

Pierce Freelon | candidate for North Carolina State Senate District 20

Pierce's run for North Carolina State Senate has been endorsed by North Carolina's longest-serving state representative **The Honorable Mickey Michaux**, Durham's longest-serving **Mayor Bill Bell**, Durham's current **Mayor Steve Schewel**, North Carolina Poet Laureate **Jaki Shelton Green**, founder of the Black Feminist Breathing Chorus **Dr. Alexis Pauline Gumbs**, and **Run For Something**.

Pierce Freelon is a professor, Emmy-award winning filmmaker, artist-organizer and former candidate for Mayor of Durham. He is the founder of Blackspace, a digital maker space in Durham where young people learn about music, film and coding. He is the writer, composer and co-director of an animated series called History of White People in America, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2018 and 2019. He co-founded Beat Making Lab, a PBS web-series, which won Best Video Essay for its episode Heartbeats of Fiji at the 2015 Daytime Emmy Awards. Pierce is the Creative Director of Northstar Church of the Arts, and has taught in the Department of Political Science at North Carolina Central University and in the Departments of Music and African, African American and Diaspora Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Pierce ran for Mayor of Durham in 2017 on a platform of Community, Growth, Youth and Love. He was appointed by Governor Bev Perdue to serve on the board of the North Carolina Arts Council. Pierce was a political organizer and Hip Hop Coordinator for a non-partisan non-profit called Voices for Working Families, where he led voter registration, education and GOTV efforts among 18-to-35-year-olds across the state of North Carolina. Pierce co-led efforts to create Next Level, a multi-million dollar partnership between UNC Chapel Hill and the US Department of State, which sends Hip Hop artists abroad for cultural diplomacy and conflict resolution. He has served on the boards of the Durham Library Foundation, Nasher Museum of Art and KidZNotes. Pierce is currently Vice Chair of the Durham Human Relations Commission.

Pierce lives in Durham with his wife of 11 years, Katye and their two kids.

EDUCATION

2008 - M.A. in Pan-African Studies (Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY)

Masters Thesis: Sankofa: Pan-African Migrations in Hip-Hop Music and Culture

2006 - B.A. in African and Afro American Studies *awarded with distinction and highest honors (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC)

Honors Thesis: Blackademics: the Development of a Hip-Hop Curriculum Based on the History of the African American Experience and Struggle for Freedom and Equality

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Entrepreneurship + Community programs

2019 - Creative Director of Northstar Church of the Arts

2014 - Founder of Blackspace (Afrofuturism digital makerspace based in Durham)

2013 - Co-founder of Next Level (Cultural diplomacy program at UNC/US State Department, for which Freelon raised over \$1,000,000)

2012 - Co-founder of Beat Making Lab (PBS web-series which won an Emmy-award in 2015)

2010 - Co-founder of Poetic Justice (Hip Hop/spoken word after-school program with Durham Crime Prevention Council)

2008 - Program coordinator for Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz

2004 - Community Organizer for Voices for Working Families (organizing 18-35 year-olds throughout NC)

Adjunct professor/visiting lecturer

2009 - present - UNC Chapel Hill; Department of African American and Diaspora Studies/ Department of Music (Chapel Hill, NC) Courses: AAAD 401; AAAD 356; AFAM 259; AFAM 356; AFAM 375; MUSC 239; MUSC 159

2008 - 2011 - North Carolina Central University, Department of Political Science (Durham, NC); Piedmont Community College, Department of Music (Roxboro, NC) Courses: POLS 4881; HUM 120; MUS 112

2007 - 2008: - Syracuse University; Department of African American Studies (Syracuse, NC) Courses: AAS 207; AAS 409

SELECTED RESIDENCIES, LECTURES, WORKSHOPS

2019

Convocation speaker: UMASS Lowell (Lowell, MA)

Music, Policy and Cities Conference: China (Chengdu, China)

Commencement speaker: UNC Chapel Hill Music Department (Chapel Hill, NC)

Diversity and Inclusion Conference (Lewisville, NC)

Kings and Queens of the Movement - MLK Celebration at Duke University (Durham, NC)

2018

Durham City/County Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration: Keynote Lecture (Durham, NC)

Millersville University: Keynote Lecture (Millersville, PA)

Pratt College of Art & Design: First Year Orientation Keynote (New York)

University of St. Thomas: Keynote (St. Paul, Minnesota)

Future of Storytelling Conference (New York, NY)

Rockford College Keynote (New York, NY)

ECO Conference: Decolonizing the Future of Community Psychology (Raleigh, NC)

Duke Forum for Scholars and Publics (Durham, NC)

2017

Blackspace WokeShops (free digital media workshops for Durham youth): Conscious Coding/ 3D Printing, Digital Storytelling, Street Griot, Blackspace Poetry (Durham, NC)

