and Puerto Rico. It explores their lived experiences, creative and activist projects, and dreams—namely, of what a more liberated future would look like, for themselves and their communities.

Primarily a short-form documentary film series, *Our Stories* also features social media campaigns; intergenerational conversations with artists and activists; and an incubator for young creatives, through which we offer messaging, branding, and promotional support to young writers, podcasters, and video creators. The project will be disseminated via digital and social media, and we hope to stream the documentary series on a major platform like Netflix or Amazon, to reach a mass audience. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color, especially low-income communities, and we have a responsibility to share the stories of our youth partners in as truthful and respectful a manner as possible, bearing in mind the additional physical, economic and mental health challenges they now face.

COVID-19 has also changed the landscape of media production in the United States. Breakthrough continues to cast for the documentary series in an adapted form. We have supported our cast with skill-building opportunities, including mobile filmmaking workshops and kits, and have expanded our creative incubator, given the uncertainty of school and work opportunities. Additionally, we will soon launch a user-generated story archive, inviting video submissions from young people across the country. Continuing the project amid the pandemic invites important questions, including: What issues are most salient to young people now, in the face of COVID-19? How can we integrate a focus on emerging issues, while maintaining fidelity to our core themes (including gender identity and expression, LGBTQ+ rights,

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racial justice, disability rights, and climate change)? The Leading Edge Fellow will lead a research project on these and related topics, which will include a landscape review, primary data collection, and qualitative analysis. The fellow will join Breakthrough's program team, reporting to the Associate Director of Strategic Partnerships and collaborating with the Creative and Program Director, Video Producer, and other staff involved with the production and dissemination of *Our Stories*. The fellowship tenure is 12 consecutive months, with an expected time commitment of approximately 40 hours per week.

Responsibilities and tasks:

- Conduct a literature review of media representations of girls and gender non-conforming youth of color in the U.S., focusing on areas including representation across different mediums, areas of underrepresentation, harmful misrepresentation, and trends over time
- Research the content and quality of existing oral history projects and other archives of relevance to the project, and identify gaps
- Collect primary data about young people's responses to COVID-19, including through qualitative data analysis of *Our Stories* cast interview transcripts, remote follow up interviews with cast and youth partners, remote focus group discussions, and surveys
- Collect primary data about user-generated content amid COVID-19, especially by youth content creators, with a focus on platforms and websites targeting Millennials and Gen Z
- Assess the quality of the *Our Stories* archive, including through workshop(s) with media experts and humanities scholars, including members of the *Our Stories* advisory group
- Assess the effectiveness of the current (draft) impact measurement framework for *Our Stories*, and help develop metrics and data collection tools with support from staff
- Research best practices in marketing and distribution for documentary film, and offer recommendations to support a virtual launch
- Build relationships with high schools, colleges, universities, and other youth educators, and developing a curriculum to support the use of *Our Stories* content as a teaching tool

Qualifications:

- PhD in any field of the humanistic social sciences, so long as the applicant's research contributes to the scholarship and understanding of religion, theology, or ethics. Read more about eligible fields [here](#).
- Passionate about social justice, particularly issues related to gender, sexuality, racial justice, and immigrant rights
- Self-motivated, organized, creative, agile, and a strategic thinker, able to shift between big-picture strategy and detailed plans
- Able to work collaboratively and cross-departmentally, as well as independently
- Familiar with digital and social media, especially platforms that appeal to young people (e.g., Instagram, TikTok)
- Empathetic, with a sense of humor and an interest in being part of a dynamic, close-knit team

APPLICATIONS

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: <https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships>
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9pm EST, November 2, 2020

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