

Discussing Political Issues with Civility



Legislative Advocacy Series, Session 7



Curtis Harris (he/him)



- Self-advocate and champion for advancing issues at the intersection of disability and race
- First student with Autism to enroll in the Chicago Public School System in 1984
- Member and leader of many committees and organizations including:
 - Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, Executive Committee
 - Access Living's Racial Justice Advance Your Leadership Power (AYLP) program
 - Access Living's member of People over Profits (POP), Disability Rights Action Coalition for Housing (DRACH) and Taskforce For Attendant Service (TFAS) and Power to People Coalition (PTP)
 - Vice-President of Chicagoland Autism Connection (CAC) Trailblazers

Housekeeping

- A recording of this meeting will be sent out along with notes and a link to the presentation within the week
- Please keep yourself muted while our presenter is talking
- Please leave questions until the end of the presentation
- Captioning is available by pressing the “CC” button at the bottom of your zoom screen
- Please be respectful



Words to Know



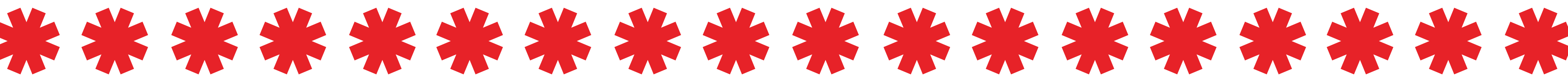
- **hierarchy**: a system where some people are seen as better than other people
- **identity**: what makes you who you are (gender, race, etc.)
- **colonialism**: when an outside country takes over Indigenous people's land
- **capitalism**: an economic system where businesses are owned by bosses, not workers
- **racism**: the belief that some races are better than others
- **cis heteropatriarchy**: a system where people who are straight and men are seen as better than others
- **civil disobedience**: disrupting every day life without violence to fight for a cause

Rio Goodwin Perez (they/them)

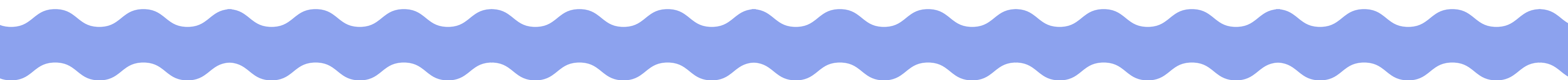
Director of The Going Home Coalition and REV UP Illinois

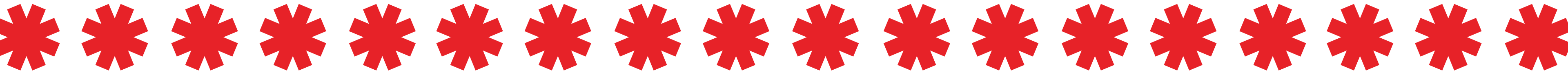


- Educator, Artist, and Organizer with hidden physical disabilities and neurodivergence
- Proud Puerto Rican raised in Tennessee
- Previously worked as a Home and Community Programs Facilitator at Arts of Life
- Organizer for 10 years, worked in mutual aid and community organizing including as part of Freedom Arts Collective providing support to Worker's Dignity, a worker's rights organization
- Student of public history and amateur archivist
- Inter-disciplinary artist working in themes of colonization, erasure, and diaspora



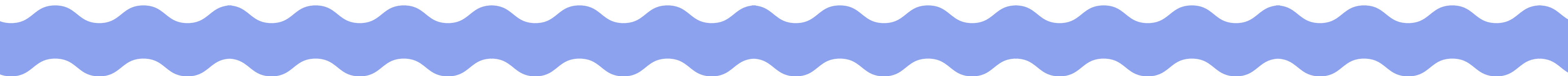
Discussing Political Issues with Civility





