

Bjorn K. Simmons

(501) 475-5340 ▪ bk@simmons.company

Website: www.bksimmons.com ▪ LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/bksimmons>

Venture Capitalist ▪ Innovator ▪ Community Catalyst ▪ Equity Advocate

Venture capitalist, ecosystem builder and champion for inclusive innovation with proven experience in catalyzing underserved communities and building successful businesses. Exceptional strategic vision with compelling ability to connect people, opportunities and resources. Progressive leader committed to driving innovation and impact through diversity, equity and inclusion in the public and private sector. Passionate communicator, creative marketer and results oriented project manager.

Core Competencies Include:

Inclusive Innovation ▪ Startup / Business Strategy ▪ Ecosystem Development ▪ Venture Capital ▪ Impact Investing ▪ Data Analysis
Multicultural Marketing ▪ Program Development ▪ Community Organizing ▪ Corporate Partnerships ▪ Government Affairs

STRENGTH FINDERS

Strategic | Achiever | Ideation | Maximizer | Woo

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Venture Noire, Bentonville, AR www.venturenoire.com Co-founder, Managing Partner (2019-2020)

Piloted the first entrepreneurial support organization focused on building and supporting entrepreneurs of color in Northwest Arkansas. Partnered with The Walton Family Foundation and The Greater Bentonville Chamber of Commerce to establish regional programs that provided access to curriculum, community, and capital. In year one the Arkansas office worked with over 200 entrepreneurs across the state. Attracted over \$400,000 in investment capital committed to entrepreneurs of color. Built a network of 20 VC and investors committed to investing in diverse founders from underserved regions. Launched the largest pitch competition in the state, focused on entrepreneurs of color. Granted over \$30,000 to minority founders in non-equity based capital.

Wyzerr, Inc., Covington, KY www.wyzerr.com Co-founder, Chief Strategy Officer (2014 - 2020)

Co-Founded, launched, and sold a big data software company, Wyzerr, built to modernize consumer feedback solutions in real-time. Led marketing, sales, and strategy. Secured over \$2 million in venture capital. Secured over \$500,000 in grants and awards. Sold the company in 2020 to black-owned business, PopCom. Built SAAS sales processes and effectively managed b2b enterprise-level relationships with Fortune 500 clients (Kroger, Walmart, Procter & Gamble), smart cities (Cincinnati Visitors Bureau, Cincinnati Chamber, City of Los Angeles, City of Houston), and airports (CVG, Hartsfield-Jackson ATL Airport). Graduated from The Ion Accelerator Program (Houston, TX 2019), Plug & Play (Silicon Valley, 2018), Infiniti Lab (Hong Kong, 2017), The Branderly Venture Accelerator (Cincinnati, OH 2015), StartFast NY (Syracuse, NY 2014).

Cintrifuse, Cincinnati, OH www.cintrifuse.com Community Catalyst, Manager of Inclusive Innovation (2017 - 2019)

Created, launched, and managed the first Inclusive Innovation Strategic Plan for the \$85M Fund of Funds and Public-Private Partnership, Cintrifuse. Coordinated and managed the StartupCincy Ecosystem consisting of 16 accelerator and incubator programs, 9 active investment funds, and a database of over 400 startup founders. Initiated Statewide Black Founders Network, increased the diversity representation by 300%, and hosted the region's largest tech conference, Startup Week. Launched The Cintrifuse Diversity and Inclusive Action Plan that adopted diversity and inclusion into the bylaws of the organization. Managed RFPs for community grants that facilitated diversity in entrepreneurship for the city of Cincinnati. Introduced corporate innovation strategies and corporate pilot projects to connect startups with regional corporate offices.

Hillman Accelerator, Cincinnati, OH www.hill7.org Managing Director (2017 - 2018)

Launched the midwest's first accelerator for founders of color alongside NFL Football Player Dhani Jones (Cincinnati Bengals) and venture capitalist Candice Brackeen (Lightship Capital). Led recruitment, programming, and community engagement for a 16-week accelerator program that connected founders to resources, customers, and capital. Hillman invests \$100,000 into up to ten teams recruited from around the world. Also responsible for developing strategic plans, conducting due diligence, and connecting startups with mentors and resources to ensure successful growth and development. Graduated 2 cohorts of founders who've collectively raised over \$10M in additional venture capital. Secured \$1.2 Hillman annually to successfully manage the program.

