



# THE PILLAR

The official newsletter of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation

SPRING 2025

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The FY 2025  
Budget Passes.....2

2025 Winter  
Pillar Circulation.....4

ILBC in the Community.....5

Uplifting Us.....7

Community Voices.....8

Black Business  
Corner.....8

Gathering as a  
Community...11

ILBC Scholarship  
Highlight...16

2025 Legislative  
Session.....17

What's to Come.....19

In the Fine Print.....21

ILBC & ILBCF  
Members.....27

Closing Page.....28

## THE FY 2025 BUDGET PASSES



While dysfunction and disarray thrive in Washington, Illinois is proving what responsible, compassionate leadership looks like. This budget is more than balanced — it also delivers for all Illinoisans. Guided by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' Four Pillars of equity — **Education, Economic Access, Health Care and Criminal Justice Reform** ... *read the full summary on page 2*



## CIVIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT DAY

This spring, nearly 700 students from 18 districts joined the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus and Foundation in Springfield for the return of Civic Youth Engagement Day — a powerful reminder that the future is already in the room. From an opening celebration led by community voices to a Capitol march filled with signs of hope and power, students ... *read the full article on page 13*



## THE FY 2025 BUDGET PASSES

*Balanced for the seventh year in a row*

Illinois has passed its seventh consecutive balanced budget — rooted in fiscal responsibility and respect for our communities. While dysfunction and disarray thrive in Washington, Illinois is proving what responsible, compassionate leadership looks like. This budget is more than balanced — it also delivers for all Illinoisans. Guided by the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' Four Pillars of equity — **Education, Economic Access, Health Care and Criminal Justice Reform** — the state is investing where it matters most. That means \$307 million more for public schools and expanded MAP Grants so students from the South and West Sides can pursue higher education without lifelong debt. It means \$500 million to prepare job-ready sites and real support for Black-owned businesses from Englewood to East St. Louis. It means wiping out over \$330 million in medical debt and shoring up safety-net hospitals that care for our most vulnerable communities. And it means real investments in violence prevention and criminal justice reform. With nearly \$2.5 billion projected in the Rainy Day Fund, Illinois is building long-term stability. These aren't just promises or hollow words, but real progress for Black and underserved communities across the state.

**“As a budgeteer this year, I was proud to take the lead on crafting a fiscally responsible budget that made smart cuts to redundant government administration to help fund vital expansions, including more afterschool programs. We’re going to continue to work on building the world-class education system our kids deserve, while creating more safety net hospitals and clinics for underserved communities across Illinois.”**

- **Leader Kam Buckner (D-26)**  
Speaker Pro Tempore and Co-Budgeteer

Quote sourced from: [ilhouseedems.com](http://ilhouseedems.com)



**“When we began negotiations for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, we took a serious look at the crisis we are facing with the understanding that fiscal responsibility is about tackling what is in front of us. This budget is simply that: a reflection of our priorities and the uncertainty that is in front of us. This budget reflects our shared values and our commitment to making Illinois a better place to live, work and raise a family – investing in the whole person. I am proud to have led a balanced budget that addresses our current needs.”**

- **Leader Elgie Sims (D-17)**  
Majority Caucus Leader and Co-Budgeteer

Quote sourced from: [senatorelgiesims.com](http://senatorelgiesims.com)



## BUDGET AT A GLANCE

### A Budget Rooted in Reality, Responsibility and Respect for Our Communities

- Illinois just passed its 7th consecutive balanced budget — no gimmicks, no shortcuts — just real investments.
- While chaos and dysfunction pour out of Washington, Illinois is holding the line and moving forward, proving what responsible, compassionate leadership looks like.

### We Said the Four Pillars Would Be More Than Paper — And They Are

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus laid out a clear roadmap: Education. Economic Access. Health Care. Criminal Justice Reform. This budget doesn't just check those boxes — it invests in them.

### Education as a Promise, Not a Privilege

- \$307 million more for public schools — because our children deserve excellence, not excuses.
- Nearly \$9 billion now going toward schools through the evidence-based funding formula — that's historic.
- More MAP Grants so young folks from the South and West Sides can afford college without being buried in debt.

### Economic Justice in Action

- \$500 million for job creation — bringing opportunity to the underserved.

### Economic Justice in Action

- Support for small and mid-size Black-owned businesses — because real economic growth must reach Englewood, East St. Louis, Maywood, and beyond.

### Healthcare that Actually Cares

- We're investing in safety-net hospitals — the places that show up when other health systems shut their doors on our communities.
- Over \$330 million in medical debt wiped out — that's families freed from the impossible choice between rent and hospital bills.
- Prescription drug affordability fund so folks can get the medicine they need without emptying their wallets.

### A Safer Illinois, Built on Justice

- Real investments in gun violence prevention.
- Continued reform and accountability in our criminal justice system — because safety doesn't just mean locking people up, it means lifting people up.

### Stability for the Long Haul

- Nearly \$2.5 billion projected in the state's Rainy Day Fund by next year — so we're ready for what comes next, not scrambling when a crisis hits.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

This budget reflects more than numbers on a page — it reflects the fights we've taken on, the promises we've made, and the people we serve.

From the young brother on the South Side getting his first job, to the grandmother in the Metro East depending on her local hospital — this is what "promises made, promises kept" looks like.

And the Four Pillars? They're not just a vision — they're being built, brick by brick, budget by budget.

## 2025 WINTER PILLAR CIRCULATION

### *Black-Owned Coffee Shops*

While our Illinois Legislative Black Caucus members work in Springfield to write laws that uplift the communities in our own backyard, our priority is making sure our communities understand how this work impacts them. The Pillar Newsletter is for the people we represent, sharing stories of hope and collective economic power rooted in the idea of Ujamaa, or “familyhood” in Swahili, supporting cooperative economics and empowerment in our Black community. To accomplish this and meet our communities where they are, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation has begun to circulate our newly updated The Pillar to Black-owned coffee shops and Black-owned businesses across the state.



