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# Tawanna A. Black, Founder & Chief Executive Officer

# PROFILE

Tawanna A. Black is an award-winning architect of racially inclusive and equitable talent, supply chain, philanthropy and marketing strategies that yield transformational results for businesses, their consumers, and the communities they work in.

For more than 20 years, she has earned the trust of executives by mobilizing teams to create and execute strategies that benefit diverse workers, consumers, and business owners and drive growth and fiscal health.

As Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Economic Inclusion (the Center), Ms. Black is on a mission to fuel racially inclusive and equitable regional economic growth in cities across the country. She has unlocked the formula for responsible corporate action to build shared economic growth while increasing consumer, shareholder, and investor trust and loyalty. The Center’s proprietary, industry-leading employer assessment, index, and tools help businesses identify the impact of policies, investments and actions on employee productivity, business growth, and community impact. Their stakeholder engagement, change management consultation and coaching place inclusion, anti-racism and belonging in the center in to drive measurable financial return and economic competitiveness for the cities and regions where they operate. Each year, Ms. Black and her team offer services to more than 50 businesses and government agencies and educate over 12,000 leaders.

Since founding the Center in 2017, Ms. Black has expanded the services, revenue and employee-base annually, and today leads a team of 32 with an annual budget of $7 million. She has become a nationally recognized thought-leader, elevating the economic imperative for corporate action to close racial wealth gaps and build shared prosperity. FSG, Minnesota Timberwolves, 3M, and businesses across the country turned to her for strategies to respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the uprisings following the murder of George Floyd in 2020. She offered unwavering guidance to disrupt systemic racism. Ms. Black developed innovative strategies to transform employment and job creation among African American men and has developed partnerships to invest in Black-owned businesses and scale entrepreneurship in growth sectors to meet the corporate demand for achieving ambitious supplier diversity goals anchored in regional inclusive economic growth and competitiveness. Today, executives at US Bank, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, Xcel Energy, and CentraCare trust her team to develop and advise on their business strategies.

Ms. Black is a skilled public-private partnership strategist and has helped companies, including Mutual of Omaha, ConAgra Foods, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska, and Cox Communications harness the power of government, community, and philanthropic partnerships to develop ESG solutions that reward communities, employees, and shareholders. Ms. Black’s urban planning and economic development experience, coupled with her keen understanding of the intersection between business goals and community needs, made her uniquely positioned to lead Destination Midtown, an unprecedented public-private partnership in Omaha, Nebraska. She led the implementation of a redevelopment master plan, guiding corporations to leverage their social, political, financial, and intellectual capital and infrastructure to revitalize a historic neighborhood at the precipice of decline or transformation. Ultimately, her leadership helped to secure more than $500 million in reinvestment in just three years to drive vibrancy, economic vitality, talent attraction and retention, and business growth.

From coast to coast, across sectors and industries, Ms. Black is a trusted guide. In 2019, the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program appointed her as a Non-Resident Senior Fellow to help guide their expanding work with cities, nationally. In 2016, Living Cities named her one of the nation’s Top 25 Disruptive Leaders working to close racial gaps. Ms. Black has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Forbes, and on MSNBC as a leading authority on the actions that businesses can and must take to close racial wealth gaps and fuel inclusive and equitable growth.

Ms. Black’s is a graduate of Washburn University and holds a Bachelor of Public Administration degree. Her accomplishments and civic leadership have been recognized with many awards and commendations. Highlights include Twin Cities Business Magazine’s Person of the Year (2022); Twin Cities Business Magazine’s Nonprofit Community Impact Award (2021); Twin Cities Business Magazine’s 100 People to Know (2021, 2020, 2017); Washburn University Alumni Fellow (2018); City of Minneapolis History Maker (2021); Minneapolis- St. Paul Business Journal’s Women in Business Award Winner (2017); and Living Cities’ America’s Top 25 Disruptive Leaders Closing Racial Opportunity Gaps (2016).

Ms. Black has served and led on over 35 boards. Today, she serves her wisdom to: McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility’s Advisory Council; Minnesota Tech Association Board of Directors; Washburn University Alumni Foundation Board of Trustees; U.S. Bank’s Access Advisory Board and the Minnesota Council of Churches Board.

Ms. Black lives in the Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul metro with her husband Eric and children Traviata and Christian.

# Select Board Service

1. Minnesota Council of Churches 2022-Present
2. Minnesota Tech Association 2020-Present
3. Washburn University Foundation 2020-Present
4. McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility Advisory Council 2020-Present
5. U.S. Bank Access Advisory Board 2022-Present
6. Minneapolis Federal Reserve - Opportunity & Inclusive Growth Institute 2017-2021
7. Northside Achievement Zone 2017-2020
8. Women’s Foundation of Minnesota 2013-2019
9. Youthprise *(Chair)* 2011-2015
10. African American Leadership Forum *(Co-Chair)* 2014-2016
11. Minneapolis-St. Paul Chapter of The Links, Incorporated *(President)* 2013-2017
12. University of Nebraska Medical Center- Chancellors Board of Counsellors 2004-2012
13. National Coalition of 100 Black Women- Omaha Chapter (*President*) 2006-2010
14. Girls, Inc. of Omaha *(Guild President)* 2004-2006
15. United Way of the Midlands 2008-2010
16. African American Empowerment Network (*Vice Chair*) 2007-2013
17. Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund (*Gubernatorial Appointment*) 2007-2010
18. Topeka/Shawnee County Planning Commission *(Mayoral Appointment)* 1997-2000

# Select Honors & Awards

1. 2022 Twin Cities Business Magazine Person of the Year
2. 2021 Twin Cities Business Magazine Community Impact Award - Racial Justice
3. 2021/2019/2017 Twin Cities Business 100 People to know
4. 2018 Washburn University Alumni Fellow
5. 2017 Minneapolis/ St. Paul Business Journal Women in Business Award Winner
6. 2017 Minnesota Business Magazine Real Power 50 Award Winner
7. 2016 Living Cities America’s Top 25 Disruptive Leaders Closing Racial Opportunity Gaps
8. 2014 Bush Fellow (Bush Foundation)
9. 2005 Midlands Business Journal 40 under 40 Award Winner
10. 2004 Ten Outstanding Young Omahan’s Winner

# Select Guest Appearances and Publications

1. USA Today, “Special Edition: Race in America.” August 2021
2. MSP Business Journal, “Fueling a diverse supply chain in the Twin Cities: An executive discussion.” December 2020
3. Next City, “Minneapolis-St Paul: Let this Be Our Moment. This Economy Calls for Reflective, Authentic Leadership.” November 2020
4. Velshi, MSNBC, “The Broken culture of policing.” September 2013
5. MPR, “In Minnesota, many Black women entrepreneurs missed out on PPP Dollars.” August 2020”
6. Australian Broadcast Company, “Economic justice goes hand-in-hand with racial and criminal justice.” June 2020
7. Washington Post, “In George Floyd’s City, Inequalities are Everywhere.” June 2020
8. The World, PRI, “Systems of oppression in healthcare long made invisible, Harvard prof says.” June 2020
9. New York Times, “George Floyd protests recall earlier tensions, promises of economic change.” June 2020
10. Brookings Institute, The Avenue “George Floyd’s death demonstrates the policy violence that devalues Black lives.” May 2020
11. Innovation Hub, “Who is Left Behind by the Tech Boom.” July 2019
12. Reuters, “In Fed policy review, labor may finally win out over inflation.” May 2019
13. Finance & Commerce, “Report Calls for Inclusive Economic Growth in Twin Cities.” April 2019