Brave New Voices (San Francisco, CA)

Just Space (Duke University social justice conference - Durham, NC)

John Hope Franklin Young Scholars Program (community workshop - Durham, NC)

My Brother's Keeper (Black history month lecture, Chapel Hill, NC)

Rhythm and Race (Raleigh, NC)

2016

Hayti to Haiti: Beat Making Lab (Durham, NC / Matenwa, Haiti)

Tedx Durham: Centers and Edges (Durham, NC)

Blackspace Block Party (Durham, NC)

Black Wall Street Beats (Moogfest, Durham, NC)

Darth Vader Youth Hackathon (web-app development program by Blackspace, Durham, NC)

Virtual Reality Lecture (Black Wall Street Homecoming, Durham, NC)

2015

Nguvu Ya Weusi: Black Power from Carolina to Congo (Goma, Congo and Chapel Hill, NC)

Cristo Negro | Diablo Blanco (Portobelo, Panama and Chapel Hill, NC)

Audio Immersion (Allied Media Conference - Detroit, MI)

Black Revolutions (University of Puget Sound, WA)

2014

Black August: Black Liberation Youth Cypher (Chapel Hill, NC)

TEDx: Mid Atlantic (Washington, DC)

Beat Making Lab projects in: Nairobi, Kenya; Cabarete, Dominican Republic

2013

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation International Conference on Family Planning (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

Beat Making Lab projects in: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Chapel Hill, USA; Dakar, Senegal; Goma, DR-Congo; Portobelo, Panama; Suva, Fiji

2012

Global Voices: Citizen Media Summit 2012 (Nairobi, Kenya)

Mashable's Social Good Summit (New York, NY)

TEDx: Sticky Ideas (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

United Nations Foundation: Rio+Social (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Juvenile Justice and Crime Prevention Council (Durham, NC)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Blackademics Interviews: Freelon ran a popular blog called Blackademcis where he published one-on-one exclusive interviews with: Dr. Maya Angelou, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Paul Mooney, Tommie Smith, John Singleton, Rakim, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Herbie Hancock, Gil Scott Heron, Danny Glover, 9th Wonder and others (www.blackademics.org/interview-archive).

Book/Journal/Magazine/Newspaper Contributions: Freelon has written over 50 columns in The News and Observer's Durham News: April 2010 - present.

"Born and Raised" in 27 Views of Durham: The Bull City in Prose and Poetry; 2012.

"Gwendolyn Brooks," "Eldridge Cleaver, Soul on Ice," and "Martin Luther King, Jr. Strength to Love" in 1,000 Key Moments: Books.

SELECTED GRANTS/FELLOWSHIPS

2012 - present - Various grants from Grable Foundation, WUNC, North Carolina Arts Council, Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Triangle Learning Network, etc.

2013 - \$1,000,000 US Department of State grant for "Next Level" program at UNC (Chapel Hill,

NC)

2013 - Freedom Foundation: Leavey Award for Excellence in Education (Philadelphia, PA)

2012 - Center for Global Initiatives faculty research grant (Chapel Hill, NC)

2008 - DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/National Endowment for the Arts: American Masterpieces Grant Award (Washington, DC)

2007 - OMA Diversity Programming Grant, Syracuse University (Syracuse, NY)

2007 - Chancellor's 2007 Research Grant, Syracuse University/University of Ghana, Legon (Accra, Ghana)

SELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS/AWARDS/HONORS

2019 - Official Selection, Tribeca Film Festival

2018 - present - Durham Human Relations Commission, Vice-Chair

2018 - Progressive Serterma, Inc. Service to Mankind Award

2018 - Official Selection, Tribeca Film Festival

2016 - Triangle Arts Award (Blackspace), The Independent Weekly

2016 - Movement of Youth "Spirit of Excellence in the Arts" Award 2015 - Emmy Award for Beat Making Lab

2015 - Emmy-Award: Best Video Essay - Heartbeats of Fiji

2015 - Leadership Triangle Goodmon Award

2015 - Hip Hop Education Center "Extra Credit" Award

2014 - Triangle Arts Award (Beat Making Lab), The Independent Weekly

2012 - 2015 / Board member, Sacrificial Poets (Durham, NC)

2012 - 2015 / Board member, Nasher Museum of Art (Durham, NC)

2011 - 2016 / Board member, KidzNotes (Durham, NC)

2011 - 2015 / Board member, Durham Library Foundation (Durham, NC)

2010 - 2013 / Board member, North Carolina Arts Council (Raleigh, NC)

2010 - 2012 Best of the Triangle: Best Hip Hop Band, The Independent Weekly

2007 - Sankofa Bird Award for Community Leadership (Syracuse, NY)