



Aisha Ray, Ph.D., Distinguished Fellow, BUILD Initiative

Aisha Ray, Ph.D. is an independent consultant. At BUILD she co-leads the Equity Leaders Action Network a national leadership program; supports the racial equity work of state early childhood system leaders; works to support racial equity within the PN3-NCIT project; and is part of the BUILD team working with the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance. Dr. Ray is a nationally recognized expert on issues of early childhood workforce policies and practices that continue to reinforce and reproduce racial marginalization and exclusion of Black, Latinx, American Indian, immigrants of color and others; and the preparation of early childhood leaders able and committed to racial equity and justice. In addition, she is a Professor Emerita of Child Development and the former Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty (SVP/Dean) at Erikson Institute. Dr. Ray is a developmental psychologist with an interest in how social, cultural, and racial factors shape early childhood teacher preparation and the workforce; childrearing in low-income Black communities and the role of fathers; and racial equity and the elimination of white supremacy in early childhood systems. In addition, she is a Senior Adviser to the President of the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI); and has consulted with numerous groups including the Blue Ribbon Panel on Early Learning of the New York State Board of Regents; Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood; National Association of State Boards of Education; Start Early (formerly the Ounce of Prevention Fund); Foundation for Child Development; Buffett Center at the University of Nebraska; Annie E. Casey Foundation; Chicago Public Schools; Parent Aware Minnesota; Council of Great City Schools; the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative; *First School* at the University of North Carolina; The University of Pennsylvania's Center on Fathers and Families; Child Trends, among others. Dr. Ray is the recipient of a number of honors, most recently the 2019 President's Inaugural Award from the National Black Child Development Institute; and the 2021 Visionary Award from the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership.

Currently she is a member of the board of Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois. In addition, she is a long-time community activist who has worked with others to address those factors (such as, mass incarceration, the carceral state, forced sterilization of Black and Latinx women, police violence in communities of color) that disproportionately affect children, families and communities of color and in poverty. She has taught at the University of Michigan, DePaul University, Morehouse College, and Prairie State Community College; and was a Research Scientist at the University of Chicago Unit on Child Development.

Dr. Ray earned a doctorate and a master's degree in developmental psychology from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; a master's degree in early education from Erikson Institute/Loyola University of Chicago; and a bachelor's degree in history from Grinnell College.