



D'Real Graham

Community-Oriented Designer | Social Practice Advocate | Educator

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Professional Summary

D'Real Graham is a dynamic community-oriented designer specializing in social practice, public-interest design, and grassroots organizing. As the founder of Black With Plants and co-founder of Keep Ypsi Black, D'Real is committed to amplifying marginalized voices through creative programming, advocacy, and sustainable community initiatives. His work at the intersection of food justice, public art, and activism fosters upward mobility and collective empowerment for Black communities in Southeast Michigan and beyond.

With expertise in DEI acceleration, human-centered design, and municipal governance, D'Real has led initiatives tackling food insecurity, maladministration, and educational equity. Through projects such as FRDM HALL and RAW (Revolutionary Art Workers of Washtenaw County), he integrates design thinking with advocacy to create inclusive, impactful spaces. He is particularly interested in food safety, urban agriculture, and sustainable food systems, aligning with the objectives of the Produce Safety Fellowship at Cornell.

Areas of Expertise

- **Food Safety & Sustainable Agriculture** – Extensive training in produce safety, food handling, and agroecology.
- **Community Engagement & Organizing** – Building equity-driven programs that support marginalized communities.
- **Public-Interest Design & Social Practice** – Applying design methodologies to civic engagement and activism.
- **DEI Acceleration & Gender Theory** – Developing inclusive frameworks in education, governance, and urban planning.
- **Municipal Governance & Policy Advocacy** – Addressing inefficiencies to improve public service and community well-being.

Education & Academic Interests

- **Gender and Narrative Theory**
- **Gender, Culture, and Representation**
- **Food Safety & Public Health**

Appointments & Leadership Roles

- **2025** – National Young Farmers Coalition, Board Member

- **2025** – Certified Naturally Grown Ambassador, DC, MD, VA, DE
- **2025** – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, Farm Representative
- **2017-2020** – Commissioner, City of Ypsilanti Commission on Human Relations
- **2016-2017** – BLM / Community-Police Relations Task Force Subcommittee, Ypsilanti, MI
- **2013-2014** – Master Plan Steering Committee, Shape Ypsilanti
- **2012-2013** – Board of Directors, Growing Hope, Ypsilanti, MI
- **2011-2012** – Chair, Intra-Workgroup, Henry Ford Kids, Bright Horizons, Detroit, MI
- **2009-2010** – Board of Directors & Chaplain, Ypsilanti Area Jaycees

Fellowships & Conferences

- **Mid-Atlantic Black Farmers Caucus Conference** (2025)
- **Black Farmer and Urban Growers (BUGs) Conference** (2025)
- **Pennsylvania Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture Conference** (2025)
- **Braiding Seeds Fellowship** – Soul Fire Farm Institute, Federation of Southern Cooperatives (2024-2025)
- **Mid-Atlantic Black Farmers Caucus** – Howard University (2024)
- **Future Harvest Beginner Farmer Training Program** – Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture (Levels 1-3, 2021-2023)
- **Future Harvest Conferences** (2020, 2024)
- **Virginia Biological Farming Conference** (2022)

Certifications & Training

- **Certified Naturally Grown Farm** – Spice Creek Farm, Brandywine, MD (*Inspection completed, April 2025*)
- **Produce Safety Alliance Food Grower Training & Certification** – eCornell, Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Feb 2025)
- **Maryland Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Training** – State of Maryland, Department of Agriculture (Jan 2025)
- **ServSafe Food Protection Manager Certification** (2025-2030) & **ServSafe Allergens Certification** (2025-2028)
- **Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Certification** – NYC Commission on Human Rights, Braiding Seeds Fellowship (2024-2025)
- **First Aid/CPR/AED Certification** – American Red Cross (2025)
- **Washington, D.C. Defensive Driving Course Certification** – American Safety Council (2023)
- **Agroecology Certificate** – University of the District of Columbia, College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability & Environmental Sciences (2019)

Publications & Presentations

- *Soup Is the Stock of the People: Cooking, Sharing, and Reimagining Black Foodways Together* – Black Farmers and Urban Growers Conference, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI,
- *Dark Skin as a Mobility Impediment* – Remarks to City Council, Ypsilanti, MI
- *Why You Should Be a Youth Leader* – Holmes Elementary Commencement Address
- *You Have the Ability to Choose Your Own Adventure* – Henry Ford Kids Newsletter
- *Ypsilanti Area Jaycees Inauguration Keynote* – Ypsilanti Area Jaycees Newsletter

Teaching & Professional Experience

- **2018-Present** – Founder, Plant Resource
- **2017-2019** – Programs Manager (II), 826DC
- **2012-2017** – Program Manager (I), 826michigan
- **2011-2012** – Preschool Teacher, Henry Ford Kids (Bright Horizons, Inc.)
- **2009-2011** – Assistant Teacher, University of Michigan Children’s Center
- **2007-2009** – Science Lab Instructor, Ann Arbor Hands-on Museum

Community Initiatives & Service

- **2019-2023** – Farmer, Future Harvest Beginner Farmer Training Program (Level II)
- **2018-Present** – Creator, Black With Plants (Mutual Aid and Mutual Relief Collective)
- **2016-Present** – Member, African American Intellectual Historical Society
- **2015-2020** – Co-founder, Keep Ypsi Black
- **2015-2019** – DEI Committee Member, 826 National Ideas Group
- **2015-2020** – Founding Member, Radical Washtenaw
- **2009-2012** – Member, National Association for the Education of Young Children

Selected Research Interests & Keywords

- Food Safety & Sustainable Agriculture | Human Behavior | Generosity & Fatigue
- Maladministration & Governance | Gender Theory | DEI Acceleration

D’Real’s interdisciplinary approach blends community activism, creative arts, and education to address pressing social issues. His commitment to food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, and public health is evident in his extensive training and leadership within grassroots farming and advocacy networks. As a candidate for the Cornell Produce Safety Fellowship, D’Real brings a strong foundation in agricultural policy, food safety compliance, and equity-driven solutions, positioning him as a leader in the future of sustainable food systems.