

BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN



NAATL
National Conference of African American Thought Leaders

ANNUAL STATE ACTION COUNCIL

POLICY MEETING & VANGUARD AWARDS RECEPTION

“WHO BRINGS ENERGY TO THIS COMMUNITY?”

Strong communities are the foundation of a healthy, thriving environment for all people. That’s why DTE Energy helps power communities through supporting projects and programs that enhance life. We take pride in our efforts to provide positive youth development. We partner with local leaders to promote community initiatives from environmental education to economic development, including community outreach services. We’re using our energy to serve.



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Our Story – Mission & Commitment

As a result of a 2010 White House Briefing for African American Leadership and President Obama’s “Call to Action”, Board Members of the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan returned from Washington and organized the Michigan African American Thought Leaders State Action Council. Since its inception, “The Council” has helped vertically communicate, advocate and debate policy concerns based on the White House’s agenda and the quality of life needs of the African American Community. From creating the policy momentum for demand driven workforce training, proposing competitive and responsible alternatives to race-based contracting that produce real equity, advocating for at-risk adolescent access to skilled trades instruction and Career Technical Education; to creation of Community-based Violence Interventions to reduce gun violence, to creation of school-based behavioral health interventions to reduce suspensions and expulsions of children of color; “The Council” through the Black Caucus Foundation has helped advance these discussions in a “non-partisan manner” on the local, state and national stages. Fundamental to the success of this effort has been the premise that sound socio-economic policy that supports advances in the health, education and welfare of African Americans can be drafted in a manner representative of good public policy and best practice adoption for ALL communities.

As a way to support the tenants of the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Week, after 2010, along with attending CBC sessions the State Action Council annually convenes in the nation’s capital with members of congress and representatives of federal agencies and the White House as part of a systemic framework to develop, collaborate on, and evaluate policy initiatives affecting the elevation of life quality of African Americans. The outputs of that meeting are communicated to the President and Congressional Members and used as a reference in the development of federal and state “**Action Agendas**”. Black Caucus of Michigan organized the first Michigan African American Thought Leaders State Action Council 2012 and authored “The African American Commerce Initiative” (AACI) as a framework for “the councils” direct service focus, and to serve African American focused policy and advocacy organizations as an adaptable guide and tool for local economic development, inclusion and equity strategies. After the successful launch of several phases of “the Initiative”, a National Council of African American Thought Leaders convened in 2022 to expand, replicate and evolve “the Initiative” for adaptable use in cities across America, commencing with its 40-million-dollar business capital and cash fund that seeks to help Black contractors at home expand to opportunities in Africa. In 2024, the AACI provided the City of Detroit with \$110 million in judgements against non-occupant owners of tax foreclose auctioned properties that never paid post auction taxes with the goal of collected monies being used to close the racial wealth gap through entrepreneurial investment.



Each year “The Council” lifts leaders up that are demonstrating through word, action and deed a commitment to elevate and advance opportunity and life quality for African Americans. The 2025 Vanguard Award Honorees are an elite class of public servants and business professionals that epitomize “Black Excellence” and serve as a shining example of “principled leadership”. To all the honorees, congratulations; and to all of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus and our guests that support them; we thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely

D. Duron Marshall
 D. Duron Marshall
 Co-Chair
 Partner
 GCG Strategies

Paul K. Blake
 Paul Blake
 Co-Chair
 Fiscal Officer
 District of Columbia

Rodney Cole
 Rodney Cole
 Co-Chair
 President
 DTE Foundation

Frank D. Woods, Jr.
 Frank D. Woods, Jr.
 Co-Chair
 President Emeritus
 CBTU Region 7

KB Stallworth
 KB Stallworth
 Co-Chair
 Chairman
 Utility Services of America



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NAATL

National Conference of African American Thought Leaders

12th Annual State Action Council *Policy Meeting*

September 25, 2025
9:00am - 12:00pm



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Alphonso David
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Dr. Gary A. Puckrein
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Representative
Amos O'Neal**
Chairman
Michigan Legislative
Black Caucus



Dr. Sam Tita
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Nnamdi Chiekwu
CEO
The Namdex Group
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KB Stallworth
Chairman
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FROM DEPENDENCY TO INVESTMENT

Today, the African American community finds itself at a crossroad. It either continues to rely on “the ultimate goodwill of humanity” to prevail over the racism, bigotry and systemic bias that has resulted in 18% of its population relegated to poverty and earnings of less than \$15,000 annually.....where advocacy efforts have resulted in median household wealth that is one-tenth that of White households (\$24,520 vs. \$250,400); or it adds strategic tools to its quest for life quality that extend beyond “inclusion advocacy” to being “a Black Business Enterprise Investor and or Black Community Equity Investor.

Why? Because while improvements will not be immediate... commitment, intentionality and consistency will over time create a stable economic engine that “compounds interest on interest” which will ultimately produce unlimited life quality improvement outcomes without dependency on the virtuousness of government.

Every African American that has the capability must become intentional about creating or identifying vehicles to pool money based on their individual risk tolerance to invest in Black business, real estate, or community projects with the goal of generating wealth from both maximizing individual returns on investment and creating benefits for the community. Whether it is through organization of a Community Investment Trust, Structured Neighborhood Investment Fund or Family & Friends Investment Collaborative, the very survival of the African American as we know it is contingent upon successful implementation of an “Independent Growth Strategy”.

Why? Because as more and more Americans become comfortable with “plutocracy or oligarchy influence”, supply-side economics, high net worth wealth preservation policies, dismissiveness of “diversity as a core value for market dominance and global competitiveness”; and open penalization of “opportunity program advocates”; fewer and fewer African Americans will have the fortitude to oppose the “limited acceptance” lifestyle afforded to them based on profession, neighborhood and class. The struggle for just inclusion and recompense” will lose supporters, resources and urgency. The growing limited acceptance phenomenon is not merely “a Black thing”. White America is gradually surrendering and capitulating to the blatant disregard of the nation’s constitution, respect for checks and balances and separation of powers in government. Whether you agree or disagree with the direction of the country, what should be clear to every African American is that their “desire for full acceptance is not a priority for Democrats, Republicans, corporate America or the American people. Not necessarily because they are evil. They are just busy with “their” priorities. Republicans AND Democrats support reducing Black elected representation. Increasing “party ranks” for both is more important than protecting provisions for “Black voices”. This is not conjecture, it’s reality. So, now more than ever identifying and “knowing” who allies are is

critical to any winning strategy. Whether the voice is red, yellow, brown, black or white, if that voice can be used to create and protect paths to life quality and abundance for the African American, we must use it!

Every interest group wants our participation and support without making “the fundamental rights and benefits of Full Citizenship” for the African American a priority. The game we are playing now is not reciprocal. Because of a “profuse gratuitous loyalty” to a Democratic Party that states it believes race inequity is a critical threat to the nation yet fails time and again to “stand-up” for its resolution, Republicans prefer African American community resources be delivered in the form of disempowerment that focuses on “policing, incarceration supports, barriers to education and capital, homeownership, food security, affordable health care, transportation and employment.

Because of Republican aethophobia about the horrors of slavery, Jim Crow and acknowledgment that intentional and unintentional systemic racism exists, Democrats feel they are the only option for African Americans and want to pick who passes out money, has access to, manages, and distributes resources in the African American community so they can hold on to us.

