



**AIR'S New Voices 2018
Third Coast Conference, October 4-6, 2018 Chicago, IL
EVALUATIONS**

Evaluation Questions:

1. Please provide a general overview of your New Voices experience. Be as specific as you can, pro and con.
2. What were the top lessons or impressions of the experience? Think in terms of things we should know as we prepare for next year class.
- 3a. Who did you meet that made the strongest impression(s) on you, and why?
- 3b. What professional connections do you expect to follow up on after the conference? An assignment? A relationship with the potential to evolve into collaboration?
4. Do you have recommendations for AIR or for Third Coast for improvements to the conference or the New Voices program?
5. Do you expect your New Voices experience influence your professional direction? Why or why not?





Name: Galilee Abdullah
Location: Chicago, Illinois
Affiliation: WBEZ

1. My first Third Coast, I had an overall amazing time. I met so many wonderful people, went to some amazing sessions (such as the session led by Chenjerai Kumanyika and Sandhya Dirks, as well as the session led by Hana and Leila of The Stoop). As someone who has most recently been in a newsroom as an intern and temp, it was affirming to be in a space where I could take ownership of my work and feel rewarded by just simply being in that space among all those great minds. I love doing the work I do, but as someone who has been struggling to find financial stability in this field, I felt so reinvigorated by the conference. It was such a joyous time to witness the level of passion and dedication that people have to responsibly telling stories. I can only hope I leave the conference and am able to effectively use the tools I've learned to better myself as a producer and Storyteller.

2. Wow, I'll say it again and again, the Power session with Chenjerai in Sandhya was so necessary, and should be a workshop for all newsrooms (haha not joking). Just hearing "abandon the idea that a story can be non-political" had me thinking, "Wow, there really are people who get it. They care and are here to help people understand." I could have left Third Coast only having attended that session and would have been just as excited and joyous as I am with the entirety of my Third Coast experience.

3. Meeting everyone in AIR and the other New Voices was amazing. NV alums like Andrew Ramsammy, Luis Perez and others, also made me feel supported. They left me feeling relieved because I felt that I could talk through some of my challenges without judgement. My conference comrade, Alicia Zuckerman, was amazing and I genuinely appreciate the conversations we were able to share during her time in Chicago, and her support throughout the conference, and beyond. I'm happy to say I've made a few friends from Third Coast, working in podcasting and radio, and who seem to all have a dedication to making the most necessary affect through their work. It meant a lot to me, and I am very grateful to have shared energy and conversation with all of them. Hana Baba of The Stoop was very kind and although our conversation was short, it was incredibly affirming to meet and speak to another Black woman and East African at Third Coast! Although I didn't get to speak to him, Chenjerai Kumanyika left me with some of the most amazing takeaways from the entire conference. His words resonated with me so much and I was moved. I hope to reach out to some of the people I connected with as resources possibly to speak on issues that are in their field of expertise in a future segment. I hope to continue receiving guidance from friends and people I met at the conference



who can help guide me in “finding my voice” and seeking consistent positions in public radio and audio in general. I hope to follow up with some people about perfecting pitches and developing ideas for personal projects.

4. I think having more AIR New Voices group gatherings could be very useful to the cohort. I also think that being compensated after the conference is over is not convenient. I am incredibly grateful to even be receiving a scholarship, but as someone who is very candid about being tight on money and not having a position that pays well enough to be attending a conference, I cannot have imagined coming from out of town for this conference. If I was not already based in Chicago, it would have been very difficult for me to afford anything. I think receiving the stipends after the fact, may put people who are in dire financial situations, but still deserve to be part of the cohort, in a pretty difficult position.

5. Yes, I do believe it will influence my professional direction because I left with a lot of things to think about. I feel like, of course, I want to keep working radio, but I also feel like there are so many cool ways that people are sharing information and telling stories, but that the pool of options is wider than I felt were open to me.

6. I think that one main critique I have, other than the way we are compensated, is that the way that the hotel situation was handled (last minute) trickled into affecting the scheduling of everything in the following days, including my audio doctor session, which was not able to even happen in person because of the craziness of scheduling/timing. I think that having a definitive schedule of events ahead of time would have made things less hectic, and at times confusing/frustrating, especially when it came to the first day being at WBEZ and the rescheduling/ canceling of my audio doctor session. Thanks again everyone, I am so grateful for the experience.



Name: Cassius Adair

Location: Charlottesville, Virginia

Affiliation: With Good Reason Radio - Virginia Humanities

1. I tend to be skeptical when people say things like “this experience changed my life.” I’m always like, who’s paying you?? But 1. We all know who’s paying me, it’s AIR, it’s pretty transparent and 2. It’s actually true in the case. This experience changed me. I’m transitioning into radio from after being trained as an academic, and I’m just finding my footing in this new world. I’m not really a journalist, not really a scholar, I’m something else. And I’m also trans and queer in a moment when it feels like my

existence is an object of debate, something that marks me as “political” no matter what I do. Career-wise, that means that I’ve not always known where to turn if something feels bad in a way that



only I notice, or if I have an idea but I'm scared it's not "universal." Having a cohort of people who get it--that's genuinely transformative. I'm so excited to grow into someone worthy of my NV cohort's generosity and care and cool.

2. Lesson One: (For organizers:) It's hard to discuss this year's Third Coast without mentioning the Hyatt hotel workers' strike, so I want to address that up front. The circumstances in which Third Coast found itself this year-- in which Hyatt management's reluctance to settle a contract meant that holding the conference would mean crossing a picket line-- might be unique to 2018 (or maybe not). But the larger issue also felt unresolved: how should Third Coast balance its accountability to its attendees, to the community of workers on whose labor the conference relies, and to its own financial stability? To me, there's a central lesson here: New Voices are entering an industry, not just a particular conference, and we need to be inducted into the critical conversations and norms and ethics of that industry.

Lesson Two: (For attendees:) Radio people are weirdly nice? And mostly feel awkward in large social gatherings, just like you do. Find the other awkward people. It'll go fine.

Lesson Three: (For attendees:) In the professional world we want to build, we're allowed to skip panels / professionalization stuff if we need them to talk about our gender feelings or our parents or our hometowns. We can start building those new norms now. So TAKE BREAKS. Listen to your body. Stand up and stretch, even if it seems weird.

3. a) First, and in a category of her own: Phoebe Wang, for telling the whole truth about racism in the Industry. Next, everyone else, especially: Lu Olkowski, for quitting and going to therapy and telling us all to go to therapy. Ike Sriskandarajah, for rock-solid conference comradeship and letting me monologue about my boring career feelings. Elena Rivera and Aseloka Smith and Molly and Mo and Arlie, for heart conversations, many of which took place while a little lost. Everyone in my NV cohort, for everything. Afi, a fearless light. Tran, an emotional and logistical genius. I kept running into James Kim everywhere and it was weird but a gift each time.

b) The queer / trans podcast meet-up (and drinks afterwards) was a revelation, and each and every conversation there turned into a professional and personal door-opener. Before Third Coast, I honestly thought I knew every trans radio person-- all four or five of us. I'm deeply glad to have been wrong: we're legion, and we're smart and cool. These all feel like collabs-in-waiting. I also met a bunch of journalistic badassess, too, doing the kind of methodical, weedy, urgent truth-finding that really speaks to the ex-academic obsessive in me. I didn't know that I could do "real" journalism before Third Coast; now it feels on the table for me.

4. I think-- hope-- many of us will mention the handling of the strike, and I already have. In addition, though, I think many of us would have benefitted from a critical conversation about how to think about how to shift the industry-level conversation as "diverse" individuals with relatively little power-- not just from an individualist standpoint of growing our own careers, but also from the perspective of growing a



collective voice. If Phoebe Wang's speech and the pocaudiohires movement is going to change the game, it needs to be that everyone strategizes together. Does this mean we find some way to do inclusion riders? We draw lines in the sand for racial justice in contract language? We write our own non-tokenizing, non-flattening norms for journalism and storytelling and agree, at least between each other, to follow them? I don't know. I think I wanted some time to think about how to put our sidebar conversations into group action.

5. I left New Voices feeling like a real "radio person," which in itself is a new direction. I also felt like I was part of a funky, weird, passionate, genius team, and that's honestly all I want in my professional life. So in a way, I feel like I'm already in that new direction. To be perfectly honest, I think the other thing that I wanted out of the conference was maybe impossible-- I wanted some fairy dust to sprinkle down on me and tell me that I was either gonna be a creative type or a capital-J journo, a squishy-weird storyteller or a news dude. But, annoyingly, the truth is that these aren't actually opposite qualities, and, furthermore, no deus ex machina is gonna make my decisions for me. So in that way, my professional direction is still, "somewhere between not-journalist and journalist," and that hasn't changed-- at least not yet. The big difference is that now, I feel like I have legit professional opportunities in all directions.

