



EST. JUNE 2007

Accredited State Chamber  
of Commerce with Distinction

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

# 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

*Collaborating for our  
collective success*

SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

SHERATON - EDISON

125 RARITAN CENTER PARKWAY - EDISON, NJ 08837

EST. JUNE 2007



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

15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CIRCLE OF ACHIEVEMENT

# AWARDS GALA

FORGING AHEAD



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Accredited State Chamber  
with Distinction

FEBRUARY  
2026 19

THE VENETIAN  
GARFIELD, NJ



# ONE LINE AT A TIME.



- **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT / ROW CLEARING**
- **FIBER / TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES**
- **EV INSTALLATION SERVICES**
- **DATA CENTERS**

- **STORM RESTORATION**
- **TRANSMISSION CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE**
- **DISTRIBUTION CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE (UG & OH)**
- **LIGHTING SERVICES (NEC & NESC)**

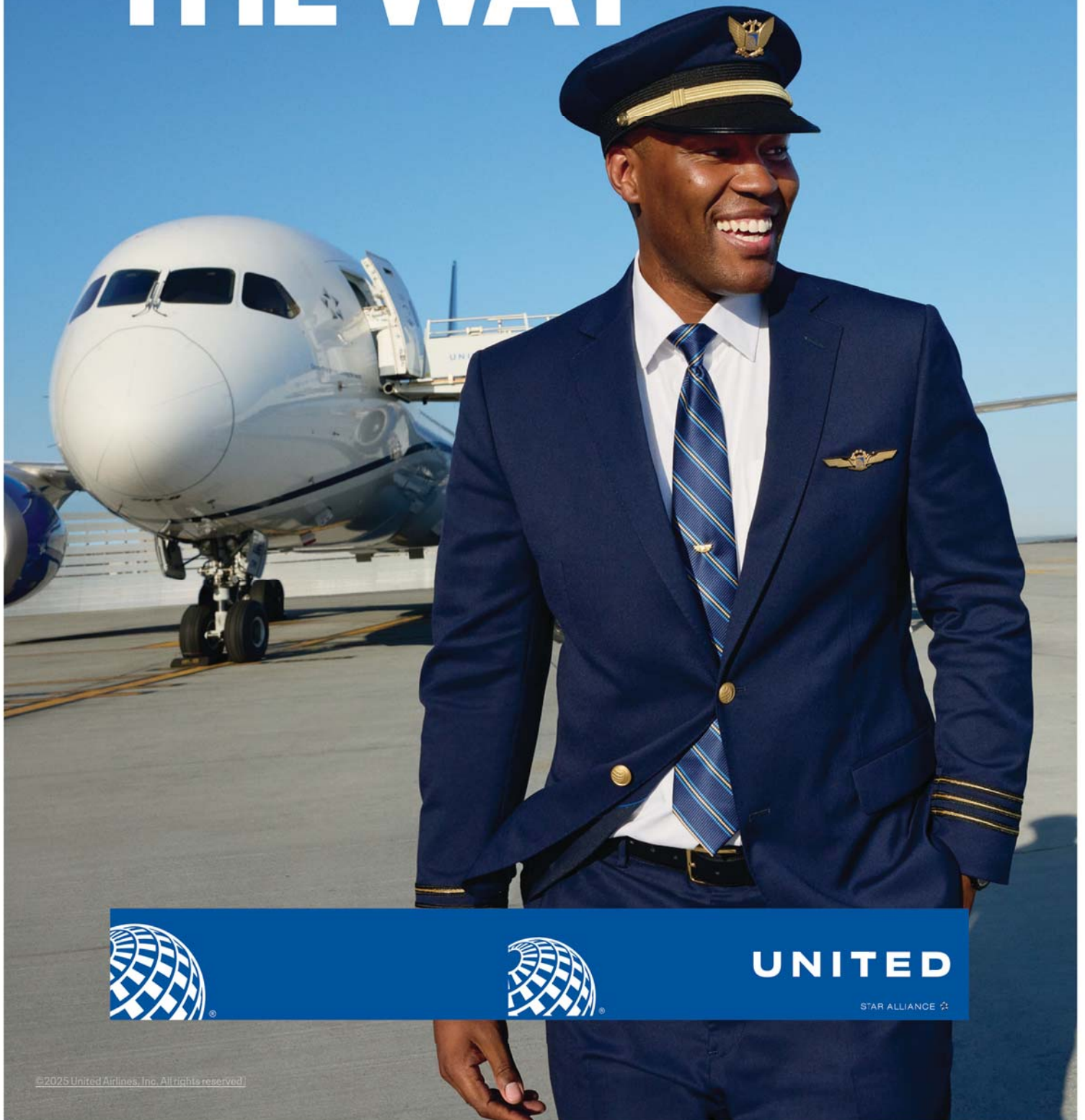


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# GOOD LEADS THE WAY<sup>®</sup>



**UNITED**

STAR ALLIANCE 

# 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Collaborating for our collective success

# PROGRAM

Registration/ General Session/Networking – Breakfast

**8:30 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.**

Introduction of Dignitary

John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM, Founder, President, and CEO  
The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

**9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.**

Welcome Remarks

The Honorable Tahesha Way, Esq.,  
Lieutenant Governor & Secretary of State, NJ

**9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.**

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Sponsorship Recognition

**9:40 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.**

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**Panel 1 - Fireside Chat** Best Practices In Public Contracting

**9:55 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.**

Moderator: John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM

Speakers:

Michael Garner, MBA, CCA, Chief Business Diversity Officer City-Wide Mayor's Office of M/WBES, NYC  
Keith Wright, Ph.D., Spiritual Leader & Author, Former Director, PANYNJ

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**Special Guest Remarks**

**10:30 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.**

Andy Ingraham, President & CEO

National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators & Developers (NABHOOD)

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**Panel 2 – Expanding Access to New Jersey's capital improvement**

**10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

contracts: Addressing systemic barriers, enhancing transparency & equity in the procurement process.

Moderator: Markis Abraham, Director, Hudson County Office of Business Opportunity

Panelists:

Jeanette Barnard, Deputy Director, Div. of Property Mgt. & Construction (DPMC), NJ Treasury

Bianca Reyes, Supplier Diversity Manager, PSE&G

Glenda Thomas, CEO, Electra Grid Solutions

Larry Wooten, Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity, American Water



## Lunch

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m..



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**Panel 3** - A Call to Action: Transportation Infrastructure Delivery, 12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.  
Community Development and Ownership, Building Generational Wealth through Opportunities  
Moderator: Tai Cooper, Chief Development Officer, NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

### Panelists

Adenah Bayoh, IHOP Franchisee, Restaurateur & Real Estate Developer  
Joy Butts, V.P. Business Devel. Mgr., CSBC, Strategy Growth & Operations, Chase Bank, N.A.  
Catherine Renaldi, Executive Vice President, Gateway Development Commission

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**Panel 4** - From Debt to Dynasty: Mastering Business 1:20 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.  
Finances for Long-Term Wealth  
Moderator: Funke Olayinka, M.D., Chief Executive Officer, GHIT Consulting, inc.

### Panelists

Lisa Lovell, MBA, Financial Planner, Prudential  
Marcus Dyer, Associate, Withum, Smith & Brown  
Matt Verney, Market President, Truist

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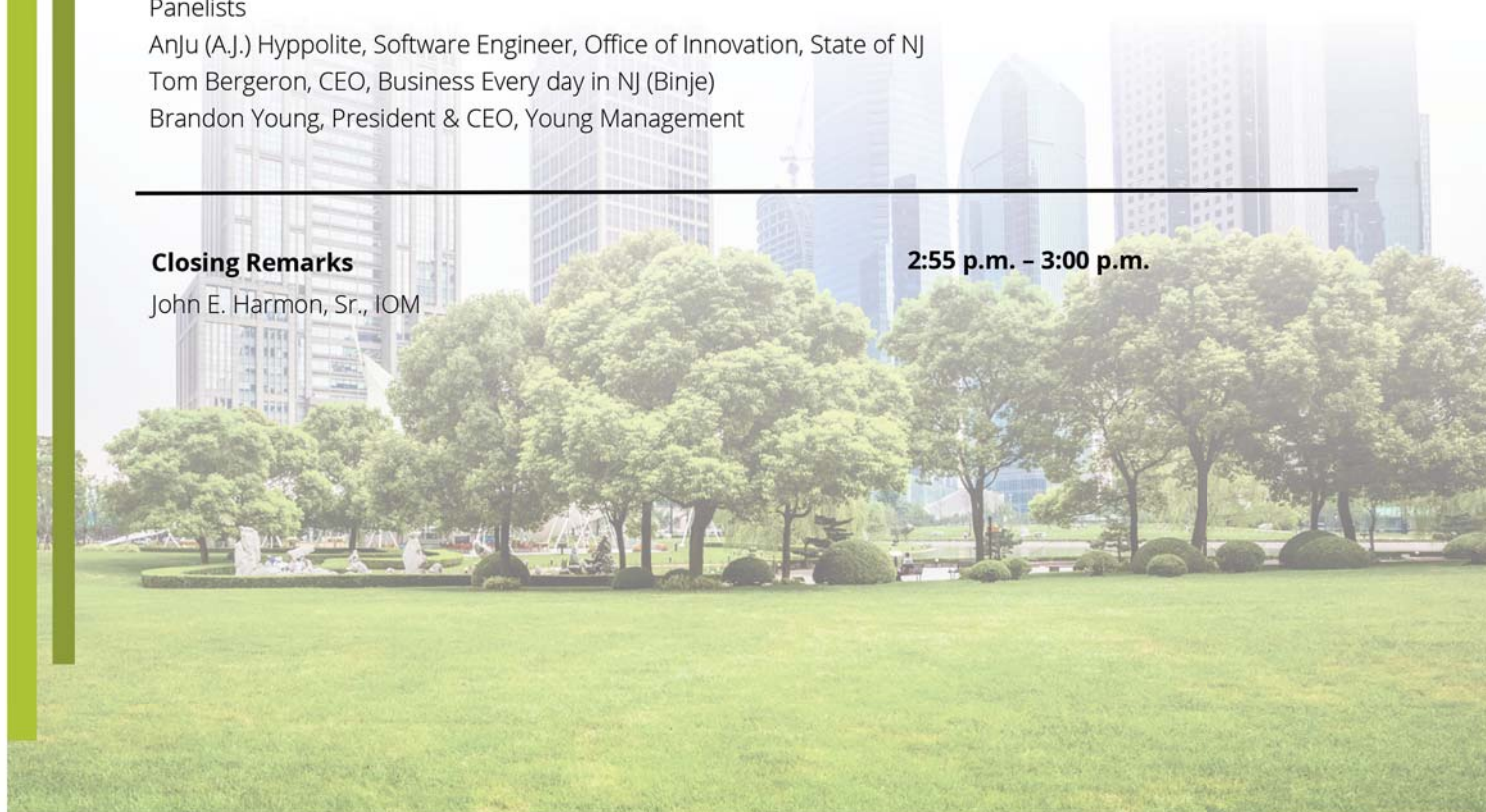
**Panel 5** - Redefining the Workplace: AI, Workforce 2:10 pm. – 2:55 p.m.  
Readiness, Innovation  
Moderator: Gary Mann, CEO, Jasfel Analytics

### Panelists

AnJu (A.J.) Hyppolite, Software Engineer, Office of Innovation, State of NJ  
Tom Bergeron, CEO, Business Every day in NJ (Binje)  
Brandon Young, President & CEO, Young Management

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**Closing Remarks** 2:55 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
John E. Harmon, Sr., IOM





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# 1 ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

EST. JUNE 2007



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

Accredited State Chamber  
of Commerce with Distinction  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

EST. JUNE 2007



# Letter from the **PRESIDENT**

Dear Attendee,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and members of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), thank you for attending our Annual Business Leadership Conference today. We are proud of our progress and the relationships we have built with corporations, various county, state, and federal agencies, and our community partners and stakeholders. The AACCNJ continues to provide increased access to resources and opportunities for our members, and leveraging these relationships has led to significant mutual benefits.

