

EST. JUNE 2007



**African American**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF  
**NEW JERSEY**

16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT  
**AWARDS GALA**

FORGING AHEAD



- FEBRUARY 19, 2026 -

Accredited State Chamber  
of Commerce with Distinction

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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# BEST WISHES

Hackensack Meridian *Health* is proud to support the

**African American Chamber of  
Commerce of New Jersey** on the occasion of its  
**16th Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala.**

Special congratulations to **Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr.,**  
Member of the Hackensack Meridian *Health*  
Board of Trustees and the entire AACCNJ team.

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16TH ANNUAL CIRCLE OF  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS GALA

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PROGRAM

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**"V.I.P. Meet & Greet  
& Cocktail Reception** ..... 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Introduction of  
Honorees** ..... 7:15 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Jackie P. Taylor  
Chair, Community Board of Directors, AACCNJ  
Founder & CEO, Boost Strategy Group, Inc.

**Master of Ceremonies** ..... 7:30 p.m. – 7:35p.m.

Dr. John E Harmon Sr., IOM  
Founder, President & CEO  
African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ

**Sponsor Recognition  
& Presentations** ..... 7:35 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

**Premier Sponsor Remarks**



**Introduction of Dignitaries**  
Dr. John E Harmon Sr., IOM ..... 7:45 p.m.

**Opening Remarks**  
The Honorable Dr. Dale Caldwell  
Lieutenant Governor, State of New Jersey

**Invocation**  
Reverend Dr. Steffie Bartley, Sr., Senior Pastor,  
New Hope Memorial Baptist Church &  
Northeast Regional Director, National Action Network (NAN)



**Dinner** ..... 7:55 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

**Keynote Speaker** ..... 9:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Michael J. Garner, MBA, CCA,  
Chief Business Diversity Officer  
City-Wide Mayor's Office of M/WBEs, NY

**Honorees Awards  
Presentation** ..... 9:30 p.m - 9:55 p.m.

Adenah Bayou, CEO, Adenah Bayou & Companies  
Karine Apollon, Chief Diversity Officer, NYC Board of Education  
Tanya Freeman, Tanya Freeman Law, LLC  
Stephanie Tavares-Rance, Co-Founder, Martha's Vineyard African American Film  
Festival (MVA AFF)  
Floyd Rance, Co-Founder, Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVA AFF)  
Sole Owner, Run & Shoot Filmworks  
Stedman Graham, CEO, S. Graham & Associates

**Closing Remarks**

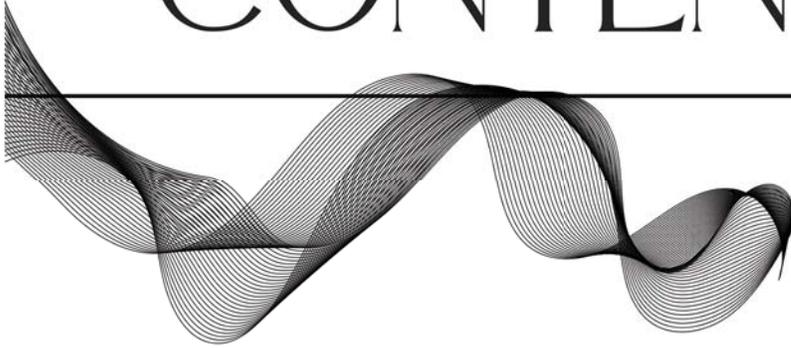
Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr. .... 9:55 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

**Dancing** ..... 10:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.

**Transportation to  
Teaneck Glenpoint  
Marriott**

.....11:00 p.m.

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### MASTER OF CEREMONIES, DIGNITARIES KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR.

THE HONORABLE DR. DALE CALDWELL

REVEREND DR. STEFFIE BARTLEY, SR.

MICHAEL J. GARNER

# 4

## HONOREES

Stedman Graham  
CEO, S. Graham & Associates

Adenah Bayoh  
CEO, Adenah Bayoh & Companies

Karine Apollon  
Chief Diversity Officer  
NYC Department of Education

Stephanie Tavares-Rance  
Co-Founder of the Martha's Vineyard African  
American Film Festival (MVAFF)

Floyd A.B. Rance III  
Co-Founder of the Martha's Vineyard African  
American Film Festival (MVAFF)  
Sole Owner of Run & Shoot Filmworks

Tanya Freeman, Esq.  
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC  
Chair, NY State Black Business Alliance

# 5

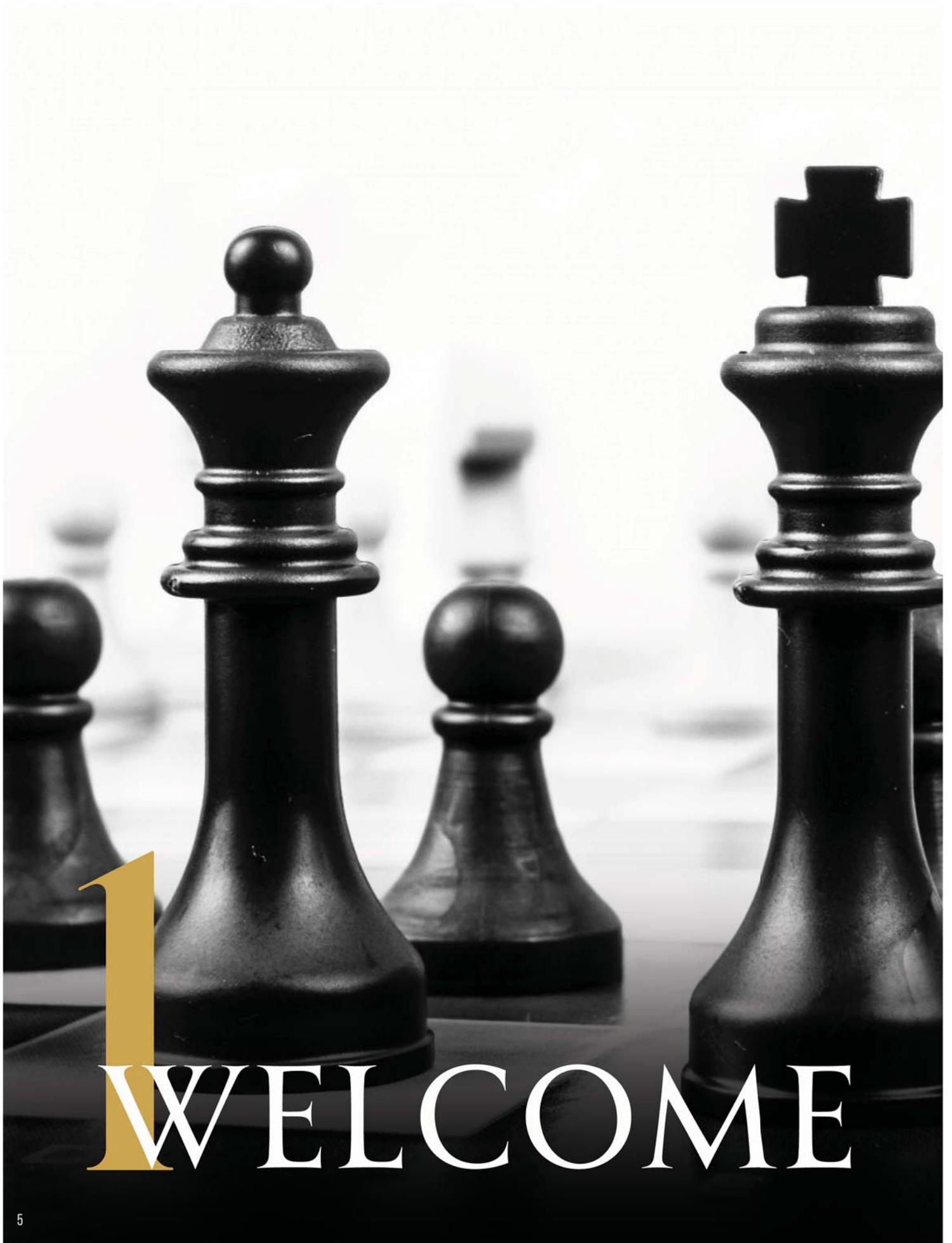
## THE LEGACY - IN MEMORIAM

PAST HONOREES  
THE LEGACY  
IN MEMORIAM

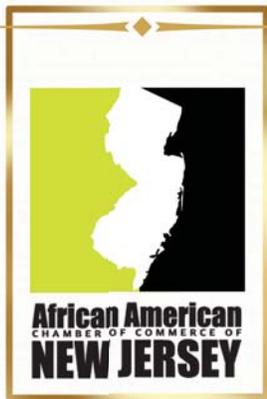
# 6

## SERVICE PROVIDERS & ADS





# 1 WELCOME



- FEBRUARY 19, 2026 -

Dear Members, Partners, and Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), it is my distinct honor to welcome you to our 16th Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala.

This year's theme, Forging Ahead, reflects both our resilience and our responsibility. As we gather this evening at The Venetian in Garfield, we celebrate not only the continued growth and impact of the AACCNJ, but also the vital role played by more than 124,000 Black-owned businesses that serve as a driving force in New Jersey's economy.

A Special Tribute to Our Honorees

The centerpiece of tonight's celebration is the recognition of our distinguished honorees. Each of you represents visionary leadership, sustained excellence, and a commitment to progress that extends well beyond individual achievement. Your work in business, public service, and community advocacy exemplifies what is possible when opportunity is met with purpose. On behalf of the Chamber, thank you for setting the standard and for advancing economic empowerment across our state and region.

We are also honored to welcome our keynote speaker, Michael J. Garner, MBA, CCA, whose leadership in supplier diversity and inclusive economic growth continues to expand opportunity for minority-owned enterprises throughout the region.

As Chairman, I extend my sincere appreciation to our sponsors, member companies, and dedicated staff. Your continued support enables the AACCNJ to serve as a strong voice for advocacy, a platform for connection, and a catalyst for the next generation of business leaders.

Thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate Black excellence and shared progress. Together, let us continue to forge ahead with clarity of purpose and confidence in the future we are building.



With gratitude and resolve,  
Gary Mann  
Chairman of the Board  
African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

- FEBRUARY 19, 2026 -

Members, Supporters, Family & Friends

A special thank you for taking this journey with us at the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Inc over the past 18 years. We commenced our mission on June 15, 2007, with a strategic partnership with the public, private and community sectors of the economy to mitigate the underperformance of Black people and Black business owners in our state.

We are pleased to report that over the years we have established several relationships within all sectors to leverage impactful outcomes for the AACCNJ, its members and supporters. Along the journey we encountered several roadblocks; many of which could have been removed or mitigated with a mutually beneficial outcome; however, they persist today. As we look to engage the incoming administration, it is my hope that we can gather around the table and negotiate more equitable economic outcomes for the 1.2 million black residents and the over 124,000 black businesses.

The contributions of blacks in almost every sector of the United States are well documented historically and thus shall serve as a point of eligibility to compete for career and contract opportunities. We know that policy changes in procurement practices have subverted intentional efforts to include our constituency on one hand, however, on the other hand, it has also adversely impacted the competitiveness of New Jersey and the United States. This imposed strategy has severe implications for this country's free enterprise system as we once knew it.

Notwithstanding, we must acknowledge this situation and unite in our efforts to persevere with professionalism and excellence. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is an initiative, however, the attributes mentioned represent transformational innate qualities that have been battle tested with transformational results and still can be applied in the current environment with favorable outcomes.

Therefore, I encourage you to remain steadfast, focused and fully embrace the mission of the AACCNJ as we execute our plans for more equitable outcomes while improving the competitiveness of New Jersey in 2026.



John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM  
Founder, President & CEO  
African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ



## State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
P.O. Box 001  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0001

MIKIE SHERRILL  
*Governor*

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL  
*Lt. Governor*

February 19, 2026

Dear Friends,

It is truly an honor to welcome all those in attendance for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala hosted by the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Incorporated (AACCNJ).

Since its inception, the AACCNJ has played an essential role in strengthening the economic vitality of our state. Through its leadership in education, public policy, and advocacy, the AACCNJ has provided a powerful platform for African American business leaders to engage with a collective voice, while advancing the visibility and success of more than 124,000 Black-owned businesses across New Jersey.

This annual Gala recognizes African Americans who have achieved distinction across business, education, public service, entrepreneurship, and culture, reflecting both personal excellence and a strong commitment to leadership and community advancement. Black History Month is especially an opportune time to honor both the progress achieved and the work still ahead, reminding us that opportunity must be intentional, equity protected, and economic growth inclusive. These principles are exemplified through AACCNJ advocacy and enduring impact.

On behalf of the State of New Jersey, we extend our sincere congratulations to tonight's honorees and our appreciation to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey for its continued leadership. Your work strengthens communities, opens doors, and helps ensure that New Jersey remains a place where talent, hard work, and vision are met with opportunity.

Best wishes for a successful and memorable celebration.

Sincerely,

Mikie Sherrill  
Governor

Dr. Dale Caldwell  
Lieutenant Governor



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Suzanne Clark  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer

February 3, 2026

African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey  
379 West State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08618

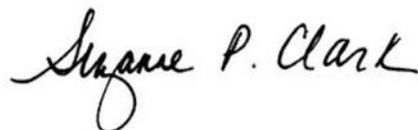
Dear Friends,

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is pleased to join the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey in celebrating the honorees for this year's Black History Month Gala. Tonight's honorees exemplify excellence, leadership, and service—qualities that strengthen communities across New Jersey and beyond.

The ACCNJ's work to advance economic opportunity for African American entrepreneurs remains vital. Your continued advocacy and commitment to growth and empowerment makes a meaningful difference for businesses and families throughout the state.

Congratulations to all those recognized this evening. We wish you an inspiring celebration and continued success in the year ahead.

Sincerely,



16TH ANNUAL CIRCLE OF  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS GALA

THANK YOU  
TO OUR SPONSORS

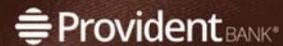
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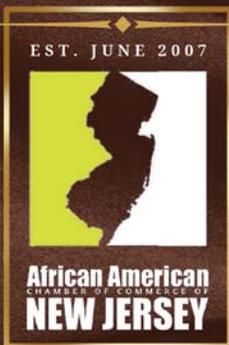


PLATINUM SPONSOR

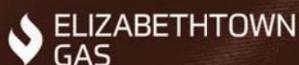


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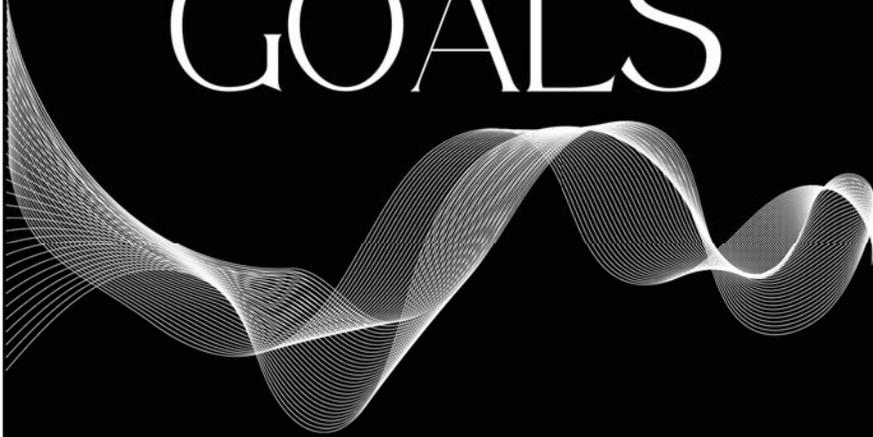
## BRONZE SPONSORS



## PROGRAM BOOK SPONSOR



# 2026 AACCNJ GOALS



## Goal 1

Raising the exemption threshold on Project Labor Agreements in New Jersey from \$5 Million to \$35 Million so that the limits align with Federal Law.