*Waukegan-area leader & Illinois Legislative Black Caucus (ILBC) Treasurer, State Sen. Adriane Johnson (D-30) delivering copies of The Pillar to one Black-and-Asian-owned coffee shop, The Brewed, in the Avondale neighborhood of Chicago.*

#### **The Pillar can be found at:**

- Drink Happy Thoughts (2 locations)
- Muse Coffee Studio
- Kusanya Cafe
- Sip & Savor (5 locations)
- Afro Joe's Coffee & Tea
- AndySunflower Cafe
- The Common Cup
- Ridman's Coffee
- Overflow Coffee Bar
- TeaPotBrew Bakery
- Momentum Coffee - South Loop
- The Brewed
- The Brew - South Shore
- Connie's Coffee
- Shawn Michelle's Homemade Ice Cream Bronzeville

**“When we center our stories and share them directly with one another, we strengthen the ties that hold our community together. The Pillar newsletter is more than just an update — it’s a bridge between legislative action and everyday lives. By bringing it into Black-owned spaces, we’re honoring our legacy, building trust and ensuring our people have access to the information and inspiration they deserve.”**

- State Sen. Adriane Johnson (D-30)

# HIGHLIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE CAUCUS

*ILBC Member Events and Public Happenings*

## END OF SESSION BLACK AND BROWN UNITY PARTY



Co-hosted by the Illinois Legislative Black and Latino Caucuses and their Foundations, the event brought together legislators, local businesses and community members to honor the hard work of the session and uplift the shared goals of both communities.

In a time of challenge and change, **the evening offered space for fellowship, music, cultural cuisine and meaningful connection.** As members from both caucuses joined the celebration, it became clear: unity isn't just symbolic, it's essential to how we lead and move forward together.

## LEADER JEHAN GORDON-BOOTH'S ANNUAL MOTHER'S DAY SENIOR BRUNCH

State Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth (D-92) hosted her annual Mother's Day Senior Brunch on Saturday, May 3. It was a heartfelt celebration honoring the incredible moms in the Peoria community. As always, the brunch served as a touching tribute to the strength and love of mothers. Attendees enjoyed a complimentary meal and lively activities, all while spending quality time with neighbors and friends.



## SPEAKER EMANUEL "CHRIS" WELCH HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION



Image from [www.emanuelchriswelch.com](http://www.emanuelchriswelch.com)

House Speaker Emanuel 'Chris' Welch welcomed his local community members to the third annual Juneteenth Festival at Memorial Park in Hillside, with additional celebrations in River Forest, Westchester and DuPage County. The event featured performances by the Jesse White Tumblers, Muntu Dance Theatre and more, drawing crowds to celebrate freedom and reflect on progress.

## ILBC SENATE CHAIR WILLIE PRESTON HOSTS TAILGATE PARTY TO KICK OFF SUMMER

**State Sen. Willie Preston (D-16)** hosted a White Sox tailgate, uniting fans before the team played the Texas Rangers on May 24th. The event was held in the parking lot outside Guaranteed Rate Field, where Preston mingled with constituents and Sox fans alike, serving up burgers, hot dogs and cold refreshments. It was a great pre-game celebration that allowed Preston to connect with community members of all ages.



## ILBC HOUSE CHAIR JUSTIN SLAUGHTER KICKS OFF SUMMER WITH A BLOCK PARTY

**State Rep. Justin Slaughter (D-27)** kicked off the summer supporting the Washington Heights Community Block Party. With a focus on encouraging collaboration between grassroots organizations across the 27th District, Representative Slaughter champions opportunities to uplift and amplify local voices and their initiatives.



## ILBC JOINT CHAIR LAKESIA COLLINS HOSTS FIFTH ANNUAL MOTHER'S DAY BLOCK PARTY

**State Sen. Lakesia Collins (D-5)** hosted her 5th Annual Mother's Day Block Party on Chicago's West Side, bringing out over 500 attendees for a day of joy, healing and celebration. More than 70 local organizations offered free groceries, health screenings, wellness services and resources. Attendees enjoyed a variety of activities, including a "She Shed" with manicures, massages and healing circles, plus pony rides, face painting, games, live music and a youth-led podcast.



## ILBCF PODCAST: THE PILLAR TALKS - AFTER JUNETEENTH: THE CONTINUOUS RING OF FREEDOM

*The Pillar Talks* recorded its first podcast "After Juneteenth: The Continuous Ring of Freedom" was a powerful conversation recorded at the DuSable Black History Museum, exploring freedom, identity and cultural reconnection. **African Chiefs Tamakloe and Mokpopo (Director Coy Pugh)** spoke on the spiritual and ancestral significance of knowing one's roots, reminding us that liberation extends beyond politics, it is deeply personal and cultural.



**State Sen. Robert Peters (D-13)** emphasized the role of policy and cultural institutions in preserving Black history, while **State Rep. Carol Ammons (D-103)** and **Dr. LaKisha David** uplifted a new state-supported genealogy initiative helping Black Illinoisans trace their lineage and reconnect with family across the diaspora. Together, their voices offered a moving call to remember, reclaim and rebuild, a continuous ring of freedom echoing from the continent to Illinois.

# ELEVATING CHANGE-MAKERS WHO INSPIRE AND LEAD

In this edition, we are highlighting two voices from the community — Antonio C. Lee, who was recently named President of the Cook County Bar Association, and Dr. Angelique Evans, PhD and Illini Science Policy Fellow at the University of Urbana-Champaign.

Join us in congratulating Antonio on his new role as President of the Cook County Bar Association and read his full *“Uplifting Us”* interview with ILBCF on page 21. During that interview, Antonio shared some of his priorities for his presidency, shared here:



A scripture, which guides Antonio’s life work is Micah 6:8: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?”



## Engagement

- Collaborating & cultivating Black stakeholder relationships (e.g., NAACP, Rainbow PUSH)
- Tapping into the full potential of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) as there is a built-in network of incredible and talented attorneys and law students.