A special thank you to the Lieutenant Governor for her participation, which is greatly appreciated. Our ultimate goal at the AACCNJ is to strengthen New Jersey's competitiveness by building bridges towards mutual success. This overarching goal aims to improve the state's competitiveness and economic impact for the 1.2 million Black New Jerseyans and over 124,000 Black-owned businesses in New Jersey.

We extend our gratitude to our Premium Platinum Sponsor for the 2025 Business Leadership Conference, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ. We also thank our Gold Sponsors: Electra Lines, PSEG, and United, and our Patron Sponsors: JP Morgan Chase and Ferreira.

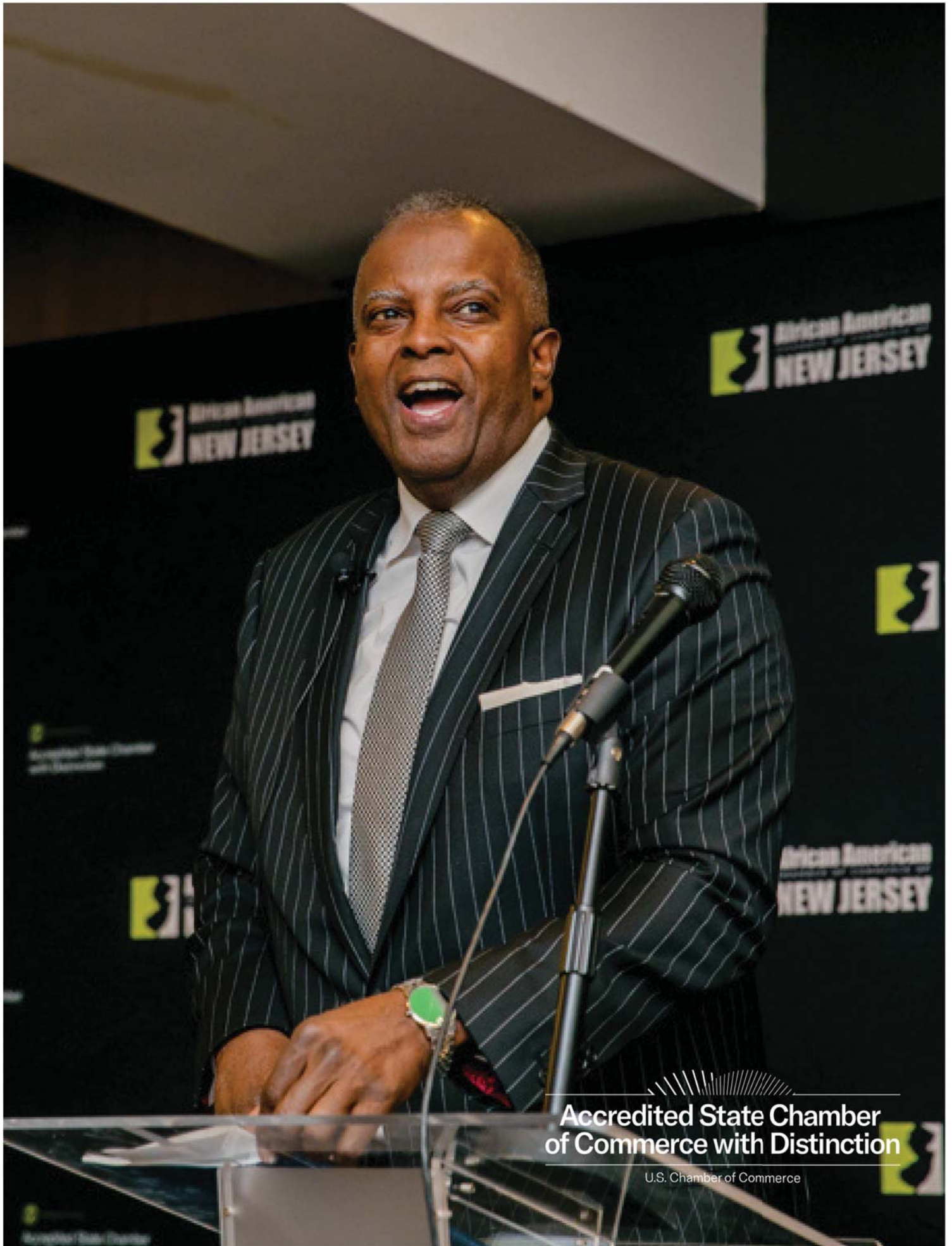
This year's event is particularly significant. The recent Disparity Study, commissioned by the Murphy Administration, revealed that Black individuals receive less than half of one percent of our state's public contracts. This highlights a large-scale emergency that requires a significant response to achieve equitable participation for Black communities.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in time of comfort and convenience but in times of controversy." We are currently in such times, seeking partners who embrace the AACCNJ's mission to connect Black business owners and individuals with opportunities in the public, private, and community sectors. Our aim is to provide value that results in mutually beneficial outcomes. It is through the intersection of availability and utilization that we foster alliances leading to transformational impact. True Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are realized only through will and intentionality. While policies provide guidance, it is people who transform potential into reality.

Your willingness to participate in today's conference and support our activities throughout the year is greatly appreciated. Our success is inextricably linked, and we encourage you to stay the course as we continue this strategic partnership.

Enjoy the conference,

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



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of Commerce with Distinction  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey

performs an essential role in New Jersey's Economy. As affirmed in its mission statement, the Chamber seeks to economically empower and sustain African American communities, facilitating entrepreneurship and free enterprise activity

within the state, with direct outreach programs. Different from acting as simply an association of allied businesses, the Chamber serves as a proactive advocacy group with a 501(c)3 tax exemption, shared by the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

EST. JUNE 2007



# About the AACCNJ

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

In March of 2019, The United States Chamber of Commerce awarded the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (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 US 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.

On September 13th, 2024 the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) led a delegation of our members to Washington, DC for an impactful Reception/Forum hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Executive Leadership Council, and the Congressional Black Caucus.

*"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."*





Accredited State Chamber  
of Commerce with Distinction  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce



# THE TRANSFORMATION CENTER





August 18, 2025

Jeffrey Sussman, Manager  
Seven One Plus, LLC by Nexus Holdings LLC  
1333 Brunswick Avenue  
Suite 200  
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

Dear Mr. Sussman,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, Staff, and Members of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), we want to express our deep appreciation for your generous gift of the property at 165 and 173 West Hanover Street, Trenton, NJ. This property will be designated as The Transformation Center.

The AACCNJ is dedicated to sustaining Black businesses and the communities where they are domiciled. On behalf of the 1.2 million Black New Jerseyans and 124,000 Black-owned businesses, your trust in us allows us to continue supporting underserved communities in New Jersey, particularly in the city of Trenton and Mercer County.

We understand that when we set out with a vision, it can sometimes be difficult for others to grasp the trajectory and how we will accomplish our goals. It begins with a belief in the mission and purpose, and with the support of others, we can actualize that vision. Because of your support, we will continue to serve as a valuable resource and mechanism to enable others to realize their goals, dreams, and aspirations.

The Transformation Center will serve as a hub and incubator for entrepreneurs, as well as a training facility for the community.

Thank you again for your generosity. Please note this letter is an acknowledgment of your gift.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Harmon, Sr.".

John E. Harmon, Sr. : IOM  
Founder, President, and CEO

# 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

Berkeley College, 536 Broad Street  
Newark, NJ 07102

Columbia Bank, 905 Broad Street  
Newark, NJ 07102

379 West State Street  
Trenton, New Jersey, 08618  
(Headquarters)

Mill One, 1 North Johnson Avenue  
Hamilton, NJ 08609

Carnegie Center Building  
35 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401



The 2025 Juneteenth Expo

# ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS



EST. JUNE 2007

# 1

The New Jersey Disparity Study results, released January 2024, revealed that Black-owned businesses received **1%** or less of state contracts in all industries between fiscal years **2015-2020**. For construction, Black-owned businesses received approximately **\$3.3 million** compared to White-male-owned businesses **\$10.8 billion**. Further, Black-owned businesses received **\$13.7 million** for professional services, compared to White-male-owned businesses **\$3.4 billion**. In response, AACCNJ formed the Disparity Study Task Force Committee to identify real solutions for the Murphy Administration to put in place to address the inequalities in business opportunity and prosperity in the state of New Jersey.

# 2



The AACCNJ earned two Bronze Awards in 2024,  
Winning Show EP 411 "2023 Expo Special" 11/4/2024



# 3

The AACCNJ implemented and continued the expansion of several programs and initiatives with the state of NJ.

- Department of Corrections – Returning Citizens
- Department of Labor – Transformation Project
- Small Business Bonding Programs
- Inaugural Youth Leadership Summit brought together more than 200 students from high schools across NJ to empower and inspire the next generation of leaders. Mayor Ras Baraka delivered the keynote address.
- Renewal and expansion of Pathways to Recovery from Mercer County only to Central Region – Oct. 2024
- New program- SNAP Navigator (Mercer County)- Oct. 24

# 4

We led a contingency of our President Club Members to a "Free Enterprise, Renewing Growth & Expanding Opportunity" Showcase in Washington DC, in collaboration with the USCC, ELC and Congressional Black Caucus.

