

# STRATHMORE



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## **New Class of Arts and Social Justice Fellows Announced**

*Presented by Strathmore with core partner Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company*

(NORTH BETHESDA, MD) - The 2023 Strathmore Arts and Social Justice Fellowship (ASJF) class brings in a new cohort of bright young minds from the DMV together to learn and grow as artist-activists in their community.

Created in conjunction with Strathmore's and Woolly Mammoth's 2022 co-presentation of Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* by Toshi Reagon and Bernice Johnson Reagon, the second year of the fellowship supports ten high school fellows in six months of study, discussions, and creation at the intersection of arts and social change. The program explores climate justice, identity, freedom, race, gender, immigration, and more. Past projects have included visual art, theater, music, writing, and spoken word.

"I think what I took away out of this fellowship was how to look at other people's communities' perspectives when it comes to challenges and inequities that I hadn't previously thought about," says visual artist Rahimah Hagmagid, a 2022 fellow. "I'm pushing myself to tell stories that aren't just my own with my art, and I never thought about that before," she adds. "I never had that sort of community space before, and I think it was really, really rewarding to be around people that are passionate about the same things."

As part of a series of concerts, plays, lectures, and workshops the fellows will attend, they'll meet with Toshi Reagon, co-creator of [Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower opera](#), which Strathmore will present again in 2023 on **June 28-July 1**. Reagon will share how she combines her values with her artistry to instigate social change.

Arts and Social Justice Fellows develop leadership skills, connect with networks of other students and arts professionals, and grow their capacity to drive projects from start to finish, culminating in a showcase of their projects with discussions of their visions for future work in artistry and activism.

*This program is made possible with generous support from the Dr. Allen A.B. Herman Fund and program sponsor, Dr. Deborah Smith.*

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## 2023 HIGH SCHOOL FELLOWS

**Abjini Chattopadhyay** (she/her) is an 11th grader at Montgomery Blair High School. Her passions range from the visual arts to singing. Her paintings and sketches have been displayed in local hospitals, showcased in the Maryland First Lady's Spring Art Show, and included in a published children's book. As a singer, she was admitted to Maryland's All-State Senior Chorus in 2022 and 2023, and placed second in the Glory International Romantic Music Competition. As a Vice President of Blair's National Art Honor Society, she creates service opportunities for students to apply their artistic abilities to help those in need throughout the community.

**Ach'sah Gubena** (she/her) is a junior at Montgomery Blair High School interested in theater and racial justice. Each year, she performs in several in-school productions, including "Sankofa," an annual Black History Month tribute. As an Assistant Director at Playset Theatre, Ach'sah leads others in diverse forms of theatrical performances. She is also a strong advocate for the Black community, partaking in numerous activist endeavors each year.

**Hosea Johnson** (he/him) is an 11th-grade multi-talented musician. He engages in an array of musical activities including singing and playing multiple instruments. Hosea's drive for activism is channeled through his approach to singing: he seeks to draw from the struggles of racism as well as the joy of being Black. Beyond music, Hosea aspires to be a large breed vet and professional polo player. He enjoys riding horses, learning about animals, and playing competitive polo.

**Jada King** (she/her) is a sophomore at Elizabeth Seton High School with passions for animals and all types of art. Jada specializes in dance, painting, and drawing, but also has interests in sculpting and creative writing. Jada enjoys art because she feels that expressing creativity and feelings are limitless. She lives in Laurel, Maryland and can be found looking for things to lay her hands on to paint.

**Myla Leung** (she/her) is a 10th grader at Winston Churchill High School. She loves the arts and humanities and is passionate about the intersection between arts and social justice. She is also interested in environmental advocacy, sustainability, and research. In her free time, she enjoys baking, hiking, reading, and spending time with family and friends. She is excited to learn how to use art to effectively advance social change in her community and beyond.