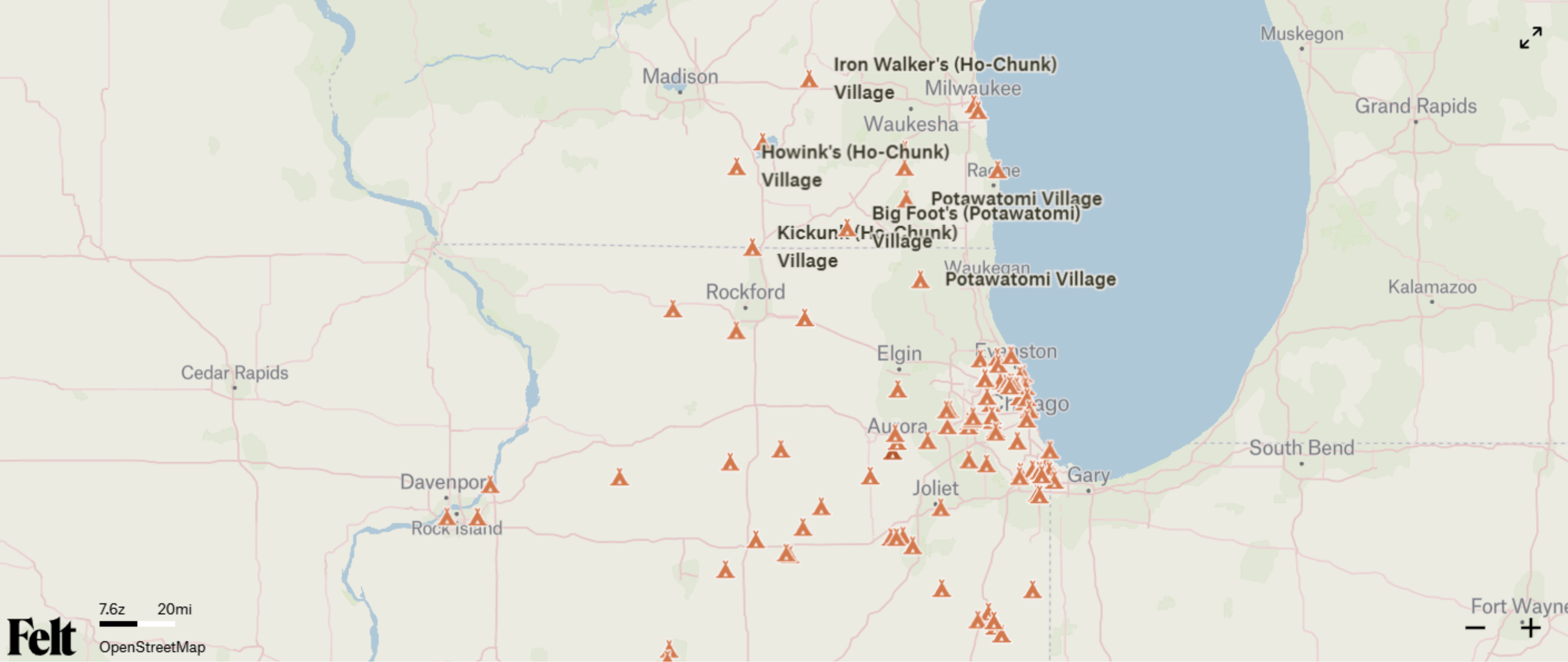
We should fight for our rights!

We should take up space!

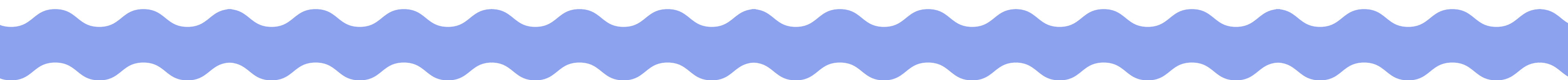


Land Acknowledgement

- Chicago is a historic trade center that was used by peoples of many tribes including:
 - Anishinaabek
 - Inohka
 - Myamiaki
 - Thakiwaki and Meskwaki
 - Ho-Chunk
 - Kiikaapoi
 - Menominee
 - Urban Native People
- The work we do is following in the footsteps of the BIPOC people who came before us who fought for their rights to be protected and for their people to be safe