6. I just feel an enormous sense of gratitude for my cohort and Afi and Tran. My heart is full whenever I think of them (or see their Instagram stories). I didn't know I needed you all until I found you-- thank you.



Name: Jordan Bailey
Location: Oakland, CA
Affiliation: Jetty Studios - Al Jazeera

1. My New Voices experience began a few weeks before the application deadline, when I reached out to our captain Afi Yellow-Duke to gain some insight into the program. Talking with Afi solidified my decision to apply — she spoke so highly of her experience both as a New Voices fellow and captain, that I felt convinced that New Voices would help me make the most of my time at Third Coast. She spoke of networking and mentorship opportunities, the benefits of having a built-in peer group, and the "status" that New Voices fellows enjoy at the conference.

And Afi was totally right. As a Third Coast newbie, it was easy to feel overwhelmed by the fast pace of the conference, and it helped a lot to have New Voices as kind of a home base throughout the week. Meeting fifteen really talented, smart and open-hearted people right off the bat made me feel more



comfortable going into the conference — I knew that no matter what happened over the next two days, I would walk away with a really amazing network of peers that I would be able to lean on throughout my career in audio.

Attending Third Coast as a New Voices scholar gave me the opportunity to do some extremely valuable networking. Being fairly new in the audio space, the New Voices accolade gave me a healthy boost of confidence when approaching more established producers, and I felt that being a scholar gave me something to discuss with them right away.

Afi's accessibility and openness remained a constant throughout the conference, and was truly one of the highlights of my experience as a New Voices fellow. She and Tran always made themselves available to answer questions, talk through concerns or just have good conversation. With the strike-related uncertainty surrounding this year's conference, Afi and Tran's guidance was invaluable.

2. I really appreciated the diversity of our cohort. We had folks from a huge variety of backgrounds, locations, perspectives, experience levels, ages, etc. and I loved getting to know people who were all really different from me, but had similar professional goals.

It's so helpful to have all the New Voices come to Chicago a day before Third Coast. Establishing those connections early on in the conference was really key. I do wish we would have had a bit more unstructured time together to really talk through our goals and fears in more depth — something like a roundtable conversation with a few leading questions from the facilitators could be really beneficial.

The conversations I had at Third Coast that were most helpful to me at this stage in my career, were all about negotiating pay. I think it's super important for producers to learn skills to negotiate, and have an expectation of how much they should be getting paid for their work. I think the more New Voices can facilitate these kinds of conversations, the better.

3. a) The "All Stories Are Stories About Power" session made a huge impact on me. I really appreciated the way Sandhya and Chenjerai broke down the storytelling traps that well-meaning producers can fall into, and offered practical solutions for a more radical form of storytelling. This session gave me language to talk about stories that I had uncomfortable gut feelings about, but couldn't quite put into words why they felt problematic. I also appreciated that Sandhya and Chenjerai called out some of their own work. That signaled to me a genuine commitment to telling stories better, as opposed to having a surface level conversation where the ideas don't get reflected in the work.

I didn't get a chance to meet Phoebe Wang, but her award acceptance speech blew me away. I was so impressed by her willingness to call out the industry's diversity problem and be really specific about the things that were problematic. I also thought it was brilliant for her to make such pointed suggestions as the POC Audio Directory and offer a long list of producer's names for studios to hire. I also enjoyed meeting Misha Euceph, who created a really beautiful podcast about learning American



culture as an immigrant. We had a great conversation over lunch, where we talked about identity and belonging as people of color in predominantly white institutions.

b) A few weeks out from the conference, I've followed up on a number of professional connections that I'm excited to maintain. Adizah Eghan, who led one of my favorite conference workshops and was on the team of producers who won Third Coast's best documentary award, invited me to sit in on a pitch meeting at Snap Judgement. I hope to collaborate on projects with Lee Mengitsu, another young black producer based in the Bay Area. And I plan to keep in touch with Nishat Kurwa, who gave some really valuable advice on negotiating at her Thursday meetup session.

And I made one important connection that has translated into a really exciting job opportunity. I had been emailing with Nicole Wong from Gimlet Creative for a few weeks before Third Coast with the intention of getting coffee but it never seemed to work out. After we bumped into each other and talked at Third Coast, we made plans to get coffee once we were both back in the Bay Area. It turned out that she was hiring producers for a new project at Gimlet, and ended up offering me the role! If I hadn't bumped into her at Third Coast, I probably would not have had this opportunity.

4. One suggestion would be to find ways for the New Voices fellows to spend more unstructured time together, although it might be tough since the conference week is already so jam-packed. But for me, one of the positive offshoots of the hotel strike was that a few of the New Voices fellows ended up getting a house together. I loved sharing a house with other fellows because it allowed us to spend more time together outside of the conference and the planned NV activities. I also think it would be great to have New Voices introduce conference sessions again, maybe on a volunteer basis so fellows can choose whether they want to introduce sessions or not. I think part of the benefit of being a New Voices scholar is the platform you have at the conference, and I think anything Third Coast or New Voices can do to elevate that benefits the scholars.

5. My New Voices experience has already influenced my professional direction! In the most direct sense, I wholeheartedly attribute my upcoming job opportunity to my New Voices experience. Without New Voices I would not have been at Third Coast this year, and without Third Coast I would not have secured this job. My New Voices experience also highlighted the importance of "networking across," and building professional connections with peers who are in a similar career stage as you. I'm really looking forward to collaborating with my New Voices cohort on projects in the future, and exchanging ideas and feedback with other fellows during the course of our careers.



Name: Angelo Bautista

Location: Washington, D.C

Affiliation: WFIU - Indiana public media

1. Everything leading up to New Voices honestly felt so surreal and I came to the retreat with a mix of excitement, anxiety and bit of an imposter syndrome that I always carry with me. I felt so incredibly lucky to be in the company of some of the most amazing audio makers and game changers. I felt so lucky that it almost felt like I didn't deserve to be there, like I had somehow just happened to walk into this room by mistake. But after meeting everyone and listening to each other's work, I was realizing that I definitely

deserved to be in this company and that I really had something to be proud of. I put in the work to be there and that's no mistake. I had been to Third Coast before, but this time around was so much different. Last year, I was merely a student there to learn. This time, I was freshly graduated, coming off of an internship and looking for a job. I networked more than I ever had before and New Voices helped me immensely with that. Our cohort felt like a team on a mission. It was us against the whole conference. We all had our individual goals and everyone lifted each other up. I am so grateful for them, and for Afi and Tran for being amazing leaders.

2. There is a lot I need to learn about how to leverage myself, my strengths and my brand when it comes to my career, and how to recognize my own value in this industry and in the workplace. Andrew Ramsammy's presentation on career success for the New Voices was DENSE but super helpful, especially as I'm just now starting my professional career.

You get to define what success is for you at this conference. Setting goals is key and I came to the conference with several people in mind to talk to. Even if you don't reach your goals or talk to everyone you meet, it's not like they're inaccessible once the conference ends.

Being a New Voice really helps give you the confidence to talk with people. It's like a super power. Even if you aren't an outgoing or extroverted person, people will come to you. Everyone is super nice so there's really nothing to be afraid of. Also, no one is too famous. They're only public radio famous.

3. a) Hans Buetow. I had only ever spoken to him by phone for a job interview, which I ended up having to forfeit for my internship at Code Switch. Still, he remembered me and even reached out to me over email before the conference. On day one, he found me before I found him and right away was introducing me to people from MPR and APM. He's probably the most personable human being and is like your personal cheerleader. He's awesome. Haleema Shah. A fellow New Voice! I connected with

Haleema before the conference and she was so helpful with me as I was going through an interview process at a place she worked. She is incredibly talented and smart and she's killing the game.



Cass Adair. Another New Voice! Cass and I connected immediately and on the first night we had a great conversation over drinks about our careers and relationships. It's always such a relief when you can find someone that relates to you and your situation. It felt like therapy. I also want to thank Cass for helping me through this recent job interview process. Thank you for being a friend.

b) I definitely want to keep the conversation going with the people I met from MPR and APM. I really admire their work and I can see my professional career moving towards Minneapolis. I also hope to keep in touch with my Conference Comrade since we didn't get much of an opportunity to connect during the conference.

4. Please keep us visible! Elevate us as much as possible! I was a little disappointed to hear that the New Voices would not be introducing the panels, although I understand the logistical problems in past attempts. I was also disappointed when we first received our name tags without the New Voices ribbons. The first reception is big networking opportunity and I felt invisible without the ribbon. I didn't like having to mention to people that I'm a New Voice. I understand things probably got mixed around under this year's circumstances, but somehow the volunteers, presenters, award recipients and radio residents all got their ribbons. It's a small thing, it makes a big difference.

