



Letter to Fellows

Baratunde

February 2025

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope this letter finds you well and that the wild headlines these days aren't getting you down.

I am thrilled to announce that **Baratunde Thurston will be our keynote speaker for the 14th Annual Rowland Conference on October 30, 2025**. Baratunde is a prolific writer, comedian, and podcaster, who previously worked for The Daily Show and The Onion. He is the author of the New York Times bestseller *How to Be Black* and the host of [America Outdoors with Baratunde Thurston](#) on PBS. We are very grateful to have him come to Vermont from his home on the West Coast to lead off our conference.

Before [Life with Machines](#), his current podcast on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Baratunde created the [How to Citizen](#) framework, which invites us to rethink what citizenship should be in our day and age.

Baratunde's use of *citizen* as a verb is meant to move us to action. Plus, in the four domains of *How to Citizen*, he provides specific examples of how to engage deeply with democracy in a more meaningful and impactful way. Baratunde's *How to Citizen* goes well beyond our traditional ideas of what civic engagement means to include the following:

- [To Citizen is to Participate](#). Show up for each other and publicly participate in ways that include and go beyond voting.
- [To Citizen is to invest in relationships](#). Deepen relationships with ourselves, our community, and our planet, and experience how we are all interconnected.
- [To Citizen is to understand power](#). Be fluent in power and the various ways we can use it for our collective benefit.
- [To Citizen is to value the collective](#). Work towards outcomes that benefit the many – not just the few.

Many of you told me that my December Letter to Fellows, “Take Care,” resonated with you. It’s certainly normal to feel overwhelmed in troubled times, and I think it makes us wonder where to turn, and how we can make a difference. Baratunde’s approach to citizenship speaks to this deep-seated need for purpose. At a time when it can feel like our democratic institutions are failing us, his approach to citizenship is hopeful, collective, and empowering.

I am grateful to have Baratunde keynote our next Annual Conference, and I’m especially grateful for the generative connections our conference makes possible each fall. I know it seems far away, but earlybird season is in just a few short months! Please mark your calendar for October 30th, and see you there!

Take care and see you soon,

Mike

P.S. If you’re interested in this idea of “digital drugs”, you may want to check out this [Cal Newport article](#) or this [interview with Dr. Anna Lembke](#)

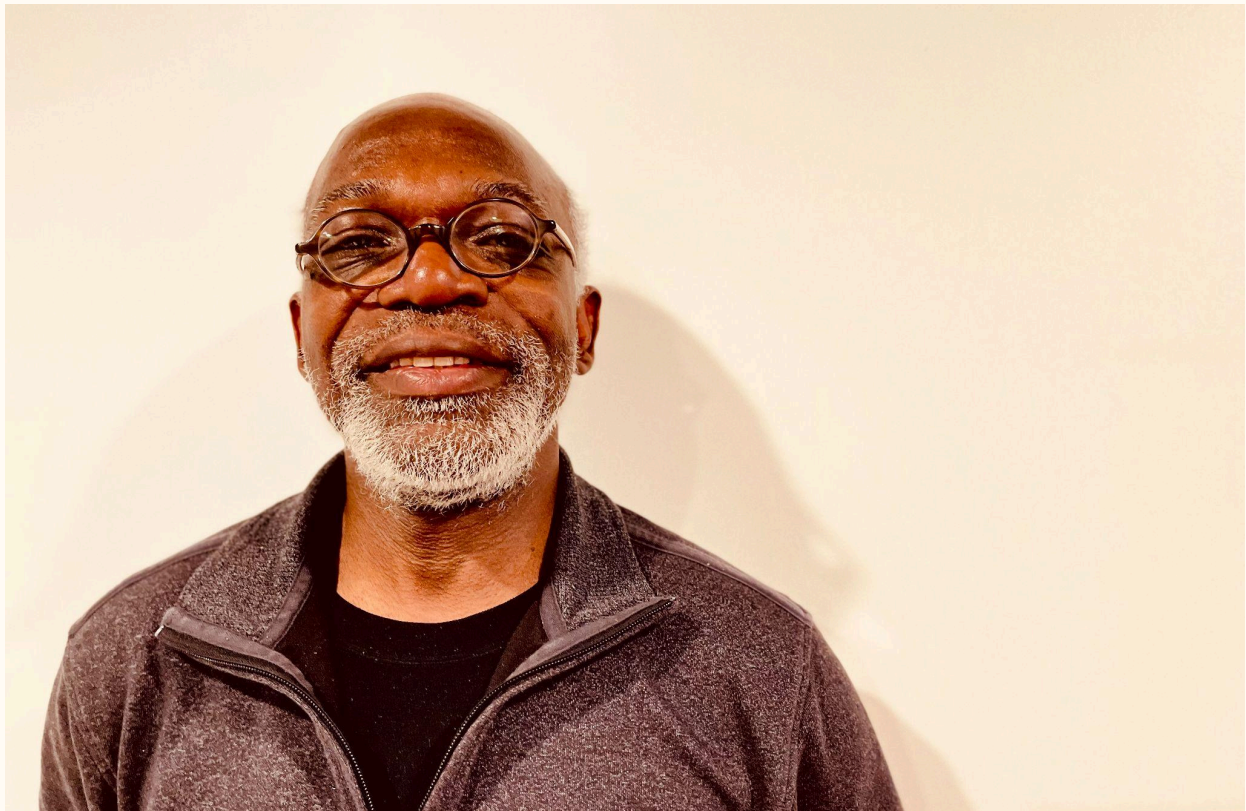
P.P.S. I also liked this [Cal Newport article about Tik Tok](#).