Indigenous Chicago Village Site Map



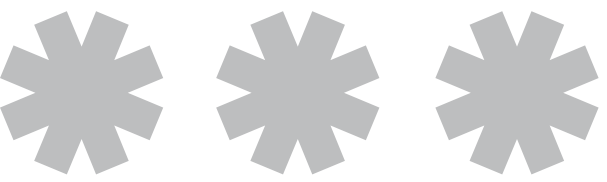
* * * Systems and Structures * * *

- When Europeans arrived in the United States, they created a system of hierarchies
 - Instead of everyone being equal in their society, some people were seen as better than others
- The system has many parts that judge people on their identities

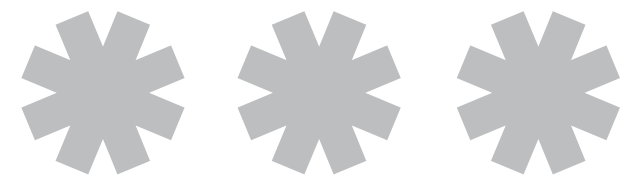
* * * Systems and Structures * * *

Colonialism, racism, capitalism, and cis heteropatriarchy

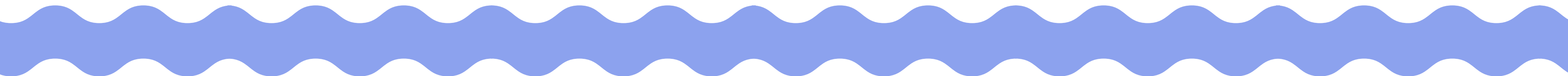
- These words may be daunting, but they are all systems that judge people based on:
 - Where they were born
 - What they look like
 - How much money they have
 - Their gender and sexuality



The Identities We Hold



- Our identities are more than just our political beliefs
- class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, education, citizenship status, place of birth
- Our identities affect how we see the world
 - Often determine whether we are aware of issues from birth or if we have to learn about them
- When we work in advocacy, we have to be aware of the way our identities keep us from seeing other people's perspectives





Civility



- When we say act with civility, we do not focus on being polite, we mean move with respect
- The word civil comes from the Latin root, civis, which means citizen
- When we are civil it means we are acting as citizens who are responsible to one-another
- We can be civil while being perceived as “impolite” by people who want to take away our rights
 - Non-violent lunch counter sit-ins
 - Capitol Crawl

Passionate Advocacy

- Many of our most loved advocates were not afraid to speak up and speak out
- We do not have to silence ourselves or hide our strong beliefs
- Sojourner Truth was an enslaved woman who freed herself then spent her life advocating for the end of slavery, woman's suffrage, and more
- She would not be seen as "polite," but she was a respectful person
 - She respected the humanity of others and fought to protect people who were seen as "less than"





More in Common than You Think



- In our current moment, our society has huge divisions
- It feels difficult to speak civilly to people who we disagree with politically
- We often have more in common than we think
 - Many of us come from the same places, or share some experiences
- In advocacy, we have to see everyone's humanity because we are fighting for everyone's rights, not just our own
 - "If one of us are chained, none of us are free"
- Finding points of connection will make change happen



Healthy Debate

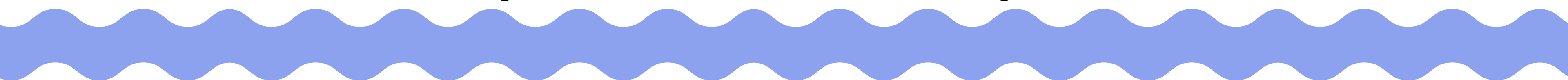


- Healthy debate is part of a healthy society
- It is okay to have a passionate debate or discussion as long as you respect the other person
- It is normal to disagree; we are not all going to agree on everything
- Part of being a citizen is being able to disagree without being hurtful
- It is okay to push back when someone says something harmful
 - Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself and your community when you know something is disrespectful or prejudicial



