



Branch Alliance
for Educator Diversity

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

New Program Aims to Incubate and Advance Research by Scholars of Color

- **Inaugural Cohort of Fellows Demonstrate an Array of Research Interests from “Experiences of Racially Minoritized Boys” to “Critical Discourse Analysis”**

AUSTIN, TEXAS — Through co-collaboration, meet ups, writing retreats and other activities, Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED), the innovative organization that works with educator preparation programs (EPPs) at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), will support and amplify the research of scholars of color through its new [Emerging Research Fellows Program](#).

The inaugural cohort of six fellows includes a diverse group of three men and three women, whose timely and culturally relevant research interests range from understanding the experiences of racially minoritized boys to critical discourse analysis. Three program participants, **Katrieva Jones**, Ph.D., **Heather Macias**, Ph.D., and **Zhongfeng Tian**, Ph.D., are designated as “faculty research fellows.” The remaining three participants, **Nardos Ghebreab**, **Arturo Nevárez** and **Shawn Savage** are “emerging research fellows.”

Research about the experiences of racially minoritized boys became important to Savage through his own experiences of growing up in Jamaica. “When I looked at the performances of males in my country, we were lagging behind on almost every metric,” he explained, adding, “It became important for me to play a role in addressing that through teaching, research and leadership. So, I started directly investigating the way schools are structured, what our males experienced in those structures and promising practices to enrich learning, enhance outcomes and bolster life chances.”

Savage, currently a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Boston College, said he began engaging his male students by implementing some innovative teaching approaches, such as using Jamaican dancehall and reggae music as scaffolds to enhance comprehension in English, and help students demonstrate literary competencies, using props and costumes in class and organizing theater excursions, which made learning fun, culturally sustaining and led to significant grade improvements. Savage said one of the things his research has taught him is that more focus needs to be placed on the assets of young people instead of on their assumed deficits.

“The Emerging Research Fellows Program presents an opportunity for an organization like BranchED, which is entrenched in the work of diversifying the nation’s educator workforce with quality educators for all students, to both increase the number of scholars of color and support their scholarship in very tangible ways, especially ways that highlight the assets and support the growth of MSI educator preparation programs,” BranchED’s President and CEO Cassandra Herring, Ph.D., said.

“The kind of research that Shawn and the other fellows are undertaking is so important and relevant to finding solutions to a number of problems affecting various aspects of education, yet can often be overlooked by mainstream academia,” said Tara Plachowski, BranchED’s research associate and coordinator of its Emerging Research Fellows Program.

During the first year of the fellowship, program milestones will involve collaborating as a co-researcher on a project with a BranchED staff member, attending monthly virtual meetups with the cohort, and participating in a writing retreat. Year two of the fellowship will involve a fellow–designed-and-facilitated research project aligned to one of BranchED’s Framework Principles.

Savage suggested that part of the reason that many inequities persist in both K-12 and higher education is because there are deficit assumptions about people of color and black people more specifically. “BranchED’s interests aligned with my interests in celebrating the brilliance and competence of people of color and trying to get them into classrooms,” Savage said of why he was drawn to BranchED’s Emerging Research Fellows Program.

During his tenure as a fellow, Savage said he hopes to explore the experiences of racially minoritized students who are in teacher preparation programs.

BranchED’s Emerging Research Fellow Program Participants and Their Research Interests:

Katrieva Jones Munroe, Ph.D.

Research Interests: higher education, underserved students in higher education, online/remote education

Heather Macias, Ph.D.

Research Interests: bilingual education, critical discourse analysis, professional development

Zhongfeng Tian (田中锋), Ph.D.

Research Interests: equitable and inclusive learning environments in ESL and dual language immersion contexts, culturally and linguistically sustaining teacher preparation

Nardos Ghebreab, Ph.D. Candidate

Research Interests: teacher preparation for Black teachers, racial literacy development, anti-racist pedagogies

Arturo Nevárez, Ph.D. Candidate

Research Interests: critical race studies and Latinx critical race studies (LatCrit) in education, racial literacies, K-12 Ethnic Studies pedagogies and praxis, teachers and teacher candidates of Color, healthy racial climate in teacher education

Shawn S. Savage, Ph.D. Candidate

Research Interests: the experiences of racially minoritized boys, young men, and adult men across their educational and professional lives, teacher education and leadership education, justice-centered qualitative research

For more information about BranchED's Emerging Research Fellows Program and to learn more about the inaugural cohort of fellows, please visit:

<https://www.educatordiversity.org/emerging-research-fellows/>

About BranchED

Based in Austin, Texas, Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity is the first and only non-profit organization in the nation dedicated to strengthening and growing educator preparation at Minority Serving Institutions, with broader goals of both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students. BranchED is expanding its reach into K-12 by supporting principal coaching and development. For more information, visit www.educatordiversity.org.

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