

CREATING WEALTH - A CRITICAL STEP FOR BLACK AMERICA

# Women Leadership

BUSINESS FOR TODAY'S WOMAN

MAGAZINE USA

SPECIAL 2021

## INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS



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## Publisher's Message



**Debra Williams,**  
**Publisher**

**C**ritical Race Theory (CRT) examines social, cultural and legal issues as it relates to race and racism. Why do some people think this is a risky topic of discussion? We need to study the way our society discriminates around race.

The 1619 Project is a study about how slavery transformed America, how racism is embedded in this country. We need to talk about these issues to face the truth about this nation's history in order for us to change and move forward.

- The 1921 Tulsa Massacre in Greenwood, Oklahoma was so violent and destructive towards a successful community of African-Americans known as "Black Wall Street". Black men, women and children murdered, robbed; businesses and homes burned down by a jealous, angry white mob - no accountability.
- The 1923 Rosewood Massacre in Florida that destroyed homes, murdered a community of black citizens driving the survivors out of town - no accountability.
- The 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre of the Lakota Indians in South Dakota on a reservation is an example of 300 men, women and children being murdered by the U.S. Calvary.
- The Provenir Massacre of 1918 in Texas where a ranching community of Latino men and boys were killed by Texas Rangers, vigilantes, and U.S. troops - no accountability,
- The 1871 mass lynching of Asian immigrants in Los Angeles, California where people were viciously stabbed, shot, beaten and hanged by an angry mob.

All of these historical tragedies are a part of racism towards minorities in this country. This is why CRT is necessary. These incidents have gone without any legal or restorative results. These people have descendants that deserve restitution. But it is another reason we need to know and understand our history. We need to stop the continuation of treating minorities as less than human. Violence should always be met with accountability.

Juneteenth is now a federal holiday, June 19, 2021. A baby-step towards recognizing black pain.

*You're not to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it. - Malcolm X*

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### Publisher

Debra Williams

**Writers: Ben Jealous; Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq.; Stacy M. Brown; Robin Berry; Mel and Pearl Shaw; Emil Guillermo; Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms; Lamell McMorris; Ray Curry; Mel and Pearl Shaw; Bo Tef**

### Design and Production

Clarence Brown & Associates



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# Protecting Our Democracy’s Most Fundamental Right – The Right to Vote



By U.S. House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn (D-SC)

Last month, we marked the 58th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech before a quarter of a million people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial. We all know the soaring oratory that Dr. King used to convey his dream of equity and racial harmony. But it was another part of that speech

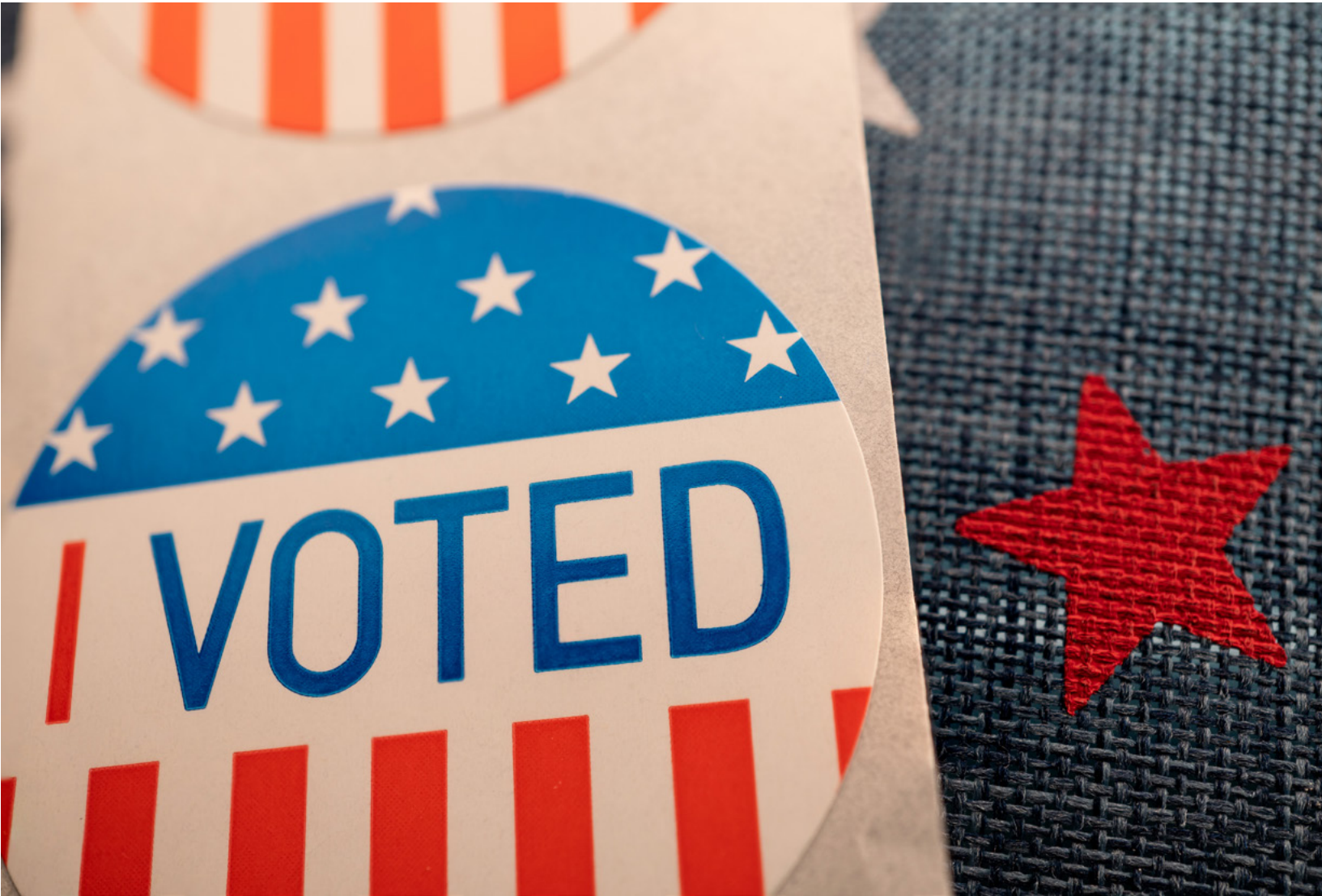
which brought marchers to Washington last month.

Dr. King closed that speech focusing on the darker, more sinister forces that were at work then and seem to be regaining prevalence today. He called out the segregationists with their “lips dripping with nullification and interposition” to prohibit Blacks from gaining equal treatment and voting rights. While today’s language has changed, the intent remains the same. It is disheartening to witness.

It was South Carolinian John C. Calhoun, who my home state continues to celebrate with his statute in the U.S. Capitol, who popularized the notion that southern states could use interposition and nullification to disregard federal laws and Supreme Court decisions that did not comport to their way of thinking. Those that adhered to his philosophy fought and lost a war. That loss ushered in the Reconstruction era, and the

political pendulum swung in favor of Black political participation and equitable treatment. But 12 years later, the pendulum swung back, ushering in the era of Jim Crow which lasted for nearly a century.

The injustices of that era sent Dr. King, John Lewis, and many others into the streets in the 1960s. Those efforts resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and a plethora of legislation known collectively as the



Great Society programs. We succeeded in moving the pendulum back to the left. Now, some 50 years later, forces in the country are pushing the pendulum back to the right. Although nullification and interposition are no longer prominent in our political lexicon, the terms have since been rebranded into the more familiar term known as states’ rights.

Nine years ago, the Supreme Court gutted the pre-clearance protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. That has led to a proliferation of states imposing voter suppression laws. This year, 49 states have introduced bills making it harder to vote. These bills have been enacted into law in 19 states, with two states of the old Confederacy, Georgia and Texas, leading the way with particularly egregious measures.

That is why the Senate must join the House in passing H.R. 1, the For the People Act, and H.R. 4, the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. These

two pieces of legislation are essential to restoring federal oversight of voting. These legislative efforts are being held hostage by the Senate’s filibuster rules, a tradition that has been the preferred method of denying civil and voting rights to minorities.

I have argued that a carve out should be made to the filibuster for constitutionally protected rights, like voting. The Senate already allows a carve out that allows the budget to pass with a simple majority to protect the full faith and credit of the United States. The most fundamental foundation of our democracy is the right to vote, and it should also receive the same consideration.

For some time now I have been calling on the Senate to pass these voter protection measures and stop the political forces who seem determined to reverse the progress made toward realizing Dr. King’s dream and the nation’s pursuit of “a more perfect Union.”

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The injustices of that era sent Dr. King, John Lewis, and many others into the streets in the 1960s. Those efforts resulted in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, ...



# Women, Black, and Hispanic/Latino Workers Underrepresented in US Clean Energy

Report highlights need to advance equity in transition to clean energy

As Congress considers the most significant domestic investment ever made to speed America's transition to clean energy, a new employment report from a collaboration of business, equity, and energy organizations highlights the need for Congress to include funding to advance diversity in clean energy and ensure women, disadvantaged communities, and workers of color are not left out of one of America's great economic expansions.

According to Help Wanted: Diversity in Clean Energy, about 60 percent of clean energy workers across America are non-Hispanic Whites and more than 70 percent are men. Black and Hispanic or Latino workers are underrepresented across clean energy technologies compared to the national average while women hold less than 30 percent of clean energy jobs in all but one state.

The study by BW Research Partnership was done in collaboration with E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), The Alliance to Save Energy, American

Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE), Black Owners of Solar Services (BOSS) and Energy Efficiency for All (EEFA).

Nicole Sitaraman, policy committee chair of BOSS and vice president of strategic engagement at Sustainable Capital Advisors said:

According to Help Wanted: Diversity in Clean Energy, about 60 percent of clean energy workers across America are non-Hispanic Whites and more than 70 percent are men.

"We are living in a climate crisis in which Black communities are suffering disproportionately. Clean energy industries often overlook the innovation,

expertise and insight that Black communities possess. It is time to change that. We will not reach our climate mitigation and adaptation goals without the full participation and leadership of people of color in the clean energy sector. This report presents important data showing the urgency of diversifying this space to achieve an equitable climate resilient future."

Paula Glover, president of the Alliance to Save Energy said:

"With Congress considering a generational investment in our energy system, we cannot let our energy future repeat the mistakes of the past. The energy sector, with its good-paying jobs and benefits, has long been a tool for economic mobility, and this report confirms that investments in the clean energy economy need to be about more than just the "clean" factor – they also need to be about building a more equitable economy. The energy efficiency sector is the largest employer in clean energy, with a two-million-strong workforce only expected to grow as we get serious about climate action. I



strongly urge Congress to make targeted investments to ensure these opportunities are more diverse and inclusive for all Americans."

Bob Keefe, executive director of E2 said: "Clean energy is one of the fastest-growing sectors of our economy, but it has a real diversity problem. As Congress and state lawmakers consider legislation to ramp-up clean energy and the jobs and investments that come with it, they must also ensure all Americans have access to the opportunities and benefits that come with a cleaner economy. Building back better also means building back more equitably."

Phil Jordan, vice president at BW Research said:

"Today's report demonstrates that we have work to do to increase diversity in the energy sector. If we couple accessible education and training and support diverse supply chains with infrastructure investments that will decarbonization the economy, we can ensure a more equitable energy sector and provide economic opportunity for communities too often left on the sidelines."

The study expands on data from the 2021 U.S. Energy and Employment Report (USEER) produced by the U.S.

Today's report demonstrates that we have work to do to increase diversity in the energy sector. If we couple accessible education and training and support diverse supply chains with infrastructure investments...

Department of Energy. Among the specific findings:

- Black workers represent about 8 percent of the clean energy labor force, compared with about 13 percent of the nation's total workforce.
- Hispanic/Latino workers represent nearly 17 percent of the clean energy workforce, slightly less than the 18 percent they represent in the overall national workforce.
- About 8 percent of clean energy workers are Asian, slightly higher than

their presence in the national workforce, while Pacific Islanders and Alaska and other native Americans each make up about 1 percent of the clean energy workforce.

- Women hold about 27 percent of clean energy jobs, compared with 48 percent of all jobs nationally.
- Black, Asian, Indigenous, and multiracial workers account for about 27 percent of clean energy jobs.

Broadly, clean energy is about on par with the fossil fuel industry and the overall energy workforce when it comes to diversity.

Women, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian workers generally hold a higher percentage of jobs in renewable energy than clean energy sectors. Black workers, however, are less likely to work in renewable energy generation or energy efficiency, but fare better in clean storage, grid modernization and clean vehicles occupations.

The report also includes data for every state and the District of Columbia. South Carolina, Maryland and New York have the highest percentage of Blacks in clean energy, while New Mexico, California and Hawaii have the highest percentage of Hispanic or Latino workers. Data for



Demographic	US Labor Force	Total Energy Workforce	Clean Energy Workforce	Fossil Fuel Workforce
Black/African American	13%	10%	8%	9%
Asian	7%	7%	8%	6%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	<1%	1%	1%	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%	2%	1%	2%
Two or more races	2%	8%	8%	9%
People of Color	22%	28%	27%	26%
Hispanic/Latino	18%	16%	17%	13%
Women	48%	25%	27%	27%

specific occupations in clean energy – such as wind turbine and solar installers and technicians, plumbers, welders, HVAC technicians and insulation installers – also is included.