Navigating Complex Topics



- It feels scary to stand up for yourself, talk about a difficult topic, or disagree with someone
 - Doing things we are scared of is the definition of bravery
 - We need brave advocates to keep us safe
 - Move with understanding and forgiveness
 - We are all human and we all make mistakes
 - We should all be given a chance to learn and grow
- 



Fight for Your Rights



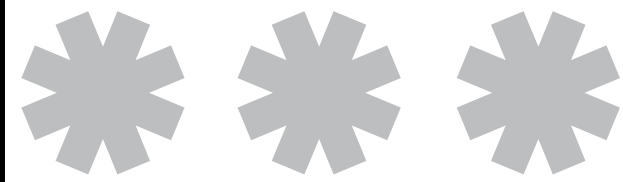
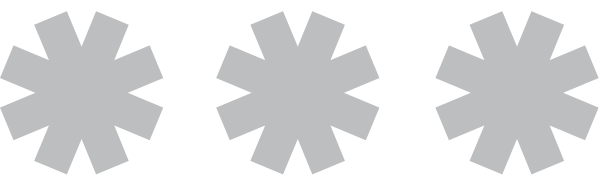
- There are many ways we can participate in passionate civic engagement
 - Political education
 - Civil Disobedience and Nonviolent Direct Action
 - Political advocacy
 - Self-advocacy
 - Mutual aid
 - Community Organizing



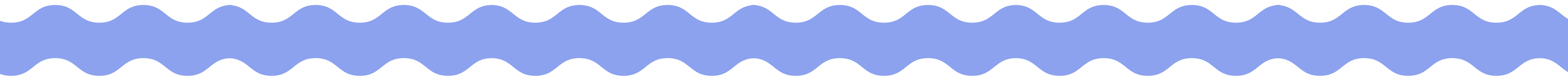
Selma to Montgomery

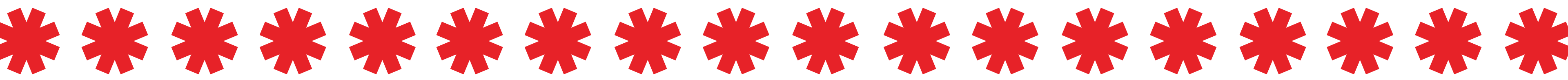


- Since 1963, organizers had been trying to create voting rights drives to get Black people registered to vote in Alabama
 - These drives were stopped by people who did not want Black people to vote
- In 1965, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) became involved to draw more attention to the movement
 - Included Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- The group decided to hold an extended march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to draw attention to their cause
- Along the way, they were beaten and shot at, and several people were killed
- They remained nonviolent, and after the march Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act

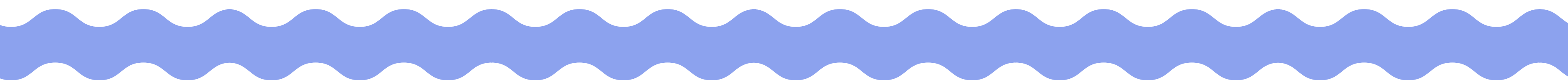


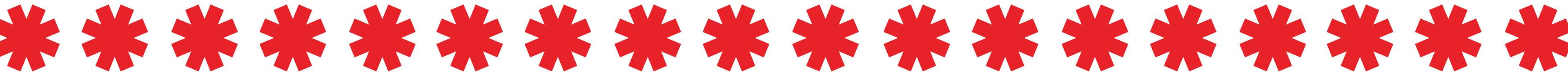
(From left) Rev. Ralph Abernathy, James Forman, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rev. Jess Douglas lead the voting rights march to the Montgomery County Courthouse. Spider Martin/Briscoe Center for American History



