Cheresa “Reese” LaFrances Purnell is a Strength-based Leadership Development Consultant, Idea Curator, and Certified Masterforce Life Coach. She has used her 17 years of mentoring, facilitating, and training experience in the nonprofit sector to lead and create platforms that support the spiritual, personal and professional development of women leaders and girls of color. Cheresa studied Sociology at Saint Xavier University. She currently works as the Founder and Executive Director of the Young Women Professionals League (YWPL).

The Young Women Professionals League’s mission is to build a network of young professional African American women who support the holistic development of girls as future leaders through the conduits of leadership development, service, philanthropy, and sisterhood. The organization selects 40 rising millennial women leaders who are inducted into the League at their annual award ceremony. The YWPL was founded in 2015 as initiative with Demoiselle 2 Femme, NFP. Since it’s inception the League has inducted three cohorts of women and in just three years the annual awards event is standing room only and has been featured in Rolling Out, Jet Magazine, Ebony, and N’Digo Magapaper.

To date, under Cheresa’s leadership, the Young Women Professionals League has hosted monthly support conference calls and shipped over 150 Care Packages for Demoiselle 2 Femme’s College Connection Program participants; completed 100+ hours of service; hosted quarterly networking events that allowed over 200 young women professionals to connect and receive personal and professional development; participated in over 25-hours of Leadership enhancement sessions with top industry professionals such as Barbara Bates, Amy S. Hilliard, Chrishon Lampley, and Yanni Brown to name a few.

Ms. Purnell began her journey in the nonprofit sector in 2001 as a part-time Outreach Specialist for Demoiselle 2 Femme, NFP (D2F). Over the span of the next fifteen years, Cheresa would work in several capacities to further the organization’s mission. Those positions include Senior Outreach Specialist, Social Media Coordinator, and Education Manager.

In her last position as Education Manager, she was responsible for the development, implementation and training of D2F educational content and curricula. During her time as the Education Manager, Cheresa developed and piloted D2F’s “Pathways to Peace” P2P was first piloted at Fenger High School and reduced suspensions among high-risk girls by 80% over a ten-week period. The impact of P2P has been also been integrated as a strategic goal of the Chicago Coalition on Urban Girls which is convened by D2F. The results of P2P helped develop D2F’s SB100 initiative which is to educate youth and families on school discipline reforms in Illinois.

Aside from her work at D2F and with YWPL, in 2018 she launched her Leadership Development Consulting brand, Reese LaFrances.  Reese teaches good leaders how to become great leaders and great leaders to become excellent leaders. I accomplish this by collaborating with my clients to assess their current leadership styles, using Gallup’s strength-based approach, to determine their area of genius which then provides them with the tools they need to maximize their productivity, boost team engagement, and increase business revenue. As a Certified Master Force Life Coach, Reese also assist clients with releasing personal baggage and overcoming the barriers preventing them from finding the freedom to follow their dreams. She believes healing, happiness, and hope are the key ingredients to live, love, and lead a fulfilling life of limitless possibilities.

Known as a Nonprofit Professional and Award-Winning Community Leader, Cheresa "Reese" LaFrances Purnell has gained a reputation for building platforms that support the personal and professional development of business and community leaders. Through unconventional approaches to leadership development and aggressive creative strategies, Ms. Purnell continues to build a brand that is one of Chicago's premier organizations for young women leaders. If you asked her what motivates her, should say, “I am passionate about empowering millennials to not only connect to what they sell but more importantly to how they serve.” For more information on Cheresa Purnell or the Young Women Professionals League, visit reeselafrances.com or 40under40ywpl.org.