

**NBCDI Policy  
Fellowship  
Inaugural Cohort  
Profiles  
2019-2020**



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National Black Child  
Development Institute



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## **NBCDI Policy Fellowship Inaugural Cohort Profiles 2019-2020**

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### **NBCDI Policy Fellowship**

The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) Policy Fellowship will elevate and accelerate Black leaders to ensure leadership at the national level more closely reflects the young children that are being served in education and other systems. Throughout this two-year program, NBCDI Policy Fellows will incubate new approaches to policies and reform systems to help Black children realize their full potential and brilliance.

NBCDI Policy Fellows will join NBCDI's national network and call to action to advance equity for Black children and families through education and advocacy. NBCDI Policy Fellows are already on the front lines of addressing institutional racism within systems that impact, educate and support Black children and families.

### **2019-2020 Fellow Profiles**

NBCDI's Policy Fellows reflect a diversity of talent across the country, from five states – Massachusetts, Alabama, Illinois, Florida and Georgia – and the District of Columbia. They represent the best in public service, policy, early childhood education and research. There are six distinguished members in the inaugural NBCDI Policy Fellowship cohort:



## Rashida Brown

Rashida Brown is the Associate Director of Human Services in the County Solutions and Innovation Department at the National Association of Counties (NACo). In this role, she leads the Association's human services portfolio and activities in a national initiative addressing early childhood development. Prior to joining NACo, Rashida served as Director of Policy, Planning and Research in the Early Learning Division of the District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education. In this role, she provided strategic direction, in collaboration with the Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning, to ensure the successful implementation of early learning policies, research and strategic plans, particularly those related to the District of Columbia's Pre-K program, quality rating and improvement system, childcare licensing and compliance, Early Head Start and Head Start programs and child care financing and eligibility. Previously, Rashida worked as a Policy Analyst at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services in the Government of the District of Columbia. During her tenure, Rashida led efforts to develop policies and strategies that focused on prevention while promoting streamlined approaches and coordination among health and human services programs. Rashida holds a Master's degree from the Howard University School of Social Work.



## **Stephanie Curenton, Ph.D.**

Dr. Stephanie Curenton is a tenured Associate Professor at the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development at Boston University. She currently studies the social, cognitive and language development of Black children within various ecological contexts, such as parent-child interactions, early childhood education programs, early childhood workforce issues and related local, state and federal early childhood policy initiatives. Her research has been funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Academy of Science

Ford Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, American Education Research Association, Foundation for Child Development, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Children's Hospital and W.K. Kellogg

Foundation. Dr. Curenton has also been awarded research policy fellowships by the Society for Research on Child Development and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Previously, she served on the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Dr. Curenton earned her Ph.D. in Developmental and Community Psychology from the University of Virginia.



## **Lee Johnson, III, Ph.D.**

Dr. Johnson is a Senior Policy Analyst, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, at ZERO TO THREE. At ZERO TO THREE, he supports the development and implementation their federal and state policy positions and strategy on a range of issues, developing a variety of written materials, and representing ZERO TO THREE in Hill and coalition meetings. Prior to joining ZERO TO THREE, Dr. Johnson was the Director of State and National Cross-Agency Collaboration at the Alabama

Department of Early Childhood Education and appointed State Director of First 5 Alabama. Dr. Johnson recently successfully defended his dissertation for his Ph.D. in Public Health at The University of Alabama. As a former early childhood educator, Lee is deeply committed to improving the quality of life for children and families through equity in early childhood systems. With a focus on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), Dr.

Johnson's current research examines the impact of early childhood adversity on the physical and mental health outcomes of Black men.



## Ngozi Lawal

Ngozi Lawal is the Project Director of the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP)'s Prenatal to 3 Initiative, which works to increase the number of children ready for Kindergarten in the Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Communities (EC-LINC). In her role, Ngozi convenes the prenatal to three communities while providing them with technical assistance on building effective early childhood systems. Prior to joining CSSP, she supported the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Education of the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to implement a national policy agenda designed to support states and communities as they prepare infants, toddlers and preschoolers for school. In that capacity, she oversaw the federal State Advisory Councils while playing a key role in the policy development and implementation of the Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge and Preschool Development Grants. Previously, Ngozi also managed the childcare portfolio at the American Public Human Services Association while working alongside state childcare administrators to develop policy proposals that improve implementation of the Child Care and Development Fund. She also partnered with state child welfare directors to reduce the disproportionality of children of color in the child welfare system while improving the educational and social outcomes for youth who age out of foster care without permanent home placements. Ngozi began her career at ZERO TO THREE, where she tracked state and federal policies and initiatives on early childhood mental health. Ngozi has a Master of Arts in Child Development from Tufts University and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Boston College.



## **Jessica Pryce, Ph.D.**

Dr. Jessica Pryce is the Executive Director of the Florida Institute for Child Welfare and a faculty member at Florida State University. Over the past decade, Dr. Pryce has emerged as a premier voice for vulnerable children of color and their families through her work in child welfare. As a published author in this field, Dr. Pryce has presented her research at over 30 conferences across the globe. Previously, she served as Deputy Director of the University at Albany's New York State Education Consortium. In 2018, she delivered a TED Talk entitled, "Implicit Racial Bias in Child Welfare Decisions," which gained over one million views online. In 2019, Dr. Pryce received a five-year appointment to the Advisory Board of the National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, where she consults and advises on leadership and workforce interventions nationwide. As a professional in this field, she is deeply committed to leading and re-building a child welfare system that focuses on strengthening families rather than pulling them apart. Dr. Pryce holds a Ph.D. in Social Work from Howard University.



## **Dina Walker-DeVose, Ph.D.**

Dr. Dina Walker-DeVose is an Associate Professor of Child and Family Development at Georgia Southern University. With more than 25 years of interdisciplinary collaborations, Dr. Walker-DeVose has previously partnered with faculty in sociology, education, criminal justice, writing and linguistics and counselor education in both her research and practice. In doing so, she has worked in early childhood settings, colleges and universities, and nonprofit organizations. Her current research examines implicit bias in educational and therapeutic spaces and ways in which teachers and therapists can recognize and overcome biases in their work with children and families. Dr. Walker-DeVose earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at North Carolina State University. She also holds a Master of Science in Child and Family Studies from Miami University in Ohio, Master of Arts in Educational Technology from North Carolina Central University, and Bachelor of Science in Home

Economics with a concentration in Child and Family Studies from North Carolina Central University.

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For more information on the National Black Child Development Institute, visit us online at [www.nbcdi.org](http://www.nbcdi.org).



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