

February Is a Mirror”
I am eighteen
with hair still soft
but my roots run older than the maps they gave us in school.
February is a mirror—
but when I look in it
I don't see me.
I see cotton fields whispering survival,
braided crowns of our hair mapping freedom roads,
I see hands that built a country
that wouldn't that were afraid to hold their hands back.
I hear Harriet Tubman
moving in the night to free our people to safety with pockets full of stars.

I see Martin Luther King Jr.
dreaming so loud that we should be able share peace amongst the people who hate us

I feel Rosa Parks
sitting down, so we could all stand
taller and be comfortable in a
space we should've been accepted
in with no boundaries
They were young once too.
They laughed, they feared,
they loved like I do.
February is a mirror but this time
I see me
I see a black woman who share a
culture with these great people
I see my Melanin and know it's a
blessing
I play with my fro and I touch my
gold hoops listening to the rap and
hip/hop station
February is a mirror and this time
I see the greatness that they fought
for us to see
- Carrihonna Washington

Have Something you'd like to
put on The Phantom Press?

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Ro08327@eastwest.edu

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cago

Tiktok:
- ewu_chicago

100th Anniversary of Black Excellence: From Black History Week to Black

History

BLACK VISIONARIES



A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

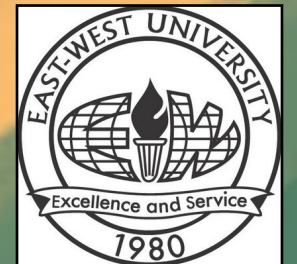


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Deans & Honors List Fall 2025



EAST/WEST
UNIVERSITY

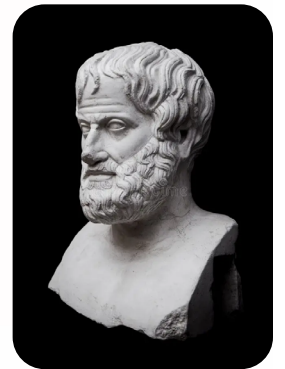
Deans List

- Akon, Martine
- Alcalá, Jenny
- Aviles, Fhernando
- Basarb, Solomiia
- Beal, Jacob
- Bell, Ka'Shon
- Bounoueres, Fls Elie
- Castaneda, Wilmer
- Chapman, Bryson
- Chavez, Karla
- Cisneros, Keneth
- Cortez, Casandra
- Davalos, Elian
- Davis, Antonio
- Davis, Brandon
- Emma-Nnopus, Chukwunyere Richard
- Estrada Trujillo, Jesslyn
- Flowers, Jatin
- Galves, Sirenity
- Gosnet, Elvis
- Green, Mualyia
- Hale-Triplett, Angel
- Harris, Ravina
- Hernandez, Ariel
- Herrera Enriquez, Emma
- Hood, David
- Hoewell, Aaliyah
- Khan, Mishaal
- Khashim, Raid
- Koua, Badou
- Ledet, Xavier
- Lewis, Kendall
- Liberty, Nyla
- Maldonado, Bryan
- Martinez-Mayer, Mardecai
- Mcnair, Joshua
- Melgar, Andrea
- Mendez-Herrera, Kevin
- Munoz, Alexis
- Myrickes, Kristie
- Nyamdavaa, Munkhsaikhan
- Ogbu, Martin
- Ortiz-Rivera, Marin
- Oussou, Jean
- Patel, Khushi
- Patel, Naiyaben
- Patel, Zinal
- Perez, Abraham
- Phillips, Amari
- Pierce, Dominique
- Raval, Vaibhavi Vinodkumar
- Robles Hernandez, Carlos
- Rose, Marijo
- Safo, Godwin
- Salgado, Evelyn
- Sanchez, Diego
- Shah, Syed Aamir Ali
- Siddiqui, Ammar
- Siddiqui, Saniya
- Sobchak, Liubov
- Swift, Yanalise
- Syed, Meraj Ali
- Taylor, Kyle
- Unal, Ahmet

Honors List

- Babso, Aseged
- Barrera, Elizabeth
- Beecham, Maria
- Burinova, Gulnaz
- Burnett, Amari
- Chounlasa-Valdez, Ellie
- Fatima, Aiman
- Flowers, Kyla
- Fullilove, Jamaya
- Hancock, Asijah
- Hill, Makayla
- Holmes, Da'Ion
- Jain, Dishi
- Juan Delmoral, Heidi
- Khan, Mohammed Rehan Ali
- Lelik, Vasil
- Martinez, Yaquelin
- Medessoukou, Mario
- Miller, Matthew
- Morales Gonzalez, Jhair
- Ocampo, Yomali
- Osman, Manel
- Osman, Meymuna
- Patel, Vency Ashvinkumar
- Riley, Aaliyah
- Rodriguez, Soledad
- Rogers, Shellicia
- Ross Jr, Kenneth
- Silva, Jesus
- Snipes, Jarrionna
- States, Sasha
- Thomas, Latricia
- Thomas, Xavier
- Trejo, Mishelle
- Verdin, Carlos
- Vohra, Amaanbhai Mogirabhai
- Vohra, Ayan
- Walker, Tiana

*"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, therefore, is not an
act but a habit.."*
-Aristotle



Words of Encouragement from Your Advisors



From Mierel and Rob

We know many of our students are balancing school with work, family, and many other responsibilities, and we truly respect the effort it takes to keep going. Every class you attend, every assignment you complete, and every quarter you finish is a step closer to your degree.



As the quarter comes to an end, take a moment to recognize how far you've come. Keep going, stay focused, and remember that we are here to support you. We are proud to be part of your journey :)

Student Success Center

Student Services Are Free. All are welcome, so please stop by and step into this inviting space. Adjusting to "whether it's your first time in school or a long time coming(back)", college life can be a tough place. Your feelings are valid.



Available Services Include

- Assistance with Academic Difficulties
- Help with Overcoming Procrastination
- Disability Accommodations
- Increasing Self-Confidence
- Free Counseling/Therapy
- Eating & Sleeping Issues
- Understanding Sexuality
- Improving Relationships
- Time Management
- Coping with Stress
- Tutoring Services
- Grieving & Loss
- Goal Setting
- Harassment

Contact Info

Phone: 312-939-0111 Ext. 1301
Email: studentsuccessctr@east-west.edu
Office Info
Location: West319
Hours :Mondays & Tuesdays (on-site only) 11:30am- 4:30pm

Biological Sciences Department

Hosted a Biology Talk featuring Dr. Sushant Kumar from Molecular Biosciences at Northwestern University.

