

Sponsored Content



KATIE BLAIR
Director of Advocacy
and Public Policy
ACLU of Indiana
kblair@aclu-in.org



KIM THOMAS
Chief Diversity Officer
OneAmerica
kim.thomas@oneamerica.com



SHARA WESLEY
Vice President, Chief Health
Equity and Diversity Officer
Managed Health
Services (MHS)
shara.wesley@mhsindiana.com



MARSHAWN WOLLEY
President and CEO
Black Onyx
Management Inc.
marshawn@blackonyx
management.com

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

DEI progress is good for the entire community

In our Thought Leadership Roundtable, executives at the ACLU of Indiana, Black Onyx Management, Managed Health Services (MHS), and OneAmerica discuss the barriers to a more just and equitable society and the progress they've made within their own organizations.

Q: Why is DEI important to your organization?

Katie Blair: In the courts, in the Statehouse, and in communities across the state, the ACLU of Indiana has engaged in ongoing work to dismantle systems of power and oppression to create meaningful change. Systemic racism pervades every aspect of

life—from interactions with law enforcement, to access to housing and capital, to health care, education, and the workplace.

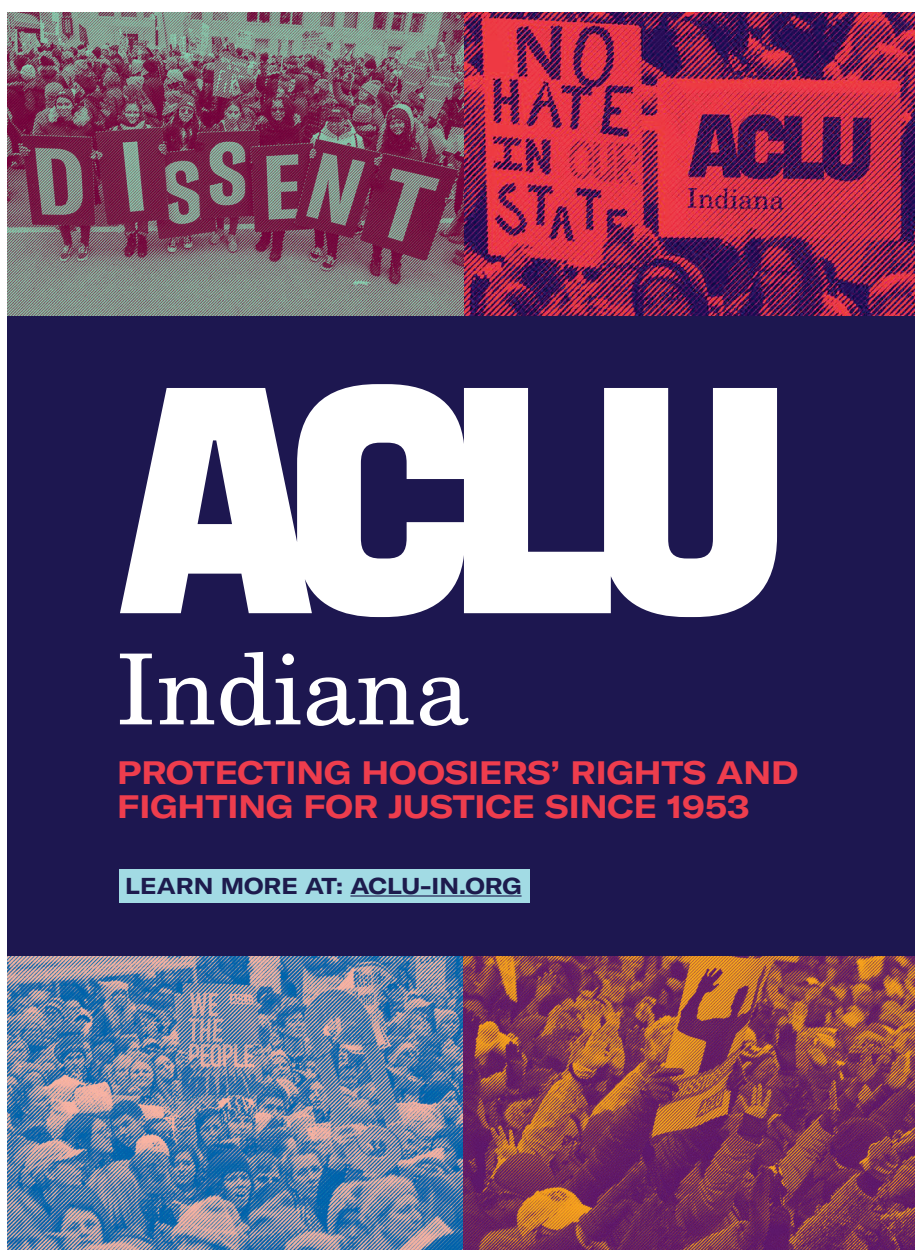
We have turned our attention inward to our own culture and systems to evolve as an organization that is reflecting internally the ambitions we have set externally. We have scaled