Thus neither has shown real interest in propelling the African American towards improvements in life quality and away from economic dependency on government programs.

The African American must be the first to accept that America accepts the construct that places Blackness at the bottom of the social order. The country was built on promoting and defending this construct. We can get in our feelings about it and advocate for change, but at the end of the day unless we create “a new game” to disrupt this widely accepted and protected construct most Americans will support “SLOW progress or the status quo”. This won’t change until we do.

The African American must understand in the depths of his soul that the current social construct defies logic when ONLY dark skin existence was possible 50,000 years ago. He must become empowered by the admitted truth by a reluctant world science community that has conceded to the fact that the first homo sapiens originated in Africa and that lighter skins are mutations that occurred as the species moved out of Africa. He must develop pride in the fact that the first universities and use of science were in Africa; and most importantly, he must develop a confidence and reassurance in the power of his self-image given the knowledge that governments throughout the world have a history of fabricating, distorting, and suppressing historical information for political and economic purposes. The game is rigged.....and not in our favor!

While we may not like it, winning in this game for the African American means capitulating, submitting, yielding, giving in, conceding, throwing in the towel and merely getting all you can for yourself because you have accepted the reality that “all the rights and benefits of FULL citizenship or just recompense for the injustice of slavery and Jim Crow” are unattainable for the African American community as a group.

Now some reading this will exclaim “NO”.....we must fight until we win; and they are correct! But we can’t afford to fight the same way and achieve the same result. It’s time to stop ‘begging for social acceptance and economic crumbs” and begin investing more in our own social enclaves, expanding our business, commerce and trade borders to include new markets while America is trying to figure itself out. While we must believe “the reason of moderate conservatives, moderate liberals and everything in between will course correct our nation’s social dysfunction”; the conflicted values, declining membership and influence of labor unions leaves the African American as the moral voice for “moral and rational distributive wealth justice”.

Its time for the African American to turn all of its education, professional knowledge and skill toward participation in equity opportunities in Black Enterprises in America and in Africa. We are not advocating for the vacating of current careers and aspirations, merely expanding use of gained experience and accumulated capital. In America, there are literally tens of thousands of moderately successful Black businesses that could be more successful if

they had “a better back room” and were properly capitalized. Many cannot grow because of an inability to acquire lines of credit that will allow them to keep growing when their growth has outpaced receivable collection. For the African American professional that wants more earnings than a stock portfolio, 401k or 457 is producing, obtaining profit by financing a receivable or taking an equity position in the business in exchange for assisting in acquiring a line of credit may be the answer. Every African American with a 700+ FICO score should explore this personal and community wealth building strategy.

African American creation of this type of economic capacity and bandwidth within our community will create returns on investment that will re-shape education, employment, supplier relationships, distribution systems, housing, entertainment and culture. Allies and others should be welcomed and encouraged to play this game with us, but the important point is that “this game” must be designed for the African American to win.

We cannot expect the Merrill financial advisor at Bank of America or JP Morgan Financial Advisor at Chase to help us understand and access investments in Axsome Therapeutics or RLJ Lodging Trust in America, any more than Dangote Cement or Seplat Energy in Africa because it is not in their interest to do so. Whether we build that service capacity to financially support Black Financial Investment Services in Black Banks, create Investment Clubs that provide education and access to expert advice on Black publicly traded companies in America and access to registered and licensed investment brokers in Africa; the winning game for the African American is “self-investment”. Success assures less dependency on government, less hostility related to “white replacement conspiracies”, and positive “interest group focus” that will strengthen momentum for the chronicling and promotion of “true science and history”. Importantly, it will fuel the intellectual reshaping of America that is strengthened because of “community pride and investment” that no longer is diminished by a core value responsibility to pass wealth upwards to support the life quality needs of elderly parents and grandparents negatively affected by racism; but that now also places a priority on passing wealth down to children and grandchildren to build a compounding financial legacy.

America remains the strongest nation on the planet, which in spite of its flaws gives its citizens great pride and a sense of exceptionalism. With all of our nation’s challenges, regardless of class, if most Americans can see themselves as exceptional, the African American must get comfortable accepting and embracing “greatness”, as every inch of American progress in has been influenced by our hand and intellect in spite of historic oppression and current repression. While many citizens claim to support the principle that every individual in the United States should have an equal opportunity to achieve success, prosperity, and upward social mobility through hard work and determination; the African American embodies this principle. We believe in and are “the American Dream”. We are “America’s American” because no other population within this country has fought longer, harder or died for this principle than the African American. We must accept and lean into our history and greatness to once and for all solve “the issue of race” and challenge ourselves and America to pursue the tremendous opportunities that await our nation upon replacing exploitative and exclusionary practices with market development and investment practices. When we, as African Americans prioritize investment over dependency, we will change the world. We are a people of great faith, now is the time to place that faith in ourselves.

Each of our 2025 Vanguard Honorees represents the “Best in Black Excellence” as they have exceeded professional expectations while delivering exceptional life-quality community impacts. They represent not just value-added talent, but the future of an America willing to embrace its best and become better for it.

KB Stallworth

KB STALLWORTH

Founder, NAATL

Chairman, Utility Services of America

Since 2015 The State Action Council Has Honored Champions of African American Life Quality



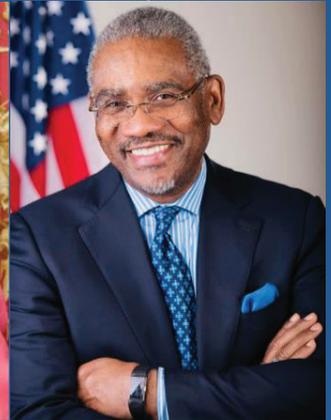
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Val Demmings
Florida



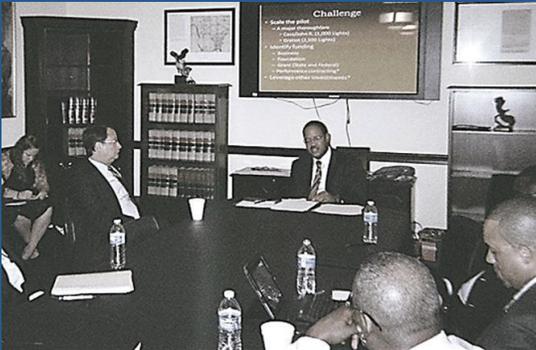
United States Representative
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Missouri



United States Representative
Elinor Homes Norton
District of Columbia



United States Representative
Gregory W. Meeks
New York



Micheal Strautmanis, White House Deputy Assistant for Strategic Engagement, Congressman Gary Peters and State Action Council Delegates (2013)



Jerry Abramson is White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Chairman Stallworth and State Action Council Delegates (2015)



United States Representative
John Dingel
Michigan



United States Representative
Bonnie Watson Coleman
New Jersey



United States Representative
Donna Edwards
Maryland



United States Representative
John Conyers
Michigan



THE BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN & THE LABORERS' AFRICAN AMERICAN CAUCUS cordially invites you to the

Michigan African American Thought Leaders

ANNUAL STATE ACTION COUNCIL Reception

Thursday September 21 2017 5PM - 7PM

2017 HONOREES



Annual White House Policy Meetings



United States Senator Gary Peters, Michigan



United States Representative Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick Florida