# 5

AACCNJ engaged Gibbons P.C. to serve as its Government and Regulatory Affairs counsel. Gibbons will counsel the AACCNJ in advocating on behalf of our members; the objective is to represent the AACCNJ on legislative, regulatory, and/or governmental processes affecting Black communities and Black-owned businesses in New Jersey.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

John Harmon installed as a member - One Hundred Black Men of New York, Jan. 2025

John Harmon, release autobiography "Power Moves", January, 2025

Gary Mann confirmed as Chairman of the Board of Directors, AACCNJ

Tammeisha Smith confirmed as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors

Tanya Freeman confirmed as Chair of the New York State Black Business Alliance

### STAFF RECOGNITION

Jacqueline Baptiste, ROI NJ Influencers - People of Color 2024

Jacqueline Baptiste, ROI NJ Top Women in Business 2024

Carmen Gates, awarded Community Connector, Capital Area YMCA, February 2024

Carmen Gates, promoted to V.P. Community Development & External Affairs Officer, October 2024

Vivian Harmon, promoted to Executive Director, Training and Development Institute, October 2024

Mary Griffin received SDDC 2024, Distinguished Service Award, October 2024

Vivian Harmon - Graduate of Non-Profit Connect- Board-Connect Program, May 2024

### 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

# Member BENEFITS

# 2025 PRESIDENT'S CLUB



Agile Systems Integrated



BURNS & MCDONNELL



Campbell's

CGI

Citizens



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

LANGAN



Loop Capital





# SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION



PREMIUM PLATINUM SPONSOR



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**FERREIRA**

PATRON SPONSOR

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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMITTEES & STAFF **OVERVIEW**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS **OFFICERS**



**Gary Mann**  
Chairman, AACCNJ Board of Directors,  
President & CEO, Jasfel Analytics



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



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



**Marcus Dyer, Esq.**  
Treasurer, AACCNJ Board of Directors  
Associate, Withum Smith & Brown



**Robert L. Johnson, Esq.**  
Secretary, AACCNJ Board of Directors  
Director and Chief Diversity Officer, Gibbons Law

# 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



**Faye Coleman**  
CEO  
PG Health, LLC



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



**Hosea Johnson**  
\*Emeritus Board Member  
President & CEO, Johnson Associates  
Systems, Inc.



**Alton Shaw**  
Vice President of Operations  
PRWT



**Raymond K. Jones**  
President  
We See You, LLC



**Dr. Funke Olayinka, MD**  
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



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



**Schnearia Ashley**  
Co-Chair, Community Board of Directors  
Senior Vice President  
Truist Commercial Banking



**Viviana Lamm**  
Co-Chair, Community Board of Directors  
CEO, Risk Strategy Solutions



**Carin Heps**  
Assistant Vice President  
Member Relations  
Support Manager



**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 Stephney**  
Principal Executive  
Broad Market Media



**Jackie P. Taylor**  
Partner/Principal, US Alliance &  
Ecosystems Leader Public Sector, EY



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



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



Dr. Denise Anderson,  
Founder & CEO, Denise Anderson  
& Associates (DA&A) LLC



Tasha Youngblood Brown, MBA, CISA  
Managing Director  
EY

## DISPARITY STUDY TASK FORCE



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



Tanya Freeman, Esq.  
Chair, NY State Black Business Alliance  
(NYSBBA) and Managing Partner Family  
Law Practice Group



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



Robert Johnson, Esq.  
Secretary, AACCNJ  
Chief Diversity Officer, Gibbons Law



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

# AACCNJ STAFF



**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

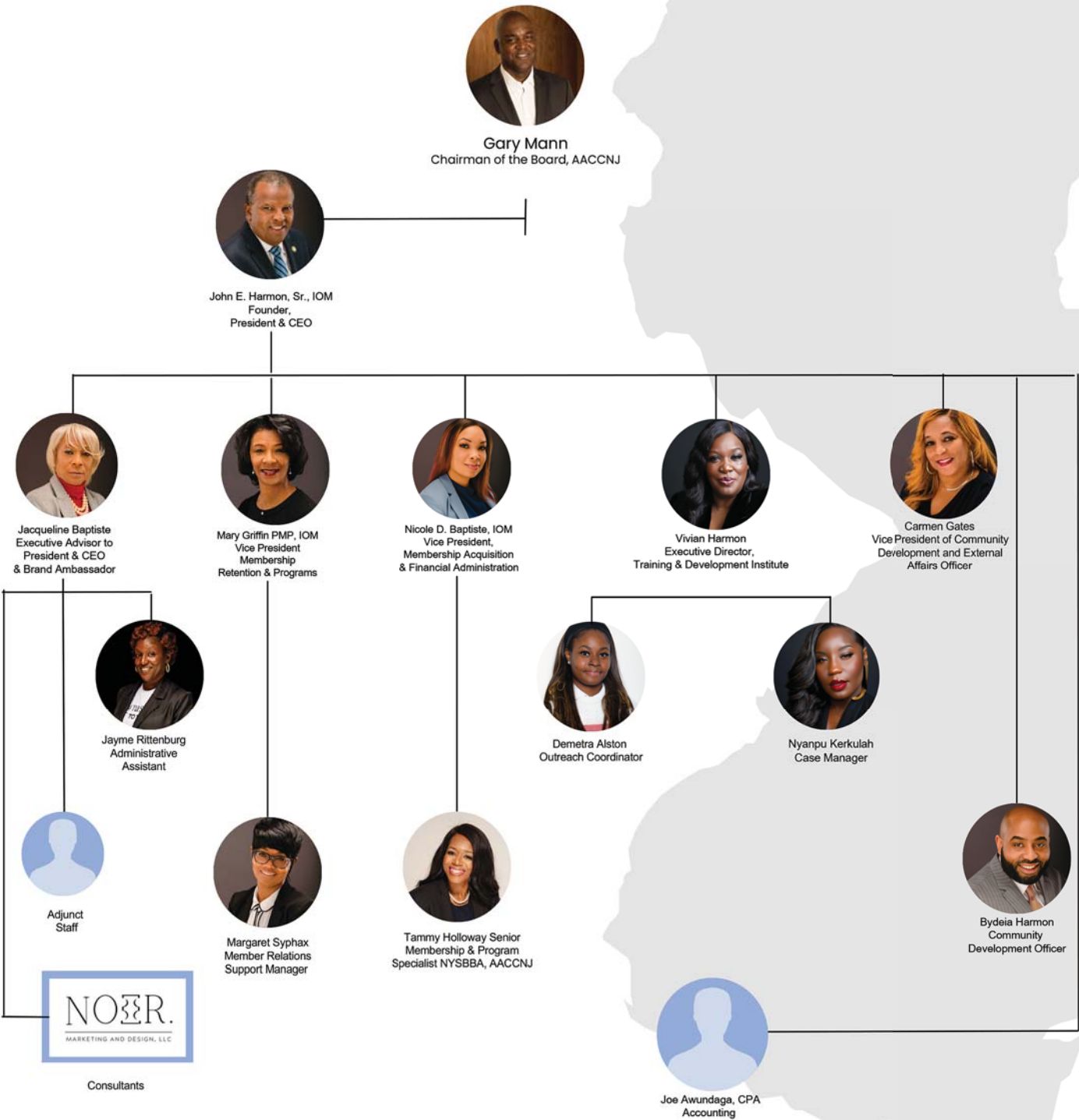


**Jayme Rittenburg**  
Administrative Assistant



**Margaret Syphax**  
Member Relations  
Support Manager

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# *DIGNITARY & SPECIAL GUEST REMARKS*

**The Honorable Tahesha Way, Esq.,  
Lieutenant Governor & Secretary of State, NJ**

**Andy Ingraham, President & CEO,  
National Association of Black Hotel Owners,  
Operators & Developers (NABHOOD)**



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## OPENING REMARKS

The Honorable Tahesha Way, Esq.,  
Lieutenant Governor & Secretary of State, NJ

Tahesha L. Way serves as New Jersey's 3rd Lieutenant Governor. She was appointed to the position by Governor Phil Murphy on September 8, 2023.

A lifelong public servant, Lieutenant Governor Way has devoted her entire career to improving the lives of her fellow New Jerseyans. Over the past two decades, she has served at numerous levels of local and state government.

As Lieutenant Governor, Ms. Way brings her extensive experience to bear on addressing the greatest challenges facing New Jerseyans — from making life more affordable, to protecting fundamental freedoms—like access to reproductive health care and equality under the law — to maintaining New Jersey's reputation as the best and safest state to raise a family.

In addition to her role as Lieutenant Governor, Ms. Way also serves as New Jersey's 34<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State — a position she has held since the beginning of the Murphy Administration.

As Secretary of State, Ms. Way leads one of the nation's oldest constitutional offices and directs a department with a diverse portfolio. In her capacity as New Jersey's top election official, she has overseen the state Division of Elections and its work in securing our democracy and ensuring broad, fair access to the right to vote. Lieutenant Governor Way also chaired New Jersey's Complete Count Commission, a 27 member non-partisan commission established to achieve a complete count in the 2020 US Census. In addition to the critical work protecting what Lieutenant Governor Way calls the "fraternal twins of democracy," she also oversees the state government offices supporting New Jersey's vibrant arts, culture, history, and business communities. Under her leadership, the state's tourism economy has generated record-high revenues.

Following her 2022-2023 service as the first Black person and first Secretary from New Jersey to lead the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) as President, Lieutenant Governor Way continues to provide support to the executive board and is an active member.

Prior to joining the Murphy Administration, Lieutenant Governor Way was an Administrative Law Judge for the State of New Jersey. In 2006, Lieutenant Governor Way was elected to the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders and served as the Freeholder Director in 2009. She served as Special Counsel for the Passaic County Board of Social Services overseeing all agency litigation. She also served as a Council Member for the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council.

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She is the former President of the Women Empowered Democratic Organization of Passaic County, an organization dedicated to empowering Democratic women by increasing their participation with the goal of achieving greater equality in the political process. Lieutenant Governor Way also previously served on the Board of Directors for the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a leading national think tank geared towards advancing dialogue and policy for improving women's lives and their families.

Lieutenant Governor Way is a graduate of Brown University, where she served as Vice President of the collegiate chapter of the NAACP, President of the Iota Alpha chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. taught religious education, and was a radio announcer for WBRU-FM. She holds a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law at Charlottesville, where she clerked for the Virginia Legal Aid Society and the United Steelworkers of America. Lieutenant Governor Way lives in Wayne, New Jersey with her husband Charles with whom she has four daughters: Fallon, Farrah, Faythe, and Fiona. She was raised in the Bronx by her late parents, Robert and Rosa Wright, who also devoted their careers to public service as employees with the New York City Transit Authority.

Lieutenant Governor Way has been a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association, Garden State Bar Association, National Association of Women Judges, Association of Black Women Lawyers, Passaic County Bar Association, and the New Jersey Women's Lawyers Association.

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## SPECIAL GUEST REMARKS

Andy Ingraham, President & CEO,  
National Association of Black Hotel Owners,  
Operators & Developers (NABHOOD)

Dr. Andrew "Andy" Ingraham is the founder and president of the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators & Developers (NABHOOD) and tourism marketing agency, Horizon's International Group Inc.. Born in the Bahamas and based in Miami, Ingraham has fused culture and commerce throughout his 30-year career, with a focus on African American, multicultural and Caribbean tourism.

Ingraham and his partners started NABHOOD in 2001 to promote black ownership, management and development of franchised and other hotels. At the time, there were no African American-owned franchised hotels. Today there are over 100,000 hotel rooms which are African American-owned or controlled and NABHOOD has forged partnerships with major brands including Marriott, Hilton, Choice Hotels and Wyndham to establish programs that enable African American, women and other minorities to participate in this large and growing business.

