



MBC-LEO MID-WINTER CONFERENCE 2026

JANUARY 11-12, 2026
Westin, Jackson, MS

**Special
GUEST SPEAKER**

Dr. Jeremy C. Hudson
FOUNDER & CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Canvas Firm



MBC-LEO President

HONORABLE Lesia Hemphill

MAYOR, CITY OF VAIDEN

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished representatives, honored partners, and esteemed colleagues, Welcome!

It is a privilege today as President of MBC-LEO to open this year's conference—an event dedicated to one of the most vital pillars of our progress: collaboration.

This gathering brings together agencies, organizations, and leaders from across our shared field, each with a unique mission, a distinct perspective, and invaluable expertise. While our responsibilities may differ, the purpose that unites us is greater than any one institution. We are here because we understand that the challenges of today—and the possibilities of tomorrow—demand connection, cooperation, and collective action.

True progress is never achieved in isolation. It is built through partnerships that bridge gaps, integrate strengths, and create solutions that no single agency could accomplish alone.

As we gather over the next few days, I encourage each of you to engage fully. Share your successes, your innovations, and, just as importantly, the lessons learned through your challenges. Listen generously. Seek common goals. Identify opportunities for alignment and cooperation. It is often in these moments—conversations between agencies, exchanges of ideas, recognition of shared priorities—that the seeds of transformation are planted.

We stand at a pivotal moment. The work ahead of us is complex, but it is also rich with possibility. By uniting our efforts, coordinating our resources, and embracing a spirit of mutual support, we strengthen not only our own organizations, but the broader system we collectively serve.

I am confident that what begins here—through dialogue, collaboration, and renewed commitment—will shape the next chapter of our shared future. Let us take this opportunity to reaffirm our dedication to partnership, to innovation, and to the deep belief that together, we can achieve far more than any of us can alone.

Thank you for your presence, your professionalism, and your unwavering commitment to progress. It is an honor to embark on this next phase of collaboration with all of you.

Welcome to the conference, and welcome to the work ahead.

Sincerely,
Honorable Lesia Hemphill,

Mayor, Vaiden, Mississippi - President, Mississippi Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (MBC-LEO)



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PANELISTS

LEWIS JOHNSON

COUNCILMAN, CITY OF GRENADE

Lewis Johnson was first elected to the Grenada City Council in 1988 and has also served as Vice Mayor. Johnson is a Grenada native who received higher education at Jackson State University and The University of Colorado. He is a past President of the Mississippi Black Caucus of Elected Officials, Regional Director and Treasurer of the National League of Cities Black Caucus, life member of the NAACP, Board of Directors for the World Conference of Mayors and Mason 32nd Degree. In 2008 he was inducted into the Mississippi Municipal League Hall of Fame.



LARRY DAY

KNIGHT AND DAY GROUP

Larry Day, founded Daylight Capital Advisors in December 2017, bringing nearly 20 years of experience in debt financing, private wealth management, and academia. His career spans notable positions at Merrill Lynch, Jackson State University, and Day, Certified Public Accountants. At Merrill Lynch, a division of Bank of America headquartered in New York City, Mr. Day served as a debt manager and loan originator, where he was the primary contact for up to 100 high-net-worth clients across New England, New York, and New Jersey. During his tenure, he closed over 500 debt transactions. His role at Day Certified Public Accountants (2006-2007) involved consulting on compliance with U.S. Department of Education guidelines for funds distributed by the Mississippi Department of Education following Hurricane Katrina.



TRAY HAIRSTON, ESQ.

BUTLER SNOW LLP

Tray Hairston, CECD, Esq., is a partner at Butler Snow LLP. Tray concentrates on public finance and economic development matters, including all types of municipal bond issues, serving as bond counsel for taxable and tax-exempt financings throughout the country. He has served as bond counsel, lender's counsel and underwriter's counsel for various cities, counties and financial institutions and worked on more than \$2 billion in transactions. One of Tray's seminal legal publications is *The Future of Economic Development*, 35 Miss. C.L. Rev. 370 (2017). He received his undergraduate degree from Tougaloo



College, his MBA from Belhaven College, and his Juris Doctor from the Mississippi College School of Law.

