

URBAN FUTURES LAB: Yearbook Edition
Episode 1: This is OUR Time Capsule: One Year in Review

Sabrina 0:06

Before we dive in, I just want to share a quick note on this episode. It was recorded on April 16, 2020, which was before our realities further changed as the movement for Black Lives reached a new momentous swell. Revisiting and editing this podcast became a call to practice grounding in times of deep change and to really reflect on the questions: “What is social cohesion in a time of disruption?” and “How can radical change come from looking back, and reimagining an unknown future?” So with these questions in mind, let's start the show.

Ashley 0:53

Yo, what's up? Welcome to the Urban Futures Lab Yearbook podcast.

Ashley 0:58

This is Ashley,

Brisa 0:59

This is Brisa,

Sabrina 1:00

This is Sabrina. And we are...

Ashley 1:03

the Urban Futures Lab Fellows!

Brisa 1:07

So, what is the Urban Futures Lab Fellowship? Well, it's a program for young adults of color. And...Ashley, Sabrina, and I explore a range of topics to strengthen our skill sets and expand our networks.

We do this through modules where we learn about topics related to creative civic engagement, media production, personal development, and professional development. It's important for young adults of color to have opportunities to develop leadership, acquire knowledge, and build relationships. And...we do this over a course of two years. And this April 1st was our first year in the fellowship.

Ashley and Sabrina:

Whoo hoo! Yay!

Ashley:

Yeah, and it's super exciting to have these opportunities to learn and grow. And through the course of the fellowship, we've also come to understand it's vitally crucial for this kind of

community centered work to have women of color—not just in the room doing the work, but also taking on leadership roles and really guiding that stuff.

Brisa:

Yeah. And so the Urban Futures Lab Fellowship is an initiative of Public Matters. And for those of you who are unfamiliar with what Public Matters is, it is a creative studio for civic engagement. And...we work at the intersection of community engagement, education, public health, the arts, and to learn more about the work that Public Matters does check out our website in the show notes.

Brisa:

But before we get any further, who are these girls screaming facts into the mic?

Ashley 2:37

Okay, so my name is Ashley, and I am going to start referring to myself as a “baby artist,” because that's what a teacher told me I was. I'm a baby artist, and I'm really interested into diving into filmmaking and I'm really interested in issues of like...broadly racial and class social justice. But also taking into account how that intersects with all of our other social and cultural identities. So that's what I'm interested in. And that's, that's what I like to do and explore as a career. That's it.

Brisa 3:12

Hey everyone, I'm Brisa, I'm another one of your hosts in this podcast. Some of the things I'm interested in are urban planning, community stories, community narratives, and the outdoors.

Sabrina 3:24

Hey everyone, my name is Sabrina, I am a poet. I'm really interested in storytelling, and I love watching people share their art and all about community building.

Sabrina:

So why are we doing this podcast? Well, right now we're in the middle of our...one of our modules, which is “Social Cohesion in a Time of Disruption.” And like, the question that we've been ruminating on is, what does that mean? And like, how do we stay connected and how do we stay engaged with each other?” Especially since we're all living in a time of spatial distancing, and there's been a lot of shifts in the world because of COVID-19, we really want to emphasize the importance of networking, especially as young women of color. And this is our way of not just building internally, but also externally and really making a point of creating meaningful work and building our creative networks.

Brisa:

So part of what we want to do is bring you into what our fellowship looks like. Because every time we try to explain to our friends what we do, nobody really understands and it's very confusing to them. So...

Sabrina:

We wanted to highlight some of our favorite moments, including learning moments and also challenging moments. Because now we're like...just started our second year and we really met a lot of people and made a lot of new friendships and connections and there's been just so many adventures along the way. And...so part of this podcast is exploring another medium and also building a new space for us to grow and also share that with the world.

Brisa 4:56

So, we are inviting you all in to get a behind the scenes look as to what we do in the fellowship. And...who we get to hang out with, who we get to know, what kind of memories we've created with each other...And also some really hilarious things that have happened in the PM office.

Sabrina:

So I'm gonna hand it over to Ashley, who's gonna set up what our first episode's gonna be about.

Ashley:

All right, so do y'all remember, way back when in high school at the very end of what seemed like a never ending school year, we voted on "Most Likely to be President" or like "Best Dressed?"

Brisa:

Yeah, I remember those.

Ashley 5:37

Yeah, those were the good old class superlatives. And in high school, they were like...a little bit superficial. But...I really dig the intention because there are ways to kind of, like Sabrina was saying celebrate achievements, remember our favorite moments, and remember what the heck we did all year.

But one thing that always bugged me is that you know, there was never any explanation of why people voted, you know the way they did. So we decided in our Public Matters family yearbook, it's gonna be...a little bit different. In fact, we wanted you all to...you know, get to know the Public Matters family a little bit better, and get a sense of what we have been learning. So these awards are an opportunity to recount all the hilarious moments that have happened at our time at Public Matters. And with that, we are going to discuss in our first inaugural podcast, the top five categories for Public Matters superlatives.

Ashley, Brisa, Sabrina 6:39

Whoo hoo! ...drumroll!