Ingraham has served appointments with the National Tourism Advisory Committee for the National Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the White House Conference on Tourism, and consulted with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, the US Travel Board, Vibe Music Conference, FUBU Y2G, Impact, Revolt Music Conference, the island of St. Maarten and the Semsamar Group. He was instrumental in bringing the American Tennis Association (ATA) and what is now the American Black Film Festival (ABFF) to Miami. He has shared his expertise as a speaker for many industry conferences including the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), Governor's Conference of Florida, Caribbean Ministers' Conference and the National Association of Black McDonald's Owners Association.

Ingraham studied at the Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica and at Miami Dade College and Florida International University in Miami, Florida.



1

**PANEL 1: FIRESIDE CHAT  
BEST PRACTICES IN  
PUBLIC CONTRACTING**



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**MODERATOR:**  
**DR. JOHN E. HARMON, SR., IOM**  
Founder, Pres. & CEO  
AACCNJ

John E. Harmon, Sr. IOM 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 1.1 million African American residents and the over 70,000 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 market place.

Harmon is the former President and CEO of the Metropolitan Trenton African American Chamber of Commerce (MTAACC). Under his guidance, MTAACC grew its membership substantially, 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.

John Harmon is a Board Member and 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 was recently appointed to the US Chamber of Commerce – Board of Directors, the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's Economic Community Advisory Council (ECAC), Investors Bank Board of Directors, Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors. 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. He is the Founder and Chairman of the New York State Black Chamber of Commerce (NYSBCC). 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, Chairman of Crime Stoppers of Greater Trenton and a former Board Member of the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), First Book, Minding Our Business (MOB), a youth entrepreneurial initiative in affiliation with Rider University.

Harmon was recently acknowledged by Return on Information-New Jersey (ROI), as the Number 1 Person of Color in New Jersey. Harmon was also acknowledged in South Jersey Journal's list of the "Twenty-five Most Influential African Americans in New Jersey", for the third consecutive year. Harmon was selected for ROI-NJ "2018 Power List of Influencers. Harmon is also recognized as a Center of Influence (COI) for the United States Army and was recently selected as a participant in the Joint Civilian Orientation 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 JCOC18. In addition, Harmon was the only attendee from the State of New Jersey. Harmon was recently selected to NJBIZ2018 Power 10. The criteria for selection to the Power 100 were: Identify the people impacting business in New Jersey in a positive way whose primary mission is to foster growth in the state. Harmon was the first individual selected as a member of the host committee for NFL Super Bowl XLVII held in New Jersey 2014.

Mr. Harmon holds an associate degree in Business Administration from Mercer County Community College and Burlington County College, and holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1983. 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 WisconsinMadison, 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.

Prior to his twenty three year career as a chamber executive, Mr. Harmon was previously employed at The Bowery Savings 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. Mr. Harmon has three sons, John Jr., Joshua, and Justin.



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**KEITH WRIGHT, PH.D.**  
Spiritual leader & Author, Former Director  
PANYNJ

Keith D. Wright is the Director of Business Diversity in the Office of DE&I, now in his second tour with the PANYNJ. The Business Diversity Unit is primarily responsible for the identification and expansion of prime and subcontracting opportunities for the MWSBE and SDVOB business community. The agency is fully committed to creating opportunities for minority firms to participate in the agency's procurements and Multi-Billion Dollar Capital Plan.

Prior to returning to the PANYNJ, Wright served as the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF), the Community Relation's Vice President and Director for Citibank covering Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, and Wright worked at Fannie Mae where he served as Vice President of Community Investment with responsibilities for operations, human resources, business integration, technology and budgeting for Fannie Mae's Partnership Office Infrastructure.

A native of New Jersey, Wright has held several civic and community positions, including serving as Chair of the Economic Development Corporation, Chair of the YMCA Capital Campaign, Chair of the Mayor's Community Development Corporation and the Parking Commission for the City of East Orange N.J. Wright has always been recognized for his great leadership and mentoring qualities and is a John Maxwell certified speaker, coach and trainer Wright received his Ph.D. in Theology from NEWBURGH Theological Seminary. His Dissertation explored Ida B. Wells, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the Genesis of the Black Lives Matter Movement. He is the author of "Spiritual Oars for Dark Waters-Christians Successfully Navigating the Corporate World of Work."

Wright received a Master of General Administration from the University of Maryland, a Bachelor of Arts in History from Rutgers University, and completed the program for management development at Harvard University's Business School. Wright is married to Eureka A. Wright and has three adult children Keisha, Keith and Khalid and five precious grandchildren, Blair, Sonya, Ryan, Jeremiah and Noah.



**MICHAEL GARNER, MBA, CCA**

**Chief Business Diversity Officer  
City-Wide Mayor's Office of M/WBEs, NYC**

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.

By changing New York City's/New York State's Legislative Laws and creating new innovative 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.

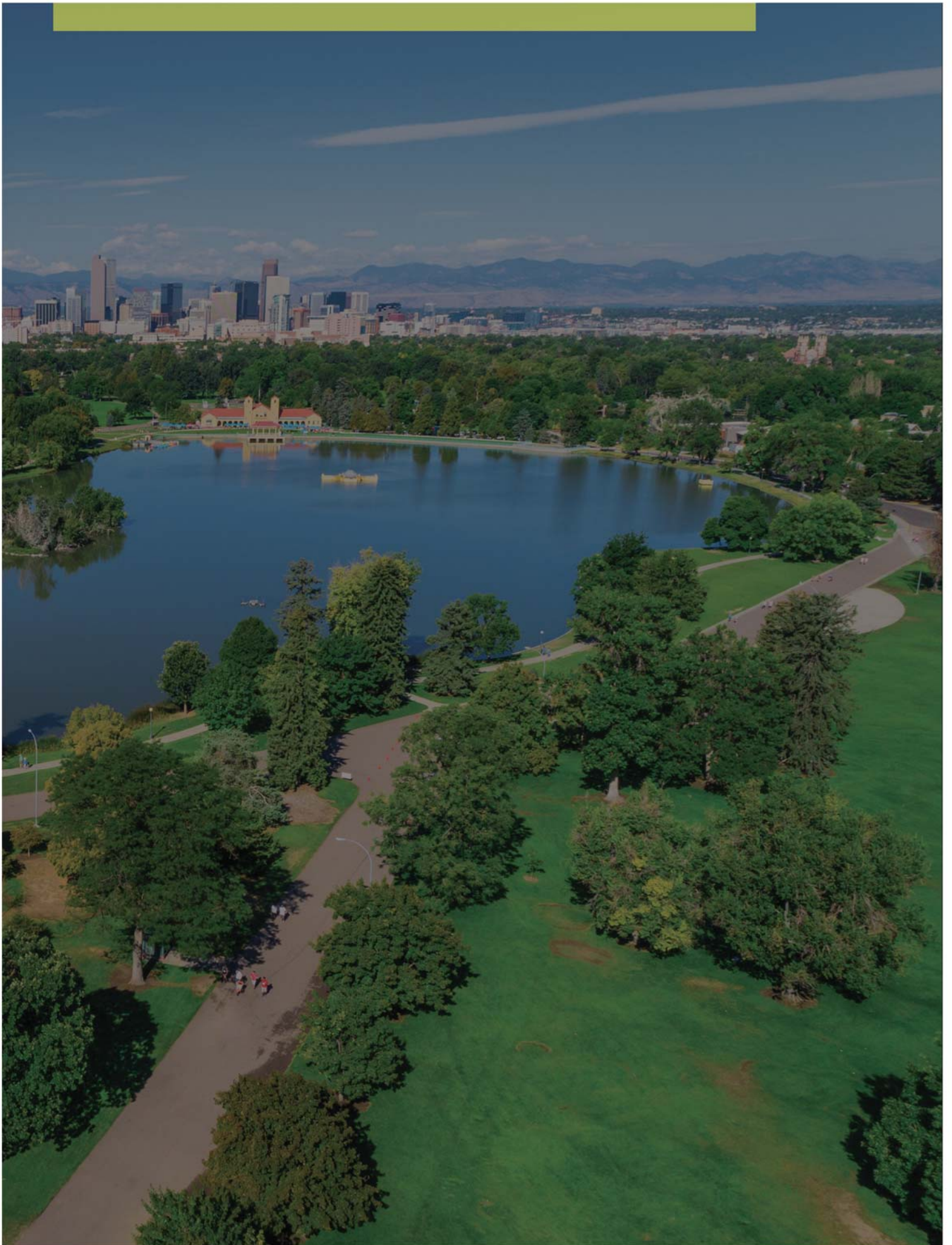


An aerial photograph of a city park. In the foreground, there is a large, calm lake reflecting the sky. A paved path runs along the edge of the lake. The park is filled with lush green trees. In the background, a city skyline is visible, featuring several tall buildings. Beyond the city, a range of mountains stretches across the horizon under a clear blue sky.

# 2

## **EXPANDING ACCESS TO NEW JERSEY'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTS:**

**ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS,  
ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY & EQUITY  
IN THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS**



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**MODERATOR:**  
**MARKIS ABRAHAM**  
Director, Hudson County Office  
of Business Opportunity

Markis M. Abraham, Esq. is an attorney licensed to practice in the State of New Jersey and before the United States District Court. Mr. Abraham has been practicing law since 2008. He is the founder and principal of the Abraham & Latimore Law Group, LLC, where his primary areas of practice are Trusts and Estates, Civil Litigation and Real Estate Land Use and Zoning. Mr. Abraham specializes in helping individuals and families create lasting legacies for their loved ones.

Mr. Abraham advises individuals, business owners, investors, athletes, music artists, fashion designers and many more on transactions, contracts, business formation, and intellectual property rights, as well as how to protect those assets with numerous trust vehicles and through other comprehensive estate planning. Mr. Abraham is an experienced litigator that has assisted numerous clients through the often-complicated probate process, as well as staunchly representing clients in expansive Will contests. Mr. Abraham is a multi-faceted practitioner drawing from a wealth of professional, business and entrepreneurial experience in various disciplines, such as law, finance, accounting, and business management, to provide meaningful advice and counsel to his clients on estate matters, including tax implication of legacy planning.

Mr. Abraham also serves as Director of the Hudson County Office of Business Opportunity. In this role, Mr. Abraham has used his project management skills to transform this County agency, working with internal and external stakeholders to re-imagine the purchasing and supplier diversity process, which has consistently led to the County achieving its supplier diversity goals over the last two (3) years. Mr. Abraham also lead the County's effort to produce a Disparity Study with the goal to develop and promote additional solutions for supplier diversity in Hudson County. In 2025, Hudson County is poised to nearly double its stated supplier diversity goals.

The background of the page is a composite image. The top half shows a city skyline, likely New York City, with various skyscrapers and a hazy sky. The bottom half is an aerial view of a large park with green lawns, many trees, and winding paths. A dark blue horizontal bar separates the two images. In the bottom right corner, there is a small graphic of three overlapping hexagons.