## Access to Justice

- Expungement Summits
- Legal Clinics (on a range of challenges)
- Mentorship (especially amongst first-generation, newer, and younger lawyers)

## Minority Job Fair

- In this profession, we must lift as we climb!
- Be more intentional about mentoring, making sure that the individual got the job, made it through law school, and *passed* the bar exam.
- Connecting with the broad membership of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA).

## Legislative Issues

- Addressing the reality that Black people suffer at every point of their legal career (e.g. law school admission test (LSAT) scores; law school survival; no real employment traction even after passage of the bar exam).

## “RELENTLESS POWER,” DR. EVANS

In her paper, “Relentless Power,” Dr. Evans explores the history of Black Power in order to inform today’s leaders on how to continue building on the past through organizing, impacting culture and lifting up Black youth.

“One way we can actualize our relentless power in the turbulent times we find ourselves in the midst of today is to build upon [ILBCF’s] 2024 theme of Infinite Hope, collaboratively dream of a better tomorrow and actively redefine Black culture, community and politics.”

*Find the entirety of “Relentless Power” on page 23.*



# BLACK BUSINESS CORNER

*Where We Spend Matters.*

Across Illinois, Black-owned businesses are not just places to shop, they are community hubs, storytelling vessels and living proof of legacy, resilience and vision. Entrepreneurs are building more than brands, they are creating spaces rooted in culture, purpose and pride.

From tailored suits on the South Side, to Cameroonian coffee in the suburbs, to a family-owned African restaurant in Champaign-Urbana, we ask you to explore, support and share.

## LEGACY MEN’S BOUTIQUE IN CHICAGO

Tucked in the heart of Bronzeville, Legacy Men’s Boutique is where sharp style meets Black excellence. Specializing in high-end thrifted suits, shirts, shoes and accessories, the boutique blends timeless fashion with community consciousness.

Behind the store is **Mandene Muhammad**, media producer and host of the Munir Muhammad Show, who has used his platform to uplift conversations on education, leadership and local power. His show has welcomed everyone from **Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson** to ILBC members like state **State Sen. Lakesia Collins (D-5)**.



MONDAY-SATURDAY  
11:00am-7:00pm  
SUNDAY by Appointment ONLY!

-Men's Boutique-

107 E. 47th Street, Chicago, IL 60653

872-228-1871

📍 107 E. 47th St., Chicago, IL

📱 @legacymensboutique

## KRIBI COFFEE, AIR ROASTERY FRANCHISE

When **Jacques Shalo** founded Kribi Coffee, he wasn't just starting a café, he was answering a call from home. With roots in Cameroon and connections to more than 600 global farmers, Kribi Coffee is a full-circle experience — one where every cup tells a story of land, labor and legacy.

With three café locations and their own air roastery, Kribi is a Chicagoland staple that brings global impact to your morning routine.

📍 149 Forest Ave., Oak Park, IL  
7324 Madison St., Forest Park, IL  
905 S. Lombard Ave., Oak Park, IL

📷 📺 📱 @KribiCoffee

🌐 kribicoffee.com



## HOMWOOD BREW COMPANY



If you know Juice WRLD, you know **Carmella Wallace**, his mother and the face behind Homewood Brew Company. A welcoming brewpub in the Southern Suburbs, Homewood Brew is where great beer, comfort food and real connection meet.

Whether you're sharing laughs with friends or making new ones over a pint, every detail of the space reflects Wallace's heart for healing, hospitality and community.

📍 18225 Dixie Hwy, Homewood, IL

🌐 homewoodbrew.com

✂ @HomewoodBrewing

📷 📺 @HomewoodBrewingCompany

## THE BEST OF AFRICA'S FOOD STORE & MAMA'S AFRICAN KITCHEN LLC

Co-owned by **Congolese immigrant Memoire Budimbu Mabiza**, these sister businesses bring the tastes and textures of African culture to the heart of Urbana and Champaign, Illinois. From spices and groceries to traditional dishes made with love, this is more than a store or restaurant, it's a celebration of community and culture.

## THE BEST OF AFRICA'S FOOD STORE & MAMA'S AFRICAN KITCHEN LLC (CONT.)

The Best of Africa Food Group also provides catering, event décor and gathering space. In 2020, it was named Illinois Family-Owned Small Business of the Year.

Scan to watch media hit:



📍 202 E. University Ave. Suite E Urbana, IL 61801  
1807 W. Bradley Ave. Suite F  
Champaign, IL 61821  
f @Thebestofafricafoodstore  
🌐 bestofafricafs.com



## TOLA'S CREATIONS BOTANICA

At Tola's Creations, wellness is more than a product — it's a practice rooted in ancestral wisdom, spiritual alignment and cultural pride. Located in the heart of Chicago's South Side, this Black woman-owned botanica is a vibrant hub for healing, learning and reconnecting with tradition.

Whether you're seeking holistic remedies or community-centered classes, Tola's Creations invites you to step into a space of empowerment and spiritual grounding.

📍 2943 W. 71st Street, Chicago, IL 60629  
📷 @TolasCreations

🌐 [tolascreations.com](http://tolascreations.com)



# GATHERING AS A COMMUNITY

*Strengthening Our Work Through Collective Action and Economic Empowerment*

The work the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus does outside of the legislature centers around creating opportunities to come together in community to celebrate our wins and lift up the work being done across the state to rectify historic and systemic racial injustices against the Black community.

Gathering as a community is an important part of propelling this work forward. When we come together, it's an opportunity to exchange new ideas, network and strengthen our connections with friends and colleagues, old and new.

## BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS

**At our 2024 Infinite Hope Policy Summit & Brunch, the ILBCF proudly honored 17 Black Chambers of Commerce from across Illinois with the Infinite Hope of Ujamaa Award.**

Rooted in the Kwanzaa principle of Ujamaa, or "Cooperative Economics," this award celebrates the relentless work these chambers do to strengthen Black economic power, foster community wealth and create pathways for shared prosperity.

