

CEMERÉ JAMES

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EXECUTIVE LEADER AND POLICY ADVISOR

Driving educational impacts for Black children by advocating for changes in public policy.

Strategic executive, change catalyst, and team mentor who leads national non-profits to support Black children. Natural public speaker who thrives in highly visible executive positions. Builds confidence of organization leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders through communication and transparency. Thought leader who leverages expertise in Black child development to conceptualize strategic advocacy plans and systemic reforms designed to advance racial equity.

- **Creating Strong Team Cultures:** Collaborate with leaders at all levels to build consensus, foster communication, and promote information sharing and teamwork.
- **Breaking Down Racial Barriers:** Support public policy changes that mitigate the impact of institutional racism and set Black children up for success in education and in life.
- **Advocating for Policy Change:** Connect with community leaders and policymakers to find common ground and identify ways to support Black communities through advocacy and systems reform.

- Racial Equity and Diversity Advocacy
 - Continuous Improvement Planning
 - Large-Scale Systems Reform
 - Fundraising and Grant Management
 - Early Childhood Education Policy
 - Public Speaking and Presentations
 - Organizational Culture Development
 - Training, Coaching, and Mentorship
 - Non-Profit Program Development
 - Policies, Protocols, and Procedures
 - Staff Retention and Development
 - Relationship Building and Networking
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TESTIMONIALS

LEADERSHIP STYLE

- “Cemeré James’ management style strikes an agile balance between practical and visionary considerations – a style that is well suited for mission-driven organizations that operate with limited financial resources.”
 - “Cemeré James has a natural sense of organization and is skilled at using tools and approaches that allow teams to accomplish ambitious project goals efficiently.”
 - “Cemeré has a distinctly calm and poised demeanor, and manages people with a strong ethic of integrity and transparency that inspires trust, while promoting a healthy environment for collaboration and reflection.”
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CAREER EXPERIENCE

NATIONAL BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE – Silver Spring, MD

02/2016 – 08/2021

Interim President & CEO | 08/2020 – 08/2021

Define overarching vision and direction for non-profit organization with \$3M in annual revenue. Create and implement strategic roadmap to achieve organizational mission. Set program goals and evaluate team performance to drive continuous improvement. Revise policies and procedures to comply with legal requirements and grant standards. Shape communications strategy to attract funders and strategic partners. Demonstrate program effectiveness to stakeholders, government officials, and the public through impact reports. Lead managers to build strong organization foundation by prioritizing resources and leveraging pro bono services.

- Increased fund development and mended culture by delivering consistent leadership during organizational transition. Rebuilt partner and employee relationships to resolve conflicts and align goals.
- Conceptualized fundraising and membership campaigns for 50th anniversary celebration and developed safe event management plan to address concerns amid COVID-19 pandemic.
- Revamped backend operations and human resources strategy, which included developing standard operating procedures, upgrading communication systems, and implementing employee engagement plan.
- Improved support of our community-based affiliates through revised policies and procedures, innovative training programs and additional funding. The number of children served in the first six months of 2021 was triple the number of children served in the full year of 2020.
- Saved \$50K by negotiating pro bono legal support and positioned affiliates to fundraise and operate more effectively.

Senior Vice President of Policy | 06/2019 – 08/2020

Vice President of Policy | 02/2016 – 06/2019

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Shaped and implemented policy vision at the national level and influenced leaders to advance racial equity in early childhood education. Served as keynote speaker and attended early childhood education conferences and events. Developed and applied expertise in racial equity and systemic reforms to launch policy initiatives designed to benefit Black children and families. Drafted and submitted grant proposals to secure funding for policy initiatives. Advised internal teams and stakeholders on culturally relevant educational strategies and programs.