Mr. Abraham attended St. Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, New Jersey, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia for his undergraduate study, and Rutgers School of Law in Newark for law school. Mr. Abraham is a former All-County athlete in football and basketball and was a varsity letterman in football at the University of Pennsylvania, winning two Ivy League Football Championships.

Mr. Abraham is a past President of the Hudson County Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, former Trustee of the Hudson County Bar Association, and a former Board Member for the Hudson County Boys and Girls Clubs, where he served for twenty (20) years and volunteered as director of their Speech and Debate Club.



**JEANETTE BARNARD**  
Deputy Dir., Div. of Property Mgt. & Construction  
(DPMC) NJ Treasury

Jeanette Barnard is the Deputy Director of Contract Administration for the Division of Property Management and Construction. Jeanette manages and directs the operations and performance of the Office of Contract Administration, which procures contracts for construction, design and energy savings improvement projects on State properties.

This Office also reviews applications for contractor classification and design consultant prequalification, which are preliminary requirements for contracting with the State on construction and design projects. Prior to working at DPMC, Jeanette served as a Deputy Attorney General for the New Jersey Division of Law. Jeanette received her B.A. in History at Duke University and her J.D. at Rutgers Law School.



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**GLENDA THOMAS**  
CEO, Electra Lines LLC and  
Electra Grid Solutions

Glenda S. Thomas, President & CEO of Electra Grid Solutions, LLC, is dedicated to supporting the electric and gas utility market. As the chief principal of Thomas & Associates Consulting (TAC), she provides expert guidance in diversity, business development, and sustainability consulting.

Glenda's experience includes serving as the Supplier Diversity Manager for Southern Company Electric Operations, where she worked to expand the company's presence in communities throughout the Southeast region of the U.S. Prior to that, she held project management and operations management roles at IBM Global Services. Glenda holds a BS in Accounting from Alabama A&M University and a Master of Science in Project Management from George Washington University.

Passionate about making a difference, Glenda is actively involved in various organizations, including World Games 2022, SRMSDC, WBEC SOUTH, American Association of Blacks in Energy, and EEI Executive Business Diversity Committee. Glenda's servant leadership style brings joy to her role as CEO, as she is dedicated to nurturing and empowering others. She is "The light", committed to developing her team to be the best versions of themselves every day. The ultimate goal of Electra Grid Solutions, LLC is to keep people connected and deliver exceptional results.



**BIANCA REYES**  
Supplier Diversity Manager  
PSE&G

Bianca Reyes serves as the Small Business Development Manager at PSEG, the Owner of Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G), New Jersey's largest utility serving nearly three quarters of the state's population. She is also the Board Vice President of NJ BPU Supplier Diversity Development Council.

She received a bachelor's in computer science from both Rutgers University and New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) and a Mini-MBA in Supply chain from Rutgers Business School. She currently lives in New Jersey and is a proud mother of two bi-racial butterflies.

Bianca has over 15 years of procurement, supplier relationship and project management experience. Bianca has worked at PSEG for over 10 years in the Procurement Organization. Most recently, supporting our IT Business, sourcing various types of hardware, software and IT Services leading contract negotiations with key suppliers. She is currently responsible for the overall strategy development, implementation, and management of the supplier diversity program, as well as, identifying qualified diverse suppliers, creating and implementing diverse supplier development strategies, monitoring and reporting program success and participating in community facing outreach.

Bianca is a true advocate of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, she is an active board member of the Adelante Business Resource Group at PSE&G, also a founding member of The Procurement Local Inclusion Team (LIT), a Rutgers Honors College Advisory Committee member, and a Role Model for the H.I.S.P.A. Organization. She believes a network of skill and support are essential for great things to happen, continuous learning and being of service will keep your dreams alive and reachable.



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**LAWRENCE WOOTEN**  
Senior Manager, Supplier Diversity  
American Water

Lawrence (Larry) Wooten: has over 30 years of supply chain and supplier diversity. Mr. Wooten has worked in various industries including Aerospace, Entertainment, Commercial Packing, Representing many of the Fortune 100 including; Sikorsky Aircraft, Time Warner Inc, Pitney Bowes and others.

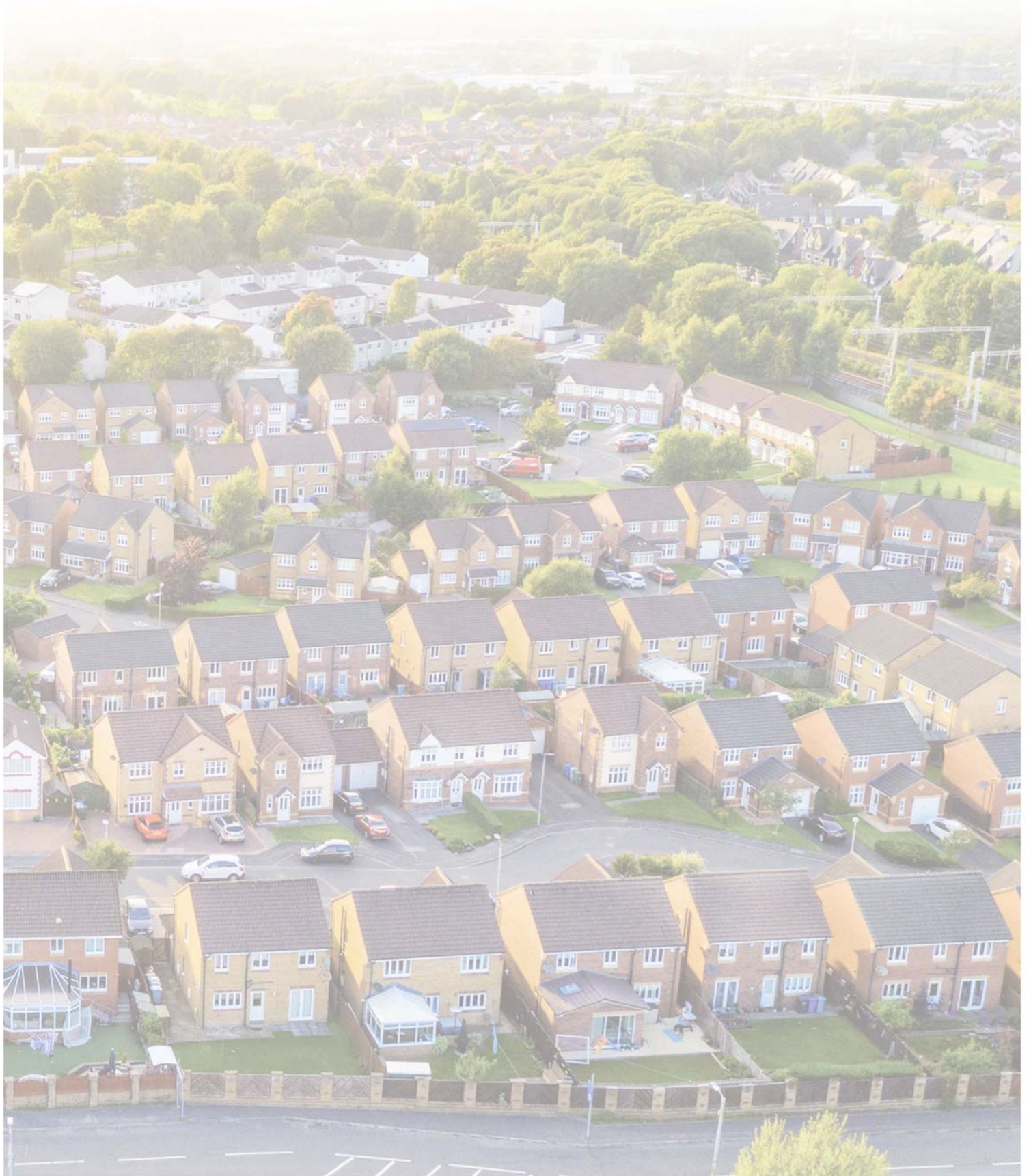
Larry also served as as President of The Western Regin Minority Supplier Development Council and reginal affiliate of The National Minority Supplier Development Council. Larry has received many awards for his work in Supplier Diversity and has successfully implemented Supplier Diversity strategies at every step of his career.

Larry is a passionate advocate for small and diverse businesses and views his work as a service to the economic condition of the country.

An aerial photograph of a suburban residential neighborhood. The houses are primarily two-story brick structures with dark roofs. Many have attached garages and sunrooms. The houses are arranged in rows with green lawns and some trees. A road with parked cars runs through the middle of the neighborhood. The overall scene is a typical suburban development.

# 3

## **PANEL 3 - A CALL TO ACTION: TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND OWNERSHIP, BUILDING GENERATIONAL WEALTH THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES**



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**MODERATOR:  
TAI COOPER**


Chief Devel. Officer  
NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

Tai Cooper holds a key leadership role at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), where she drives strategic growth across pivotal areas including Community Development, Economic Security, Small Business Services, and Business Banking. In this capacity she oversees a diverse portfolio of programs valued at \$800 million, ensuring impactful investments in equitable economic development and community revitalization.

Since joining the Authority, Tai has led transformative placemaking initiatives, leveraging New Jersey's arts and cultural sectors as engines for social and economic change. Her leadership has empowered community organizations to deliver innovative placemaking projects, public art installations, and arts-based community development ventures. Tai also spearheaded groundbreaking efforts in cannabis equity, overseeing the largest grants in the nation designed to support social equity applicants.

With over 20 years of leadership experience, Tai has built a career centered on forging collaborative partnerships, championing innovative programs for vulnerable communities, and driving systemic change. Her expertise in blending policy, philanthropy, and innovation has consistently delivered results that enhance both community well-being and economic resilience.

Previously, Tai served as NJEDA's Vice President of Community Development and Public Affairs, where she led communications and engagement strategies designed to strengthen connections with policymakers and stakeholders. She played a pivotal role in advancing equitable economic development policies, with a focus on fostering innovation and creating greater social impact.


An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood with many houses and trees. A solid blue horizontal bar is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Before joining NJEDA in 2019, Tai held several high-impact roles, including Deputy Chief Policy Advisor to Governor Phil Murphy, where she led New Jersey's Federal Opportunity Zone initiative. As Chief Policy Advisor to Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, she provided strategic oversight on public safety, community engagement, philanthropy, and municipal innovation. Tai also contributed to Mayor Baraka's campaign and transition teams, further solidifying her reputation as a trusted leader in urban policy and governance.

Tai's career began as a Senior Aide to Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), where she managed critical issues spanning economic development, education, banking, and urban affairs. She later served as Chief of Staff to the Mayor of Orange, New Jersey, honing her skills in organizational leadership and community advocacy.

Raised in the North Ward of Newark, Tai earned a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Planning from Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from NYU's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service. She has been widely recognized for her leadership and contributions, earning accolades from the New Jersey African American Chamber of Commerce, NJPAC, Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District and consistent recognition as a policy leader on state power lists by InsiderNJ and ROI-NJ.