## Goal 2

The abolishment of Registered Municipal Accountant designation as a requirement to perform municipal government audits.

## Goal 3

Disaggregation of the spending levels of blacks and other groups; applying all the aspirational goals once adopted to every dollar the state of New Jersey spends, Pension funds, bond finance, professional services, Construction, and Good and Services, etc.

## Goal 4

Elimination of Education, Occupation and Credit Scoring as proxies for auto insurance premiums.

## Goal 5

A review of New Jersey's State Contracting and Cooperative Purchasing Programs with the intention of modifying the process for more equitable participation and better transparency to the public.

EST. JUNE 2007



**African American**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF  
**NEW JERSEY**

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ABOUT THE  
AACCNJ

EST. JUNE 2007



# ABOUT THE AACCNJ

## The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

performs an essential role in the economic viability of New Jersey. While providing a platform for New Jersey's African American business leaders, to speak with a collective voice, the AACCNJ advocates and promotes economic

diversity fostering a climate of business growth through major initiatives centering on education and public policy. The Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c) 3 tax exemption, which is shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.



November 23, 2022, The United States Chamber of Commerce awarded the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey with its Accredited State Chamber with Distinction designation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community.

"Chambers of commerce that achieve an Accreditation designation are truly leaders in their industry." said Raymond P. Towle, U.S. Chamber Vice President, Federation Relations and IOM. "This rigorous review includes all aspects of a chamber's policies, operations, and programming. When chambers of commerce earn the distinction of becoming Accredited, it is a mark of excellence for the organization, its staff, and its leadership. Accredited chambers are recognized for their ability to serve as a resource to their region's businesses while maintaining transparent governance practices, sound financial controls, safe work environments, effective communications, and value in programming. They are commended for their continued advocacy of free enterprise, and for their commitment to serving members and their local businesses. Congratulations on this tremendous accomplishment."

In **March of 2019**, The United States Chamber of Commerce (USCC) awarded the AACCNJ with three stars Accreditation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community. **The Chamber joins the top 3 percent of all chambers in the nation who are Accredited as both the only accredited Chamber in New Jersey and the only African American Chamber in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce federation to hold this distinction. With approximately 7,000 chambers in the U.S.**, Accreditation with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a prestigious honor that distinguishes the high quality, expertise, and strong leadership displayed by Accredited state and local chambers of commerce. In **November of 2022**, the USCC granted the AACCNJ a reaccreditation status with; Statewide Chamber with Distinction. **In October of 2025, the AACCNJ remained New Jersey's only Accredited Chamber or Business Organization, as declared by the largest business federation in the world, the USCC.**

*"We are extremely delighted to share with our members and supporters the recent designation awarded by the United States Chamber of Commerce to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, of its reaccreditation status "State Chamber with Distinction", said John E. Harmon, Sr., Founder, President & CEO. "The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey is the only Accredited Chamber of Commerce or Business organization in our state - what a significant achievement for the dedicated staff of professionals and Board of Directors."*

**IN 2022, THE AACCNJ RECEIVED A PERFECT SCORE IN COMMUNICATIONS & FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FROM THE USCC.**



## ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) Inc. was established in 2007 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, B2B (business-to-business) organization in Trenton, New Jersey. The Founder, President and CEO of the AACCNJ is: John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM., jharmon@aaccnj.com Telephone (609) 571-1620

Serving more than 900 active members, the AACCNJ has become a central beacon for minority and non-minority advocacy building, community and government relations, business development, job retention, and education attainment. The Chamber serves as a mechanism for communication, program creation, and strategic implementation of initiatives and resolutions that help build New Jersey's economic landscape.

To date, the AACCNJ has advocated on behalf of its members on several capital development and procurement projects to insure inclusion. The AACCNJ is a conduit to:



**Bridging gaps** between the **under-performing populations** in New Jersey and a vital resource to initiating dialogue leading to strategies that address the state's overall competitiveness.



**Workforce and development training**, job-readiness programs and recruitment services.



Free enterprise activity for **Women, Veteran and Minority-owned business**.



**Access to resources** in making statewide businesses visible in key markets.



**An open line of communication** with state and local government officials, and suppliers.



**Youth mentorship** and entrepreneurial programs.

## AACCNJ LOCATIONS

379 West State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08618  
(Headquarters)

Transformation Center  
165 West Hanover Street  
Trenton, NJ 08618

Mill One  
1 North Johnston Avenue  
Hamilton, NJ 08609

# 2026 PRESIDENT'S CLUB



# ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS



1

The AACCNJ's new Transformation Center was made possible through the exceptional generosity of Nexus Properties, whose affiliate, Seven One Plus, LLC, gifted the 26,800-square-foot facility to the Chamber. Dante Germano, Managing Member of Nexus Properties, played a key role in facilitating this contribution and ensuring the building could become a long-term asset for the community. This transformative investment is further supported by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and strengthened through a formal partnership with Rowan University, which will provide educational programming, workforce-development opportunities, and collaborative initiatives.

2

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) and Rowan University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish an academic presence for Rowan at the AACCNJ's new hub, The Transformation Center, in Trenton. This partnership aims to expand educational and training opportunities in the region by integrating Rowan's resources with the chamber's business-focused center.

3



AACCNJ "Pathway to Success" wins Two Bronze Telly Awards in the 2025 Competition. Bronze Award DEI Category for (2) Season Six Episodes.



4

TDI secured more than \$2 million in program funding to strengthen workforce pathways for populations facing systemic barriers — including justice-impacted individuals, people directly or indirectly impacted by the opioid epidemic, and New Jersey veterans, women and historically marginalized populations seeking high-growth careers in manufacturing and supply chain logistics.

5

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), in partnership with the Administrators Network, proudly hosted the inaugural Educators of Color Symposium on June 6, 2025, at the Crowne Plaza in Princeton, NJ. The event brought together a dynamic community of educators, thought leaders, and advocates dedicated to advancing equity and excellence in education.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Gary Mann, CEO, Jafel Analytics, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Marcus Dyer, Principal, Withum, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Tammeisha Smith, CEO, Dunbar Center, ROI Influencers, People of Color

Robert Johnson, Esq., Officer, Chief Diversity Officer, Corporate Group, Gibbons P.C.,

has been recognized by his peers in the 2026 Edition of The Best Lawyers in America®

Schnearia Ashley, Senior Vice President, Commercial Banker, Truist, was appointed to Governor

Shapiro's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs

Tanya L. Freeman, Esq., Co-Founder, Black Business Unblinded, Chair, NYSBBA, named to BINJE's 2025

Best Health Care List Chairs: Chair of the University Hospital Board of Directors



## LEADERSHIP & STAFF RECOGNITION

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Influencers People of Color 2025

Jacqueline E. Baptiste – ROI Women In Business 2025

Mary Griffin - Received SDDC Advocate Award

Carmen Gates – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Carmen Gates – Appointed to the Board of Contact of Mercer County

Vivian Harmon - Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Vivian Harmon - Served as a panelist for Future Ready NJ with NJ Council of County Colleges

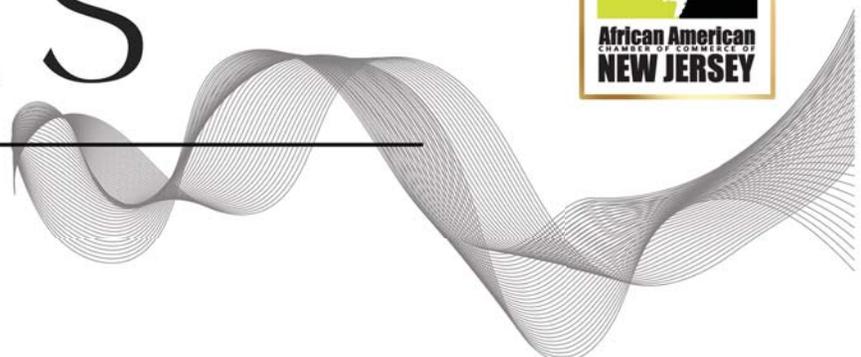
Bydeia Harmon – Completed first year of USCC IOM Program

Nyanpu Kerkulah - Joined staff as a full time Program Director

Khadir Williams - Joined staff as a full time Program Coordinator

Demetra Alston - Promoted to Employment and Outreach Services Coordinator

# MEMBER BENEFITS



## ALL MEMBER BENEFITS

- Radio Show
- Membership Spotlight
- Monthly members only virtual call with the President
- Member Events Posted on Website - Free promotion of events, ribbon cuttings and services
- Complimentary Regional networking at AACCNJ events
- Dual membership with the US Chamber of Commerce
- Trade specific Roundtables
- Quarterly meetings
- Annual meeting
- Meeting With A Member of Membership Acquisition Team
- Assistance with MBE/MWBE/SBE/DBE Certifications
- Member Resume Portal
- Q&A opportunities with state and local officials and corporate representatives
- Pro Bono Alliance - Pro bono legal services \*Annual revenues of \$500,000 or less.
- Ability to post jobs
- Access to RFP opportunities
- Opportunity for referrals and resources for potential opportunities
- Access to members only, promotions and discounts
- Complimentary website development
- Complimentary monthly ROI reports

## MEMBERS LV2 - LV5 (\$2,500-\$7,500)

- Spotlight in Magazines
- Guest on RVN TV
- Priority Scheduling as a Quarterly meeting Presenter
- Priority Scheduling as panelist for AACCNJ events
- Standalone social media promos

## MEMBERS LV6 - LV9 PLUS PRESIDENT'S CLUB (\$10K AND ABOVE)

- Pathway to Success TV appearance
- President club Roundtable Participation
- Unlimited promo shares on social media
- Company name and logo on AACCNJ website
- Recognition at the AACCNJ Annual meeting
- Supplier Chain Diversity
- High level networking and access to unique opportunities
- President club breakfast during BLC
- Support on Legislative and Public Policy matters

# ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS



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The AACCNJ's new Transformation Center was made possible through the exceptional generosity of Nexus Properties, whose affiliate, Seven One Plus, LLC, gifted the 26,800-square-foot facility to the Chamber. Dante Germano, Managing Member of Nexus Properties, played a key role in facilitating this contribution and ensuring the building could become a long-term asset for the community. This transformative investment is further supported by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) and strengthened through a formal partnership with Rowan University, which will provide educational programming, workforce-development opportunities, and collaborative initiatives.

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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Dr. Denise Anderson, Ph.D., MPH**  
CEO  
Denise Anderson & Associates



**Racheal Ankrah-Fosu**  
Chief Technology Advisor  
The Galileo PreSchools  
Busy Place Early Learning Center, KIDFIN



**William Bowie**  
President & CEO  
Empower Construction



**Deborah J. Frazier**  
Wealth Management Advisor  
LRG Wealth, Advisors/Hightower



**Hosea Johnson**  
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Owner Nothing Bundt Cake, Wayne, NJ  
Founder and CEO, GHIT Consulting, Inc.



**Will Smith**  
Vice President  
Corporate Shared Services  
South Jersey Industries (SJI)



**Robert D. Warrington, Esq.**  
Founding Partner,  
Dawkins & Warrington Law Group, LLC



**Thomas Webster**  
Chief Executive Advisor  
2020 Business Advisors

# COMMUNITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Dr. John E Harmon, Sr., IOM**  
 Founder, President & CEO  
 AACCNJ



**Jackie P. Taylor**  
 Chair, Community Board of Directors, AAC  
 CEO & Founder  
 Boost Strategy Group LLC



**Schnearia Ashley**  
 Senior Vice President  
 Truist Commercial Banking



**Carin Heps**  
 Assistant Vice President, Small Group &  
 Individual Broker Channel Sales  
 Delta Dental of New Jersey  
 Delta Dental of Connecticut



**Faye Coleman**  
 CEO  
 PG Health, LLC



**Stacey Kavanagh**  
 Vice President  
 Market Manager  
 Provident Bank



**Wendy Lanski**  
 Director, Enterprise Vendor  
 Management & Operations  
 Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ



**Erik Larsen**  
 Team Leader  
 C&I Northfield Bank



**Bill Stephey**  
 Principal Executive  
 Broad Market Media



**Viviana Lamm**  
 CEO  
 Risk Strategy Solutions



**Ralph D. Weaver**  
 Founder & Former CEO  
 East West Connections



**Lawrence Wooten**  
 Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity  
 American Water

# DISPARITY STUDY TASK FORCE



**Denise Anderson, Ph.D., MPH**  
Founder & CEO, Denise Anderson  
& Associates (DA&A) LLC



**Tasha Youngblood Brown, MBA, CISA**  
Managing Director  
EY



**Marcus Dyer, CPA, JD,**  
Treasurer, AACCNJ  
WithumSmith+Brown, PC



**Tanya Freeman, Esq.**  
Chair, NY State Black Business Alliance  
Tanya Freeman Law, LLC



**Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM**  
Founder, President, & CEO  
AACCNJ



**Robert Johnson, Esq.**  
Secretary, AACCNJ  
Partner, FBT Gibbons



**Gary Mann**  
Chairman, AACCNJ  
CEO, Jasfel Analytics



**Monique Nelson,**  
Executive Chair, UniWorld Group  
(UWG)



**Tammeisha Smith**  
Vice Chair, AACCNJ  
CEO, Dunbar Center, Inc.



**Robert Warrington, Esq.**  
Former Vice-Chair, AACCNJ  
Founding Partner, Dawkins &  
Warrington Law Group, LLC

# MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



**Deirdra Oliver**  
Senior Branch Manager  
Visions Federal Credit Union  
Saddle Brook, NJ

<https://www.visionsfcu.org/locations/saddle-brook>



**Edward Roberts**  
Founder & Owner  
Prep Boyz LLC/ Buggin Out  
Pest Control

<https://www.bugginoutipm.com/>



**Nadine Brown**  
CEO  
N&R Divine Cleaning  
Services LLC

[www.nrdivinecleaning.com](http://www.nrdivinecleaning.com)