United States Representative Fredricka Wilson Florida



United States Senator Debbie Stabenow Michigan

Michigan State Representative Leslie Love

Tyrone Sanders, Jr. Partner, Public Affairs Associates



Michigan Lieutenant Garlin Gilchrist, II



Michigan United States Representative Brenda Lawrence

The Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan & Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Region 7 Michigan

Thursday September 21 2023 6PM - 8PM

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Conference of African American Thought Leaders

ANNUAL STATE ACTION COUNCIL RECEPTION

2023 HONOREES

His Excellency Henri Etoundi Essomba, Ambassador to the United States, Republic of Cameroon

Willard InterContinental Washington, D.C. 1401 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

National Conference of African American Thought Leaders

To support the work of the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan contact us at : (313) 285-9234 bcfadmin1@michiganblackcaucus.org www.NAATL.org www.michiganblackcaucus.org



Founding Board Members: Atty. Richard White, Jack Martin, Rep. Alma Stallworth, Don Davis, and Dr. Charles Tucker

Founded by the Honorable Alma G. Stallworth during her tenure in the Michigan Legislature while serving as Chair of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus; the Foundation was established as a 501-c3 tax exempt organization dedicated to the creation and delivery of service programs which improve the economic circumstances and quality of life for Michigan's African American citizenry.

The Foundation's creation evolved from a segment of social-economic and political history which continues to frame the advancement of Black America. At the base of this history was the understanding of a cross section of Black leaders that intellectual resources were needed to support research dedicated to the development and implementation of public policy initiatives critical to the well-being of Black people in America and around the globe.

Prior to 1983, when James J. Blanchard was elected Michigan Governor and Gary Owen was elected Speaker to the Michigan House of Representatives, the only African American staffers at the State Capitol were those working in the offices of Black legislators. During this time there were no African American policy analysts serving on the central policy staffs of the Michigan House or Senate; and with limited exception, only a meager number worked in State agencies, departments or in private sector governmental affairs capacities. Without policy perspectives developed specifically by African Americans; African American legislators, the legislature as a whole and the Executive Branch were limited in both policy perspective and resolution options regarding the challenges facing Michigan's African American community.

In 1984, Representative Stallworth, Senator David Holmes and Senator Jackie Vaughn, III with the assistance of KB Stallworth, a marketing & syndication executive for Scott & Fetzer Corp; and Steve Zimmerman, a senior partner in the law firm of Dykema Gossett; convened a meeting with a cross section of Michigan's most successful and respected African Americans to formulate plans for what was to be the newly formed Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan. Among them was Jack Martin, the principle of the most successful African American accounting firm in Michigan; and Dr Karl Gregory, an economist and professor who had successfully created two African American owned financial institutions; Dr. Charles Tucker, one of the nation's most successful sports agents and psychologists; Atty. Richard White, a principle from one of the nation's most respected African American law firms; and Don Davis, a renowned music producer and song writer who was also the principle shareholder of Michigan's only African American owned bank.



In 1985, these individuals, working in collaboration with the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, organized the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan's Legislative Internship Program to serve as a feeder system for African Americans interested in the pursuit of public policy related careers in state government. The program would also serve as a "front-line" research program charged with developing solutions to public policy inequities that affected the black communities of Michigan.

Revolutionary in its design, the internship program provided 12 academic credits to minority students recruited from Michigan State, Wayne State and the University of Michigan for one academic quarter of governmental affairs service, and/or submission of a policy paper (with collaboration of a Black legislator) detailing solutions to an issue adversely impacting African Americans. State policies regarding the use of minority contractors, goals of minority procurement, lottery contract expenditure distribution, auto insurance, public and private sector African American appointments, tax reversion, adolescent teen pregnancy, drug and smoking prevention are issues that have all been impacted by Foundation initiatives stimulated by the Intern Program Research.

Today, the Foundation's internship model has been replicated in university systems throughout the nation. Its success in the 1980's has opened the doors for governmental affairs occupations for African American professionals in the legislature, executive branch, fiscal agencies, state departments, and private sector. Now, more than twenty years later, the challenge continues for the Foundation to serve as a critical intellectual link between Michigan policy makers, business leaders, service organizations and the community. There remains a need to frame, refocus and remind decision makers of the critical need for "vertical integration" of African Americans throughout the public policy process to ensure fair and equitable treatment. Nothing exemplifies this need better than the current absence of a single African American in the Capitol Press Corps during a time when media coverage of black experiences and perspectives are essential to improved race relations and equitably addressing Michigan's social and economic woes.

The Foundation is dedicated to the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that effectively address issues such as these. Critical to these endeavors will be continued efforts to educate decision makers, both White and Black, to Michigan's African American political history and advocacy for the vertical integration of minorities into business and government operations for future generations to come.

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Andrew J. Monroe

Managing Attorney



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President & CEO
Minority Quality Forum



Honorable Amos O'Neal
Chair, Michigan Legislative Black Caucus
Michigan House of Representatives



Honorable Cory Booker
United States Senator



A. Gregory Eaton
Michigan's First African American
Multi-Client Lobbyist



Kishia L. Powell
CEO
WSSC Water



Dr. Sam Tila
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United States Senator

CORY BOOKER



The Honorable Cory Booker became the first African American to be elected to represent the state of New Jersey in the U.S. Senate in 2013.

On the evening of March 31, 2025, Senator Booker took to the floor of the Senate and invoking the memory of the iconic Congressman John Lewis, said he intended to make some “good trouble” in what he described as a “moral moment” for the country. For the next 25 hours, Senator Booker delivered a powerful, brilliant and eloquent oral protest of attacks on America’s constitutional federal republic system of government in what became the longest Senate speech in U.S. history.

The Rhodes Scholar and son of two IBM executives was educated at Stanford University and University of Oxford; and has Yale law degree. A man of extraordinary intellect and high moral character that may be leading a debate on the fairness of increasing taxes on the wealthy one minute and shoveling the snow from an elderly person’s driveway the next.

In this period of crisis, all Americans should take stock of a basic belief of the Senator that “while a man may be powerful, the people were more powerful”. It is that clarity and boldness that stands on fairness, equality and humanitarianism embodied by Senator Booker that we celebrate.

The desire to ban military-styled weapons whose manufacturers acknowledge are made to produce a high number of casualties quickly is not an attack on the right of the citizens to keep and bear arms; it is a reasonable approach to reducing the potential for, and number of victims of mass shootings. While some debate the merits of reducing gun proliferation, and others debate government infringement on any type of arms ownership, Senator Cory Booker debates “what is most likely to improve American life quality and safety.

The desire to provide every American with quality health care is not an attack on the health care industry. While some debate the commitment and quality of a non-profit vs. for-profit systems, Senator Booker debates whether large employers and the capital gains of Americans that earn over \$250,000 per year should contribute toward the provision of Medicare for all.

These examples of clear-thinking, critical analysis, complex problem-solving, systems comprehension and intellectual empathy are what makes Senator Cory Booker “an exemplary democratic representative”. His commitment to seek “a just balancing or recompense” for America’s “original sin”: the systemic dehumanization of Black people via a rational economic model is what makes him an exemplary 2025 Vanguard Award Honoree.

