



**Office of the Governor
JB Pritzker**

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Gov. Pritzker Announces the 2025 Order of Lincoln Recipients

Bonnie Blair, Sandra Cisneros, Jeanne Gang, Janice K. Jackson, Carol Marin, and Julieanna L. Richardson will receive the award on May 3

SPRINGFIELD — Governor JB Pritzker today announced the 2025 recipients of the Order of Lincoln, the state’s highest honor for professional achievement and public service. This year’s Lincoln Laureates will be honored at the upcoming 61st Annual Convocation at 5:30 p.m. on May 3, 2025, at the Krannert Center for the Arts located on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Established in 1964, the Order of Lincoln recognizes individuals who have made remarkable contributions to the betterment of humanity in or on behalf of the State of Illinois. The six recipients join more than 350 distinguished Illinois residents who have joined the Order of Lincoln over the last five decades.

“With world-renowned achievements in athletics, literature, architecture, education, journalism and history, the 2025 class of Lincoln Laureates embody the very best that Illinois has to offer,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “I am proud to uplift their incredible contributions and to award these talented men and women our state’s highest honor.”

This year’s recipients are:

Bonnie Blair, first American woman to win five gold medals at the Olympic Winter Games. She began her monumental career at just four years old in her hometown of Champaign. She made her Olympic debut less than two decades later at the 1984 Sarajevo Games. It was at the 1988 Calgary Games, in the 500 meter, that she earned

her first Olympic gold medal, and in World Record time. Her dominance in the sport continued at the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville where she added two more gold medals. Blair stood atop the podium for her final two gold medals at the 1994 Olympic Games in Lillehammer. Her consistent victories made her the first woman ever to win three consecutive Olympic gold medals in the 500 meter, earning her the recognition of Sports Illustrated Female Athlete of the Year. Since retiring, Blair has worked extensively with the Alzheimer's Association, dedicated to honoring the memory of her mother, Eleanor. Additionally, she extends her tireless fundraising efforts to the American Brain Tumor Association, in memory of her brother, Rob, and the Leukemia Association, in memory of her sister, Mary. A motivational speaker and philanthropist, Blair is also the Director of Community Engagement for the DASH Project Inc, Developing Athletes for Speedskating High-Performance. Adding to her impressive sports accolades, she also has been inducted into the US Speedskating Hall of Fame, Chicagoland Sports Hall of Fame, the Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame, and the United States Olympic Hall of Fame.

Sandra Cisneros, poet, short story writer, novelist, and essayist whose work explores the lives of the working-class. Her numerous awards include NEA fellowships in both poetry and fiction, the Texas Medal of the Arts, a MacArthur Fellowship, the PEN/Nabokov Award for Achievement in International Literature, the National Medal of Arts, the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, and the Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award from the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. Her novel *The House on Mango Street* has sold over eight million copies, has been translated into over twenty-five languages, and is required reading in elementary, high school, and universities across the nation. In 2024, *The House on Mango Street* was published in the Everyman's Library Contemporary Classics Series in recognition of the 40th anniversary of its original publication and in 2025 an opera based on the novel will premiere at The Glimmerglass Festival. Cisneros is a dual citizen of the United States and Mexico. As a single woman, she chose to have books instead of children. She earns her living by her pen.

Jeanne Gang, architect and founding partner of international architecture and urban design practice Studio Gang. Known for a distinctive design approach that expands beyond architecture's conventional boundaries, she creates striking places that strengthen connections between people, their communities, and nature. Her diverse portfolio across the Americas and Europe includes the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation at the American Museum of Natural History; a new United States Embassy in Brazil; and an expansion of the Clinton Presidential Center. A MacArthur Fellow and a Professor in Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Jeanne has been named one of TIME Magazine's most influential people in the world.

Janice K. Jackson, EdD, CEO of Hope Chicago and former CEO of Chicago Public Schools (CPS). She is a Chicago native and one-time schoolteacher who spent her career making instrumental strides in the field of education as the first CPS alum to serve as CPS CEO. In 2003, she helped acquire a \$500,000 grant from the Gates Foundation to

underwrite the establishment of Al Raby High School, later serving as founding principal. Jackson was then tapped to open another, George Westinghouse College Prep, whose success is recognized nationally due to its thriving world language program and partnerships. In 2014, her leadership talents took her into CPS administration, where as a Network Chief she oversaw 26 schools and 14,000 students. She went on to serve as Chief Education Officer, and in 2017, was promoted to CEO. Her 22-year tenure with the district is most notable for the district's results in advancing equitable student outcomes. Jackson departed CPS in 2021 and today serves as CEO of Hope Chicago, a public-private partnership working to drive economic mobility for disinvested communities through scholarships for Chicago families.

Carol Marin, esteemed journalist and Emmy Award-winning reporter. She is a native Illinoisan and University of Illinois graduate. Her career affiliations include WMAQ-TV Chicago, CBS News, "60 Minutes," and the Evening News with Dan Rather. She also served as a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times and was a regular contributor to "Chicago Tonight" on WTTW, a public broadcast station. In 1997, Marin was awarded the prestigious Peabody Award for her body of work. She received another Peabody Award, along with producer Don Moseley, in 1998 for their documentary on the facially disfigured. She is the recipient of national Emmy awards in 1989 and 1998, as well as two Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Awards in 1986 and 1998, for exceptional reporting. The American Women in Radio & Television presented her with the coveted Gracie Award in 2002. Marin Corp Productions, her independent documentary company, began an association with DePaul University in 2003, where, along with Moseley, produced programs for CNN and The New York Times/Discovery Channel. Marin returned to WMAQ in 2004, and two years later, became the station's political editor. Her outstanding journalism once again culminated in industry recognition, this time earning her a third Peabody Award for investigative reporting in 2015 on the police shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald. In 2016, DePaul University launched the Center for Journalism Integrity & Excellence with Marin as co-director, where she continues to help guide students as they prepare for a career in journalism.

Julianna L. Richardson, founder and president of *The HistoryMakers*, a Chicago-based nonprofit, which is a nonpartisan, digital, archival collection of African-American oral histories. She graduated from Brandeis University with a double-major in theatre arts and American studies. Richardson went on to graduate from Harvard Law School in 1980 and started her career as a corporate attorney for the Chicago law firm of Jenner & Block. She later took her first role in the media industry, as cable administrator for the City of Chicago Office of Cable Communications. Richardson founded Shop Chicago, a regional shopping channel, and then created her own production company, SCTN Teleproductions, which managed three local cable channels and served as the local production extension for C-SPAN. In 1999, Richardson began an archive, compiling over 3,500 African American video oral histories. Richardson's archive contains over 348 Illinoisans, more than any other state on record. In 2012, the United States Library of Congress became the permanent repository for Richardson's collection, making it only their second major African American oral history collection. Richardson was

honored as a prominent Chicagoan, receiving the Chicago History Museum's John Hope Franklin Making History Award.

The May 3 ceremony is free and open to the public and will be livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube. A ticketed reception and dinner will immediately follow the ceremony, and tickets must be purchased in advance by April 1.

For further information or to attend the upcoming gala, contact Executive Director Leanne Barnhart at 217-493-0047 or visit www.LincolnAcademyIllinois.org.

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