**Pauline Lloyd**  
Founder & Executive Director  
Albert Islay Walden  
Education Alliance, Inc.

<https://www.islaywalden.org/>



**Kim Leiby**  
Business Development  
The Lerepco  
IT Group

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# AACCNJ STAFF



**Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM**  
Founder,  
President & CEO



**Jacqueline Baptiste**  
Executive Advisor to  
President & CEO  
& Brand Ambassador



**Mary Griffin, PMP, IOM**  
Vice President of  
Membership  
Retention & Programs



**Nicole Baptiste, IOM**  
Vice President,  
Membership Acquisition  
& Financial Management



**Carmen Gates**  
Vice President of Community  
Development and  
External Affairs Officer



**Bydeia Harmon**  
Community  
Development Officer



**Vivian Harmon**  
Executive Director  
Training & Development  
Institute



**Tammy Holloway**  
Senior Membership &  
Program Specialist  
NYSBBA, AACCNJ



**Demetra Alston**  
Outreach Coordinator  
Training & Development  
Institute



**Nyanpu Kerkulah**  
Case Manager  
Training & Development  
Institute



**Jayme Rittenburg**  
Administrative Assistant



**Margaret Syphax**  
Member Relations  
Support Manager



**Melody Holiday**  
Intake and Workforce  
Administrative Coordinator  
Training & Development Institute



**Khadir Williams**  
Program Coordinator  
Training & Development  
Institute

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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Chairman of the Board, AACCNJ



**Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr.**  
Founder,  
President & CEO



**Jacqueline Baptiste**  
Executive Advisor to  
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Vice President of Community  
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Affairs Officer



**Jayme Rittenburg**  
Administrative  
Assistant



**Nyanpu Kerkulah**  
Case Manager



Adjunct  
Staff



**Margaret Syphax**  
Member Relations  
Support Manager



**Tammy Holloway** Senior  
Membership & Program  
Specialist NYSBBA, AACCNJ



**Demetra Alston**  
Outreach Coordinator



**Khadir Williams**  
Program Coordinator



**Melody Holiday,**  
Intake and Workforce  
Administrative Coordinator



**Bydeia Harmon**  
Community  
Development Officer



Consultants



**Joe Awundaga, CPA**  
Accounting



**Shareene Snear**  
Grants/Financial Consultant

# ADJUNCT STAFF



Helen Walker



Evon Judkins



Kimberly Smith



Tress Parker



Myrial Pedersen



Glori Bryson



Joslyn Morman



Vanessa Woolfolk



Victoria Woolfolk



Shawna Biggs



Sabrina Williams



Tamara Williams



Elaina Mason



Thank you

To the Board of Director, staff and each member of the staff of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey for your contributions to tonight's Gala!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO  
THE 16TH ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARDS GALA EVENT TEAM

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM  
CEO  
The Visionary  
Corporate Engagement

Jacqueline E. Baptiste  
Brand Ambassador  
Fundraising  
Lead, Production & Management

Noir Marketing and Design, LLC  
Noelle Baptiste, Tahji Wright

Tress Parker  
Assistant Lead

Green Glass Films  
Video Production

Staff  
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Mary Griffin, IOM  
Carmen Gates  
Jayme Rittenburg  
Margaret Syphax  
Shawn Sapp

Adjunct Staff

Helen Walker  
Jessica Desmond  
Evon Judkins  
Elaina Mason  
Kimberly Smith  
Sabrina Williams  
Shawna Biggs  
Glori Morman

Nyasa Bryson  
Tamara Williams  
Danielle Wilson  
Lisa Clotter  
Dawn Smith  
Brenda Livingston  
Connie Ellis  
Valerie Merritt

Thank you to the AACCNJ Board of Directors, Staff and Adjunct Staff



3

MASTERS OF  
CEREMONIES  
DIGNITARIES  
INVOCATION  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM FOUNDER, PRESIDENT & CEO, AACCNJ

In 1997, as a small businessperson, John E. Harmon, Sr. was an early member of the Metropolitan Trenton African American Chamber of Commerce (MTAACC), becoming its president, two years later. Under his guidance, MTAACC grew its membership, forged alliances with business associations/organizations and government, and forged strategic partnerships in the public and private sectors to benefit African American businesses throughout New Jersey. Harmon recognized the growing need for a statewide organization that could align both government and business interests to advocate for New Jersey's Black entrepreneurs and their communities. That led him to establish the AACCNJ – which is heralded as the leading voice for business development and economic empowerment for New Jersey's Black owned businesses.

Harmon has served as the Founder, President, and CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), since 2007. In this role he has the responsibility of establishing, implementing, and executing the mission, as well as the fiduciary oversight and governance of AACCNJ in accordance with its Bylaws. In addition, he works to identify strategic partnerships in both the public and private sector to connect AACCNJ members and supporters to resources and opportunities to grow and sustain their goals and objectives. Moreover, Harmon serves as an advocate on behalf of the 1.2 million African American residents and the over 88,000 Black owned businesses statewide to ensure that policy at the municipal, county, and federal level provides fairness, equity and access to a level playing field in the marketplace. Harmon hosts the Gold Telly Award winning - AACCNJ monthly television show "Pathway to Success" as well as the Chamber's weekly radio show "The Empowerment Hour."

Prior to his twenty-seven-year career as a chamber executive, Mr. Harmon was previously employed at The Bowery Savings Bank (now part of Capital One Bank) in New York City where he managed the bank's Residential Real Estate Department overlooking major mortgage loan transactions; and at Chemical Bank where he managed third party loan originations for New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. While working at Chemical Bank, Mr. Harmon established The Affordable Housing Loan Program. Following his banking career, Mr. Harmon founded a transportation company in 1989, called Harmon Transfer, Corp. The company transported dry goods, perishable commodities, and produce throughout the Northeast United States and Canada.

Harmon is the Former Chairman of the Board for the National Black Chamber of Commerce; there are 150 Affiliate Chapters of the NBCC and over fifteen international affiliates. Harmon is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Economic Community Advisory Council (ECAC), Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors, Jersey Central Power & Light and Hermann Transportation. Harmon is also a Board Member of Digital Place Based Advertising Association and is a member of the US Chamber of Commerce Committee of 100.

## DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM FOUNDER, PRESIDENT & CEO, AACCNJ



He is the Founder CEO & Chairman of the New York State Black Business Alliance, Inc. (NYSBBA), and was pinned as a new member of the 100 Black Men of NY in January of 2025. Additionally, Mr. Harmon is a Board member of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce (NJCC), New Jersey BPU, Supplier Diversity Development Council (SDDC), Opportunity New Jersey, Better Choices, Better Care NJ, Chairman of Crime Stoppers of Greater Trenton. He is a former Board Member of Fairleigh Dickinson University, Investors Bank, American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), First Book, and Minding Our Business (MOB), a youth entrepreneurial initiative in affiliation with Rider University.

Harmon was awarded in 2024 with the National Association of Corporate Directors Awards – non-profit governance award. NJ Biz Power 100 List for 2024, 2023, 2022 and in 2018 to its Power 10 list. Harmon was acknowledged in 2021 and 2022 by ROI-NJ, for two consecutive years as the Number 1 Person of Color in NJ and was recognized in ROI-NJ “People of Color Influencers” for 2025, 2024, 2023 and 2018. Harmon was recognized as one of the NJ Business Hall of Fame Class of 2021 Laureates on December 9th, 2021. In 2021, for the third consecutive year, Harmon was acknowledged in South Jersey Journal's list of the “Twenty-five Most Influential African Americans in New Jersey. Harmon was honored by NJBIA as the Executive of the Year in October of 2022, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra at their Spring Gala in May of 2022. Harmon is also recognized as a Center of Influence (COI) for the United States Army and was selected as a participant in the Joint Civilian Orientation 2018 Conference (JCOC) hosted by the Secretary of Defense. The JCOC program is the oldest and most prestigious public liaison program in the Department of Defense. Harmon was selected as one of 40 individuals (out of 230 applicants) to attend JCOC 18. In addition, Harmon was the only attendee from the State of New Jersey to participate in the conference. Harmon was the first individual selected as a member of the host committee for NFL Super Bowl XLVII held in NJ in 2014.

John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, ABA, BA, ABA, h.c., BS, L.H.D. h.c. holds an associate degree in Business Administration from Mercer County Community College and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1983. Shortly before graduating in 1983, Harmon received a call from FDU's career development office encouraging him to apply for a management training program for future bank presidents. Of 150 candidates, he was one of only 12 chosen – and the only African American. Mr. Harmon also successfully completed a one-year Fellowship on Regionalism and Sustainability sponsored by The Ford Foundation and completed the Minority Business Management Seminar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 2009. Additionally, Mr. Harmon completed a four-year Chamber Executive Management Program, at Villanova University, sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in 2014. Harmon was conferred with an honorary Associates Degree in Business Administration from Rowan College Burlington County, in 2014. Harmon was awarded a honorary Doctor of Humane Letters (L.H.D.), honoris causa, from Fairleigh Dickinson University in May of 2022. Harmon was bestowed with an honorary degree of Doctor of Business Administration from Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ in May of 2024. Dr. Harmon gave the undergraduate commencement address to the class of 2025, and was bestowed with an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree, from William Paterson University at the Prudential Center, in Newark, NJ, in May of 2025. In September of 2025 Dr. Harmon was bestowed with an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Thomas Edison State University, at Cure Arena, in Trenton, NJ.

Harmon grew up in a large, working-class family in Trenton, NJ. His father operated his own trucking business; his mother was a factory worker. In high school, Harmon studied auto mechanics and aspired to one day running his own business like his father. Harmon is an avid sports fan, as a young man he played on the local baseball team. Today he enjoys golfing. He has three sons, John Jr., Joshua, and Justin. He is a member of Higher Ground Interdenominational Church, in Ewing, NJ. Harmon released a book in 2025 - Power Moves: The Life and Legacy of a Black Chamber Executive.



**JACKIE P. TAYLOR**  
CHAIR, COMMUNITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AACCNJ  
FOUNDER & CEO, BOOST STRATEGY GROUP, INC.

Jackie P. Taylor is a business strategist, bestselling author, and dynamic motivational speaker with over 22 years of experience in organizational performance improvement and technology enablement. As the CEO and Founder of Boost Strategy Group LLC, Jackie has dedicated her career to inspiring and empowering business leaders to achieve transformative impact. With her unique blend of passion and expertise, Jackie has become a go-to source for business insights and motivation.

Throughout her career, Jackie has partnered with large, complex organizations to ensure their workforce, operating/service delivery model, and technology enablement initiatives are aligned with their organizational strategy. Her work has advanced the institutional mission of numerous government, higher education, and private sector organizations nationally.

Jackie's commitment to service extends beyond her professional accomplishments. She has previously served as a leader and mentor in the national EY Entrepreneur Access Network, where she mentored hundreds of Black and Latinx business owners. Additionally, she has served as Commissioner of the New Jersey State Martin Luther King Jr. Commission and co-chair of the annual NJ Dr. MLK Jr. Youth Conference. As a founding member of The National Coalition of 100 Black Women-Central NJ Chapter, Jackie actively advocates for marginalized communities.

Recognized for her outstanding contributions, Jackie has received numerous awards, including NJBIZ BEST 50 Women in Business and the Somerset Commission on Status of Outstanding Women in Somerset-Information Technology. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management and is certified through Harvard University's Executive Leadership Program. Jackie is also a Certified Senior Professional in HR (SPHR/SCP).

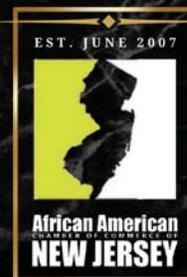
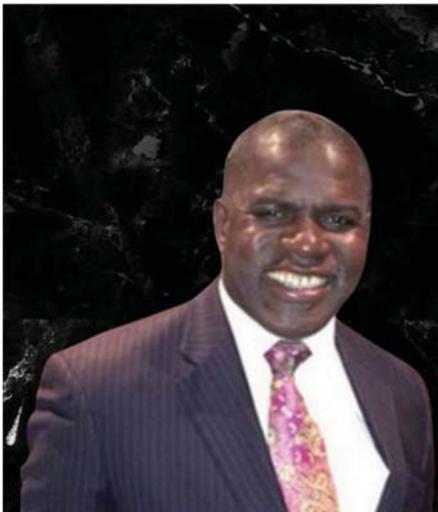
As a dynamic motivational speaker, Jackie shares her inspiring insights and experiences with audiences worldwide. Her focus on growing and scaling businesses, embracing failure, and promoting health equity through entrepreneurship resonates with business leaders, government officials, and entrepreneurs alike.

Through Boost Strategy Group LLC, Jackie continues to make a difference in the business world by empowering organizations to achieve sustainable growth and lasting change.



THE HONORABLE DR. DALE CALDWELL  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, NEW JERSEY

Dr. Dale Caldwell has spent his life serving New Jersey, including leadership roles in the public sector, private sector, and higher education. He currently serves as the President of Centenary University. He formerly served as the executive director of the Rothman Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Fairleigh Dickinson University, President of the Educational Services Commission (ESCNJ), Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), founding executive director of the Newark Alliance and senior manager at Deloitte Consulting. He volunteered on the New Brunswick school board for 26 years, serving as president for six.



REV. DR. STEFFIE BARTLE, SR.  
PASTOR, NEW HOPE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH &  
NORTHEAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK (NAN)

Senior Pastor of New Hope Memorial Baptist Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey, he is a respected faith leader, community advocate, and public servant dedicated to advancing social justice and youth development. He serves as Director of the Jersey Chapters of the National Action Network and holds the role of Northeast Regional Director Board Member, overseeing initiatives from Connecticut to Washington, DC.

As Founder of the National Action Network Technical World, with locations in Newark and Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Brooklyn, New York, he has expanded opportunities for workforce development and technical training. His commitment to public safety and community relations is reflected through his service on multiple Administrative Advisory Committees addressing body camera policies, collaboration with Attorney Generals, and close work with state trooper recruitment efforts.

He has been appointed by Governor Phil Murphy to the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice and previously served on the Governor's Transition Team. Additionally, he contributes his leadership to the Advisory Committee Against Police Officers Using Excessive Force and serves as Chaplain for the Newark Police Department, working alongside numerous police departments and prosecutors to strengthen community partnerships.

His civic engagement extends to serving on the Board of Directors for the Chad School Foundation, the PSEG Green Efficiency Task Force Committee, and the Juvenile Justice Committee. He is also Chairman of the International Youth Organization (IYO), partners with former Governor James McGreevey on reentry initiatives, and has been involved in the development of the Mildred Crump Bridge Project. Since 2018, he has consulted on cannabis programming and serves as a Board Member for the Progressive 360 Carpenters Union.

A devoted family man, he is married to Lady Harriet Bartley and is the proud father of five daughters and one son, and grandfather to four grandsons.

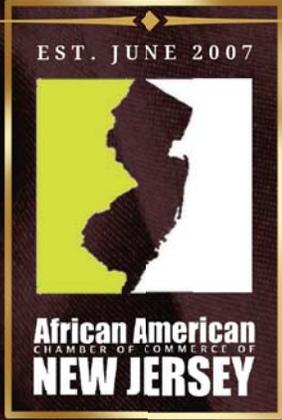


**MICHAEL J. GARNER, MBA, CCA  
CHIEF BUSINESS DIVERSITY OFFICER, CITY-WIDE  
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF M/WBES, NEW YORK CITY**

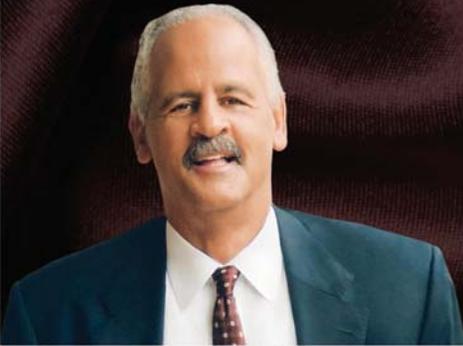
Michael J. Garner, MBA, was appointed New York City's first Citywide Chief Business Diversity Officer by Mayor Eric Adams on February 16, 2023. Mr. Garner formerly served as Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), State of New York. His tenure at the MTA spanned 14 years from February 2009- through February 2023. He is a diversity champion, making it his personal and professional mission to create a more diverse business environment wherever he's been.