Dr. Kumar presented “Visualizing the Invisible: How Structural Biology Is Transforming Our Understanding of Human Health and Disease.”

The talk focused on the importance of visualizing the structures of macromolecules, such as proteins and nucleic acids, and the critical role structural biology plays in our understanding of human health.

Senior Seminar

Exams can be fun and relaxing time! EW Seniors present their final projects—talking to friends, showing off their talents, and motivating freshmen.

EET – Electronics Engineering Technology

Invited students to join them during a collaborative event using the contemporary teaching strategy: think, pair, share. This was a wonderful opportunity for us to co-construct our understanding of EET in an ever-evolving world.

Author Visit

Students sat down with Theodore C. Van Alst Jr.

Open Mic – FREE SPEECH and Performance

Students got a chance to showcase their talents of all sorts. Storytelling, singing, rapping, and pizza were all part of the day.



EWU Students had the opportunity to meet various artists in the group that shared their own wisdom, positivity, stories, knowledge and poetry.

BLAQ ICE & P.O.E.T RETURNS FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

LIVE AT EAST-WEST UNIVERSITY FEBRUARY 18, 2026

STUDENT WORKSHOP BE READY TO READ YOUR POEM FOR EXTRA CREDIT 12PM | THERE WILL BE AN OPEN MIC BRING YOUR POETRY 312.719.7310 www.iampoet.com

Open Mic Poetry in honor of black history. BLAQ ICE and other Artists shared to us students.

DR. SUSHANT KUMAR DEPARTMENT OF MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCES AT NORTHWESTERN

East-West University Interdisciplinary Symposium

EWU Signature Course Student-led symposium meaning conference discussing multiple topics including: Taro and Psychology; Positive Narcissists; Transhumanism; Entshittification; Overconsumption.

BlacQ Ice Event

Honoring Black History where the professionals and the students alike share their impassioned stories thru words and song.

Golden Gloves Victory

Boxing Champ Mario Medesoukou won the first bout of the Golden Gloves. He leveraged his length and quickness to win all three rounds.

“The first round was a thing of beauty,” Coach Bill Hillmann said. “Absolute Beauty.” CONGRATS





Carter G. Woodson: The Father of Black History

Carter G. Woodson, born in 1875 to formerly enslaved parents in Virginia, became one of the most influential historians of the twentieth century. After working in coal mines and starting school late, he rose quickly in his studies and eventually earned a Ph.D. from Harvard. He dedicated his life to correcting the erasure of Black contributions from American education, founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915 to publish research and create materials that preserved Black history. His book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* argued that denying people knowledge of their own history limits their identity and potential. In 1926, Woodson created Negro History Week to shift how the nation understood Black history, and as the Civil Rights Movement grew, students expanded it into Black History Month. First celebrated at Kent State in 1970 and officially recognized in 1976, Black History Month continues Woodson's mission by honoring Black achievements and ensuring their stories remain part of America's broader history.

Neil DeGrasse Tyson

Neil deGrasse Tyson is one of the world's most recognizable scientists, known for making space and science exciting and easy to understand for people of all ages. As an astrophysicist, he studies the universe—from stars and planets to galaxies and cosmic mysteries—but his real gift is the way he explains complex ideas in clear, engaging language. Through bestselling books, television shows, podcasts, and public talks, he has helped millions connect with science in everyday terms. As director of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, he inspires young students to explore the universe and stay curious. Throughout his career, Tyson has encouraged people to think critically, ask questions, and trust evidence, reminding us that science is for everyone and that understanding the universe helps us better understand ourselves.



Condoleezza Rice

Condoleezza Rice is a political scientist, educator, and leader who made history as the first Black woman to serve as U.S. Secretary of State. Growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, during the Civil Rights Movement shaped her belief in education, discipline, and perseverance. She became a professor and expert in international relations, studying how countries interact and how conflicts can be prevented, which eventually led her to serve as National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State. In these roles, she met with world leaders, worked on global challenges, and helped guide major foreign policy decisions, earning a reputation for intelligence, professionalism, and calm leadership. After leaving government, Rice returned to teaching, mentoring students interested in politics and diplomacy, and supporting education programs that expand opportunities for young people. Her career shows how dedication, confidence, and a commitment to learning can open doors to leadership and global impact.



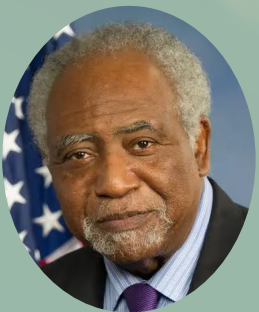
Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells was a fearless journalist, activist, and leader who fought for justice during a time when telling the truth could be life-threatening. Born into slavery in 1862 and raised during Reconstruction, she quickly learned the importance of standing up for what is right. She became a teacher and later a journalist, using her writing to expose the violence and discrimination Black Americans faced, and her groundbreaking investigations into lynching brought national and international attention to racial brutality. Wells also fought for women's rights and helped found the NAACP, believing equality must include both race and gender. She traveled widely to speak about justice despite constant threats, and her courage, intelligence, and determination made her one of the most powerful voices of her era. Today, she is remembered as a pioneer of investigative journalism and a lasting champion of human rights.



Danny K. Davis

Danny K. Davis is a longtime public servant and community advocate who has represented Illinois's 7th Congressional District since 1997. Born in Arkansas and raised in a working-class family, he moved to Chicago as a young adult and became deeply involved in education, local government, and neighborhood organizing. Before entering Congress, Davis served on the Chicago City Council and the Cook County Board, building a reputation for focusing on healthcare access, education, economic opportunity, and support for working families. In Congress, he has championed policies related to criminal justice reform, youth programs, and community development, often emphasizing the importance of investing in underserved neighborhoods. Throughout his career, Davis has been known for his steady leadership, his commitment to public service, and his long-standing connection to the communities he represents.