- Bronzeville Chamber of Commerce, Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce, South Shore Chamber of Commerce, The Woodlawn Chamber of Commerce, The Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation, Greater Chicagoland Black Chamber of Commerce, Chamber 57, Springfield Black Chamber of Commerce, Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce,
- Illinois State Black Chamber of Commerce, Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce, Washington Park Chamber of Commerce, Lake County Chamber of Commerce, Black Chamber of Commerce of Southern Illinois, Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce

Siri AJ. Hibbler, Founder & CEO of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, the Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce and Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce, was gracious enough to send her appreciation for receiving the Infinite Hope of Ujamaa Award. *Read her letter to the Caucus on the next page ...*

## LETTER OF APPRECIATION

*A letter by Siri AJ. Hibbler*

Dear Esteemed Members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus,

On behalf of the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, the Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce — as well as our Boards of Directors and the many resilient and visionary member businesses we represent — I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the honor of receiving the Infinite HOPE of Ujamaa Awards.

To be recognized by such a distinguished body for our ongoing work in uplifting Black businesses and communities is both humbling and deeply meaningful. This award is not just a symbol of recognition, it is a powerful affirmation of the collective work we've carried forth with passion, perseverance, and a deep commitment to economic equity.

**This award is not just a symbol of recognition, it is a powerful affirmation of the collective work we've carried forth.**

The spirit of Ujamaa, rooted in cooperative economics and shared responsibility, has been the foundation upon which our chambers were built. To be acknowledged in this way is a reminder that our efforts are not in vain — that every connection we help build, every entrepreneur we support, and every youth we inspire contributes to a broader legacy of empowerment and progress.

**We are grateful for the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' continued leadership in advocating for policies and initiatives that ensure access, opportunity and justice for Black communities across our state.**

We are grateful for the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus' continued leadership in advocating for policies and initiatives that ensure access, opportunity, and justice for Black communities across our state. Your support strengthens the momentum of our mission and inspires us to continue forging pathways to prosperity.

Please accept our deepest thanks for this meaningful recognition. We look forward to continuing to work alongside you in advancing a brighter, more inclusive future for all.



*Siri AJ. Hibbler*

**Siri AJ. Hibbler**

Founder & CEO

Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce  
Cook County Black Chamber of  
Commerce  
Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce

## TUESDAY TALKS

Members of Illinois' business community regularly meet to come together to learn, connect and grow. Hosted by the Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce and Cook County Chamber of Commerce, the *Tuesday Talk Series* is more than a standing meeting — it's a space where relationships are built and business insight flows freely.

Whether you're scaling up or starting fresh, these weekly conversations feature guest speakers who bring the real-world knowledge, resources and perspective you need to navigate today's business landscape and position yourself for success in tomorrow's.



(Left) Chicago Inspector General Deborah Witzburg, (Right) Siri A.J. Hibbler, Founder & CEO of Illinois Black Chamber of Commerce, Cook County Black Chamber of Commerce and Garfield Park Chamber of Commerce

## CIVIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT DAY

*Inspiring the Next Generation of Leaders*

This spring, nearly 700 students from 18 districts joined the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation in Springfield for the return of Civic Youth Engagement Day — a powerful reminder that the future is already in the room. From an opening celebration led by community voices to a Capitol march filled with signs of hope and power, students experienced the heart of civic engagement firsthand.

Inside the Capitol, young leaders delivered speeches alongside ILBC members, participated in a mock legislative session, and learned directly from local elected officials during a dynamic leadership panel. The day wrapped with a spirited trivia competition and a whole lot of inspiration. This wasn't just a day at the Capitol. It was a movement to energize, equip and elevate the next generation of Black leaders across Illinois.

**This wasn't just a day at the Capitol. It was a movement to energize, equip and elevate the next generation of Black leaders across Illinois.**



## REFLECTION FROM CIVIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT DAY

*Written by Mahiri Anderson, Assistant Principal at Adam Clayton Powell Elementary*

As a Chicago educator, class trips to Springfield, Illinois signalled the end of the school year for 7th and/or 8th grade students. If budgeting allowed, the school community rode a charter bus three and half hours to the historic capital city. In order to facilitate the trip during the Illinois Assembly session, I diligently prepared by completing end of year testing along with other district mandates and school events. Oftentimes, the extent of the visit only included a stroll through the quiet halls of the capital after the IL Assembly session adjourned, then a brief view of the empty Illinois Fair Grounds as the bus quickly whizzed by to return to Chicago by 7pm.

This year however, the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus & Foundation (ILBCF) sponsored Youth Civic Engagement Day that was truly transformative. ILBCF curated an experience that truly engaged our students. After arriving in Springfield and grabbing a snack, all students participated in a “March on the Capital” from the ILBCF House to the Capitol with other students. At the capital, students were able to interact with each other, take pictures with their groups, as well as with their local legislatures.

Students then entered the state capital where they were greeted by various officials including Powell’s very own, IL Senator Marcus Peters. Students were then invited to participate in a Mock Press Conference which was initially slated for about thirty minutes with students providing a two minute speech. ILBCF adjusted and accommodated the students that prepared a speech allowing them to present at the mock press conference. This activity concluded to the cheers of not only their own classmates, but from all of the attendees.

Next, students gathered for rotating sessions at the Illinois State Library for a brief presentation along with a Q&A session on how the General Assembly works to pass policy. Students were able to briefly discuss and build upon some ideas they previously discussed in their

classrooms and how these ideas would potentially go through the process to become Illinois law. While this was the only “classroom” style agenda item, this assembly provided an opportunity for insightful synthesization and reinforcement of the information provided.

Afterwards, students boarded their buses and rallied back to the Illinois FairGrounds for lunch along with a panel discussion with ILBCF representatives, and a keynote address stressing the importance of civic engagement. At the conclusion of the presentations, there were several raffles for various prizes, including laptops for students, at no cost.

