

Individual Award

Award criteria: Nominees must be individuals who have made significant contributions toward building a sense of unity among Ohio citizens.

Nominees must have used Dr. King's vision of nonviolent social change to successfully bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build a better community and advance equity.



J. Averi Frost
Columbus

J. Averi Frost is a champion of minority-owned businesses. Her dedication to the success of Black businesses is described as reflecting Dr. King's principles of non-violence and economic justice. In nominating her for the Individual Award, Frost's nominator referenced Dr. King's advice on the night before his assassination to do business with Black-owned businesses.

Frost is Executive Director of the Central Ohio African American Chamber of Commerce (COAACC) and founder of Microcosm Community Improvement Corp., which advocates for Black-owned businesses in central Ohio.

Frost has spent most of her career supporting Black and minority-owned businesses, accumulating accolades for her advocacy and vision that "... have been an asset to the Black-owned business community she has worked to build and empower."

She worked for several years with the Ohio Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC) developing programming for small and minority business owners and helping them strategize for success. Prior to her work with the Columbus MBAC, she was on staff at the Central Ohio Minority Business Association.

Frost began leading COAACC in 2018 and in 2020, she began also working for the Columbus Urban League, leading the Minority Small Business Resiliency Initiative that works to connect businesses with resources. As head of the program, she has expertly applied her extensive knowledge in support of Black and minority-owned businesses during an especially challenging time.

"As often as not, the most effective form of advocacy is through information and education," added her nominator.

"Dr. King's historical significance as a Civil Rights leader and advocate for racial, social, and economic justice is made more profound when young leaders, generations removed, continue the work in unique and creative ways. Ms. Frost's commitment to the success and sustainability of Black-owned businesses is helping to build a strong economic base for the entire community. She is helping all of us learn to define economic justice in new and innovative ways."

Frost has been involved in several social causes, including serving as President of the Steering Committee of Black, Out, & Proud, Inc.; Board member for the Community Capital Development Corp.; Board Chair for Mothers Helping Mothers, Inc.; as well as fundraising efforts for the American Cancer Society. She is a Columbus native and graduate of Denison University.