MICHAEL THOMPSON

ONE VOICE

Michael Thompson serves as the Director of Budget & Fiscal Planning for Shelby County Government. In this role, Michael is responsible for the County's \$1.6 billion-dollar operating budget and \$1 billion dollar Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget. Michael has been instrumental in ensuring that it's employees have received historic pay increases during his tenure. Michael served as the County Administrator in Tunica County. Michael also worked with a Big-Four Public Accounting Firm and lead teams of Forensic accountants to help large public companies prevent, detect and respond to fraudulent financial reporting schemes and misappropriation of asset matters involving C-Suite executives and employees.



CHARITY W. KARANJA

BUTLER SNOW

Charity Karanja is a member of Butler Snow's Public Finance, Tax Incentives and Credit Markets Group and has the distinction of being one of six women across the nation named to the 2024 Class of the Caren S. Franzini Fellowship, a merit-based program by the Council for Development Finance Agencies Foundation recognizing outstanding women in development finance for their leadership and dedication to the advancement of the industry. Charity has also been featured in a Spotlight by the National Association of Bond Lawyers, highlighting her career and accomplishments in public finance. Charity graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law where she earned a Juris Doctorate degree.



ASHLEY FLOYD

ONE VOICE

Ashley Floyd's academic journey began at Jackson State University, where she graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science. In 2021, she founded the Mississippi Democracy Project, an initiative reflecting her profound love for her state and its people, especially mothers and children. Through this project, she

focuses on building strong, service-oriented neighborhoods. Her ongoing involvement includes serving as Vice President of the Hinds County Federation of Democratic Women, Elections Chair of the Hinds County Democratic Executive Committee, and Voter Registration Chair for the Mississippi Democratic Executive Committee. She has also held leadership roles as Immediate Past President of the Hinds County Federation of Democratic Women, past president of the Belhaven Heights Community Association, and Financial Secretary and Public Policy Chair for the National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc..

C. JEROME BROWN

RENASANT BANK

C. Jerome Brown graduated from Jackson State University with a Bachelor in Business Administration majoring in Marketing. Jerome furthered his studies at the University of Southern Mississippi in Management. Brown also holds a certification from the True South Economic Development Program from the University of Southern Mississippi. He is also a graduate of the University of Mississippi's School of Banking with the Mississippi Bankers Association. Brown is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., where he is Past President of the Mississippi Caucus and Past President of the Hattiesburg Alumni Chapter and is past Southwestern Province Board Member for Mississippi and lead the province's financial education program called Greek Learning to Avoid Debt (GLAD). Brown is currently the Southwestern Province Polemarch (Regional President), which is head of fraternal operations in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, New Mexico and the country of Mexico.



JAKE MCGRAW

RETHINK MISSISSIPPI INITIATIVE

Jake McGraw leads the Rethink Mississippi initiative at Working Together Mississippi, a nonpartisan civic engagement organization of nonprofits and religious institutions across the state. He began researching and writing about the brain drain when he moved back to Mississippi more than a decade ago to work at the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation. A native of Oxford, he studied public policy and economics at the University of Mississippi and economic history at Oxford University. You can reach him at j.mcgraw@workingtogetherms.org.



PANELISTS

QUINCY MUKORO

OCTAGON GROUP

Quincy Mukoro is the founder and president of the Octagon Group, a full service government affairs and business development firm. The Octagon Group represents several organizations such as the City of Jackson, Mississippi, Motorola, Spectra, Pafford Emergency Management Services, Hope Policy Institute, and the Mississippi Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials. Prior to starting the Octagon Group, Quincy was the Director of Public and Governmental Affairs with the Mississippi Municipal League. Quincy graduated from the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in political science and received his master's degree in public policy and administration from Mississippi State University.