**When the Illinois Assembly mandated Middle School Civics in 2020, I was curious at how we could consistently simulate and engage students in authentic democratic processes. ILBCF has provided me with the model of how it can be done. While most students saw this as a day out of school, I saw seeds of authentic engagement sown in the minds of our students. Students recorded and streamed their classmates, sharing a moment of pride beyond a speech in the school auditorium.**

On the way back to Chicago, my students recalled the various “shoutouts” from Illinois Representatives as time was taken from the floor for them to be recognized from various schools. Students also posed several questions regarding the guests on the floor- from topics discussed including race & religion, the reasoning for satire

## CIVIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT DAY (CONT.)



along with resulting laughter, and acknowledging of why there were various people in the Illinois House speaking. My 8th grade students inquired when they could have this experience again. While my 8th graders can't go, I am elated about what my 7th graders could experience next year. Nevertheless, I also see opportunities how my 8th graders now rising freshmen, may become organizers, club leaders, participants in the Mikva Challenge, intern with elected officials, or merely gain confidence and awareness of how to improve themselves or their community.

Thank you Illinois Legislative Black Caucus & Foundation for providing a noteworthy experience that left an indelible impression on myself and my students.

**Mahiri Anderson**  
Assistant Principal  
Adam Clayton Powell Elementary



# ILBCF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

*The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation Proudly Supports Our Youth*

The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation proudly invests in Illinois' future by supporting students pursuing their dreams through college, university and vocational training programs. As we near **\$2 million in total scholarships awarded**, our commitment remains unwavering: to help young people broaden their horizons through education and opportunity.

**The ILBCF Scholarship Program makes a lasting impact in the lives of our recipients — many of whom go on to lead, serve and inspire in their communities and beyond. Here's what a few of our alumni had to say:**



**Kenya Apongule, Spelman College**

**Scholarship Award Year:** 2020

**Current Position:** Bioethics Research Fellow at Emory University

"Receiving the ILBCF Scholarship was a blessing that played a vital role in helping me achieve my educational goals. As a self-independent student who relied solely on scholarships and grants, this support allowed me to focus on my academics and leadership without the added stress of financial hardship."



**Jayden Newman, American University**

**Scholarship Award Years:** 2020 - 2022

**Current Position:** Communications Coordinator at Illinois Office of the Governor

"The ILBCF Scholarship was an indispensable resource during my college experience. As someone who worked two to three jobs the entirety of my college years to afford my education, scholarships like this one had an incredible impact on my journey."



**Dominique Peters, Loras College**

**Scholarship Award Year:** 2020

**Current Position:** Blueprint Career Coach at the Mayor's Office of Employment Development & Graduate Student at the University of Baltimore, Maryland

"The ILBCF Scholarship empowered me to embrace my identity and stand confidently as a Black woman. I have been inspired by the Leadership of Senator Lightford and State Representative Welch as I have pursued a career in public service."



**Darryl Cowins, University of Illinois at Urbana**

**Scholarship Award Years:** 2015

**Current Position:** Underwriting Assistant at Seneca Insurance Company

"When I got the scholarship, it showed me that people still believe in you. It showed me that people will invest in you, and they see your potential. Winning showed me that my work hadn't been done in vain and that I still had time to accomplish my goals."



**Curtis Pointer, Western Illinois University**

**Scholarship Award Years:** 2023

**Current Position:** Community Director at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

"Receiving the ILBCF scholarship was a blessing that made my final year of my Master's degree a lot smoother and took away my financial stress. The ILBCF awarding these scholarships showed me that there are organizations that exist to help Black students get their education."

# 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

*Legislation Supporting The 4 Pillars During The 2025 Spring Session*

## LEGISLATIVE WINS FROM THE CAUCUS

During the 2025 spring legislative session, the ILBC celebrated several wins focused on advancing equity and justice across Illinois. The caucus led efforts to **improve health care accessibility, strengthen the public education system, enhance police accountability and much more**. These accomplishments reflect the caucus' ongoing commitment to addressing systemic disparities and ensuring that state policy better serves all people.

**PILLAR 1: CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**PILLAR 2: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**



**PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC ACCESS, EQUITY, & OPPORTUNITY**

**PILLAR 4: HEALTH CARE & HUMAN SERVICES**

### **ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1710**

This legislation requires the Illinois State Police to regularly report detailed data on firearm-related homicides and aggravated assaults to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, with the information made publicly available. This transparency helps lawmakers allocate resources better and promotes trust by allowing the public to track law enforcement's progress in solving these cases.

### **ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1672**

This legislation requires Illinois school districts to report how they use early literacy screeners for students in kindergarten through third grade, starting in the 2026–2027 school year. The Illinois State Board of Education will compile this data and publish a statewide report by March 1, 2027, to help track and improve early reading interventions.

### **ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 2280**

This legislation updates the Reimagine Public Safety Act by requiring the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention to submit annual reports to the General Assembly detailing communities affected by concentrated firearm violence, outlining current investments and providing updated recommendations. It also changes the frequency of reporting on local funding recommendations from biannual to annual. Overall, it aims to provide communities with better support and resources to reduce violence and improve safety.

### **ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1953**

Following the horrific murder of Sonya Massey, members of the ILBC spearheaded this legislation that strengthens transparency and accountability in police hiring. This measure updates the Illinois Police Training Act and Personnel Record Review Act to require law enforcement agencies to share complete personnel files when making hiring decisions. It also strengthens legal protections for agencies and previous employers who release these records, giving them full immunity from liability.

**PILLAR 1: CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**PILLAR 2: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**



**PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC ACCESS, EQUITY, & OPPORTUNITY**

**PILLAR 4: HEALTH CARE & HUMAN SERVICES**

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3528**

Championed by freshman House member Michael Crawford, a member of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, this legislation ensures that colleges and universities in Illinois can't require student teachers to work for free, giving future teachers an opportunity to get paid during their training.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1563**

This legislation, also known as the "Illegal Squatters" bill, clarifies that Illinois law does not prevent police from enforcing criminal trespass laws or removing people or property from a home when trespassing is involved. It ensures that eviction rules don't block law enforcement from taking action against illegal squatters.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1899**

This legislation allows people who complete certain diversion programs for first-time weapons offenses to apply for a Firearm Owner's Identification Card once the court confirms they've finished the program. It also gives prosecutors the option to recommend diversion programs for defendants charged with certain low-level weapons offenses.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 2488**

This legislation strengthens Illinois' Equal Pay and Prevailing Wage laws by requiring all covered businesses to report to the Department of Labor confirming they pay women and people of color fairly compared to others in the same roles. This expands transparency and helps combat wage discrimination across the state.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 2517**

This legislation expands implicit bias training for Illinois healthcare workers to include education on maternal health risks affecting marginalized communities with higher mortality rates. It also covers statistics and effective care plans aimed at reducing pregnancy-related deaths and complications.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1418**

This legislation requires insurance coverage for screenings that detect peripheral artery disease (PAD), a condition that disproportionately affects Black adults. By making these screenings more accessible, the bill aims to promote early detection and improve treatment outcomes, helping reduce serious complications.

**ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 5232**

This legislation directs the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to publish a revised disparity study, focusing on demographic representation at the supplier and distribution levels in Illinois' beauty, cosmetics, hair care and personal care retail industries. The bill aims to identify and address barriers facing underrepresented populations seeking to enter these sectors. *We're still watching this legislation from the 103<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly.*

**PILLAR 1: CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**PILLAR 2: EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**



**PILLAR 3: ECONOMIC ACCESS, EQUITY, & OPPORTUNITY**

**PILLAR 4: HEALTH CARE & HUMAN SERVICES**

## LEGISLATION TO WATCH

### ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3632

The Homicide Victims' Families' Rights Act creates an established process for reviewing unsolved murder cases that are over three years old with no leads, requiring fresh reviews by investigators not previously involved. It also mandates law enforcement agencies to assign family liaison officers to support victims' families, helping them receive the care and communication they deserve for closure.

### ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 1784

The Illinois Clean Slate Act remains a crucial step toward giving many people the fresh start they need by automatically sealing nonviolent criminal records after a period of good behavior. It removes major barriers to employment, housing and education — especially for communities disproportionately impacted by the justice system.

### ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 3441

This legislation strengthens Illinois' Equal Pay and Prevailing Wage laws by requiring all covered businesses to report to the Department of Labor confirming they pay women and people of color fairly compared to others in the same roles. This expands transparency and helps combat wage discrimination across the state.

# WHAT'S TO COME

*Upcoming Opportunities to Connect and Engage*

## RECAP OF ILBCF GOLF OUTING & SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION

In July, we golfed for scholarships! Each year, the ILBCF Annual Golf Outing & Scholarship Reception helps to raise funds for deserving students.

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 9TH**

- **Golf Outing at Harborside Int'l Golf Club**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, JULY 10TH**

- **Scholarship Reception at UIC Forum**



## RECAP OF ILBCF GOLF OUTING & SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION (CONT.)

Thanks to generous supporters, 150 scholarships were awarded this year, continuing our tradition of investing in the next generation of Black leaders. Look out for our Summer Edition of The Pillar to get a 'hole in one' scoop and learn more.

## "ENDGAME: RELENTLESS POWER" POLICY SUMMIT AND BEDAZZLED POWER BRUNCH



This fall, we will gather not just to talk policy but to move it. Join us for our Annual 2-Day "Endgame: Relentless Power" Policy Summit and Bedazzled Power Brunch, where voices rise, networks deepen and power is not just discussed, it's activated.

Mark your calendar for **Friday, October 3rd and Saturday, October 4th, 2025**, as we take over the Fairmont Chicago Millennium Park Hotel with a weekend designed to elevate, inspire and remind us that when Black leaders unite, there's no end to what we can achieve.

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3RD

- **Kick-Off Press Conference**
- **Keynote Welcome**
- **Keynote Luncheon: For Such a Time As This — The Re-Emergence of the Civil Rights Movement**

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH

- **The Bedazzled Power Brunch**
- **Black Business Activation Showcase**

**Whether you're a policymaker, community organizer or advocate — this is the room you want to be in.**

**Questions? Interested in becoming a vendor or sponsor? Reach out to us at [info@ilbcf.org](mailto:info@ilbcf.org). We'd love to have you in the room where power and policy unite.**

# IN THE FINE PRINT

*Going Deeper into the Voices Shaping Our Future*

## “UPLIFTING US”

*Interview with Antonio C. Lee, President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA)*

On Friday, June 27th, 2025, Antonio C. Lee was installed and sworn in as President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA). A team member from the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation (ILBCF) sat down for an interview via Zoom with President Antonio Lee on Tuesday, July 1st, 2025. The following has been edited to reflect the conversation and statements by Mr. Lee were only provided in his capacity as President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA).

### Your why and your journey to the law-inclusive of childhood/upbringing:

Antonio described himself as a leader, motivator, public servant and thinker, who is passionate about giving back to the community. As a Black male that grew-up on Chicago’s South Side in the South Shore neighborhood, Antonio has always been acutely aware of taking action and working to address the social ills—plaguing his community—at all levels. When asked about the law, Antonio mentioned his strong foundation for curiosity, reading, critical thinking—and advocacy as tools, which have aided him in being an advocate and being inspired by the civil rights movement. The ultimate goal is to unlock doors with keys and reach back to uplift those coming up under through engagement and mentorship. Initially, Antonio had no interest in civil rights law, specifically. In his early career, criminal law was propelled to the forefront. Through service as a Presidential Management Fellow (PMF) at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Antonio began to hone his commitment to civil rights through housing work—an issue Antonio contends intersects intricately with the Black community whether housing, employment, redlining, etc. Most importantly, Antonio gained substantive litigation

experience on both sides of the “v.” with plaintiffs and municipalities, all of which were fundamental to his ascension within CCBA.

**Q: What does it mean to be President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) during this critical moment in history and what are key goals/priorities during your tenure?**

As previously mentioned, Antonio was sworn in on Friday, June 27th, 2025. The Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) was founded in 1914—and the founders would be pivotal in establishing the National Bar Association (NBA) in 1925. The legacy of this organization and the past presidents, who served before Antonio, are the clarion call for his bar year’s theme: “Rooted in Legacy and Rising in Power.” Lee’s ascension to the presidency was, by far, no easy task. Years ago, Lee started as a committee chairperson and rose up the ranks to serve as a Board Member, 3rd Vice President, 2nd Vice President, President-Elect, and now President.