Tai's work reflects her unwavering commitment to creating innovative solutions, fostering equitable communities, and leveraging philanthropy to drive meaningful, sustainable impact.

A green graphic consisting of two overlapping hexagons, located in the bottom right corner of the page.

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**ADENAH BAYOH**  
IHOP Franchisee Restaurateur  
& Real Estate Developer

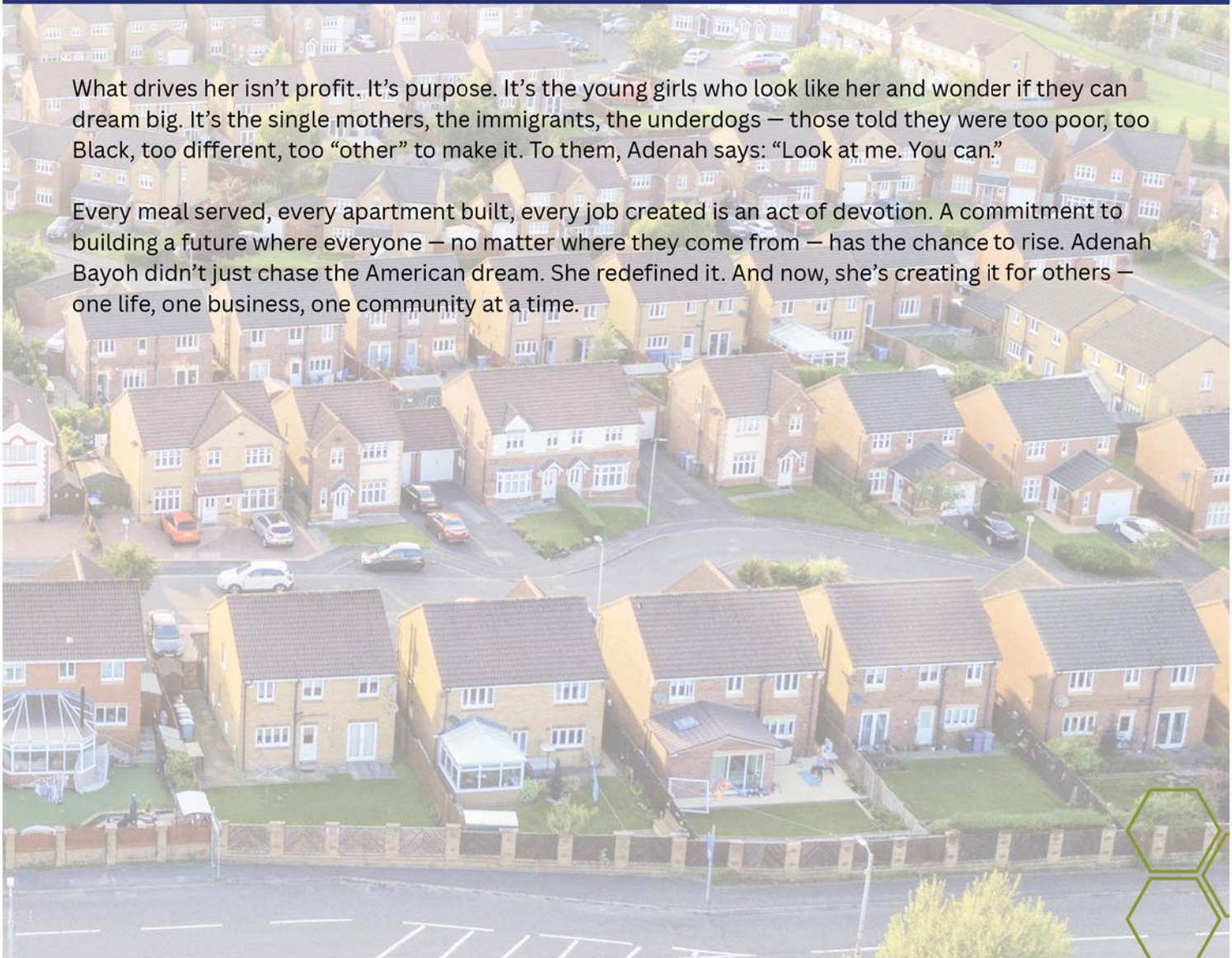
Adenah Bayoh's journey is not just a success story — it is a love letter to resilience, legacy, and the limitless possibilities that bloom when one woman dares to dream beyond survival. She was just 13 when she fled Liberia's brutal civil war, leaving behind the only home she knew. With heartbreak in 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.



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## **JOY BUTTS**

V.P. Business Devel. Mgr., CSBC  
Strategy Growth & Operations  
Chase Bank, N.A

V.P. National Business Development Manager- Community & Business Development for JPMorgan Chase. Located in New York, New York I have over 14 years of experience at Chase and 16 years in financial services. Speaker, Strategist, Collaborator, Thought Leader, Innovator, Mentor & Influencer with impeccable people skills who has impacted thousands with a holistic approach for developing the functional expertise of others. She's served on JPMorgan's National Advisory Board, Seton Hall Universities Customer Experience Program, SBA's development center and is an active board member with the Flex - N - Fly Foundation.

She's received JPMorgan's National Achiever award, Greater NY Chamber of Commerce Honoree award and appeared on; Global Platform Refinery29, NBC's Chasing The Dream Reality Series and Good Morning America. As a speaker, panelist, thought leader amongst her peers and mentor she is excited to support the business community.



**Catherine Rinaldi**  
Executive Vice President  
Gateway Development Commission  
(GDC)

Catherine Rinaldi is the Executive Vice President of the Gateway Development Commission (GDC), the bi-state authority charged with delivering the Hudson Tunnel Project. Ms. Rinaldi oversees all essential administrative functions, while developing and tracking metrics to ensure GDC achieves its strategic objectives.

She was previously the sixth president of Metro-North Railroad and the first woman to hold that position. She served as Metro-North's president for more than seven years, and under her leadership the railroad set records for on-time performance and achieved the highest customer satisfaction of any of the MTA agencies. She led Metro-North through the COVID-19 pandemic and developed strategies to rebuild ridership in its aftermath. She was also responsible for the successful delivery of positive train control, a federally-mandated rail safety technology.

From February of 2022 until October of 2023, she simultaneously served as Interim President of the Long Island Rail Road and led rail readiness activities associated with the successful commencement of LIRR service into the new Grand Central Madison terminal in East Midtown in January of 2023.

Prior to her assumption of these roles, Ms. Rinaldi held a number of other positions within the MTA, including General Counsel (MTA), General Counsel (LIRR), and Chief of Staff/Counsel to the MTA Chairman.

Ms. Rinaldi previously held other positions in the public sector, including as an attorney in the New York State Governor's Counsels Office and as principal law clerk to the Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals.

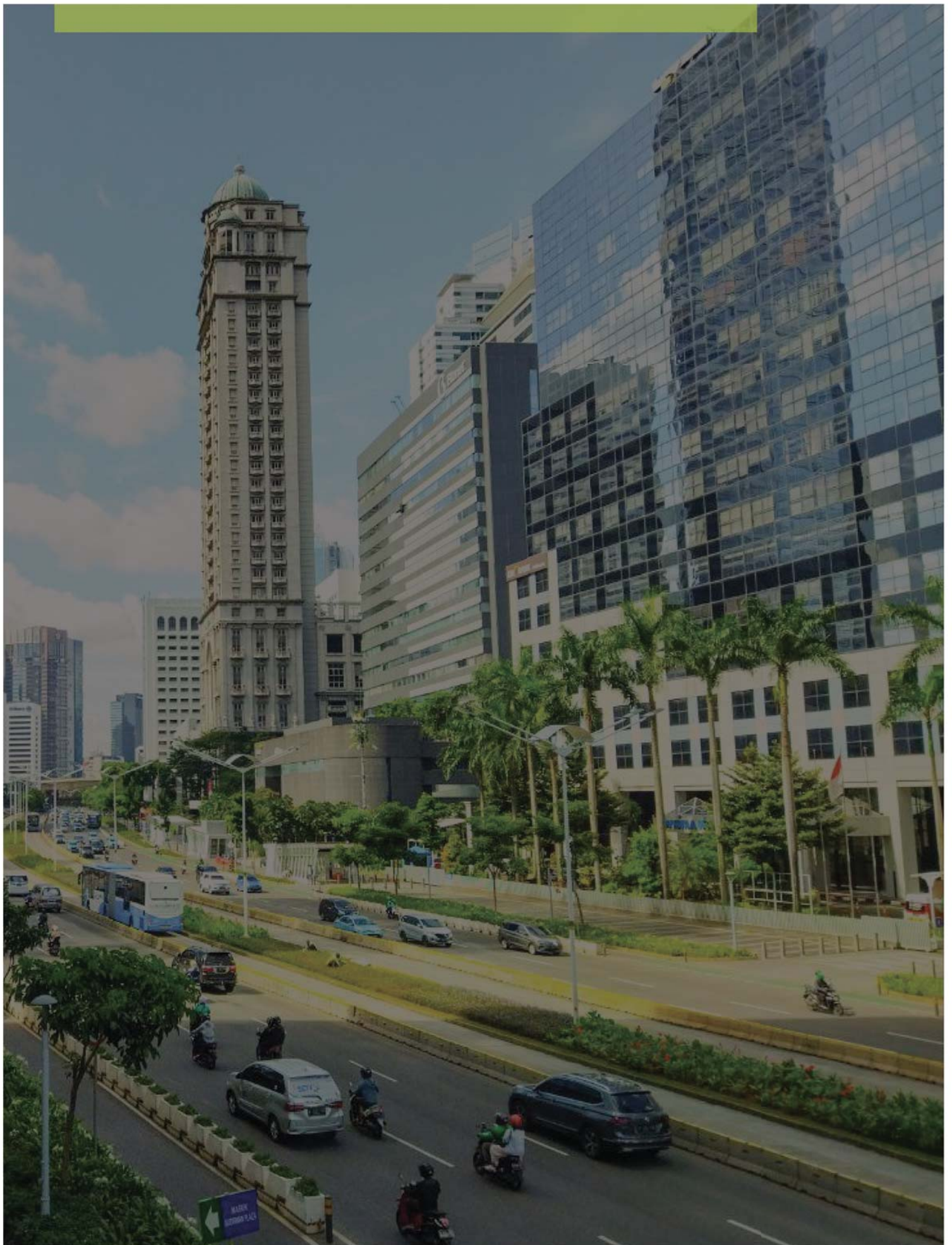
Ms. Rinaldi is a summa cum laude graduate of Yale College and a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law. She resides in Westchester County, New York with her husband and son.





4

**FROM DEBT TO DYNASTY:  
MASTERING BUSINESS FINANCES  
FOR LONG-TERM WEALTH**



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**MODERATOR:**  
**DR. FUNKE OLAYINKA, MD**  
CEO, GHIT Consulting, Inc.