our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to increase pathways to employment, strengthen our culture of belonging, and enhance our professional development commitments to underrepresented staff.

We know that the future of the ACLU, and every success we have, hinges on our ability to develop, foster, and sustain a workplace of racial equity, economic justice, and transformative inclusion.

Kim Thomas: At OneAmerica, we know that diversity of all types, at all levels, and across all facets of our business makes us a stronger, more

Marshawn Wolley: We believe that building equity is everyone's responsibility and serves as your return on investment. Although we are excited for the future of this work, we are most interested in helping companies integrate their inclusive practices into their business strategies across the organization. As more organizations think beyond the bottom line and take action, we are happy to come alongside small and large organizations to help them leverage their strengths to better serve the Black community and communities of color.



"One of the things people in Indiana are most proud of is our commitment to Hoosier hospitality. Unfortunately, our laws don't always reflect that."

KATIE BLAIR, ACLU OF INDIANA

innovative, resilient, competitive enterprise. We strive to improve quality of life in the communities we serve by providing access to financial security. Our customers and distribution partners have an array of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences that translate into different needs. To fulfill our vision of delivering on promises when customers need us most, we must be intentional about having DEI at the forefront when offering financial solutions. This helps demonstrate our commitment and understanding of what matters to our diverse base of customers and distribution partners. We gain and leverage these insights by having a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve. Ultimately, diversity, equity, and inclusion enable us to fully achieve our vision.

Shara Wesley: We are singularly focused on our purpose: transforming the health of the community, one person at a time. To deliver culturally-sensitive health care to our members, we depend on the diverse ideas, experiences, and cultures that our employees, located around the globe, bring to the workplace.

Q: Why is DEI important to the entire city?

Marshawn Wolley: Inclusive economies make better economies. It is an economic necessity, a business imperative, and simply the right thing to do. Researchers found that a child born in the bottom 20% of incomes in Indianapolis has only a 4.8% chance of reaching the top 20% of incomes. The opportunity for an economic boost and human impact when we truly invest in making Indianapolis an inclusive region is exponential.

Kim Thomas: Diversity, equity, and inclusion can have a bottom-line impact for individual employers and impact the entire economic ecosystem of the city of Indianapolis. Investing in programs and initiatives that dismantle systemic inequities and create greater access to financial security for underrepresented groups can improve not only mental and physical health, but also the educational and socio-economic well-being of individuals and families. Investing in people means we're investing in our community. Improving the city's overall DEI

Sponsored Content

“At OneAmerica, we know that diversity of all types, at all levels, and across all facets of our business makes us a stronger, more innovative, resilient, competitive enterprise.”

KIM THOMAS, ONEAMERICA

health can attract diverse talent and create new investment capital, resulting in long-term economic prosperity for Indianapolis.

We also benefit as individuals when new and different voices are elevated and heard in every aspect of our lives—whether in business, education, medicine, media, or the arts. Broadening our exposure and interactions with people who see and experience the world differently enriches the culture of the city and our personal lives.

Shara Wesley: Indianapolis exists to serve everyone. Regardless of a person’s age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, health, etc., we have a duty to serve all equally and inclusively.

Q: Some DEI initiatives focus on specific under-represented groups, while others cast a broad net. Which of those best describes your approach to DEI? Why?

Shara Wesley: Our DEI initiatives are comprehensive and a fundamental part of MHS’ culture. Our leaders are responsible for implementing the diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy and demonstrating their clear commitment in their words and actions.

