



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CIVIC ACTOR STUDIO

Office of Civic Engagement



The Civic Actor Studio at the University of Chicago is a civic leadership retreat designed to help strengthen the performative aspect of civic leaders and accelerate civic trust through Classic Theater.

FALL 2024 COHORT

CIVIC ACTORS



YOMIKA ALEXANDER

(she/her) is a U.S. Air Force veteran with a background in women's studies and industrial and organizational psychology. Specializing in project, program, and event management for small nonprofits nationwide, Alexander

founded The Alexander Institute, LLC, to provide tailored consulting services to help organizations achieve seamless and impactful results.



AYRIOLE FROST (they/them)

is the manager of partnerships and learning at Ingenuity, Inc., supporting arts access, equity, and quality for all CPS students. Frost is also a thought partner and implements convenings for arts organizations and CPS teachers

to support their partnerships.



REBECCA AMATO (she/her) is an educator and public humanities scholar-practitioner with a commitment to uplifting the stories, histories, and imaginations of those who too often go unheard and unseen. She is also the director of teaching and learning at Illinois

Humanities and stewards the Odyssey Project/ Proyecto Odisea.



CURTIS HENDERSON (he/him)

is the executive director of Project LOVE Chicago, leading initiatives focused on improving academic performance, expansion of career pathways, and increasing access to mental health resources for Chicago's youth. His work is

dedicated to empowering youth with resources and experiences that help shape them into successful, productive individuals within society.



MONIQUE ETIENNE (she/her) is the grants and data manager at Comer Family Foundation. She works to support organizations that are innovative and collaborative in their approach to meeting the complex needs of communities impacted by systemic neglect

and aggression.



EDDIE KORNEGAY, PH.D.

is the executive director of the Center for Poverty Solutions at the Illinois Policy Institute. He oversees and directs the formation of partnerships with direct service organizations to exchange ideas about the best ways to empower

people to overcome poverty.



CIVIC ACTORS



DEANNA NEIL (she/her) is an educator, author, and performer currently at KAM Isaiah Israel as well as the founder of Innovative Judaism. Through her writing, performances, and creative programming, Neil fosters inclusive Jewish experiences that inspire community connection and engagement.



ARTHUR REED (he/him) is the founder and executive director of Second Chance Initiative. Reed leads efforts in violence prevention and social services, working to support individuals and communities in need by fostering safe, empowering environments and advocating for systemic change toward a more inclusive and resilient future.



MARIA NELSON (she/her) is an arts administrator with 10+ years of experience in arts nonprofits, primarily in fundraising. Nelson enjoys wearing many administrative hats to support and sustain Chicago's artists and arts ecosystem.

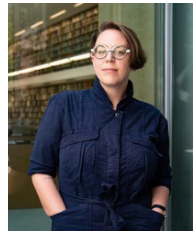


PAUL ROTHSCHILD (he/him) brings his corporate background and direct experience of incarceration to his role as managing director of operations for the Illinois Coalition to End Permanent Punishments. Paul works to dismantle the barriers to employment, education, housing, and civic engagement faced by people with arrest and conviction records.



MARK E. PAYNE (he/him) is the executive director of Public Allies Chicago, where he leads efforts to build a pipeline of diverse, emerging civic leaders. With 30 years in public safety, community development, and civic engagement, Payne is committed to strengthening

Chicago's communities and fostering community-driven change and leadership.



B. SAMPSON (they/them) is a writer, maker, curator, and executive director of the Chicago Poetry Center. Sampson's work is focused on equitable access to arts across Chicago; equitable pay for working artists; and collaborative, community-centered leadership.



NZINGHA RA'IN (she/her) has been working in the education field for more than 15 years serving in a variety of roles including but not limited to special education classroom assistant, case manager, teacher, and coach. She enjoys supporting students as they manage

the chaos of academic spaces and empowering them to lean into those challenges to reach their goals.



SABLE SANDERS (she/her) is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker serving the states of Illinois and Texas as well as a mindfulness coach, certified yoga instructor, and ADHD certified clinical service provider. Sanders predominantly works with Black women to help increase their self esteem, improve communication skills, and set strong boundaries.

CIVIC ACTORS



ULRIC SHANNON (he/him) is the executive director of the Surge Institute Chicago Fellowship. Shannon is committed to advancing leadership among Black and Brown educators and advocates for community-driven school redesign to create equitable educational opportunities.



ANTHONY SPAULDING (he/him) is a system impacted artist mentored by Margaret Burroughs. Through his art, Spaulding brings attention to miscarriages of justice. He is also a barber and performs a one-man show.



ROBERT WILSON (he/him) is an educator, a doctoral student, and a supervisor in the writing center at University of Illinois Chicago, as well as an assistant minister at the Chicago Heights Church of Christ. Robert works with a diverse population of undergraduate students, guiding them in finding their voices as they research and write about topics they are passionate about.



CIVIC FACILITATORS



ALEXANDER BROWN

manages a Decarceration Fellowship of 13 returning citizens recently released from prison. This Fellowship aims to inspire and build out their leadership skills so that they can go back into their communities and mobilize more leaders. Brown

is passionate about bringing equity to community members and equality to communities.



JOANIE FRIEDMAN

is the executive director of civic leadership in the Office of Civic Engagement at the University of Chicago. She is the instigator and co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio. Joanie works to build civic trust through participatory civic arts.



SENYAH HAYNES

is a multi-disciplined artist, trainer, mentor, and joyful wanderess. She is both a participant and facilitator of the Civic Actor Studio.



YOHANCE LACOUR

is an artist and an activist committed to the liberation of Black people in America and abroad.



AUDREY PETTY

(she/her) is a teaching artist with Prison +Neighborhood Arts Project and a writer and educator with the Invisible Institute. Audrey grew up in Chatham and Hyde Park, and now makes her home in South Shore with her family.



GABBY RANDLE-BENT

is a scholar, director, and dramaturg who is passionate about social justice, storytelling, and the power of performance to change the world. She has a dual BA degree in Drama and Sociology from Stanford University and an MA degree in

Performance as Public Practice at The University of Texas at Austin. She has directed, devised, dramaturged, and produced professionally across the United States in Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Austin, and New York City (off-Broadway) and internationally on three continents. She was one of the co-founders of the Civic Actor Studio.