MWDBE/SDVOB programming, Mr. Garner and his teams at the City of New York, the MTA and the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA), have been responsible for more than \$30 billion in contracts and payments to New York State/City Minority and Women-owned Businesses. In addition, during his tenure at the MTA, he and his team increased the hiring of Blacks, Hispanics and Asians by 20%, across the MTA's six different operating agencies.

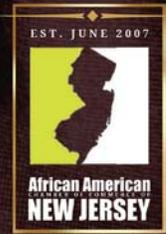




# 4 2026 HONOREES



STEDMAN GRAHAM  
CEO  
S. GRAHAM & ASSOCIATES



STEDMAN GRAHAM is a business advisor, chairman and CEO of S. Graham and Associates, a management and marketing consulting firm. He is the author of 12 books, including two New York Times best sellers and one Wall Street Journal bestseller.

As a businessman, educator and speaker, Graham lectures and conducts training programs for corporations and educational organizations worldwide on the topic of Identity Leadership, based on the philosophy that one cannot lead anyone else until you first lead yourself. He has delivered Identity Leadership programs in The Netherlands, Germany, China, Canada, the UK, Bermuda and South Africa.

His proven Nine Step Success Process® drives his powerful message. This success process is based on the principle that it doesn't matter how the world defines you, it only matters how you define yourself. Graham is honored as a distinguished visiting professor at colleges and universities throughout the country. He is a former adjunct professor at the Northwestern Kellogg School of Business where he taught the course, "The Dynamics of Leadership."

Graham's clients include Gulfstream, Aerospace, Microsoft, Deloitte, Wells Fargo, Lenovo, General Dynamics and the US Department of Labor and Education.

As a proud native of Whitesboro, New Jersey, Graham has demonstrated an enduring dedication to youth and community. His New York Times best seller, *Teens Can Make it Happen* has become a program utilized in numerous middle and high schools in the US and abroad.

With dedication to community development, Graham is the founder of the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro and the Concerned Citizens of Lake Wacamaw, North Carolina. He is also the Co-founder of the Community Alliance for Youth Success (CAYS) and a member of Horatio Alger.

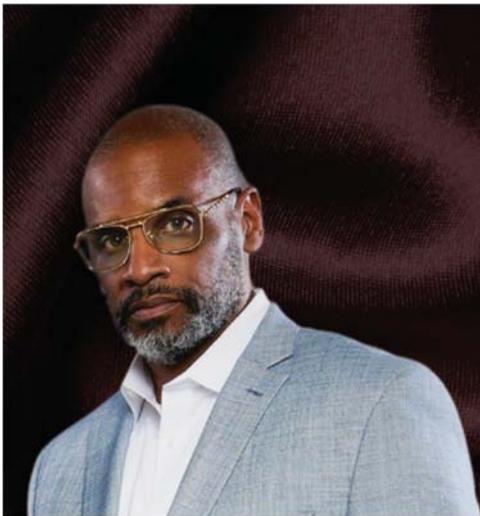
Stedman Graham has served in the United States Army and played professional basketball in the European League. Graham holds a Bachelor Degree in Social Work from Hardin-Simmons University and a Masters Degree in Education from Ball State University and has been awarded three honorary Doctorates. Graham serves on several boards and has received numerous awards.



## ARTHUR GEORGE GASTON (1892–1996) ENTREPRENEUR, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Arthur George Gaston (1892–1996) was a pioneering African American entrepreneur whose life and work reshaped Birmingham, Alabama, and set a national example for Black economic power. Born into poverty, Gaston built a business empire valued at an estimated \$30–\$40 million, spanning insurance, banking, hospitality, and media. His enterprises—including the Booker T. Washington Insurance Company and the Citizens Federal Savings Bank—were created at a time when segregation locked Black Americans out of mainstream financial systems. Like earlier self-made Black leaders such as Free Frank McWorter, Gaston believed economic independence was essential to true freedom, and he used business as a tool for collective advancement.

Gaston's impact on the Black community extended far beyond wealth creation. In 1960s Alabama—a flashpoint of the Civil Rights Movement—he emerged as a powerful but moderate advocate, often working behind the scenes to support desegregation, voter participation, and Black institutional stability. His businesses provided jobs, access to capital, and safe spaces for organizing, while his leadership helped bridge conversations between Black activists, white business leaders, and political power brokers. Gaston demonstrated that Black entrepreneurship could be both a shield and a lever against racial inequality, proving that ownership, influence, and community investment were critical pillars of long-term Black progress.



FLOYD A. B. RANCE III  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
AFRICAN AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL (MVAFF)  
SOLE OWNER OF RUN & SHOOT FILMWORKS

Floyd A. B. Rance III is an award-winning cultural producer, Director, and Producer whose work sits at the intersection of film, narrative change, and community impact. He is the Owner and CEO of Run & Shoot Filmworks, Inc., a media company dedicated to elevating underrepresented voices and creating platforms for meaningful dialogue through storytelling.

Rance is best known as the Co-Founder and Executive Producer of the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAFF), one of the nation's most respected cultural convenings celebrating Black storytelling in film and television. Under his leadership, MVAFF has evolved into a multi-day, multi-venue destination that convenes filmmakers, actors, executives, and cultural leaders, while partnering with major brands and institutions to amplify stories that challenge, inspire, and reflect the African American experience.

As a Director and Producer with Run & Shoot Filmworks, Rance has helmed music videos and commercial projects and continues to expand his creative work into the narrative and scripted storytelling arena. His approach is rooted in authenticity, cultural stewardship, and the belief that story is a powerful vehicle for both artistic expression and social impact.

Rance is also the Executive Producer of ESPN's 30 for 30 Stuart Scott: Boo-Yah! documentary, honoring the life, legacy, and cultural influence of the iconic sports journalist. His producing work emphasizes legacy preservation, representation, and the elevation of culturally resonant voices.

Beyond his work in film and media, Rance is deeply committed to philanthropy, mentorship, and leadership development. He is a Co-Founder of the Rance Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on education, creative opportunity, and community empowerment. Through the foundation and his broader ventures, he supports emerging filmmakers, students, and entrepreneurs—particularly those from historically underrepresented communities.

A proud native of New Jersey and a graduate of Howard University's School of Communications, Floyd A. B. Rance III continues to shape national conversations by using storytelling as a catalyst for connection, equity, and cultural preservation.



STEPHANIE TAVARES-RANCE  
CO-FOUNDER OF THE MARTHA'S  
VINEYARD AFRICAN AMERICAN FILM  
FESTIVAL (MVAFF)  
FOUNDER | THE C-SUITE SUMMIT

Stephanie Tavares-Rance is an award-winning executive producer, brand architect, and visionary leader, and the Founder of The C-Suite Summit, an exclusive executive platform designed for senior-level leaders—particularly women executives—across industries. She is the Co-Founder and Executive Producer of Run & Shoot Filmworks, Inc. and the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival (MVAFF), where she plays a pivotal role in creative strategy, partnerships, and the festival's elevated guest experience.

A graduate of Pratt Institute, Stephanie brings a sophisticated design sensibility and strategic lens to experiential programming, content curation, and brand development. Her work is defined by intentionality, excellence, and impact. Through MVAFF, she has helped build one of the most trusted and culturally influential platforms for filmmakers, thought leaders, and global partners.

Stephanie has received numerous awards recognizing her contributions to the arts, leadership, and cultural innovation, honoring her ability to create meaningful spaces that elevate voices and foster authentic connection. She is also an Executive Producer of ESPN's 30 for 30 documentary on Stuart Scott: Booyah - a portrait of Stuart Scott, further extending her impact into landmark storytelling that celebrates legacy, resilience, and excellence.

As founder of The C-Suite Summit and luncheons, Stephanie curates invitation-only experiences in premier destinations, bringing together accomplished executives for deep dialogue, leadership development, and renewal. The Summit is known for its high-touch execution, powerful conversations, and emphasis on purpose-driven leadership.

Through her work with the Rance Family Foundation, Stephanie champions education, empowerment, and legacy-building. Her leadership is marked by vision, grace, and a commitment to creating platforms that inspire people to lead boldly and live fully.



OSCAR DEVEREAUX MICHEAUX  
JANUARY 2, 1884 – MARCH 25, 1951  
AUTHOR, FILM DIRECTOR AND INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCER

Oscar Micheaux stands as one of the most important pioneers in Black history and Black cultural expression, widely recognized as the first major African-American feature filmmaker and the most successful Black filmmaker of the early 20th century. Born to formerly enslaved parents, Micheaux's life embodied self-determination, entrepreneurship, and intellectual ambition at a time when Black voices were systematically excluded from American media. Through more than 40 independent films and seven novels, he rejected degrading stereotypes imposed by white-controlled Hollywood and instead presented Black people as complex, educated, striving, and human. His work offered Black audiences representation during the Jim Crow era, creating "race films" that spoke directly to Black experiences, aspirations, and struggles when mainstream cinema either erased or vilified them.

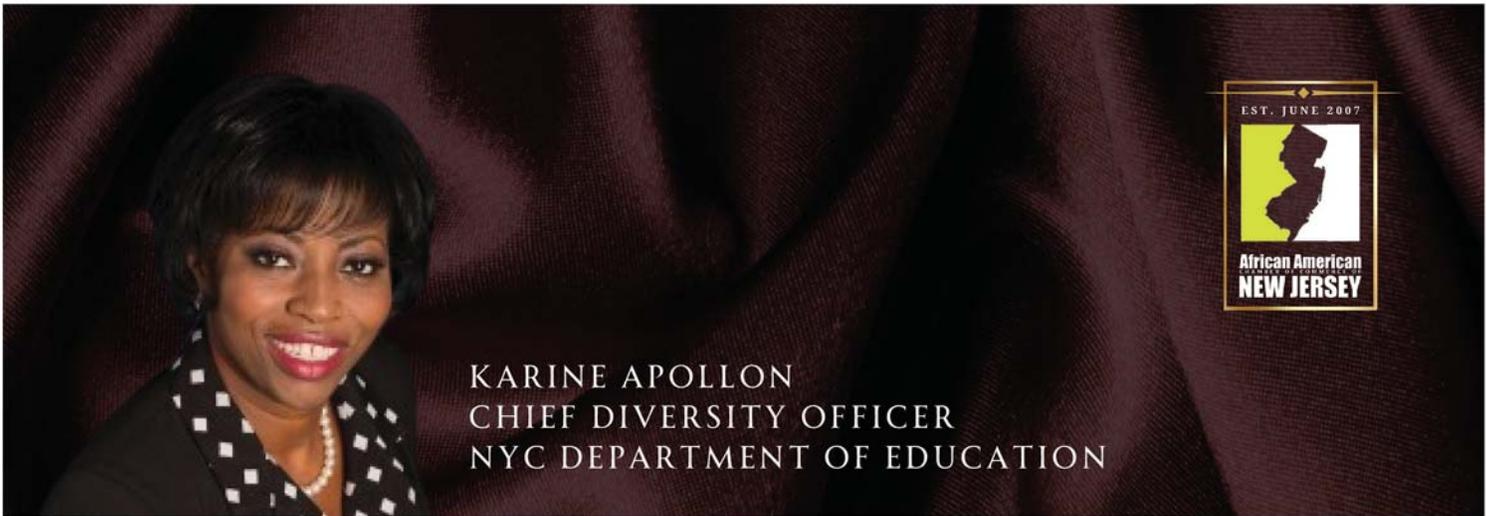
# THE HISTORY

## MARIA PRISCILLA THURSTON WILLIAMS (1866–1932) THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN FILM PRODUCER FOR THE SILENT CRIME DRAMA THE FLAMES OF WRATH IN 1923.

Maria Priscilla Thurston Williams (1866–1932) was an African American educator, writer, and civic leader whose work bridged education, women's rights, and racial uplift during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, she came of age during Reconstruction and devoted her life to intellectual advancement and public service at a time when opportunities for Black women were severely limited. Williams was deeply committed to education, both as a means of personal empowerment and as a collective strategy for strengthening Black communities navigating Jim Crow segregation.

Williams is especially remembered for her role as a Black woman suffragist and public intellectual who insisted that African American women had a rightful place in national conversations about democracy, citizenship, and reform. Through her writing and organizational involvement, she advocated for voting rights, women's leadership, and educational access, helping to challenge the exclusion of Black women from both the mainstream suffrage movement and political life more broadly. Her legacy reflects the often-overlooked contributions of Black women who quietly but powerfully shaped early civil rights, feminist thought, and community advancement long before these movements were formally named.





**KARINE APOLLON**  
**CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER**  
**NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Karine Apollon is an accomplished senior executive with over 30 years’ experience in education driving multimillion-dollar revenue and profit growth in the private sector. Ms. Apollon worked for over two decades in a variety of leadership roles at the children’s publisher Scholastic, where she scaled literacy and mentorship initiatives and launched Scholastic’s family and community engagement work, with a focus on supporting and empowering marginalized communities. She became the CEO of a Reading Partners and enhanced their financial results and enhanced experiences for students, families and communities.

Ms. Apollon has been successful with cultivating and expanding strategic relationships with high profile partners on behalf of the organizations she represents. Her focused and results-oriented business objectives, increased business revenue, strengthened partnerships, enhanced customer experience, and ensure increase customer loyalty and satisfaction.

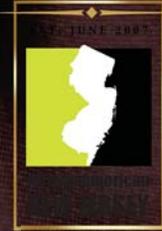
Ms. Apollon was appointed the Chief Diversity Officer for New York City Public Schools in 2022. In this role, she leads the school district’s M/WBE strategies to greatly expand economic opportunities for women- and minority-owned businesses.

Since she began leading this work, NYC Public Schools has made great strides toward ensuring that NYC Public Schools engage businesses that reflect the students, families and communities that they serve. Since she began in 2022, MWBE businesses have experienced increased opportunities to engage and participate in NYC Public Schools solicitation process. She has established aggressive goals and created many programs for increased opportunities resulting in improved outcomes for MWBE businesses, including the following:

- Amendments made to NYC Public Schools’ Procurement, Policy, and Procedures to remove barriers to access for M/WBE businesses
- 140% increase in MWBE utilization in the first full year of the administration
- Doubled the number of unique MWBE vendor partners
- Increased MWBE contracts by 81%
- Over 50% of NYC school districts exceeded M/WBE FY 2023 goals

Ms. Apollon is a champion and continues to move this work forward to ensured continued success and increased opportunities for MWBE businesses.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in business administration with a double major in International Finance and Marketing (IFM) and Finance from the University of Miami. Ms. Apollon’s greatest and most fulfilling role is that of a mother to her two young men, Mario and Benjamin.



**MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE**  
**JULY 10, 1875 – MAY 18, 1955**  
**EDUCATOR, PHILANTHROPIST, HUMANITARIAN,**  
**WOMANIST, AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, FOUNDER OF**  
**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN**

Mary McLeod Bethune was an influential American educator, philanthropist, humanitarian, womanist, and civil rights activist whose life's work centered on education, leadership, and racial uplift. Born in 1875 to formerly enslaved parents, Bethune believed deeply in the transformative power of education as a pathway to freedom and opportunity for Black Americans. She founded what would become Bethune-Cookman University, creating access to higher education for generations of Black students. In 1935, she established the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), uniting Black women's organizations across the country to collectively advocate for civil rights, women's rights, and social justice. Through this work, she also launched the *Aframerican Women's Journal*, which served as the organization's flagship publication and a vital platform for Black women's voices, ideas, and leadership.

Bethune's importance to Black history lies in her ability to combine education, activism, and institution-building to advance racial and gender equality. As a trusted advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a key member of the "Black Cabinet," she helped shape federal policy affecting African Americans during the New Deal era. Her leadership emphasized self-determination, civic engagement, and the political power of Black women at a time when their voices were often marginalized. Mary McLeod Bethune's legacy endures as a symbol of visionary leadership, collective empowerment, and the enduring role of Black women in shaping American democracy and social progress.





TANYA L. FREEMAN, ESQ.  
TANYA FREEMAN LAW, LLC  
CHAIR, NY STATE BLACK BUSINESS ALLIANCE

I graduated cum laude from Touro College, Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center and was awarded my undergraduate degree cum laude from Caldwell University.

As much as possible, I give back to my professional and personal communities. I have lectured on a variety of legal issues including, custody, child support, and relocation law to fellow attorneys on behalf of the New Jersey State Bar Association's Institution for Continuing Legal Education. In October 2018, I was appointed by the Governor to serve as Chair of the Board of Directors for University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey. University hospital is a level one trauma center and the state's only public acute care hospital.

My community involvement also includes volunteering as a Panelist for the Superior Court, Essex County, Early Settlement Panel and serving as a member of the Family Law Executive Committee for the New Jersey State Bar Association where I Co-Chair the DEI Committee.

Appointed by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 2022, I am currently serving a five-year term on the District VB Ethics Committee. In addition to these committees, I am very proud to serve as a Fellow of the American Bar Association and be part of a global honorary society of attorneys, judges, law faculty, and legal scholars whose public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the highest principles of the legal profession and to the welfare of their communities. Membership in the Fellows is limited to one percent of lawyers licensed to practice in each jurisdiction, so I am among an inspiring group of leaders in my field.

In 2021 the Essex County Bar Association named me "Family Practitioner of the Year." I also joined the Board of the Independent Colleges and Universities of New Jersey, a non-profit organization focused on building synergies between New Jersey's independent universities and advocating on behalf of students. I am very proud to be on the Advisory Board for my alma mater, Caldwell University.

If you are facing a family law issue, I am here for you. I will advocate for your needs and find innovative strategies to address your legal concerns. I represent families throughout northern New Jersey, including Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Somerset and Union.



CHARLOTTE E. RAY (JANUARY 13, 1850 – JANUARY 4, 1911)  
FIRST BLACK AMERICAN FEMALE LAWYER IN THE UNITED STATES

Charlotte E. Ray was a pioneering lawyer, educator, and civil rights trailblazer who broke barriers for Black women in the legal profession during the 19th century. Born in 1850 to abolitionist parents, Ray was deeply influenced by a commitment to justice and public service from an early age. In 1872, she became the first Black woman admitted to the bar in the United States, earning her law degree from Howard University at a time when both racism and sexism severely limited professional opportunities for Black women. Despite her historic achievement, Ray struggled to attract clients due to discrimination and was ultimately forced to leave the legal profession—an outcome that reflects the systemic barriers she sought to dismantle.

Ray's contribution to the Black community and public service extends far beyond her legal credentials. She used her education and influence to advocate for civil rights, women's rights, and equal access to education, later serving as an educator and an active member of the National Association of Colored Women. Her life highlights the often-unrecognized labor of Black women who laid the groundwork for future generations of lawyers, judges, and public servants. Charlotte E. Ray's legacy is one of courage and quiet resistance—demonstrating that public service is not only found in holding office or high-profile roles, but also in breaking barriers, creating pathways, and insisting on the right to belong in spaces where Black voices were deliberately excluded.

16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARDS GALA

# THE HISTORY



ADENAH BAYOH  
CEO  
ADENAH BAYOH & COMPANIES

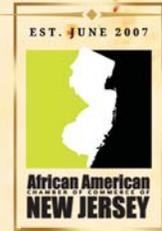
Adenah Bayoh's journey is not just a success story — it is a love letter to resilience, legacy, and the limitless possibilities that bloom when one woman dares to dream beyond survival. She was just 13 when she fled Liberia's brutal civil war, leaving behind the only home she knew. With heartbreak in her past but hope in her future, Adenah arrived in the U.S. carrying no luggage, no money — only the unshakable belief that her life could be more. That belief was planted by her grandmother, a woman who ran a small restaurant in Liberia, feeding her neighbors with love and intention. That memory became Adenah's compass.

Today, that seed has grown into an empire rooted in purpose. Adenah is the proud owner of nine restaurants across New Jersey and New York, including three IHOP franchises. At just 27, she became one of the youngest IHOP franchisees in the country — shattering ceilings in spaces not built for her and creating seats at the table for others along the way. In 2017, she co-founded Cornbread, a fast-casual, farm-to-table soul food concept created to honor the traditions that shaped her. In 2021, she launched Brick City Vegan, a plant-based concept built for communities that are often excluded from the health and wellness conversation. Collectively they are a celebration of Black culture, family, and food that heals, proving that access and nourishment can — and must — go hand in hand.

In 2023, she made history as the first Black woman in New Jersey to secure a 9% NJHMFA affordable housing credit — bringing deeply affordable housing to Newark's South Ward, a community that raised her and one she continues to pour into. As a real estate developer, she is transforming abandoned spaces into vibrant community hubs. Her redevelopment of the former Irvington General Hospital is a bold step toward healing both buildings and neighborhoods, proving Adenah's mission extends beyond the plate.

But Adenah's greatest legacy is not in buildings or businesses — it's in people. What drives her isn't profit. It's purpose. It's the young girls who look like her and wonder if they can dream big. It's the single mothers, the immigrants, the underdogs — those told they were too poor, too Black, too different, too "other" to make it. To them, Adenah says: "Look at me. You can." Every meal served, every apartment built, every job created is an act of devotion. A commitment to building a future where everyone — no matter where they come from — has the chance to rise.

Adenah Bayoh didn't just chase the American dream. She redefined it. And now, she's creating it for others — one life, one business, one community at a time.



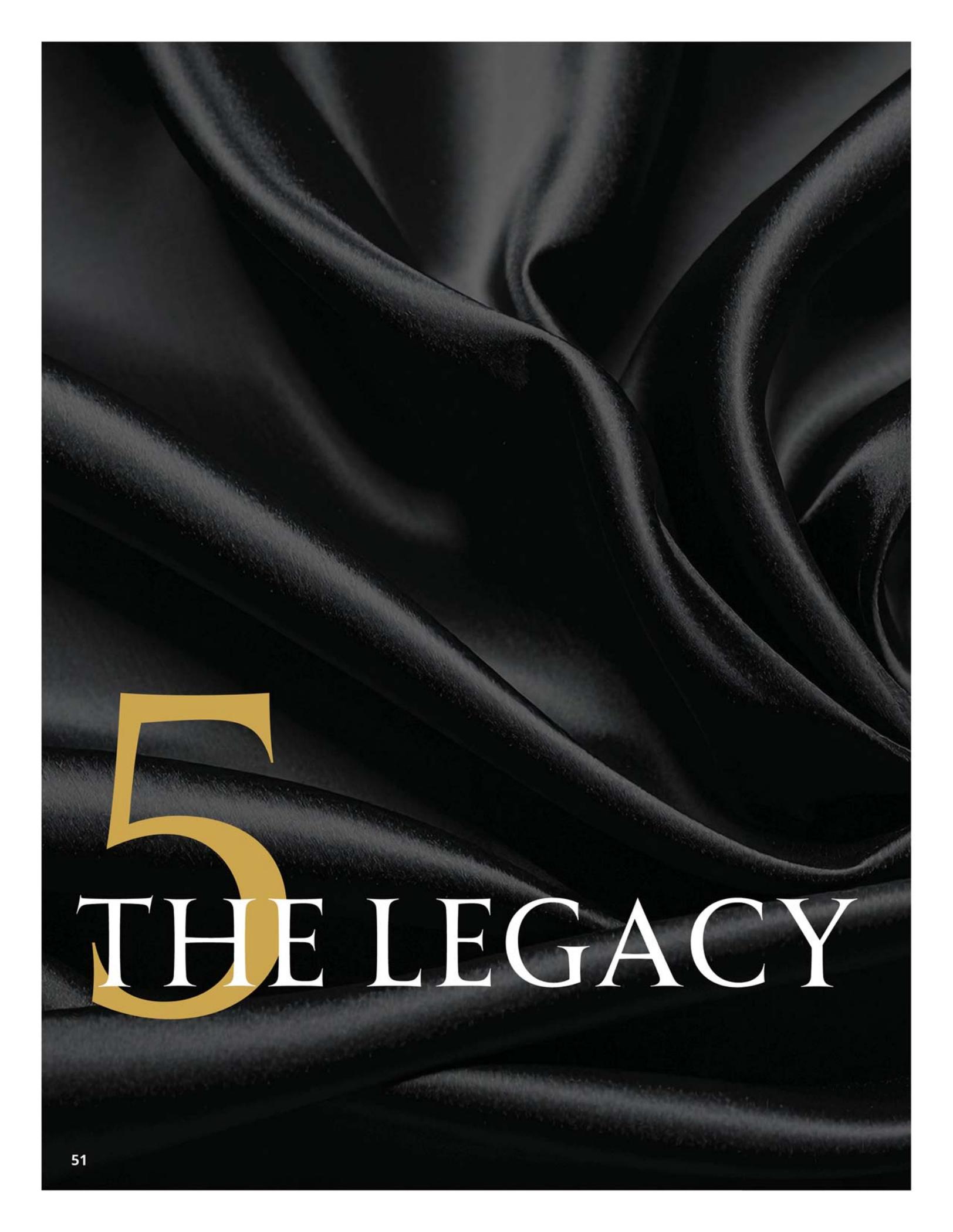
**BIDDY MASON (AUGUST 15, 1818 – JANUARY 15, 1891) WAS AN AMERICAN NURSE AND A CALIFORNIAN REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEUR AND PHILANTHROPIST**

Biddy Mason was a formerly enslaved woman who became one of the most influential Black entrepreneurs and philanthropists in 19th-century America. Born into slavery in 1818, Mason was forced to travel west with her enslaver before eventually arriving in California, a free state. In 1856, she courageously petitioned the court for her freedom and won—an extraordinary act at a time when Black women had virtually no legal standing. Once free, Mason worked as a nurse and midwife, earning a reputation for her medical skill and compassion. Her steady income, paired with her sharp financial instincts, allowed her to build stability for herself and her family in a society determined to deny her opportunity.

Mason's true legacy lies in her groundbreaking role in real estate and community wealth-building. She strategically purchased property in what would become downtown Los Angeles, making her one of the first Black women in the United States to own and profit from real estate. As her holdings increased in value, Mason used her wealth to uplift others—funding schools, aiding formerly enslaved people, and co-founding the First African Methodist Episcopal (First AME) Church of Los Angeles, the city's oldest Black church. Biddy Mason's life stands as a powerful example of how Black women used land ownership and entrepreneurship as tools of freedom, economic power, and collective advancement, making her a foundational figure in both Black history and American real estate.

16<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT  
**AWARDS GALA**

# THE HISTORY

A background of black, draped fabric with soft folds and highlights, creating a sense of depth and texture.

# 5 THE LEGACY



# PAST HONOREES ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 2025 Honorees

**Public Service Award** - Latrecia "Trish" Littles-Floyd Acting Chair & Chief Administrator, NJ Motor Vehicle Commission

**Education Award** - Dr. Jonathan Holloway, President, Rutgers State University of NJ

**Business Award** - Donata Russell Ross, Chief Executive Officer Concessions, International LLC, Board Member,  
H.J. Russell Company LLC

## 2024 Honorees

**Presidential Award of Excellence** - The Honorable Benjamin Crump, Founder & Principal, Ben Crump Law, PLLC

**Business Award** - Brett J. Hart, President, United Airlines Holdings, Inc

**Public Service Award** - Keith D. Wright, PhD., Director, Business Diversity Operations, Office of Diversity, Equity &  
Inclusion Port Authority of NY& NJ

**Community Service Award** - Dr. Darcella Patterson Sessomes, LCSW, Chief of Programming and Reintegration Services  
New Jersey Department of Corrections

## 2023 Honorees

**Diversity in Sports Award** - Kenneth Bentley, CEO, Advocates Professional Golf Association Tour, (APGA Tour)

**Gus Heningburg Award** - Officer Harry Dunn, U.S. Capitol Police, Thirteen Year Veteran

**Community Service Award** - Natalya G. Johnson, Esq. Senior Counsel, Johnson & Johnson, President, Garden State Bar Association

**Community Service Award** - Brenda Ross Dulan, Founder & Managing Principal, The Ross Dulan Group

**Politics Awards** - The Honorable Marty Small Sr., Mayor, Atlantic City, NJ

## 2022 Honorees

**Business Award** - Nadine Leslie, Chief Executive Officer, Suez, North America

**Community Award** - Toni Proffitt-Brown, Esq., Chief Admin. Officer, Delaware River Port Authority

**Community Award** - Rev. Dr. Deforest B. Soaries, Jr., Retired, Senior Pastor, FBCLG, Somerset, NJ, Founder & CEO,  
Dfree Global Foundation, Inc., Former Secretary of State, NJ

**Business Award** - Michael J. Garner, MBA, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Metropolitan Transportation Authority

## 2021 Honorees

**Business Award** - Ralph Weaver, Founder & CEO, East West Connection

**Community Service Award** - Alison Banks-Moore, Chief Diversity Officer, Horizon BCBSNJ

**Business Award** - Ralph Albert Thomas, CPA (DC), CGMA, CEO & Executive Director, New Jersey CPA Society

**Sports Award** - Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Three-Time Olympic Gold Medalist, Silver Medalist, and Two-Time Bronze Medalist ('84, '88, '92, '96)

## 2020 Honorees

**Education Award** - Yla Eason, Assistant Professor of Professional Practice, Rutgers Business School, Rutgers University

**Community Service Award** - Lawrence Hamm, Civil Rights Activist, Humanitarian, Lecturer, People's Organization for Progress

**Business Award** - Jay Morrison, Chief Executive Officer & Founder, Tulsa Real Estate Fund

**Politics Award** - The Honorable Shirley Turner, Senator, NJ State Legislature

## 2019 Honorees

**Political Award** - Sheila Oliver, Lt. Governor, State of New Jersey, Commissioner, NJ Department of Community Affairs

**Community Service Award** - Donnell Williams, Broker/Owner, Destiny Realty

**Corporate Award** - Leecia Eve, Vice President, State Government Affairs, Verizon

**Business Award** - James Reynolds, Jr., Chairman & CEO, Loop Capital

## 2018 Honorees

**Political Award** - Mildred Scott, Sherriff, Middlesex County

**Political Award** - The Honorable Sandra B. Cunningham, Senator, NJ State Senate, Deputy Majority Leader

**Community Service Award** - Louise Calloway, Historian & Founder, Underground Railroad Ed. Center

**Business Award** - Oble McKenzie, Managing Director, Blackrock

# IN MEMORIAM

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey recognizes the following individuals for their contributions to a better society during their lifetimes.