One important evolution in our journey has been a broadening of our focus to amplify equity—the fair treatment of all—and equal access to opportunity, information, and resources. This advancement in how we approach our work is now reflected in the core pillars of our DEI strategy. This framework guides our efforts and holds us accountable for measurable progress. The pillars of our DEI framework are: Talent (We will foster a diverse workforce that represents the markets we serve); Community Engagement (We will advance DEI in local communities by engaging with them through partnerships and philanthropy); Supplier Diversity (We will support the growth and representation of diverse vendors and suppliers by creating the opportunity to do business with MHS); and Stakeholder Collaboration (We will support our providers and partners in enhancing their awareness and cultural competency in serving an increasingly diverse population).

Marshawn Wolley: We’re certainly mindful of the full spectrum of diversity, equity, and inclusion but as a benefit corporation we have decided that our mission is to empower Black people and communities of color. If we consider a shared value approach to corporate behavior where the city benefits when the company benefits and vice versa, the data suggests addressing the challenges facing

the Black community would produce the highest social return. As a Black leader and Black business owner this matters to me. Our analysis of socio-economic data suggests that failing to focus on the Black community threatens the progress of the city. So, while we do trainings on general DEI issues like cultural competency, we have designed interventions specifically aimed at achieving DEI objectives for the Black community.

Katie Blair: As a civil liberties’ group that works to reduce disparities and protect the rights of all, with a particular focus on groups that have traditionally been denied their rights, we take a similar approach to DEI initiatives. When everyone is empowered to succeed, our companies, our communities, and our economy are better for it. But there are many layers to creating a truly equitable workplace.

One issue we work on that isn’t traditionally considered in DEI efforts is access to reproductive care. Restricting access to comprehensive reproductive care, including abortion, threatens the health, independence, and economic stability of Indiana employees, and impairs the ability of Indiana businesses to build diverse and inclusive workforce pipelines, recruit top talent across the states, and protect the well-being of all the people who keep our businesses thriving day in and out.

Kim Thomas: At OneAmerica, DEI is rooted in principles of valuing everyone and fostering a culture of individual contribution. Everyone has the access and ability to contribute to the growth and success of each other and the overall organization. So, it’s really inclusive of both approaches. We’re committed to taking specific, targeted steps to address the inequities and disparities that exist for underrepresented groups. And we’re direct and transparent in our approach to addressing these issues. Examples include the formation of our Business Resources Groups for our associates and our community, and industry efforts to address the racial wealth gap through financial education and expanding employment opportunities.

Q: What should organizations be doing to attract and retain diverse talent?

Kim Thomas: We need to invest in recruiting resources and offer a competitive and rewarding career experience to engage diverse talent. However, the foundation of this work must be built on trust. People want to know they can be heard and be assured they can thrive in an organization. They want to know

that they matter. In order for diverse talent to feel this way, organizations must have evidence-based indicators that demonstrate their commitment. In other words, our actions must align with our words. The first step is considering the various dimensions of diversity and identifying barriers for individuals or groups of people, but then we must commit to removing those barriers and do what’s necessary to drive greater equity and inclusion. If our applicants and associates see evidence that DEI is a priority in the organizational culture, this builds trust and better positions us to attract and retain diverse talent.

Shara Wesley: MHS believes that a diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace fuel improved service, innovation, and performance. We strengthen our workforce by hiring a range of candidates with varying life experiences and professional backgrounds, and we thoughtfully engage them throughout their employee life cycles with dedicated support and leadership development opportunities.

This past year, we continued to enhance our reporting mechanisms, ensuring we can develop strategic initiatives that address areas of opportunity for DEI advancement. We improved our reporting for leadership by providing metrics on DEI learning completion and business-unit DEI activities. A new DEI dashboard for our DEI Councils, HR Business Partners, and Business Unit Leadership provides a way to track ongoing progress of programs and initiatives. Also, we improved our tracking of employees who complete leadership development programs to help us better identify candidates for additional development and advancement opportunities.

In addition, the Talent Attraction team nurtures a talent pipeline that connects us to a diverse workforce. All of our talent advisors receive training to become Certified Diversity Recruiters. With our talent infrastructure, we continuously deepen our diverse bench of talent. Enterprise talent reviews, succession planning, career development planning, and comprehensive analytics drive results through our people plans.

See page 26A



OneAmerica® isn’t just our name — it represents our beliefs of unity, togetherness and support.

We’re committed to intentionally advancing diversity, equity and inclusion for the long term. As a values-based provider of financial services, we’re uniquely positioned to drive economic empowerment and equality for all our stakeholders.

Visit **OneAmerica.com** to learn more about our community investment.