Angela Davis

Angela Davis is a scholar, activist, and author whose work has focused on civil rights, prison reform, and social justice for more than five decades. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, she grew up in a community deeply affected by segregation and racial violence, experiences that shaped her lifelong commitment to fighting inequality. Davis became a professor and a prominent voice in movements for racial and gender justice, speaking out against mass incarceration and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. Her activism made her a national figure in the 1970s, and despite facing intense political pressure and controversy, she continued to write, teach, and organize. Today, Davis is recognized as a leading thinker on abolition, human rights, and collective liberation, and her work continues to influence students, activists, and scholars around the world. She has authored several influential books that challenge traditional ideas about justice and encourage new ways of imagining community safety. Her lifelong dedication to education and activism has made her one of the most enduring and transformative voices in modern social movements.

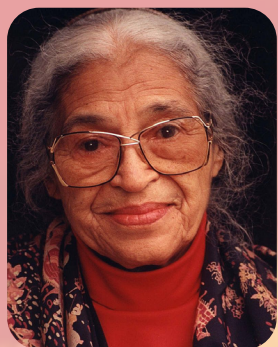


School Integration: The Children Who Faced Hate to Change History (1954-1960)

The fight to integrate schools began after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which said that segregated schools were unfair and illegal. Even though the law changed, many white communities refused to accept Black students. This meant that young Black children had to face anger and danger just to go to school. Ruby Bridges was only six years old when she became the first Black child to attend an all white elementary school in the South. Every day, she walked through crowds of adults who yelled at her and tried to scare her. Federal marshals had to walk with her for protection. Inside the school, many teachers would not teach her, and parents took their children out of class. Ruby spent the whole year learning alone, but she never gave up. Her courage showed the world that even a child can stand up to hate.



In Little Rock, Arkansas, nine Black teenagers known as the Little Rock Nine tried to attend Central High School in 1957. They were blocked by angry mobs and even by the governor of the state. The situation became so serious that the president sent federal troops to escort them into the school. These students faced threats, bullying, and violence every day, but they kept going because they knew their education mattered. Their bravery helped push the Civil Rights Movement forward and opened the doors of education for future generations.



Rosa Parks: The Spark That Ignited a Movement (1955)

Rosa Parks is known for refusing to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. This simple act of courage became one of the most important moments in the Civil Rights Movement. Parks had worked for years to help victims of racial violence, and she understood the unfair treatment Black people faced every day. When she refused to move, she was arrested, and her arrest inspired the Black community to take action.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott lasted 381 days. During this time, Black residents refused to ride the buses. They walked long distances, shared rides, and supported each other even when they were threatened or punished. The boycott became a powerful example of peaceful protest and helped bring national attention to segregation. It also helped introduce Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a leader. Rosa Parks showed that change can begin with one person who decides to stand up for what is right.

The Black Lives Matter Movement: A New Generation's Fight for Justice (2013-Present)

The Black Lives Matter movement began in 2013 after the killing of Trayvon Martin. It started as a message on social media and grew into a worldwide call for justice and equality. The movement became even stronger after the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Millions of people marched in cities across the world to demand fair treatment, safer communities, and accountability for violence against Black people.

Black Lives Matter reminds us that the fight for equality is not over. The movement brings attention to issues such as police violence, racial profiling, and discrimination that still affect Black communities today. Through protests, community work, and online organizing, BLM has given a new generation a voice. It connects today's struggle to the long history of civil rights activism. The movement continues to push for change and encourages people everywhere to speak up and protect Black lives.



In Memory of Jesse Jackson (1941-2026)

Reverend Jesse Jackson spent more than sixty years fighting for fairness, equality, and opportunity for Black Americans. He began his work as a young man alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., helping organize marches, protests, and voter registration drives during the Civil Rights Movement. After Dr. King's death, Jackson continued the mission by speaking out against racism, poverty, and injustice in communities across the country. He created the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, an organization that helped people gain access to education, jobs, and voting rights. His work supported families, students, and workers who needed a strong voice on their side.

Jackson also made history when he ran for president in 1984 and 1988. Even though he did not win, his campaigns showed the nation that a Black leader could compete at the highest level of politics. He inspired millions of people, especially young Black voters, to believe that they could be leaders too. Throughout his life, Jackson traveled around the world to help solve conflicts, support human rights, and bring attention to people who were being treated unfairly. He was known for his powerful speeches, his courage, and his commitment to helping others.

Jesse Jackson's passing is a great loss, but his legacy continues through the people he inspired and the progress he helped create. He leaves behind a lifetime of service, leadership, and hope. Ending your second page with a tribute to him is a meaningful way to honor his life and connect the history of the Civil Rights Movement to the present day.



Susan B Anthony

Women's History Month

EWU Women who are making history



Cristy Calderon

Constituent Services
Director for the
City of Chicago



Carol Ann Pinkston

Staff Attorney in the
City of Montgomery



Dee Atkins

Chief of Community
Engagement at
Greater Chicago Area



Trenity K. Dobbey

Workforce Development
Director for the
Mayor's Office



Beyoncé
Queen Bey
Motha
Giselle Knowles Carter

History

Women's History Month began in 1978 in Santa Rosa, California, when teachers and community leaders realized that women's stories were missing from most classrooms. They created a small celebration called Women's History Week and chose the week of March eighth to match International Women's Day. Schools held activities, students learned about important women from the past, and the community supported the idea. The response was so positive that other cities and states began creating their own Women's History Week events. People wanted a way to recognize the many women who helped shape the country but were rarely mentioned in history books.

The movement grew quickly. In 1980, a group of women's organizations asked the federal government to recognize Women's History Week, and President Jimmy Carter issued the first national proclamation. Congress followed with its own resolution in 1981, and for several years the country celebrated only one week in March. Many activists argued that a week was not enough to honor the long and diverse history of women in the United States. In 1987, Congress agreed and officially declared March as Women's History Month. Since then, every president has recognized the month, and schools, museums, and communities use this time to highlight women's achievements in science, politics, art, civil rights, and everyday life. Today, Women's History Month reminds us that women of all backgrounds have played a major role in shaping the world we live in.

Important dates in Womens History

1848 – The Seneca Falls Convention

The first women's rights convention in the United States took place in Seneca Falls, New York. Women gathered to protest unequal laws, lack of voting rights, and limited opportunities in education and work.