The report outlines numerous policy recommendations for Congress and state lawmakers, including:

- Investments in better education, training and apprenticeship programs for members of historically underserved communities.
- Creation of “green banks” and other financing mechanisms to jump-start clean energy companies and jobs, with specific metrics for minority owned companies and communities.
- Enforcement of funding and performance targets for efficiency programs in under-resourced communities.
- Financing requirements to ensure underserved communities directly benefit from any clean energy facilities – such as solar or wind farms, gigafactories, or clean vehicle factories – built in their neighborhoods.

For more information or for interview requests, please contact Ben Finzel (202-277-6286, [ben@renewpr.com](mailto:ben@renewpr.com)) or Michael Timberlake (913-645-9103; [mtimberlake@e2.org](mailto:mtimberlake@e2.org)).

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# For All the People, By All the People

By Ray Curry, Secretary-Treasurer, UAW

Our nation was founded on a profound principle — a government that is chosen by the people. Granted, this extraordinary experiment as it was called in the early years of our constitution, was not conceived perfectly and has always required vigilance and determination. But I believe that Americans from coast to coast, from every walk of life, from the founding fathers to those determined Georgians who stood in line for hours this past January to send their choice for U.S. Senate to Washington, are united in the idea that we, the people, should choose our leaders. We, the people, have the right to participate in this great democracy of ours with our vote. We have fought and died for this right.

More people than ever voted in the last presidential election. Both parties won and lost. Americans, Black, White and Brown, young and old, turned out in the middle of the worst pandemic the world has seen in generations to say: 'As an American, I have the right to cast my vote for who will represent me in this government of ours.'

So... I have to ask you, if the system worked so well and if the idea is, as Alexander Hamilton and James Madison put it in the Federalist Papers, that the vote belongs to the people, then what are we doing? Why is there vote-robbing legislation being introduced in so many states? Why are we trying to silence so many people, especially so many people who are Black and Brown from coast to coast?

I think we all know the answer. I would say, look who's back. But he has never really left, has he?

Hello Jim Crow?

Let's take a look at just a few of these proposals. As of late March, we have seen a whopping 361 bills introduced in state legislatures in 47 states that seek restrictive voting provisions. Even more



telling is the number of these provisions that are being touted as 'election reforms' or protections against 'voter fraud.'

The truth, according to numerous academic studies and journalistic reviews, is that election and voter fraud historically have been incredibly rare and affected but a tiny percentage of all votes in the 21st century.

We have heard this language before. It is in fact, the same tenor and tone that was used during the Jim Crow era to describe voter suppression measures. Then, like now, there was no evidence of rampant voter fraud or voting irregularities. In essence, these measures

are touted as reforms for a problem that simply does not exist.

The truth, according to numerous academic studies and journalistic reviews, is that election and voter fraud historically have been incredibly rare and affected but a tiny percentage of all votes in the 21st century. To put it another way, the Brennan Center for Justice concluded that it was more likely for an American to be struck by lightning than to commit voter fraud.

Nearly half of the voter restrictions measures that have been introduced include provisions to restrict absentee voting. More than 40 bills have also been introduced relating to voter registration that would purge people from the voter rolls and 24 dealing with early voting.

Whose America is this?

I would call this bad trouble. I am thinking of the late Congressman John Lewis, who fought so tirelessly when it came to voting rights and who called his fight making good trouble. Right now, we have bad trouble going on in almost 50 states. Let's take a look at two — Georgia, where Black voters were so influential



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in tipping the balance of the Senate, and Michigan, where I live.

In 2020, a record 1.3 million Georgians — more than a quarter of the electorate — voted absentee in the middle of the pandemic. Before the new restrictions, all that was needed was a matching signature. The new law took care of that. Voters looking for that absentee ballot now will have to provide the number of their Georgia’s driver’s license or state identification, along with a birth certificate and possibly a copy of a bank statement or a current utility bill. Records show that about 200,000 Georgians don’t have drivers licenses or a state ID. Three different voting rights groups say that Black voters are less likely than White voters to have the needed ID.

Then there are provisional ballots. Old law said you could still have your vote counted if you show up at the wrong precinct in the same county. The new law says no out-of-precinct votes cast before 5 p.m. Black voters, it turns out, move much more frequently than White voters and consequently are more apt to turn up at

the wrong precinct. Voting by drop box has also been made more difficult with changed hours and locations.

Later to the game but no less ugly is Michigan, which has introduced eight of these types of bills with three advancing so far. Should they make it into law, they

**Inclusion, the principle that America was founded upon, hangs in the balance. Are we for the people by the people? Or for some, by some?**

would establish a photo ID requirement for both in-person and mail voting; make it harder to even ask for a mail ballot; and would limit the use of mail ballot drop boxes.

Fighting the good fight

Of course, actual democracy is not taking kindly to Jim Crow’s return. In addition to the sweeping For the People Act (H.R. 1), there are lawsuits filed in the wake of Georgia’s voter suppression measures aimed at stopping Republicans from selecting who gets to vote there. Three groups, including one headed by voting rights champion Stacy Abrams, came together in the suit calling the legislation an effort to impose “unconstitutional burdens on the right to vote”— particularly for Black voters.

President Joe Biden has called voter suppression efforts “sick” and went on to say, “What I’m worried about is how un-American this whole initiative is.”

So, the fight goes on. Inclusion, the principle that America was founded upon, hangs in the balance. Are we for the people by the people? Or for some, by some?

Like I said, I think justice will win out. I think it’s a fight worth fighting for. I also think it is a fight we should not be having — not now, not ever again, if we are to call ourselves a democracy.

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# Taking on Abusive and Deadly Policing With New DOJ Leadership

President Biden has spoken personally about the importance of ending police violence and reimagining public safety.

By Ben Jealous, Trice Edney News Wire

Thanks to the voters who elected President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, we now have a Department of Justice that actually cares about justice.

And I am not just talking about justice as an idea. I am talking about a Department of Justice that is willing to take on abusive policing and law enforcement agencies that are corrupted by racism.

In his first month on the job, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland reversed a Trump-era policy that made it harder for the Justice Department to investigate police departments and hold them accountable for violating people’s civil rights.

And he was just getting started. In the past few weeks, the Justice Department has announced that it is starting an investigation of the police departments in Minneapolis—where George Floyd was murdered by former officer Derek Chauvin while other officers watched.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO has called the city’s police union a white supremacist-led organization.

Patterns and practices  
The Justice Department has also launched an investigation of policing practices in Louisville, where Breonna Taylor was shot to death in her own home.

**The Justice Department has also launched an investigation of policing practices in Louisville, where Breonna Taylor was shot to death in her own home.**

These investigations will look at more than those individual killings. This kind of “patterns and practices” investigation looks at the big picture to determine whether and how a law enforcement agency is violating people’s civil rights.

They are a way to evaluate— and do something about—the impact that systemic racism has in a police department and the communities it is supposed to serve.

“Patterns and practices” investigations can lead to consent decrees—agreements that require police departments to change the way they operate, with oversight from the Justice Department to make sure change actually happens.

In the past, Justice Department investigations and consent decrees have been important tools for getting violent police behavior under control and changing abusive cultures in out-of-control departments.

When the Trump administration shut down this kind of investigation, it sent a signal to police departments that the Justice Department would look the other way rather than hold them responsible for misconduct.

Of course, Trump himself repeatedly made it clear that he was not opposed to violent policing. In fact, he encouraged it.

Important steps  
President Biden has spoken personally about the importance of ending police



violence and reimagining public safety. He has called on Congress to pass the imperfect but important George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

Another good sign was the announcement that the FBI is doing a civil rights investigation of the killing of Andrew Brown, Jr., who was shot in the back of the head by police in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

All of these are important steps in protecting Americans, especially Black Americans, from abusive policing.

President Biden has also spoken out against Republicans’ racist efforts to pass new voting restrictions in states all over the country.

Biden has called those efforts “sick” – and we can count on his Justice Department to do what they can to challenge voter suppression – even though rightwing justices on the U.S. Supreme Court have greatly weakened the tools that the Voting Rights Act gave the department to prevent Black voters from having their rights denied.

Greater justice coming  
The Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has just written the Arizona Senate president to raise concerns that

**Another good sign was the announcement that the FBI is doing a civil rights investigation of the killing of Andrew Brown, Jr., who was shot in the back of the head by police in Elizabeth City, North Carolina.**

a bogus “audit” of ballots from last year’s presidential election that is being conducted by private contractors from the so-called “Stop the Steal” movement could be violating the Voting Rights Act.

There are more signs that we can expect changes at the Justice Department. Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta, who was recently confirmed by the U.S. Senate, started her career as a civil rights attorney by winning freedom for dozens of mostly Black people wrongly jailed in

a small Texas town.

And the Senate should soon confirm Kristen Clarke to head the civil rights division, where she started her legal career investigating police conduct, hate crimes, and human trafficking.

Together with President Biden and Attorney General Garland, Gupta and Clarke will save lives, defend civil rights, and give millions of Americans hope that greater justice is coming.

Ben Jealous is president of People For the American Way and People For the American Way Foundation. He also is the former president and CEO of the NAACP.





# Creating Wealth — A Critical Step for Black America

By Lamell McMorris, Washington Informer

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the recent attack on the U.S. Capitol in which domestic terrorists with Confederate flags and white nationalist symbols, has shaken America to its core. This is the moment to confront America's racist past and present. Though we are not denying America's achievement as the first constitutional democracy, we must also acknowledge that centuries of slavery and racist policies have not yet been resolved. Last year, after the tragic and publicized killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless more, Americans began to reckon not only with police brutality but the glaring racial inequities in economic prosperity, interactions with the criminal justice system and access to the voting booth. Now, with COVID-19 disproportionately devastating the Black community, the

systemic inequities are clear and people are motivated for change. We need to build on this momentum and pass sweeping legislative policies that uproot the deeply embedded racism in our country.

First, the racial wealth and homeownership gap needs to be deliberately corrected. The median net

**The median net worth of Black households in 2016 was just \$17,150, compared to \$171,000 for White households.**

worth of Black households in 2016 was just \$17,150, compared to \$171,000 for White households. Homeownership, a key step in creating generational wealth, is still skewed, as the racial homeownership gap is today wider than it was in the 1940s. The devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated this economic inequality. In addition to the disparate health impacts, COVID has also had much worse effects on Black businesses. A recent report by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that 41 percent of Black-owned businesses—about 440,000 enterprises—have been shuttered by COVID-19, compared to just 17 percent of white-owned businesses. It is critical to focus on growing and supporting Black-owned businesses through providing access to business loans, promoting widespread financial literacy (including stock market and real estate investment education) and

financing entrepreneurial incubators that develop community businesses.

It is also critical to provide financial support to historically Black colleges and universities that are educating future Black leaders. Indeed, rather than investing in education, states spend exorbitant amounts of money on our mass incarceration system—some states have spent as much on prisons as on universities. Far too many people are incarcerated (we have less than five percent of the world's population but nearly 25 percent of its prisoners), many for non-violent crimes and resulting in unnecessary costs to the state. This money needs to be redistributed, particularly due to the fact that African Americans continue to be disproportionately targeted by the prison system—African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of whites. This also exacerbates the racial wealth gap. Our broken criminal justice system is more likely to imprison poor people who then are passed over for jobs once they are released due to their past criminal history so they remain unable to achieve financial stability, continuing the cycle of poverty.

Of course, an important way to exert legislative change is through voting. However, the criminal justice system connects to the disenfranchisement of Black Americans. Millions of Americans are barred from voting due to past

criminal convictions, an injustice that is a relic of our Jim Crow past as Black Americans are disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system. Racial inequity in voting doesn't stop there—after the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in 2013, laws have sprung up across the country that suppress turnout of Black Americans and other racial minority groups. The federal government needs to pass a comprehensive voting rights bill that addresses racially targeted voter suppression. These problems are all intertwined and difficult to parse through, yet the only way to progress towards solving them is through dramatic legislative action that confronts systemic racism in its many forms.

We are at an inflection point when it comes to racial justice. After a traumatizing year, we have the opportunity now to recognize the deeper work that needs to happen to confront systemic racism. We are at a point where we need to realize that, despite the various accomplishments of America, we are a deeply flawed nation stained by centuries of slavery, Jim Crow laws, banking discrimination, red-lining segregation and mass incarceration which have yet to be resolved. To be clear, we can certainly celebrate America's history of achievements, but we must also honestly assess our past and confront, through legislative action, the lingering

**We are at an inflection point when it comes to racial justice. After a traumatizing year, we have the opportunity now to recognize the deeper work that needs to happen to confront systemic racism.**

obstacles placed on Black Americans.

Lamell McMorris is the founding principal of Greenlining Realty USA, a real estate redevelopment firm aimed at redressing the effects of redlining. McMorris is a lifelong advocate of civil, economic and social rights, currently serving on the national boards of the National Action Network, the National Urban League and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. He previously served on the national board of the NAACP and as the Executive Director and COO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is founder and CEO of the Washington, DC-based strategic advisory firm Phase 2 Consulting.



