



The 2024-2026 Black Women's Leadership Experience

The BWLE Residential Program

The Black Women's Leadership Experience (BWLE) supports young adult Black women in their spiritual and vocational pursuits creating a community of compassion and care that fosters: Self-love, Authenticity, Creativity, and Healing. This 24-month residential leadership development program provides a platform for young adult Black women to discover their own path by supporting their identity formation and leadership development. The program offers full-time paid work in a local service or justice organization, a facilitated program curriculum centered in Womanist studies, wellness support, and mentorship.

Program Components

- Sisterhood Circles to address identity formation and faith exploration.
- Wellness groups to address Black women's mental health and wellness and equip with access to appropriate resources.
- Community engagement to explore what it means to live a life of service.
- Black women clergy and lay leader mentorship to offer supportive spiritual and vocational exploration.
- A final project to explore a passion project, new idea, and/or develop a talent, skill, or vocational interest that speaks to the core of the participant's self-identity and vision for the future.

Meet the BWLE Team

Below are the women who have been and will continue to be an integral part of the BWLE framework.



[Dr. Tene Davis](#) serves as the [NBA's Young Adult Leadership Development](#) (YALD) Director. Previously, she held several roles in academia including the Associate Director of Georgia State University's Early College Program, the Director of the university's Girls Who Code club, and the Director of the African American Male Initiative at Booker T. Washington High School at the Atlanta Public School system.



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[Rev. Virzola Law](#) is a Mission Specialist for [NBA's Young Adult Leadership Development](#) Program, a role she has served in for nearly 10 years. She currently serves as the Senior Pastor of [Northway Christian Church](#) in Dallas, Texas. She is the first elected Black woman in more than 100 years to serve in this capacity in the congregation. Before being called to Northway, she served in various pastorates including Lindenwood Christian Church and Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church both in Memphis, Tennessee.



[Rev. Dr. Yolanda Norton](#) is the founder of the [Global Art & Theology Experience](#) (GATE) and [Beyoncé Mass](#). She also serves as a program consultant and curriculum writer for BWLE. GATE is an initiative focused on cultivating resources, programs, and pathways for Black girls and women. In 2022, the organization became an [NBA Incubate Partner](#). Currently, the primary project of GATE is the Beyoncé Mass—a Christian womanist worship service that uses the music and life of Beyoncé as a tool to cultivate an empowering conversation about Black women—their lives, their bodies, and their voices. In addition to her work with GATE and NBA's BWLE, Dr. Norton serves as a professor at Wesley Theological Seminary.



[Joselyn Spence](#), MDiv, LPC serves as the Director of the NBA's [Mental Health and Wellness](#) Program. In this role, Joselyn works to design and implement programs that promote holistic wellness across all NBA programs. This work is done through the creation of learning resources for clergy and community leaders, addressing the needs of pastors in a variety of ministry settings, and sharing the stories that help to eliminate stigmas related to mental health and wellness. She is passionate about mental health care, holistic wellness, communal care ethics, and spirituality. As a holistic wellness specialist, she has worked at the intersection of these passions to develop research and provide empathic care to all she is called to serve.



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[Rev. Monica Wedlock Kilpatrick](#) serves as the Vice President of Organizational and Leadership Development—leading the execution of overall strategic and operational implementation for NBA program areas. In this role, Monica carries deep knowledge of each project, program operations, and strategic plan, and focuses on three areas: organizational leadership, program leadership and management, and knowledge management.

Prior to joining the NBA, Monica served as director of admissions and recruitment at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. Her time there was spent identifying talented and courageous people discerning calls to service in the church and community, listening to their needs and dreams, partnering with them to discover a process for theological education and vocational training, evaluating their fit with the institution, and inviting them into a journey of learning and service.

Dates and Location

July 2024 – June 2026 in Washington, DC. Learn more about this inaugural experience by reading the FAQ below.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many young adults will be admitted into the program?

Five young adult Black women will be admitted into the 2024-2026 program experience.

What is the process for selection?