- Spearheaded development and launch of fellowship program for Black policy professionals. Set up program logistics and secured funding to support the next generation of Black executive-level leaders in child and family policy.
- Coordinated and led preparation, publication, and promotion of 2018 State of the Black Child Report Card, assessing the performance of four states in Black education at the primary level.
- Campaigns and Publications—Envisioned, procured funds, and implemented the following initiatives:
 - Delivering on the Promise of Effective Early Childhood Education: This initiative is designed to dismantle the preschool-to-prison pipeline by addressing the extreme rates of suspensions and expulsions in early childhood education. To date, “Delivering on the Promise” campaign boasts the following accomplishments: two national convenings, two Town Halls in Dallas, TX and Chicago, IL, four webinars, six Communities of Practice (leading action at the local level), focus groups with parents in six cities, and two white papers: Delivering on the Promise of the Effective Early Childhood Education and Delivering on Affirming Early Childhood Education: Lessons from Community Voices. In Fall 2020, the Council on Black Health has also launched a campaign in Georgia in support of “Delivering on the Promise.”
 - Responsible Transformation of Early Childhood Education Workforce: This initiative is designed to 1) examine the impact new education requirements will have on Black early childhood educators; and 2) explore how best to implement a bachelor’s degree requirement for early childhood educators in communities that primarily serve children of color—Black children, in particular—by strengthening and not displacing the current workforce. To date, this campaign has resulted in the following accomplishments: two Town Halls in Atlanta, GA and Washington, D.C., a plenary presentation at a major national conference, fifteen focus groups with educators and parents, collaboration with UnidosUS (uniting the voices of Black and Latinx educators), and a white paper: Responsible Transformation of Early Childhood Education Workforce.
 - State of the Black Child Report Cards – Texas, Washington, Georgia, Ohio: This state-level publication series highlights the impact of systemic racism and discrimination on Black children and families. Report Cards are designed and promoted through engagement with local advocates, community leaders, parents, caregivers, educators, and elected officials.

CLASP: CENTER ON LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY – Washington, DC

11/2013 – 02/2016

Deputy Director and Senior Policy Analyst – Work Support Strategies (WSS)

Led Work Support Strategies (WSS) Initiative in partnership with Urban Institute and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Allocated \$21M budget to support six states in delivery of public assistance programs, including SNAP, Medicaid, and child care assistance. Advocated for expansion of work assistance before media organizations and public officials. Oversaw day-to-day operations to streamline program implementation and service delivery. Cultivated relationships with state, federal, and local officials to secure programmatic and policy support. Developed and implemented fundraising plans and managed funder relationships.

- Drafted and reviewed grant proposals to secure over \$9M in funding.
- Wrote culminating paper on statewide program integration in public assistance programs and large-scale systems reform.
- Planned and coordinated annual WSS national conference; created and allocated conference budget and developed programming and workshops for state and federal officials, national thought leaders, Congressional staff, and funders.
- Planned and managed annual WSS national conference, including: creating and tracking budgets; developing workshop and plenary sessions; securing national experts as speakers; planning private sessions for WSS states; and organizing public forums to reach a larger audience of state and federal officials, national thought leaders, Congressional staff, and funders.

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES – Chicago, IL

06/2011 – 11/2013

Lead Operations Specialist | 07/2012 – 11/2013

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Operations Specialist | 06/2011 – 07/2012

Conceptualized and implemented process improvements for human services offices across the state. Optimized delivery of essential public services, including SNAP and Medicaid. Collected and analyzed performance data to evaluate program successes and identify gaps. Facilitated conflict resolution and informal dialogue with office staff and administrators. Recruited, hired, and supervised business process specialists.

- Led team to spearhead business process redesign for five human services offices in two years, supporting 20% of households in the state (300K+ households).
- Rewrote operations manual for human services offices that was scaled to across 100+ human service offices across the state of Illinois. Communicated business process best practices, including integration of new processes into existing operations and sample office procedures.
- Helped develop operations practices for implementation of new eligibility system across 85 human services offices as part of Affordable Care Act (ACA).

ILLINOIS ACTION FOR CHILDREN – Chicago, IL

06/2008 – 06/2011

Illinois Early Childhood Fellow

Helped child care centers implement bilingual immersion curriculum. Analyzed impact of policy changes on early childhood language development programs. Supported Vice President of Strategic Planning and Implementation.

- Supported the Vice President of Strategic Planning and Implementation by creating and managing performance assessment procedures to expand team capabilities and establish avenues for growth within the organization.
- Served as a staff member for the Illinois Commission on the Elimination of Poverty and drafted policy recommendations for the Commission's final report.