# American Business Leaders **Step Up to Fight** Inequities in the South

By Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., President and CEO, National Newspaper Publishers Association

**E**ven as the pandemic has laid bare societal inequities that have been eroding the foundation of our democracy, political leaders in Washington and in state capitols are mired in a level of rancor and partisanship not seen since the ideological struggles over the Vietnam War. This toxic atmosphere has left them incapable of addressing pressing, yet ingrained issues like the racial wealth gap, the digital divide, and vast inequalities in everything from health care to home ownership.

With COVID-19 still an omnipresent concern and the country's recovery still very much in jeopardy, individuals, families, and communities – particularly communities of color throughout the South – are struggling to deal with issues that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

From impediments to wealth creation opportunities and a dearth of education and workforce development to a lack of access to reliable broadband, substandard housing, and inadequate political representation, communities of color

have suffered an outsized toll during the ongoing public health crisis.

Yet political leaders can't even agree on basic facts that would allow the nation to implement a coherent

**With COVID-19 still an omnipresent concern and the country's recovery still very much in jeopardy, individuals, families, and communities – particularly communities of color throughout the South – are struggling to deal with issues that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.**

national strategy for combatting a pandemic that appears to be entering a new wave amid the rise of the highly contagious Delta variant that is currently ravaging parts of the South.

Against that disillusioning backdrop, there is at least some reason for hope. Moving to fill the vacuum created by the inaction of our political class, a group of business leaders in the technology and investment sectors have embarked on a far-reaching – and perhaps unprecedented – campaign to address the social inequities and systemic racism that has historically plagued our country's southern communities.

Known as the Southern Communities Initiative (SCI), the campaign was founded by financial technology company PayPal, the investment firm Vista Equity Partners (Vista), and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG).

SCI was formed to work with local elected officials and advocacy groups to tackle the ubiquitous problems of structural racism and inequalities facing communities of color in six

communities throughout the South. SCI notes that these areas – Atlanta, Birmingham, Charlotte, Houston, Memphis, and New Orleans – were chosen in part because they are home to around 50 percent of the country's Black population and are where some of the greatest disparities exist.

SCI is aiming to drive long-term change, as outlined by PayPal CEO Dan Schulman, Vista CEO Robert F. Smith and BCG CEO Rich Lesser. In Atlanta, for example, SCI is working to bridge the wealth gap that exists among the region's African American residents. While there is a strong Black business community in the city, and high levels of Black educational achievement thanks to the regional presence of several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and the voice of the Black Press, there is still an extremely low level of Black entrepreneurship and business ownership with only six percent of employer firms being Black-owned.

To remedy this disparity, SCI is working with the Southern Economic Advancement Project to create entrepreneurship hubs and accelerator programs to increase the number of minority-owned businesses. The corporations behind SCI are also using their networks to help other companies work with minority-owned supply companies.

In Alabama, SCI is seeking to bridge the massive digital divide in an urban area where 450,000 households are without connection to the internet. In order to tackle the crisis, SCI is leveraging relationships with local schools and libraries to distribute laptops and service vouchers. Another tact SCI is taking is to partner with the owners of multi-unit buildings in low-income neighborhoods to install free public Wi-Fi for residents.

The lack of access to capital is another reason Black communities throughout the South have been traditionally underbanked. In Memphis, where 47 percent of Black households are underbanked, SCI is partnering with Grameen America to cover the \$2 million per year



per branch start-up cost to build brick-and-mortar banks in minority communities. This alone will provide 20,000 women access to more than \$250 million per year in financing.

Beyond these initiatives, SCI is partnering with groups like the Greater Houston Partnership and the Urban League of Louisiana to provide in-kind support to improve job outcomes for minority college students, expand access to home financing through partnerships with community development financial institutions, and harness the power of technology to expand health care access in underserved urban and rural neighborhoods.

The issues facing these communities throughout the South are not new nor will they be fixed overnight. Fortunately, SCI is taking a long-term approach that is focused on getting to the root of structural racism in the United States and creating a more just and equitable country for every American.

A once-in-a-century pandemic and a social justice movement not seen since the 1960s were not enough to break the malaise and rancorous partisanship in Washington. Fortunately, corporate leaders are stepping up and partnering with local advocates and non-profit groups to fix the problem of systemic injustice in the U.S.

We, therefore, salute and welcome the transformative commitments of the Southern Communities Initiative (SCI). There is no time to delay,

because as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. so accurately said, "The time is always right to do what is right."

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. is President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA) and Executive Producer and host of The Chavis Chronicles on PBS TV stations throughout the United States. He can be reached at [dr.bchavis@nnpa.org](mailto:dr.bchavis@nnpa.org).

**The lack of access to capital is another reason Black communities throughout the South have been traditionally underbanked. In Memphis, where 47 percent of Black households are underbanked, SCI is partnering with Grameen America to cover the \$2 million per year per branch start-up cost to build brick-and-mortar banks in minority communities.**



# Renee Montgomery Makes History in Purchasing WNBA's Atlanta Dream

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire  
Senior National Correspondent

**R**enee Montgomery, a two-time WNBA champion and vice president of the Atlanta Dream, has purchased a stake in the franchise and is now co-owner. Montgomery is the first retired player to own and serve as an executive of a WNBA team.

The superstar and her two partners, Larry Gottesdiener and Suzanne Abair of Northland Investment Corp. take over the team that was once co-owned by former U.S. Sen. Kelley Loeffler (D-Ga.).

"With the unanimous WNBA and NBA [board] votes, marks a new beginning for the Atlanta Dream organization, and we are very pleased to welcome Larry Gottesdiener and Suzanne Abair to the WNBA," Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said in a statement.

"I am also thrilled that former WNBA star Renee Montgomery will be joining the ownership group as an investor and executive for the team. Renee is a trailblazer who has made a major impact both in the game and beyond," Englebert added.

Selected fourth overall in the 2009 WNBA draft, Montgomery appeared in 364 games. She played in 37 playoff games and twice won the WNBA title as a Minnesota Lynx member.

She matched the WNBA regular-season record with eight made three-pointers in 2018 and notched her 500th career trey in 2019 – making her just the 13th player in league history to accomplish that feat.

Last November, Montgomery proved

a champion in another venue: political activism. She joined Stacey Abrams and other women of color to push voter participation and inclusion, ultimately helping President Joe Biden win Georgia and the White House.

Those efforts also led to Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff winning



the Senate and grabbing the majority in the upper chamber.

"My dream has come true," Montgomery declared. "Breaking barriers for minorities and women by being the first former WNBA player to have both an ownership stake and a leadership role with the team is an opportunity that I take very seriously."

Van Brooks, the founder and executive director of the nonprofit SAFE Alternative Foundation for Education, also praised Montgomery.

"Back in March, at the beginning of the pandemic, we reached out to Renee Montgomery to join our Together, We Can virtual program as a host," Brooks wrote in an email. (You can watch her class here.)

"She was ecstatic to help because the Virtual Program was created to help people. It provided people of all ages with a fun and educational, social outlet to combat the isolation brought on by nationwide quarantine," Brooks continued.

"Renee Montgomery's amazing work ethic, WNBA accomplishments, and passion for helping people have positively impacted the lives of many. "From a star player on the team to co-owner, she is a woman making history that serves as an inspiration for many, and that includes our students."

"Many of our students love sports and have an aspiration to become professional sports players. Renee Montgomery's path has started a conversation around other career options associated with their favorite sport by focusing on their academics."

"Thank you, Renee Montgomery, for serving as an amazing role model for our students and many more."



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# Participating as a Subcontractor to Northrop Grumman Corporation

By Cynthia Washington

An Interview with Gwendolyn Tillman,  
Corporate Director, Global Supplier Diversity  
Programs for Northrop Grumman

**W**ashington: My company, Washington Concepts (WCI), devised a 14 book series, Federal Contracting Made Simple, and then turned it into a seminar, which is used by SBA. So we help businesses go from entrepreneur to government contractor, taking them from one dimension to the next. And we've grown companies from zero in revenue to \$20 million. WCI held the largest procurement fair under the Clinton administration for small/minority, veteran, and women owned businesses. We basically bought 112 federal agencies in the DC area to the White House and literally formed a procurement fair. A lot of vendors were awarded \$4 million on the spot just from using our system.

I'm very excited to find out more about Northrop Grumman contracting programs. Can you start by just telling us a little bit about your position and who you are and what you've done?

**Tillman:** So I'm actually celebrating my 34th year at Northrop Grumman. I've worked in the defense industry my entire career starting with General Dynamics, then came to Northrop Grumman. Of my 34 years I've been in the supply and diversity arena for a little over 20 years. I enjoy what I do. I've been with Northrop Grumman so long because I feel we have the same type of values. I'm a person that is very much a believer in national security and keeping our nation secure. Northrop Grumman does that by providing the products and services it does. The company is a very strong ethics based organization, very hard working. We work very hard to satisfy our customers, and meet their objectives.

**Washington:** Can you tell us a little bit about the structure of Northrop Grumman? The company is so arduous and complex. Make it simple for us to understand.

**Tillman:** First of all, any company large or small that's



interested in doing business with Northrop Grumman should contact the supplier diversity office. Our job is to help companies navigate the maze, so to speak. Our company has 90,000 employees strong across the nation and the world.

We are comprised of four independent business sectors under the umbrella of Northrop Grumman. The first sector is aeronautics system sector headquartered in Palmdale, California. And it is the site where the organization performs a lot of our aircraft manufacturing autonomous systems activity. Another business sector is our defense systems sector headquartered in McLean, Virginia. The defense systems is a complimentary sector to aeronautics in that defense systems provides a lot of the aircraft sustainment support to the platforms that we build for our customers. They also provide training and simulation support, and other various types of support to our troops nationwide and worldwide. Another business sector is our mission systems business unit that's headquartered in Linthicum, Maryland. That's basically just outside of Baltimore. Mission systems is where our cyber activity and intelligence activity is, as well as electronic sensors and defense electronics. Then finally, our newest sector is space systems business unit headquartered in Dallas, Texas. As you can tell by the name, it is where our satellites and all things space are housed.

**Washington:** This is very helpful information for the

small business community to understand how they can target working with Northrop Grumman. This also tells you based on geography and depending on what your company is doing in that particular location, what division you should focus on.

Can you give us any advice you would have for small/minority, veteran and women owned businesses when they're interested in working with Northrop Grumman?

**Tillman:** First and foremost, know your customer. So we encourage any company that's interested in doing business with us to visit our website, NorthropGrummanm.com and get to know us get to understand what we produce, who our customers are, because that goes a long way in helping a company to determine whether or not the product or service that they provide would be used by Northrop Grumman, or someone else within our industry. Also, again, knowing who our customers are, that's very important as well, because once you know who our customers are, you have a better understanding of the types of captures we're looking to pursue. And also small businesses can meet the small business professional within the different services, and become familiar with them in order to begin developing relationships. Relationship building is very important for small businesses, when they're attempting to do business with a company like Northrop Grumman. Getting to know the Small Business liaison officers within the company is important as well, because, again, it's all about the relationship. We do business with people we know and are familiar with. So developing a relationship, making sure that you can communicate what your value proposition is to the company, what you bring to the table, is very important.

**Washington:** Those are great tips. You almost said exactly what we said in our book series. Know your customer, do your homework. They know if you didn't do your homework. Simple things like you mentioned going to the website; see those four different areas Northrop Grumman is located in, to focus on the location you can travel to and service. I always tell companies not to market to people that can't buy from you. That is where a lot of small businesses waste their money.

**Tillman:** We maintain a section on our website dedicated to small businesses to provide them resources. We also post what we buy. So if nothing else, they can go on our website, www.northropgrumman.com/suppliers see what we buy. It lists all the different types of commodities we typically buy. So if you're a company that provides electronic parts, you can certainly go and take a look.

All I need to do is ask, who I should speak to about when we're buying more electronic parts, or what types and what programs they would support. And again, that the model supplier, in our mind is someone who's very prepared to ask the right questions, not just, Hi, I'm interested in doing business. What do you do? Hi, I'm interested in doing business with

Northrop Grumman. Here's what I do. Here's what my value is to you. I'm interested in X, Y, and Z programs. And I typically would talk to a program manager, can you help me get to the right person?

**Washington:** You want to know the person that's going to purchase your services. And usually, like I said, business owners spend a lot of time and money with people who cannot buy from them, or don't buy enough of what they sell. Where would they find that list of small business liaison officers? Is that also on your website?

**Tillman:** Absolutely. We have about 30 small business liaison officers throughout the company. And they're located all over the country. So if you're interested in speaking with someone who's in a local area, you can do that. If you're interested in speaking with someone who is tied to the cyber business area, we can direct them that way. So it's all in doing the homework to know how to approach the company and to ask the questions that get you to where you need to be.

**Washington:** Making that information readily accessible to us, as small/minority, veteran and women owned businesses is key. Because a lot of the agencies don't, it's hidden in plain sight, as I call it.

**Tillman:** And that's why we partner with a lot of the trade associations locally and nationally. Of course, you're familiar with National Minority Suppliers Development Council (NMSDC) and various others. We partner with them to make sure that information about how to contract is available.

**Washington:** And one of the things that we're doing with NASA is directing more small minority businesses to them who can work with all of their primes. So we know that GM is the first one to do the presentation. But then we have AI, we have SpaceX, we have many of them coming. These companies don't have enough minority participation, so WCI is helping them improve that effort. I'm all for teaching the business community

how to fish. That's what our book series does. We allow them to learn how to how to get paid on time, and then they can do it on their own. We don't want them to keep coming back to us, or go to an accountant, learn how to do that for yourself. WCI's motto, "teach them how to fish", they'll be able to fish forever.