5. Third Coast is always an invigorating experience that reaffirms my love of public media and audio and the people in this industry. As for the New Voice experience, I feel like I've been awakened to the value I have as an underrepresented voice in audio and I will take that with me wherever I choose work. I will be forever questioning the structures and those in power who may not fully recognize the value I possess. But I will also remain hopeful that with every New Voices cohort, the needle inches inevitably toward equity.



Name: Zakiya Gibbons
Location: Brooklyn, NY
Affiliation: Independent

1. I felt so honored to be able to attend Third Coast for my first time as a New Voices Scholar. It was so comforting to go into Third Coast--which can be overwhelming and intimidating--with a group of likeminded and kind people who also were pretty new to the scene. Definitely one of my highlights of Third Coast was becoming a New Voices Scholar, and befriending everyone in my cohort. I wish I had more time and space to get to know everyone better! While I understand it was a jam-packed few days, I felt that we jumped into the deep end of Third Coast orientation and didn't have a chance to really get to know each other. For



example, when everyone went around saying their names and played clips, it would have been nice to know more than everyone's name and hear their work. It would have been nice to hold space to talk about everyone's experiences in the audio industry, especially as an underrepresented voice. I had a sense of pride being a New Voices, but when I got to the conference and interacted with others in the industry--especially those who are not underrepresented--I was surprised to see that many people did not know what the New Voices Scholarship was, and did not understand what an accomplishment it was. That was frustrating, as New Voices is kind of 'marketed' as a prestigious door-opener, but many people didn't see it as that because they didn't know what it was. Another big "pro" of this experience was having Afi Yellow-Duke as our New Voices captain, and having Tran's support. They were always super helpful and approachable, and handled the strike situation with grace despite it being a hectic and stressful situation.

2. 1) Third Coast is a giant conference, and having all of those people in your industry under one roof can be intimidating. I feel privileged in that I already know quite a few people in the industry having worked in audio in New York for the past few years, but it was still hard to get "out there" and network, and feel like you're doing it effectively. I expected to go in making a lot of top level connections that would've led to something big (which admittedly was probably a lofty goal), but when I did meet people that I had planned on meeting that would have been a 'big connection' it was very fleeting and unsatisfying. But despite all of that, I'm surprised that I left the conference with a few job offers, which was nice!

2) Not as many people as I thought know what New Voices is

3) New Voices scholars are so interesting and kind! I wish I could have gotten to know everyone better.

3. a) All of the New Voices scholars made a big impression on me because everyone was so kind and passionate, and it was nice to go into this big, intimidating space with a group of people who were also pretty new to the scene, and underrepresented in some way. I was lucky enough to make new friends that I know I'll stay in touch with for a very long time, and I even made a best friend in a very short amount of time. Another person that I met that made a strong impression on me was my mentor, Sharon Mashih. She has really taken the New Voices mentorship aspect of this program to heart, and has really supported me and shown up for me in ways that I never expected. I've always respected her work so it was so cool that this program not only allowed for me to meet her, but to have her in my life as a support system and friend.

b) I met some people from a show that I really respect, and they were very active in maintaining a connection with me and they asked me to pitch them, so that is a connection that I will most likely follow up on. And I met someone at Third Coast who is working on a cool project, and that led to a job that I currently have.

4. When I did the Ragdale Radio Residency, there was a good balance of everyone being independent and spending their time as they wanted, but then "family dinner" was required every night, which entailed of the Ragdale chef cooking dinner for us and all of us gathering for a family meal. It would've



been nice if there was something built into the New Voices programming like that, where everyone spent their time as they saw fit--especially since there's a lot going on at Third Coast--but there was some kind of required meetup everyday, like lunch or dinner, paid for by AIR, because we all felt the desire to get to know each other better, but there was barely any time or space for that. I would also recommend having the New Voices scholars having more of a public role at Third Coast, as I felt like we got lost in the crowd despite promises of recognition. Additionally, not many people were aware of what the New Voices program is, and why it's an accomplishment, which was frustrating, especially because this experience is largely marketed as a door-opener for a budding career. I would highly recommend new marketing or more of a presence at Third Coast so that people know what the program is, and are more likely to take the time to get to know us. The only public recognition we got was a ribbon, and most people didn't know what the ribbon was for. Even a simple announcement with a few sentences about what the program is, and we all go on stage and wave with a quick intro would have been nice.

5. Now that I learned that many people do not know what the New Voices program is, I'm not sure how much it will influence my professional trajectory, to be honest. For those who do know what it is, perhaps it will set me apart a bit, but having been a New Voices Scholar doesn't feel like much of a career gamechanger. It was much more of a socially significant experience, as I made great new friends for life.

6. During introductions in the orientation, everyone should provide their pronouns.



Name: Morgan Givens

Location: Washington, DC

Affiliation: Independent

1. My experience as an AIR Media New Voice was far better than I could have imagined. There's always a bit of anxiety when meeting new people, or trusting a new organization to hear and support who you are as a creative person...but everyone who was involved with my experience was so ridiculously inviting. I'm naturally a pretty shy person, and I can be quiet when meeting new people, but Tran, Afi and all the others in my cohort instantly made me feel comfortable. And, I think we all connected in a real way. I trust everyone in my cohort, and know they'd be there for

me. The same way I'd be there for them. It's surprising when considering how little we've all known each other. I wish we could have had more time together as a group. I know the point is to have a foundation before we set off into the wilds of the conference, but it really would have been nice to have



one more day or a half day, with all the other AIR NV folks. I'm super interested in their work, but don't think I got enough time to learn more about them (though, I didn't arrive on the first day until 11a/Noon).

2. My first impression was "Holy heck! All of these other NV folks are incredibly talented." It was nice to be surrounded by so much creative energy. It's hard to get that sometimes when you're grinding away in your daily life, trying to keep the bills paid so you can pursue your dreams. Being surrounded by others who are so wickedly brilliant at their work was inspirational. It made me want to keep pushing myself, and it made me feel less alone. I liked our speaker. He had good advice about negotiating pay...but...I don't think he really knew how to read a room. We'd just come out of the Kavanaugh hearings. And they were brutal, and really opened up old wounds for sexual assault and harassment survivors. Folks were super triggered, and still on emotional eggshells when we had our meet-up. I don't think he considered how sensitive a topic it all was. Or who may or may not be triggered by his bringing it up in an attempt to be lighthearted. While his advice was great, his method of delivery wasn't.

As far as preparation for the next class...bring way more business cards than you think you'll need. I brought 75 and ran out! And, it's okay to be awkward. You're not the only one feeling weird about talking to total strangers. Everyone is kinda in the same boat. But, if you find the people you click with, while you're there (I did! And they're wonderful. I still talk with them everyday), nurture that relationship before you leave. It was the moments outside of the "main conference" that were most beneficial to me. The moments I grabbed a beer or lunch with someone I didn't know, and we all laughed and had a good time talking about everything BUT audio. Those are the people I still talk to. And yes, figure out that handful of people you want to speak to before the conference. I never thought I'd actually have it in me to talk to Julie Shapiro, but I did! And she was lovely. Talk to the people who scare you. They don't bite.

3. (a) I met Ian Fox. He works for PRX, and he's in charge of helping to get their podcast garages up and running in new cities. He was seriously the kindest person I met there. Ian just has such a good heart. Whenever I passed him, he asked if I needed anything. He was quick to introduce me to other folks, and he made me laugh. Also, he's a huge cheerleader for indie podcasters. Great guy. I'm glad I know him.

(b) I'm still talking to Julie Shapiro and John Barth. And I'm also talking with Chenjerai Kumanyika. I've talked to all of them a bit since the conference ended, and we're still staying in touch. I actually just saw Chenjerai a week ago.

4. My only advice at this point would be to make sure speakers who talk to us know how to accurately read a room. Even still, I learned a ton. I met so many people, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

5. I absolutely expect it to contribute in a meaningful way to my career trajectory. It's already



begun to!



Name: Cherry Griffin
Location: Grayson, GA
Affiliation: IBNX Radio Network

1. It was truly an honor to be apart of the AIRS New Voices Scholars for 2018. I learned just what AIRS was all about before I left Georgia. The representation of AIRS, Tran and Afi are truly models of excellent customer service and teamwork. The level of professionalism they both displayed was above average and showed their commitment to AIR. I am still on a high from meeting my fellow voices and learning from them as well. They all are a very talented professionals and made me realize I still have a lot to

learn. To think I almost missed this conference makes me grateful everyday I was able to attend. I was overjoyed and thrilled at meeting other radio personalities and podcasters outside of AIRS. I have already shared AIRS platform and encouraging others to get involved.

The only con I have is, there wasn't enough time! There were a good variety of breakout sessions but not enough time to attend all the ones I wanted to attend.