Policy Assistant | 06/2008 – 08/2009

Analyzed administrative process changes at state level in early childhood education. Collected and synthesized research to facilitate resource prioritization. Advised internal teams on policy agendas and recommended courses of action.

- Researched and drafted public policy platform to support organizational mission.

DIGITAL YOUTH NETWORK – Chicago, IL

06/2008 – 06/2009

Robotics Team Leader

Led team of middle school students to compete in First Lego League robotics competition. Mentored and advised students on pursuing careers in the technical field.

- Created curriculum to develop students' understanding of robotics and automation technology and build confidence in pursuing science at high school and college level.

Additional Experience:

IBM, Inc. | Supply Chain Manager

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO – Chicago, IL

Master of Public Policy (MPP)

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY – Evanston, IL

Master of Science (MS) in Industrial Engineering and Management Science

FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY – Tallahassee, FL

Bachelor of Science (BS) in Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering

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COMMUNITY SERVICE (highlights)

GROWING GOOD – Online Parent/Caregiver Support Community Child Development Expert	10/2021 – Present
National African American Child and Family Research Center, Morehouse School of Medicine Technical Workgroup Member	04/2022 – Present

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS & MEDIA(highlights)

- Capitol Hill Briefing. “Building on the Child Tax Credit to Help All Children Thrive.” 07/2016.
Florida Head Start Association Conference. “Being Black is Not Risk Factor.” 04/2016
Successful Black Parenting Magazine. “Expelling Preschoolers can be a Pipeline Straight-to-Prison.” 06/2016.
Ascend at the Aspen Institute Webinar. “2-Generation Opportunities in the Every Student Succeeds Act.” 12/2016.
YWCA Capitol Hill Day. “Federal Funding to Support Our Communities.” 06/2017.
One Goal Summer Conference. “Being Black Is Not a Risk Factor: Statistics and Strengths-based Solutions in the State of Florida.”
07/2017.
YWCA Policy Webinar Panelist. “Child Care & Early Learning: YWCA Policy Update Webinar.” 03/2018.
Urban Institute Strengthening ECE Workforce Diversity Convening. “Improving Workforce Quality: Challenges, Opportunities,
and Policy Solutions.” 03/2018.
BUILD QRIS 2018. Plenary Panelist. “Why Are All the White People Sitting at the Policy Tables? – Developing Racially/Ethnicity
Diverse Leadership in Early Childhood Systems.” 07/2018.
Washington Area Women’s Foundation Conference. “Importance of Diversity in the Early Childhood Education Workforce.”
08/2018.
NBCDI “Texas Black Child State Report Card.” 08/2018.
NBCDI “Washington Black Child State Report Card.” 08/2018.
Congressional Black Caucus Panel. “Real Talk: The Black Family Today.” 09/2018.
NBC News. “Kicking kids out of preschool is damaging, experts say. So why is it still happening?” 08/2019.
Black Voice News. “National Black Child Development Institute: Working to Shape the Future for Black Children Part 1—The
2020 Census, Changing the Narrative Regarding ‘Hard to Count.’” 11/2019
Real Black News Podcast Series. “Cemerè James, National Black Child Development Institute.” 10/2019.
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. “Counting Black Children in the 2020 Census.” 03/2020.
Tele-Press Conference Black Census Week. “Count Me Black.” 03/2020.
American Academy of Pediatrics Census Webinar. “Counting Every DC Child Counts: Implications for Children of Color.” 06/2020.
Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta. “Black Children Count: 2020 Census Webinar.” 07/2020.
BUILD Initiative Seminar Series. “The Effects of Coronavirus on Early Childhood Educators of Color.” 07/2020.
AppleTree Audience Series. “Cemerè James: Interim President, CEO of National Black Child Development Institute.” 02/2021.
mOppenheimORG. “Supporting Underserved Children and Youth | Nonprofit Report.” 02/2021.
TJX Companies. “Fireside Chat with National Black Child Development Institute CEO.” 03/2021.
Early Childhood Funder Collaborative. “Impact of COVID-19 on Communities of Color.” 06/2021.