

TEDxNashville

PROTECT  
KIDS  
NOT GUNS

BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER

JUSTICE  
NOW

IF BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER  
Vote!

*Charlame*  
OLIVER

# Charlane Oliver

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR | ADVOCATE | CONSULTANT

@charlane.oliver

When it comes to turning one's passion into purpose, it's something that Black women from various walks of life have excelled in. Throughout her career, it's been made abundantly clear that Senator **Charlane Oliver** is more than a politician — she's a public servant invested in the liberation of her community. Born in impoverished circumstances that, theoretically, she should have succumbed to, the concept of a rough upbringing soon figured out that **Charlane Oliver** fights back. While **Charlane's** legacy is decorated with a multitude of accolades, whether in the form of politics or community organizing, her most outstanding achievement lies in showing up for marginalized communities and encouraging others to do so. Her journey to creating change didn't start with the advantage of privilege or legacy, but in Little Rock, Arkansas, where she overcame every circumstance stacked against her to become the phenom she is today.

As the youngest child raised by a hard-working single mother, the Little Rock native immediately learned the importance of work ethic and grit. A self-proclaimed over-achiever, she quickly amassed a star student-athlete reputation throughout her formative years. With successful stints in several extracurricular activities with high marks not too far behind, on the surface, the scholar was no stranger to success. Behind closed doors, however, she found herself in a completely different world marred by depression and suicide ideation, abusive relationships, sexual assault and more. Despite enduring her share of hardships, **Charlane** matriculated into Vanderbilt University with the support of a hefty scholarship package to start a new chapter in a different city. Upon reaching the long-awaited destination of adulthood, she soon realized that her opponents had gotten bigger just as her blessings had.

After several college internships in the field of sports management, she realized that she had a different calling. She entered the nonprofit industry and discovered her love of helping people under the leadership of a Black woman at Bethlehem Centers of Nashville. After graduation, she embarked on a mission of compassion, serving as a case manager for the Tennessee Department of Human Services. In this role, she dedicated herself to aiding individuals facing the toughest of circumstances, including Hurricane Katrina evacuees seeking refuge from a storm to start anew. Upon deciding that she wanted to strengthen her skillset in the nonprofit arena, **Charlane** pursued her Master of Public Administration at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville where she worked for organizations such as CoverKids, which helps to provide needed healthcare insurance for those that can not afford commercial insurance rates.





After moving back to Nashville in 2011 with her spouse and newborn baby, she had the epiphany that she needed to heal from the trauma that continued to weigh her down in her personal life. This soul-searching process culminated with the death of Trayvon Martin, coupled with the rise of the BLM movement, motivated **Charlane** to channel her outrage into public service and activism.

**Charlane** soon landed a communications director role at the Williamson County Chamber of Commerce. As the only Black person on staff, coupled with the countless deaths of Black lives at the hands of police nationally, she knew that she had to be the change that she wanted to see. This change started with teaming up with her now co-founder of The Equity Alliance to support a local Black woman candidate running for the school board. That partnership expanded as the two founded a transformational organization dedicated to empowering the Black community, through the Black feminist lens.



**Charlane** champions sisterhood not only through her membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the nation's first Black sorority, but also through her work professionally, politically, and in the community. Teaming up with other prominent Black women in her circle, she and her colleagues at The Equity Alliance have tackled issues of voter suppression, systemic racism, and other forms of discrimination to become the most powerful Black women-led organization in the state of Tennessee. While her fight for equity proved her to be a formidable foe against the white republican opponents who dared to challenge her, COVID-19 proved to be another challenge all

in itself. When COVID-19 affected the state of Tennessee, **Charlane** immediately shifted her interests to advocate for the Black community, who was dying disproportionately at three times the rate of white counterparts by this new, mysterious disease.

Working in tandem with Nashville Mayor John Cooper and the Metro Council, she secured over \$20 million for Black and brown communities affected by COVID-19. Her work didn't stop there, as the death of George Floyd and the 2020 general election provided more challenges. After organizing the largest protest in Nashville to protest the unlawful murder of George Floyd, **Charlane** then shifted her energy towards addressing voter suppression. After challenging Republicans in court, her efforts to save democracy through voting rights won, making 2020 the year with the highest voter turnout in Tennessee.

Undoubtedly, **Charlane's** career in politics and community organizing is storied, but as proven repeatedly, her journey is just beginning. As she continues to grow in her career, so does her list of accomplishments. At the age of 25, the Knoxville Leadership Foundation appointed **Charlane** to lead Amachi Knoxville, a federally-funded, faith-based mentoring program for youth ages 4-17 whose parents are incarcerated in prison. On the verge of losing funding, the program underwent a complete turnaround under **Charlane's** leadership. She exceeded the program's goals for the first time in program history and more than tripled the operating budget to \$250,000 due to outstanding performance measures.

