EDLI
Entrepreneurial Development and Leadership Institute
inspired by Frederick Douglass

NORTH STARS

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BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR THOSE OVERLOOKED.

WHERE VISION MEETS ACTION.

SHERARD JONES

CEO & Founder of VYYABLE

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About EDLI

The Entrepreneurial Development and Leadership Institute (EDLI), inspired by Frederick Douglass prepares under-resourced entrepreneurs to succeed and prepares their businesses for funding through a personalized business assessment and targeted network of resources and support.

Vision Statement: Empowering diversity in entrepreneurship, we envision a future where under-resourced businesses thrive and lead, with equal access to resources, opportunities, and funding necessary for unparalleled success.

Mission: To prepare under-resourced entrepreneurs to succeed and prepare their businesses for funding.

Values: Growth mindset, accountability, safe space, empowerment, and generosity.

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EDLI was made possible by our generous founding funders:

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CHASE

"YOU ARE NOT IN THIS ALONE. UNDERREPRESENTED ENTREPRENEURS HAVE THE DRIVE BUT SIMPLY NEED ACCESS. EDLI SERVES AS THAT ACCESS CONNECTOR... TO RESOURCES, TO CAPITAL, TO INFORMATION, TO MARKETS, TO EACH OTHER."

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear EDLI Community,

February is not only a time of renewed focus and action - it is also Black History Month, a meaningful opportunity to honor the legacy, resilience, and brilliance of Black leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs who have shaped our nation and continue to shape our future.

This month also marks the birthday of Frederick Douglass, a powerful reminder of the namesake and inspiration behind the Frederick Douglass Entrepreneurial Development & Leadership Institute (EDLI). Douglass's commitment to education, economic empowerment, and self-determination remains at the core of our mission. His belief that knowledge is the pathway to freedom continues to guide our work in building access, opportunity, and ownership for under-resourced entrepreneurs.

As a community rooted in that legacy, we are proud of the progress we are making together. EDLI continues to grow in meaningful ways by welcoming new members, strengthening partnerships, and deepening our support for founders at every stage of their journey. Your engagement - whether through attending sessions, collaborating with peers, or advancing your skills through EDLI University's 250+ on-demand courses, fuels a vibrant ecosystem centered on education, opportunity, and collective advancement.

To our new members: welcome. To our long-standing supporters: thank you for continuing to show up for yourselves and for one another. And to every founder featured in this edition of North Stars: your courage, creativity, and resilience embody the very spirit of EDLI.

As we move forward this month, we recommit ourselves to the principles that Frederick Douglass championed — education, economic independence, and the power of community. We remain dedicated to strengthening this ecosystem, amplifying your successes, and ensuring you have the tools and support needed to build sustainable, generational businesses.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we will continue to educate, empower, and elevate.

Warm Regards,

J. Vincent Williams

Executive Director, EDLI

WHERE IDEAS BECOME POSSIBLE:

How VYYABLE Helps Underserved Founders Take the First Step

By Zimri Rodriguez

The Platform Helping Underserved Founders Prove What's Possible

VYYABLE isn't just a tech tool. It's a lifeline for first-time and overlooked founders trying to turn raw ideas into real businesses. At its core is a simple but powerful mission: give under-resourced entrepreneurs the clarity, validation, and ecosystem access they've long been denied.

Through AI-powered viability analysis, market clarity, and capital-ready roadmaps, VYYABLE helps early-stage founders- especially Black, Latino, and Women entrepreneurs - answer the questions that stop most dreams before they start: Is my idea viable? Is there a market? What's my next step?

VYYABLE's message is bold and unapologetic: brilliance exists everywhere; opportunity does not. And they're here to change that.

The Spark Behind the Work

The inspiration is personal. After witnessing countless entrepreneurs with real potential stall - not because of a lack of talent, but because of a lack of access - founder, Sherard Jones, knew the system had to shift. Too many underrepresented innovators were running into walls built long before they ever showed up.