My first impression when I arrived in Chicago was, what did I get myself into? Am I really prepared for this conference? As for the lessons I learned, there are way too many to write on this paper, but I will break it down for you the best I can. Impression: Afi's professionalism even before I arrived at the conference put me at ease, despite all the chaos that was unfolding around us, she remained, calm and professional. If she spoke negative about anything, I personally did not hear it. She made me feel accomplished and proud about being an AIRS New Voices Scholar for 2018. Her professional demeanor, character and work ethic made it easy for me to be proud of the organization that I was inducted into and representing that week. Tran did an amazing job as well, but Afi was the main person I was in contact with.

Lesson: I was under prepared for the conference. I was completely lost on the podcast world lingo. That wasn't a reflection of the communication from Tran and Afi pre-conference, it was my lack of preparation. However, attending the conference just validated my claim that even behind the voice there is a story that needs to be told. I seriously need to add podcasting to my live show platform.

2. My AIRS 2018 New Voices Scholars made the biggest and lasting impressions on me. I was thoroughly impressed with all of their accomplishments and the vulnerability they had to learn and teach at the same time. They opened my eyes to new possibilities, encouraged me with their tenacity,



fearlessness and boldness to follow their own paths. I learned what story telling really is, how art plays a vital role in broadcasting and how different cultures share in the same struggles to create relevant material that will change lives. My comrades help me re-learn a skill that I abandoned years ago, “Dare to Be Different.”

3. The professional connections I made were with my comrades, Blue Dot Sessions, Hindenburg, Mehdi Hasan (Deconstructed) podcast, Jennifer White WBEZ 91.5, Aseloka Smith (The Colored Girl Beautiful) and Chenjerai Kumanyika (Rutgers University). While there are a host of others, but these are the people I had the most interaction with. They all have a quality in them that I am trying to build within myself. I believe I can only increase my skills and craft by learning how they do what they do well.

4. The only suggestions I have is set the traveling schedule better. AIRS should partner with a travel agency to book all the AIRS New Voices Travel and transportation throughout the conference. It would have been awesome to have more time with the New Voices, a day for introduction and then a day to help the voices map out and maneuver their way through the conference. Giving the schedule early was nice, but for those of us new to podcasting, I know for me it was overwhelming and I really had no direction. I would even look at giving the voices an opportunity to broadcast live from the AIR table (station). This connects their audience to what is happening at the conference.

For Third Coast I would work more on having representation of multiple ethnicities on the program. There wasn't in my opinion enough diversity in the structure of the conference itself. For the panelist and or persons presenting, to have them prepared, I would have the participants at registration sign up for the panel discussions they want to attend. This way it will be a little more structured and not so chaotic. The last is to figure a way to make sure that the meals being sponsored for the event is something everyone will enjoy. Maybe create a menu with fish, beef, chicken and vegetarian selection and pre-order at registration. This way no one can complain they didn't serve a dish that they liked.

5. The AIRS New Voices experience absolutely made a huge impact on my professional career. As mentioned earlier, I have a clear direction of where I am going, met as well as learned that I need to accomplish my agenda is already in place. No need to reinvent the wheel.



Name: Pedro Lugo-Velasquez
Location: San Juan, Puerto Rico
Affiliation: Independent

It was a great experience attending the festival. It was a more political experience than I ever thought and it's very comforting knowing that. The conferences were educating and getting to hear



audio producers thoughts helped shaped a lot of what I want to do. Talking to producers from latin america showed me that most productions in spanish, sadly, are done out of love for the medium. Hearing producers give talks and speeches about underrepresentation sparked an interest in integrating to this spanish international producing community. But none of it would have been possible without the meet up with my talented fellow cohorts. Air media's first day retreat was the best opening/preparation for what was coming next.

Noticing the gap between the US english producing community and the rest of the world was very interesting. Coming from Puerto Rico, a caribbean spanish speaking community with a colonial relation to the US, I learned that the audio production form the island could be a middle place for both producing communities. I especially took away the collaboration network that exist between latin american audio productions and the role I want to have on that space.

On the conferences and quick chats I learned to trust my ideas and be more proactive in exploring audio media. Hearing and learning from this other podcast around the globe and engaging with their creators was an unique experience.

About the confidence in my voice I notice the interest on what's happening on the island due to the lack of information from producers on the island itself. And that's the main thing to work right now, crating a international voice on the audio storytelling medium of what's happening in Puerto Rico. Not only for US audience, but for latin american countries. So content in english and spanish is a need right now.

I made some remarks during the All Stories are about power conference and after it ended one of the speakers, Chenjerai Kumanyika, came up to me and told me he liked what I said. I was very surprised since his presentation was very powerful. We chatted a little about being political on storytelling and he asked about what was happening on the island. The humbleness and deep respect that Connie Walker showed during her presentation was inspiring and her openness to talk and recommend some ideas about one of my future projects has no price. On the Latin American side of Third Coast, I had several talks with Mariano Pagella about how hard it is to get spanish speaking people in to the audio storytelling word when they're accustomed to traditional radio listening. Hearing his struggles and facing the same things myself, was comforting and at the same thing worrying. Being able to sit and talk with Radio Ambulante production team was a highlight of the Festival. Seeing the people behind the podcast I listen religiously every week made it real and possible for me to do better work than the one I am doing right now.

The strongest impressions and connections came from within AIR Media itself. First meeting my fellow New Voice, Ariana Martinez, was a blessing. Even though we were very busy, we were able to connect on so many levels and can't wait to see what she will do. And the other person was Martina Castro, she was so welcoming and resourceful. It was like being with a rockstar. What she has done and built for spanish speaking is important and for her to be including me in all of that was a blessing. I didn't know how much my life was going to change meeting her and I am forever thankful.

Having business cards was essential in planning collaborations. Meet and talked to producers from US, Latin America, Canada and Germany planning future collaborations from the island. One of my main goals is collaborating with the Constellations podcast. Coming from an art background and feeling that the work I plan on doing doesn't have a space for that, this platform would we perfect. Meeting them at Third Coast sure boost my energy to try more experimental abstract work that maybe



doesn't have an audience on my island. Planning on also collaborating with Filter, a podcast in Germany about coffee, on the island local coffee industry. I also plan to do a collaboration with my fellow New Voice, Ariana Martinez, on our mutual relationship between the US and Puerto Rico. Finally I plan to collaborate with Podcaster@s and anything Martina gives me the opportunity to do.

The retreat was essential in preparing for what Third Coast had to offer. Andrew Ramsays presentation was helpful in detailing better what I want for my podcast. Talking and hearing from my fellow New Voices also help expand what the possibilities in audio media were and how is the process for each of us. The mentorship program, for me, was the most important aspect of all, having someone who has done this before and has experience really helps form the future of the medium. It helps bring down the doors that intimidate someone like me who is brand new to all of this. And specially working in a language that's not spanish. Putting AIR Media's resources at our disposal will be key in forming the future of audio media in US and the world.

Attending Third Coast as part of the New Voices was an advantage for all of us. On Puerto Rico there is almost no podcast community and the one that exist is mainly radio influenced interview style. Audio storytelling for me was something I had ideas and few examples to show to my people. Going there and being validated by Martina and international producers is a push In needed to take my audio production to levels I didn't know possible. Is funny how Puerto Rico being in the center of the Americas, is so isolated and fights between two identities. Spanish and english culture are present in our daily lives, but meeting people from both sides let me know that it's necessary that me and the other audio producers on the island have a important middle space in both narratives, and we need to take action on that. That i something I never would have find out, if AIR Media hadn't giving me the opportunity to attend. I am forever grateful. Gracias totales.



Name: Ariana Martinez
Location: Providence, RI
Affiliation: Independent

1. Coming to the Third Coast conference as an AIR New Voices Scholar was nothing short of transformative. As an a visual artist turned audio storyteller, I wasn't sure if there was space in the radio and podcasting professional landscape for the kinds of stories I wanted to tell or the ways I wanted to create them. This opportunity has shown me that my perspective is needed, valued, and worthy of support. AIR has shown itself to be an organization that works hard to stand by its mission and values, one that goes to great lengths to support underrepresented

voices and to create opportunities beyond the traditional industry structure. My experience as an AIR New Voices Scholar felt professional and organized, but also extremely warm, kind, and caring. I appreciated how much work was done beforehand (through email, Google hangouts, and



pre-conference phone calls) to prepare our cohort for the conference, and to lay some groundwork for lasting relationships among us. The New Voices retreat at WBEZ was especially helpful in making space for all of us to grasp an understanding of the work our peers were making and thinking about. I think it's so important that AIR New Voices learn as much as they can about each other and from each other so that they can continue to support each other beyond the conference. I felt that once the conference got started, I was so thankful for a support system I could fall back on. That support felt (and still feels) real and purposefully crafted by AIR. If, in the future, there was more time scheduled for the cohort to learn and reflect together, that would be a great improvement to the program.

