



# The William J. White Fellowship

**Fostering intentional systems change via a youth-workforce pipeline to solve our world's most pressing problems**

## Who was William J. White?

When William J. White was a child growing up in an industrial town in Upstate New York, he and three of his eight siblings contracted polio. While devastating for the White family, a silver lining of these unfortunate circumstances was that it created an opportunity for researchers desperately looking for statistical data sets to fight the disease. The four White family siblings were included in the research of Dr. Jonas Salk, who later developed a vaccine to defeat polio, reducing the global incidence of polio to near zero today.

The experience — a front-row seat to creating solutions to near-impossible challenges — lit a fire in White, inspiring him to become an epidemiologist. He played a small but critical role in the fight to wipe out another intractable global threat: smallpox, a disease responsible for the deaths of up to 10 billion people over four millennia and more than half a billion people in the first 70 years of the 20th century alone.

How unlikely was achieving this medical miracle? Under normal circumstances, the prospect of eradicating smallpox was already highly improbable. But because this effort launched at the height of the Cold War, a solution was even less likely, as it required a close scientific collaboration between then-ideological foes the United States and the Soviet Union, all in a fragile geopolitical landscape and during a time when scores of formerly colonized nations gained their independence.

Yet, the U.S.-Soviet collaboration did take place, and it launched an unprecedented global partnership around this health emergency, further cementing White's belief that no challenge was too large or complex to solve. The late Bill White was emblematic of an idealistic commitment to social good — he uprooted his young family to move halfway across the world to Ouagadougou, all to contribute his small part to impactful systems change that, quite literally, transformed the world.



## What does the William J. White Fellowship do?

Today, in his memory, the William J. White Fellowship recognizes that meaningful systems change can only come from collaboration and partnership, fueled by purposeful mentorship.

That is why the William J. White Fellowship aims to catalyze holistic systems change by giving young people the opportunity and exposure to social impact fields outside of traditional talent pipelines.

Not only does the Fellowship provide these recipients from underserved communities an entry point to an exciting and important career path, but the entire sector can benefit resoundingly and enhance impacts by including the different viewpoints and life experiences the Fellows bring to the table.

*The late Bill White was emblematic of an idealistic commitment to social good.*

## Who are the recipients of the William J. White Fellowship?

The William J. White Fellowship is designed to give young people hands-on opportunities to learn about and contribute to the work of the social impact sector. Candidates for the WJW Fellowship currently attend community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), or Latino-serving, Asian Pacific Islander-serving, or other minority-serving institutions.

There are too many arbitrary barriers to entry for employment in this field — particularly for those from structurally excluded communities. Too many social impact organizations are lacking the lived experiences of an important cross-section of the community, and that fact hinders the sector from achieving its full potential. It is both timely and urgent that we reimagine the qualities and requirements needed of those entering the field.

Bill White himself was a life-long advocate of bringing diverse voices and perspectives into critical conversations. It is this very diversity of thought that most often leads to solutions to challenges previously thought to be unsolvable.



## What is the role of Pyxera Global?

At Pyxera Global, we recognize that we have a significant role in opening access to the social impact space and, equally important, in ensuring that, as an organization, we are capturing talent that, through traditional hiring structures, too often goes unrecognized.

Each year, Pyxera Global will award one or more candidates from a community college, HBCU, or minority-serving academic institution this Fellowship, where they will work with our global team.

To accelerate learning and build their networks, the WJW Fellows will receive direct mentorship from Pyxera Global leadership, industry-sector experts, and relevant professionals outside of the industry.

Fellows will also participate in an immersive component, joining an ongoing Pyxera Global project to experience our unique approach to global engagement first-hand.

## What have previous William J. White Fellows said about the program?



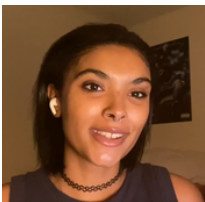
“The William J. White Fellowship gave me an opportunity to do something that I never thought that I would be able to do. I never once thought that I could go into my office in Washington, D.C., and work in international development,

helping people not only in my community but all over the world. I grew up in a very small community, in a very large Mexican family, and my parents didn't go to college. They didn't have the opportunities that I have and that they provided for me. When I was offered the Fellowship, I was very nervous, and I didn't think that I was qualified. And my mentors at Pyxera told me that I was and that they needed people like me. They needed people with different viewpoints. They needed people from community colleges because we're an overlooked demographic. And I thought that was an amazing point of view.”

**Carmen**  
**Student, Frederick Community College**  
**(Frederick, Maryland)**



## What have previous William J. White Fellows said about the program?



“This Fellowship really made me realize what I was passionate about. It made me realize that I want to help people in need — not just locally or within the United States, but on a global level, as well. This William J. White Fellowship gave me the opportunity to see the endless possibilities of problem-solving. There is so much that can be done and that needs to be done, and that’s what this Fellowship taught me. The fact that people can come in, recognize a problem, and set up a plan for that problem. This job really focuses on problem-solving — it’s a skill that everyone should develop and needs to develop.”

**Peyton**

**Student, Frederick Community College (Frederick, Maryland)**



“I was scared of failing, and I did fail a couple of times. But those failures made me learn something: never be afraid to ask anything.

I made so many mistakes, but I learned from each one...all because I had so much support from all these amazing people. I was really fortunate to work with them and have their support system and mentorship. Every day, I walked in with a smile, and every day, I walked out with a smile. There was never a bad day...I always learned something new that I could apply at home, school — everywhere.”

**Negina**

**Student, George Mason University (Fairfax, Virginia)**



## Support the William J. White Fellowship

Throughout his life, William J. White took great pleasure in mentoring young people. His life embodied service through a career in public health, and through this Fellowship, we hope to continue his legacy for generations to come. Please help us to foster equitable representation in the social impact field — support the William J. White Fellowship at <https://pyxeraglobal.networkforgood.com>.

## About Pyxera Global

Pyxera Global is a nonprofit social enterprise that connects global resources with local expertise to address our world's most pressing challenges, one community at a time. Based in Washington, D.C., and active in over 100 countries, we build partnerships that put local stewardship at the center of change. Our vision is a world where equitable and regenerative systems enable all communities to thrive.

Our programs focus on food security, the circular economy, global health equity, and digital inclusion. Through our services—including corporate skills-based volunteering, technical assistance, and strategic advisory—we help build the leadership and capacity needed to turn ideas into action.

We believe communities are best positioned to drive their own solutions, and lasting impact happens when they have the right tools and resources. By partnering with businesses, governments, and nonprofits, we aim to reshape global systems to ensure everyone has the opportunity to lead fulfilling and prosperous lives.

## Contact

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