SAFIA MALIN

ONE VOICE

Safia Malin currently serves as the Policy Director at One Voice, where she leads state policy strategy, supports legislative advocacy efforts, and advances community-driven approaches to public policy. Previously, Safia worked as the Senior Program Manager at the New Georgia Project, where she oversaw the organization's electoral programming in the legal department. Before that, she worked on the Southern Poverty Law Center's voting rights practice group as an Outreach Paralegal. At the SPLC, Safia managed voter protection efforts in Georgia and Florida, coordinated community engagement and public education, and provided policy and litigation support. Originally from Colorado, Safia holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Colorado Boulder and remains committed to strengthening civil rights, advancing equity for historically marginalized communities, and protecting democracy.



HARVEY JOHNSON, JR.

HOPE CREDIT UNION

Harvey Johnson, Jr., after graduating from Tennessee State University in 1968, Johnson attended graduate school at the University of Cincinnati, receiving a Master of Arts Degree in Political Science, and a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Air Force. In 1972, Johnson began a career in public service that has



spanned over 50 years, working at the federal, state and local levels of government, as well as in the non-profit sector. The highlight of his career was his election in 1997 as the first African American Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi; he was re-elected in 2001; and he was elected to a third term in 2009. He has served as President of the National Conference of Black Mayors, a Member of the US Conference of Mayors Advisory Council, and an At-large Member of the Executive Committee of the National Democratic Committee. He is a Life Member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a Life Member of the NAACP, and a member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. He is a former President of 100 Black Men of Jackson, Inc.; and he was the 2023 National Mentor of the Year for 100 Black Men of America. He is married to Kathy Ezell Johnson, and they are the parents of two children.

DR. BERNEECE HERBERT

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Berneece S. Herbert is a solutions-focused leader and social scientist with more than 25 years of experience across academia, government, and the nonprofit sector. She advances collaborative planning in urban development, community economic development, leadership, and sustainability. As Chair and Associate Professor of Urban & Regional Planning at Jackson State University, she integrates natural and social sciences to address complex societal challenges. As founder and CEO of Community Solutions Group, she partners with communities to develop data-driven inclusive, and innovative planning strategies. An educator and thought leader, she is known for bridging theory and practice and empowering leaders to advance sustainable, equitable outcomes. She holds a Ph.D. in GIS & Remote Sensing, a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning, and a B.Sc. in Biology, and is currently pursuing a second Ph.D. in Public Administration & Policy with a concentration in Policy & Management.



KABIR KARRIEM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 41

Kabir Karriem is a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, representing District 41. He assumed office on January 5, 2016. His current term ends on January 4, 2028. Karriem won re-election to the Mississippi House of Representatives to represent District 41 outright after the general election on November 4, 2025, was



canceled. Karriem became City Councilman for Ward 5 Columbus, Mississippi in 2009. He attended Hinds Community College and earned his B.S. from Mississippi State University. He is President of the MS Legislative Black Caucus.

NKEMDILI C. LEWIS

ONE VOICE

Nkemdili C. Lewis is an accomplished Senior Financial Executive with over 20 years of experience leading financial operations and optimizing performance across various sectors, including government, education, and non-profit organizations. With expertise in strategic fiscal management, budgeting, compliance, and process improvement, Nkemdili has consistently delivered exceptional results by streamlining financial systems and driving organizational growth. Currently serving as the County Administrator for Warren County Board of Supervisors in Vicksburg, MS, Nkemdili plays a key role in shaping financial strategies, managing a \$47M annual budget, and overseeing a major \$80M capital project. Her leadership in financial operations is complemented by her successful implementation of new systems like Workday and the development of a robust budgeting process for the county's American Rescue Plan Act grants. Nkemdili holds an MBA with a concentration in Accounting from the University of Phoenix and a BBA from Jackson State University. She is a member of the Government Finance Officers Association and is skilled in various accounting and financial software systems.



NKEMDILI C. LEWIS

COUNCILWOMAN GULFPORT

Ella Holmes-Hines is longest serving council representative for the City of Gulfport, Mississippi. Councilwoman Ella Holmes-Hines represents Ward 3 in Gulfport, Mississippi. First elected in 1997, she was the first African American woman to serve and has become a prominent figure in local governance, known for her advocacy for neighborhood restoration and community services. She represents Ward 3. Much of her work focuses on revitalizing local infrastructure. She frequently scrutinizes city expansion and annexation plans, often questioning if the city can adequately provide essential services (fire, police, garbage, and zoning) to new areas.