What are some of the methods Northrop Grumman has used to attract diversity; diverse vendors, minorities, women- and veteran-owned business?

**Tillman:** For one thing, as I mentioned before, we partner with a lot of the ethnic trade associations such as the Black Business Association, Latin Business Association, Asian Business Association, we partner with them as well as with our agency customers with SBA Procurement Technical Assistance

*We encourage any company that's interested in doing business with us to visit our website, NorthropGrummanm.com and get to know us get to understand what we produce, who our customers are...*





Centers. We utilize those contacts, and attend outreach events sponsored by our customers and by the PTAC and various others as opportunities for outreach to small businesses. We may sponsor anything we may attend, we may speak at events. We do matchmaking at many events and maintain a very aggressive outreach program for that reason. And we utilize those opportunities to meet with small businesses as much as we can. And of course, in this COVID-19 era, obviously, things have changed in terms of how we do it. But we haven't stopped doing it, we're just doing it virtually.

**Washington:** That's great! It's very helpful when the entities have a pretty aggressive program, businesses aren't left to try to figure it all out on their own. So thank you for that.

Can you tell us some of the outreach programs to attract and prepare these vendors? What we found from some primes like Pearson, a large contractor in Florida, and we're helping with this is that they will put out programs, connect with those other entities that you mentioned, but within there's a next step in preparing that vendor for actually doing business with them? What kind of steps do you take to prepare those businesses for doing business with Northrop Grumman? With our technical assistance we have created programs for prime contractors preparing vendors on how to do business with them. These are the next steps to outreach. So what programs do you have to actually prepare them for doing business with you?

**Tillman:** Well, basically, just like we're talking right now, we're talking about how to do business, we do that directly with the suppliers. And we offer them advice. We do a lot of informal mentoring, as well, where companies may just call and say, Hey, you know, I'm not sure if we're actually ready to do business with you. But I want to take the opportunity to just talk with you maybe have you look at our capability statements, see if it makes sense, if this is what you're looking for, as a prime contractor looking for small businesses to do business with. And so we gave advice, as well to companies that are interested in doing business, and we're very upfront with them and say, you know, hear you need to make some changes to what you've provided us, because, you know, you need to be more succinct about your message, you need to be very clear about what you do, how to contact you, what your NAICS codes are, that you

fall under. So we give them advice about what is typically the types of information our program managers or our procurement managers are looking for to determine whether or not you're a company that we want to do business with it. It may be something as simple as, don't forget to include your website on your on your flyer. And then sometimes we have we say to them, you know, no, you're not ready to do business with us, we suggest you get some additional training. Let me direct you to the PTAC , who provides training or to other resources to help you get to that point. And then also, we do remind companies, you don't have to do business with the big business. It's great to partner with small businesses. That's a way for you to develop past performance, which of course, we're always looking for, is a track record of your performance. So if you don't have a lot of past performance, one way to do that is to possibly enroll in a program and develop a track record that way or pair up with agency customers to start getting business so that you can develop a track record, which would then make you more attractive to larger companies to do business with you, though. We provide that type of advice all the time to companies, whether through the outreach that we do or just one on one.

**Washington:** One of the challenges that we found in federal procurement was that there are a lot of unqualified vendors that will never get contracts from them, because they don't have past performance, they don't have the the real knowledge of doing business with the government or a prime contractor. So, again, that's why WCI created a system to became the only company who has a co-sponsorship with the US Small Business Administration to prepare those companies to offer that technical assistance. Because they have to be procurement ready. Either you're qualified or you're not. How do we help you through this process? You're not qualified yet or how to team with another business? We're big on teaming. A lot of times we always tell companies, you can do more together than you can alone. Exactly. We support the SBA's teaming Center in Washington, D.C. this is an organization under the U.S. Commerce Department's MBA program. And they basically help companies team. Does Northrop Grumman have a regular outreach program every month or every year?

**Tillman:** In addition to the types of outreach that I described, we have what we call a small business advocacy team within the company that's made up of the Small Business liaison officers. And what we do is we host meetings, monthly, maybe bi monthly, it all depends where we have suppliers come in and introduce their company to our organization. And typically, we focus on companies that may have capabilities that could span multiple business sectors. And so we invite the Small Business liaison officers to participate. We get their information in advance so that we can ask them questions about their capabilities and their performance. And we also invite other organizations, we may invite our procurement people, we may invite engineering, depending on the type of company it is, but we utilize those sessions as an opportunity for the small business to introduce themselves to the company, and to also be able to get some feedback from us in terms of whether or not their capability is something that we need now or something

we may potentially need. Some companies are interested in our mentor protege program. So we talked to them about that, or about possibly doing research and development for the company. So it's just a great opportunity overall, for companies to showcase what their capabilities are, and to have the right people in the room to give them feedback in regards to next steps. If there's interest. And if there isn't at this point in time, that's okay, as well. That's one of the things we have to do as small business liaison officers as well is to temper expectations and let companies know that okay. You made a presentation. That's the first step. Now, you begin to cultivate the relationship you begin to develop contact so that you can determine when is a good place for you to insert to support a potential opportunity coming up. And also, we work with companies that are interested in teaming with us as well. So we encourage them if they're interested in teaming to bring an opportunity to us, we'll match them up with a program manager to see to determine Is this an opportunity that Northrop Grumman would like to partner on? Or is this something that we would be a subcontractor to the small business on? It all depends on what the opportunity is. But we're open to partnering with small businesses as well. So we encourage that.

**Washington:** And where would they find the information about your outreach programs?

**Tillman:** On our website, [www.NorthropGrumman.com/suppliers](http://www.NorthropGrumman.com/suppliers), we maintain a wide variety of information, not only the names and contact information for the Small Business liaison officers themselves, but it gives links to information about the company about what we buy and other resources, such as our agency, customer websites, we encourage our suppliers to get to know our agency customers as well, because they can be advocates for them as well. So I don't think many companies really realize that, but the customer is an advocate just as we are. So developing that relationship can definitely help them to open doors to gain access as well.

**Washington:** That's definitely a great resource to go back to your customers and make certain that they can be an ally for them too. It's all about getting results.. What would you say is the biggest challenges that small minority businesses face when attempting to do business with Northrop Grumman?

**Tillman:** Over the time that I've been a small business liaison officer, I'd say, there's a couple of things, not being prepared is number one. We've done outreach for years, and we have companies that may very well be very qualified to do business, but they're not prepared to have the conversation. And so we encourage suppliers that are interested in doing business just to be prepared to have the conversation; know what your value proposition is. Know who you typically would speak with within the company. Know what program or what activity you're interested in. Be able to articulate to us how we can help you. If it's just getting you to the program manager that you need to speak to, or if it's getting you connected with someone at a local site. The more information you can provide us as small business leaders, liaison officers, the better because that's what we're here to do is to help the companies steer their way through the maze of a large company like Northrop Grumman.

**Washington:** And then our last question, please share what you believe will help diverse contractors reach the decision makers in Northrop Grumman, in a nutshell? Please reiterate those really key points of reaching the decision makers.

**Tillman:** Again, just being prepared by understanding what the company does, understanding how they as the small business can bring value to us how you can solve a problem for us, help us to steer you in the correct direction, tempering your expectations, understanding that things don't happen overnight if there's a lot of relationship building that goes into it. Getting to a point of getting a contract through tempering your expectations by understanding that those steps need to take place, then it developing that relationship is important that once you become a supplier performing and performing all of the time, 100% of the time is important. Because Northrop Grumman is a large company, we work with many other large companies. And because we all have these goals that we're trying to achieve, we looking for a particular type of company that provide good performance. We get references back and forth between ourselves as well as from our customers. So performance is key.

**Washington:** I agree, that's the bottom line, they have to perform well. Getting to that decision maker, you have to be prepared, you have to be able to say what they want to hear to make them say yes. I like what you said about the large companies sharing their vendors, because literally, we need prime contractors to refer us to other prime contractors. And it was because we supply them with a particular kind of company, you know, so that's exactly, that's really key, they have to know that if they're working with one prime, you know, I always use it as a marketing tool for them as well, whenever they are working with one prime x prime, if they have other primes that are working with to supply the same service, you could be more proactive than waiting for them to refer you, you can definitely ask for another prime who's buying the same service, because you all know, you know, the other large vendors and you guys work together. And sometimes they can think you're all competitive, and you're all you know, at odds with each other. But you're not you're on the same team, you know, you're supplying absolutely wide like they are, you know,

**Tillman:** especially in those supply diversity arena week, even though we're competitors, we all are advocates. And above all, we're advocates. And so we're looking for ways to work with small businesses. And you know, we share best practices, we do a lot of benchmarking across the board. So we share our best practices and how we can better work with small businesses.

**Washington:** Well, I have really been enlightened. WCI is very proactive in our business development efforts. But more importantly, we want to help the agencies meet their goals, two thirds of federal agencies still aren't meeting their small/minority, veteran and women-owned goals. The primes can't do it, so we help in that effort nationwide. We can definitely support your efforts to find those qualified vendors. Thank you for your time and expertise.



# Ida B. Wells and Nikole Hannah-Jones – Our History and Our Future

By Mel and Pearl Shaw

*We are at a unique moment in history where we can celebrate the power and accomplishments of two Black women journalists: Ida B. Wells and Nikole Hannah-Jones. The life and legacy of Wells lives on in the work and words of Hannah-Jones.*

Ida B. Wells was born into slavery in Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1862. During Reconstruction, her father helped start Shaw University (now known as Rust College), a school for newly freed slaves, which Wells attended. Wells was an educator, a journalist, and one of the co-founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Through her investigative journalism she documented and spoke out against lynching – including the lynching of three of her friends in Memphis, TN. She documented the causes of lynchings, speaking truth to power.

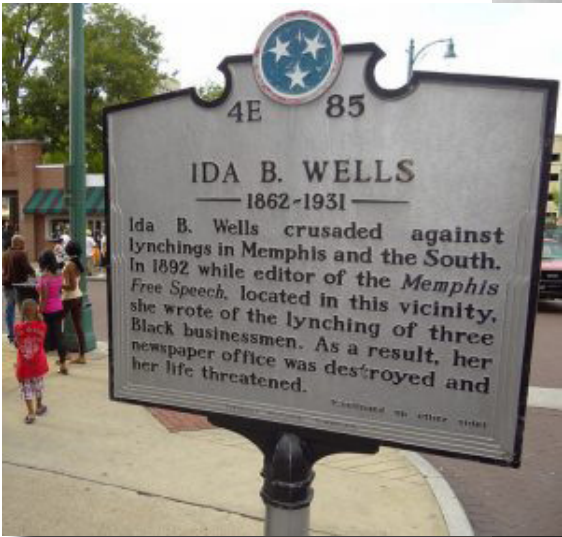
Today Nikole Hannah-Jones is steadfast in her investigative journalism, speaking truth to power in two recent and critical ways: The New York Times Magazine’s 1619 Project and her fight for fair treatment at University of North Carolina. She was offered the Knight Chair in Race and Investigative Journalism at UNC. She was the first Black person to be offered this position and the only one to not be granted tenure at the time of her

appointment. While she was ultimately granted tenure, she has declined the offer and instead is joining the faculty at Howard University as a tenured faculty member and Knight Chair in Race and journalism. She has been awarded a Pulitzer prize for her work on the 1619 project.

*Both Wells and Hannah-Jones have roots in Mississippi, ties to HBCUs, and commitment to investigative journalism.*

Both Wells and Hannah-Jones have roots in Mississippi, ties to HBCUs, and commitment to investigative journalism. Hannah-Jones was a co-founder of the Ida B. Wells Society at UNC, Chapel Hill and will found the Center for Journalism and Democracy at Howard University. In choosing to join the faculty of an HBCU, Hannah-Jones makes a statement to the world that Black organizations and institutions can once again be home to the best Black minds. That Black professionals at the top of their game can and do influence Black organizations – especially HBCUs.

At the same time as Hannah-Jones is making headlines, the residents of Memphis, Tennessee are celebrating the life of Ida B. Wells on July 16th with the unveiling of a life-size statue and the opening of a plaza dedicated to her life and work on the world-renown Beale Street. This project was born from the determination of Rev. Dr. L. LaSimba M. Gray, Jr. to ensure that Memphis paid the “debt” it owes Ida B. Wells. “When her three friends, Thomas Moss, Calvin



McDowell, and Henry Stewart were lynched in 1892, she editorialized the Lynching as ‘cold blooded murder.’ A mob destroyed her newspaper office and threatened her life. She was told if she came back to Memphis, she would be lynched.” Under his leadership, volunteers raised \$250,000 during the COVID-19 pandemic to build the Ida B. Wells Memorial Plaza.

Both women stand for truth and facts and the value of Black lives and Black history. We have to know our history, make history, and record our history.

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# INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

By WLM Staff



**Bhavana Rakesh**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Axiom Consultants, Inc.



**M**s. Bhavana Rakesh is Chief Executive Officer of Axiom Consulting, Inc., located in Rockville, MD. Under her leadership, Axiom exceeded its growth targets from under \$1 million to over \$10 million in yearly revenue in less than three years. Axiom has proven its power as a leader in combining mission services and enterprise IT to successfully serve the needs of the U.S. Federal Government agencies. Axiom is focused on innovative solutions to address customer's mission, with core capabilities of science & technology, engineering, information technology and program management.

