



Dr. Kenneth Lee Harris, Ph.D.

16th National President & CEO, The National Business League

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Short Biography

Dr. Kenneth Lee Harris is a distinguished economist, international scholar, and historian of Black business. Born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, his heritage traces to the Mafa people of Cameroon, Africa (maternal lineage) and the Indigenous Aboriginal Black Choctaw–Natchez community of New Orleans (paternal lineage). His professional and scholarly work focuses globally on the advancement of Black and Indigenous business enterprises.

A proud product of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Dr. Harris earned his Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Master of Arts in Counseling/Clinical Psychology from Clark Atlanta University. He later obtained an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in Education and Public Policy from Wayne State University. He holds a dual Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in African American and African Studies and Economics from Michigan State University, including a formal specialization in Business and Entrepreneurship from the Eli Broad College of Business. He also completed postdoctoral studies at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

As the 16th National President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Business League (NBL)—the oldest and largest trade association dedicated to Black businesses and professionals in the United States, founded by Dr. Booker T. Washington in 1900—Dr. Harris leads a national membership base of more than 120,000 individuals across all fifty states and the global diaspora. The League is supported by over 125 Fortune 500 corporate partners. Under his leadership, the organization operates from its national headquarters in Tuskegee, Alabama, with regional offices in Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; Los Angeles, California; Washington, D.C.; and Cape Town, South Africa, maintaining chapters across the United States and throughout the Pan-African diaspora.

Prior to his tenure at the National Business League, Dr. Harris founded and led several major organizations, including the Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce, which he expanded to more than 36,000 members, and the International Detroit Black Expo, Inc., an annual convening that attracted more than 1,000 Black exhibitors and over 300,000 global consumers.



Dr. Harris's career reflects an unwavering commitment to Black economic sovereignty and institutional development. As Executive Vice President of the Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council, he contributed to an economic output exceeding \$36 billion annually. His civic leadership includes his election as a Detroit Charter Commissioner in 2009, receiving 49,000 votes in a citywide election. Demonstrating decisive leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, he mobilized \$20 million in capital to sustain Black-owned businesses. By 2023, his leadership at the National Business League had facilitated more than \$150 million in corporate contracts for Black businesses with companies such as Stellantis, General Motors, Ford, Toyota, Cummins, DTE Energy, Lear Corporation, and Magna. In early 2024, he led a historic international trade mission of 42 Black women-owned businesses to Panama, Costa Rica, and Colombia, securing more than \$40 million in business opportunities across South America and the Caribbean.

A respected advocate and thought leader, Dr. Harris advances a philosophy of economic liberation rooted in ancient African principles. Central to his framework is the restoration of **MA'AT**—the timeless values of Truth, Justice, Harmony, Balance, Order, Propriety, and Reciprocity—as a guiding foundation for economic development. His unique combination of rigorous scholarship, executive leadership, and cultural grounding positions him as a singular voice in the global movement to advance Black business empowerment, economic sovereignty, and institutional transformation.

The National Business League

Established on August 23, 1900, by the visionary Dr. Booker T. Washington, the National Business League (NBL) holds the historic distinction of being the first and largest trade association in the United States devoted exclusively to the advancement of Black-owned businesses and professionals. For more than a century, the organization has stood at the forefront of economic empowerment, serving as a global catalyst for measurable progress and transformative impact.

Today, the NBL represents a powerful economic sector of approximately **3.6 million Black-owned businesses**, which collectively generate more than **\$206 billion in annual economic output** and support **3.5 million jobs** across the United States. This dynamic sector continues to grow rapidly, led by Black women—the fastest-growing entrepreneurial demographic in the nation—and a rising generation of innovators, with nearly two-thirds of Black business owners under the age of forty.

Headquartered in its historic birthplace of Tuskegee, Alabama, the National Business League maintains an international footprint that includes an office in Cape Town, South Africa, and regional hubs in Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. Through this expansive



global network, the League delivers essential tools, strategic resources, and policy advocacy to ensure Black businesses can compete and thrive in both domestic and international markets.

The scale of the League's impact was demonstrated at its **125th Quasquicentennial Anniversary Conference**, held in Atlanta, Georgia, from August 21–23, 2025. The historic gathering convened more than **3,300 Black Business Enterprises (BBEs)** from around the world and welcomed official delegations from **33 Pan-African nations**, establishing a record as the largest assembly of global Black business enterprises ever convened on American soil.

Today, the National Business League proudly serves a membership of more than **120,000 entrepreneurs, professionals, and enterprises nationwide**, supported by strategic partnerships with over **125 Fortune 500 corporations**, as well as numerous public sector agencies and leading private institutions. The League's expanding engagement across South America, the Caribbean, and Africa further reflects its unwavering commitment to building a globally connected Black business ecosystem.

Looking toward the future, the NBL's forward-leaning strategy is anchored in its flagship initiative, the **Economic Sovereignty Movement: Digitize 1 Million Black Businesses by 2030**, launched April 1, 2026. This transformative campaign reflects the League's commitment to preparing Black entrepreneurs for a technology-driven economy by equipping them with the digital infrastructure, AI tools, and global networks necessary to compete and lead in the modern marketplace.

With a legacy spanning more than a century, the National Business League continues to stand as the cornerstone institution of Black economic empowerment—honoring its historic foundation while boldly shaping a more prosperous, innovative, and equitable future for generations to come.