P.P.P.S. If you see “message clipped” at the bottom of this newsletter, please click through! Depending on how many photos we have, Gmail will sometimes truncate this newsletter.

Rowland Foundation Updates

Diversifying the Educator Workforce

Rowland DEW Scholars



Congratulations to our new Rowland DEW Scholar Alejandro Herrera! Alejandro is teaching Spanish at Hartford High School under a provisional license as he pursues teacher licensure through the Teacher Apprentice Program (TAP) at Champlain College. Special thanks to Melissa Wyman (RF23) for her help connecting Alejandro with the Rowland Foundation and this important support for aspiring educators of color.

2023 Rowland Fellows

Cohort Meeting at Northfield Middle & High School



The **2023 Cohort of Rowland Fellows** met in Northfield to share ideas for the culmination of their Fellowship work this semester. Seen here Carrie Gilman introducing a student presentation on self-advocacy with Senior Associate Jean Berthiaume looking on (*left*), and the 2023 Cohort working together on school change strategies (*right*).

2024 Rowland Fellows

Cohort Meeting at Danville School



The **2024 Cohort of Rowland Fellows** met in Danville to share strategies for their Fellowship budgets and Collaborative Work Groups. Seen here the Danville Bear mascot in a hallway mural (*left*), and the 2024 Cohort discussing how coregulation works in schools with students and colleagues (*right*).

Celebrations



Congratulations to Nicole Awwad (RF21)! Nicole was recently named a [Southern Vermont Emerging Leader](#), which is an award sponsored by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, the regional development agency for southeastern Vermont.



Congratulations to Matthew DeBlois (RF09)! Vergennes Union Elementary School, where Matt serves as principal, has received [national recognition](#) for their efforts to incorporate movement across all settings. More stories will be coming out soon in this EdWeek series.

Congratulations to Kathy Cadwell (RF16) who is now serving as the [Braver Angels](#) Blue Co-Coordinator for Vermont. She will be offering a "Skills For Disagreeing Better" on March 22 in Morrisville and a "Depolarizing from Within" workshop for "Blue-leaning" individuals in the Mad River Valley on April 26, hopefully with students, as with her recent Rowland Conference workshop.

Gratitude



In June 2024 **Rachel Cohen (RF19)** welcomed a daughter, Poppy, to the world. Rachel and her husband Tyler are having fun hiking, skiing and travelling with her. Rachel teaches humanities at CVU and is the director of the Vermont Youth Cycling League.

From **Beverly McCarthy (RF24)**: "One of my sons reached out to check in with me in light of what is happening within our government and to our people. He was concerned about the Fellowship funding. I let him know the Fellowship is privately funded. As a parent, it is heartwarming to know your child (even an adult child) thinks of you. It is also settling to know that there are organizations, such as The Rowland Foundation, that will continue to function, thrive, and support important work."

From **Kat Robbins (RF21)**: “During the chaos that is reigning right now, federally, state, and locally, I have never been more grateful for the bedrock solid support of and connection with organizations like the Rowland Foundation and the people associated with it. It’s so good to not feel alone.”



Andrew Jones (RF15), seen here ice climbing up in Smugglers Notch in subzero temperatures, is grateful for winter.

Courtesy Posts

From Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union: “We are looking for a talented person to lead transformation in a 6–12 building. We are striving for increased learner agency and integrated learning experiences. Franklin Northeast is in its first year of implementing our collaboratively developed Portrait of a Learner as its graduation requirements. We need a leader who can build a culture of innovation, does not shy away from dynamically changing environments, and is passionate about transforming the school experience. We are a Supervisory Union committed to creating relevant and deep learning experiences for all students. This work is supported by systems, the school boards, and system leadership.” This Enosburg Falls High School Principal position is posted on Schoolspring. Find out more about Franklin Northeast on their [website](#).



Don't miss this year's **School Redesign in Action conference in Boston on April 8th!** You can [register here](#) and find out more [information here](#). Many Rowland Fellows have presented and participated in this conference over the years, and now that Emily Gilmore (RF17), Jeanie Phillips (RF14) & Erica Wallstrom (RF14) all work as Senior Associates for Great Schools Partnership, this conference is a kindred spirit of ours more than ever. This year, Jeanie Phillips & Mike Martin will be leading a session called [Turning Beliefs into Action: The Rowland Cohort Model](#), which borrows from [their article](#) with nearly the same name.



[Statewide Youth Gathering](#) Friday, April 11, 2025 (9:00 AM 3:00 PM)

We are hosting our first Statewide Youth Gathering on Friday, April 11, 2024 in Fairlee, VT! Get ready for meaningful connections, delicious food, skill sharing, and joyful learning! The theme will be “a call to unity: the power of connections in activism”. This event features a [t-shirt design contest](#) and opportunities for youth to leader workshops ([applications close February 10th for workshops](#))

[BIPOC Overnight Camp - Save the Date](#) Sunday, Aug 17 to Thursday, Aug 21

This is a BIPOC-centered camp for youth 12-17 years of age. The mission of BOC is to bring youth of color into nature and provide opportunities for connection, healing and joy.

