

9-12-2022

UD photography student selected for exclusive national fellowship

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Waskiewicz, Lucy, "UD photography student selected for exclusive national fellowship" (2022). *College of Arts and Sciences Newsroom*. 587.

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UD photography student selected for exclusive national fellowship

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Monday September 12, 2022

By Lucy Waskiewicz

University of Dayton photography major Jayonna Johnson is one of eight college students nationwide selected as an Imagining America Joy of Giving Something 2022-2023 fellow.

The fellowship provides undergraduates who work with photography and/or digital media an opportunity to participate in a year-long learning exchange that includes tuition support, project support and opportunities for professional development.

“I was very excited,” said Johnson, a sophomore from Cleveland. “I definitely feel like it’s going to elevate me as a photographer and also as a businessperson. I’ll be able to get mentorship, to talk to people and build my communication skills, so that’s definitely a lot of

short-term and long-term things for me personally to benefit from.”

As a Joy of Giving Something fellow, Johnson will receive a \$2,000 scholarship and an invitation to Imagining America’s National Gathering Oct. 14-16 in New Orleans. She’ll also have the opportunity to complete a community-based project with professional mentorship and financial support.

Glenna Jennings, associate professor of photography and Johnson’s academic adviser, will mentor her throughout the fellowship year.

“Jayonna arrived at UD with impressive talent in photography, and her skills have only grown in the short but meaningful time she has been here,” Jennings said. “I am excited to see how Jayonna can apply her unique, individual vision to this specific project, to showcase not only her editorial photography skills but also her conceptual creativity.”

Johnson’s creative project will tie into her work as a member of the UD Human Rights Center’s Moral Courage Project.

The Moral Courage Project is a biyearly initiative that tells the stories of Americans who refuse to back down from the crises gripping their communities. The 2022 Moral Courage Project focuses on housing injustice.

Johnson traveled to Oakland, Calif., for two weeks this summer as a part of the Moral Courage Project’s print team. There, she met people impacted by the region’s housing crisis and recorded their stories and experiences via interviews and photography.

She hopes to continue with the theme of housing injustice with her community engagement project.

“We’re currently in production for everything we did in Oakland, and with the fellowship I’ll be doing a community project, so I wanted to intertwine those together,” Johnson said.

She has partnered with Gem City Market, a community-centered co-op grocery store in West Dayton, which will be the focus of her project.

Johnson looks forward to meeting the other fellows and networking with professionals in her field of study at the Imagining America National Gathering. Jennings hopes to accompany Johnson on her trip as a mentor and companion.

“It’s such a great opportunity,” Johnson said. “I’ve always wanted to travel and New Orleans is somewhere I’ve wanted to go for a while. With Glenna potentially coming, that releases a lot of the anxiety for me. I know her well and she’s been such a huge help throughout this process.”

The fellowship is rooted in a collaboration between Imagining America and the Joy of Giving Something nonprofit corporation, which provides the funds for the fellows' scholarships. Fellows are selected by review of the artistic merit, existing community-engagement and financial need demonstrated in their applications.

Jennings praised the strength of Johnson's portfolio, especially at this point in her college career.

"I knew that her fellowship application could have been overlooked due to her status as a first-year student, but I believe the work spoke for itself," Jennings said. "We are so honored to support Jayonna as the youngest of these eight fellows from around the nation."

To read more about Johnson's fellowship, [visit the fellows website](#).

For more information about photography at UD, visit the [Department of Art and Design website](#).



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A photograph from University of Dayton photography major Jayonna Johnson.