## CLAUDETTE COLVIN

SEPTEMBER 5, 1939 – JANUARY 13, 2026

A HIDDEN FIGURE AND PIONEER OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.



## VIOLA "MOTHER" FLETCHER

MAY 10, 1914 – NOVEMBER 24, 2025

WAS THE OLDEST KNOWN LIVING SURVIVOR OF THE TULSA RACE MASSACRE AND A SUPERCENTENARIAN.



## HARRY STEWART JR

JULY 4, 1924 – FEBRUARY 2, 2025

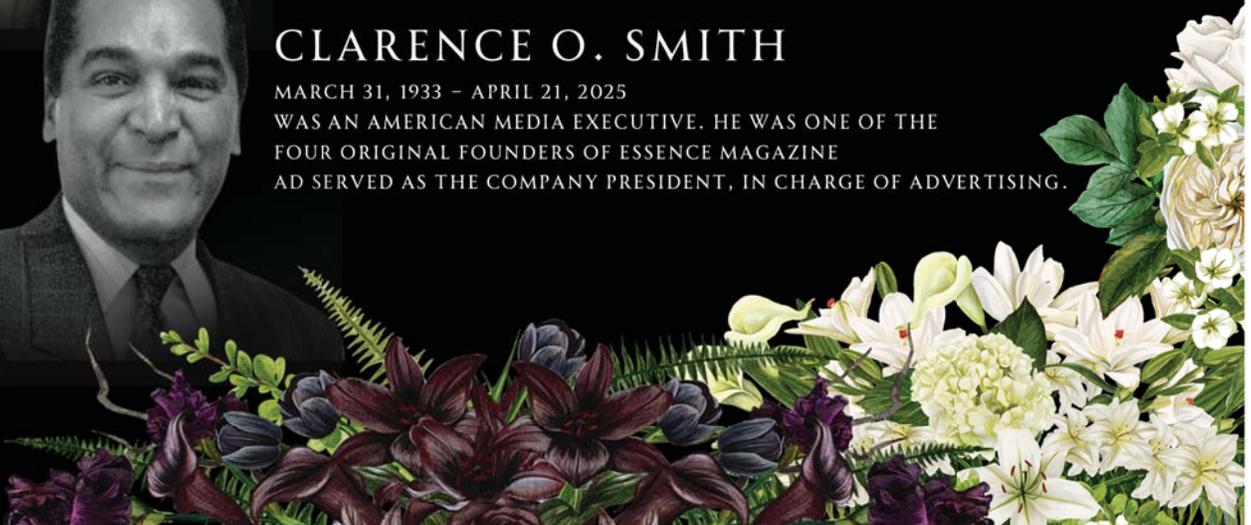
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## CLARENCE O. SMITH

MARCH 31, 1933 – APRIL 21, 2025

WAS AN AMERICAN MEDIA EXECUTIVE. HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUR ORIGINAL FOUNDERS OF ESSENCE MAGAZINE AD SERVED AS THE COMPANY PRESIDENT, IN CHARGE OF ADVERTISING.



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## VIVIAN AYERS ALLEN

JULY 29, 1923 – AUGUST 18, 2025

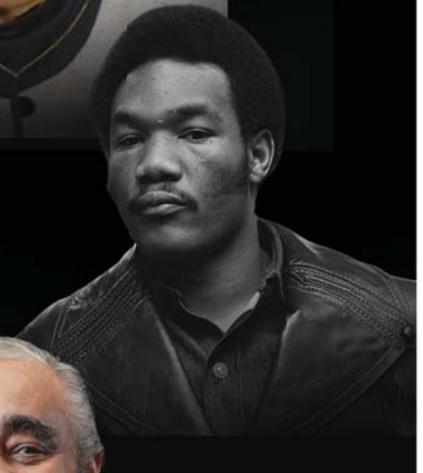
WAS AN AMERICAN POET, PLAYWRIGHT, CULTURAL ACTIVIST,  
MUSEUM CURATOR AND CLASSICIST.



## GEORGE FOREMAN

JANUARY 10, 1949 – MARCH 21, 2025

WAS AN AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL BOXER, BUSINESSMAN,  
MINISTER, AND AUTHOR.



## CHARLES RANGEL

JUNE 11, 1930 – MAY 26, 2025

WAS AN AMERICAN POLITICIAN WHO SERVED AS U.S.  
REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISTRICTS IN NEW YORK CITY  
FOR 46 YEARS.



## JIM DENT (JAMES LACEY DENT )

MAY 9, 1939 – MAY 2, 2025

WAS AN AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL GOLFER.

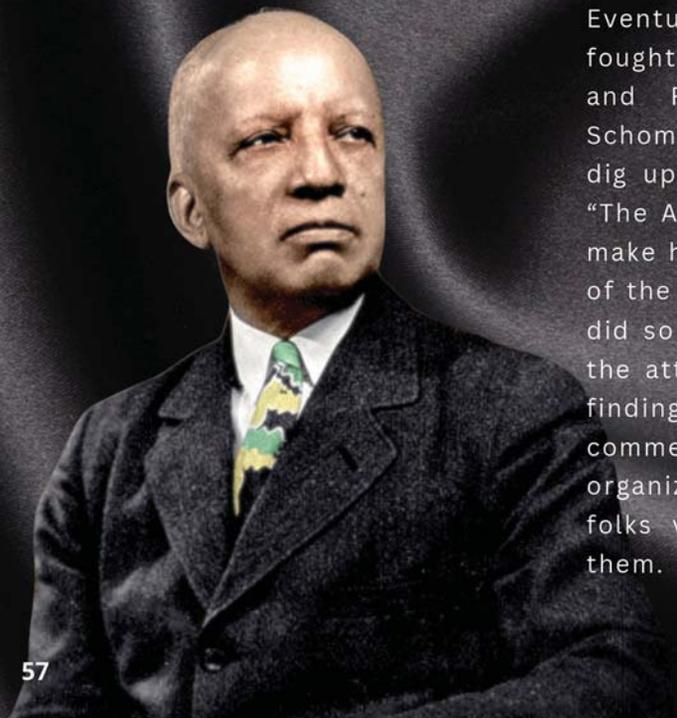


# CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history. Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, George Cleveland Hall, William B. Hartgrove, Jesse E. Moorland, Alexander L. Jackson, and James E. Stamps institutionalized the teaching, study, dissemination, and commemoration of Black history when they founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) on September 9, 1915.

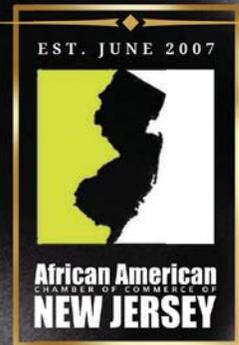
In 1925, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson planned the inaugural week-long observance of Black history, he could hardly have anticipated the imprint he would leave on the world. From Negro History Week to Black History Month, ASALH has carried forth the tradition, and the observances have become part of the warp and weft of American culture and increasingly the global community. For our 100th theme, the founders of Black History Month urge us to explore the impact and meaning of Black history and life commemorations in transforming the status of Black peoples in the modern world. As part of the global African diaspora, people of African descent in the United States have viewed their role in history as critical to their own development and that of the world. Along with writing Black histories, antebellum Black scholars north of slavery started observing the milestones in the struggle of people of African descent to gain their freedom and equality. Revealing their connection to the diaspora, they commemorated the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, and the end of slavery in Jamaica. They observed American emancipation with Watch Night, Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations.

Eventually they feted the lives of individuals who fought against slavery, most notably Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The scholar Arthur A. Schomburg captured the motivation of Black people to dig up their own history and present it to the world: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future." When Carter G. Woodson, as director of the Association, established Negro History Week, he did so as part of that tradition. Yet, by concentrating the attention of the American public on the scientific findings of historians, he sought to turn the commemorations more forthrightly into a far-reaching, organized, and sustained effort to transform how Black folks viewed themselves and how the world viewed them.





**ASALH**<sup>®</sup>  
THE FOUNDERS OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## ASALH | THE FOUNDERS OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH (EST. 1915)

Year after year, he built Negro History Week into an African American and American cultural institution. He set the themes and provided materials to illustrate the contributions people of African descent had made to the movement of history and modern culture. As his contemporary W. E. B. Du Bois put it, "He literally made this country ... recognize and celebrate each year a week in which it studied the effect which the American Negro has had upon the life, thought and action in the United States. I know of no other man who in a lifetime has unaided built up such a national celebration." Since the passing of the founder, ASALH has continued his work, making Negro History Week and Black History Month an even more deeply rooted American institution. On February 10, 1976, during the United

States Bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month. Then in 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244 designating February as Black History Month. These efforts have made February the month when Black history finds its way not simply into the schools of the American nation, but also into cultural heritage sites (museums, archives, libraries, parks, etc.), public squares, workplaces, houses of worship, and homes across the land and across the oceans. These institutions offer sites to discover and learn more about African American history through programming, camps, book displays, and exhibitions. To understand the modern world, especially nations where Black peoples form a significant population, one must grapple with the impact that the public observances have had on the past and the present.

This year, when we are also commemorating the 250th anniversary of United States independence, it is important to tell not only an inclusive history, but an accurate one. We have never had more need to examine the role of Black History Month than we do when forces weary of democracy seek to use legislative means and book bans to excise Black history from America's schools and public culture. Black history's value is not its contribution to mainstream historical narratives, but its resonance in the lives of Black people.



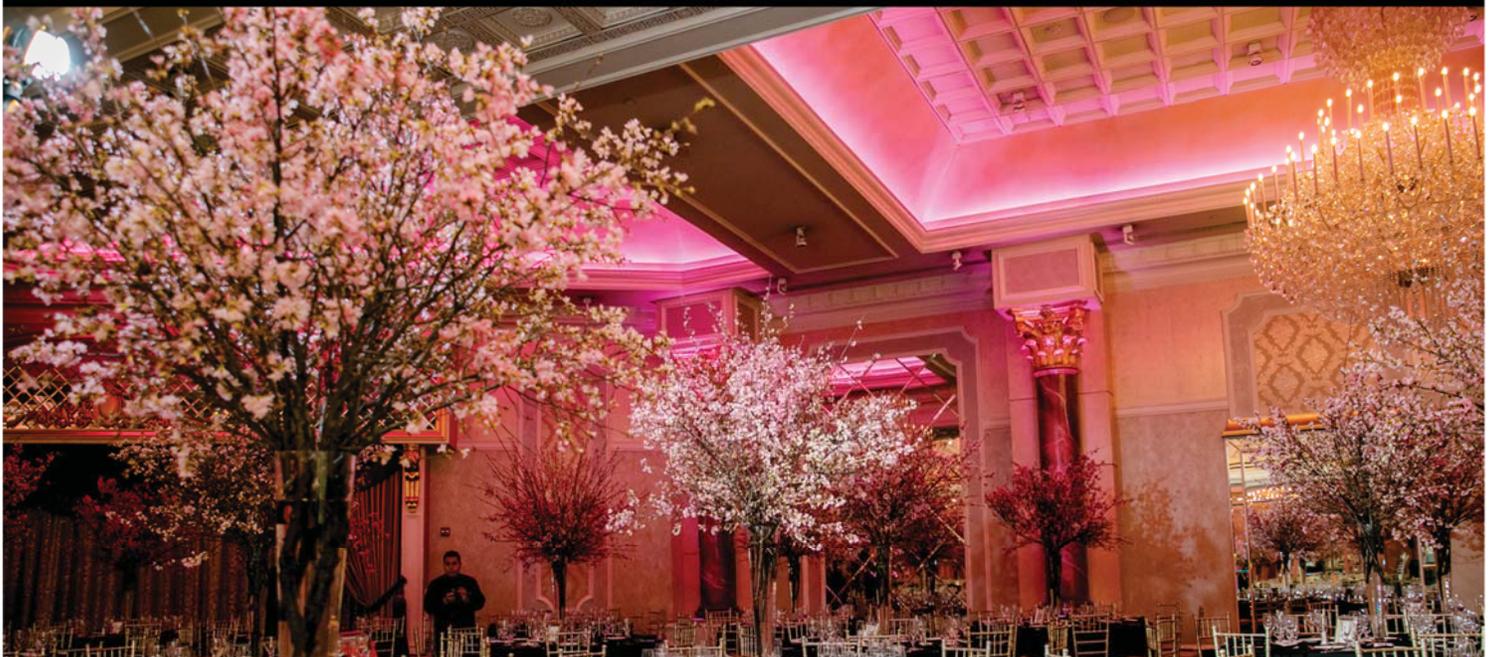


# CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN BLOOM FEBRUARY 2025 AACCNJ GALA

For this year's gala, we are excited to feature a forest of golden yellow to add to the evening's splendor.

Forsythia is one of the first early-blooming branches of the new year. Bloom Flowers is able to provide these flowers during this cold winter through a process known as "forcing the bloom." This process begins in late November to ensure these beautiful branches are ready for our February gala.

We hope you enjoy this early bounty of Spring!



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6



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The AACCNJ is dedicated to economically empowering and sustaining African American communities and businesses through entrepreneurship and capitalistic initiatives throughout the state of New Jersey and through its partnership with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (NBCC). As a non-profit organization, donations not only allow us to continue to function as an organization, but also allow us to better serve our community.

We thank you again for your donation, which is also 100% tax deductible.



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conEdison, inc. proudly congratulates the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey on its Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala, “Forging Ahead” and commend its continued leadership in advancing economic impact across New Jersey.

We also applaud this year's distinguished honorees whose excellence in business, culture, education, entrepreneurship, and public service is shaping stronger, more equitable communities throughout New York City and New Jersey.