The MEANT Group, Atlanta, GA Founder & CEO, (2013 to 2016)

The MEANT Group is a full-service experiential marketing and branding company supporting small to midsize brands in the areas of Marketing, Entertainment, Advertising, Networking, and Talent. The company specialized in curating and executing experiential marketing campaigns including but not limited to brand launch, event promotions, social media management, digital content strategy,

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web design, sponsorships, and PR. Clients included AY Magazine, The University of Arkansas, Monster Energy Drinks, Noble Wolf Vodka, Platinum E-Hookahs (Christina Milian), The Designer's Choice Fashion Preview, Arkansas College Prep Academy, Chattahoochee Valley College Fair, Voscato, Sooligan App, Ozone Vodka, Glaziers Distribution, and more.

Georgia General Assembly, Atlanta, Georgia Chief of Staff, Field Director, Special Projects Director, (2011- 2015)

Served under the leadership of House Leader Stacey Abram, Senate Leader Gloria Butler, and Minority Whip Carolyn Hugley. Held several roles including Special Projects Director, Chief of Staff, Campaign Manager, and Field Director. Worked across the GA House of Representatives and the Senate collaborating with lobbyists, PACs, and community groups to support the passage of democratic legislation. Facilitator for the Democratic Whip Team, GA Education Task, The Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council, and Mercedes-Benz Stadium Commission. Co-managed the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus intern program. Supported and collaborated efforts with Democratic caucus members as well as the senior staff team. Served as Field Director during election seasons managing 4 statewide campaigns. Worked directly with statewide and national political action groups including the Georgia Democratic Party, Legislative Black Caucus, the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, Georgia Innocence Project, Progressive States Education Initiative, Maintained appropriate relationships with elected officials. Implemented technology including whip bill tracking system, Votebuilder, and VAN. Led the passage of HR 73 - supporting the exoneration and compensation for wrongfully incarcerated victim Lathan Word. Worked alongside Stacey Abrams and team to develop GA voter registration plan and millennial activation playbook. Graduated from the DLCC Field Program. Coordinated state-wide tours, press conferences, town halls, public hearings, fundraisers, and more.

Arkansas General Assembly, Little Rock, Arkansas Communications Director, Associate Director of Voter Registration (2014)

Spearheaded the election of Representative Eddie Armstrong as Minority Leader of the AR House of Representatives. Supported the establishment of millennial action group ROCK AR Vote, resulting in 1,000+ registered Millennial Voters (under 35) and over 10,000 impressions on social media. Built PR strategy and community engagement as liaison with clients, managerial, journalistic staff, and persons of interests POI. Developed press communications as well as worked with media to support communications with caucus members and community organizations. Managed outreach budget, fundraising activities, and community events. Launched a GOTV effort to recruit, engage, and charge young people to the polls touring the state colleges and universities with the state-wide coordinated campaign and President Bill Clinton. As Director of Voter Registration, I managed statewide voter registration and canvassing efforts.

COMMUNITY SERVICE & TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Arkansas Office of Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board, Chairman 2018 - Present

Google For Startups, Grow with Google Partner 2020 - Present

Northwest Arkansas Council CACHE Advisory Board, Member 2020 - Present

Creators; Village, Advisor 2020 - Present

The Foundation for Social Impact, Founding Board Member, 2019 - Present

StartupCincy Advisory Board, Director 2016 - 2018

Cincinnati Memorial Hall Society, Board of Trustees 2017 - 2019

Ozark Mission Project, Board Member 2014-2016.

Rock AR Vote, Founding Board Member 2014 - Present

As seen on:

[Arkansas Money & Politics](#) / [Epic Spotlight](#) / [I am Northwest Arkansas](#) / [Sirius XM: Karen Hunter Show](#) / [Walton Today](#)
[Because Bentonville](#) / [Business Wire](#) / [Blacks In Technology](#) / [American Marketers Association](#) | [Cincinnati](#) / [WCPO News](#)
[Ledger-Enquirer](#) / [Forbes](#)

EDUCATION

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University of Arkansas, **Bachelor of Science - Business Administration** (Fayetteville, AR)

2007 - 2011

Major: Marketing **Minor:** Entrepreneurship