Ms. Rakesh is a successful executive with more than 20 years of government contracting experience and has been CEO of Axiom since 2016. She is best known for her leadership in strategic planning, business development and ability to deliver indisputable financial results.

Prior to founding Axiom with partner Mr. Rakesh Peter, she served as application developer in Sun Microsystems, and then as a contractor to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in various capacities, including as scientific analyst, IT specialist and program manager across the various line offices within NOAA. Over her 16+ years with NOAA, she won several awards for her contribution supporting the NOAA science mission.

Ms. Rakesh began her career in the IT and engineering industry after getting a Bachelor's degree in Engineering and a Graduate Degree in Computer Science from the George Washington University.

Ms. Rakesh strongly believes in building the next generation of scientists and leads several initiatives that support kids in STEM. She also a strong promoter of taking care of the environment and participates in several activities that support the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay.

Axiom is 8(a) and Economically Disadvantaged Women Owned Small Business certified by the Small Business Administration.



**Elizabeth Raj Serrano**  
President and Founder  
Santha-Ruby Medical  
Assistance Foundation



**E**lizabeth Raj Serrano is a human development practitioner, capacity Building Expert, Trainer, a civic Leader with a core expertise in Health and Advocacy in Nigeria and Africa.

She has contributed immensely to the promotion of positive youth development, inclusion, and democratic governance within the Nigerian society.

She has a keen interest in mentoring youths, and training young leaders for a better Africa. She undertakes youth centric projects and believes firmly in #inclusion because she is a relentless advocate for Persons Living with Disabilities. This is because she believes that Youths, Abled or differently abled (Persons Living with disabilities) are today's most valuable assets, and The Future of our collective world.

Her passion for making global impact through the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals has made her President and Founder of Santha-Ruby Medical Assistance Foundation, Founder, Ruby Initiatives for the Psycho social support and rehabilitation of abused victims (sexual abuse), Vice President for Angel Wings global freedom foundation for persons living with Disabilities, Vice President Alcanzar Foundation, Deputy National Coordinator Food Bag Initiative, Consultant Diplo-Age finishing academy, Director, Kemi Remi-Dairo Hearing Foundation, Director and Co- Founder Alcanzar consultancy services limited, Director, Board of Trustees WIFEE foundation (Women Initiative for Family Entrepreneurial Empowerment), Member, Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), External Project director for Think Africa Initiative, Member, Oyo State Coalition against Cancer, and Member of the Highly Prestigious and distinguished Crans-Montana Forum of New Leaders For Tomorrow.

Elizabeth is a Visionary and selfless leader who is committed to making impactful and positive change in the world. This has led her to establish her credibility and contribution to the development and education of impoverished adolescents in Nigeria, who reside in underserved communities and urban slums.

On several occasions, she has organized and spoken at different Community (Educational) development programs



for pupils/students in government owned primary/secondary schools, as well as empowered thousands of young leaders across Nigeria.

Asides the special attention she gives to vulnerable girls, she is committed to training and grooming value oriented leaders- dedicating her time to training Nigerian youths in Tertiary institutions; this in a bid to making them more enlightened about personal power, career success, mental health and leadership competence with the hope to create responsible Nigerian leaders who birth a better Nigerian society where inclusion, peace and prosperity are a standard.

In addition to the above, as part of her health intervention programs, she initiated and oversees the provisioning and periodic distribution of hygiene packs, (Ruby Health kits) to “At Risk” male and female students in public secondary schools.

Finally, as a ‘NextGen’ in innovative leadership, she has been making use of research, asset mapping, stakeholder partnerships, community organizing and digital technology in galvanizing change.

Elizabeth’s operating philosophy is that the citizens can be responsible for meaningful change in the society, the same way the government could and should be. Therefore, it is her fervent hope that each and every person would contribute their quota towards making their tiny corner of the world, a much better place.



**Dr. Christi Monk**  
International Speaker,  
Best-Selling Author



**D**r. Christi Monk is an International Speaker, Best-Selling Author, Bullying Expert, and Organizational Leadership and Development Consultant, and Mediator. After quitting her job in 2016 because she was unfulfilled and tired of taking jobs that did not align with her core values, she developed the S.T.A.Y. model.™ The silver lining in Dr. Christi’s story is her manager asked her to stay and they created a position tailored for her.

In 2018, Dr. Monk launched the Bold Moves Experience and the Confidence Suite. Dr. Monk trains women how to

use their core value system so they are more influential, effective, confident and productive contributors in the workplace and their communities. By focusing on the core values system and regaining confidence, women are equipped to make the bold moves necessary to live their best life on their terms.

When women work with Dr. Christi, they learn to stand in their power unapologetically, take control of their thoughts and actions, assess whose help they need and yield to their authenticity. Dr. Monk is passionate about helping others find their voice and discovering their purpose so they can walk boldly in their authenticity. She believes you cannot go professionally where you are not willing to go personally.

Dr. Christi has shared the stage with the likes of Star Jones, Kim Coles and George Fraser. She presented her published work, entitled “Workplace Bullying - In Search of Clearer Definition” at the No More Harm conference in Australia, and has appeared on several podcasts. She is an advocate for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Her past clients include The University of Phoenix, The National Black MBA – Charlotte Chapter, Cedar Hill ISD, Health Resources and Services Administration, and Crown Leadership Institute.

Dr. Monk received her Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership Studies. She believes in life-long learning and continuously seeks ways to help women become their best selves. Her certifications include Brain-based Coaching, Keirsey Temperament Personality Assessment and the Entrepreneurial Mindset Profile. Her signature program is Leading From Your Center of Resilience and Empowerment (C.O.R.E.)™. Dr. Monk currently resides in Maryland.

You can learn more about Dr. Christi at [www.christimonk.com](http://www.christimonk.com). You can reach her directly at [cmonk@christimonk.com](mailto:cmonk@christimonk.com). Follow her on all social media platforms @DrChristiMonk.

# INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS



**Carmen L. Powell,**  
President and CEO of  
Veritiss LLC



**C**armen Powell hails from Cleveland Ohio where, at a young age, her views and thoughts on leadership, social justice and equality were formed. Carmen attended Captain Arthur Roth Elementary School, an inner-city school comprised of economically disadvantaged minority children, where a school official had a brilliant idea to take her 6th grade graduating class on tour of Kent State University to expose students to college life and inspire them to attend college. Carmen’s mother was a chaperone and the tour also represented her first visit to a college campus. The date of the college tour was May 3, 1970. The very next day, May 4th, 1970, the unfortunate shootings at Kent State took place and four students were killed. Though Carmen and her classmates saw crowds of student protestors and somewhat understood what was going on – protest of the Vietnam war – after the shootings, Carmen concluded three things: 1. College students were brave and unafraid to speak out; 2. Her elementary school came dangerously close to being in the conflict; and 3. Kent State was where she wanted to attend college. Determined to attend college as soon as possible, Carmen accelerated through high school graduating a year early to begin at Kent State in 1975. The university experience greatly expanded both her desire to see the world and to be part of something greater than oneself – service to others and country. To further her goals, Carmen joined Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant, Human Resources (HR) officer upon graduation in 1979.

Inspired by the selflessness and bravery of the American Soldier, Carmen had a distinguished 20-year Army career, being selected as commander of three successive company commands as a captain (a rarity for any officer, let alone an HR officer), and selection for battalion command. After retiring from the Army, Carmen worked as a Senior Member of the Professional Staff at Systems Research Corporation (SRA), and later worked as Vice President for Business Development at a small minority owned business before starting Veritiss LLC.

Carmen started Veritiss with several goals in mind: to

provide the very best service to government customers; to be recognized by the government as a high-performing mission focused business that happens to be small, without allowing the company’s size to define performance; to employ great people committed to mission excellence who she could lead, learn from and be inspired by; to support and promote other small businesses and become a value-added partner to all; and to provide support to those in need locally, nationally and internationally. Carmen was appointed a Small Business Commissioner in Fairfax County Virginia by former Hunter Mill Supervisor, Catherine Hudgins where she served for over a year before relinquishing her appointment to continue focus on Veritiss’ critical missions and incredibly brave and bold employees working overseas in harm’s way. Carmen is especially proud of Veritiss’ former outstanding, brave, loyal, and committed Afghanistan linguists who risked their lives in support of the United States. U.S. missions in Afghanistan and Veritiss LLC succeeded due to the great work, efforts, and bravery of Veritiss’ hero linguists. Veritiss is now fully engaged in and 100% committed to supporting, protecting and ensuring the safe and expeditious exit of their great families out of Afghanistan. Carmen is immensely proud to have worked with and learned from brave Veritiss employees and continues to be inspired by them.



**Mary Ikoku,**  
President of Working Moms Africa  
CEO of the Integrated Quest Public Relations

**M**ary Ikoku is a Nigerian seasoned communications consultant, public relations expert and a journalist with vast experience in developing, implementing and promoting communication and public relations strategies to ensure brand visibility, promote corporate image, policies and positions. She serves as President of Working Moms Africa and CEO of the Integrated Quest Public Relations, which are all part of The Access Media LTD.

As the founder and President of Moms Africa, Mary leads the endeavor to help women cope with the challenges created by mixing professional careers with parenthood. The organization publishes Working Moms Africa (WMA), a magazine that deals with work life



balance for the professional women. Her involvement with Working Moms Africa Magazine dates back to 2006, when she first “launched” it as a vision and she continued to build on it till today when we have WMA as Africa’s leading publication for the Working Woman.

In 2009-2011, she served as Special Adviser to the former Minister of Information and Communications, Prof. Dora Akunyili. In this role, she implemented schemes to expand government outreach, generate funding for advocacy campaigns and refine governmental communication processes.

In 2012, Mary headed the Communication Unit of the Federal Government of Nigeria’s Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme SURE-P, where she pioneered the setting up of the communications unit and instituted international best practice for communicating SURE-Programmes. The ever workaholic Mary also went further to develop the programme’s communications strategy and brand structure before moving to the Federal Ministry of Finance’s Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) as the Communication Adviser.

Mary Ikoku also established Rebranding Value Club for Primary and Secondary schools in the country to inculcate in young Nigerian children, value orientation, attitudinal change, civility and patriotism. Over 58 schools were enlisted at the pilot stage of the programme.

She has launched several key initiatives to support the advancement of women including Annual Moms Ball & Awards, Moms Roundtable, Moms Meet-Up and the Moms Summits. The ‘Moms Ball & Awards’ is an annual awards event for workplace and home front management benchmarking and recognition for working mothers in the country.

Ikoku is a recipient of the British Airways Business Opportunity Grant (BOG) Award and Brand Journalist Award from the Brand Journalist Association of Nigeria and recently, Woman in Media Award 2014 from the Wise Women Awards, UK

She has a Bachelor’s degree in English from Abia State University, and a Master’s degree in International Relations from the Lagos State University. She’s an Alumni of the Yale School of Management, University of California, Davis (UC Davis) and London School of Public Relations, London, UK. She’s an active member of many professional bodies both locally and internationally, which include; Public Relations Society of America (PRSA); Member, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR); and Member, E Marketing Association (EMA).

She is an acclaimed keynote speaker on the advancement of women, work life balance, barriers facing women of Nigeria and leadership. She has appeared on major talk shows including Good Morning Africa, BBC She word, Channels TV Sunrise Daily, Arise Morning Show, TVC Women’s World, AIT Focus/Democracy Today and NTA’s Am Express.



**Ingrid Watkins**  
CEO & Chief Diversity Strategist  
at IW Consulting Group (IWCG),

**I**ngrid Watkins is CEO & Chief Diversity Strategist at IW Consulting Group (IWCG), an Atlanta based consulting firm that specializes in corporate diversity program solutions, providing consulting services to some of the top corporations in the U.S. and globally.

Prior to launching IWCG in 2017, Ingrid spent 15-years of her corporate career advocating for the utilization of minority owned businesses in contract opportunities at the world’s most recognized brand, The Coca-Cola Company. She began her career with the global brand in 1996 and held several leadership roles including Sr. Manager of Global Procurement-Supplier Diversity, where she was responsible for implementing and managing the Company’s best-in-class supplier development and capacity building program.

Ingrid is a passionate diversity thought leader, strategist and writer whose articles on small business and diversity issues have been published in national magazines. She is a highly sought after trainer, who facilitates diversity and business development seminars throughout the U.S. Her first book, The Multicultural Trifecta: How to Create an Inclusive Corporate Culture, is due for release in the Fall of 2021.

She serves on a number of diversity advocate Committees and Boards, including Chair of the Education Committee for the National Veteran Business Diversity Council, and the National Black & Latino Council.

Prior to her corporate career, Ingrid worked as a broadcast journalist for several local and national media organizations in her hometown of Columbia, South Carolina and in Washington, DC.

Ingrid earned an M.B.A. from Regis University Graduate School of Business, Denver, CO., and a B.A. in Journalism/Communications from the University of South Carolina.



