



Meet the Multicultural Leadership
Academy **2023 Cohort**

MARCUS SAMUEL

**Impact Coordinator,
The Community Trust**

Marcus aids in building relationships with key stakeholders including community leaders, civic leaders, and donors. Performs administrative tasks, supports cross-functional collaboration within the Trust. Supports grant-making processes and activities including pre-work, communications, site visits, decisions, and grant writing





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PATRICIA HERNÁNDEZ

**Director of WIC and Women's
Health Services, Roseland
Community Hospital**

Patricia is dedicated to fulfill the need for quality food and nutrition education and increase healthy deliveries in the Roseland community by creating, promoting, and modeling healthy behaviors. My mission is to address maternal and child health inequities in the African American/BIPOC communities and beyond





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JUANITA GARCIA

**Board of Directors,
Rebuilding Exchange**

Juanita is
passionate about
decarbonizing the
built environment





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NOELLE GIPSON

**Assistant Director,
University of Chicago**

The Community Programs Accelerator offers nonprofit capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the impact and sustainability of nonprofits on the south side.



PHASHA SPENCER

Senior Specialist, Partnerships, EdReports

Phasha Spencer (she/her) is the Senior Specialist, Partnerships at EdReports.org. She is responsible for leading and supporting the expansion of state and district partners, education organizations and special projects. In this role, her work ensures the growth strategy, business development and codification of services for the Partnerships team. Phasha has a breadth of experience in a variety of roles in non-profit, the Higher Education landscape, educational consulting industry and diversity, belonging, equity and inclusion spaces. Phasha's community involvement includes student mentorship, community engagement, advocacy and fire safety and prevention.





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ADAM GONZALEZ

General Counsel & Senior Director of External Affairs, El Valor

Adam is the General Counsel and Senior Director of External Affairs for El Valor, a human services organization, whose mission is to support children, people with disabilities, and their families achieve excellence and participate fully in life. Adam leads El Valor's strategic development and community partnership goals, government affairs, compliance, legal, and real estate portfolio.





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ROCÍO PULIDO

**Program Manager,
Immigrant Justice Partnerships,
The Resurrection Project**

I oversee a portion of TRP's grant programs that provide funding to communities impacted by immigration policies in Chicago and Illinois. We help strengthen existing infrastructure of community based legal aid and immigrant rights organization by providing funding they need to hire and retained talented legal representatives and enhance capacity building and training opportunities.





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PAMESHA ROBINSON

**Youth and Family Program
Coordinator, Claretian Associates**

I am the Facilitator of the U.N.I.T.Y Squad Summer Leadership Institute through One Summer Chicago and the After School Program. I received an award from Mayor Lightfoot regarding the Digital Equity work that I have been doing. I organize Mock Trials through the Cook County States Attorneys Office. I have ensured that our youth have received training in Nutrition, Financial Literacy, Mental Health and Trauma Informed Awareness and just recently took our youth on a College Tour.





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DARION CRAWFORD

**Compost Coordinator,
Urban Growers Collective**

Building fertility for farm
production, Compost
education across programs
and community





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VANESSA MELGOZA

Director of Health Programs, Corazón Community Services

The Director of Health Programs works towards the mission to improve the quality of life for children, youth and families through holistic social services offered in a culturally sensitive environment. She empowers our community members through community events, workshops, and services that focus on three programmatic areas: teen pregnancy prevention, HIV prevention services, and youth workforce among other advocacy work.





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KISHA INGRAM

**Dean of Enrollment
Management,
Malcom X College**

As Dean of Enrollment Management for Malcolm X College it is my responsibility to listen to the communities we serve and collaborate with others to make change and keep an open mind to truly hear the needs of the community and provide guidance for social impacts.





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MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ

Executive Director, Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action

Manuel Hernández-Nuñez is the inaugural Executive Director of the Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action - the oldest Latinx LGBTQ+ organization in the Midwest. As Executive Director, Manuel oversees the day-to-day operations, programming, and development of the organization. He has nearly a decades worth of experience as a content expert in organizational leadership, DEI&J, funds development, and community building across the non-profit, small business, and education sectors. A New York City native and proud gay Boricua, Manuel now calls Chicago home.