2. As a New Voices Scholar, I got the impression that the radio / podcasting field (or at least the subset that attends Third Coast) is just as invested in community building as it is in making good work. I learned that when someone says they hope to talk with you further or that they are curious about your work, they mean it. I was continuously surprised by how open and generous people were with their time at Third Coast. I think AIR should continue to help future New Voices determine who they might want to talk with at the conference and to provide frameworks/suggestions for how make the most of brief conversations and how to follow up afterward. Another takeaway that was especially meaningful to me as an artist was the realization that there is room for experimental work in this field, and that the people making it are happy to share their knowledge and collaborate. I appreciated that my New Voices cohort consisted of people making a wide variety of work—people experimenting with fiction, children's programs, and (in my case) sound art. I hope AIR continues to seek out people whose work challenges expected formats and norms.

3. I was immediately inspired by everyone in my New Voices cohort and it was important to see people who had come to audio work from so many different perspectives and experiences. It would feel incomplete not to mention them here. Outside the New Voices cohort, I was thrilled to meet Andrew Leland, who produces *The Organist* for KCRW. Andrew's work was one of the first things I ever listened to that signaled to me that my experimental interests would be welcome in the audio sphere. It was wonderful to tell him how much his work has inspired me and to talk further about the ways artists, writers, and audio makers can cross-pollinate and create new hybrid works. In this same vein, I had wonderful conversations with Michelle Macklem and Jess Shane, the co-producers of *Constellations*, about the future of experimental audio stories. Michelle and Andrew's *The Art of Noise* talk showed me that the experimental work I want to make has ancestors—cousins and siblings across time, a strange sonic family that will welcome it home.

4. Within my own New Voices cohort, I have found two amazing opportunities for collaboration. Morgan Givens has reached out to me with a proposal for custom artwork that will promote his podcast, *Flyest Fables*, on social media. I'm so excited to use my skills as a visual artist to enrich awesome work done in audio. I am also excited to keep building a relationship with Pedro Lugo-Velasquez, another New Voices Scholar, who happens to be from my father's home town of Lajas, Puerto Rico. I am currently developing an audio project, *Para Cruzar el Agua*, that requires me to gather interviews from Puerto Ricans in New York City and in Puerto Rico. I feel so fortunate to have Pedro as source of guidance and support in Puerto Rico when I travel to make this work. Pedro



has spoken about his desire to see more narrative and artful storytelling in the Puerto Rican podcast and radio scene. I would love to someday work together on projects that support this goal. Pedro also comes from a visual arts background, and I hope we can learn more about each other's visual work and inspire each other in that field as well.

5. My experience at Third Coast as a New Voices scholar was overwhelmingly positive. However, in regard to the New Voices program, I would have liked more time for the cohort to exchange ideas and learn about each other before and after the conference. I felt that by the end of the week, I was starting to discover points of connection with members of my cohort that might have solidified into concrete steps toward collaboration if we had had the time to catch up right as the conference was ending. One way to address this would be to attempt to house all New Voices in the same space, so late-night ideas could flow between rooms, or early risers could gather and talk shop over coffee without having to travel far to meet each other. Another suggestion would be to have the closing breakfast somewhere other than the general breakfast for all conference goers. Using that time for a more intimate reflection in a space not as loud or crowded might help make sure New Voices meaningfully connect with each other before going in different directions later in the day. In regard to the Third Coast conference itself, I thought the Thursday Meet-Ups were a great idea with potential for improvement. I know they were largely impacted by the last-minute move of the conference to WBEZ, but I felt that there wasn't quite enough time in any of them to really dig into the topic at hand. I liked that Third Coast offered a kind of program that wasn't a standard talk or lecture, something that was more interactive, so I hope that Third Coast considers other possibilities for programs that encourage discussion among the participants in real time.

6. My New Voices experience showed me a professional world with a deep sense of integrity, responsibility, and compassion for others. Third Coast attendees chose to support Chicago's hotel workers, helped each other navigate uncertain times, called for change in how our industry treats producers of color, and came together to create an intentional space for listening and learning. I feel proud to have been welcomed into this field and definitely want to continue working alongside people with such strong values. In regard to my craft as an artist and a producer, I was pleasantly surprised to talk with so many people who were interested in making experimental work. After Third Coast, I feel that my skills from my art and design background are transferable to radio and podcasting, that I have something of value to offer. I am excited to seek out creative partnerships and envision new projects that push me to use my creative skills in service of impactful stories with real stakes and consequences. Moving forward, I feel confident that this field will allow me to operate as an artist and an audio producer simultaneously, to make work that can live in both realms.



Name: Imani Mixon
Location: Detroit, MI
Affiliation: Independent

1. Overall, my New Voice fellowship was the best part of my overall Third Coast experience. The retreat was a great addition to the New Voices requirements. There was a similar value system and set of desires and struggles between our cohort which made it easy to open up and share our deepest and newest projects. It was nice to have a familiar group of faces to anchor you in a sea of media people. After the day at WBEZ and more conversations with fellow New Voices, I

was inspired and motivated but it was short-lived after entering the larger Third Coast community. Judging off of the visuals alone, the conference largely reinforced the fact that mainstream and independent media is overwhelmingly made up of white people. So it didn't feel like the most appropriate or encouraging space to share my personal projects or ideas that would directly influence or benefit my community without being tokenized.

2. Respect your pace and your needs.

There's no way to attend every enticing thing, come up with a list of your must-see and must-do moments, then build in time for resting and recharging.

Walk around as if your next partner, collaboration, or good idea is just down the hallway.

A lot of times people have more to offer or more on their mind than what's on their nametag, have conversations, and open up to the idea that this experience could work out in your favor.

Give help and get help.

Everyone has likely overcome the very thing that one of their peers has encountered. Don't be stingy with your hacks or tips and if you're experiencing tension with a particular project or thought process, introduce that to a mind outside of your own.

3. ALL MY NEW VOICES PEOPLE! Gabrielle Horton, Adizah Eghan, TK Dukes, Nygel Turner, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Bridget Armstrong, Jackson Bierfeldt. Afi Yellow Duke, Ngoc-Tran Vu, Andrew Ramsammy, Sam Sanders, Allison Kobayashi Sandhya Dirks, Chenjerai Kumanyika, Aliya Pabani.

a) The most memorable interaction I had was with Ayana Contreras of WBEZ. We sat at the same table during the first night at dinner and I got a lot of insight into how to carve out your niche and



pursue stories that interest you while being associated with a legacy publication. I was inspired by how naturally she archives and documents her love for music and finds ways to delve deeper into black Chicago history. As a Detroit and brand new DJ, it was nice to get a glimpse into the kind of future you can build for yourself.

b) I hit it off with my mentor, Juleyka Lantigua-Williams, and she was a reliable, responsive and genuine connection who understands my frustrations with mainstream media as well as my hopes of shifting narratives and building a new framework for Detroit storytelling. Of course, we'll keep up with the mandatory correspondence, but through our phone call and meeting she seems committed to helping me get my ideas off the ground and holding me accountable for my goals.

4. Not necessarily, I've been pretty vocally a writer who podcasts and experiments with audio through DJing. It was a bit overwhelming to be around so many people who are die-hard audio supporters, but also nice to see how people are carrying out and thinking about projects elsewhere. I'll continue to be curious and pursue these curiosities in whatever medium feels good and beautiful.

5. I'm thankful for this experience and I think it came at a pivotal time in the year and also a pivotal time in my career as I decide how I want to move forward and in what ways. There were an equal number of independent media-makers and full-time media employees, so it was nice to compare processes and acknowledge the fluidity of both realms.



Name: Angela Nhi Nguyen

Location: Brooklyn, NY

Affiliation: Independent

1. Earning the title of "New Voices Scholar" is something I've been waiting years for. Fourth application's a charm, right? This was my second year attending Third Coast and there were a couple external factors I thought would impede my experience as a New Voice (hotel strike, relocation of conference events). Thankfully, that wasn't the case.

One of the immediate perks about receiving this honor was the outreach I got from previous New Voices. Getting texts and Facebook posts like "Oh my gosh! CONGRATS!" and "welcome to the family" from people (who understand the anxieties that come with being a fairly fresh face in the public media industry) gave my heart warm fuzzies. I instantly felt accepted into a community of like-minded folks. Another perk was having an already established cohort of people I knew going into the conference. Not everyone gets to say they achieved



#squadgoals on Day 1, but we could and that made navigating the networking part of the conference less daunting. Being able to get food off site and room with a couple of my fellow scholars was lots of fun; attending this conference without the financial strain was really nice too. Speaking of finances, I learned a lot about how to negotiate for better pay during our retreat and THAT is something I'm very grateful for.