Brisa 6:43

Great, so let's move into the first category. So, Sabrina, Ashley, are you ready for this category?

Sabrina and Ashley:
Yes. I'm ready!

Brisa 6:55

The category is... "Most Likely to be Voluntold." Now, we all know what volunteering is, right? Like, everybody in high school, how to do those community service hours, you had to volunteer, and you had to go... I don't know, like... go to a basketball game and like, make sure you sold stuff. And you did it on your own time, willingly. But being voluntold is very different. Being voluntold is basically, "Hey, you want to do this?" but you're looking at them like "You better do this." So there's one person in the PM family that has been voluntold several times. And... this person always just shows up ready to be there to help. And... it's really exciting to always see them there. So let's give it a drumroll for Most Likely to be Voluntold...

(drum roll sound effect)

Brisa 7:49

And that person is... Lucy!

All:

Whooo~ Woot, woot, woot!

(airhorn sound effect)

Brisa 7:54

So Lucy has been to... Saturday, early morning trainings. For some tobacco use prevention programs that we were doing. And Lucy is very great with youth, with young children... And, she just has like this really cool personality with kids. Like they understand all her slang. She's also been there at some of the ELARA, which is the East Los Angeles Renaissance Academy after school program sessions. And she's kinda just there chillin' with the kids. And so Lucy is voluntold by Uyen, [who] is our program coordinator. So thank you Uyen for dragging Lucy. Yes, and... yeah, well, whoa... Before I forget, there's one really nice story about Lucy that I don't want to forget to talk about.

One time Ashley, Sabrina, and I had a public speaking project that we were assigned.

Ashley

Mmhmm.

Brisa

And I remember we were all really nervous about it. We were kind of freaking out.

Ashley

Yeep.

Brisa

But it was really sweet seeing Lucy walk into the door. And she had brought flowers for each one of us. And that was just really nice. And we want to say it publicly Lucy...Thank you!

Ashley and Sabrina 9:10

Thank you.

Brisa 9:12

Thank you again. And thanks for being very supportive to the PM family and to the PM Fellows as well.

Ashley

All right, thanks so much Brisa for walking us through that lovely category of being voluntold. Our next superlative is one that I actually saw on the Internet. And I was really excited about it because I knew instantly who it was as soon as I read it. And that is, who is "Most Likely to be Mistaken for a Student."

Ashley 9:40

The votes are in. It was a close tie...No, this really wasn't a close tie. Because it's me!

Ashley 9:49

The award goes to me, I feel like I'm kind of rigging the system because I'm awarding an award to myself...But hey, those are the rules. So yeah, my name is Ashley again, and I'm most likely to be mistaken for a student because even though this is an audio format, I look...just imagine a baby face with an adult body. And basically you have me. And so, sometimes it gets on my nerves. But..through the course of like, our work with Public Matters, it's kind of become like a superpower of mine. Just because I remember this one time we were facilitators for high school students for a conference spearheaded by the Advocates for Healthy Choices. And it was supposed to be a student led conference and it was focused on like, anti-vaping campaigns and anti-tobacco use and education. And I really wanted to seem like authoritative and I thought that...youth being perceived as a youth maybe, like, you're not an authority figure, but it actually turned out that being mistaken for a younger person helped the students open up a bit more and just like really take the conversation seriously.

Ashley

And I felt like I was able to, like facilitate a really insightful conversation about students and their feelings on tobacco usage. And like...them being honest and giving, like real stories about their friends, family, and even themselves about like vaping and anti vaping. And whether they...how could they stop or whether they even wanted to stop. So, it was really cool to open up that space for like...to talk about...like more taboo and transgressive behavior and value their experiences that they all brought. Because they were so amazing. So yeah, that was really awesome. And I think Public Matters helped give that opportunity to even see myself in that role. So thank you for my award speech.

Ashley 11:54

I'd like to thank the Academy!

Brisa 11:56

Do you still pay the student fare on the bus?

Ashley 11:59

If they don't ask!

Brisa

One dollar!

Ashley 12:05

Holla for dollar! Now you know. I always try and get the kid stuff but sometimes they do card. So...pick my battles. So Sabrina, what's up next?

Sabrina 12:14

All right, I got you Ashley, our next superlative is..."Most Likely to Cheer You Up." So the award is...self explanatory, perhaps, but I think we're all unanimous with our votes. And this one goes to our Program Coordinator, Uyen!

(air horn sound effect)

Ashley and Brisa go whoot whoot!

Sabrina

So Uyen is our ultra hype woman, well...everyone's ultra hype woman. She just makes work not feel like work, and always has a really cheerful attitude. And even when there are times when one of us or like a lot of us are feeling kind of down, or like overwhelmed with the task at hand, she shares great content of Patches and Dexter, her two super cute dogs.

Sabrina 13:05

And she's just...

Sabrina 13:07

Yeah, she's just been really a great mentor during our time with Public Matters so far and it's so much fun to work with her and learn from her...And one of the nicest things she's...she's ever done like for me, personally, is I was going through a hard time along with my family earlier this year and she collected a care package and put it together from all of the PM family and delivered it all the way to my house! Which was super nice and it was filled with like a card with everyone's messages and also yummy fruit and like tea from the OC...and it was just, so awesome and you always feel loved when you're around Uyen. Like, there's never a moment where you don't feel supported. And this is why we gave this award to her. So...