**Ambassador Dr. Robin Renee Sanders**  
United States Diplomatic Corps

**A**mbassador (Dr.) Robin Renee Sanders served as one of the U.S. Government’s top diplomats on African issues over a long career in the United States Diplomatic Corps reaching senior positions ranging from Ambassador to the Republics of Nigeria, Republic of Congo, two stints – NSC Director for Africa at the White House, and U.S. Permanent Representative to the West African Regional Organization ECOWAS. Dr. Sanders received her doctor of science degree in information systems and communications from Pittsburgh’s Robert Morris University, where she also holds the title of Distinguished Public Service & Rooney Scholar. Sanders is also a Gallup Senior Scientist. The Ambassador also holds MA and MS degrees from Ohio University; and, a BA from Hampton University. She is a recognized Africa Region thought-leader on subjects ranging from Africa’s small businesses (known as SMEs), trade, political, economic, and technology issues as well as US-Africa policy, security (e.g. Boko Haram, Al Shabab). Her work also focuses on the region’s thematic topics such as the Africa Diaspora and SMEs, SDGs, food security, democracy/elections, education and climate change. She has testified before the U.S. Congress on many of these topics. Her advisory firm is divided into two parts: The FEEEDS Advocacy Initiative and FE3DS, LLC. FEEEDS focuses on Africa economic development, Diaspora, Entrepreneurship/SMEs issues. FEEEDS also advises several organizations; co-hosts an annual Africa event with Gallup World Poll; and publishes @The FEEEDS Index, which features Gallup World Poll Africa development data. FE3DS, LLC provides business strategies for small businesses, and on Africa trade, technology, power, renewables, aviation, affordable housing and aviation.

Dr. Sanders also is a recognized philanthropist giving notable works to the Smithsonian Museum of Africa Art (NMAA), particularly praise-worthy pieces Liberal Women Protest March, and Hunters in the Rainforest (NMAA’s permanent collection); State Department’s Diplomacy Museum, Hampton University Museum, and RMU Public Arts Collection. She supports the Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders-iho Geneva Sanders and the Sanders-Spear named endowments supporting tuition assistance for at-risk students at Morgan State University and RMU.

Ambassador Sanders is a National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) founding donor under the 2015 Society and is also a member of its Harriet Tubman Legacy Society. She has received the U.S. military’s Joint Chiefs of Staff Civilian Honor Award, Medal of Honor Republic of Congo, six State Department awards (Superior & Meritorious); is a member of the U.S. Government’s Trade Representative Africa Committee, the prestigious American Academy of Diplomacy & American College of National Security Leaders of former senior U.S. Government officials, and the National Society of Scholars for her public policy & academic work, and is listed in Who’s Who.



**Gwendolyn Tillman**  
Corporate Director, Global Supplier Diversity  
Programs for Northrop Grumman

**G**wen manages the day-to-day responsibilities for the corporation’s supplier diversity programs organization and is responsible for the implementation of the corporation’s supplier diversity strategic plan. Ms. Tillman’s role also encompasses government customer relationship development and enrichment, and business management.

Gwen has over thirty five years’ experience in the defense industry and has been a part of the Northrop Grumman team for over thirty years. Her most recent position was Corporate Project Manager, Mentor-Protégé and HBCU/MI programs, where she provided corporate wide strategic guidance and oversight of the Mentor-Protégé and Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Institutions (HBCU/MI) programs. Before that, she held positions of increasing responsibility in such diverse functions as small business programs, supplier relations, price/cost analysis, and estimating.

Northrop Grumman is a leading global security company providing innovative systems, products and solutions in autonomous systems, cyber, C4ISR, space, strike, and logistics and modernization to customers worldwide.





**Sharon R. Pinder**  
President and CEO  
Capital Region Minority Supplier Development  
Council (CRMDC)

Sharon R. Pinder is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council (CRMDC). — a non-profit corporation whose mission is to link corporations and government agencies with competitively viable Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs). A renowned expert in entrepreneurial diversity and inclusion, Pinder has transformed the landscape for minority and women owned businesses, leveling the playing field and creating increased opportunities for these businesses to succeed.

Pinder may be best known as Maryland's first appointed cabinet Secretary of the Governor's Office of Minority Affairs and for her work as the architect of Maryland's minority and small business reform movement. During her first three years in this position, the number of contracts awarded to Maryland's women and minority businesses increased by \$1 billion. She was also responsible for the creation of the Small Business Reserve Program – the country's first state level set aside for small businesses. Her work has served as a model for other states. Pinder also created the Top 100 MBE Awards© program. In its 13th year, it is the region's premier recognition ceremony for minority businesses.

At CRMDC, Pinder continues to bring change and innovation. In the first 18 months of her tenure, CRMDC won \$4 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) for a new MBDA Business Center, Washington, DC, and the nation's only Federal Procurement Center solely dedicated to helping MBEs obtain federal contracts. In 2021, Pinder was awarded the grant to operate the MBDA Business Center, Virginia. She's implemented several signature programs significantly enhancing services to both corporate members and MBE suppliers.

For the last three years, CRMDC has been recognized by the Washington Business Journal as one of the Top 25 Largest Business Advocacy Groups in Greater Washington, DC.

Prior to taking the helm at CRMDC, Pinder served as Director of the Mayor's Office of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development (MWBD) for the City of

Baltimore. As a member of the Mayor's cabinet, Ms. Pinder was responsible for the management of the City's minority and women business programs. During Ms. Pinder's three-year tenure she developed and implemented the supplier diversity and inclusion strategy for the City. Prior to her appointment with the City, Ms. Pinder was Chief Executive Officer of The Pinder Group, and the founder of the Center for Business Inclusion and Diversity.

Prior to her tenure in diversity and inclusion, Pinder spent over twenty-five years in the Information Technology sector in organizations such as USF&G (now Traveler's Insurance) Equitable Trust Bank (now Bank of America) and General Electric Information Systems where she played a significant role in leading GE onto the Internet.

Pinder has a Master of Science Degree in Technology Management from the University of Maryland University College where she had the honor of serving as Professor of Practice in the School of Graduate Studies and is the 2004 Alumnae of the Year. In 2014, University of Maryland Eastern Shore named a scholarship, the Sharon Pinder Award for Entrepreneurship, in her honor.



**Glenda Stinson,**  
CEO of S.E.A.T. Business Development Group  
(S.E.A.T.)

Glenda Stinson, CEO of S.E.A.T. Business Development Group (S.E.A.T.), strongly believes in building structure to promote business success. A retired Supplier Diversity and Development professional, she has experience to win with large enterprises while sensitive to the growth and sustainability needs of small and diverse-owned businesses. Stinson is known for developing award-winning supplier mentoring and development programming with marked revenue generation, job creation and capacity building of the small and diverse participants. She drives supplier results and advances corporate spend through a coordination of strategic planning, education and risk mitigation training.

S.E.A.T. assists corporations with program development through an analysis of the organization's people, processes and operations. The programmatic approach of Strategic Empowerment through Adaptive Techniques creates

strategies to empower leadership to inspire, grow and move their team or business towards operational success. In addition, each client is evaluated in categories such as industry, culture and customer profile to ensure unique and authentic results. S.E.A.T. believes in an integrative approach to strengthening operations and delivering success. Whether working with a Fortune 500 or a small entity S.E.A.T. is able to effectively relate and communicate at all levels.

Supplier Diversity and mentoring program development is a unique space in which the S.E.A.T. team excels. S.E.A.T. designs corporate programs that are responsive to the obligations of the company's core operations while managing to grow supplier opportunities, advance sustainability and promote an equitable future within local communities.

Today's social reform has ignited an emphasis on supplier diversity and equity programming. Glenda Stinson is an advocate who wants to ensure there will be sustained success, "It is important that diverse-owned businesses especially minority-owned businesses receive contracting opportunities that posture them for longevity." She believes that sustained success for diverse businesses is possible when development, education and opportunity meet. Stinson says, "The social inequities of business ownership have created disadvantages that transcend into the core of small and diverse business ownership specifically that of Black and Brown communities. In the majority sector many business owners live business and experience business acumen daily. Most business owners in the Black and Brown communities are the first to own a business and although they are astute in delivering their product or services, may not have been privileged to the nuances that often limit contract accessibility."

Stinson designed her business to build bridges between large enterprises and small and diverse-owned businesses. For corporations seeking to create or enhance their Supplier Diversity programming, S.E.A.T. begins working with the "why" emphasizing that the integrity of the program ultimately determines its success. Education on infrastructure, finance and other core business acumen is delivered to the small and diverse suppliers to foster growth and a return on the budget and time investments made by them and the corporate partners. Stinson summarizes, "The solution is never one-sided and by bringing strategic empowerment to both corporate and diverse businesses, S.E.A.T. hopes to provide the structure that will lead to sustainable and equitable business success."

## INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS



**Rachel Akem-Harumi**  
CEO  
Future Skills Consult and  
Co-Founder, Africa Startup University

Rachel Akem-Harumi is a Philanthropist, Kingdom Entrepreneur, International Conference Speaker and Women Development Expert. She is the organizer of "Future Women Conference" and the lead Speaker of "Turning Point International Seminars."

She is also the Co-Founder of African Startup University and the CEO of Future Skills Consult.

In her quest to help African women achieve their greatest dreams she founded "Women in Africa For Transformation Initiative (WIA)", the organisation that is giving African Women the leverage to compete and win.

WIA has effective and operational chapters in Kenya, Botswana, Nigeria, Malawi, Cameroon, Ghana, Benin Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Togo, Zambia and Norway. WIA also have membership in more than 28 African countries.

In 2019 a leading News Magazine in the Netherlands reviewed her immeasurable contributions to women development in Africa and honored her with the AFRICAN WOMAN OF THE YEAR Award. And on 8th December 2020, she was awarded AFRICA'S WOMAN LEADER AWARD By the prestigious "World Women Leadership Congress" and Award.

Rachel is the author of WOMANITY, the book that revealed the lies and historical conspiracy against women. In the best-selling book she eloquently articulated that Nation's that invest in women are rich and powerful and nation's that do not, are poor and powerless.

She is a consultant and trusted adviser to political and business leaders who want rapid change in their countries, organizations and constituencies

Rachel is cooking something big - something that will give women a voice and an edge. She is partnering with some of the most influential and extraordinary women in the world to create a global force .... (195 voices, representing 195 countries in the world to defend the cause of women in every Community, city and Country in the world).

Her greatest dream is to help women achieve their greatest dream.



# Black Leaders: Spending Must Include Minorities as State Prepares for Billions in Fed Cash

By Bo Tefu | California Black Media

Some African American leaders in California are concerned. As the state looks forward to receiving billions in new federal funding this year for development projects, they fear African American and other minority-owned businesses and their workers will be left out.

The leaders say California has not lived up to its commitment to equitably include African American contractors and businesses in the state's ongoing infrastructure investments. The state has also failed, they say, to include Black-owned institutions like newspapers and other media when informing the public about open bids for taxpayer-funded contracts, hiring and other economic opportunities.

John Warren, the publisher of the San Diego Voice & Viewpoint, the city's largest African American-owned publication, said that there is little-to-no community outreach when government agencies allocate funds for contracts and announce job opportunities.

"The notices for the jobs are not being advertised in our Black and Brown newspapers," Warren said. "If they don't reach out to us from a standpoint of being proactive inclusive, we won't benefit from these jobs."

Last Wednesday in Pennsylvania,

*Pres. Biden announced a \$2 trillion infrastructure federal spending plan called the "American Jobs Plan."*

Pres. Biden announced a \$2 trillion infrastructure federal spending plan called the "American Jobs Plan."

He says, if the U.S. Congress approves it, the proposal would create \$19 million jobs. In addition, it would invest in research and development that helps the United States "out-compete" China and other countries around the world.

Biden also promised that his plan would also address existing racial disparities that have resulted from the government's historical neglect or isolation of African Americans and other minorities when

undertaking large-scale national development projects.

"Inaction is not an option," the President said, chiding the U.S. Congress to pass the bill.

"It is an 8-year program that invests in our roads, our bridges, broadband, airports, ports, fixing our water systems. It is going to repair our V.A. hospitals across the country – many of them more than 50 years old," Biden said.

Responding to the POTUS's announcement, Gov. Gavin Newsom sounded upbeat.

"President Biden put forward a transformative vision for a healthier and cleaner future for our country, with unparalleled investments in infrastructure and clean energy which will create millions of high-paying jobs along the way," said Newsom.

Newsom said California is "uniquely positioned to benefit from these investments."

The governor cited how California will likely use some of the federal money, citing projects like expanding broadband access; making the state's electric grid more resilient to wildfires and blackouts, improving schools, hospitals and housing; expanding clean transportation; and more.

Newsom said the spending will also "lift up opportunities for communities too often overlooked."



To help get the word about the infrastructure plan out, Gov. Newsom and Vice President Kamala Harris toured an Oakland-based facility on Monday morning to emphasize the importance of the American Jobs Plan. Vice Pres. Harris held a listening session with local leaders, including a small business owner who received resources and funding from the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund.

But even though the California state government has already set aside lump sums of money to invest in the building and maintenance of state highways, bridges, and additional mass transit infrastructure, Black leaders say African American companies have yet to equitably benefit from those projects.

The overall infrastructure budget for Caans, for example, includes a \$273 million investment from Senate Bill 1, passed in 2017, to repair the state's roads and various transportation systems. The California Department of Transportation (Caans) is responsible for managing and distributing \$491 million in funds, allocated by the California Transportation Commission. Caans is also in charge of distributing job opportunities including construction contracts and jobs across the state.