President Lee’s goals + priorities include:

- **Engagement**
  - Collaborating and cultivating relationships with key Black stakeholders (e.g. NAACP, Rainbow PUSH, etc.)
  - Tapping into the full potential of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) as there is a built-in network of incredible and talented attorneys and law students.
- **Access to Justice** (Antonio noted how often he is heartbroken when litigants enter court without knowing how to advocate for themselves)
  - Expungement Summits
  - Legal Clinics (on a range of challenges)

## “UPLIFTING US” (CONT.)

*Interview with Antonio C. Lee, President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA)*

- Mentorship (especially amongst first-generation, newer, and younger lawyers)
- **Minority Job Fair** (Antonio shared an anecdote from the recent year where he asked, “how many law students here are first-generation law students,” and about 90% of the room raised their hand)
  - In this profession, we must lift as we climb!
  - Be more intentional about mentoring, making sure that the individual got the job, made it through law school, and passed the bar exam.
  - Connecting with the broad membership of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA).
- **Legislative Issues**
  - Addressing the reality that Black people suffer at every point of their legal career (e.g. law school admission test (LSAT) scores; law school survival; no real employment traction even after passage of the bar exam).

**Why is it important to be active, join, and support key historical organizations like the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA), the NAACP, and Rainbow Push, just to name a few?**

Antonio acknowledged that just because you have the membership, does not mean you have membership engagement. That mantra is a focal point of his bar year as he works to grow membership even further. Antonio noted that his installation ceremony was one of the more well attended affairs in recent years with nearly 700 guests in the audience. The motivation behind the outpouring of celebration was that people wanted an experience. Through, incorporating entities like the South Shore Drill Team, which Antonio is an alumnus of, and centering keynote speakers that could speak on relevant topics regarding today’s challenges—Antonio feels he met the moment. Before pivoting to the next question, Antonio acknowledged the rich culture, history, and

tradition these legacy organizations possess and the need for the next generation to employ tactics, which help grow and retain membership.

**What are your hopes/fears about the rule of law at this moment? And, what can be done to stop the erasure of Black History?**

Antonio was abundantly clear and unequivocal in the reality that every attorney takes an oath to defend, obey, and support the U.S. and state constitutions. Simply put, that and respect for the rule of law must be adhered to as a primary obligation within this profession.

On the erasure of Black History, Antonio expressed the need to continue advancing, educating, and teaching our history with a factual lens. Antonio said, “Black History is important—it is also American History, so these stories must be told.”

**Historical figures and role models?**

As a son of the South Side, Antonio described his mother and father as being his biggest role models. Antonio’s father taught key lessons centered around discipline, perseverance, and the power of keeping your word. Similarly, Antonio’s mother pushed him to think deeper and go the extra mile. Family has always been the lifeblood of what keeps Antonio going and never has to look too far to know that his village has his back. Before citing historical figures,



## “UPLIFTING US” (CONT.)

*Interview of Antonio C. Lee, President of the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA)*

Antonio also described his grandmother as being a woman of immaculate style and grace, who he learned having a strong attention to detail from. On the historical role models front, Antonio expressed deep gratitude for Justice Thurgood Marshall and the strategy behind dismantling the unequal treatment that Black people experienced by way of *Brown v. Board of Education*, a landmark Supreme Court case which declared that state-sponsored segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

### Issues of Importance in this Moment?

Antonio re-referenced the key legislative priorities from above and mentioned that committee chairs from the Cook County Bar Association (CCBA) would work tirelessly to address and educate on many issue areas impacting underserved populations with a

special emphasis on Criminal Legal System Reform and Healthcare.

**What strategics and tactics are available to Black Illinoisans during this time of uncertainty to survive and thrive?**

Antonio mentioned the need to come together as a collective with tangible action items to move in a cohesive way. In addition, Antonio highlighted the importance and power of collaboration as a show of strength in utilizing each other's precious resources.

### Any closing thoughts?

A scripture, which guides Antonio's life work is Micah 6:8: He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

## RELENTLESS POWER

*Written by Dr. Angelique Evans, PhD and 2023 ILBCF/Illini Science Policy Fellow at the University of Urbana-Champaign/ILBCF Policy Associate*

“To demand these God-given rights is to seek Black power, what I call audacious power, the power to build Black institutions of splendid achievement.” - Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr, 1966

Speaking to the 1966 graduating class of Howard University, Congressman Powell Jr. defined Black Power as audacious power rooted in the “God-given rights,” which included the right to be secure in one's person, free of police brutality, have a good education, move upward in housing and employment, and be equal members of the body politic.

Kwame Ture, formerly Stokley Carmichael, and Charles Hamilton (1992) wrote the book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* as a sort of blueprint “about the why, where, and in what manner Black people must get themselves. It is about Black people taking care of business - the business of and for

Black people.” Ture and Hamilton explain that not taking care of the business of Black people will result in a continued subjugation of the community and continued lack of control and access to our lives, politics, authority, or economy. Ture and Hamilton posit a key aspect of our fight for liberation is by redefining and unifying what it means to be Black, and in community.

**“Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of Black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions and reclaim their history, their culture, to create their own sense of community and togetherness.” (Ture & Hamilton, 1992, p.37-38)**

## RELENTLESS POWER (CONT.)

*Written by Dr. Angelique Evans,*

59 years after Congressman Powell Jr's speech and 33 years after Ture and Hamilton's publication, we are still tasked with seeking and bringing about Black power for future generations by living boldly, speaking loudly, remembering, and embodying the relentless power of those who have gone before us. Most importantly, we must come together as a community, united to bring about the change we have sought as the embodiment of the relentless power needed to bring it about.

Our relentless power is the summation of the hopes of our ancestors, dreams we hold in the present, and vision of Dr. King's dream realized in the future. The Foundation would posit that key aspects of our relentless power is our ability to organize, the impact of our culture, and the infinite hope we continue to build up in our youth. One way we can actualize our relentless power in the turbulent times we find ourselves in the midst of today is to build upon the 2024 theme of Infinite Hope, collaboratively dream of a better tomorrow, and actively redefine Black culture, community, and politics.

