JESSE WHITE
SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
February 20, 2020

For More Information Contact:
Beth Kaufman

Jesse White Hosts Celebration in honor of African American Heritage Month

Honorees include the first female African American Michelin Star chef, first African American Alum Principal of Leo Catholic High School, NBC 5 News Anchor, 27th Ward Alderman and DePaul Men's Head Basketball Coach

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White hosted the annual African American Heritage Month celebration today at the James R. Thompson Center.

"This year we recognize the contributions of these distinguished honorees in culinary arts, media, public service, education and sports leadership who serve as role models," White said. "Each recipient has made a valuable contribution to our state."

Governor JB Pritzker joined Secretary White at the event where White honored Leo Catholic High School Principal Shaka Rawls, who serves as the first African American alumnus in the role, with the Education Achievement Award; DePaul University Men's Head Basketball Coach Dave Leitao with the Athletic Achievement Award; 27th Ward Alderman Walter Burnett Jr. with the Distinguished Leadership Award; NBC 5 Chicago anchor Marion Brooks with the Excellence in Broadcast Journalism Award and Mariya Russell with the Outstanding Culinary Achievement Award. Russell became the first African American female chef, in the 93-year history of the Michelin-Guide, to earn a star.

Suzanne Le Mignot of CBS 2 Chicago emceed the event. The celebration also included performances from the Jesse White Drum Corps, Jesse White Tumbling Team, the Leo Catholic High School Choir and the Gurdon S. Hubbard High School JROTC.