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NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS INC

PRESS RELEASE

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SHARED RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW AMERICA
National Urban/Rural Fellows Impart a Vision of the Future

York, NY -- December 3, 1996 -- Some people have called it a silent revolution -- an intellectual revolution that promises to deliver change. It has been brewing in this country for over 26 years and in that time, over 700 individuals of diverse backgrounds and living throughout the country and in Puerto Rico have been armed with Masters degrees and life experiences to help them lead in the public sector. The program is the National Urban/Rural Fellows; its mission is to identify, recruit, and train men and women from racial and ethnic communities to executive and policy-making positions in the public sector, thus, sharing responsibility and leadership for the future of America.

It began in 1969, as a cooperative project of the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in collaboration with Yale University and with financial support from the Ford Foundation. Since then, it has received financial backing from major American corporations such as American Airlines, AT & T, Exxon, Coca Cola, American Express, Philip Morris Companies, General Electric, Xerox, Metropolitan Life,

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Johnson & Johnson and many more. Foundation support is also distinguished including the Ford Foundation, Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Cleveland Foundation, George Gund Foundation, the Lilly Endowment and a host of others. The success of the program, it seems, has not gone unnoticed.

Purpose

"The country cries out for effective leadership -- particularly leadership from diverse racial and ethnic communities," says Luis Alvarez, President of National Urban Fellows, Inc. Mr. Alvarez, who is a 1972 graduate of the program, has been leading the organization since 1976. "Our view has changed," he says, "we no longer consider ourselves as prospective leaders for our communities, but also for the nation."

Indeed, it is a challenging time for America -- a time when public policies and social systems, instituted over the last fifty years, are being questioned, radically altered and, in some cases, abandoned for new ways of conducting business and providing for the public good. It is a time when projected demographic shifts in major population centers throughout the country have taken hold and created new expectations of business, public leaders and public institutions. As envisioned by National Urban Fellows, Inc. it is a time which requires full participation of our citizens in the dialogue and evaluation of public policies and demands the broadening of America's leadership base to include people from all sectors of our society in government.

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Why the Public Sector

National Urban/Rural Fellows is a rigorous, full-time graduate program comprised of academic course work and field experience, leading to a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Bernard M. Baruch College, School of Public Affairs, City University of New York. Speaking at a recent graduation ceremony for the outgoing class of fellows, Dean Ron Beckman stated, "At a time when public service has been demeaned at the local, state and federal levels, even by those in public service, it is admirable that these National Urban/Rural Fellows have committed themselves to a career in public service." The Dean's observation may be a harsh reality of our times, but listening to the views of the fellows, you would hardly believe it to be an issue.

Randy Hill, age 36 from Cleveland, Ohio stated, "There is always a need for service and certain voices need to be heard." He intends to provide a voice for his community back home and contribute to how public programs are managed. Prior to becoming a fellow, Randy was a Unit Supervisor of Customer Service for the Sewer & Water Department of the City of Cleveland.

The youngest fellow in the Class of '96, Gina Amaro, age 24 years, is a native New Yorker with strong roots in the city's Puerto Rican community. She feels it is her responsibility to serve in the public sector. "I've been privileged," she claims, "as a Latina with advantages, because of the work others before me have accomplished. Elders have served me and we need fresh blood. I am the fresh blood."

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Yet another view on public service belongs to Ubaldo Lebron, an occupy education specialist from Massachusetts with an interest in administration and management. Perhaps a more practical perspective on the need for government workers, he commented, "We have not reached the state of nirvana where everyone is responsible for themselves and the state does not have to control anything." He also pointed to the lack of representation of Latinos at high levels of government as motivation for his pursuit of a Master of Public Administration degree through the National Urban/Rural Fellows program.

The desire to fill the gap of representation of minority men and women in government and to serve as advocates within the public system for their particular community seemed to be a common thread among the fellows. Together in this desire, they form strong bonds while in the program and the sense of community within the group seems natural. As a network of alumni, 700 strong, they have a capacity to effect change in government and the public sector in general.

Mentor Assignment

As a complement to the academic component, the National Urban/Rural Fellows program provides a nine month assignment with a mentor, normally a senior executive in a government agency (federal, state, city or county) or in a not-for-profit agency. The mentor assignment learned allows the fellows to acquire first-hand experience and an in-depth view of management styles in public or not-profit organizations. This experience, combined with a graduate degree at the end of the program, provides fellows with the

credentials to seek and secure leadership positions in the public sector.

Tobeka Green, age 26, assigned to the Points of Light Foundation had Robert Goodwing, CEO & President, as her mentor. Her responsibility was to plan and launch *Connect America,* a special initiative directed at corporations, community organizations, non-profit agencies, groups of faith and membership organizations, which seeks to raise voluntarism in America. "I feel like this mentorship has perfectly positioned me for the rest of my life," she said. "It was a phenomenal experience."

Rufina Juarez, age 32, is from West Marlin, a small town in the Imperial Valley of Southern California, southeast of San Diego. She went from working as a community advocate in her hometown to serving as a Special Assistant to Joseph Drew, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority during her mentor assignment. "I've a lot from a management and administration perspective," she said. "I feel like I've changed career direction to the transportation area."

According to Edwin Acevedo, the Director of the National Urban/Rural Fellows program, Ms. Juarez's experience is not uncommon. "Mentors spend valuable time coaching and grooming fellows in their organization," he said. "As a result, the assignments often open doors to new career choices."

Susan Schick, Director of Community Development for the City of Long Beach, California has been a mentor since 1989. She thinks it is important for agencies like hers

to utilize proven programs with emphasis on diversity. She stated, "It is a great way to get excellent, highly trained staff that can add value to an organization, especially if you can retain them."

The National Urban Fellows, Inc., with a long and reputable history of matching organizational needs with the ideals and interests of individuals seeking to grow and contribute to society, continues with a view of the future. While the National Urban/Rural Fellows program is the cornerstone of its program offerings, the organization also operates the Environmental Science & Management Program. Similarly structured, its goal is to increase the number of women and people of color in senior level positions in the environmental field.

"We are making a difference," claims Mr. Alvarez, "and we look forward to working with government agencies, national organizations and individuals who are also interested in contributing to America's future." Individuals and organizations interested in participating in National Urban Fellows programs, either as a fellow or mentor, should contact the National Urban Fellows office in New York by calling 212-921-9400, faxing at 212-921-9572 or writing: National Urban Fellows, Inc., 55 West 44th Street, Suite 600, New York, NY 10036.

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