1869 – First Women's Suffrage Organizations Form

Groups like the National Woman Suffrage Association were created to fight for women's right to vote. Women faced public criticism, legal barriers, and social pressure to stay silent.

1872 – Susan B. Anthony Is Arrested for Voting

Anthony cast a ballot in the presidential election and was arrested because women were not legally allowed to vote. Her trial brought national attention to the injustice women faced.

1908 – Women March for Better Working Conditions

Women garment workers in New York City protested unsafe factories, long hours, and unfair pay. Many women worked in dangerous conditions with no legal protections.

1911 – The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

A fire in a New York factory killed 146 workers, most of them young immigrant women. Locked doors and unsafe conditions made escape impossible. This tragedy pushed the country to demand safer workplaces.

1920 – The 19th Amendment Is Passed

After more than seventy years of protests, marches, and arrests, women finally won the right to vote. Many women of color, however, still faced discrimination and barriers at the polls.

1955 – Rosa Parks Refuses to Give Up Her Seat

Parks's act of resistance sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott and became a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. Her courage highlighted the double struggle Black women faced: racism and sexism.

1963 – The Equal Pay Act

This law made it illegal to pay women less than men for the same work, although many women still faced wage discrimination and limited job opportunities.

1972 – Title IX Is Passed

Title IX banned discrimination based on sex in schools and colleges. It opened doors for women in sports, education, and professional careers.

1973 – Roe v. Wade

The Supreme Court recognized women's right to make decisions about their own bodies. This became a major moment in the fight for women's health and autonomy.

The Inequalities Black Women Faced in Early Woman's History

Although the early women's rights movement fought for equality, Black women often faced discrimination from both society and from white suffragists. Many white women's organizations refused to include Black women in marches, meetings, or leadership roles. Even after the 19th Amendment passed in 1920, many Black women in the South were still blocked from voting through racist laws, threats, and violence. Leaders like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Sojourner Truth fought for both racial justice and women's rights, but their contributions were often ignored in history books. Their struggle shows that the fight for women's equality was not the same for all women, and that Black women had to overcome both sexism and racism to make their voices heard.



In Honor of Henrietta Lacks

Henrietta Lacks was a Black mother of five whose life changed the world in a way she never knew. In 1951, while being treated for cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins Hospital, doctors took a sample of her cells without her knowledge or permission. At the time, Black patients often faced unequal treatment, and Henrietta was not told what was being done with her tissue. What happened next became one of the most important moments in medical history.

Henrietta's cells, later known as HeLa cells, were the first human cells to survive and grow endlessly in a lab. Scientists had tried for years to keep cells alive for research, but none lasted more than a few days. Henrietta's cells were different. They multiplied rapidly, stayed strong, and opened the door to discoveries that changed medicine forever. Her cells helped develop the polio vaccine, cancer treatments, IVF, gene mapping, and countless medical breakthroughs that continue to save lives today.

For decades, Henrietta's family had no idea her cells were being used around the world. They received no recognition, no compensation, and no explanation, even as companies made millions from

HeLa cells. Her story became a symbol of how Black patients were often mistreated, ignored, or used without consent in medical research. Today, Henrietta Lacks is honored not only for the scientific impact of her cells but also for the conversations her story sparked about ethics, consent, and respect in healthcare. Her legacy reminds us that behind every discovery is a human life that deserves dignity and acknowledgment.



Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Malala Yousafzai



Michelle Obama



Kamala Harris



Frida Kahlo

Who run the world? GIRLS

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Supreme Court Justice who fought for gender equality and spent her career protecting women's rights through powerful legal decisions
- Malala Yousafzai: A global advocate for girls' education whose survival and activism symbolize resilience against extremism.
- Michelle Obama: Former First Lady and attorney who uses her platform to support education, health, and empowerment for young women.
- Kamala Harris: Vice President of the United States who made history by breaking multiple barriers and opening doors for future generations of women.
- Frida Kahlo: An artist whose work confronts identity, disability, pain, and womanhood with raw honesty.
- Beyoncé: Music artist and cultural icon who celebrates Black womanhood and advocates for creativity, equality, and representation through her work.

Important Modern Dates in Women's History

1981 – First Woman on the U.S. Supreme Court
Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court. Her appointment broke a major barrier in government and inspired more women to pursue careers in law and public service.

1993 – Family and Medical Leave Act
This law allowed workers to take unpaid leave for childbirth, adoption, or family illness without losing their jobs. It protected millions of women who were often forced to choose between work and family.

1994 – Violence Against Women Act
This act provided federal support for investigating and prosecuting domestic violence and sexual assault. It helped create shelters, hotlines, and legal protections for women facing abuse.

2005 – First Woman Secretary of State
Condoleezza Rice became the first Black woman to serve as Secretary of State, representing the United States on the global stage and expanding women's leadership in foreign policy.

