

# Meet Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Leaders



Joy Spencer | Executive Director

## Equity Before Birth

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
[equitybeforebirth.com](http://equitybeforebirth.com)

Joy Spencer knows from firsthand experience the hardships parents experience due to the lack of paid family leave. She testified before the Ways and Means Committee of the US House of Representatives regarding the need for national paid family leave. She is the first executive director of Equity Before Birth, a new nonprofit tackling birth inequity using an unprecedented approach: offering sponsorship to Black birthing people and their infants in the Triangle region of North Carolina by providing access to paid leave opportunities, health care services, and supports.

### Key Achievements:

- ◆ Served over 200 families in 5 counties in North Carolina including Durham, Wake, Orange, Chatham, and Johnston.
- ◆ Dispersed over \$350,000 to local families for essential baby items, paid leave, doula and midwifery support, transportation to prenatal appointments, childbirth and lactation education, and therapy.
- ◆ Engaged 50 dedicated volunteers who help bring their mission to life.



José Hernandez-Paris | Chief Executive Officer

## Coalición Latinoamericana DBA Latin American Coalition

**NORTH CAROLINA**  
[latinamericancoalition.org](http://latinamericancoalition.org)

La Coalición is an immigrant rights organization that is pioneering a model for 21st century democracy- building and inclusive community engagement in North Carolina – a region that has never before experienced such dramatic demographic shifts. La Coalición provides direct services to the Latinx community in Charlotte, North Carolina through a range of programs that support parents, children and youth, immigrant, and worker's rights. It is active in national, state, and local policy circles as it intentionally addresses the root causes of structural exclusion to promote equitable policies, supports grassroots mobilization to engage

traditionally disenfranchised people to be advocates for themselves and their communities, and builds alliances with traditional and non-traditional allies to increase their collective capacity to promote social justice.

**Key Achievements:**

- ◆ Has been on the front lines coordinating and providing emergency, critical health, educational, nutrition, housing, and integration supports to immigrant families crossing the Texas border.
- ◆ Purchased its building to serve as the headquarters of community services and supports.
- ◆ Implemented membership-based organizational structure and partnered with key community organizations to offer additional services and benefits to member individuals and families.



**Gloria Blevins | President and Executive Director**

**Black Child Development Institute - Ohio**

**OHIO**

[bcdiohio.org](http://bcdiohio.org)

The mission of the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) of Ohio is to advance the quality of life for Black children and families through education and advocacy. NBCDI initiates and supports strategies for achieving positive outcomes for all Black youth.

**Key Achievements:**

- ◆ Developed a trauma informed professional development series for educators.
- ◆ Facilitated a listening session tour in 2023 to capture the lived experiences of individuals within BIPOC communities to effectively inform policy.
- ◆ Established a coalition of BIPOC leaders to assess the unique needs of community while partnering with Ohio's early childhood policy organization to inform advocacy efforts, assess data needs, and navigate/establish equitable systems.
- ◆ Launched climate campaign (lead focus) to increase knowledge capacity of communities of color regarding lead, testing, and supports- placing advocacy tools among parents/caregivers.



**Dorian Wingard** | Chief Operations Officer and **Jessica Roach** | Chief Executive Officer

## Restoring Our Own Through Transformation (ROOTT)

OHIO  
[roottrj.org](http://roottrj.org)

Jessica M. Roach, MPH, and Dorian L. Wingard, MPA, are co-founders of Restoring Our Own Through Transformation, known to our community family as ROOTT. ROOTT is a Black-family led, community-based health and wellness organization, dedicated to specifically addressing Black health inequity as it relates to maternal and infant mortality. ROOTT's reproductive justice philosophy emphasizes and re-empowers the inherent agency Black families have in making their decision to determine when, where, how, and if they decide to have children.

Both Jessica and Dorian have extensive multi-disciplinary experience in public health and public policy creation, development and advocacy, academic and clinical research, and professional development and training of clinical and non-clinical personnel. Jessica serves as ROOTT's Chief Executive Officer and Clinical Director, with Dorian serving as ROOTT's Chief Operations Officer and Policy Director. Together, they bring over four decades of integrated, multi-faceted experience to the challenge of Black family health inequity.