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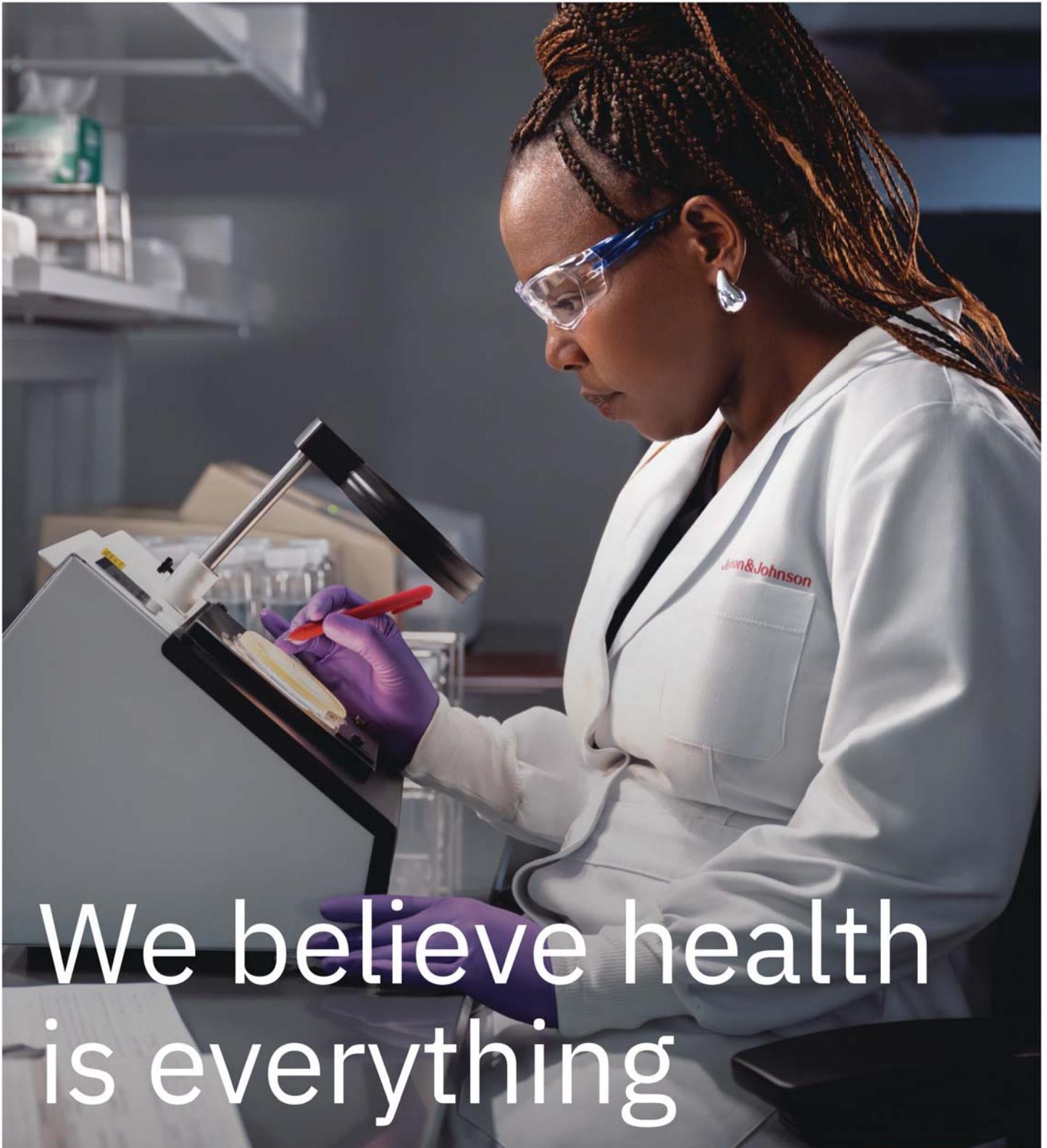
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# Honoring Leadership. Celebrating Legacy. Advancing Black Excellence.



“Because when we move together,  
the journey continues.”

Black History Month reminds us that our story is not confined to the past. It is alive in the leadership, service, and excellence we celebrate tonight.

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey stands as a powerful force for progress. It champions Black-owned businesses, opens doors that too often remain closed, and works to ensure that opportunity is not a privilege, but a shared promise. Its leadership strengthens our economy, our communities, and our collective future.

This evening also honors extraordinary individuals whose work reflects courage, commitment, and a deep belief in what is possible when service leads the way. To my fellow honorees, congratulations. Your impact matters, and your leadership helps light the path forward.

With heartfelt gratitude to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey for this honor, and congratulations to John Harmon, the AACCNJ Board, and all those committed to advancing Black excellence today and for generations to come.

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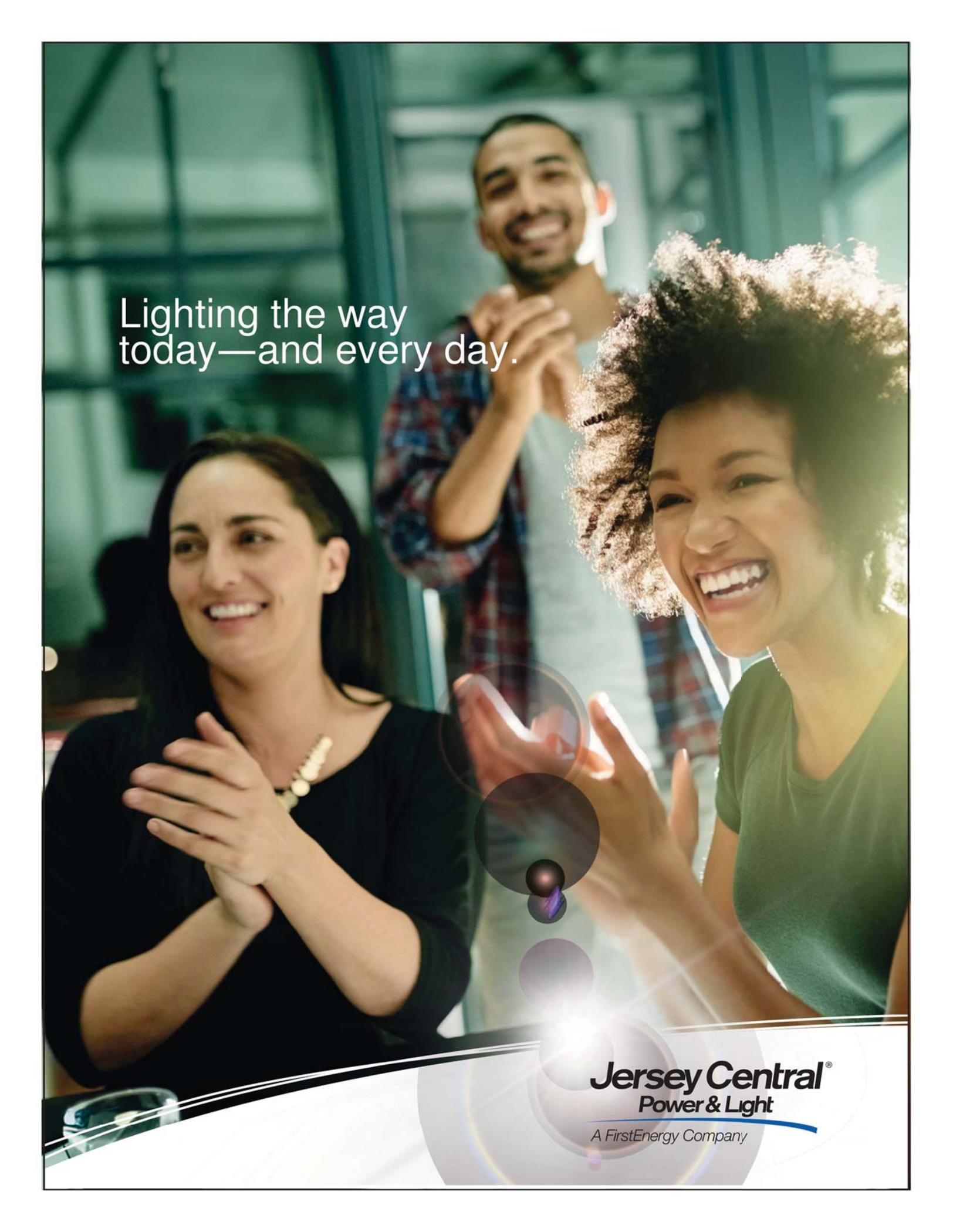
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We're not just in your community, we're a part of it. By attracting new businesses and jobs, we're fueling economic vitality in our region.

We're proud to work with organizations like African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey who are steadfast in their commitment to build a stronger, more equitable local economy.

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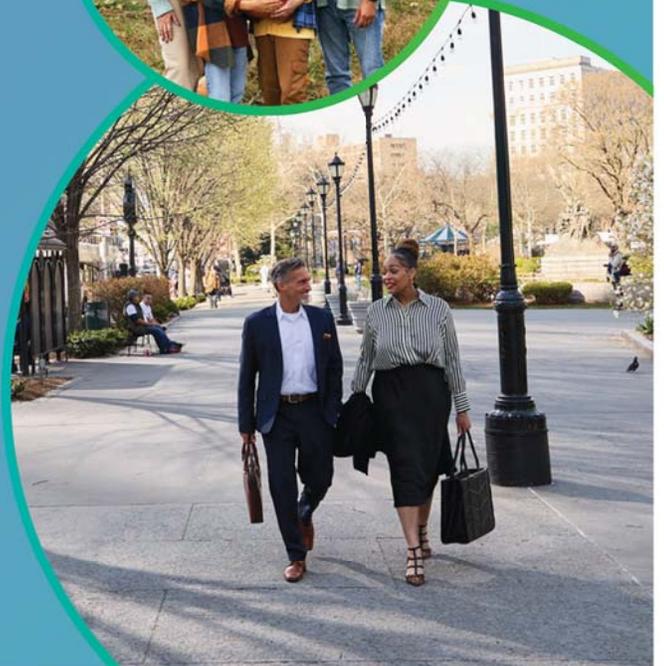
We've got a good thing going in New Jersey.

Here, families raise their kids in diverse communities. Those kids become students, excelling in top-ranked public schools and universities. Those students feed our talent pipeline, bringing fresh ideas to the many global companies headquartered in New Jersey. Those companies then flourish, making advancements in healthcare, technology, and so much more.

You could call it cause-and-effect.

We call it business as usual in New Jersey.

**Discover what's in it for you.**



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[ThisIsNewJersey.com](http://ThisIsNewJersey.com)



**Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.,  
Essex County Executive  
And the  
Board of County Commissioners**

*CONGRATULATIONS TO THE*

**African American Chamber of  
Commerce of New Jersey**

*For Hosting their 16th Annual Circle of  
Achievement Awards Gala*

*Best Wishes to this Year's Honorees*



*Essex County is committed to working with African American owned  
businesses. To learn about procurement opportunities  
with Essex County, please visit:*

*Essex County Office of Purchasing  
[Essexcountynjprocure.org](http://Essexcountynjprocure.org)*

*Essex County Office of Small Business Development  
[ecsmallbiz.org](http://ecsmallbiz.org)*

*Putting Essex County First*

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## Congratulations to the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey's Circle of Achievement Awards Gala 2026 Honorees

Kinsey Communications is a full-service communications firm and proud member of the AACCNJ that specializes in providing communications counsel and services for corporate and non-profit sectors. The New Jersey-based firm offers a comprehensive suite of services and capabilities including:

- Public and media relations • Strategic marketing
- Community outreach and engagement
- Internal and external communications
- Social and digital media management • Collateral material design
- Event coordination • Writing • Project Management

**Jemia Kinsey Singleton**

President/Chief Communications Officer—[jemia@kinseycomm.com](mailto:jemia@kinseycomm.com)

[kinseycomm.com](http://kinseycomm.com)



**Aziza Kibibi**  
CEO, Precious Little Ladies Inc.  
Author | Activist | Speaker  
Survivor



Ending child sexual abuse and gender-based violence through prevention, education, and survivor support.

## Protect New Jersey Kids. Support Survivors.

**93% of victims under 18  
know their abuser.**

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

### Put Prevention in a Child's Hands Sponsor #ItsOkToTell Prevention Kits

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Scan to sponsor kits



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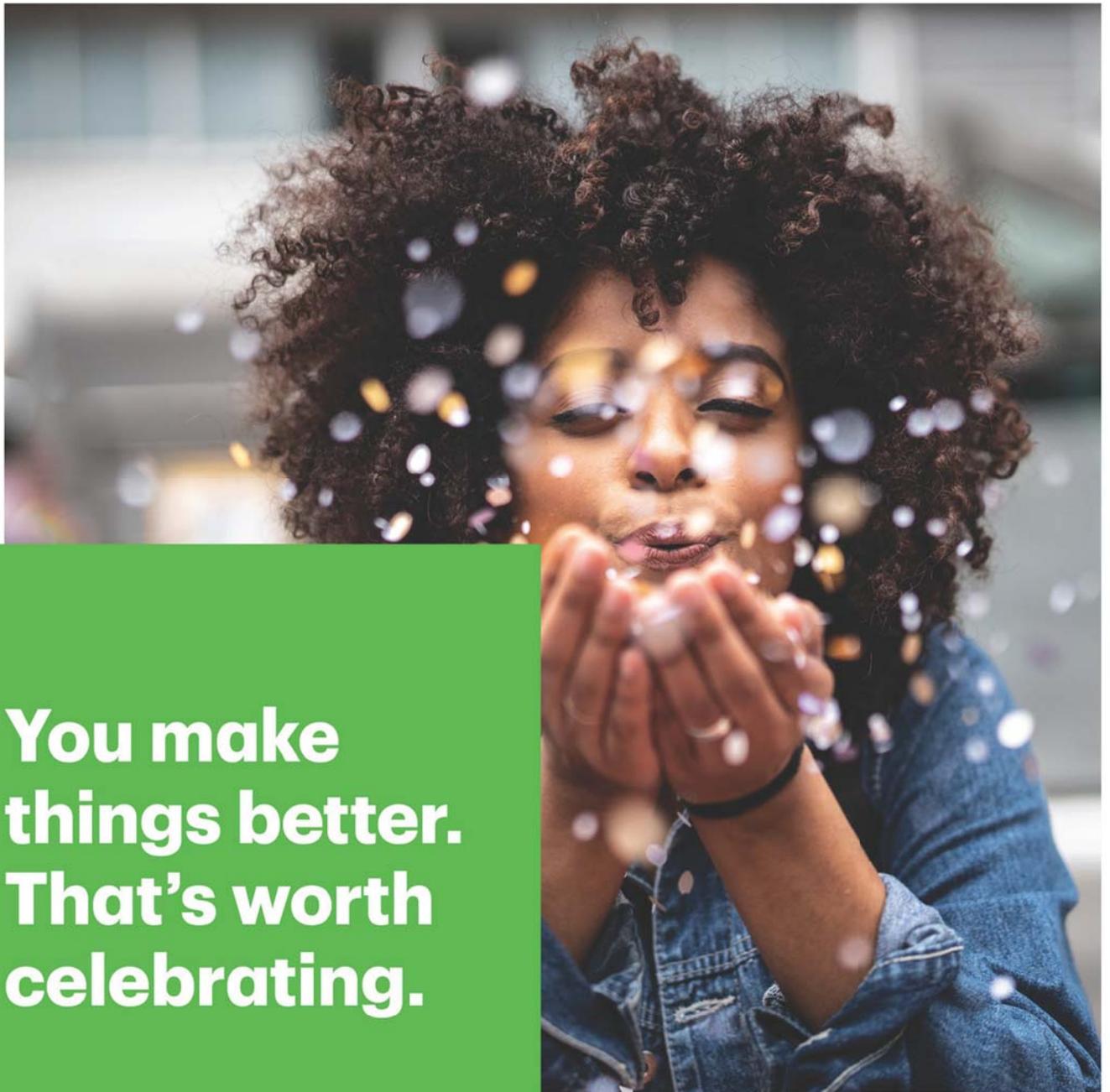
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Proud to honor Circle of Achievement Award recipients and celebrate their work—improving life, making history and inspiring countless more to achieve their best.

