



ADVANCING BLACK STRATEGISTS INITIATIVE

APRIL 2022

About the Advancing Black Strategists Initiative

Social and economic justice movements have collectively fallen short in taking a leading role in expanding opportunities for Black thought leaders and strategists. In the same way that the NFL welcomes Black running backs and receivers but excludes Black quarterbacks and coaches; many Black organizers have gotten the message that, while they are great at mobilizing people and building relationships, they are not perceived to be fit to run a campaign or lead a program not solely about Black communities. Gender bias only compounds this problem.

To correct this historical and present-day injustice, Jobs With Justice launched the Advancing Black Strategists Initiative (ABSI) in partnership with Morehouse College and the Institute for Policy Studies in September 2020. The Initiative was started with the overarching vision to create a cohort of Black economic-justice and labor-focused strategists committed to leading, developing, and advancing policies and campaigns that support the collective power-building of working people, particularly in the South. To defeat the prevailing political and economic school of thought of radical libertarianism that goes back to the days of the Confederacy, we must lead with a counter framework based in the creative experiments of

southern Black workers, union and non-union, who were—and often still are—the primary targets of the original Jim Crow framework.

ABSI has the potential to make a deeply transformative impact on Black leadership in the South and to continue to advance its curriculum in other historically Black Southern institutions. While ABSI began with a partnership at Morehouse College, it has since expanded to the larger Atlanta University Consortium (AUC), which will act as the academic hub and symbolic home of ABSI moving forward. We are already in talks of an expansion with Spelman College to align with some of the existing programs of the Sociology/Anthropology and the Comparative Women's Studies Departments and the Social Justice Fellowship Program. This partnership will give access to the cohort of ABSI fellows to be connected with relevant Spelman programs, connect the Spelman community to ongoing, Black-led worker campaigns in the region, and eventually house an ABSI Visiting Scholar at the institution.

We continue to build an Advisory Committee of diverse academic, nonprofit, labor union, worker center, and philanthropic partners from across the country to ensure the evolution of ABSI.



ABSI Advisory Committee

Dedrick Asante-Muhammad,

Chief of Race, Wealth and Community, National
Community Reinvestment Coalition

Dr. Algernon Austin,

Senior Researcher at the Thurgood Marshall Institute,
NAACP LDF

Janel Bailey,

Co-Director, LA Black Worker Center

Marc Bayard,

Associate Fellow and Director, Institute for Policy Studies'
Black Worker Initiative

Dr. Sheri Davis,

Senior Program Director for WILL Empower with the
Center for Innovation in Worker Organization (CIWO),
Rutgers University School of Management and Labor
Relations

Felicia Davis,

Co-founder, HBCU Green Fund and Coordinator of
Sustainability, Clark Atlanta University

Kenny Diggs,

Assistant Political Director, AFSCME

Appollos Baker,

Legislative and Political Department, American Federation
of Government Employees

Sherman Henry,

Morehouse College
Program Manager of the Advancing Black Strategists
Initiative, Morehouse College.

Dr. Cynthia Hewitt,

Professor and Chair, Morehouse College International
Comparative Labor Studies

Dr Danielle Phillips-Cunningham,

Director and Associate Professor of Multicultural Women's
and Gender Studies at Texas Women's University

Patrick Scott,

Director, AFL-CIO Organizing Institute

Erica Smiley,

Executive Director, Jobs With Justice

John Taylor,

National Field Director of Property Services Division, SEIU

Jason Tomlinson,

National Coordinator of the Advancing Black Strategists
Initiative, Jobs With Justice

Tanya Wallace-Gobern,

Executive Director, National Black Worker Center Project

Dr. Naomi R Williams,

Assistant Professor, Rutgers University School of
Management and Labor Relations

Launching the Inaugural Class of Movement Fellows

We are excited to announce the official first cohort of Advancing Black Strategists Movement Fellows! Beginning in Spring 2022 with a convening in Atlanta, this inaugural class of inspiring leaders (listed below) will immediately jump into action and be placed on specific active campaigns throughout the South for 16 months. The Fellows will also take accredited courses at Morehouse College and receive numerous mentorship and professional opportunities throughout the course of the program, positioning them to take the next step in their career as leaders. Below are some insights into the fellow's stories, as well as the campaigns they will be working on.