Something I was expecting to learn more about was how to maximize my membership with AIR. When I asked, I got all the info I needed but if I hadn't, I'm not sure if I would've understood all the perks that come with being part of this network.

2. Need to knows:

- Dress like yourself. Let's be real...Podcasters/radio folk are a casual bunch. Your clothes don't define the connections you make, your voice does.
- Recharge. Meeting lots of people = energy is sucked out of you. Don't feel bad about taking a social detox. Rest to be at your best.
- Follow up. After the conference, commit to a couple hours of reaching out to your new connections. You'd be surprised at how many people don't do this and how opportunities are missed because of it.

3. A) Here's where my New Voices acceptance speech starts: Shout out to Ariana Martinez and Luis Fernando Vargas Vega for being the New Voices of my cohort I got to deeply connect (and room) with. An extra big thanks to Elena Victoria Rivera for her friendship and continuous support. And to the Snap Judgment team for leaving the biggest impression on me (extra props go to Liz Mak & Shaina Shealy). Their crew is the epitome of #squadgoals. I got to spend some time with them outside of the conference and witnessed firsthand the genuine care they have for each other/the work they do. That's something I hope to have in any working group I'm a part of. Their talents and who they are as people are diverse AF. If anyone needs an example on how to create a quality crew, they need to reach out to Snap Judgment and ask how they did it.

B) After the conference, I spent a solid four hours reaching out to everyone I got a business card from. Even though I know that's as far as a connection will get with some people, I'm really hoping to stay connected with Brigid McCarthy from Vox - I feel like she's someone who can be a mentor-like figure to me; independent producer Adam Raymonda – he has creative projects going that I hope to be a part of; and one Laura Ubaté from Radiónica who has ideas that I'd love to help bring to life.

4. While I'm grateful AIR gave me the opportunity it did, improvements can definitely be made to the New Voices program. First, there should be a session where scholars learn how to maximize the benefits of being a member of the network. As mentioned, I didn't fully understand these things until I asked and feel like NVs of the future would find it useful to feel connected to a community, especially after the conference is over. I also wish there was more time to bond with my cohort. Don't get me wrong, we spent quality time with each other at the retreat but I wish there was more scheduled time for things like boundary breaking and candid conversations about struggles we've faced as independent producers.



In regard to Third Coast, I'm surprised they didn't incorporate New Voices throughout the conference like they did last year. If my memory hasn't gone loco, then I recall New Voices introducing a few panel discussions. I liked that because it allowed the scholars to have a more active role than other conference attendees. I'd suggest possibly reintroducing that, as long as it doesn't greatly take away from their time attending other panels and workshops. New Voice Scholars worked hard to get where they are and it'd be nice to see them be recognized a little more.

5. I couldn't be anymore #blessed to be part of this program. This accomplishment will for sure help guide my direction as a working professional trying to make a big impact in this world. With this whole experience, I feel less afraid to ask for help. I have a better sense of who's who in the industry and how their talents/connections can be part of my career's upward trajectory. Everything I learned about negotiating for better pay through AIR and Third Coast were invaluable. I know nuggets of knowledge like that will help me as a young, femme POC trying to make a name for herself in public media. I also have every intention of helping others in generations to come to succeed in their life paths too!

6. Thanks to Tran, Afi, and the rest of AIR for making a difference in the lives of people like myself. I'm so glad you encouraged me to apply again because it made my time at Third Coast memorable and so worth it.



Name: Zuhdiah Sarhan

Location: Lorton, VA

Affiliation: Independent

1. Attending Third Coast as a New Voices Scholar was pivotal to my growth as an independent creator. Coming from an entirely different career background, it was validating to be chosen for this opportunity and refreshing to attend the conference where I was able to sit in community with a group of diverse and welcoming individuals that were also at points of flux in their lives. The NV retreat before Third Coast was extremely helpful for me because I was able to see what other projects people in audio were working on and passionate about. This allowed me to

see the real spectrum of audio content which led me to get more interested in fiction and community storytelling. Once the conference began I felt that there was strength in the loose organization of social gatherings and mealtimes outside of the main sessions, but more so for those seasoned audio makers and not so much as someone new to the field. I did find it a bit hard to make meaningful connections with others in the industry. I would have liked a little more New Voices time allotted during these parts of the conference for that reason. The sessions and tracks themselves were very helpful to informing



my view of the audio industry and production processes. My takeaways from them and having access to Hindenburg software and the AIR resources following the conference has helped me continue to learn and work on my projects. This has been a significant experience overall because it has truly allowed me to feel connected to the community and has further validated the importance of my work.

2. Allowing more time for people to share their work during the retreat (whoever wants) and seeing where commonalities exist between different projects being working on/how they might be able to advise each other would have been helpful. Also asking the NVs about what they would like to learn about and creating a session during the trip on that topic. Having a Google Hangout prior to the conference was helpful so maybe hosting more of those following the conference would be beneficial to folks to discuss where they are with their projects and keep the sense of community.

3a. Haleema Shah and Imani Nixon, fellow New Voices, made strong impressions on me from the day of the retreat. Haleema presented a piece of work that covered an experience she had in the country her parents had immigrated from and also used her presentation time to talk about her experience coming into the field with a Muslim background. I related to what Haleema had to say and her transparency about her experiences as a minority in this industry and this was very motivating and affirming for the goal of increasing Muslim-American visibility in my work. Similarly, Imani made a strong impression on me due to the candid nature in which she expressed herself and the stage that she is in trying to find the medium that she likes best to express herself in. She comes from a writing background which is also where I moved into audio from. I was interested the work she is doing in Michigan recording her community through individual recorders and would like to see if this model can be used in places in my community as well.

3b. I expect to follow up with 3 individuals for sure. The first is Ruxandra Guidi who was my conference comrade. During the conference I was able to meet up with Rux twice and discuss the production process and the nuances of covering personal material through audio. She will be reviewing my work and providing me with feedback and advising me on entering the freelancing space. I have also received some guidance from Morgan Givens, a fellow 2018 New Voice who is also based out of DC metro area. I've received really helpful guidance from Morgan relating to opportunities to workshop with others in the DC area and different financially accessible opportunities to gain experience and audio training. Haleema Shah is another New Voice that I mentioned in an earlier response who I've discussed ideas with and may end up working with in the near future.

4. I think more time together with the other New Voices would've been nice to get to know everyone better and spend time in community sharing our work and future goals. I also believe that a review of the Third Coast Conference structure and notable individuals that in attendance would've been helpful during the retreat because sometimes information can be lost in email chains. To Third Coast I would recommend staggering out the programming so that there is time for individuals to rest and reset and more seating room during the sessions and the mixers. I also believe having a New Voices Airbnb would be very fun.



5. This experience has definitely influenced my professional aspirations since I received a lot of the critical information I needed for starting in this industry. I was able to learn about many opportunities like fellowships and scholarships to gain experience in audio as well as skills important to a career in public media like self-promotion and salary negotiation for freelance work. I still need to figure out if I prefer to incorporate visuals in my work or focus more on developing audio techniques, but I was able to come to that question because of this experience and work on answering it so that I have a clearer vision of what I'd like to do moving forward.

6. My biggest motivation has come from my fellow New Voices and I am so thankful to them, Afi, Tran, and the rest of Air for all that I have learned. I feel very welcomed and valued by this community and I know that will lead me to making better and better work!



Name: Haleema Shah

Location: Madison, WI

Affiliation: Wisconsin Public Radio

1. My experience with AIR's New Voices fellowship was incredibly rewarding. It has been weeks since the conference, and I still feel like within a few short days I have made friends that would have taken me years to meet. I feel like in my years of working in the audio industry, I have spent a lot of time searching for the support and creative energy of other audio makers from underrepresented groups. Being connected with a group of LGBTQ+ audio makers and people of color while attending Third Coast was not only an exciting community to be part of, but an incredible source of inspiration. There is a wealth of stories waiting to be told in underrepresented communities, and a number of ethical questions to be answered when telling them, and I believe that my New Voices cohort will be some of the first people to address those things. A number of the conversations that took place between New Voice fellows at the retreat were focused on how we can move forward in the workplace as storytellers—negotiating, building a brand, and advocating for ourselves as members of underrepresented groups. New Voices was perhaps the only space in the conference that spent so much time on this, and I believe that space was incredibly important. However, I think that the retreat could have focused more on introducing fellows to each others' work, and focusing on the unique skills each of us have. New Voices has the opportunity to become a space where a lot of collaborations and coalitions can be built between up and coming storytellers, and I think creating workshops within the retreat that can better facilitate lasting ties between members of the group.



2. 1. Have an elevator explanation for a project that you're excited about that you can discuss with anyone you meet at the conference. I recommend talking about work that is personal in some way and can also speak for the kind of person you are. Be ready to explain what inspires your work and why you think it's important for people to hear.