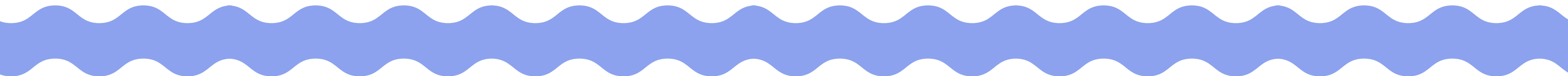


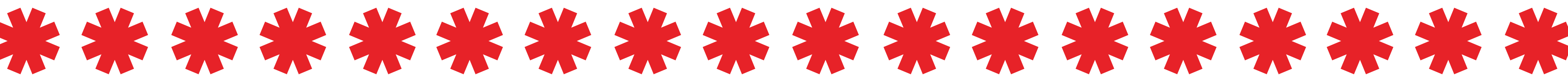
Questions and Answers





After the session a survey will appear asking you to provide us with feedback on our presentation. Please help us improve our work by filling it out!





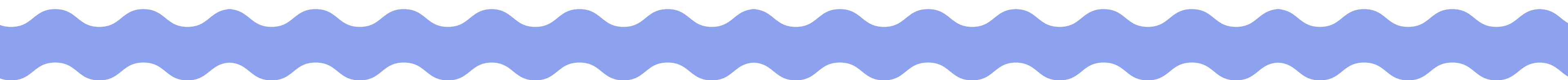
Thank you!

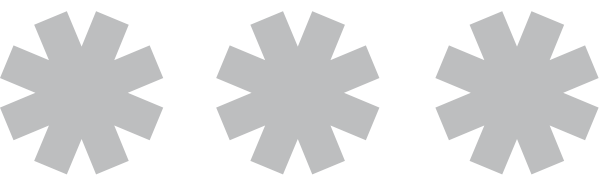
Contact Us!

Jennifer Thibodeaux Sands: jennifer@thearcofil.org

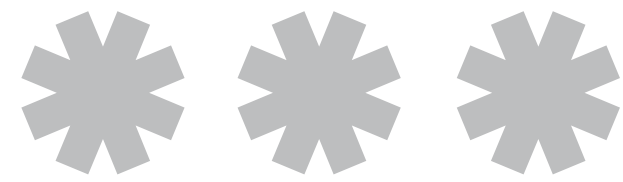
Rio Goodwin Perez: rio@thearcofil.org

Curtis Harris: curtisharris31855@yahoo.com



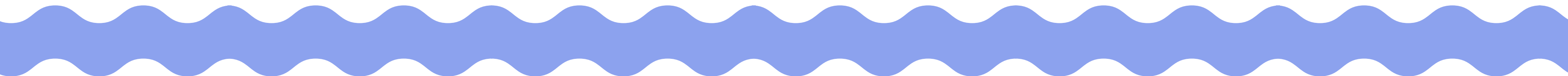


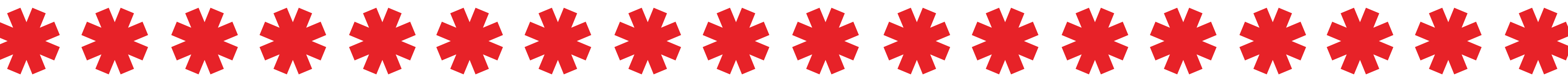
Coming Up Next



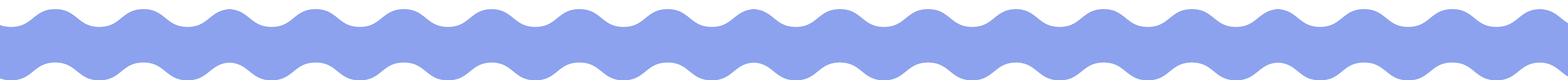
How a Bill Becomes a Law at the Federal and State Levels

March 9 at 10:00 am





**We will send out the meeting
recording, slides, resources,
and vocabulary words after
the session**





Thank you to our sponsor!



“In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. This communication is supported in part by grant number CFDA 93.630 from the U.S. administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.”