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JESSICA TAYLOR

**Director of Post Secondary
Initiatives, Steans Family
Foundation**

Focus on creating and strengthening post secondary pathways to ensure success for North Chicago students, bridging the gap between existing job readiness training, earn-and-learn opportunities, and other workforce programs in North Chicago. Responsibilities also include leveraging opportunities for student exposure to career-related services and support for students who choose to seek and earn a degree or quality credential.





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CARLOS MATALLANA

**Founder and Developer,
Blok by Blok Podcast Club
Chicago**

Carlos is a visual artist that believes in dialogue. He is the founder of the first Podcast program in the city aimed to support youth and their curiosity about their surroundings, their city and themselves.





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MONIQUE DRAPER

**Chief Program Officer,
B.U.I.L.D**

As the CPO at BUILD my role is to inspire hope and offer opportunities to youth who live in some of the most challenging neighborhoods on the west side of Chicago. Empathy, Passion Persistence and Innovation, it is through this lens that I curate programs that give the hardest to serve youth who face varied systemic obstacles an opportunity to connect, overcome and thrive and attain a positive future.





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VINITA VOSS

District Director, U.S. House of Representatives

As per the Constitution, the U.S. House of Representatives makes and passes federal laws. The House is one of Congress's two chambers (the other is the U.S. Senate), and part of the federal government's legislative branch. The number of voting representatives in the House is fixed by law at no more than 435, proportionally representing the population of the 50 states. District staff support the work of their respective Representatives in the areas they serve, to meet the needs of constituents.





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TONIKA DAVENPORT

**Racial Equity Inclusion Justice
(REIJ) Coordinator,
Metropolitan Family Services**

The short answer is that I do people work. I lead and oversee the REIJ initiative, which aims to improve the workplace culture by promoting inclusiveness at every level and being more equitable in our policies and practices. My role focuses internally on our staff to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to be the best practitioners for the communities we serve.





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EDWIN ORTIZ REYES

**Equity Officer, Chicago
Department of Housing**

Engages community partners and residents to advance DOH's vision of justice and equity in creating safe, healthy, stable, and affordable housing that undoes Chicago's racist history of segregation and wealth extraction from Black and Latin communities.





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MARIA NAVA

**Community Engagement
Manager, Warren–Newport
Public Library**

I develop key community partnerships to help eliminate barriers to programs and services needed by underserved and underrepresented populations. I am passionate about creating partnerships which help provide equitable access to resources for everyone in our community. I believe that by working together we can build stronger united communities.





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KHAMERON TOWNSEND-RILEY

**Community Affairs Specialist,
University of Illinois at Chicago
Office of Community
Collaboration**

Responsible for serving the Lawndale Community by programming the UIC Neighborhood Center located in the MLK Fair Housing Exhibit. Creates pathways to education and wraparound services for Lawndale residents and creates access for the Lawndale community to partner with UIC and other organizations.





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AARON CORTES

**Adjunct Professor,
Northeastern Illinois
University**

Adjunct professor in the
department of Computer Science.
Provide developmental CS course
to traditional, non-traditional
students and teachers.





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JORDAN ESPARZA

**Owner, Heavybutlite
Creative Solutions**

HeavyButLite has enabled me to not only produce visual content but contribute to publications including the Chicago Reader, Lyrical Lemonade, and Black Fashion Fair. My understanding of community and society provide a strategic understanding of how I might apply my experience in professional settings, especially human services, to improve outcomes for the populations I'm most passionate about serving.





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JOSE PIZARRO

**Director of Intervention
Services, BUILD, Inc.**

Restorative justice orientated with an expertise in assisting, promoting, encouraging, and providing programming concepts and ideas with an aptitude to lead and work with people to achieve program outcomes and expectations. Develops, enhances, and creates economic and educational programs that will establish a sense of purpose and equality for the less fortunate in general and people of color in particular.