Shechel Williams

Jobs to Move America (Birmingham, AL)

Shechel Williams is a family caregiver who began her grassroots organizing in 2016 as a member of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) - We Dream In Black (WeDiB) Atlanta chapter. Shechel is an impassioned advocate for access to health care and the rights of family caregivers, having appeared on CNN, and in print outlets like HuffPost, BBC America, Politico, and The New York Times. Shechel uses digital organizing tools to reach remote members, and from April 2020 to the end of 2021 Shechel could be seen hosting Monday Night Live on We Dream in Black's Facebook page, a mix of popular & political education, as well as kinship and fun for chapter and remote We Dream in Black members. As part of the Jobs to Move America internship, Shechel will be helping organize to ensure that workers and communities see real benefits from our government's investment of public tax dollars in private corporations — and that companies that move in next door are good neighbors and good employers.



Anastancia Cuna

Interntional Union of Painters and Allied Trades (Atlanta, GA)

Anastancia Cuna is a professional nanny and an organizer with the National Domestic Workers Alliance, WeDib and a board member of Matahari Women's Worker Center. She was chosen to lead the Massachusetts Black Immigrant Domestic Workers Covid-19 Survey in 2020, to research and collect data on the conditions and experiences of Black immigrant domestic workers during the covid-19 Pandemic, the survey was conducted by the National Domestic Workers Alliance in partnership with the Institute of Policy Studies. on PBS, and in print with outlets like NBC, Refinery-19, The Hill, Yahoo News, The American Prospect, and more. Anastancia is a mother of 2 daughters, quadrilingual (English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tsonga). Anastancia will be working with IUPAT in Atlanta, Georgia.



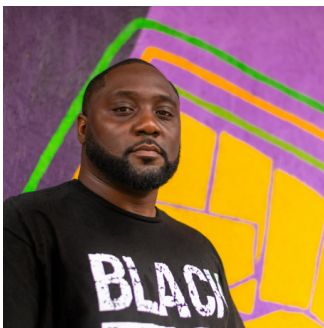
Nichel Dunlap
United Steel Workers (Chester County, SC)

Nichel Dunlap is a veteran of the United States Army, past member of Local Teamsters #71, and holds a strong passion for her community. An upcoming graduate of Queens University of Charlotte, N.C. in 2022, she plans to receive a BA in Communications. She currently serves as the recording secretary for UE150 Charlotte City Workers Union, as well as statewide trustee. She is also a member of Black Workers for Justice, and a fellow for the Southern Workers Assembly and board member for COMM University. She has the pleasure of being wife to Shannon, and mother to D’Nasia—her proudest accomplishment. As part of her ABSI fellowship with the USW, Nichel will be helping push Giti Tire to invest in the greater Chester community and hiring more workers.



Jason Brooker
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America
(Tidewater Area, VA)

Jason Brooker is a researcher and consultant looking to facilitate truthful conversations. Jason’s research focuses on the individual and the psychological effects of code switching in less-than inclusive environments. In 2014, he founded and became CEO of Metanoia Global 360. He has an MBA from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Science from South Carolina State University. Jason is an avid learner and boxer inspired to showcase how the skills learned in boxing are transferable skills that can be used to maneuver through school, business, and life. As part of the ABSI fellowship with UE 150, Jason will be assisting in organizing municipal workers in Virginia Beach and Newport News to speak with city council members in private small meetings as well as training up the workers about the mechanics of this process and speaking for themselves.



Eric Hall
United Auto Workers (Tuscaloosa, AL)

Eric LaMar Hall is an associate minister at Peace Missionary Baptist Church, a veteran of the United States Army, as well as a community activist and advocate. In 2019, Hall was selected as a Inaugural Fellow for Movement School progressive movement which aims to translate activist power into political power by changing how we develop campaign leadership. Following his 2019 fellowship Hall created Project Organize Alabama, a non-partisan, state-wide grassroots coalition campaign striving to restore voting rights, and eliminate voter suppression in Alabama. Eric will be working with UAW to organize a Mercedes Benz plant in Tuscaloosa and Volvo plant in Montgomery. A historically anti-union area, this campaign is seeking to become the first automotive plant to be unionized in Alabama.