Gene Hale, Chairman of the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce, said the state's transport agencies need to increase the spending among minority groups, "to make a lasting impression in Black and Latino communities."

"Caans should also increase their small

business goals on state-funded highway projects, and also continue to do more outreach to reach these disadvantaged communities," said Hale.

Toks Omishakin, the director of Caans – who Gov. Newsom pointed in September 2019 – said his department has opened the Caans Office of Race and Equity (CORE), which works closely with the Office of Civil Rights for equity efforts in August 2020.

The transportation agency also hosted a virtual business summit to support local businesses.

The inaugural virtual small business summit included 800 businesses from across the state networking with federal government officials and representatives from banking institutions.

Despite the success of the event, Omishakin said that Caans struggled to get participation from Black and Latino business owners.

"One of the things we need to do is engage more with the communities," Omishakin said. "We need to reach out more to people and businesses to let them know what opportunities exist."

According to the Economic Policy Institute, the unemployment rate for Black Californians in the last quarter of 2020 was 15 %, the highest in the state. Latinos were a close second at 13 % within the same fiscal quarter.

Warren said using trusted messengers like established Black-owned media publications around the state is a practical way to promote equitable hiring processes and distribution of funds.

"They have to put money in inclusive

media for community outreach – the same way they did with the census," Warren said. "There has to be a directive that these jobs be inclusively placed before us and made available to us."

Omishakin, Caans director, said that ethnic media is a viable option for community engagement in Black and Latino communities.

"We're going to step up even more on this type of engagement," Omishakin said. "We know that some communities rely on ethnic media to get our information, so we're going to do more to get the engagement we were looking for."

Omishakin said Caans is committed to boosting equity in its funding programs and hiring processes.

One important way to address issues of inclusion issues of diversity and equity across the board, "is through our business practices, and how we give more opportunity to marginalized businesses," said Omishakin.

Hale, who is also the CEO of G&C Equipment Corporation, a construction equipment, material, and supplies company said the transportation agency must be willing to set up goals that prioritize minority businesses for government contracting jobs in predominantly Black and Latino communities.

Hale says he also supports direct outreach to African American businesses.

The businessman and civic leader said Caans needs to design programs that, "specifically reach the disadvantaged minority communities and business people."



# Women Don't Get a Break — Especially Black Women

By Cheryl Smith

I hope you've paid attention to the chatter following the "bombshell" announcement by Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who has decided not to seek another term this Fall. Full disclosure. I have mad love for the Mayor. On a number of fronts our lives parallel: roots in Crawfordville, GA; attended Florida A&M University; Journalism majors; pledged the Beta Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and, we are both mothers, but not by birth.

So, some may want to stop reading now because "Cheryl is going to be biased" and to those critics, I have two things to say: first if you think the majority of stuff you read and see does not have biases embedded within, well I say "chile please" and; secondly, the longer I live and the more I have to live with things like COVID, Trump, and self-haters who tear their people down, I say, "don't come for me unless I send for you!"

In three words: I'm not apologizing. In another eight words, I'm sick of people tearing Black women down. We're too strong, weak, mean, angry, et al. I can't go on because I get sicker with every adjective. Black women catch hell from all sides and angles and then the ones who should be the most supportive are the biggest damned critics! OTHER WOMEN! No, let me call it like it is — OTHER BLACK WOMEN! Which brings me to my truth.

It was frustrating to hear and read comments as folks far and wide speculated about why Mayor Lance Bottoms would not seek another term. There was talk about President Biden, a large drugstore chain job, pursuit of another office, etc. Atlanta's rising crime rate, jail issues,

investigations of previous administrations, and more were fodder for those needing something to say. There was also talk of her being "tired, angry," and yes, "salty."

In her video, the Mayor talked about challenges and triumphs. She definitely had to face some situations that no one could have prepared her for because there's no one else alive who has encountered a pandemic of the magnitude of COVID-19 and it is so disingenuous to hear people try to reason that COVID -19 is not having an impact on everything.

It's been challenging for leadership and I know folks have to have something to do, so they speculate. It makes them feel good inside. But haven't you learned anything from the death of actor, humanitarian Chadwick Boseman. Da 5 Bloods co-star Clarke Peters, following Mr. Boseman's death, said he recalled seeing his co-star being pampered on the set and thinking, "maybe the Black Panther thing went to his head."

Mr. Peters said he regretted those thoughts, because at the time he didn't know that Mr. Boseman had been battling colon cancer for the past four years. We don't know Mayor Lance Bottom's journey. What we do know is that she has some serious receipts and if you do the homework her legacy is intact because she has served in numerous capacities throughout her lifetime and prayerfully she has many more decades to go.

Heck, if she wants to put her law degree to work to serve, joining the likes of Atty. Ben Crump; or if she wants to put that J-School degree to work, doors are open even right here at Texas Metro News; or if she wants to stay home with the children; teach at FAMU's Law School or she can go back to the bench as a judge; assume a



Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms

leadership post with Delta Sigma Theta; or, become a college, preferably HBCU, president; it's her life, her journey.

Get yourself some business, because when your time is all said and done, will it have been spent talking about what others have done or will you have done something worth celebrating or sharing in history books? Wow! Yes, I am here in Texas with enough issues of my own as I am sure I am going to be accosted by some unsuspecting person who comes for Fort Worth Mayoral Candidate Deborah Peoples as she faces a candidate in a runoff election where if elected she will become the Cowtown's first Black female mayor.

Heck. First Black mayor! Unfortunately Ms. Peoples, is dealing with some of the same hateration where folks just have something negative to say. I'm not saying don't criticize. What I am saying is "know what you are talking about." Bring receipts or shut up. If you want help living a life without regrets: you can begin by pledging to stop being so damned judgmental! Mayor Keisha is living her life. Live yours.



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# Annette Nance-Holt Becomes Chicago Fire Department Commissioner

By Chicago Defender Site Editor

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced that Acting Fire Commissioner Annette Nance-Holt will take over as the permanent Commissioner of the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) pending City Council approval. Commissioner Nance-Holt will be the first woman and first woman of color to lead the Chicago Fire Department in its 162-year history. On her first day leading CFD, Commissioner Nance-Holt will join Mayor Lightfoot in swearing in the Department’s newest class of 42 paramedics.

“Commissioner Holt has more than three decades of proven leadership and a passion for public service that makes her the perfect fit for this role,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Furthermore, in a time where more work remains in order to eliminate discrimination, racism, and sexism from the firefighter profession, Commissioner Holt’s history-making appointment as the first woman and Black woman to lead as Fire Commissioner couldn’t have come at a better moment. I want to congratulate her on formally and permanently stepping into the role and look forward to seeing how she builds upon CFD’s long-standing reputation as the finest in the nation.”

“The Fire Department must have membership and leadership that mirrors



the communities it serves every day,” said Commissioner Nance-Holt. “As a child, I never laid eyes on either a female firefighter or a firefighter of color. There were no role models who looked like me, and so I never thought that becoming a firefighter, which was my dream, would be a possibility for me. As Fire

Commissioner, I intend to show the next generation of young black women that they too can achieve any and everything they set their minds and hearts to.”

Commissioner Nance-Holt has dutifully served the Chicago Fire Department for over 30 years. Most recently, she served as the Acting Fire Commissioner after



Commissioner Richard Ford II retired following his own lifetime of dedicated service.

Prior to becoming acting Commissioner, Annette Nance-Holt achieved another historic first when she was named the First Deputy Commissioner by Commissioner Ford in 2018, making her the first woman to hold the Department’s number two spot. Before becoming First Deputy, Commissioner Nance-Holt served the Chicago Fire Department with distinction in the following positions: Deputy District Chief, Battalion Chief-EMT, Captain-EMT, Lieutenant-EMT, and as a Firefighter.

Commissioner Nance-Holt is a procedural and safety-oriented firefighting professional with over 30 years of experience in the planning, organizing, and administration of all fire department operations. Her skillsets include fire administration, equipment management, budget management, enforcement of regulations, policies, and procedures related to all facets of fire suppression. Commissioner Nance-

*“Commissioner Holt has more than three decades of proven leadership and a passion for public service that makes her the perfect fit for this role,”*

Holt is highly competent in assessing and eliminating risks and hazards through effective recommendations in executing corrective action plans, policies & procedures, and employee instructions. Her proven leadership and analytical skills are evidenced by her desire and ability to continuously seek improvement in fire/rescue operations and emergency medical services.

Commissioner Nance-Holt resides in Chicago with her family. She is the founder of two nonprofit community organizations, Purpose Over

Pain and the Blair Holt Scholarship Foundation. She holds a Master of Science degree in Public Administration/Fire & Emergency Management from Anna Maria College and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Chicago State University.





# Protect Your Health with Heart-Smart Eating Plan

By Family Featured

As people have spent more time at home, many have rediscovered the simple joy of home-cooking and stumbled upon a secret weapon for health at the same time. By making smart, intentional decisions from breakfast to dinner and every meal (and drink) in-between, they are supporting strong bodies.

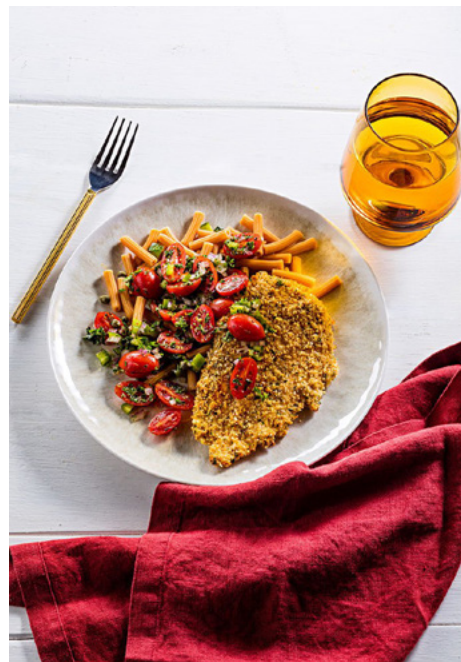
A heart-smart eating plan is especially important for more than 30 million people in the U.S. living with type 2 diabetes who are at double the risk for heart disease and stroke compared to those without diabetes, according to the American Heart Association and American Diabetes Association's Know Diabetes by Heart initiative. When managing diabetes and heart health, building a consistent eating plan with the right balance can be a powerful tool.

Healthy eating provides benefits for the whole family whether members are managing existing health conditions or not. This recipe for Baked Parmesan Chicken is packed with 30 grams of protein in each serving yet delivers only 280 calories. For a tasty way to increase vegetable intake, try pairing the no-sugar chicken dish with Green Beans with Mushrooms and Onions.

A key to feeling your best begins with the first meal of the day. Start the

morning on a nutritious note with this Ham and Broccoli Frittata – a low-sugar, low-fat, low-calorie alternative to traditional fat- and sugar-laden breakfast foods. With this recipe, you're setting yourself up for a healthy day and getting the energy you need to live it to the fullest.

Find more recipes and learn more about managing the connection between diabetes and heart health at [KnowDiabetesbyHeart.org/Recipes](https://www.knowdiabetesbyheart.org/Recipes).



## BAKED PARMESAN CHICKEN

Recipe courtesy of Know Diabetes by Heart

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 18 minutes

Servings: 4 (3 ounces chicken per serving)

- Cooking spray
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/3 cup finely crushed, low-sodium, whole-grain crispbread
- 1/3 cup shredded or grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon ground oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 4 ounces each), all visible fat discarded, flattened to 1/4-inch thickness

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Lightly spray a 13-by-9-by-2-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

In a shallow dish, whisk the egg, water and oil. In a separate shallow dish or pie pan, stir together the crispbread, Parmesan cheese, parsley, oregano and pepper. Dip the chicken in the egg mixture then in crumb mixture, turning to coat at each step and gently shaking off any excess. Using fingertips, gently press the coating mixture so it adheres to the chicken. Arrange the chicken in a single

layer in the baking dish. Lightly spray the chicken with cooking spray.

Bake for 15-18 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink in the center and the top coating is golden brown.

Nutritional information per serving: 280 calories; 80 calories from fat; 9 g total fat; 2.5 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 1 g polyunsaturated fat; 4 g monounsaturated fat; 125 mg cholesterol; 340 mg sodium; 530 mg potassium; 18 g total carbohydrate; 4 g dietary fiber; 0 g sugar; 0 g added sugar; 30 g protein; 370 mg phosphorus. Choices/Exchanges: 1 starch, 4 lean protein.



*A heart-smart eating plan is especially important for more than 30 million people in the U.S. living with type 2 diabetes who are at double the risk for heart disease and stroke...*





**GREEN BEANS WITH MUSHROOMS AND ONIONS**

Recipe courtesy of Know Diabetes by Heart

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 10 minutes  
Servings: 4 (1/2 cup per serving)

- Water
- 8 ounces green beans, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 4 ounces sliced mushrooms, stems discarded
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced onion
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 pinch pepper

Fill a medium saucepan 3/4 full of water. Bring to a boil, covered, over high heat. Cook the green beans, uncovered, 5 minutes, or until tender-crisp. Drain well in a colander.

In a medium nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom.