### Building on Infinite Hope

**“If we look back at struggles for justice and equality, we find that there aren't often propitious moments for those struggles. We've always confronted waves of conservatism. And while we cannot create the conditions for the struggles in which we engage, we can bring our determination. We can bring our vision for a better future. And even as we express the deep disappointment — and I'm not going to try to enumerate all of the things about which we are collectively disappointed, but we can't find ourselves so ensconced in that**

**disappointment that we don't create the kind of hope that will allow us to move forward and pass legacies to the next generation of people who are struggling.”**  
**(Angela Davis, 2025, p.1)**

The above quote is from the keynote address "Infinite Hope" by Angela Davis given at the 15th Inaugural Peace Ball in Washington DC, on January 20th. The speech focused on "the power of infinite hope to fight against injustice" (DemocracyNow, 2025). As a nation and even more so as a community, we are living in a time period marked by unprecedented attempts of erasure specifically relating to civil rights, liberties, and freedoms, that cause unease, distrust, and fear in the general populace. However, it is important to remember that this is not the first of these seasons we have faced. In fact, as a people, we have experienced one challenge or another since the feet of our Ancestors touched this land over 400 years ago. It is imperative that in this season, we remember and call upon the relentless power fueled by infinite hope that we have curated and built upon in our culture, civil and social change movements in order to overcome. To that end, this paper will briefly examine aspects of culture, leadership, and social justice practices to aid in our collective remembering to encourage our continued movement through our relentless power.

### Black Culture: Beyond A Mastery of Things

**“You have been told that the might of your country is in its wonderful invention, in its circuits and weaponry. This is the mastery of things. But Wakanda was great before it had things, and its secrets are older than any vaulted metal.”**  
**- Coates, 2017**

## RELENTLESS POWER (CONT.)

*Written by Dr. Angelique Evans*

The quote, from the popular Marvel comic and graphic novel *Black Panther*, calls to mind the importance of acknowledging that Black culture is more than the sum of our talents and what we can produce. We are built on the teachings, music, and language that extends beyond and above our current here and now; and the impact it has both on trade, commerce, and diplomacy both domestic and abroad is priceless.

One cannot discuss the opportunity, impact, and potential consequences of protest today vs. those of years gone by, without acknowledging the role of the media and the necessity of holding leaders, media, and society accountable in the media. One person who exemplified all responsibilities as a remarkable journalist, activist, and social justice advocate was Ida B. Wells.

**Speak up! Fearlessly Name Wrongdoings**  
**“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.” - Wells, as quoted by Gates Jr., 2014**

Ida B. Wells, the daughter of formerly enslaved people, was born into slavery in 1862 in Mississippi. Wells wrote under the pen name Iola, a name reflecting her southern roots, and began her writing career in 1884 - writing a “legal challenge to railroad segregation based on her personal experience being thrown out of a “ladies” car on the Chesapeake, Ohio and Southwestern Railroad. ([Gates Jr., 2014](#).)” Wells’s experience fighting racial segregation on public transportation occurred 71 years before Rosa Parks; however, shedding light on the subject matter was not the only thing Wells did as a journalist. Wells used her position as a journalist to:

- Fact check reports that asserted violent crimes against women were carried out primarily by Black men and noted the number presented were a misrepresentation of consensual relationships between Black men and white women (Freedom of Speech)

- Call out leadership within the Black community to use their power for the betterment of their Black constituents “what material benefit is a “leader” if he does not, to some extent, devote his time, talent, and wealth to the alleviation of the poverty and misery, and elevation of his people? (Functions of Leadership)”
- Name, define, and speak boldly about the atrocities (lynching, segregation, lack of support and safety by political party/affiliation) Black people suffered (numerous articles)

Wells shows us the importance of shedding light via the media as - journalists, digital nomads, and citizens, on injustices. As the field of journalism and media has changed in more recent times it is important to acknowledge the importance of passing the torch and bringing our youth and young adults into the conversation.

In conclusion, our attention is drawn back to the Marvel film *Black Panther* and the importance of honor, legacy, and people/community. The Foundation would like to challenge our work “For Honor, For Legacy, and For Wakanda” with a slight amendment thinking of Wakanda as our Ancestors, their ascendants (us), and those who have yet to come. With that the Foundation would like to close with a message of hope, using the words of critical scholar [Derrick Bell’s](#) (2018) epilogue in “Faces at the Bottom of the Well,” which read:

**The Foundation would like to challenge us to continue our work “For Honor, For Legacy, and For Wakanda” with a slight amendment thinking of Wakanda as our Ancestors, their ascendants (us), and those who have yet to come.**

## RELENTLESS POWER (CONT.)

*Written by Dr. Angelique Evans*

With that the Foundation would like to close with a message of hope, using the words of critical scholar Derrick Bell's (2018) epilogue in "Faces at the Bottom of the Well," which read:

"Beyond the despair of your final narrative, I am reminded that our forebearers - though betrayed into bondage - survived the slavery in which they were reduced to things, property, entitled neither to rights, nor to respect as human beings. Somehow, as their legacy of our spirituals makes clear, our enslaved ancestors managed to retain their humanity as well as their faith that evil and suffering were not the extent of their destiny or of the destiny of those who would follow them.

Indeed, we owe our existence to their perseverance, their faith. In these perilous times, we must do no less than they did: fashion a philosophy that both matches the unique dangers we face, and enables us to recognize in those dangers, opportunities for committed living and humane service. The task is less daunting than it might appear. From the beginning we have been living and working for racial justice in the face of unacknowledged threat."

**It is the Foundation's hope that together we will continue to flourish in infinite hope, and follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, remembering the relentless power that has driven change and built community along the way.**



### **DR. ANGELIQUE EVANS**

*PhD and 2023 ILBCF/Illini Science Policy Fellow at the University of Urbana-Champaign/ILBCF Policy Associate*

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