The fastest-growing public research university in the Northeast, Rowan is:

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- building powerful public-private partnerships for innovation, economic development and affordable access to high-quality higher education.



**You make  
things better.  
That's worth  
celebrating.**

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Thanks for serving our community.

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# Young Management & Consulting

Proud Sponsor of the  
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Circle of Achievement  
Awards Gala

YMC congratulates the honorees of the 16th Annual AACCNJ Circle of Achievement Gala Awards for their outstanding leadership, vision, and dedication to advancing communities, business, and culture. We are proud to celebrate and support individuals and organizations making a meaningful impact and shaping a stronger, more connected society.

[www.workwithyoung.com](http://www.workwithyoung.com)

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***Congratulations to the AACCNJ  
and all of the honorees.***

*- Albert & Tammy King -*



**BINJE is proud to support  
AACCNJ's 16th Annual  
Circle of Achievement Awards Gala**

**Congrats to all Honorees!**

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IMPACT.**

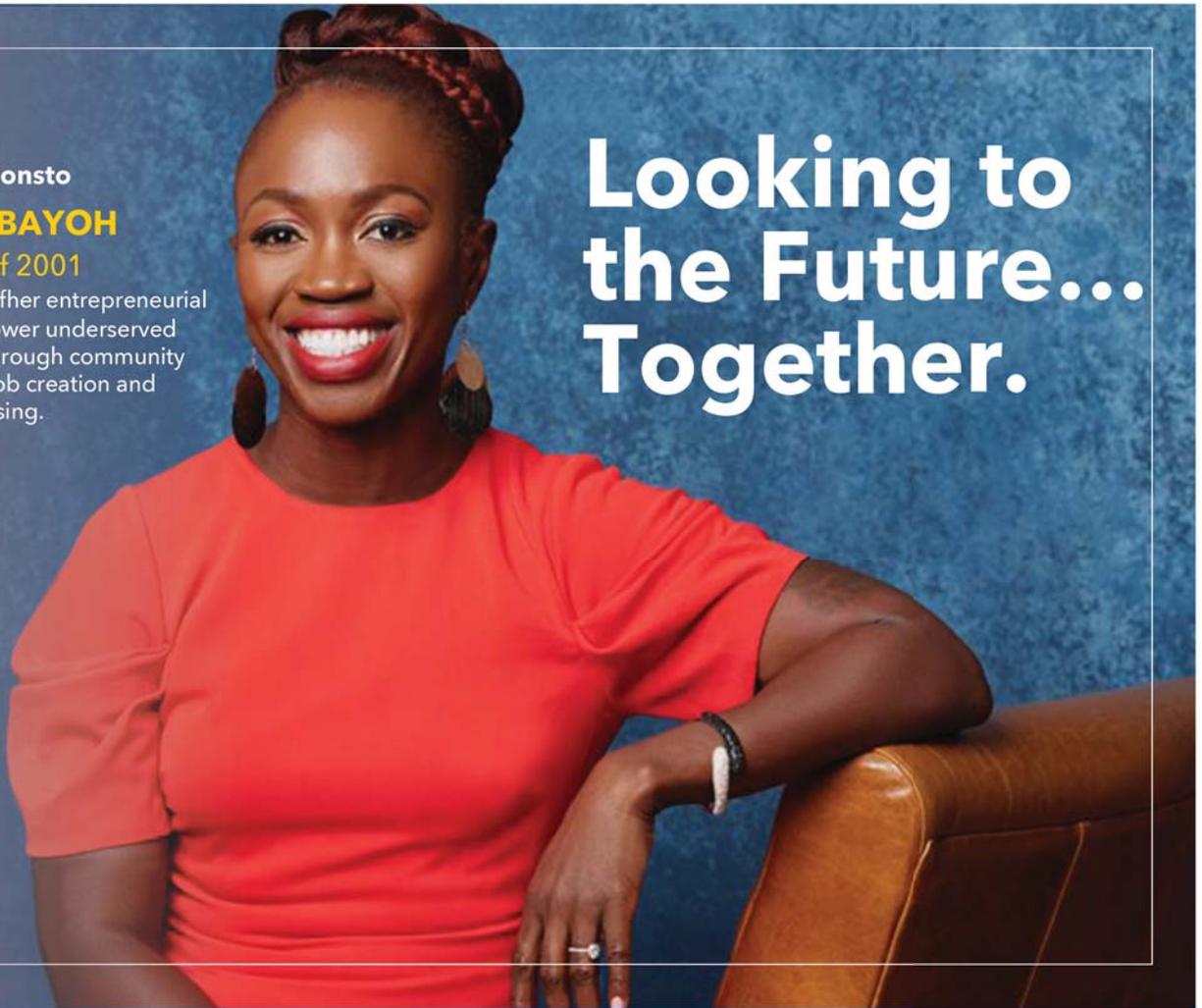
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Fairleigh Dickinson University is honored to be a long-time educational partner of the  
**African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey**  
and we proudly support its transformational mission to make  
our state a better place **to live, learn, work and thrive.**

We congratulate the distinguished **2026 Circle of Achievement Honorees**,  
whose leadership and barrier-breaking contributions continue to advance opportunity,  
equity and sustainable economic growth across New Jersey.

**TO EXPLORE WAYS TO PARTNER WITH FDU, CONTACT:**

Dr. Anita Rivers, Chief Community Relations & Workforce Development Officer | EMAIL: [arivers@fdu.edu](mailto:arivers@fdu.edu)



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Turner Construction Company is proud to support the **African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey** at the 16th Annual Circle of Achievement Awards Gala!



# Turner

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Scan for more info on Turner

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BLACK BUSINESS  
ALLIANCE**

**UNLOCKING GROWTH THROUGH  
RESPONSIBLE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**



**THURSDAY**

Feb. 26, 2026

5:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



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Tanya L. Freeman, Esq.  
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THE SECOND ANNUAL

# FILMING IN THE GARDEN STATE

Unlocking the Power of New Jersey's Film Incentives  
Thursday, August 13, 2026 | Martha's Vineyard | 3:00 - 6:00 P M

- Held during the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Run & Shoot Filmworks Martha's Vineyard African-American Film Festival -

## 2026 PANELISTS



Assemblywoman  
Tennille R. McCoy  
NJ Legislature  
District 14

Senator  
Benjie E. Wimberly  
NJ Legislature  
District 35

Michelle Bodden  
Chief Inclusive Culture  
Equity Officer  
NJEDA

Tai Cooper  
Chief Community  
Development Officer  
NJEDA

Elizabeth Parchment  
Team Lead - Special Projects  
NJ Motion Picture &  
TV Commission

Kenneth Gifford  
Founder/CEO Newark  
International Film Festival,  
Owner Ironbound Studios NJ

Gary Mann,  
Chairman, AACCNJ  
CEO, Jasfel Analytics

Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr.  
Founder, President  
& CEO, AACCNJ



JOIN US FOR THE 24th ANNUAL  
 RUN & SHOOT FILMWORKS

MARTHA'S VINEYARD AFRICAN  
 AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL

MVA AFF 24

AUGUST 7-15, 2026

MVAFF.COM



SCAN TO BUY TICKETS

 Martha's Vineyard AA Film Festival

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PRESENTED BY



# 3-PANELS WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Join the AACCNJ for our conference consisting of a three-panel discussion, with industry experts, on critical issues facing the Black community in New Jersey:

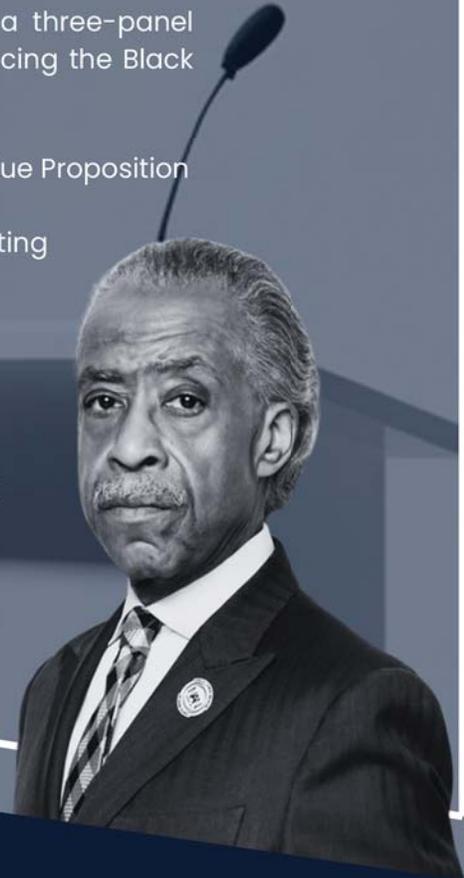
Panel I: Black Businesses - Success Models & the Value Proposition

Panel II: Procurement Opportunities & Corporate

Panel III: Partnerships, Best Practices in Public Contracting

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER REVEREND AL SHARPTON

FOUNDER, NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK, AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST, POLITICAL ANALYST



**African American**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF  
**NEW JERSEY**

# THE STATE OF BLACK NEW JERSEY

## 2026 ECONOMIC SUMMIT

PRINCETON MARRIOTT - FORRESTAL  
PRINCETON, NJ

APRIL 16  
2026



  
NEW JERSEY  
AMERICAN WATER



EST. JUNE 2007



**African American**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF  
**NEW JERSEY**

# WOMEN WHO **EMPOWER** AWARDS LUNCHEON

A Celebration of Leaders

MAY 14  
2026

PRINCETON MARRIOTT - FORRESTAL  
PRINCETON, NJ | 11:30-2:00 P.M.



**Join the AACCNJ for our annual Women Who Empower Awards Luncheon dedicated to honoring women who have shown exemplary accomplishments and service in their respective fields.**

Why Should You Attend The Women Who Empower Awards Luncheon?

- Opportunity to network with awardees, prospective clients, and members
- Hear from leaders who have made strides in their respective fields



capitahealth



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GAS



# 20 JUNETEENTH 26 INNOVATION EXPO LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

## CALLING ALL INNOVATORS

An opportunity to showcase your innovations in technology, health, arts, sustainability, products, goods and services.



### New Audience

Entrepreneurs, creators, companies, and social media influencers who are eager to showcase new ideas



### New Focus on Innovation

Pitch contest, giving one winner the chance to work directly with a world reknown company



### New Experience

New dynamic, open-floor experience designed for exploration and discovery

**JUNE 10, 2026**

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EXHIBITOR SET UP ALSO AVAILABLE  
JUNE 9, 9:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
(ROOM BLOCK AVAILABLE)



The AACCNJ proudly launched its inaugural Black Business Expo in 2023 at Montclair State University in Montclair, NJ. The 2024 event was re-branded as the “Juneteenth Black Business Expo” hosted at Fairleigh Dickinson University on the Metro Campus, followed by the 2025 Expo at The College of NJ, in Ewing, NJ.

Building on this legacy, the event has evolved into the Juneteenth Innovation Expo—an annual platform celebrating ingenuity, industry leadership, and forward-thinking creation across multiple fields. The Juneteenth Innovation Expo now highlights the latest advancements, products, and ideas developed by trailblazers within our community, providing a dynamic space for industry leaders to share, connect, and inspire.



# INVENTORS, CREATORS, & FORWARD THINKERS

If you’ve built something new, reimagined what’s possible, or created an invention that deserves to be seen, this is your moment. From technology and health to arts, sustainability, business, and beyond—show the world what the future looks like through your work.

## PITCH CONTEST

If you’ve built something new, reimagined what’s possible, or created an invention that



## MATCHMAKING SESSIONS

If you’ve built something new, reimagined what’s possible, or created an invention that



## NETWORKING RECEPTION

Post event reception complete with live musical entertainment, Beer & Wine and food stations.





EST. JUNE 2007

# AACCNJ ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

SAVE THE DATE

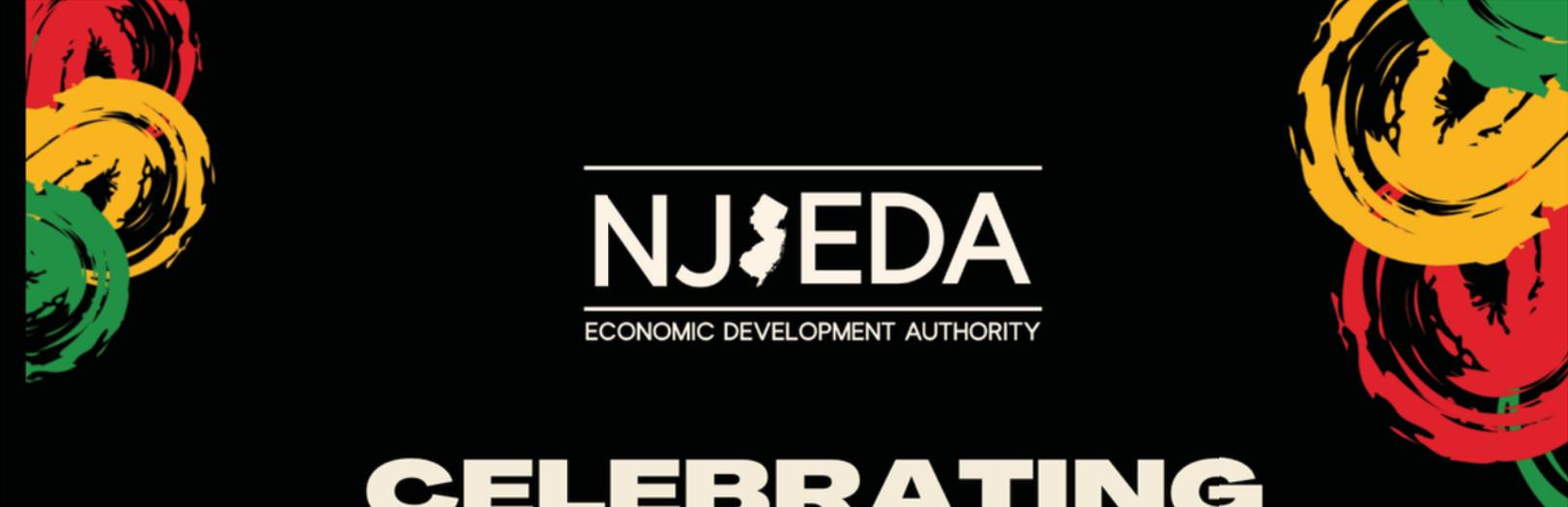
**20** MONDAY  
JULY, 2026

7:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.



fiddler's elbow

COUNTRY CLUB



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**CELEBRATING  
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HISTORY  
MONTH**  
2026

**THE NEW JERSEY ECONOMIC  
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*The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey has been incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code and provides advocacy and support for businesses throughout the State of New Jersey.*

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