LIFE INSURANCE | RETIREMENT | EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Sponsored Content

“To deliver culturally-sensitive health care to our members, we depend on the diverse ideas, experiences, and cultures that our employees, located around the globe, bring to the workplace.”

SHARA WESLEY, MHS

Continued from page 25A

Marshawn Wolley: If diversity, equity, and inclusion are the people, policies, and systems of an organization, belonging is how people feel. Often people talk about belonging as being able to bring your full self to work. This might look like leaders creating formal or informal space for employees to be heard during national tragedies. The contract between employee and employer has fundamentally changed. Smart companies will figure out how to be responsive to both generational and life-stage views on work and the psychological safety needs of employees. We should also be careful with the idea of “fit” within an organization. I would think deeply about how you want your culture to grow to meet future business challenges and opportunities and about how talent can move a company to its best future state.

Q: What are the biggest barriers to meaningful improvement in diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Marshawn Wolley: I’m really pleased to be working with the Business

Equity for Indy initiative, which is institutionalizing the business community’s response on racial inequality in the Black community and removing barriers to access for Black business owners. Through BEI, they have the opportunity to directly connect with potential customers. We can look back through the city’s history to see civic responses to DEI problems that are named but never fully addressed. Settling for episodic attention to DEI by key stakeholders threatens the credibility of new efforts and in and of itself is not helpful because it doesn’t match the magnitude of the challenges. That CICP, the Indy Chamber, and Indianapolis Urban League have found a way to come together for a sustained effort on addressing racial inequity is a game changer.

Katie Blair: For DEI efforts to truly hold meaning and to have long-lasting success, companies need to not only look inside themselves at their own values and practices but outside as well. We need more companies to work to propel forward laws at the local and state level that reflect the

DEI work they are doing within their organizations. In Indiana, we have seen the power the voices of the business community have when speaking out against legislation that could harm their employees. They know that DEI can’t just begin when an employee walks into their office and fade away after work hours. Hoosiers need more companies to come to the table.

Kim Thomas: Bias and a lack of understanding create barriers in advancing DEI. Our life experiences influence our thinking. Our actions can reveal themselves in the form of a bias, which impacts how we understand, view, and engage with others. While many of our biases don’t cause harm, if left unchecked, they can become deeply rooted views that impact decision-making and can have a negative impact on others. Bias can result in broad generalizations or assumptions about someone or a group of people and may cause someone to dismiss a student’s potential, a patient with a serious medical concern, or a job seeker. We must start with recognizing and acknowledging that we all have biases and then actively manage them. We can do this by continuing to expose ourselves to new situations and expanding our network by intentionally engaging with people who have different backgrounds and perspectives.

employees could do their best work. While navigating a remote work environment, we took great care to make sure our employees felt connected, respected, and heard. Our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Office drove a strategy that engaged our Employee Inclusion Groups, delivering more than 250 virtual programs across our enterprise, ranging from transparent dialogue on vaccines to establishment of a resource group for parents, as well as a network for caregivers, and the launch of a new series of Courageous Conversations about how to be an authentic ally.

Marshawn Wolley: The data suggests that the field is poised to double in revenue by 2026 to just over \$15.4 billion. While the industry is extremely fragmented, I’m hoping that professionalization continues and that the field moves beyond training. We focus on DEI objectives because we appreciate that there are systems and institutions that need to be created or that need to function better to produce the outcomes we want for society. While we have excellent training, we believe the future lies in management consulting on DEI disciplines inside of business functions like HR, Procurement, and External Relations and even management of institutions or programs for DEI objectives.

“I think the fact that the city asks about equity in the budget process and has increased its transparency in reporting of XBE spend are models for other corporations and non-profits.”