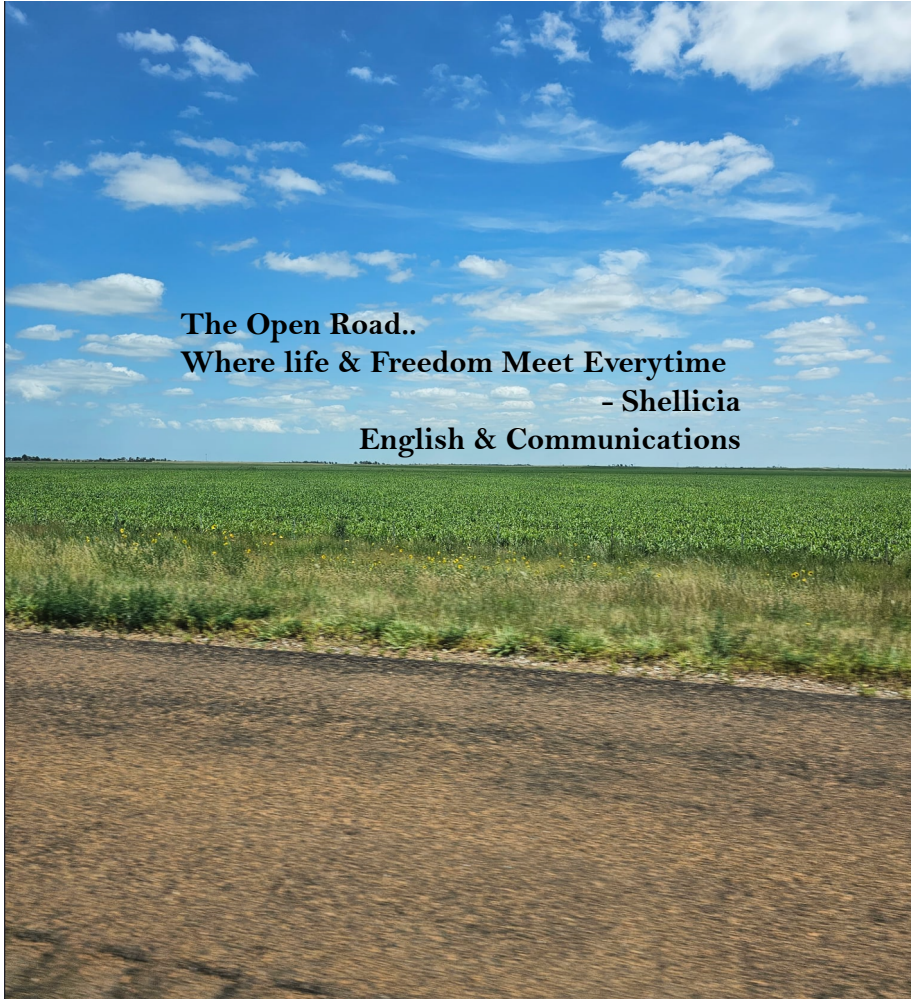
2013 – Women Allowed in Combat Roles
The U.S. military lifted the ban on women serving in combat positions. This opened thousands of jobs that had been restricted for decades.

2016 – First Woman to Win a Major Party Nomination
Hillary Clinton became the first woman nominated for president by a major political party, marking a historic moment in American politics.

2021 – First Woman Vice President
Kamala Harris became the first woman, the first Black woman, and the first South Asian woman to serve as Vice President of the United States. Her election represented a major milestone in representation and leadership.

2022 – Ketanji Brown Jackson Joins the Supreme Court
Ketanji Brown Jackson became the first Black woman to serve on the Supreme Court, expanding representation at the highest level of the judicial branch.

Creator's Corner



The Open Road..
Where life & Freedom Meet Everytime
 - Shellicia
 English & Communications

Cosmic Fatalism

Theoretically, we are all living to die,
 and that is not a melancholic thought, but fact.
 Life and Death have their own purposes
 but what, then, is that of Time?

Is it the keeper or the thief;
 the silence between our beginnings and ends?
 Does it heal, or merely remind us
 that nothing truly stays?

And at the end of it all,
 when we have lived the lives we were meant to live,
 and the earth implodes,
 will the sins we've sinned still matter?

For perhaps we are nothing more
 than a star's decay
 beautiful only as we burn away.

ADC

English & Communications

The Social Safety Net (2000-2036) Justice in American Society

The American social safety net has changed significantly from 2000 to the present, shaped by political conflict, economic pressure, demographic shifts, and evolving beliefs about fairness and responsibility. Medicare and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) show how the country tries to prevent insecurity caused by age, disability, illness, or poverty, yet constantly debates how far that responsibility should extend. At the start of the 21st century, the safety net appeared stable but limited. Medicare was widely trusted, and SSI provided minimal income support for people with severe financial and medical needs. These programs were viewed as necessary protections rather than pathways to opportunity, and public attitudes reflected a belief that assistance should exist but remain modest. Meanwhile, demographic data already showed that the aging Baby Boomer generation would soon place new pressure on Medicare, signaling long-term challenges.

From 2000 to 2026, the safety net evolved under strain. Medicare expanded to include prescription drug coverage through Part D, a major change that relied heavily on private insurance companies and added complexity to the system. SSI, however, changed very little. Benefits rose slowly and often failed to match rising housing and living costs, leaving many recipients barely surviving. Economic crises such as the Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic exposed how quickly Americans could fall into hardship and how deeply health and economic vulnerability are connected. Medicare became essential during national emergencies, while SSI recipients struggled with rising expenses and strict eligibility rules. Throughout this period, Congress debated reforms but rarely enacted sweeping changes, resulting in gradual adjustments rather than major redesigns.

For many Americans, these shifts were experienced directly. Older adults navigating Medicare found a program that offered life-saving coverage but required complicated decisions about plans and supplemental insurance. People receiving SSI often described living in a state of survival rather than stability, protected from homelessness but unable to achieve long-term security. Public debates reflected competing values. Supporters saw Medicare as proof that collective care can work, while critics warned about government overreach and unsustainable spending. SSI remained even more contested, often misunderstood and stigmatized despite serving people with significant disabilities and medical challenges. This mix of reliance and discomfort has come to define the modern safety net.

Today, Medicare remains one of the most popular and politically resilient programs in the country, often framed as something Americans earned through work. SSI, however, continues to be shaped by debates about deservingness and welfare. Rising healthcare costs, longer life expectancy, and widening economic inequality make both programs more important than ever, yet they operate within a fragmented system built through decades of compromise rather than a unified vision of social protection.

Looking ahead to 2036, demographic and economic trends suggest that the United States will be significantly older, with more people depending on Medicare. Advances in healthcare may extend life expectancy, increasing both the benefits and the costs of coverage. Policymakers will likely face pressure to control spending while maintaining access. SSI's future is less certain. Without reform, its benefits may fall even further behind basic living costs, though growing awareness of disability rights and economic insecurity could push for modernization. The most likely outcome is gradual, uneven change. Healthcare protections may strengthen because they are politically popular, while income supports remain more contested. The safety net will continue to exist, but its shape will reflect ongoing national disagreements about responsibility, independence, and the meaning of collective care.

- Chantill Douglas

The Jinx vs the Joker

Whenever you watch television, listen to news or radio, read newspapers or books, names come to mind. Ellen DeGeneres, Steve Harvey, A.C. Greene, Cheryl Burton, J.K. Rowling, etc. These names are easily recognizable, allowing them to gain a massive amount of fame from fans. But think about it, what if someone was famous and never knew about it? What if there was someone who's so famous that you'd be surprised to even think they were famous? Well, you're in luck, because I happen to know about a guy. Someone whose name will be ledged into history, someone who will always be remembered, and his name is Andre Williams.