Funke Olayinka, MD, is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of GHIT Consulting INC., a strategic planning and business advisory firm supporting small and medium-sized enterprises across sectors, including healthcare and franchising. A physician and Healthcare IT consultant, Dr. Olayinka has worked with leading institutions across the country, including NYU Langone, Mount Sinai, MD Anderson Cancer Center, Yale Cancer Center, and Rutgers Cancer Institute, where she has designed chemotherapy protocols, led clinical systems optimization, and advised executive leadership on EMR implementations to improve patient outcomes and operational efficiency.

She received her Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Science, Arts, and Technology, College of Medicine in Olveston, Montserrat, her Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), and a bachelor's degree in Human Physiology from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. In 2018, she was honored with the Role Model Award from the Roselle Area NAACP Chapter.

Dr. Olayinka serves on the Board of Directors for the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, advancing the chamber's mission to promote economic empowerment through entrepreneurship. She is also a member of the Advisory and Advancement Council and the Foundation Board at William Paterson University's Cotsakos College of Business, contributing to institutional strategy and philanthropic growth. In addition, she serves on the Enrichment Grant Review Board of MyGOAL Inc., which supports families of individuals with special needs.

Dr. Olayinka is a former franchise owner of Nothing Bundt Cakes in Wayne, NJ, which she successfully operated for five years before selling the business in May to create more time and flexibility for her family. Above all, she is a devoted wife and mother whose family continues to be her greatest motivation and guiding purpose.



**MARCUS DYER**  
Treasurer, AACCNJ  
Associate, Withum Smith & Brown

As Leader of Tax Controversy, Marcus concentrates his practice in handling all aspects of federal and state tax controversies, including civil tax examinations, appeals and collections matters. Marcus has over 20 years of experience in providing tax advisory and representation services to businesses and individuals. He has handled numerous commercial and tax disputes before State courts, Federal District Court and the United States Tax Court.

Marcus also brings substantive legislative and public policy experience, having served with a Tax Research Foundation and a state Legislative Budget Board, where Marcus focused on tax policy analysis, fiscal forecasting, and the development of legislative recommendations.

#### **CREDENTIALS/EDUCATION**

BA Degree in history, Duke University

MPA degree, concentration in public finance, University of Texas at Austin

JD degree, University of Pennsylvania



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**LISA LOVELL, MBA**  
Financial Planner  
Prudential

As a Financial Professional with Prudential, I can help you with many of the financial questions you have - from evaluating insurance needs to helping you prepare for college costs or meeting your retirement goals. My promise is to work tirelessly to help you achieve your goals. At Prudential, we are dedicated to building and maintaining close relationships with our customers – relationships founded on trust, respect and integrity. No matter what stage of life you find yourself in, as a Prudential Financial Professional, I can help you find solutions to your financial challenges. So, whether you are just starting out, settling into retirement, or somewhere in between, let's discuss your current financial situation, goals and challenges – and together we can help you meet your challenges.

**I'm Most Proud Of:** As the 2022 Award of Merit Recipients, I'm most proud of serving my clients and giving back to the communities in which I live and work. There's nothing better!





## **MATT VERNEY**

### **Market President**

### **Truist**

As a Commercial Relationship Manager at BB&T Bank, now Truist Bank, Matthew has been instrumental in helping businesses and nonprofits find banking solutions to ensure they have all the banking tools necessary to successfully complete their mission.

Matthew is a graduate of The University of Maryland at College Parks Smith School of Business in 2001. After graduating college Matthew volunteered for service in the United States Marine Corps, graduating from Officer Candidate School in Quantico Virginia and served as an Artillery Officer for the 1st Marine Division. Matthew was honorably discharged from active duty service in 2005. He gained his Masters degree from Loyola University in Baltimore Maryland and was a successful entrepreneur in the Restaurant industry prior to joining the Banking Industry in 2012.

He's extremely active in the community and currently serves on: the Board for the Camden County Workforce Development Board, Vice Chair and Youth Investment Committee Chair of the Camden County Workforce Development Board, the board of Greater Philadelphia Veterans Network, the Treasurer of Operation Yellow Ribbon, the Board of Regional Business Assistance Corporation and the board of the South Jersey Tourism Corporation.

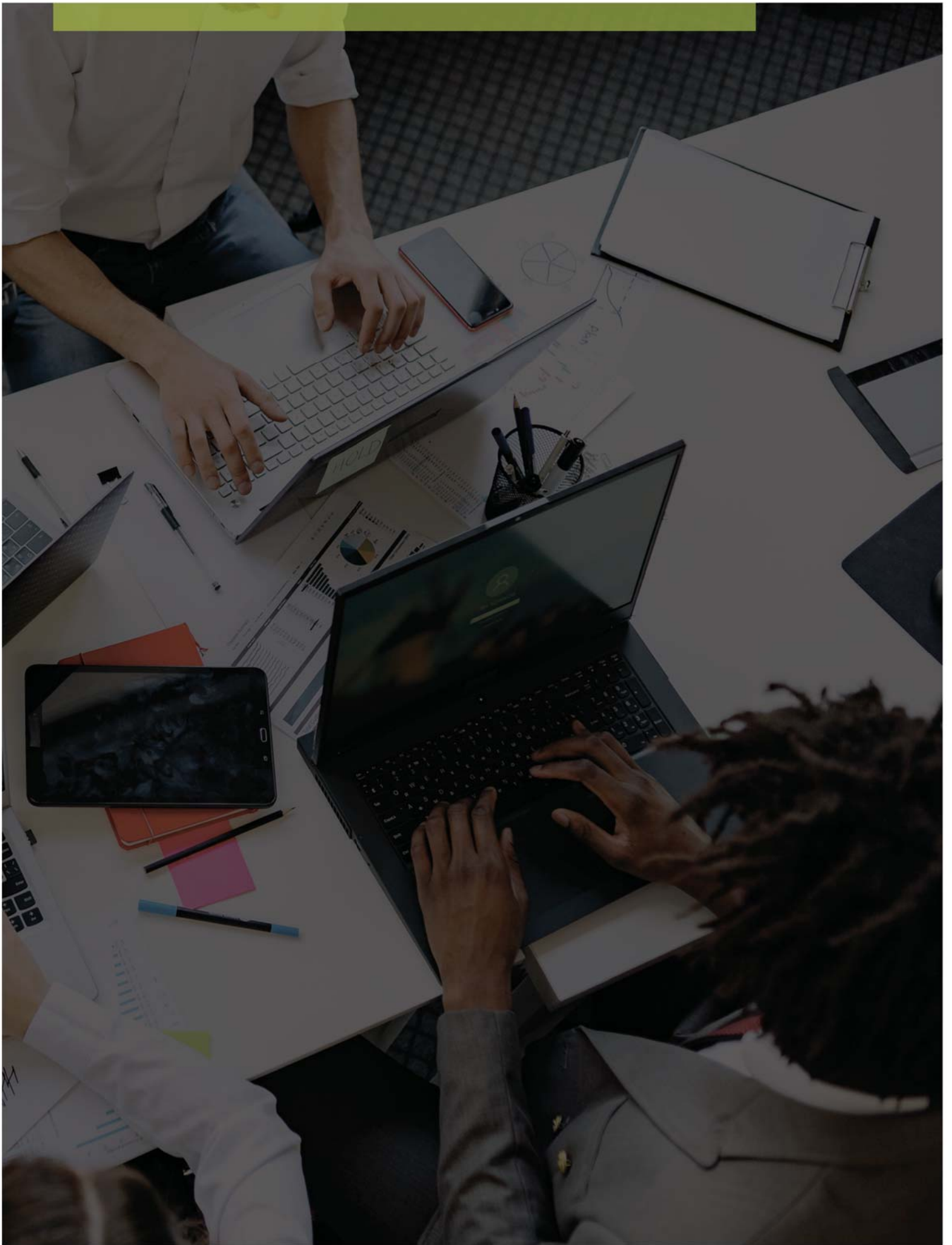
Matthew is also involved in many veteran nonprofit organizations to include Bunker Labs, Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation of Philadelphia, Operation Yellow Ribbon, and the Veterans Business Referral Network. Matthew is a proud husband and father of 4 sons ages 8, 7, 4 and 2.



A high-angle, top-down photograph of a woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a white button-down shirt, sitting at a desk. She is focused on writing on a large sheet of paper with a pen. The desk is cluttered with various items: a laptop with a landscape image on its screen, a smartphone, a magnifying glass, a pen, a yellow sticky note, and several other papers, some of which contain charts and graphs. The background is dark and out of focus. A large, bright yellow number '5' is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the desk and the woman's arm.

# 5

**REDEFINING THE WORKPLACE:  
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE,  
WORKFORCE READINESS, INNOVATION**



# 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

*Collaborating for our collective success*



**MODERATOR:**  
**GARY MANN**  
Chairman, AACCNJ  
CEO, Jafel Analytics

Gary Mann is a distinguished American computer scientist and entrepreneur renowned for his expertise in data engineering, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and data analytics. In 2018, he embarked on a transformative journey by founding JASFEL Analytics LLC, an innovative company specializing in data engineering, AI, and analytics, where he currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer.

Gary's journey into the realm of data commenced during his undergraduate years at Rutgers University, where he initiated a startup focused on automating data collection and analysis. Armed with a degree in Computer Science upon graduation, Gary seamlessly transitioned into the private sector, carving a niche for himself in diverse areas such as business intelligence, data integration, information management, SaaS development, business development, entrepreneurship, and corporate leadership.

With a career spanning over three decades, Gary has amassed a wealth of experience in corporate leadership that extends beyond data management. His multifaceted expertise encompasses product development, global sales, marketing, executive management, and the operational intricacies of technology solutions. Gary has served as an international business executive for companies specializing in data intelligence, data governance, and data integration. Furthermore, he has played a pivotal advisory role for Big Four consulting and technology firms, offering guidance in the architecture, sale, and implementation of solutions across various vertical markets. Gary's reputation for collaboration, problem-solving acumen, and unwavering work ethics has consistently positioned him in mission-critical roles.

An insatiable learner, Gary diligently hones his skills and expands his knowledge base to consistently deliver cutting-edge solutions to diverse industries and businesses. This journey stands as a testament to his unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of innovation.