MARSHAWN WOLLEY, BLACK ONYX MANAGEMENT

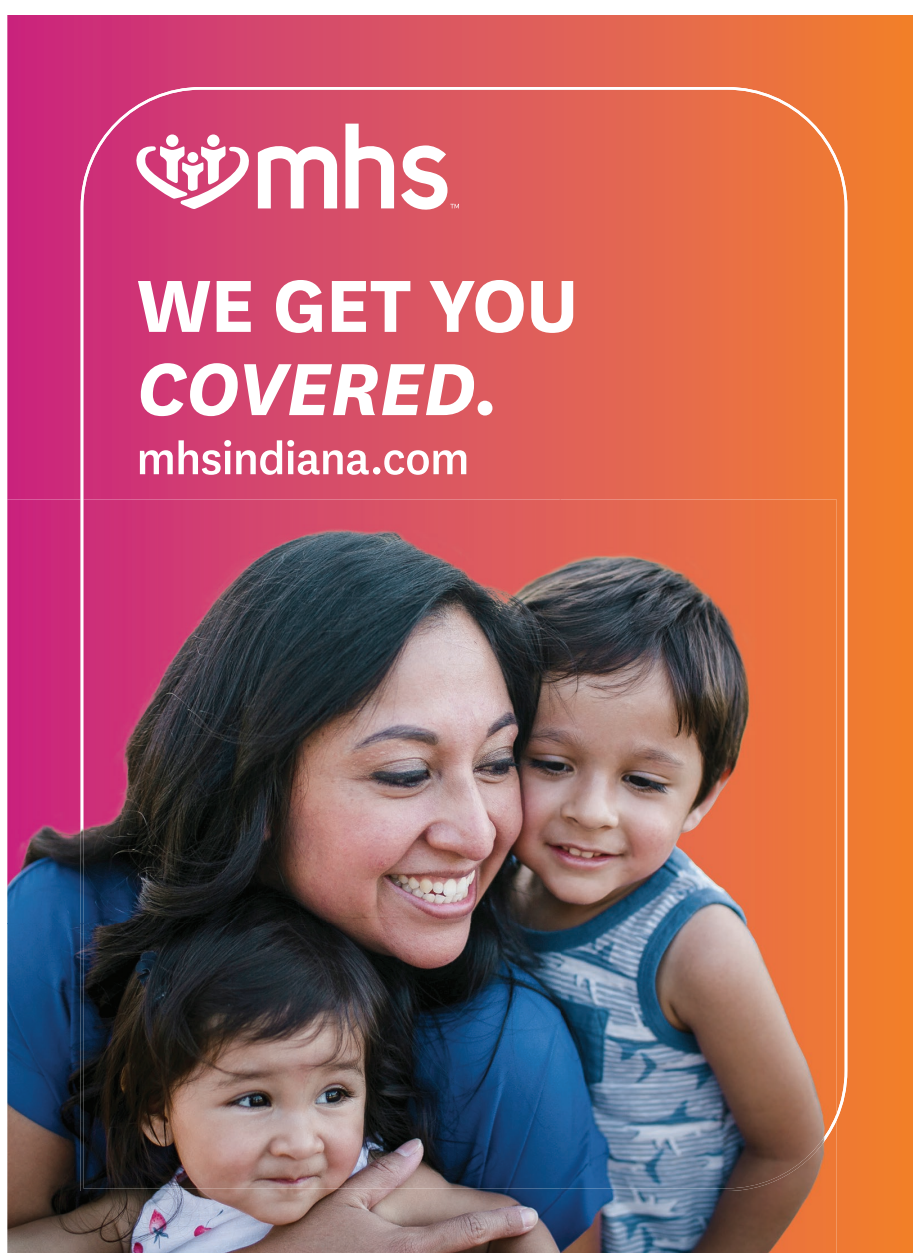
Q: How would you characterize the health of the DEI movement today and how do you expect it to evolve over the next two years?

Shara Wesley: The past two years have seen a number of challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, racially motivated tragedies, and other inequities. We had to reevaluate and reset some of the ways we live and work, and it is an ongoing process. Now more than ever, we as a company, and as a community, must continue to work together to remove the barriers that prevent us from thriving.

The challenges of this past year amplified our need to be agile and innovative, and we addressed the changing needs of our 400,000 local members. To help our employees maintain their level of excellence in support of our members, we also provided new programs, resources, and support tools to ensure

Kim Thomas: The tragic murder of George Floyd in 2020 invoked a bold call for action. No longer is there an appetite to only speak about the issues or take incremental steps that don’t have a lasting impact. Organizations, communities, and individuals have taken specific steps to advance DEI on a much larger scale than we’ve seen in decades. We now have a larger platform, and more are willing to stand on it—together.

We can expect to see companies become more intentional in aligning their overall Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategies to accelerate advancements in DEI and work to influence regulatory and legislative decisions. Additionally, economic stabilization of our communities in today’s volatile market will require our industry to broaden its focus to the “have nots”—the people who have been overlooked. Addressing these inequities through greater inclusion is especially important now, when the gap is wider than ever.



mhs

WE GET YOU COVERED.

mhsindiana.com

Sponsored Content

Q: What policies—local, state or federal—do you think would be most helpful in creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community?

