

## **Meleika Gardner**

In an interview, Evanston Public Library described Meleika as being “on an inspiring path with twists and turns including years spent in Atlanta and Los Angeles, oftentimes rubbing shoulders and working with well known artists and producers.” As a young woman, Meleika toured with La Face Records, a joint venture with artist/producers Babyface and L.A. Reid (Arista Records). Touring with La Face were Damian Dame, TLC, Outkast, Usher, and many others. Meleika also worked with Concord Music Group, learning from then co-owner Norman Lear. She did casting for independent films.

Returning to Evanston in 2013, Meleika noticed Evanston did not have a video platform that allowed residents a voice on local issues. With her background in entertainment and production, she grabbed her phone and hit the streets to hear from the people guerilla style. These exchanges became the podcast that later birthed *Evanston Live TV*. During the local elections, Meleika put candidates in her car to interview them, bringing the Evanston candidates into homes via social media. Residents and city officials acknowledged that Evanston Live TV was partially responsible for the highest voter turn-out since the 1970s.

ELTV has become known for promoting people, brands, and organizations on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Evanston’s local tv station. Some of her video episodes have received over 100k views. Since then, Meleika’s *Evanston Live TV* has led to hosting events for nonprofit organizations such as the Evanston Community Foundation, organizing press conferences for political figures, and moderating panel discussions for such organizations as the NAACP North Shore. Drawing on her passion and communication abilities, Meleika joined the board of We Will Women to assist women and children to get involved in legislation. Meleika co-authored an Amendment to State Representative La Shawn K. Ford’s education Bills HB4954 and HB5851 and mobilized a coalition for support. Both Bills were passed by Governor J.B. Pritzker on March 8, 2021 under the Black Caucus Agenda. This led to Meleika becoming the Chairperson for the Inclusive American History Advisory Committee, reporting to the state Commission with the Illinois School Board of Education. Currently, Representative Ford and Meleika have launched a new radio program on iHeart Radio WVON 1690, WCPT 820 Progressive Talk Radio, and CAN TV Chicago titled *Chicago Heal*, addressing Chicago violence and community mental and emotional health services. Meleika also has recently become a board member of Art Encounter.

Meleika Gardner was awarded Community Leadership Person of the Year in 2021 by the Evanston Chamber of Commerce. She is a proud Community Engagement Specialist assisting Evanston in furthering its messaging of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity and now expanding into Chicago with *Chicago Heal* to help fight for our community and children.

<https://fb.watch/1HZziBgLbC/> <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=320397279248048>  
<https://fb.watch/1HZVI3nXyr/>