Andre Williams arrived at East-West in 2024, coming from a return from one year of college in New Hampshire. Upon his return, I immediately spotted him. Now realistically speaking, I was a bit nervous to approach him even for an interview, but my boss looked at me and said "There, that's our next story! He'll be perfect for our headline!" I was nervous at first. His quiet and silent anger made me shiver, those warrior-like eyes that glared at me from a distance made me feel like I was his next target for elimination. So over the next few days I built up the courage from my pathetic telenovelas and Addams family-like marathons and went to speak to him the next day. I then managed to see him by himself in the lunchroom with his ripped-up jeans, crochet sweater with an anime hoodie of some sort? And to top it off he had that amazing Marvin Richards jean jacket with fur. With the swiftness of a deep breath I finally asked him, "Excuse me, may I sit with you?" This alone made me scared as I saw him take off his headphones just to respond with a simple but polite "Sure".

Okay, Okay let me stop with all the daydreaming. I didn't actually interview him on that day, because C'mon, that'd be stupid! Journalism 101 says, in terms of how I view them, "Writing profiles are like watching film, you have to watch and study your assignment to the tee. Only by that you'll be successful". So I did just that, I paid very close attention to his classes, who he was talking to, and so on. This led me to a few very important people. The first person I interviewed was his English Professor Nedaa Zayed. When interviewing her, one question came to mind the most, "Based on how he was in your class and through interactions with him how would you be able to describe him?" I managed to get an array of responses, the first was about honesty and self reflection "Unlike a lot of people he's not above reflection, and is very honest when it comes to self reflection" she said. Then she continued to talk about how she compared him when they first met versus now. "He's more open to discussion than when I first met him" she then went on to say. What got me the most is how she topped it off, and it made me laugh quite a bit. "He's a more mature version of my son" she famously said, and like I mentioned it made me laugh quite a bit. Upon that we then went our separate ways. The next person I interviewed was his poetry Professor Natalie Whrel, who typically described his poetry skills. "He's fascinating to speak with, always willing to speak and step up, and he always does a lot of amazing work!" as she famously put it. I was very impressed by how passionate she was when talking about him, especially since they're both Michael Jackson fans.

Now this last one really hit a home-run. When I had the opportunity to interview one of the most famous professors East-West had to offer, Dr. Bill Hillmann. An absolute legend in the flesh, he wasn't just Andre's professor, he was mainly Andre's boxing coach! When I sat across from him, the first thing that came to mind was about boxing and how they met. The thing that got me was his nickname, which was the Jinx. "The Jinx?" I asked. "Yeah! He's the Jinx!" Dr. Hillmann replied.

"How did he get that nickname?" I asked. He told me he got the nickname when they went to Guaranteed Rate Field to watch the White Sox Play. He along with Andre and two other friends went as well. At this moment the White-Sox witness history as the worst team of all time with the worst record in MLB history. "Everyone in that stadium was against the Sox, and Dre being the only Sox fan there cheered for them, they came back and won against the Angels at home! He Jinxed us!" Hillman famously said. According to the Sox last few home games they won them all before acquiring the historic embarrassment of the worst record in baseball history on the road.

Then the million-dollar question came up, "What do you think about him based on being around him and in his classes, Doctor?" I asked. And he had this to say. "Dre Williams, The Jinx is a very intelligent young man, eloquent even. He understands story structure, even helped teach my class about it. But he can get easily distracted sometimes, sometimes he's his own worst enemy, sometimes the Jinx Jinx's himself but he is indeed doing better, might even graduate. He's also my assistant boxing coach as well. He's extremely hilarious, and will always be a great part of East-West" Hillmann famously said. This got to me a lot, I remember my own basketball coach saying things like that but it didn't even hit nowhere close to home like this. Upon these interviews, my final stage was set.

I then saw him again from a distance, this time I actually found the guts to talk to him and question him. Just looking at him made me nervous. From his wild and messy hair to his lingering death stare. It was like I was in Dead By Daylight but in real life, where the killer was directly in my face. When I finally sat down with him I began with a simple opener, "If you could describe yourself how would you do it?" I said shakingly.

"That depends on the context of the conversation. If you want a general answer then I'd say that I'm honest, in everything I say and do, even when I'm joking" He goes on to say. "What are your favorite hobbies here at East-West?" I then asked.

"I have a few here, but my favorite one is basketball. I do it all the time, schooling people is so much fun" He described.

I then went on to ask some personal questions about him, then moving on back to East-West. "What's your favorite part about boxing with Dr.Hillmann?" I asked. "My favorite part was the mitts, knowing that every punch I throw could hurt him is satisfying. It's the very reason why I called him an old man" he said as Doctor Hillmann himself said the same thing.

I wanted to be horrified but I felt like there was a hidden meaning behind that. Obviously it wasn't literal, but it does describe how hard and how much force his punches had.

"Why do you think professors like you here at East-West?" I asked.

"It's a trait I had since high school. I rather be liked by most professors than most students. I believe it's because I don't get on their nerves and I actually talked to them like a person and instead of just being a professor." He then said, Honestly, this made my heart flutter a little. To end it I had to end with something big, one that I feel like he'd have a handful to say about. I then asked him, "Dr. Hillman calls you the Jinx. I wonder how you feel about that, and if you could name yourself what would it be?" I then saw him chuckle, and genuinely laugh even.

After that he famously said, "I got the nickname because of the baseball game, also because of a famous boxer. I genuinely forgot his name. At first it kinda bothered me every time he said it, if it was up to me I'd call myself the Joker, especially because of how hard hitting my evil can be. But I'm used to being called the Jinx and I even like it, in fact...I embrace it." He famously says. "Hell! It's kinda funny, I just take and embrace it. Besides, I might look like I'm angry a handful of times but I do like to mess with people that I like, especially Professor Zayed." Mentioning her I laughed again, remembering what she told me. "If you had to pick a favorite professor, who'd it be?" I then ask.

"I'd have to say either Dr.Hillman or Professor Zayed, Hillmann because of how often I knew him and Zayed because...well, I think she's an amazing professor and member of the troll hall of fame" He famously said with a laugh.

From that day on I spoke to him a few more times, and every single time I managed to like him more and more. And this is how I knew, he was indeed a legend in the making.

