JOBS TO MOVE AMERICA

PUBLIC GOODS FOR THE MOST PUBLIC GOOD



Dear Maria,

My grandparents left the South for Chicago during the Great Migration in the 1930s.

They were part of a generation seeking opportunity, dignity, and freedom from the racial oppression of the South. Their journey shaped the economic opportunities my family would later have.

As we celebrate Juneteenth today, I recognize that my story is the story of thousands of families who continued searching for freedom long after slavery officially ended.

As a child in Chicago in the 70s, I would attend community meetings with my mom, a political organizer who knocked on her neighbors' doors to ensure they were part of the political process.

At the time, I didn't realize the lessons I was learning. Looking back, those experiences planted seeds that would later shape my own path.

Growing up, the last thing on my mind was becoming an organizer.

I started working as a cook at what was then called the Staples Center, now Crypto.com Arena, in Los Angeles, California. There, I immediately noticed the pay disparity.



Cooks in my kitchen were making $2–$3 less per hour than workers doing similar jobs for another employer in the same facility. I kept asking, "Why are we getting paid less?"

That question led me to become active in UNITE HERE Local 11. I became a committee person and began learning how unions fight for workers. Over time, I grew frustrated watching management fight workers over every raise, sometimes arguing with us over pennies.

I became a shop steward and started advocating for my coworkers. The fight wasn't just about wages; it was about dignity and fairness. I became one of the organizers for the first Community Benefits Agreement in the country. One that ensured workers had a legally binding agreement that made them part and parcel of the economic development in our community.

Later, I organized workers in Houston, Dallas, and Austin, Texas, before moving back to California.

Fast forward to 2026, I am a community organizer with JMA in my beautiful hometown of Chicago, where my grandparents settled all those years ago.

I am here today building relationships with various organizations to help bridge the gap between workers, unions, and companies.

The work I do today is not something new. It is an extension of a much longer struggle that stretches back through my family, my community, and generations of Black Americans.

My grandparents pursued freedom through migration. My mother organized her neighborhood. I organize workers and communities.

Juneteenth reminds us that freedom has always required struggle. It reminds us that progress comes because ordinary people organize and demand change.

That's what Juneteenth means to me: the opportunity to tell our story, honor those who came before us, and continue the fight for those who come next.

In Solidarity,

Andre Steele

Midwest Organizing Manager, Jobs to Move America

600604	Los Angeles, CA 90013	Birmingham, AL 35212

Open In Browser

Copyright © 2025, All rights reserved.

Admnistrative Offices

Jobs to Move America
525 South Hewitt Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Email Preferences
Unsubscribe