MBC-LEO Mid-Winter 2026

January 11 - 12, 2026 Westin, Jackson, MS

SUNDAY, January 11, 2026 - SCHEDULE

3:30 PM ----- **Board of Directors Meeting**
PRESIDENT'S SUITE

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM ----- **Registration**
1ST FLOOR CONFERENCE AREA

4:30 – 5:45 PM ----- **Legislative Update**

PRESENTERS:

Hon. Kabir Karriem ----- Chairman, MS Legislative Black Caucus
and Rep. District 41, Columbus, MS
Quincy Mukoro ----- Octagon Group
Safia Malih ----- Policy Director, One Voice

6:00 – 8:00 PM ----- **Welcome Reception**

MONDAY, January 12, 2026 - SCHEDULE

8:15 AM – 2:30 PM ----- **Registration**
1ST FLOOR CONFERENCE AREA

8:00 AM ----- **Complimentary Breakfast**

9:00 – 10:00 AM ----- **WORKSHOP:**
The State of Black Mississippi

PRESENTERS:

Bernece Herbert, Ph.D. ----- JSU, Urban & Regional Planning
Jake McGraw ----- Working Together MS

10:00 – 11:00 AM ----- **WORKSHOP:**
Building Community Wealth

PRESENTERS:

C. Jerome Brown ----- Executive Vice President, Renasant Bank
Trey Hairston, Esq. ----- Butler Snow
Charity W. Karanja, Esq. ----- Butler Snow
Harvey Johnson, Jr., former Jackson Mayor ----- One Voice MS

MBC-LEO Mid-Winter 2026

January 11 - 12, 2026 Westin, Jackson, MS

11:00 – 12:10 PM ----- General Membership Meeting and Election

12:15 – 1:15 PM ----- LUNCHEON

Speaker: Dr. Jeremy Hudson
CEO, Canvas Firm

1:30 – 2:45 PM ----- WORKSHOP:
From Crisis to Clarity: City Audit Management and Best Practices

PRESENTERS:

Larry Day ----- Daylight Capital Advisors
Michael Thompson ----- CPA
Nkembili Lewis ----- One Voice MS
Ashley Floyd ----- MS Democracy Project

3:00- 4:00 PM ----- WORKSHOP:
From Campaign to Community: Mastering the Role of an Elected Official

PRESENTERS:

Councilwoman Ella Holmes Hines ----- Gulfport City Council
Councilman Lewis Johnson ----- Grenada City Council
Anthony Witherspoon ----- Former Mayor, Magnolia



Closing Reception

6:00 – 9:00 PM:
Johnny T's
538 North Farish St.

Featuring:
**Bass, Rhythm and
Grooves Band**

Dr. Jeremy C. Hudson: A Visionary Leader in Organizational Growth and Transformation

Dr. Jeremy C. Hudson is the Founder and Managing Partner of The Canvas Firm. Boasting over a 15 years of invaluable experience in identifying challenges and implementing innovative solutions for organizational advancement, Jeremy brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to his role. He earned his Bachelor of Business Administration from Ole Miss, followed by a Master of Business Administration from the John Sperling School of Business, and a PhD in Organizational Leadership from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Prior to establishing The Canvas Firm, Jeremy served as Global Director of Culture and Engagement for Dell Technologies. In this pivotal role, he spearheaded initiatives focused on enhancing company culture, elevating employee engagement and experiences, driving corporate social responsibility efforts, refining employer branding strategies, and championing diversity initiatives. Jeremy played a key liaison role to the CEO and Executive Leadership Team, collaborating closely to redefine core values

and shape the company's future trajectory.

Jeremy's professional journey includes impactful years at Ernst & Young (EY), a prominent Big Four firm, where he played a pivotal role in shaping the First-Year Experience strategy for the United States. Beginning as a regional leader, his exceptional leadership and strategic acumen led to an expanded role overseeing all US regions. His contributions earned him the prestigious Facilitator of Excellence recognition twice.

