

# 5 Black Leaders Advancing Fairness

While some progress has been made in elevating Black voices, people of color continue to be underrepresented, whether it's in business, sports or the military.

It's not always easy to talk about challenges and painful experiences. But it's necessary to advance fairness. Audre Lorde once said, "When I dare to be powerful, to use the strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important that I am afraid."

This article highlights five Black leaders who have spoken at Fair360 events and advanced fairness by sharing their stories and advocating for civil rights.



**Joy Fitzgerald**

Joy Fitzgerald is the SVP and Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at UnitedHealth Group. She's also a speaker, author and life coach under her company, Speaking Joy.

Fitzgerald has over 25 years of leadership experience across various business sectors. She champions diversity as a business strategy and has dedicated her career to helping people better themselves in the public and private sectors.

During Fair360's 2023 Women of Color and Their Allies event, Fitzgerald emphasized including women of color at high-level tables.

"It is not an education issue. It is not a performance issue. It's not an intellect issue. It's not a capability or a competency issue. I'm going to submit to you some of this is our issue because we're still waiting on men to help us," Fitzgerald said. "I wouldn't be where I am today if a man hadn't helped me, but I don't see (enough) women showing up in this conversation to

help other women that don't look like them like we need them to."

She said allyship and analyzing who currently has a seat at the table is a start to uplifting women of color.

"It is our time to take our power and leverage it for the good of other women and stop worrying about what that means for your career. Your value system and your integrity should be worth the cost of doing what you believe is right. That's when we will win for everyone."



**Rev. Jesse Jackson**

Civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr. has served in many roles in the fight for social, racial and economic justice. In addition to being a civil rights leader, Jackson is an ordained Baptist minister and a former presidential candidate.

Jackson formed The National Rainbow Coalition in 1984 following his first presidential campaign. It countered President Reagan's policies that disproportionately affected minority communities. In 1996, the organization merged with Operation PUSH, evolving into the Rainbow PUSH Coalition (RPC). RPC aims to achieve civil rights, economic parity, global peace and justice.

Rev. Jackson has been a longtime supporter of Fair360 and has spoken at our Top 50 event through the years. At the 2022 Top 50 event, he called on professional sports teams to make their procurement and supplier contracts more inclusive.

Procurement and supplier teams are the "backside" of what makes sports teams function, Jackson said. They are what draw in the fans and make each game a memorable experience.

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“We must fight for the backside of these industries that make them happen,” he said.



**Minda Harts**

Minda Harts is a workplace equity subject matter expert, a professor of public service at New York University and an author. She is the CEO of The Memo, LLC, a career development platform for women of color.

Harts is transparent about her struggles as a Black woman in corporate America. At Fair360’s 2022 Women of Color and Their Allies event, she spoke of the importance of recognizing abuse in the workplace, unpacking it and healing from trauma.

“As women of color, we’ve normalized the mistreatment in the workplace,” she said. “The intention might not have been bad, but the constant harm is damaging to us.”

Read the full article to learn Harts’ [plan of action](#) for when workplace abuse occurs.

**MUST WATCH: Career Advice:**  
**Minda Harts**



**Colonel Yvonne Spencer**

Colonel Yvonne Spencer has served in the United States Air Force for nearly 30 years. She was one of the first Black and first female to lead the Air Force’s

Heavy Engineer Combat Unit. Spencer moved to Montana to take over the unit, where she found that racism and sexism were abundant.

When addressing her unit, Spencer had to stress the importance of integrity. She reminded them that service comes before “self and excellence in all that you do,” which discrimination and sexism has no part in.

“Everyone is treated not because of the package that they were wrapped in, but what they brought to that fight,” Spencer said at Fair360’s 2022 Women of Color and Their Allies event. “I had to ask myself what am I representing? Are they seeing an African American? A woman? Or a leader that believes in the values that should be instilled upon everyone when they don the cloth of our nation?”

**MUST WATCH: Career Advice:**  
**Colonel Yvonne Spencer**



**Howard Bryant**

Howard Bryant is an author, sports journalist, radio and TV personality. During our 2022 Top 50 event, Bryant shared insights from his book titled *Full Dissidence: Notes from an Uneven Playing Field*.

Full Dissidence confronts injustice in America by exploring inequities in sports and divisive cultural narratives. It delves into the ongoing struggles of Black Americans in a society overshadowed by authoritarianism.

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Bryant said Colin Kaepernick kneeling at a San Francisco 49ers preseason game in 2016 was one of the first displays of an athlete showing political activism since the 1960s. Between the 1970s and 2000s, some thought athletes were spared from social injustices because of their financial success.

“As much as we talked about power and control and these athletes making so much money, how much power do you actually have if you lose your

entire career by speaking? Maybe these athletes have a lot of money, but they don’t have a lot of control. They don’t have a lot of agency. And money and power are not the same thing,” he said.

Bryant also spoke of increasing Black representation in leadership ranks, erasing Black identity as a condition of success and holding leadership accountable. [Read more.](#)