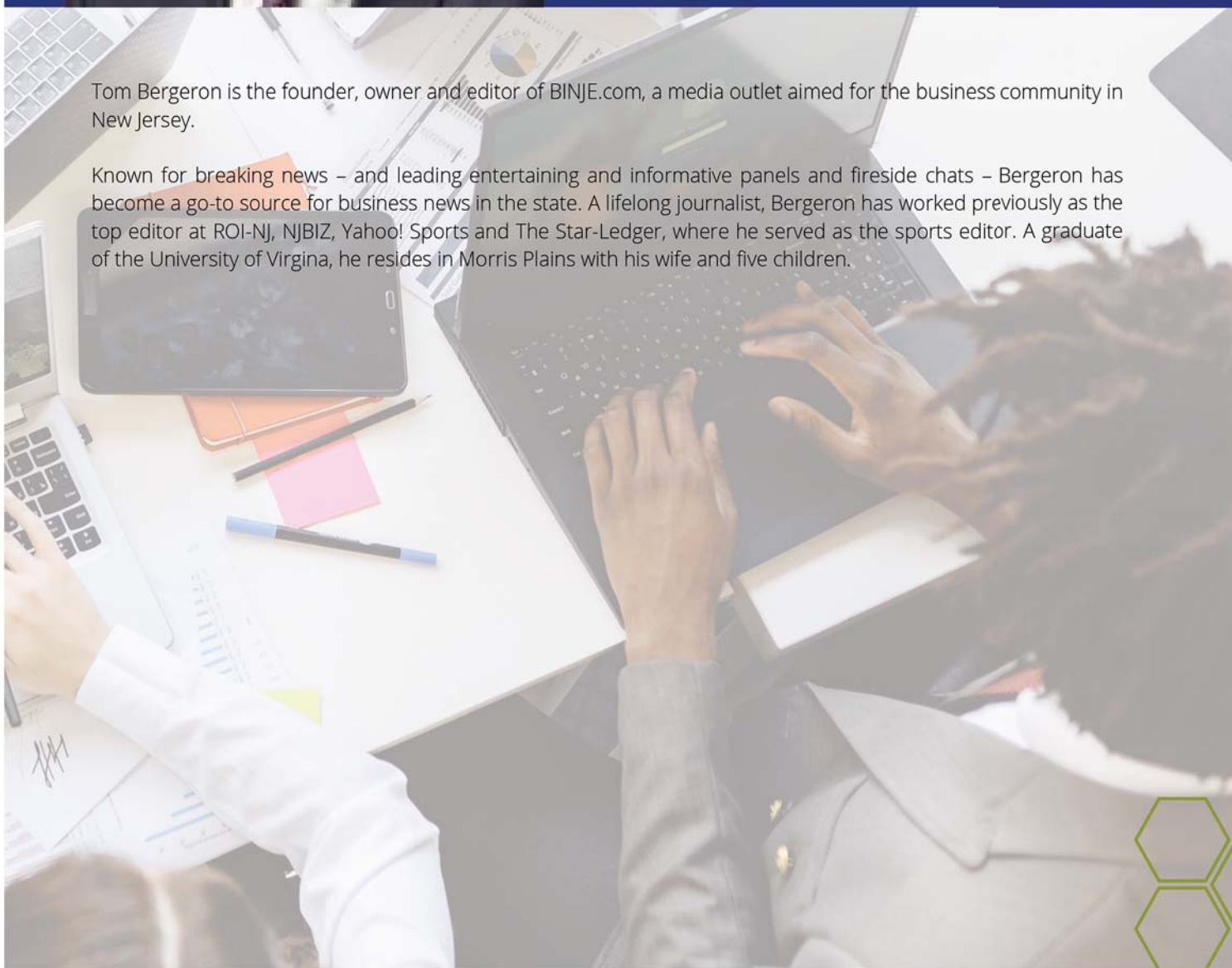
Beyond his professional endeavors, Gary is actively engaged in community and industry leadership. He serves as a board member of the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ) and the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute. Additionally, Gary contributes his expertise to the steering committee of the New York State Black Business Alliance, the NJEDA Diversity Finance Advisory Board, and the Fiserv + RU-N advisory Board.



**TOM BERGERON**  
CEO, Business in NJ Everyday  
(BINJE)

Tom Bergeron is the founder, owner and editor of BINJE.com, a media outlet aimed for the business community in New Jersey.

Known for breaking news – and leading entertaining and informative panels and fireside chats – Bergeron has become a go-to source for business news in the state. A lifelong journalist, Bergeron has worked previously as the top editor at ROI-NJ, NJBIZ, Yahoo! Sports and The Star-Ledger, where he served as the sports editor. A graduate of the University of Virginia, he resides in Morris Plains with his wife and five children.



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*Collaborating for our collective success*



**ANJU (A.J.) HYPOLITE**  
Software Engineer Office of  
Innovation, State of NJ

AnJu Hyppolite is a software engineer at the Office of Innovation, where she helps make government services more accessible for New Jerseyans. She first joined the Office as a fellow through Coding it Forward's Civic Innovation Corps Fellowship. She is passionate about leveraging technology to benefit the public good. She has contributed to the Business Experience Initiative, helping to develop a one-stop application that improves the user experience for entrepreneurs looking to start, operate, and grow their businesses in New Jersey.

As part of the Resident Experience Initiative, AnJu helps streamline the delivery of government programs and services and develops internal tools that expand the Office's ability to improve the lives of New Jersey residents. AnJu graduated cum laude from Boston University with a degree in management studies—financial management. She is also an arts and community advocate, challenging and reimagining the status quo.



**BRANDON YOUNG**  
President & CEO  
Young Management

Brandon Young, a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity incorporated, serves as President & CEO of Young Management & Consulting (YMC). Mr. Young graduated from college with a Bachelors in Electrical Engineering from Auburn University then moved into corporate America.

During those years, Brandon worked for a few large corporations. What really changed Brandon's purposes was when he transitioned from being an employee to a business owner and started Young Management & Consulting and pushing YMC from a start up to a fully functional business in 2019.

Brandon is a certified project management professional with a Master's in Engineering Construction Management from the University of Alabama Birmingham. Since 2019 Young Management and Consulting has generated over \$80M in revenue and grown to over 100 team members. YMC is a US based organization that has recently expanded their service territory to the UAE. Per Mr. Young "Do great things and great things will follow" His years of success in various industries have allowed him the skills and experience to maintain a steady path to success for himself, his staff, vendors, and all who #WORKWITHYOUNG.

Mr. Young was recognized by Auburn University's Alumni Council as a 20 Under 40 recipient in 2022 and Outstanding Young Engineering by Auburn University Samuel Ginn College of Engineering in 2023.

Mr. Young provides a valuable blend of leadership and creativity to maximize trade partner relationships while developing a trusted network of reliable resources. Brandon has proven and continues prove he is more than capable to achieve any goal placed in front of him.

He as created a culture at YMC that has a mission to give back, while promoting innovation, proficiency and trust.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  
SERVICE PROVIDERS  
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6

# Thank you

Thank you to the members of  
the AACCNJ on behalf of the  
Staff and Board of Directors

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trentonmakesgrfx@gmail.com  
609-540-2102

DJ Kevin McAllister  
djkmac50@yahoo.com  
908-346-5373

## Thank you to our Media Partners





15TH ANNUAL

# CORPORATE AWARDS DINNER

**OCTOBER 16, 2025**  
6:00 P.M. – 9:30 P.M.

PRINCETON MARRIOTT AT FORRESTAL  
100 COLLEGE ROAD EAST, PRINCETON, NJ 08540

**Ticket Price**

Members: \$130

General Admission: \$150

*Cocktail Attire*



**Noelle Baptiste**

Co-Founder & Lead Graphic Artist  
Noir Marketing & Design, LLC.

**Tahji Wright**

Co-Founder & Lead Digital Media Strategist  
Noir Marketing & Design, LLC.

**George Sowa**

Founding Chief Executive Officer  
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**Edward Funches**

President  
Inclusion Mobile Detailing

**Darleen Gillespie**

EVP & Chief Retail Banking Officer  
First Bank

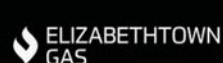
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## 2025 HONOREES



SCAN TO REGISTER OR VISIT  
LEARN MORE AT [WWW.AACCNJ.COM](http://WWW.AACCNJ.COM)





EST. JUNE 2007

7TH ANNUAL  
**PARTY WITH  
A PURPOSE**

111TH NEW JERSEY LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

NOVEMBER 18, 2025  
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

HARD ROCK HOTEL AND CASINO  
BRIGHTON BALLROOM

**Hard Rock**  
HOTEL & CASINO

Join the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City, NJ, for our FREE event held during the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Conference!

TO REGISTER VISIT [WWW.AACCNJ.COM](http://WWW.AACCNJ.COM) OR SCAN HERE



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# ANNUAL HOLIDAY & YEAR END MEETING

EST. JUNE 2007



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

DECEMBER 10, 2025  
6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

PRINCETON MARRIOTT AT FORRESTAL  
100 COLLEGE ROAD EAST  
PRINCETON, NJ 08540



scan to register

JOIN US AT OUR ANNUAL EVENT AND RECEIVE A COMPLIMENTARY  
"I AM BLACK WALL STREET" T-SHIRT & CHANCE TO WIN A FREE  
TICKET TO OUR BLACK HISTORY MONTH GALA!  
(2 WINNERS). A \$300 VALUE PER WINNER!

**MEMBERS - \$135.00**  
**GENERAL ADMISSION - \$145.00**

**NETWORKING**

**CARVING & FOOD STATIONS**

**THREE HOUR OPEN BAR**

**COMPLIMENTARY  
ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

**MUSIC BY DJ KEVIN McALLISTER**  
**Total Exposure Entertainment**

**PRESENTATION:**  
**AACCNJ 2025 RECAP &  
2026 FORECAST**

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

**PRESENTATION:**  
**BLACK CONSUMERISM NIELSEN IQ**

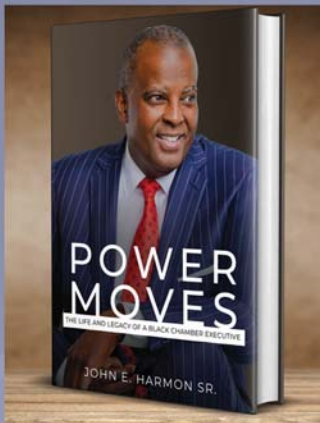
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# POWER MOVES

The Life And Legacy Of A  
Black Chamber Executive

AVAILABLE NOW!



John E. Harmon Sr. recounts his ascension journey  
from humble beginnings to becoming one of the  
state's most influential businessmen.

# 2ND ANNUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP



MOBILE  
ACADEMY  
WE'RE ON THE MOVE >>>

## SUMMIT 2025

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS



This year's summit will focus on the theme: **"Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education"**—highlighting how emerging technologies are reshaping the future of learning and career pathways. Attendees will hear a dynamic keynote address on the impact of AI and innovation in the classroom and workplace.

Students will participate in two engaging workshops:

- **Building Wealth through Entrepreneurship**
- **The Intersection of Mental Health, Social Media, and Technology**

In addition to these sessions, the summit will feature **exhibitor tables** and **networking opportunities** with industry professionals, educators, and community leaders—offering valuable insights, resources, and connections to help students prepare for tomorrow's workforce

**October 9, 2025**

9:00AM - 1:00PM

Crowne Plaza Princeton  
Conference Center, 900 Scudders Mill  
Road, Plainsboro Township, NJ 08536

**REGISTER TODAY**

This highly anticipated event will host over 300 high school students from 20 schools across the state of New Jersey for a day of empowerment, education, and inspiration.





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U.S. Chamber of Commerce

## Accredited State Chamber with Distinction

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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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