Jeremy's dedication to education and organizational development is evident through his work at Georgia's newest public college, where he played a leading role in establishing the learning and development department and spearheading institution-wide initiatives to ensure faculty and staff compliance. He also collaborated closely with the athletic department to strategize on student-athlete engagement activities.

Passionate about the intersection of business and sports, Jeremy's doctoral research focused on the organizational socialization, emotional intelligence, and transformational leadership of Intercollegiate Athletic leaders.

A native of Mississippi, Jeremy resides in Atlanta with his wife, Jaleesa, and their son, Jaxon. With a relentless drive to empower organizations and individuals to reach their full potential, Jeremy continues to make an indelible mark in the realm of business development and leadership.



LUNCHEON Program



MISSISSIPPI BLACK CAUCUS OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mid Winter Conference, Jackson, MS

January 12, 2026 • 12:15 PM

Mistress of Ceremony

Honorable Lesia Hemphill, Mayor
Vaiden, MS • President, MBC-LEO

Invocation and Blessing Alderman Henry Daniels
Kosciusko, MS
MBC-LEO Chaplain

Greetings and Welcome Honorable John Horne
Mayor, Jackson, MS

Introductions Honorable Lesia Hemphill
Mayor, Vaiden, MS
President, MBC-LEO

Lunch

Introduction of Speaker Alderwoman, Felecia Irving
Natchez, MS
1st Vice President, MBC-LEO

Speaker
Dr. Jeremy Hudson
The Canvas Firm

Presentations and Recognitions Honorable Lesia Hemphill
Mayor, Vaiden, MS
President, MBC-LEO

Benediction Alderman Henry Daniels
Kosciusko, MS
MBC-LEO Chaplain



MISSISSIPPI BLACK CAUCUS OF LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS



SCHOLARSHIP

Recognizing outstanding performance by Mississippi Students preparing to attend institutions of higher learning.

AWARD: The Mississippi Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials Scholarship will be awarded to six (6) graduating senior students enrolled in a public, private, or parochial school in the State of Mississippi.

AMOUNT: Six (6) individual five-hundred-dollar awards (\$500.00). Two awards will be awarded per region in the state. The Northern Region Award is in honor of the late Mayor Eddie Smith, the Central Region Award is in honor of Mrs. Gertrude Young, and the Southern Region Award is in honor of the late Mayor Robert Johnson.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATION: April 15th. **AWARD ANOUNCEMENT:** June 1st.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Graduating senior from an accredited Mississippi high school.

CRITERIA FOR SCHOLARSHIP AWARD: Past academic record and experience • Strength of past course work • Three-page essay, double-spaced, on a topic of your choice • Statement of career choice • One (1) letter of recommendation • Grade point average • Proof of enrollment at an institution of higher learning

APPLICATION: Applicants must submit the following documents for consideration by the scholarship committee: Application form • Statement of proposed career plan • Essay • High school grade transcript • Evidence of community service • One letter of recommendation • Other letters of recommendation (optional)

All of the above items are to be submitted by the applicant's guidance council in a single envelope, postmarked no later than April 15th, to: MBC-LEO Scholarship, 304 Williams St., Hattiesburg, MS 39401.

The Mississippi Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials will review all applications and make final selections of the awards. The winners will be notified in writing. For additional information, call Shanekia Jordan at 769-257.4516.

MBC-LEO Scholarship Application

(TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

County of Citizenship or Permanent Residence _____

High School _____

Location of High School _____

Proposed Major/Minor _____

High School Grade Point Average _____

College/University you will attend _____

Please check the category that applies (optional):

Black White Hispanic Indian Asian or Pacific Islander

List any internships or work experience that relate to your career choice:

(Use separate sheet of paper if necessary)

Attach a statement (two pages typed, double-spaced) describing your proposed career. Be specific about the type of career you plan to pursue and your reasons for choosing it. Describe any work experience, including internships and volunteer activities, relative to your career choice.



Mississippi BLACK CAUCUS OF LOCAL Elected Officials

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Email: mbcleo2023@gmail.com

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Website: msblackcaucusoflocalelectedofficials.org

Deborah Delgado **CONFERENCE COORDINATOR**