- Andre Williams, English & Communications

UNSOLVED CASE FILES



Daniel Sotelo and Nataly Brookson (2022)

Daniel Sotelo and Nataly Brookson vanished on April 30, 2022, in a way that still feels unnervingly deliberate. Nataly left her shift at Friedman Place, a care facility for blind adults, and stepped into the quiet of the Budlong Woods neighborhood. She didn't seem afraid. She didn't seem distressed. She simply walked out the door and disappeared. That same day, Daniel her boyfriend, was dropped off

at the Roosevelt CTA station by his roommate. He was days away from earning his master's degree in organic chemistry, talking about the future with the kind of certainty that comes from hard work and hope. Then he vanished too. Two young people, connected in life, swallowed by the same city within hours of each other. When Nataly's body surfaced in Lake Michigan near Bryn Mawr, the shock rippled through Chicago. When Daniel's body appeared nearly three weeks later and miles away near Wilmette, the fear settled in. The medical examiner could not determine how either of them died. No cause. No manner. Nothing that could explain how two healthy students ended up in the same water under circumstances that made no sense.

What makes their case so haunting is the silence around it. Daniel's wallet and phone were reportedly found near where Nataly's body was discovered, a detail that only deepened the confusion. Why were his belongings near her, but his body found far north weeks later. Why did they disappear on the same day from different parts of the city with no witnesses, no signs of struggle, no digital trail. Their families searched the shoreline, begged for answers, and received only the cold, unchanging fact that both young lives ended in the same lake without explanation. Chicago has seen tragedy before, but this one feels different. It feels like a story with its ending torn out, a mystery that refuses to settle. The unanswered questions cling to their memory like fog, leaving behind the unsettling sense that something moved beneath the surface that spring, something no one has ever been able to name.



Diamond and Tionda Bradley (2001)

On a warm July morning in 2001, Diamond and Tionda Bradley vanished from their South Side apartment. Their mother returned home to find the girls gone and a handwritten note that never felt right. Tionda was ten. Diamond was three. The note said they had gone to the store and to a nearby playground, but handwriting experts questioned whether a child wrote it at all. For years, sightings came in from across the country. Each one brought hope. Each one faded into nothing. The FBI searched. The community searched. But no evidence has ever surfaced. Not a trace. Not a clue. It is as if the world opened up and swallowed them whole. Their disappearance is one of Chicago's most painful mysteries, a story that sits heavy on the city's memory. The Bradley sisters are a reminder that some absences feel like ghosts, always present, always unanswered.



Marlen Ochoa-Lopez (2019)

Marlen Ochoa Lopez was a young mother excited to welcome her baby. She answered a Facebook post offering free baby clothes, a simple act of trust that led her into a nightmare. Inside a home on the Southwest Side, she was attacked with a level of cruelty that shook the city. Her unborn child was cut out from her stomach. The suspects had been planning the crime for months, possibly longer, using social media to lure pregnant women. Even after arrests were made and solved, the horror of the case lingered. It forced people to confront the terrifying truth that danger can hide behind a friendly message, a smile, a promise of help. Marlen's story is a wound that never fully closed. It is a reminder that evil does not always announce itself. Sometimes it waits quietly behind a door that looks safe.

Christopher Pineda (2007)

Christopher Pineda's story is quieter, but no less haunting. He was a student, a kid with a life ahead of him, when he was killed in 2007. His case barely made the news. There were no citywide searches, no national headlines, no public pressure. His family grieved in the shadows, hoping someone would speak up, hoping someone would care. The silence around his case is its own kind of horror. It reflects how easily some stories are overlooked, how quickly some victims are forgotten by the world around them. Christopher deserved more. His story deserves to be told. Including him in this spread brings him out of the darkness and into the light he was denied.





Curating a Space for Learning: Mr. Huston Lawrence and the Heart of East-West University's Library

At many universities, the library is simply a building filled with books. At East-West University, it has always been something more personal, a space shaped by community, creativity, and connection. Few people embody that spirit more deeply than Mr. Huston Lawrence. As both an alumnus and a longtime librarian, his journey mirrors the growth of the university itself and reflects the powerful role libraries play in shaping student success.

Founded in 1980 in the heart of Chicago's South Loop, East-West University began as a small institution with a bold mission: to provide affordable, multicultural higher education to students from diverse backgrounds. In its earliest years, the campus consisted of a single building, the East Building, stretching across four floors. With only 300 to 500 students, the university felt more like a family than a campus. That intimacy became one of its greatest strengths.

For Mr. Lawrence, who first arrived as a student in the late 1980s, that smallness was exactly what made East-West feel like home.

From Student to Steward of Knowledge

When Mr. Lawrence enrolled, computers were just beginning to appear on college campuses. East-West was excited to introduce a new printing lab, an innovation that signaled the university's commitment to staying current even with limited resources. He began his studies in electronics but soon discovered a new passion and switched to business. What he remembers most from those early years was the feeling of possibility.

"I was so excited to know what I could do next," he recalls.

Because the university was small, he never felt lost in a sea of students. Professors knew his name. Staff recognized his potential. And as a predominantly minority institution, East-West offered a sense of belonging that shaped his confidence and academic direction.

Mr. Lawrence graduated from East-West University in June 1990. Just two months later, in August 1990, he began the

Library Science program at Chicago State University. While pursuing his graduate studies, he returned to East-West in September 1991 to work in the university library. Balancing work and school was demanding, but he remained focused.

"I kept telling myself, I have to get this done," he says.

His family was there to cheer him on when he earned his Library Science degree in 1996—a milestone that marked not just academic achievement, but personal perseverance.

He has been at East-West ever since.

Thirty-five years later, Lawrence is still shaping the very environment that once shaped him.

The Library as a Learning Environment

For Mr. Lawrence, the library has never been just about books or databases. It is a learning environment, one that should feel welcoming rather than intimidating. It is so inviting and warm, something he has accredited to Ms. Michelle Kopteros, our esteemed librarian's creative vision.

His philosophy is simple:

"Assist, not push or pull."

Through student orientations, research workshops, and one-on-one guidance, he helps students navigate digital databases, streaming media, e-books, and academic support tools. He meets students exactly where they are, showing them how to find sources, evaluate information, and build confidence as researchers.

