

Joshua Gray joins South Shore Works as the Healthy Chicago Equity Zone Program Manager. He is a current 5<sup>th</sup> Ward resident, born and raised in Chicago's Hyde Park community. As a young person growing up on the Southside, Joshua saw the need to bring people together to deal with community issues. He has lived his entire life advocating for the underdog and believes strongly in servanthood leadership. Over the past sixteen years, he has demonstrated this characteristic improving the life of Chicago residents as an educator and community organizer.

Joshua received his education from the campus of Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. As a business student, Joshua learned to communicate with people of various backgrounds, analyze situations, and work well with others. However, his biggest lessons came when he returned to Chicago and entered the non-for-profit sector serving Chicago's largest African American Catholic Church and organizing in the Auburn Gresham community.

As a skilled community organizer Joshua realized that the niche, he had discovered in college to talk and relate to people with different backgrounds was part of his calling. In Auburn Gresham he had successfully organized protests and led demonstrations about gun violence, youth employment opportunities, and state funding for underserved areas.

Joshua later found himself in education as a teacher, dean, and school administrator. In these roles he helped to turn around several schools in the Chicago Public Schools district, including a public high school in the 18<sup>th</sup> Ward. He worked with parents to advocate for their child's education and local law enforcement to ensure safety in the larger neighborhood. When Joshua decided to leave the classroom, he later was recruited by Arne Duncan at Emerson Collective, now Chicago CRED, where he supervised grant funding for youth summer programming.

In 2018, Joshua decided to move on from youth work and expand the reach of his service by running for political office. Joshua ran for Cook County Commissioner of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District to improve the life of Cook County residents and lead the office to a community first focus. Joshua's bid for office was unsuccessful but made huge traction organizing in Chicago south side neighborhoods.

After the election Joshua had many political offers from various entities but chose to go back to his old stomping grounds, Auburn Gresham, to work under the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward organization. Here is where a lot of his political operative skills were nourished and sharpened. He ran many campaigns for, Alderman, State Senators, County Judges and even Mayor for the City of Chicago. After several years leading the 17<sup>th</sup> Ward political organization Joshua decided to start his own political consulting firm, Gray Consulting Group, where he is currently the managing partner. In this role he can provide expert consultation in public affairs, campaign strategy, relationship building, grass root community organizing and fundraising to likeminded government officials, non-for-profits, and for-profit institutions.

Joshua is proud to be a champion of the people and supports the important causes of our communities. Each community promise is rooted deeply in his desire to uplift and breathe new life into blighted areas. Neighborhood revitalization starts with a change in the way residents view their communities. Ghandi says "Be the change that you want to see in the world." Joshua strongly believes that if we want our communities to step up, then you must step up; if you want our people to love, then you must love first; if you want them to value education, then you must first educate yourself.