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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Atlanta Business League and The King Center Unite to Empower the Next Generation Through the 2026 Beloved Community Leadership Academy

ATLANTA, GA — As communities across the nation honor the life, legacy, and unfinished work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Atlanta Business League (ABL), in collaboration with The King Center, proudly announces the **2026 Beloved Community Leadership Academy**, a transformative youth initiative facilitated and led by the Atlanta Business League this year and grounded in the principles of nonviolence, economic empowerment, and community leadership.

Aligned with the 2026 King Holiday theme, “**Mission Possible 2: Building Community, Uniting a Nation – The Nonviolent Way**,” the Community Leadership Academy equips young people ages 13–18 with the skills, confidence, and purpose needed to lead change. The Academy focuses on helping youth establish, pitch, and execute viable business plans, while connecting entrepreneurship to civic responsibility, ethical leadership, and service—cornerstones of Dr. King’s vision for the Beloved Community.

“Economic empowerment has always been central to the civil rights movement,” said **Leona Barr-Davenport, President & CEO of the Atlanta Business League**. “In 2026, ABL is proud to lead and facilitate this Academy, ensuring our young people gain not only business skills, but also the values, discipline, and courage required to build stronger communities and a more unified nation.”

Through ABL-led workshops, mentorship, and experiential learning, participants will explore entrepreneurship as a tool for social impact, develop innovative business concepts that address real community challenges, and strengthen their public speaking, financial literacy, and leadership skills.

Dr. Keisha Graves, Chief Research, Education, and Program Officer at The King Center, highlighted the importance of the partnership. “This collaboration reflects Dr. King’s belief that education, economic justice, and nonviolence are inseparable. By centering youth leadership and entrepreneurship, we are preparing the next generation to carry forward Dr. King’s mission in meaningful and practical ways.”

Program goals and outcomes include:

- 100% youth completion of a written business plan
- Formal pitch presentations to business and community leaders
- Increased confidence, leadership capacity, and financial literacy
- A deeper understanding of nonviolence, civic engagement, and community building

As part of the broader King Holiday Celebration activities, the 2026 Beloved Community Leadership Academy serves as a living testament to Dr. King’s enduring legacy—demonstrating that when young people are empowered with opportunity and guided by purpose, Mission Possible becomes reality.

Together, the Atlanta Business League and The King Center affirm that building community and uniting a nation—the nonviolent way—begins with investing in our youth today.

About the Atlanta Business League

Founded in 1933, the Atlanta Business League is one of the oldest and most respected Black business advocacy organizations in the nation. ABL’s mission is to support, empower, and advocate for businesses and professionals through economic development, entrepreneurship, education, and leadership—ensuring equitable access to opportunity and sustainable growth for future generations.

About The King Center

Established in 1968 by Coretta Scott King, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (The King Center) is a global leader in preserving Dr. King’s legacy and advancing his philosophy and methodology of nonviolence. Through education, training, and advocacy, The King Center inspires individuals and communities to create the Beloved Community and drive transformative social change.

Media Availability

Leona Barr-Davenport and Dr. Keisha Graves are available for interviews to discuss the Beloved Community Leadership Academy and the importance of youth entrepreneurship and nonviolent leadership in building stronger communities.

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