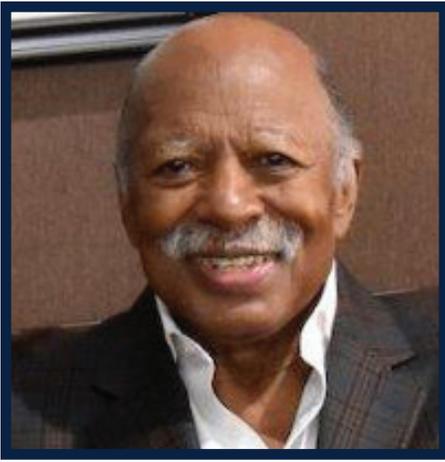
Just as the NAATL created a viable race neutral path for increased return on investment for federal department of transportation infrastructure project appropriations that had a net result of improving contract and labor opportunities for Black businesses and labor via successful “Best Value Procurement” practices; Senator Booker’s “Baby Bond Proposal” a solution to America’s race gap quandary.

By providing every child at birth with an interest-bearing savings account wherein children born unto wealthy parents receive a federal deposit of \$1,000 and children born unto less affluent parents will receive a deposit of \$2,000; a much-needed future generation jobs and income transition policy is created that could reduce the anticipated negative job loss impact associated with America’s AI future.

Annual deposits in a comparable ratio of a lesser amount based on fiscal practicality would be funded through age 16 thus achieving a vehicle for recompense that is fiscally responsible and does not require race specificity or acquired wealth distribution by American society. SMART POLICY approaches like these are what elevates a member of Congress from good to GREAT!

For his steadfast commitment to using his brilliance and his voice to form a more perfect Union for ALL Americans, we honor Senator Cory Booker as a 2025 Vanguard Honoree.





Lifetime Service Honoree

A. GREGORY EATON

Mr. Eaton's governmental affairs career began in 1965 as Executive Assistant & Legislative Council to the Michigan Automobile Dealers Association. He served with distinction in that capacity for 39 years. Although not central to his service at the Association, in his spare time Mr. Eaton was committed to the identification of paths by which persons traditionally denied opportunities could be granted access to the "American Dream". In no small part due to his advocacy efforts, support for inclusion, assistance and development was garnered for minorities to work in and own automobile dealerships. The year following "The Great Rebellion" was not only historical due to the untimely

death of Dr. Martin Luther, King, Jr; but in Michigan, it marked the start of a new era as Mr. Eaton became the first African American Government Affairs Representative and Partner in a multi-client lobbying firm and is one of only three individuals to have attended every single Super Bowl since its inception in 1967.

Always an entrepreneur, Mr. Eaton, founded a janitorial business in Lansing, Michigan in 1960 that he operated for twenty years. In 1970 he opened the Mustang Bar (later named the Garage Bar & Grill) which quickly became an unofficial "district office" for many members of Michigan's Legislative Black Caucus. In 1998, Mr. Eaton organized the largest executive transportation company in Michigan, Metro Cars, Inc; and in 2002, he became CEO of Continental Lighting LLC in Sterling Heights. In 2011 he opened Gregory's Soul Food Restaurant which he still operates today.

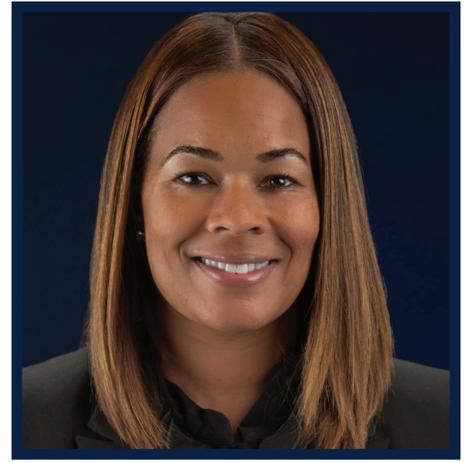
But most of us know Mr. Eaton because of the 36 years of exemplary service he has provided to the citizens of Michigan through his governmental affairs representation of public, private and non-profit stakeholders via Karoub Associates. But African American's working in governmental affairs, have a tremendous legacy to live up to and guide them in their career pursuits because of the lifetime of service of A. Gregory Eaton.

The State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders has chosen to recognize Mr. Eaton as its Lifetime Service Honoree because of his steadfast commitment to finding ways to represent public and private sector clients in a manner that produced desired results for them, while also assuring that minority, women and disadvantaged constituencies were protected, empowered or provided with new or meaningful participatory opportunities. To accomplish this year-end and year-out for more than a half century is nothing less than extraordinary considering the lack of importance such a balance had with many of his clients, and the modest level of influence persons of color, the poor, or women had in state governance over the course of his career. This accomplishment alone places A. Gregory Eaton in a "class" of his own. But what truly distinguishes Mr. Eaton as the "Godfather of Governmental Affairs" for the African American Community is his commitment to personally and professionally counsel, develop and support African Americans elected officials in general, and elected legislators in particular during and after their years of service regardless of whether they are, or were "critical players" in the process. Because of this commitment, Mr. Eaton is respected not only as a "good lobbyist", but also a "great friend" by every African American legislator elected during his career. Mr. Eaton has told many a member that "the legislative process is just like life. It's relationship driven. When people know you genuinely care about their success and are willing to help them find a way to succeed, they will reciprocate. If you use that philosophy with your colleagues, Democrat and Republican on the job; you'll also use it off the job in a gender, social and economically neutral manner with Blacks as well as Whites; and be not only successful in politics, but in life".

In an era of term increased partisanship, A. Gregory Eaton's words and deeds provide an elevated benchmark for service based on a "commitment to mutual and collaborative success" that we all should aspire to.

Meeting no strangers, Mr. Eaton's relationships span politics, business, entertainment and sport. He is strong contributor and supporter of such organizations as the NAACP, M.S.U. Beaumont Tower Society, M.S.U. President's Club, M.S.U. Honorary Varsity Club, United Negro College Fund, Country Club of Lansing, Renaissance Club, Detroit Athletic Club, Masons, Shiners', Eel's Place, Ronald McDonald House, Special Olympics, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, and the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan. He has also served on the Board of Directors of Old Kent Bank, Republic Bank and the Accident Fund of Michigan.

KENYETTA HAIRSTON-BRIDGES



Kenyetta Hairston-Bridges is a transformational leader whose career reflects bold vision, strategic innovation, and lasting impact in urban cities. With decades of experience, she brings deep expertise in urban place management, city building, public finance, real estate development, and coalition building—making her a driving force in shaping inclusive, vibrant, and resilient communities.

Since stepping into her role as President & CEO of the Tampa Downtown Partnership, Kenyetta has redefined the organization’s strategic direction. Her leadership has positioned the Partnership as a bold advocate for Tampa’s evolving downtown—energizing cross-sector collaboration and aligning the organization with the city’s momentum to serve as a catalyst for equitable urban transformation.

Prior to her work in Tampa, Kenyetta played a pivotal role in Detroit’s economic resurgence. Her ability to forge high-impact public-private partnerships and structure innovative financial incentives helped drive some of the city’s most ambitious redevelopment efforts. She was instrumental in advancing a groundbreaking health and innovation campus, a once in a generation automotive manufacturing facility, and a series of developments in the city’s sports and entertainment district—with a strong emphasis on affordable housing and community inclusion. Her influence also extended to the revitalization of Detroit’s historic train station into a modern mobility hub and the redevelopment of a key downtown district into a thriving mixed-use destination.