VYYABLE was built to rewrite that narrative. This is more than a platform. It's a belief: when you give founders the right tools, their power becomes undeniable.

A Myth Worth Debunking

There's a belief that entrepreneurs just need capital. But as VYYABLE knows well, funding without readiness often accelerates failure. Validation, clarity, and strategy are the true foundation.

A Blueprint for Readiness

VYYABLE equips entrepreneurs with a suite of AI-driven supports designed to meet them where they are and push them where they want to go:

- Business Viability Reports that confirm opportunity and shape business models.
- Readiness Assessments to prepare founders for accelerators, lenders, and investors.
- Action Plans that turn dreams into step-by-step execution.
- Ecosystem Connectivity linking entrepreneurs to BSOs, mentors, and capital providers.

It's both structured and personalized - technology with a heartbeat.

A Moment That Captures the Impact

Recently, VYYABLE partnered with an entrepreneurship program serving housing authority residents in Chicago. Many participants walked in unsure if entrepreneurship was even possible for them. One woman with a childcare concept left with a validated model, a clear plan, and a new sense of confidence. That shift - from doubt to direction - is the heartbeat of VYYABLE's work. It's not just about building businesses. It's about proving to founders that their ideas are worthy.

The EDLI Effect

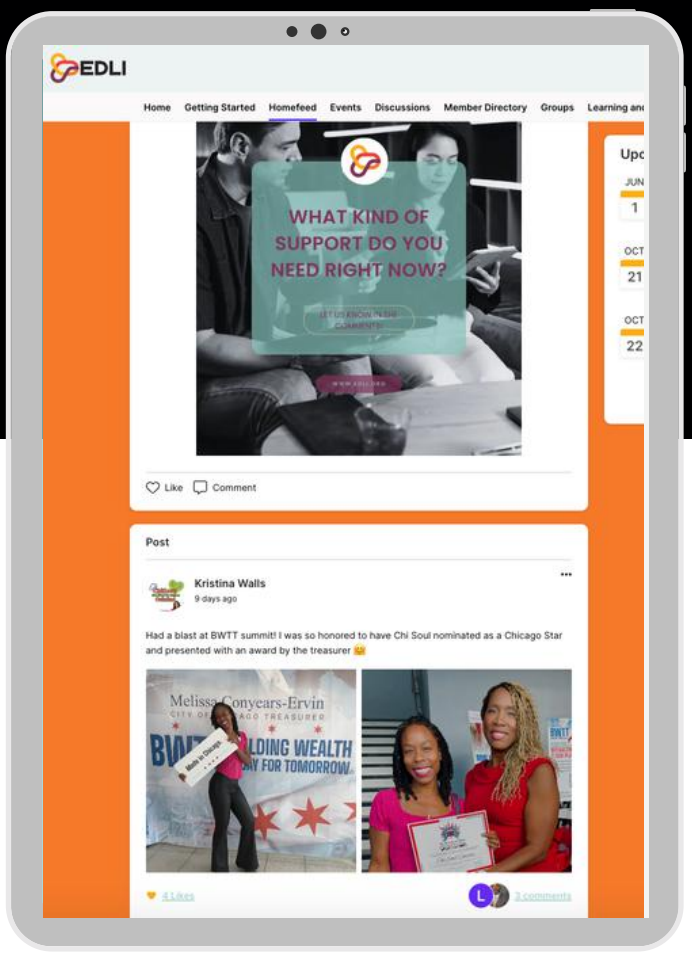
Being part of EDLI reinforces the work. "We're not building in isolation," they explain. "Communities like EDLI help us share knowledge, build partnerships, and push collective impact forward." Together, the ecosystem grows stronger and more inclusive.

What Sets Them Apart

VYYABLE blends community trust with AI-powered validation, offering support that is standardized enough to scale but personalized enough to matter. Every founder walks away with a plan, a pathway, and the confidence to move forward.

Join the EDLI community

and get featured in our magazine



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