In 2006, **Charlane** served as a Charter member, Vice President, and Secretary, instrumental in launching the Knoxville Area Urban League Young Professionals chapter. She wrote and designed the winning proposal that earned New Chapter of the Year from the National Urban League. At Meharry Medical College, **Charlane** worked for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy and the Office of Marketing & Communications, where she was responsible for elevating the Center's reach, visibility, and professional branding as a newly established academic research center. In this role, **Oliver** was voted "Most Valuable Professional" by her Division of Student and Faculty Affairs peers.

As the Director of Communications for the Williamson County Chamber of Commerce at the height of Nashville's "It City" boom, **Charlane** used her public relations expertise to drive key marketing and branding strategies for the largest network of businesses in the fastest-growing county in Tennessee. She launched the inaugural Williamson County Mobility Week, a countywide campaign recognized for one of 12 Grand Awards for Communication Excellence from the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.

While serving Tennessee's 5th congressional district as a community liaison and communications strategist for Congressman Jim Cooper, **Charlane** led one of the most successful voter registration efforts in Congress called Project Register. This nonpartisan community initiative recruited over 215 Middle Tennessee businesses, universities, nonprofits, and government agencies to encourage voter registration among their employees.

As the founder of the Power of 10 PAC, **Charlane's** endorsements helped catapult historic election wins, including Nashville's first Latina general sessions judge, first Latina Nashville school board member, first Black woman register of deeds, and first Black public defender. As the co-founder of The Equity Alliance, **Charlane** turned \$250 of her own money into a \$2.5 million-dollar

powerhouse organization in just five years, growing currently with three chapters across the state. She is the brainchild behind creating the Tennessee Voter Guides, the Black Women for Tennessee coalition, and ultimately, the Black Women's Empowerment Weekend, an annually sold-out signature fundraiser and one of Nashville's most prominent events for Black women. Additionally, she co-created the LiberTEA Collective civic leadership development program, having graduated more than 100 political newcomers across Tennessee. These are just a few of the many accomplishments where **Charlane** has left a lasting legacy of transformative impact across Tennessee.

**Charlane Oliver's** journey, marked by her roles as a consultant, public speaker, strategist, and political powerhouse, is just beginning its ascent. Evolving beyond her reputation solely as a political force, she is now leveraging her extensive expertise to uplift other leaders, businesses, nonprofits, and progressive advocacy organizations striving to create transformative change. Transitioning into a consultant, **Charlane** is committed to not only sharing her story but also guiding others to find the light within themselves as their own sources of inspiration and drive.

## Let's Talk *Strategy!*



*Charlaine*  
OLIVER

AWARDS &  
*Recognitions*  
INCLUDE



**Michelle B. Marrs Health Care Advocacy Award**

• Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, **2022**

**Chair's Award**

• Tennessee Democratic Party, **2021**

**Nashville Power 100**

• Nashville Business Journal, **2020 & 2021**

**Innovator Award**

• Creative Girls Rock, **2021**

**Susan Short Jones Emerging Leader Award**

• National Coalition of 100 Black Women - Metro Nashville Chapter, **2021**

**Heritage Award**

• Nashville Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., **2021**

**Young Leader of the Year Award**

• Young Leaders Council, **2019**

**Luminary Award**

• Family and Children's Services, **2020**

**Tennessean of the Year**

• The Tennessean, **2020**

**Excellence in Public Service Award**

• Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Tau  
Lambda Chapter, **2019**

**Community Leader Civic Award**

• The Links, Incorporated, **2019**

**Women of Influence - "Dynamic Duo"**

• Nashville Business Journal, **2019**

**Ella Baker "Power" Award**

• NAACP Nashville, **2019**

**Movers and Shakers Award**

• Tennessee Women's Political Collaborative, **2019**

**Young Professional Leadership Award Nominee**

• ATHENA Nashville, **2019**

**Now Generation Activist**

• The Tennessean, **2019**

**Dr. Evelyn Fancher Unsung Hero Award**

• Les Gemmes, Inc., **2018**

**Unsung Hero Award**

• East Nashville Chamber of Commerce Council, **2018**

**100 Leading African Americans in Nashville**

• NashvilleBusiness.Net, **2018**

**Communication Excellence Grand Award**

• Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, **2017**

**Nashville Black 40 Under 40**

• Stay On The Go Magazine, **2016**

**Most Valuable Professional**

• Meharry Medical College the Division of  
Student and Faculty Affairs, **2014**

**Mentor of the Year**

• Governor Bredesen's L.I.F.T.  
Mentoring Initiative, **2007**



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