Hairston-Bridges’ career is defined by her ability to unite government agencies, corporate partners, nonprofits, and community stakeholders around shared goals and bold visions. Her contributions have earned her numerous accolades, including selection to Leadership Detroit, recognition as a Women of Excellence by the Michigan Chronicle, inclusion among Crain’s Detroit Business Notable Women in Real Estate, and a Women in Leadership honor from Corp Magazine. She is also a proud recipient of the Michigan Chronicle Vanguard Award for her work in economic development.

A proud native of Detroit, Kenyetta holds both bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Central Michigan University. She continues to serve on several boards, including Florida Downtowns, Inc., the Tampa Bay Regional Chamber, Visit Tampa Bay, and the Greater Detroit Foreign Trade Zone Board. Her commitment to civic engagement extends beyond her professional role—having spent over 20 years mentoring youth and empowering young girls through Detroit PAL.

Because she has chosen a career path that exemplifies leadership rooted in purpose, equity, and community impact, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders is proud to honor Kenyetta Hairston-Bridges with the 2025 Vanguard Award.





AALIYAH HAQQ

Aaliyah Haqq is Chief Operating Officer of The Academy for Advancing Excellence, New York-based global leadership development company that provides training, coaching, and consulting to foster equitable and inclusive workplace cultures. The company focuses on driving behavioral and institutional change to create work environments where all people are valued and have equal opportunity.

The Academy's services are built on the legacy of the Center for Workforce Excellence, which it acquired to offer disruptive solutions for enhancing company culture and business performance. It has a global reach and is a subsidiary of the Global Black Economic Forum.

Ms. Haqq's career has taken her from Health & Human Services to Commercial Real Estate., Executive Leadership Development. She is the former is Vice President at Dominus Commercial. Past Board Chair for The National Family Preservation Network. She has served on the Outreach Committee for the Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children in Dallas; and is a corporate athlete that corporate athlete, she plays soccer, practices yoga, and is a marathoner. Ms. Haqq has a degree in Community Health from Hofstra University, is a Licensed Texas Realtor and member of Commercial Real Estate Women and Conscious Capitalism.

The key services and initiatives Ms. Haqq oversees at The Academy for Advancing Excellence are:

Leadership development: The Academy designs leadership programs for various career stages, from foundational training for early-career employees to advanced programs for senior executives.

Inclusive leadership: It provides training on implementing inclusive practices and mitigating unconscious bias to improve team performance and employee engagement.

Organizational change: The Academy partners with businesses, governments, and non-profits to guide strategic changes that address complex workplace issues and build accountability.

Technology and platforms: The company uses technology to deliver its solutions, including developing apps like the E-Suite app to make leadership development more accessible.

The Academy's mission and purpose are:

- **Global mission:** The Academy aims to cultivate a global business community where every individual can authentically engage, be valued, and have equal opportunities to achieve transformational results.
- **Social justice:** Part of its mission involves providing strategic guidance to leaders on addressing social justice issues, especially those affecting marginalized groups.
- **Driving impact:** By focusing on culture-driven leadership, the Academy helps organizations increase employee engagement and innovation, ultimately leading to better business outcomes.



BENITA E. LEFFT

Benita E. Lefft serves as President and Chief Operating Officer of Optus Bank, a historic financial institution based in Columbia, South Carolina. Optus Bank is a federally designated Minority Depository Institution, a U.S. Treasury Certified Community Development Financial Institution, and an FDIC-insured bank. It is committed to Banking on Communities through Impact, Innovation, and Economic Empowerment.



In 2023, Benita Lefft made history as the first woman to be appointed President of the bank since its founding in 1921. In her dual role, she oversees the bank's Retail and Commercial Banking divisions, Deposit and Central Operations, Human Resources, and Marketing and Communications.

Prior to joining Optus Bank, Lefft had a distinguished 30-year career with Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., where she held several senior leadership roles across markets in Charlotte, NC; Columbia, SC; and Orangeburg, SC. Her responsibilities included serving as Senior Vice President and Head of the Middle Market Credit Services Division, Chief Operating Officer, Area City Executive, E-Marketplace Director, and Community Banking CRA Officer. Throughout her tenure, she led high-impact teams across the Southeast, Midwest, and India for both regional and global financial institutions.

A native of Orangeburg, South Carolina, Lefft holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in Political Science and Economics from the University of South Carolina, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Dayton in Ohio. Lefft is an active thought leader and speaker, having presented at Community Development Bankers Association (CDBA) Peer Forums on topics such as cash flow lending strategies and impact measurement for CDFIs. She is frequently invited to speak at universities and nonprofit organizations on issues related to small business development, financial inclusion, and women's empowerment.

Deeply committed to community service, Lefft serves on the board of the South Carolina Bankers Association as a Midlands representative, is a Life Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® and leads the Pearls of Service Community Foundation as its president. Benita E. Lefft is widely recognized for her operational excellence, visionary leadership, and dedication to creating equitable access to financial opportunity. She is married to Joseph R. Lefft; and they are parents to daughters, Gadson and Alexis, and continue to honor the life and legacy of their late son, Joseph Evan Lefft.

Because of her unwavering commitment to fostering wealth and financial independence in underserved minority and low-income populations communities by providing equitable access to financial resources, capital, and financial literacy programs that are moving the needle in closing the generational wealth gap; and ensuring that wealth-building opportunities are available to all people, regardless of their background or circumstances, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders salute and honor Benita Lefft with our 2025 Vanguard Award.





D. DURON MARSHALL

D. Duron Marshall has over 30 years of political, government and management experience including his current position as Managing Partner at GCG Strategies, LLC.

After attending Southeastern HS in Detroit as a standout football player, Mr. Marshall worked at the Chicago Board of Trades while also attending College. Soon he would find himself in the middle of the Indian Ocean proudly serving our Country on board the World's first nuclear aircraft carrier, USS Enterprise CVN-65. During the filming of the movie Top Gun and sequential battle operations, Mr. Marshall worked hard to successfully ensure aircraft readiness. His military time was also filled with additional professional education, after a service-connected injury took him off the military battlefield onto a new and exciting political landscape.

With a graduate's degree in political science and a surgically repaired ruptured Achilles tendon, Mr. Marshall found himself joining the United States post office in his continued federal service. Through his time in the post office, he would achieve such union titles as State Area Director, 1st MPWU State Legislative Director, Local Legislative Director and finally Local Union President. It was in his capacity as a Federal union President and weeks after the devastating 9/11 attack on our Country, that he made United States history by becoming the first Federal union President to successfully negotiate and sign a "Union Shop" provision covering federal employees.

Mr. Marshall has made his life mission to stand up for good business, the under-represented, representative politics and his country. He has held a number of influential service positions that require outstanding leadership skills including Congressional Chief of Staff, Congressional District Director, PAC Chair of the Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce, President of the Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan, APWU National Rank and File Committeeman, Board Member of United Way S.E. Michigan and Executive Board Member of the Metro AFL-CIO.