2. People might disagree with me on this one, but I advise not going to every single breakout meeting and staying in it from start to finish. Pick a few that you're extremely passionate about, and then carve out time to have deeper conversations with the people at those sessions that you liked. The best way to learn isn't always going to every single workshop or breakout—sometimes having unstructured time to have unstructured conversations with people you click with is more valuable.

3. Get rest. At the end of the day, you're attending a conference, and you have to smile and nod a lot. Sometimes you'll speak to people whom you have an effortless connection with, and sometimes you'll speak to people who you'll have to work a little harder to understand. You need energy for both scenarios. So carve out some alone time and sit by a window and drink your coffee alone for a few minutes, come back to your room and take a nap, or go to bed early. Do whatever it takes to make sure you have the energy to be engaged and present.

3. A) I have been a fan of Gimlet's Uncivil podcast for a long time, so I was thrilled to meet Chenjerai Kumenyika in person, and attend a session that he led with Sandhya Dirks called "All Stories are About Power." I love being a podcaster, but I consider myself a journalist first, and being able to learn from people whose work is deeply critical, reflective, and educational was the best part of my Third Coast experience. Storytelling can be just as dangerous as it can be uplifting, and I think it's important to be aware of that whether we are working on news, evergreen, historic, or fictional stories.

B) I recently moved to Washington, D.C. and my fellowship was a perfect opportunity to connect with other storytellers in the area doing really interesting work. I'm hoping to get plugged into the audio community, and also continue to help building. I'll be reaching out to New Voices fellows Morgan Givens and Zuzu Sarhan more!

4. My main suggestion is for both AIR and Third Coast to take greater advantage of Chicago. The city is brimming with stories from underrepresented communities, and I would like to see both the conference and the fellowship make greater efforts to connect a group of storytellers with the local community.

I think a simple but powerful way of doing that is by setting up group meals at family owned restaurants where the owners or workers can share stories about food or the traditions it came from.

The live bilingual radio program in a predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhood was a wonderful experience, and I'd like to see more Third Coast happy hours, meetings, and events taking place in Chicago's neighborhoods and ethnic communities.

5. My New Voices experience will definitely influence my professional direction. I was inspired by many New Voices scholars who do freelance or independent creative work to make sure they are able to tell



stories that matter to them. They have shown me that taking risks with your work sometimes requires one to produce content without the support of larger media company's backing. Meeting with other New Voices scholars has also been a huge source of insight into understanding compensation in the audio industry. And I will definitely continue to seek the advice of other New Voices on things like salary and negotiation.



Name: Irene Smalls
Location: New York, NY
Affiliation: Independent

1. I feel as though I have been welcomed into this dynamic sometimes dysfunctional community of creative, ethical makers and shakers. I especially appreciated the Orientation Session for the New Voices members. Changing seats from time to time made it easier to meet in depth other members of the cohort. It would have been tough throwing us into the general conference population without an orientation. Getting us together before we merged into the conference meant we had basic information, I always had someone to sit with at lunch, to compare notes with for the sessions I was not able to attend, to join in a

conversation with and to bounce things off of. The New Voices Scholars were my people base at the conference.

In general, I was touched by the genuine interest of people I met at the conference to share information and expertise. This ranges from the graphics person in our group who volunteered to help me with my website to people who came up to me and commented on my pitch. Everyone has been so open and sharing. This new media world is unfolding. I am excited because I can see myself as part of it.

I love that the conference is in Chicago. Not only is Chicago a public media powerhouse but it is a great city. I saw the Bean. It might be nice to organize some Chicago sightseeing for the New Voices Scholars Group. Some New Voices Scholars have never been to Chicago before.

The conference made me understand I am not ready to start a podcast. I want to learn more about radio production first. That was one of my major concerns coming to the conference. Do I have the skills to do the technical aspects of doing a radio show. From sound design, to graphics, to hosting and co hosting, equipment, location, raison d'être I learned are all elements to be considered. The brightest spot of the conference for me was the conviction I want to start pitching ideas and doing radio based pieces on my successful pitches. Once I have a number of produced pitches and learned the equipment I will start thinking about doing a podcast again.



I really enjoyed the Provocation Session. The speakers were coherent and powerful. They made me think of many issues through different lenses. The guy who talked about ending his relationship with number 45 in Washington was hilarious. The bilingual radio event was enlarged my concept of Spanish language programming. How often we think of language only as a barrier. In that evening session language was a barrier put also a basis for understanding how non-English speakers feel. As the presenter said, a large part of the world does not speak English. I also loved the live DJ. The music was really nice. I am a dancer. I danced by myself with total abandon sometimes with another person male or female but mostly alone.

The fact the conference was in full support of the striking hotel workers was 'da bomb'. It made it clear to me that Third Coast was not only talking the talk but was willing to walk the walk. The letter from the founder of third Coast Conference on her indecision on the strikers and cancelling the conference felt real. I felt her pain and embarrassment. I understood for a small organization to cancel the financial risks were enormous. She made a business/judgement call but with the pushback from conferees she moved rapidly to make amends.

Tran and Afi could not have been more affable and helpful. For this new experience of the Third Coast Conference having knowledgeable and friendly staff made all the difference. I am an exercise enthusiast and having Tran give me access to the hotel gym was great. The only criticism I have of the sessions is that there was too much sitting. Sitting is the new smoking.

I also appreciate the New Voices reception at the Caribbean restaurant. It ties in with the theme of diversity and shows real commitment to people of color. Put your money where your mouth is. New Voices is willing to put their money where their values are committed.

2. Number 1 The general lack of ego among radio media professionals. All the people at the conference were approachable and genuinely interested in talking. There did not seem to be a celebrity ethos which was nice.

Number Two - The earnestness and heartfelt podcasters who are giving a piece of themselves to the world. Some of the podcast programming ideas were things that I never really thought about hearing on radio.

Number Three: The importance and potential impact of radio as we as society silo ourselves with headphones and smart devices. Radio reaches into the silos. Name names - Leila Day was great, Tran, Afi, My conference mentor Stacia. I loved her podcast meant as a legacy for her daughter.

3. There were so many people I met that made an impression on my. The strongest impression was from the NPR producer I pitched to. He was not interested in my pitch but gave me constructive steps to take in making the pitch one he would be interested in. He gave the nicest and most polite "No" I have experienced. I would definitely approach him again with a pitch.

From my pitching session two producers who were not on the panel approached me and asked me to pitch their radio shows. I will follow-up with them. I also intend to follow-up on pitching The Nod, even though that producer was not able to attend the conference. I am also going to take my fellow New Voices Scholar up on her kind offer to help me with my website.



4. I really did not like that whole radio sex general presentation I found it offensive. I saw no artistic value in what she presented. The presenter was I I I I I during most of her talk.
5. New Voices will definitely influence my professional direction. I see professional possibilities I had not seen before. I intend to use the network and resources to develop my radio career. Also, the many free resources new voices provides is exciting. I am looking forward to exploring the Hindenburg offer, to do tape syncing and get some pitches out there.
6. 1. The Conference opened up other areas of working in radio like producing events to accompany radio programming.
2. The benefits of being an Air New Voices Scholar with the free two year Hindenburg membership and being part of the directory are exemplary.
3. I really appreciated they only served water at the conference to drink. No unhealthy high sugar soft drinks. I tend to be an active person so there was too much sitting for me. But, I find that a most conferences. An activity break of yoga or stretching would be much appreciated.
4. The vendor booths were helpful. Lot of good information and people to network with. I even won a prize, a computer bag.
5. The best session I attend was given by two women from Gimlet on Branded Content. The session was packed. It seemed from the conference branded content is the only way to sustain programming and podcasting.
6. The session of Pay for People of Color was well attended. I bounced around from session to session to hear all I could. I can see that pay is a sore point in this industry.
7. The thing that impressed me most about the conference was that even though the radio professionals were not making a lot of money they were self-actualizing. They were self-actualizing in being able to put their views, feelings and beliefs out to the world. That is an incredibly powerful thing.
8. It would be really helpful to have technical sessions for the New Voices Scholars. I am befuddled by the mechanics. How exactly do you do a podcast? What equipment do you need? What personnel do you need? How does a station broadcast radio show work? Can the scholars observe a radio broadcast from the technical side? How do you develop a story narrative for a radio pitch? etc. etc.