Cook the mushrooms, onion, garlic and salt 5 minutes, or until the mushrooms are soft and lightly browned,

stirring frequently. Stir in the lemon juice, pepper and cooked green beans.

Nutritional information per serving: 60 calories; 25 calories from fat; 2.5 g total fat; 0.5 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 0.5 g polyunsaturated fat; 1.5 g monounsaturated fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 60 mg sodium; 300 mg potassium; 9 g total carbohydrate; 2 g dietary fiber; 4 g sugar; 0 g added sugar; 2 g protein; 70 mg phosphorus. Choices/Exchanges: 2 vegetable, 1/2 fat.



**HAM AND BROCCOLI FRITTATA**

Recipe courtesy of Know Diabetes by Heart

Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cook time: 25 minutes  
Servings: 4 (1/4 frittata per serving)

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups frozen fat-free potatoes O'Brien, thawed
- 6 ounces small broccoli florets, rinsed in cold water, drained but not dried
- 8 large egg whites
- 1 large egg
- 4 ounces lower-sodium, low-fat ham (uncured, nitrate/nitrite-free), cut into 1/4-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup fat-free milk
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Preheat the oven to 400 F.

Lightly spray a medium ovenproof skillet with cooking spray. Heat over medium heat. Remove from the heat. Put the potatoes in the skillet. Lightly spray with cooking spray. Cook for 4-5 minutes, or until potatoes are golden brown, stirring occasionally.

In a microwaveable bowl, microwave the broccoli, covered, on high for 3-4 minutes, or until tender-crisp. Drain in a colander. Stir the broccoli into the potatoes.



In a medium bowl, whisk the egg whites and egg. Whisk in the ham, milk and pepper. Pour the mixture over the potatoes and broccoli; stir well. Bake for 15-18 minutes, or until the eggs are set.

Nutritional information per serving: 180 calories; 30 calories from fat; 3 g total fat; 1 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat; 0.5 g polyunsaturated fat; 1.5 g monounsaturated fat; 60 mg cholesterol; 460 mg sodium; 570 mg potassium; 17 g total carbohydrate; 2 g dietary fiber; 4 g sugar; 1 g added sugar; 18 g protein; 210 mg phosphorus. Choices/Exchanges: 1 carbohydrate, 2 lean protein.

*A heart-smart eating plan is especially important for more than 30 million people in the U.S. living with type 2 diabetes who are at double the risk for heart disease and stroke...*





# Black Physicians Discuss Benefits of Medical Marijuana

by the Medical Marijuana Education and Research Initiative (MMERI) of Florida A&M University.

**D**r. Genester Wilson-King is a board-certified gynecologist who started recommending medical marijuana treatments to her patients after Florida legalized it in 2016.

She's one of the 2,500+ doctors in the state qualified to order medical marijuana and low -THC cannabis for patients with qualifying conditions.

"I always looked for other ways of helping my patients outside of pharmaceuticals, especially the ones people take all the time, and in my research, I found and learned about cannabis," she said.

"Many women's health conditions have multi-factorial components, including mood, pain, difficulty sleeping and hormone imbalance. The capacity of cannabis to act as an anti-inflammatory agent, a muscle relaxant, a mood enhancer, a sleep remedy, and a pain reliever, all at the same time, makes it ideal for women's health conditions."

Launching of ACHEM

Dr. Wilson-King is among a growing number of Black physicians focused on helping people of color consider the therapeutic benefits of cannabis through the Cannabis Health Equity Movement and its recently launched Association for Cannabis Health Equity and Medicine.

ACHEM (pronounced AyKem) is focused on educating health professionals and healers in a nationwide effort to raise awareness about cannabis use in the health care treatment of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), and to promote entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in the medical marijuana industry.

ACHEM was co-founded by Board Vice President Dr. Janice Knox, a nationally recognized endocannabinologist, speaker and authority on the subject of medical cannabis.

*"I always looked for other ways of helping my patients outside of pharmaceuticals, especially the ones people take all the time, and in my research, I found and learned about cannabis,"*

"We call ourselves endocannabinologists because we really

study the physiology of the body [i.e., the endocannabinoid system] first and then the pharmacology of cannabis to emphasize the correct clinical application," said Dr. Knox, a board-certified anesthesiologist and co-founder of The American Cannabinoid Clinics in Portland, Ore.

"When I talk to a patient, I am looking at the disease process, thinking about which receptors involved in that process I need to target, and then what is the best cannabinoid that is going to work on that receptor."

The receptors she's talking about are found throughout the body and the endocannabinoid system, which Dr. Wilson-King describes as one of the most important physiological systems in establishing and maintaining human health.

"The endocannabinoid system is responsible for helping us to relax, eat, and sleep. Cannabis works through the endocannabinoid system and utilizes such receptors as CB1 and CB2, plus some others, to affect change within the body," Dr. Wilson-King explained.

Cannabis vs pharmaceutical

When comparing the use of medical cannabis versus some pharmaceutical medications, Dr. Angela "Kaya" Ledbetter, a board-certified emergency medicine physician in Houston, Texas and ACHEM



board member, says it's important to know that the safety profile of cannabis is better.

"It is a lot safer. Fortunately, cannabis has fewer side effects than a lot of other medications, which allows us the ability to experiment a little bit and work with a patient to figure out what works best with them.

I definitely believe there are great things about our modern medical system that does wonders for people, but I also believe that when our modern medical system was developed it demonized a lot of natural treatments."

Dr. Wilson-King added, "Cannabis is a medicine, but you can't think of it like a pharmaceutical. A pharmaceutical is a single molecular chemical that goes into the body to do a singular thing.

Cannabis is made up of multiple substances that go into the body and do a multitude of things. It is called 'multiple mechanisms of action', meaning it works in many different ways, and that is why cannabis can be so helpful for many

different conditions."

Removing the stigma

All three doctors hope the launch of ACHEM will help remove the stigma of medical cannabis use in the Black community.

"ACHEM is going to be very important for us to train clinicians and providers that look like us so we can change some of those old staunch beliefs in our community," said Dr. Knox.

"I can tell you that when a Black patient saw my face, you could almost taste the relief that they had when I walked into the room. It's a matter of trust.

If we can train more health care providers that look like us, explaining the science and the physiology and the benefits to our people, I think they will receive it better."

To learn more about Medical Marijuana as Medicine, visit [mmeri.famu.edu](http://mmeri.famu.edu) to watch MMERI's Conversations on Cannabis Virtual Forum featuring Dr. Genester Wilson-King, Dr. Janice Knox and Dr. Angela "Kaya" Ledbetter on YouTube. For more information on medical marijuana, visit MMERI's website at <http://mmeri.famu.edu/>





# Survival of the Fittest

By Dr. E. Faye Williams

I'm not perfect nor do I claim to be. Although I strive to get as close as possible, I don't evaluate my comportment as perfect or my judgment as infallible.

I accept the humanity and infallibility of others and hope, that when evaluated by others, I will be extended that same courtesy and grace. On occasion, my eyes have even been closed to the obvious.

My focus has been the achievement of social and justice for those who've been historically or systematically disadvantaged by the imposition of impediments to their progress – typically, women and people of color.

The imperative of eliminating the internal and external threats to our personal and collective security has always loomed large as a personal objective and is exemplified by the incessant and growing list of those murdered by agents of "law enforcement."

I'm moved to action by the anguish of children who're victimized by a never-ending cycle of hunger or those who receive an education that's inadequate to provide future incomes that will sustain them or any children they will attempt to parent.

The dedicated and principled effort necessary to even begin to confront the myriad of problems impacting our communities requires single-minded focus.

## Situational survival

For generations, the volume of problems that our communities have had to face have been challenging for some and overwhelmingly difficult for most. I sometimes compare our socioeconomic difficulties to an adult reality game of "Dodge Ball."

Like that ball that nearly knocks your

head off, the strife and trouble common to our communities, seemingly comes out of nowhere with the goal of knocking you out of the game – literally.

Rather than really resolving issues, many of us are caught in situational survival. We move from one crisis to another only catching the periodic "break" or respite giving us enough energy to survive through the next struggle.

Having so little time for reflective thought, many of us are caught in the

*My focus has been the achievement of social and justice for those who've been historically or systematically disadvantaged by the imposition of impediments to their progress – typically, women and people of color.*

loop of tackling the next most critical threat to us. It's no wonder that many people of color are without a real sense of urgency about the growing threat to our ecology.

As one who previously only focused on the more recognized, recurring, and active threats against my community, I wasn't first among those on the ecology bandwagon.

Encouraged by the philosophy of indigenous people, I accepted that "Only when the last tree has died, and the last



river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught will we realize we cannot eat money."

## Writing your ticket

If we can't live without the threat of natural disaster or a poisoned environment, what does it matter how long or under what circumstances we live?

That guidance from the original caretakers of this land led to the realization that a requirement for the "true" social activist is to maintain a 360-degree awareness of things necessary to guarantee the long-term, positive quality of life.

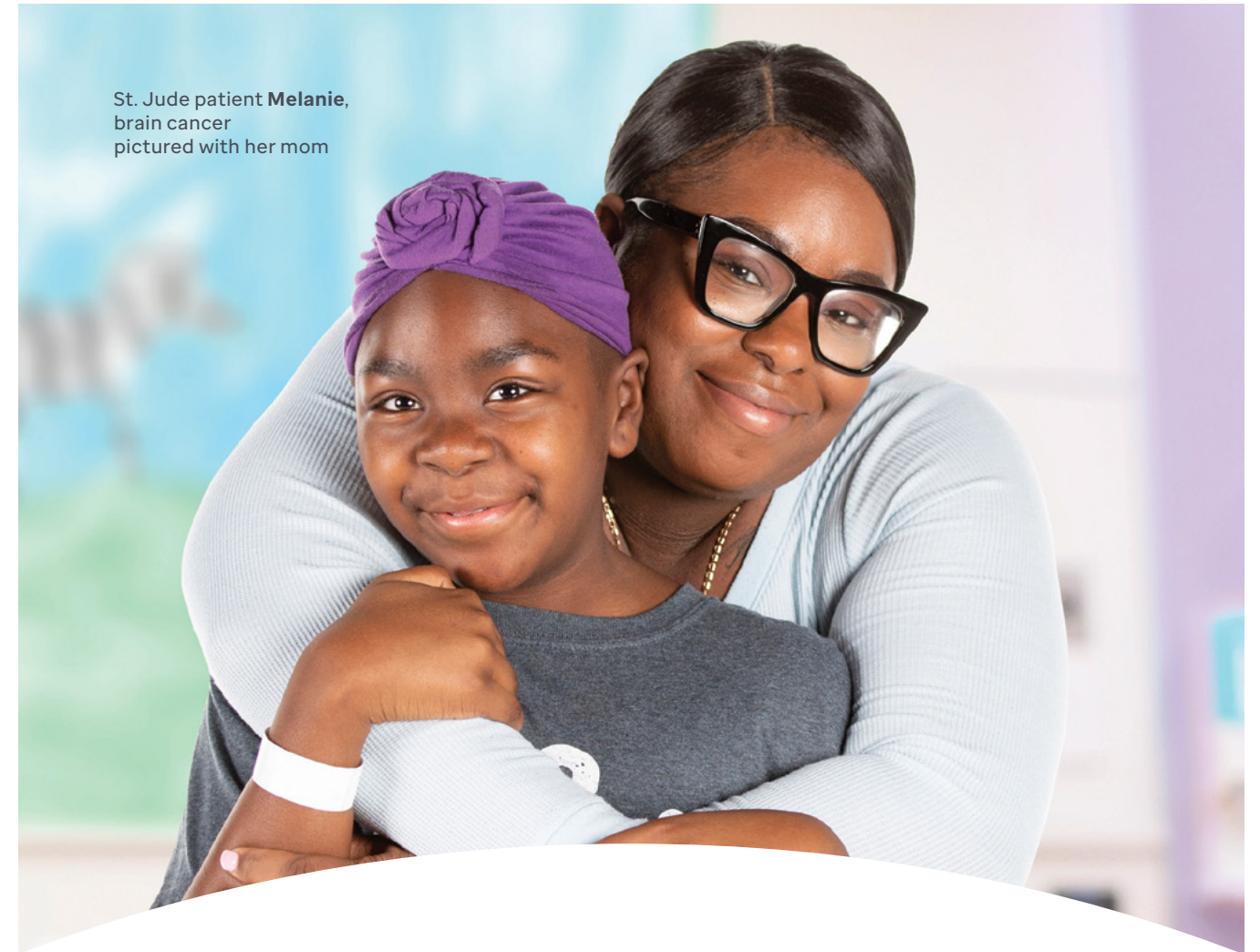
Any observer with common sense should understand that the appointment of former U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior (first Native American so appointed), the U.S. rejoining the Paris Climate Accords, and the emphasis placed on the development/refinement of renewable energy sources by President Biden should give a clue as to a growing economic opportunity.

The movement toward renewable energy should encourage those looking for high-growth employment opportunities. Increasingly, training or ground-up experience is available in solar or wind energy.

Those with scientific, technical, or mechanical skills can potentially write their own ticket to success.

Dr. E. Faye Williams is national chair of the National Congress of Black Women, Inc. Contact her via [www.nationalcongressbw.org](http://www.nationalcongressbw.org).

St. Jude patient **Melanie**, brain cancer pictured with her mom



## Help kids like Melanie get the best care.

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