Having received over 60 awards, plaques and certifications from organizations such as the National Council Of Negro Women, State of Michigan, American Postal Worker Union, Michigan Postal Worker Union, United States House of Representatives and Wayne State University Labor Studies; Mr. Marshall continues to provide direct service in D.C by working with the following federal committees: Small Business, Federal Budgeting, Appropriations, Oversight and Governmental Reform, Bi-national Water Ways Security, Military academy's, transportation and Veterans.

For his dedication, years of service and continuing efforts on behalf of our nation and the African American Community, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders is proud present D. Duron Marchall with a 2025 Vanguard Award

MARC H. MORIAL

Marc H. Morial is one of a few national leaders that possesses “street smarts,” and “boardroom savvy” and is effectively using the experience to redefine the civil rights movement to include an “Empowerment Agenda” that addresses economic disparities between racial groups and between the rich and poor as President & CEO of the National Urban League.



Mr. Morial has made fighting for economic justice a central mission, publishing annual metric driven State of Black America reports that include an Equality Index to measure progress. In an effort to help address capital access challenges he created a fund that has invested nearly \$200 million into minority- and urban-impact businesses. To be a bedrock of inner-city stability Mr. Morial oversaw the development of the Urban League Empowerment Center in Harlem, New York; a \$242 million project that includes the organization’s new headquarters, a civil rights museum, affordable housing, and retail space. Because of a concern related to the challenges many inner city schools have in properly funding and resourcing college and career readiness supports, Mr. Morial has initiated Project Ready and the Urban Youth Empowerment Program.

A former President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Mr. Morial served as a Louisiana State Senator and as Mayor of New Orleans. A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, and the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Economics and African American Studies, he has been recognized as one of the 100 most influential Black Americans by Ebony Magazine, one of the top 50 Non-Profit Leaders by the Non-Profit Times, one of the 100 Most Influential Black Lawyers in America and he has also been inducted into the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame in Atlanta, GA.

For his unwavering leadership and leading voice on the national stage in the battle for jobs, education, housing, health, voting rights, equity, and entrepreneurship; the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders proudly presents Marc Morial with the 2015 Vanguard Award.



**National
Urban League**



DR. SIDONIE NIBA

Dr. Sidonie Niba is a pharmacist, entrepreneur, and community-builder whose journey from healthcare leadership to nonprofit innovation has been driven by one consistent mission: to create belonging, opportunity, and transformation for the African diaspora.

As the Founder and Board Chair of The African Think Tank (TATT), Dr. Niba has led one of the fastest-growing African diaspora organizations in the United States. In just 2.5 years, TATT has grown to over 3,000 members, empowered 250+ entrepreneurs and small businesses, and built a global volunteer network of 100+ leaders. From working with Governor Roy Cooper to establish North Carolina's first African Diaspora Heritage Month, to launching a chapter in Accra, Ghana, and building partnerships with Dallas Baptist University and

Johnson C. Smith University, she has shown what is possible when vision meets action.

The African Think Tank is a champion of forward-thinking solutions to the most pressing challenges facing the African diaspora. By harnessing technology, creativity, and the power of collaboration, it unlocks new opportunities for growth and progress. At the core of other work is the goal of empowering the members of the African diaspora to take charge of their own futures through professional development, entrepreneurship, and the pursuit of collaborative economic opportunities that offset systemic inequities that prevent members of the African diaspora from accumulating wealth and achieving economic security.

Beyond TATT, Dr. Niba also serves on the advisory board of the Healthy Tarrant County Collaborative, where she helps elevate the voices and experiences of underrepresented communities in shaping public policy, health, and civic leadership. Through TATT, Dr. Niba is laying the foundation for a global infrastructure of trust, unity, and empowerment—a movement where Africans everywhere can thrive, contribute, and lead. For her, TATT is not simply about serving today's community; it is about shaping tomorrow's narrative, ensuring that the diaspora's legacy is one of innovation, resilience, and shared prosperity.



**The
African
Think Tank**
Together, we thrive

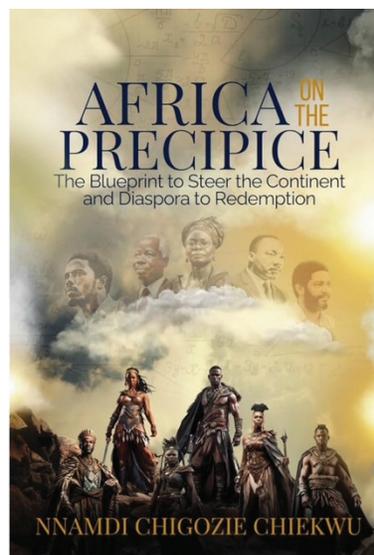
NNAMDI CHIEKWU

Nnamdi Chiekwu is an entrepreneur and founder of The Namdex Group Africa (NGA), a private holding company with business interests in energy, logistics, mining services, and agricultural sectors in West Africa. Mr. Chiekwu was a Co-Founder and partner at Namdex at Benjamin Jerold I, LLC (Member FINRA, NYSE, NYSE Arca, BATS & SIPC), a multi-service broker dealer, and one of the first firms on Wall Street to provide private placement fund raising services, exclusively to emerging African Private Equity fund managers. Prior to founding the Namdex Group, Mr. Chiekwu worked in corporate strategy and consulting for Fortune 100 companies and financial restructuring firms in the US. He attended Reinhardt University, where he received his bachelor's degree in general commerce and graduated with honors. He earned his MBA at Emory University's Goizueta Business School.



Mr. Chiekwu challenges the NAATL to accelerate its efforts to create “finance & skill collaborations” between African Americans and Afro-hegemonist Africans for the protection and life quality elevation of persons of African descent globally, the ultra-modern development of Africa, and importantly the salvation of humanity. He insists that while seeking expanded growth and influence within our realities to elevate the life quality of our people, ALL of our interdependent relationships in government, politics, business, the professions, education, entertainment and sport require an “intentionality in forward progress”. While our interests will not be monolithic, the values we live by and teach our children, families and allies should always be grounded in reverence of the fact that the first anatomically modern humans evolved in Africa and that lighter skin tones in European populations are a result of genetic mutations that occurred in African ancestors after they migrated out of Africa. These scientific facts coupled with a fear of inferiority to a seminal archetype created “a need” for a psychosocial explanation of what was inexplicable; and resulted in the creation of historical Eurocentric and Western-centric bias, false narratives, scientific racism, colonial-era historical misrepresentation and deliberate erasure, misrepresentation, and marginalization of African societies. A truth which must be shared repeatedly until all discomfort and fear is gone. Indeed, until context for today’s false reality is understood by the African world community and its allies, it is unreasonable to assume the vestiges of racial bias that are preventing the emergence of an enlightened societal reconstruct will be dismantled.

Just as Dr. DuBois has argued that until we harness the financial and intellectual power of the top 10 percent of the African American population—through classical education, writing, and direct involvement in social change—and or that of a “Guiding Hundredth” ; the societal construct which perpetuates a false and oppressive social order will not be destroyed , so too does Mr. Chiekwu challenge all people of African descent to vest themselves in commitment to creation of “a global state” committed to Afro-hegemonism out of self-interest to protect themselves, elevate Africa and rescue humanity.