**Olivia Ensign** (she/her) is an 11th grader in the Visual Arts Center magnet at Albert Einstein High School. Olivia works in many creative mediums, including drawing, painting, digital art, dance, and creative writing. Her artwork has been recognized by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and Friends of the Yellow Barn Studio. An intern at Dance Exchange in Takoma Park, she guides 8-10 year olds, fostering their love for dance, creativity, and collaboration. An advocate of nature, Olivia also received a Girl Scouts Silver Award for organizing volunteers to rebuild a neglected rain garden to benefit pollinators and the Rock Creek watershed. She wants to create work where people from diverse backgrounds can better see and feel the personal, societal, and structural interconnections of difficult social issues, especially racism. By expressing her creative voice, Olivia hopes to move people to take action to create social justice.

**Aron Moldabek** (he/his) is a 9th grader at Georgetown Day School. Aron is passionate about music in all its forms including studying piano, singing in his school's chorus, and participating in an acapella club. He plays extensive classic rock repertoire and is the lead singer of his own rock band. Aron is interested in honing his skills in social activism and seeks to closely explore the concept of tolerance and peace within

local communities, multicultural societies, and the broader world. Aron volunteers at Rockville Bike Hub and is a mountain biking enthusiast.

**Ollie Braden** (they/them) is a senior at Jackson-Reed High School and has been drawing ever since they could hold a pencil. As Creative Editor for their school magazine and Director of Visuals for their school paper, Ollie sees art as a crucial tool for communication and expression. They're passionate about climate justice and started a Sunrise Hub at Jackson-Reed, joining a national, youth-led movement pushing for climate justice. As a Strathmore Fellow, they hope to marry their passions for artistic expression and advocacy.

**Rayan Afif** (they/them) is a 12th grader at George C. Marshall High School in Fairfax, Virginia. They've been involved in theatre for fourteen years as a performer, playwright, and scenic painter, among other roles. Rayan's plays have been produced by Statesmen Theatre. Awards include: First Prize for Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Art's 10-minute Play Contest ("1, 2, 3", 2022), Semi-Finalist for the Hal Leonard Vocal Competition (High School Musical Theatre, 2022), and VHSL Top 2 Best Actors in the Region (Finley in "Edit Profile", 2021). Rayan's work stems from "artivism," the connection of art and activism, where they find it imperative to use art as a means of social justice and to inspire difficult conversations.

**Tais Moore** (she/her) is a Senior at McKinley Technology High School who loves finding ways to incorporate art into her life. She is a part of the theater club at her high school and is currently preparing for the upcoming play: Fences. Outside of acting, Tais enjoys creative writing and bringing the stories of those around her into the spotlight. You can always find her working to change the world.

## **ABOUT STRATHMORE**

Strathmore is a multidimensional, creative anchor in the community, where everyone can connect with the arts, and artists can explore their full potential.

It presents hundreds of performances, visual arts, and education programs, annually, for diverse audiences on its Montgomery County Maryland campus and in the community.

All of Strathmore's facilities are Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC) STAR™ accredited. [www.strathmore.org](http://www.strathmore.org)

## **ABOUT WOOLLY**

Woolly Mammoth creates badass theatre that highlights the stunning, challenging, and tremendous complexity of our world. For over 40 years, Woolly has maintained a high standard of artistic rigor while simultaneously daring to take risks, innovate, and push beyond perceived boundaries. One of the few remaining theatres in the country to maintain a company of artists, Woolly serves an essential research and development role within the American theatre. Plays premiered here have gone on to productions at hundreds of theatres all over the world and have had lasting impacts on the field. Co-led by Artistic Director Maria Manuela Goyanes and Interm Managing Director Ted DeLong, Woolly is located in Washington, DC, equidistant from the Capitol Building and the White House. This unique location influences Woolly's investment in actively working towards an equitable, participatory, and creative democracy. [www.woollymammoth.net](http://www.woollymammoth.net)

Woolly Mammoth stands upon occupied, unceded territory: the ancestral homeland of the Nacotchtank whose descendants belong to the Piscataway peoples. Furthermore, the foundation of this city, and most of the original buildings in Washington, DC, were funded by the sale of enslaved people of African descent and built by their hands.

For further information visit [www.strathmore.org/fellowship](http://www.strathmore.org/fellowship)

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