ROOTT's Perinatal Support (Doula) Model provides innovative interventions that target the improvement of birthing conditions and outcomes for Black families who have collectively been disproportionately impacted by maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. ROOTT's philosophy of engagement is laser-focused on addressing Black Maternal, Infant and Family Health through a health equity lens.

### Key Achievements:

- ◆ Achieved and sustained a 0% Black infant and maternal mortality rate since 2017.
- ◆ Currently serves as a subject matter expert for White House staff, congressional leaders, state and local governments, central Ohio hospital systems, and various national and local community stakeholders.
- ◆ Is a founding member of the national Black Mamas Matter Alliance.
- ◆ Recently received the 2021 Publishers Award from the Ohio Minority Business Enterprise Media Group.



Wanda Montgomery | President Emeritus

## Black Child Development Institute Wisconsin Affiliate

WISCONSIN  
[bcdi-wisconsin.org/](http://bcdi-wisconsin.org/)

Wanda Montgomery is a founding and charter member of the Black Child Development Institute-Milwaukee Affiliate. A membership-based organization, BCDI-Wisconsin exists to improve and protect the quality of life of all children and families, specifically those of African American descent. By providing hands-on experience, BCDI Milwaukee effectively promotes positive change in the health, welfare, and educational needs of Black children and their families.

BCDI-Milwaukee was instrumental in publishing Being Black is not a Risk Factor: Statistics and Strengths-Based Solutions in the State of Wisconsin, which highlighted key policy recommendations supporting the health, education, and well-being of Black children in Milwaukee.

### Key Achievements:

- ◆ Serves as backbone organization for Kaleidoscope, a cross-sector coalition comprised of BIPOC/ALAANA-led organizations working to promote the health, education, and economic well-being of young children throughout Wisconsin.
- ◆ Effectively raises awareness and develops health policy priorities to address high rates of Black infant and maternal mortality in the City of Milwaukee and across Wisconsin.
- ◆ Serves as a community engagement expert on federal Healthy Start initiative in Milwaukee to improve maternal and child health in Milwaukee, WI.
- ◆ Delivers literacy services tailored to the needs of young Black children and their families.



Peng Her | CEO

## The Hmong Institute

WISCONSIN  
[thehmonginstitute.org](http://thehmonginstitute.org)

Peng Her has over 20 years of community development experience, working with elected officials, residents, and service providers to remove barriers that keep residents and children from succeeding. He provides cultural training, facilitation, interpretation, and translation to governmental agencies, educational institutions, law firms, and nonprofits. Peng helped establish the Hmong American Studies Program at the UW Madison, Hmong American Community Certificate at Edgewood College, and was a member of the Lao Hmong Overseas Committee to

establish humanitarian dialogue between the US and Lao government.

Peng was the recipient of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award in 2015 for his work to better his community. He currently sits on the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Committee. Prior to joining The Hmong Institute, he was the community relations coordinator at the UW-Madison's Institute Research on Poverty.

The Hmong Institute's mission is to empower communities through education, health, and preservation of the Hmong heritage. It carries out its mission through a broad range of programs and services, including the Hmong Language and Cultural Enrichment Program (HLCEP), which provides an intensive program focusing on Hmong culture, language, and traditions as a way to bolster academic achievement in school.

### **Key Achievements:**

- ◆ Created the Hmong Health and Wellness Advisory Committee to develop a first-of-its-kind, Hmong community-driven assessment that harnesses the strengths and assets of the Hmong in Wisconsin to determine their needs and desires across health, education, early care and education, housing and economic security, among other areas. This assessment is being designed to foster research to action, enabling Hmong leaders to develop policy solutions and priorities tailored to the needs of the Hmong community.
- ◆ Created Intergenerational Hmong Child Care Center: According to the State of Wisconsin, there is only one licensed Hmong family child care center serving Hmong-speaking children and their families. The Hmong Institute has been awarded grant funding to explore the creation of an innovative child care center that fosters the inclusion of Hmong elders, grandparents and parents and that preserves Hmong language, customs, and traditions.
- ◆ Is the anchor organization of Kaleidoscope, a statewide coalition comprised of BIPOC/ALAANA organizations committed to lifting up voices, policies, and services needed for young children and their families in Wisconsin's communities of color so that all children have the opportunity to thrive.