KISHIA L. POWELL

Kishia L. Powell is General Manager & CEO of WSSC. A dynamic force in the global water sector with 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors across the U.S. and London, England. She leads a team of 1,680 strong and manages the day-to-day operations of the largest water utility in Maryland – the 8th largest in the country – and ensures water and water resource recovery services are safely provided to 1.9 million customers throughout a 1,000-square-mile service area.

Ms. Powell serves on the board of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies, (formerly as President), representing over 400 clean water agencies across the country. Mayor Brandon Scott appointed her to serve on the Baltimore Water Governance Task Force. She also serves on the Morgan State University School of Engineering Executive Council and the Montgomery County Chamber Board and was appointed to serve on the GSA Green Building Advisory Council. In May 2023, the Maryland Society of Professional Engineers honored her with the Industry Icon Award.

Before being selected to lead WSSC Water, Ms. Powell served as DC Water’s Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President, where she championed several initiatives, including a focus on operationalizing equity and environmental justice. She provided oversight for DC Water’s 10-year \$6.4 billion capital improvement program and led the implementation of workstreams under the utility’s strategic plan imperative for reliability. While at DC Water, Ms. Powell had the honor of testifying before both houses of Congress in support of water sector funding and the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act, known as the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law with historic federal water funding levels. In September 2023, she was invited to return to the Senate Environment and Public Work Committee to provide testimony on the BIL implementation and progress.

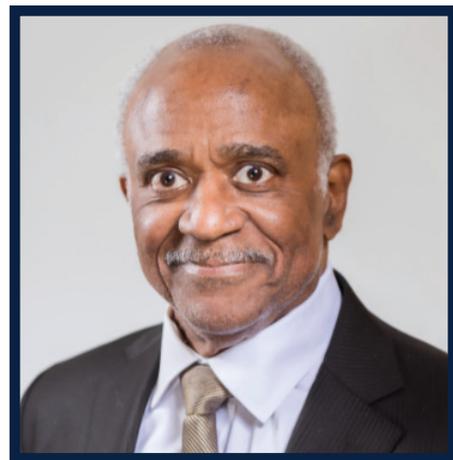
Before DC Water, Ms. Powell was the City of Atlanta’s Commissioner of Watershed Management, overseeing \$644 million in annual operating expenditures and a five-year capital improvement plan of \$1.26 billion. She previously served as the City of Jackson, Mississippi’s Public Works Director and Bureau Head of Water and Wastewater for the City of Baltimore, where she was recognized by the Chesapeake Water Environment Association as a Water Hero in 2010. A licensed Professional Engineer in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, she holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Morgan State University’s Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. School of Engineering.

Because of her success in blending global experience with local strategies to address climate resilience and equity road mapping with strategically sound and technically innovative solutions, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders is pleased to honor Kishia L. Powell with a 2025 Vanguard Award.



GARY A. PUCKERIN, PHD

Gary A. Puckrein, PhD, is President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Minority Quality Forum a not-for-profit organization that he founded in 1998. The Forum addresses the critical need for strengthening national and local efforts to use evidence-based, data-driven initiatives to guide programs to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness for racial and ethnic minorities and other special populations. The goal of the Forum is to strengthen the capacity of local communities to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness in minority populations through prevention, early detection, and control of disease complications. Dr. Puckrein also serves as the Executive Director of the Alliance of Minority Medical Associations (a collaborative effort of the Asian and Pacific Physicians' Association, the Association of American Indian Physicians, the Interamerican College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the National Medical Association), which was formed on the basis of evidence-based data that highlight significant disparities in health-care treatment plans and outcomes among many underserved populations within the United States. In April 2001, the National Minority Health Month Foundation launched National Minority Health Month in response to Healthy People 2010, the national health-promotion and disease-prevention initiative.



The National Minority Quality Forum in collaboration with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, developed a comprehensive database that links vital statistics and other elements—including demographic, environmental, claims, prescription, laboratory, hospital, and clinic data—in a centralized data warehouse, organized around zip codes. The Zip Code Analysis Project has enabled the Forum to develop a Health Assessment Tool which measures and forecasts health status in small geographic areas, evaluates the impact of specific interventions, monitors changes in health outcomes, and undertakes risk assessments (health-care utilization and its financial implications). The Forum uses the Health Assessment Tool to stratify communities by geographic and health-status referents and to provide the health-disparities movement with a common set of indicators to measure and report on progress toward the elimination of disparities in health care and health status.

In November of 2025, Dr. Puckrein and their team will focus their sights on Michigan and the launch of Cancer Stage Shifting Initiative in Flint, Michigan—a paradigm-shifting population health monitoring program that represents the inaugural deployment of proactive cancer surveillance in marginalized communities. For his commitment to advancing culturally competent cutting edge technoscience in disadvantaged communities to fill life threatening gaps in early detection and disease prevention in that will save thousands of lives in minority and disadvantaged communities, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders honor Dr. Gary A. Puckrein with a 2025 Vanguard Award.





THE HONORABLE AMOS O'NEAL

The Honorable Amos O'Neal is Chair of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus and Minority Vice Chair of the Michigan House of Representatives Appropriations Committee.

A relentless advocate for criminal justice reform and supporting Michigan's workforce from unions to trade workers; Representative O'Neal has advanced funding for improved prison systems, well-trained corrections officers, beneficial prisoner support resources and public policy that aligns career technical education and community college opportunities with workforce demands, craft skills and on-boarding within the trades.

Names Tri-County Building Trades Labor Person of the Year in 2022 and the Michigan Pipe Trades Legislator of the Year, Representative O'Neal was also awarded with a fellowship from Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development. Honored as the 2024 Sickie Cell Champion of the Year, Representative O'Neal has also been honored with Safe and Just Michigan with the Milliken Award for his work in advancing criminal justice reform. The 2024 Legislator of the Year honoree of the Michigan County Social Services Association, was also a 2024 County Advocate Honoree of the Michigan Association of Counties, 2024 Friend of Public Health Award honoree of the Michigan Association of Local Public Health and honored as Legislator of the Year Michigan Community Action, the Michigan Municipal League and Michigan Manufacturers Association.

Before entering his first term in the Michigan legislature in 2020, Representative O'Neal served on Saginaw, Michigan's City Council for thirteen years, including as Mayor Pro Tem. He also served on the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners for four years. During his time in local government, Representative O'Neal developed a reputation of going above and beyond expectations to in his service on various boards and committees throughout Saginaw County that would aid him and county organizations in improving their service to the public. These leadership roles included his Chairmanship of the Saginaw County Commission's Committee on Health and Human Services, his advocacy as Board Member of Michigan Works! and the Saginaw County HIVAIDS Task Force. The Boy Scouts has recognized his work with the Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award, and the Saginaw Chamber of Commerce has presented him with the President's Award.

For his tireless efforts to create a united political forum for Black elected officials to advocate for the specific needs and interests of African Americans and other marginalized communities, ensuring they have "a representative voice" in the legislative process speaks to systemic inequalities that promotes policies for equity and opportunity, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders presents Michigan State Representative Amos O'Neal with the 2025 Vanguard Award.

DJOUNDIE ‘JUDE’ ETOUNDI

Djoudie ‘Jude’ Etoundi is Business Development Manager for Enrich City Resort in Limbe, Cameroon and Principle of Emerging African Partners, an investment advisory firm that specializes in business solutions for developing and emerging markets, with an emphasis on African economies.