Name: Derrick Toledo

Location: Jemez Pueblo, NM

Affiliation: Independent

1. For a long time now I've been wondering what exactly my next step was going to be in the broadcasting field. When one of my buddies, a past New Voice, recommended AIR to me, I jumped at the opportunity. The New Voice experience was indeed exactly what I needed. It was refreshing and reaffirming to meet so many like minds in the broadcasting industry. I felt right at home amongst my fellow audio nerds. There are a ton of takeaways from the trip to Chicago to be a New Voice to fit into such a small space. First of

all the crop of talent was insanely impressive. They are passionate, creative and determined. The kind of people I would want on my team. As far as the Third Coast Festival goes, the breakout sessions were all really good because the speakers actually lived that content. For example there was a panel called "Writing for the Ear" by Sophie Townsend where she exhibited the point of dynamic script and delivery by showing a clip from The Godfather. She pointed to the scene at the end of The Godfather as phenomenal because of the dynamic use of tone, delivery and pauses. The point to understand is that the speakers presented material in a very understandable and memorable way. The collective energy of the conference, I thought, was off the chart. I think some negative takeaways I had may have been that the conference was too short. I realize there is a time and a place with people's schedules and expenses to keep in mind but it seemed like a really fast conference. I am always asking for the world in everything so I realize this isn't the most realistic observation.

2. #1 All of the voices were outstanding! I knew we were all picked for a reason but they were impressive right off the bat

#2 Some of the folks were a little more introverted than others (including myself) meaning we all didn't get to talk to each other so maybe more icebreakers

#3 Since we didn't get to speak to each other so much maybe a little more time or workshops concentrated more to the group. I mean it was really well put together but more time together as Voices should be beneficial, maybe even a goodbye dinner since everyone took off without a formal goodbye

3. A. If there were people who made the strongest impression on me would be my comrade Davey Kim and New Voices Angela "Merk" Nhi Nguyen. Davey knew so many of the esteemed producers at Third Coast but he also just exudes experience. Angela is fearless. From the little time we spent together I can tell she's going to go far the way she carries herself. She might be the smallest person in the room but she is has the biggest personality. On the other hand, all the Voices were absolutely astonishing. I can't wait to see what they do and even collaborate with some when I can.



B. I expect to follow up with basically all of them. When I was in DC all I did was try to break the ice so I had someone to talk to. Now a year later and dozens upon dozens of social gatherings later I realize the importance of quality networking. In theory I want to talk to everyone but I can only wish I had the energy for that but I met strong quality at this conference. For example I met a few indigenous ladies from the northeast. A Melissa Olson from Minnesota regularly works with public radio. Her and I plan on collaborating on a few issues as we know some prominent indigenous leaders like Winona Laduke. Additionally there is a critical issue hardly being reported on, "Missing Indigenous Women and Girls." Definitely something we talked about tag teaming on.

Another example I also met Jocelyn Robinson a Native lady I met from Connecticut that has strong ties to my home state New Mexico. We have plans on collaborative work but maybe more importantly we are going to start a minority or indigenous broadcasters network in New Mexico. I have connections with the young crop and her with the more experienced. I made more connections as such which I am excited to see what becomes of it.

4. I think overall everything ran smoothly. A couple of things I was put off by was the strike. I had no idea that was going on until the day I arrived. Maybe an update before hand saying this is happening and as a result this solution is being sought so rest assured the conference will go on rain or shine. Granted I've never ran a huge organization so I don't know the ins and outs of the processes but I imagine conference goers might have been more at ease to attend.

The second thing was the break out sessions maybe could have had one line or two on the board outside the room about exactly what the session was going to entail. There were a few times when I was like darn it I'm in the wrong place because I thought they were going to talk about how to pitch or being an independent Podcaster. One more thing, there were so many emails. Of course there was all that jazz about the strike but maybe half the emails that were sent could have got the job done of informing everyone what was up.

5. My professional direction is definitely still formulating but undoubtedly has been influenced by being a New Voice. I always loved working in the broadcasting field and was slightly struggling with the idea of applying it as a full-time career as much as I would love that. Being able to meet my fellow Voices and even conference comrades I realize the serious potential to stay practicing my love and voice. Now that I've attended the Third Coast Conference I'm ready to full on jump into the many ideas I have. Being able to see and talk to others as independent producers and podcasters. I'm confident in the stories I've heard and networks I'm building upon. Right now I'm on finishing up an employment contract but beyond question will push my audio networks and skills to success. However measurable that is I now know what to aim for.

6. I am always up for collaboration and discussion with other ambitious or even established journalists. The speed I bring to editing and production can be quite astonishing so I'm always happy to offer my services or voice to those who need another person on their team. I have serious issues with the fear of missing out and am always down for whatever.



Name: Luis Fernando Vargas Vega

Location: San José, Costa Rica

Affiliation: Radio Ambulante

1. It was Wednesday, the first day of the New Voices experience. We're at WEBZ. You can see Lake Michigan right outside the window. This American Life started a couple of rooms from where we are introducing ourselves. It's kind of surreal. Everyone is talking about their projects, presenting snippets of audio and I'm struck with awe and the thought of, "wow, this people are doing things that are way more interesting than what I'm doing". This self deprecating moment—that's how I deal with things, don't take it the

wrong way —, was the most inspiring moment for me. I want to do better, like those people, I thought. I want to be as creative as them.

That sums up my New Voices experience. That sense of awe, of respect for the wonderful scholars—now friends—that I met... The sense of inspiration while hearing all the wonderful producers that kindly shared their experiences and advises at Third Coast.

It was like a crash course of positive and creative energy. A welcoming and warm place of people so open and affectionate that was almost overwhelming. Talking with each one of the New Voices was an energetic experience, a fun exchange, an exercise in empathy, and a window to see the world and life itself from a completely different perspective. It's very unusual to find such a talented and diverse group.

I couldn't stop smiling... and listening.

2. Lesson #1: Talk, talk, talk. Networking wasn't my main objective in Third Coast—I was in a kind of "spiritual journey" to find inspiration and meaning after severe burnout—, but I came out of there with emails, contacts and a few collaboration opportunities. How? Just talking to people. As a former print journalist I can say without a doubt that radio producers are a kind and friendly group. It can even feel a bit weird. If you talk to somebody, you will come out of that conversation with advice or an open door for future work. It will happen naturally if you let it happen.

Lesson #2: Third Coast is more than a Conference. I was so stressed about filling up my time with the different presentations, but ended up realizing that it was just part of this event. Some were great, others not so much, but what was always exciting was meeting someone in the hall, in a mixer or at some event. Sometimes you will get more advice or inspiration from that one-on-one exchange than at an hour and a half talk in a conference room. Also, get out of the hotel! I went to mixers and live shows and had a blast (and learned a lot in the process).



Lesson #3: Being part of New Voices is so much more than going to Third Coast. Going to the conference is a big part, but make connections with the other scholars. They are great and talented people, and will help you out a lot. I wish I could get to know them a lot better. Being a New Voice Scholar is more than a little star in your resume, is being part of a community of people willing to make the industry change.

3. A) Asthaa Chaturvedi, associate producer of Caliphate. Caliphate was one of my favorite podcasts this year. I met her at the Late Night Provocations events. Talking to her was a moment of fandom, yes, but I also got a little insight of how the podcast was produced. She was so open and nice to me... It was unbelievable that someone that made something you admire so much would be so open to talk about it.

Kaitlin Prest, Queen of Radio. Love is a theme to be explored by non-fiction — Kaitlin Prest is doing, in my opinion, one of the most interesting radio aesthetics I know of. Listening to her talk was the most inspiring moment of the whole Third Coast experience. I didn't get to introduce myself, but listening about what inspires her was more than enough.

B) I met several people who could pitch to Radio Ambulante to produce a story, including Amy Walters from Reveal and my mentor, Sophia Paliza-Carre, from Latino USA. But most importantly for me is keeping in touch with the New Voices scholars, see how they grow as professional and see if I can be of any help to them. That is my main focus.

4. We need to hang out more as New Voices! More spaces to share, that I missed. Maybe asking to meet up an extra day would be too much, but I think the last breakfast isn't enough. Also, the whole gathering around a table and each having some minutes to talk is not the kind of bonding I'm thinking of. I will like to be bored with this people, have down time, that's when conversations start and you get to know each other more deeply. The idea of the "AIRBnb" (pun intended) sounds like a perfect opportunity for that.

I also think this essay could be a little more creative. We're radio producers and people who tell stories, we could present something a little more fun to write and to read! Lastly, I want to touch upon the strike and how it affected the beginning of the conference. For the amazing team that organizes Third Coast —transparency is key. Mistakes were made, and I think they learned the lesson, but communication in advance about the situation was necessary.

5. Yes, in a deeply personal level. Like I said in the application, it is pretty lonely down here in Costa Rica. The podcast scene here is small and just beginning, so the opportunity to meet people with a lot of experience, doing amazing things was invaluable to me. I came back inspired, willing to experiment and to take risks, with ideas to produce something I never done before. I also did something for the first time —networking. I was pretty good at it! I have always been skeptical about it, but it helps out a lot. I know that now and I know good things come out of it.



END EVALUATIONS