Applicants must submit a completed application. A selection committee will review all completed applications and determine candidates for an interview. Interviews will be hosted through video conferencing. Final candidates will be notified and will need to confirm their decision by the deadline (ideally within 2 weeks of notification).

How will I financially support myself?

All participants will work in a health and human services organization for approximately 30 hours/week at \$15/hour.

What expenses does the program cover?

- Transportation to and from Washington, DC (at the start and conclusion of the program)



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- Housing
- Utilities
- All travel related directly to programming

What does the program NOT cover?

- Personal social activities
- Transportation to and from work sites (i.e. public transportation, personal car use and related expenses, rideshare, etc.)
- Personal needs (i.e. cell phone, clothing, hygiene items, food, etc.)
- Personal travel during breaks, holidays, and/or weekends

Will I have a roommate?

In most cases, participants will have a separate bedroom; however, participants may have to share a bathroom with 1-2 other participants.

Do I have to make a full two-year commitment to the program – July 2024 through June 2026?

Yes, barring any unforeseen circumstances, the commitment to the Black Women's Leadership Experience (BWLE) Residential Program is the full two years. We ask that all potential applicants seriously consider their two-year goals and objectives when considering an application to the program.

Is BWLE the same as XPLOR?

BWLE was born out of a clear need the NBA saw throughout the seven years of hosting the XPLOR Residency Program. Although both programs focus on the vocational and spiritual development of young adults, the BWLE will engage a smaller focused affinity group, Black women, and their particular needs for support and growth. The BWLE residential program is a two-year commitment.

Do I have to be a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) member to apply?

No, although Disciples may understand and experience the ministry of the NBA uniquely. This program may give preference to Disciples candidates or those affiliated with Disciples institutions. However, the most important requisite is for the young adult to be curious about identity formation as a Black woman and how and where God might be calling—and they are ready to explore that call within a Disciples context.

What if a BWLE participant is still sorting out religion/spirituality?



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NBA's BWLE is intentionally formed to help participants engage in "discernment" -intentionally asking how and where God might be calling someone in their personal, professional, spiritual, and relational life. We don't assume participants have all the "big questions" figured out. On the contrary, sorting out religion, theology, and spirituality is a life-long quest. The NBA's BWLE helps participants realize that and equips and affirms them in that journey.

Who would make a good BWLE participant?

BWLE participants are young adults who want to join a community that centers Black women's experiences with support and resources to help them realize their hopes and dreams for self and community. This program provides a platform to reflect, discern, and discover one's path to self-actualization (achieving one's fullest potential).

How much does it cost to be a participant?

This residential program costs a sincere commitment to see where God may be calling, but participants do not pay for their time in NBA's BWLE. Houses are set up to allow participants to live on a monthly livable wage, with housing and utilities provided by the NBA.

Can I work an extra job or be enrolled in additional college courses during the NBA BWLE residential program?

The BWLE residential program involves a very strong commitment to building relationships and investment in the growth and exploration that happens during the 24 months. Therefore, working an outside job beyond the internship or enrolling in additional college courses is not permissible.

I fall outside the range for the BWLE residential model, but would like to support the initiative, how can I get involved?

Thank you for your interest in supporting this new NBA program area! You can get involved by volunteering to be a mentor to our cohort of young women or by connecting NBA to DMV based opportunities; to do this please email Dr. Tene Davis at TDavis@NBACares.org.

I missed the deadline for the 2024-2026 cohort of women, how can I be notified about future BWLE/Young Adult Leadership Development opportunities with NBA?

There are several other ways to get involved with NBA's [Young Adult Leadership Development](#) program. Throughout the year, we host webinars designed for young adults, host BWLE retreats, [offer granting opportunities](#) and peer-to-peer support opportunities via our [Peer](#)



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[Learning & Wellness Groups](#). The best way to get notified about our upcoming events and open applications is by subscribing to our monthly e-mail [newsletter](#) or following us on social media, [@NBADisciples](#).

Thank you for your interest in National Benevolent Association's program areas. If you are interested in supporting this ministry and more, make a gift at [NBACares.org/Donate](#).