Sabrina
Whooo~

Ashley
Round of applause!

Brisa 13:58
She's also the gif, GIF queen.

Sabrina
Yes, she is!

Sabrina 14:04
All right, so for this next award, Ashley is going to introduce it for us. And there was a lot of contention for this one. So tell us all about it.

Ashley 14:12
Yes, this was our most competitive superlative yet. And it is..."Most Likely to Garden During the Apocalypse," which is pretty timely. And so there are a couple, you know, a couple people who are definitely serious contenders. But ultimately, it was a close call...but we had to give it to...Amanda.

(air horn sound effect)
Yay!

Ashley
And in general, people at Public Matters...Like, we have a lot of people who like to play in the dirt and be outdoors. And there is a general consensus that there's a kind of a restorative feeling or healing feeling that...that happens when we are able to be outside and be with nature. And so yeah, we just felt like this person understands that. And even grows...has a community...Amanda has a community garden with raised beds and she goes like pretty...I mean like, she would go during the apocalypse without a doubt. Like...

Brisa 15:12
I mean she has, right?

Ashley 15:16
Just to stock up and be farm to fresh table...you know, like...And...but, the other person that we want to shout out, who was a close second runner is Mike, of course. The other person who likes to play in the dirt, Mike. And you know, we always love hearing about the...you know, adventures of fighting with the squirrels in the backyard. There are some mean Silverlake squirrels. Let me tell you, and they're feisty.

Sabrina 15:43

They are. They chew on the rug outside!

Ashley 15:48

So kudos to Amanda and Mike, for always reminding us to go outside and get some sun and go make sure to...you know, be a fully whole person.

Brisa 16:01

Right. Get back to nature, huh?

Ashley 16:02

Yeah, get back to nature.

Sabrina

Play in the dirt!

Ashley 16:06

Cool. So Brisa, what's the word on the next and final superlative we have?

Brisa 16:13

Cool, so the final superlative, which...who knows may not be the final? I don't know.

Ashley

Oh right. You're right.

Brisa 16:21

Yeah. But at Public Matters, we do a lot of networking. And especially through the Fellowship, we have these things called Supper Clubs—where we invite people who would be interested in the work that we're doing and who are also doing interesting work that we learn about as well. And so this category is..."Most Socially Networked." So this person, we think, kind of knows everybody, right? Like, even, it's just like not a face to face...like, they know somebody's name. And if you tell them your interests, they'll be like, "Ooh, I have a good person for you to know." And...this was a pretty easy vote, our person that we selected for "Most Socially Networked" is...

(drum roll sound effect)

Brisa 17:09

Mike!

(air horn sound effect)

Brisa 17:13

So, we chose Mike because he is always the one that is setting us up with a bunch of different people. Whether it's connecting Ashley with people in film and media, or Sabri...connecting Sabrina with people who are interested in like poetry and the arts and community storytelling and healing, or me whether that's people who are into urban planning, community, environmentalism...You know, I think Mike always talks about people like, "Oh, that person's a good person to talk to because they're a good connector." But I think Mike, himself is a very good connector as well. He does a good job of connecting people. And I think that's great that we get to have Mike during this Fellowship, where he provides a lot of opportunities for us to grow as individuals. And...we get to meet some of the people that Mike knows during our Supper Clubs, where we cook food for our invited guests.

Brisa 18:08

So, for one of the Supper Clubs, Mike invited Theresa Hwang and Sara Daleiden. Theresa Hwang is director of the Department of Places, which we will link in the show notes.

Brisa 18:19

Sara Daleiden is a civic engagement artist and director of MKE <-> LAX media. And...the module that we were exploring was basically creative civic engagement. So these two people came together to have a conversation with us about their practice and their process. And I think it was a very powerful moment. Especially since the Fellows are all women, and having people at the dinner table who are also women and have their own personal experiences and stories. And it's really nice to be able to share that space with other people who are interested in the things that we are interested in. So thank you, Mike, for connecting us to interesting people and expanding our networks. And we appreciate you. And I know sometimes you are the only guy in a room full of girls, but it's always so fun and interesting to have you around. So shout out, Mike.

Ashley

Shout out to Mike.

Sabrina

Whoo, whoot!

Sabrina 19:18

All right, well, that wraps up our first round of superlatives. So thank you so much for tuning in to our first episode on the Urban Futures Lab podcast! So if you're wondering what we will be celebrating next, just stay tuned for our next round. In the next episode, we'll hopefully be featuring a guest and...continue sharing out what other people in our PM family have received a superlative title. And so with that, don't forget to check out the show—our show notes in the description. This will have some links to get to know some of the people that we talked about a little bit better, and also get to know us a little bit better. So again, thank you so much, and we look forward to talking with y'all next time.

Brisa and Ashley
Thank you all! Stay tuned.

Ashley 20:04
Might be the one. Next one, shout it out.

Brisa
Yeah!

Ashley
Stay tuned.

(ambient outro music)

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