Latino Policy Forum’s
2023 Multicultural Leadership Academy Cohort
Announced

CHICAGO | The Multicultural Leadership Academy (MLA) is proud to announce the participants of the 2023 MLA Academy.

The six-month program aims to provide a diverse group of civic leaders with the leadership skills needed to facilitate collaboration between Latinos and African Americans through intercultural collaboration and social action.

“I am excited about the new 2023 Multicultural Leadership Academy and look forward to continuing the legacy of building bridges between our Black and Brown leaders and communities,” said NiCole Ward, Multicultural Leadership Academy Manager.

“I am beyond honored and excited to be part of an amazing selected community of individuals who are invested in fostering change in Black and Brown communities across Illinois. I look forward to engaging in community with my fellow cohort members and the training team around the development of innovative and creative practices that will foster access, equity, and inclusion,” said Aaron Cortes, Northeastern Illinois University, 2023 cohort.

“On behalf of all the MLA Alumni- Welcome to the family!” said Wendy Williams, University of Chicago, 2019 cohort.

“Be prepared to challenge your current way of thinking, share ideas and thoughts that you thought no one else would understand, learn, love, and grow. Leadership Development is a lifelong journey you will enjoy as part of the MLA family. Have an open mind and, most importantly, an open heart.”

The Academy’s core learning competencies for participants and their organizations include:

- Arts Expression: Using the arts as a catalyst for individual and group creativity and innovation.
- Intercultural Understanding: Fostering an understanding of Illinois’ Latino and African-American communities and identifying their common interests.
- Social Change, Policy Action & Community Improvement: Collaborating via ‘affinity groups’ on how to create a better, more equitable Illinois through social change, policy action, and community improvement.
- Transformational Leadership: Leading the way for change by uplifting, motivating, and inspiring others with a clear vision and establishing a compelling moral and ethical framework.

The 2023 Multicultural Leadership Academy Cohort:

Aaron Cortesa  
Northeastern Illinois University - Center for College Access and Success

Adam Gonzalez  
El Valor Corporation

Carlos Matallana  
Spanish Digital

Darion Crawford  
Urban Growers Collective

Edwin Ortiz  
Chicago Department of Housing

Jessica Taylor  
Steans Family Foundation

Jordan Esparza  
College of Lake County

Jose Pizarro  
ALSO

Juanita Garcia  
Rebuilding Exchange

Khameron Townsend-Riley  
University of Illinois at Chicago - Office of Community Collaboration

Kisha Ingram  
Malcolm X College
Manuel Hernandez
Association of Latinos/as/xs Motivating Action

Marcus Samuel
Shriver Center on Poverty Law

Maria Nava
Warren-Newport Public Library

Monique Draper
BUILD

Noelle Gipson
University of Chicago

Pamesha Robinson
Claretian Associates

Patricia Hernandez
Roseland Community Hospital

Phasha Spencer
Ed Reports

Rocio Pulido
The Resurrection Project

Sherie Arriazola Rivera de Martinez
Safer Foundation

Tonika Davenport
Metropolitan Family Services

Vanessa Melgoza
Corazon Community Services

Vinita Voss
Will County Health Department

For more information about the Multicultural Leadership Academy, please contact NiCole Ward, Multicultural Leadership Academy Manager, nward@latinopolicyforum.org
The Forum would like to thank the sponsors of the Academy:

The Chicago Community Trust
Archer Daniels Midland
The Walder Foundation
Grand Victoria Foundation
Harris Family Foundation
Healthy Communities Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit [www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org)