Marshawn Wolley: We need more diversity in the C-suite and on corporate boards. DEI requires top down buy-in to facilitate the incentives needed for managers to change behavior from what is comfortable to something that is different. I think the fact that the city asks about equity in the budget process and has increased its transparency in reporting of XBE spend are models for other corporations and non-profits.

Katie Blair: One of the things people in Indiana are most proud of is our commitment to Hoosier hospitality. Unfortunately, our laws don't always

reflect that. In order to create a more inclusive community, our legislature needs to pass laws that welcome a diverse community and create a more equitable environment.

Just last year, we saw numerous bills that would censor how teachers and students talk about race and gender discrimination in our schools. Thankfully, that legislation was defeated after receiving an outpouring of opposition. Despite a lack of evidence, the legislature passed a ban on transgender girls playing in K-12 sports alongside their peers. And every legislative session our lawmakers pass legislation that limits reproductive freedom.

If large groups of people do not feel welcome in our state due to laws that create an unequal playing field, businesses will find it more difficult to recruit diverse and talented teams.

Q: What success is your organization most proud of in terms of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, marketplace and/or community?

Kim Thomas: We're proud of our integrated approach to DEI, which encompasses a view of our organization, the community, and the financial services industry. Our focus includes listening to our associates, hiring and retaining diverse talent, creating educational opportunities that enable our workforce to become more consciously inclusive of others, and leveraging career and development opportunities that enable our associates to grow. We're also strategically investing in the community. OneAmerica recently announced a \$1 million commitment to empower youth and adults with financial knowledge.

In his role as Chairman of the American Council of Life Insurers, our Chairman, President and CEO Scott Davison recently announced the formation of a ground-breaking, nonprofit investment partnership to expand the industry's capability to help close the racial wealth gap and drive upward mobility in communities of color. Through touching our industry, community, and associates, we commit

ourselves to being changemakers within our shared world.

Shara Wesley: Establishing the Chief Health Equity Officer role is just one step toward demonstrating MHS' commitment to the leadership and management needed to define, implement, and evaluate strategies to achieve equitable access and reduce disparities in clinical care and quality outcomes. This strategy must include tracking, assessing, and improving disparities in care, and supporting the diverse cultural, language, economic, education, and health-status needs of those we serve.

Marshawn Wolley: We launched the Indy Accompliceship program to respond to the reality that Black businesses faced a 41% closure due to COVID-19. The Indy Accompliceship organizations embraced a framework that was informed by research and the Black community. The organizations have made great strides in hiring of Black people in director-level and C-suite roles, improved procurement policies and the development of strategic relationships with Black artists and grassroots organizations. Helping organizations move from statements to meaningful actions based on objectives identified by the Black community has been extremely rewarding. ●



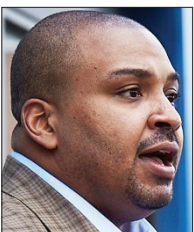
Katie Blair is Director of Advocacy and Public Policy at the ACLU of Indiana. Previously, she worked as Director of Activism for Planned Parenthood of Indiana and as Executive Director for the 51% Club, whose mission is to inspire Democratic women to vote. During the 2015 legislative session, she took a leave from her work at the ACLU to become Campaign Manager for Freedom Indiana, the statewide grassroots group that opposed the Indiana Religious Freedom Restoration Act.



Kim Thomas is a Chief Diversity Officer with progressive experience in multiple industries, including financial services, medical diagnostics, health insurance and commercial printing. She joined OneAmerica in 2017 and has led efforts for key priorities, including the development of a comprehensive organizational effectiveness model and the implementation of a career and compensation framework, as well as leading DEI.



Shara Wesley is Vice President, Chief Health Equity and Diversity Officer, for MHS. She has more than 20 years of experience in health care, community, and public health organizations where she has dedicated her career to health equity initiatives that proactively address gaps in social determinants of health.



Marshawn Wolley is President and CEO of Black Onyx Management Inc., an applied research firm and management consultancy focused on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives. Trained as a stratification economist, he is also a certified diversity executive. He has worked in government, private, and non-profit sectors and academia, where he taught courses on managing workforce diversity.



BUILDING EQUITY INTO YOUR BUSINESS IS YOUR ROI

Black Onyx Management helps organizations leverage their strengths while empowering Black communities.

BLACKONYXMANAGEMENT.COM