During the early 2010s, as research shifted onto phones and digital platforms, Mr. Lawrence understood that the library had to evolve. When East-West moved into its new building in 2013–2014, the library expanded with it, gaining updated spaces, new technologies, and a design that reflected the modern needs of students.

But for Lawrence, the most important evolution was not technological, it was emotional. The library had to feel accessible. It had to feel like a place where students could ask questions freely, explore ideas, and grow.

Curating Creativity and Curiosity

Our librarian sees the library as a creative space as much as an academic one. Learning happens through conversation, exploration, and the freedom to wonder. By creating a calm, welcoming atmosphere, he encourages students to broaden their thinking and discover new possibilities.

Education, he believes, transforms not only individual lives but entire communities. When students stay in school, succeed academically, and grow in confidence, they move closer to becoming equal participants in society.

"Become the change you want to see," he often reminds them.

That mindset is quietly reinforced within the walls of the library every day.

A Legacy of Support

In many ways, Mr. Huston Lawrence's story is the story of East-West University. Both began with small beginnings. Both grew through dedication, service, and a belief in the power of education. And both continue to shape the lives of students who walk through the university's doors.

For the past six years, Lawrence has stood at commencement, watching graduates cross the stage. As they pass by with their degrees in hand, he sees something familiar, hope, pride, and possibility.

He enjoys "seeing the stars in their eyes."

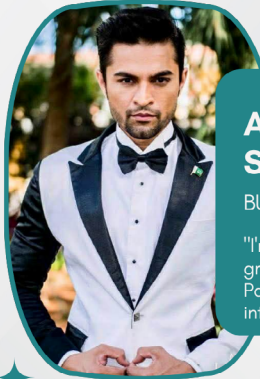
The library he helps curate is more than a study space. It is a foundation, a place where students are encouraged to think, question, and create. A place where learning is not just supported, but intentionally and lovingly built.

And for the many students who enter its doors each semester, that environment can make all the difference.



East/West University

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**AAMIR
SHAH**

BUSINESS

"I'm humbled and grateful to represent Pakistan on the international stage."

Global Titles

Participated in international beauty pageants across South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, and the United States, including Manhunt International, Starhunk International, and Runway Model Universe.

Singing Career

Released music centered on themes of love, faith, and cultural identity, including "Ishq Tareeqa," "Mere Khuda," and "Nara-e-Takbeer Hai."

His songs have been featured at community events and cultural programs in both Pakistan and Chicago.

Seen on TV

Appeared in Pakistani television dramas such as "Kalank," "Bechari Nadia," and "Mohabbat Karna Mana Hai."

Worked across a range of roles that helped develop his on-screen presence and versatility.

Media & Talk Shows

Featured on Pakistani morning shows and entertainment programs where he discussed his artistic journey and community involvement.

Entrepreneurship

Founded a small clothing brand offering culturally inspired fashion in Pakistan and Chicago.

Has been involved in product design, branding, and community-based pop-up events.

Humanitarian Work

Leads the Aamir Shah Foundation, supporting children with special needs and families facing hardship through charity drives, resource distribution, and community programs.

Has organized food, clothing, and school-supply initiatives in both Pakistan and the United States.

Who is Aamir Shah?

Aamir Shah is a Pakistani actor, singer, and model who built much of his early creative experience overseas before continuing his education in Chicago. Now a student at East West University, he balances his studies with a growing artistic journey shaped by performances and modeling work across South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, and the United States.

His commitment to community remains central to who he is. Through the Aamir Shah Foundation, he has supported children with special needs and families facing hardship. He considers this work just as meaningful as anything he has done on stage or in front of a camera.

Aamir's creative path began long before he arrived in Chicago. During his years overseas, he explored acting, music, and modeling across a range of projects, from television dramas to commercial campaigns. These early experiences introduced him to the discipline and cultural exchange that come with working in different countries and creative environments.

His modeling work included participation in several international competitions in South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, and the United States. Aamir describes these opportunities as formative rather than defining, noting that they helped him understand representation and responsibility as a Pakistani artist working abroad.

In addition to modeling, Aamir has appeared in television dramas on major Pakistani networks and has taken part in commercial campaigns for brands across Pakistan and the Middle East. He views these roles as stepping stones that shaped his versatility and confidence as a performer.

Aamir also began releasing music in recent years, sharing songs that reflect themes of love, faith, and cultural pride. His work has resonated with audiences in both Pakistan and the U.S., something he attributes to the emotional honesty behind his writing rather than to recognition or awards.

Outside of his creative pursuits, Aamir remains deeply involved in community service. Through the Aamir Shah Foundation, he has supported children with special needs, organized charity drives, and assisted families facing hardship in both Pakistan and Chicago. He often speaks about this work as the part of his life that keeps him grounded and connected to the communities that shaped him.

Now continuing his education while building his artistic portfolio, Aamir hopes to use his experiences to contribute meaningfully to the creative and cultural spaces he is part of. For him, growth, service, and representation matter more than visibility.

"I'm humbled and grateful to represent Pakistan on the international stage."

— Aamir Shah

In a recent conversation, Aamir reflected on the experiences that shaped his artistic journey and the purpose behind his work.

On representing Pakistan internationally: **"Every award is a reminder of the responsibility I carry."**

On his music: **"Music is my passion. I'm grateful that people around the world are connecting with my songs."**

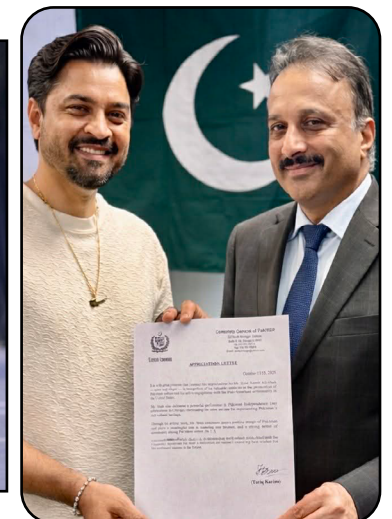
On community recognition:

"Being honored by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Chicago means a lot. Their support keeps me grounded."

Aamir Shah Image Highlights



Aamir Shah representing Pakistani talent on the international runway.



Being honored by the General of Pakistan