An Afropolitan from Cameroon with diverse international experience initially in SME development in Rwanda and Israel, and subsequently as an African economy investment consultant to local French governments, African sales and marketing consultant to BPI Group in Paris and Ford Europe in Germany. Mr. Etoundi has provided years specialized business counsel related to growing African operations that is grounded in an understanding of transnational identity that transcends national boundaries and embraces diverse, worldly, and often unique urban African business cultures.

Mr. Etoundi was educated in France at Sorbonne Paris North University and has a MBA from ISC Paris Business School and has participated in advancing the NAATL State Action Council InvestAfrika collaborations since 2022.



DR. SAM TITA

Dr. Sam Tita is the author of seven books. and CEO of the ENRICH™ family of companies headquartered in Ontario, Canada. The ENRICH™ brand includes business services, pre-engineered steel buildings, hotels and resorts, e-commerce, agriculture, and technology. Dr. Tita a motivational speaker and regular guest on Canadian Christian television appearing on notable major networks such as Yes TV, Daystar Canada, Afroglobal Television, and the Miracle Channel.

Enrich Building Solutions, a real estate investment company that also offers custom and pre-engineered steel buildings worldwide manufactured by Pioneer Steel Manufacturers Limited. Enrich Centre is a thriving hub for entrepreneurs in Greater Toronto that serves as a small business incubation center that provides entrepreneurs with access to a multi-disciplined community, flexible workspaces, and valuable membership benefits designed to fuel small business growth and success.

Black Equity Nexus is a comprehensive financial empowerment firm dedicated to the advancement of Black wealth creation, elevated lifestyles, property ownership, and social justice. The organizations mission is to equip Black individuals and businesses with the tools and resources needed to achieve economic power, build generational wealth, and foster positive change within their communities. Originally from Cameroon, Dr. Tita began focusing his attention in 2021 on building a Central Africa gateway to a contemporary, eco-conscious, affordable luxury, smart city resort comprised of luxury villas and condominiums in Limbe, Cameroon.

Because of his faith-based commitment to empowering wealth creation and business collaboration among African Canadians, African Americans and all persons of African descent; and channeling those efforts toward real estate development on land in Amba Bay which in 1858 served as colony for freed slaves; the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders honors Dr. Sam Tita with a 2025 Vanguard Award for his vision and contributions to development of an 5 star luxury condominium and water part resort economic repatriation project.





SEAN WERDLOW

Sean Werdlow is Senior Managing Director and Head of the mid-west and southeast regions for Siebert Williams Shank, a full-service investment banking firm offering debt and equity origination services to a wide range of Fortune 500 companies and debt underwriting for municipal clients nationally. Mr. Werdlow is responsible for the overall public finance business operations and the growth of the firm’s market share in the mid-west and southeast territories of the United States. Werdlow has led over \$14 billion of senior managed capital markets transactions and secured an additional \$12 billion in co-managed deals.

Previously, he was Chief Financial Officer for the City of Detroit. Serving in this role, he was the first finance professional in the history of city government to manage both Departments of Finance and Budget simultaneously. Mr. Werdlow led aggressive initiatives that resulted in \$250 million in annual expenditure reductions and over \$400 million of new and one-time revenue measures over a four-year period. Under his leadership, the city also received numerous credit rating upgrades reaching the “A” category for its general obligation rating. This resulted in millions of savings for taxpayers and ratepayers.

A proven finance professional and business leader who has led multiple entities through challenging financial and economic circumstances and growth phases to achieve strong results and create significant value for shareholders and constituents, Mr. Werdlow is often sought after in civic circles seeking to gain access to his experience and expertise. Among his Board service to numerous industry groups, civic organizations and non-profits are the Wayne State University Foundation and The Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan.

Because of his unwavering commitment to demonstrating the ability to BOTH lead in professional excellence and results driven service to his clients and actively support community initiatives focused on education, the arts, and empowering young people from underserved communities, the State Action Council of the National Council of African American Thought Leaders honors Sean Werdlow with a 2025 Vanguard Award.



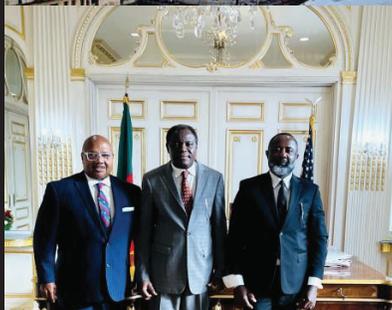
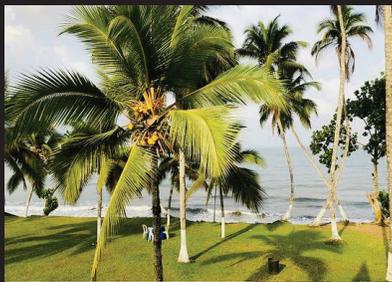
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Exciting Opportunities In Tourism fueled by beautiful beaches along nearly 250 miles of the Atlantic Ocean ready for resort development and seven national parks abounding in animal species that include elephants, lions, gorillas, chimpanzees, monkeys, buffalos, antelopes, giraffes, hippopotami providing great safaris and seasonal game hunting. Cameroon also has mountain ranges suitable for cyclists, hikers and climbers filled with beautiful and rare plant species, pods and hot springs.

Building A Sustainable Energy Infrastructure that advances hydroelectricity, electric distribution, water infrastructure and drinking water production are all forward-thinking investment opportunities. Participating in the supply chain to advance hydrocarbon production, oil drilling, refinery services and even investment in oil production sharing and concession contracts provide enormous profit potential while helping build Cameroon’s Energy sector.

There Are Great Investment & Profit Opportunities In Processing Resources, Fabricating Materials and Scaling To An Industrial Level, Small and Medium Size Business Enterprises in Cameroon

Amazing Food Crop Opportunities related to the creation of cereals, starchy food, roots tubers and vegetables. While major farm production includes plantain; cassava, Irish potato, sweet potato; tomatoes and onions, the availability of fertile land creates limitless opportunity for farm investments.

Industrializing Craft Products that include clothes, shoes, sandals, bags, belts, footstools, : statues, masks, beds, panels, leather work, wood & bronze sculpting. Processing Raffia and natural fibers into furniture, pictures, bags and more.

Evergreen Cash Crop Opportunities in cocoa, coffee and palm oil. Whether it is a farm investment in Arabica and Robusta coffee production, investment in a Palm oil grove for the production for the oil, cotton fiber, natural rubber production or investment in banana or tobacco cultivation, Cameroon is ripe for these farming and processing investments and many, many more.

Endless Forestry Product Opportunities exist because of the vast supply of quality woods such as iroko, akki, sapelli, mohabi, sipo, swetenia, movingui; complimented by strong reforestation efforts.

Expanding Communications & Information Technology infrastructure, applications, commercial and consumer use; from business processes to computer devices and broadband access; the opportunities are as enormous as they are exciting.

Participating in Advancing Road, Bridge, Tunnel, Air & Sea Port Infrastructure is by far the most complex financing investment opportunity, but one that provides the greatest ability to establish a strategic stake in Cameroon’s national development and global growth.

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