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FEMA NEEDED TO UPHOLD PROTECTIONS OF BLACK COMMUNITIES

The **NAACP** submitted comments in response to the **Federal Emergency Management Agency's** (**FEMA**) *Request for Information* (*RFI*) regarding the potential programmatic and organizational updates within the agency. The updates proposed could potentially have harmful impacts on Black communities impacted by disasters nationwide.

Abre' Conner, **NAACP** Director of Environmental and Climate Justice shared the following statement: *"Black communities are experiencing more severe and frequent disasters due to intentional decisions to increase fossil fuel use in frontline communities. Our branches and state conference leaders have highlighted what we need now: better coordination from **FEMA** and more resources to ensure communities have a chance at rebuilding and a more resilient future. Now is the time to increase transparency, communication, and mitigation efforts for disaster resiliency efforts."*

"Black communities are experiencing more severe and frequent disasters due to intentional decisions to increase fossil fuel use in frontline communities."

In the joint letter signed by the **NAACP** and **LDF**, the organizations call on **FEMA** to increase disaster assistance to renters; adequately replace affordable homes when disasters occur; ensure Black communities receive assistance and clear communication; and ensure that **FEMA** and recipients of federal disaster funds are following federal civil rights laws in implementing their disaster recovery programs.

Black people have long faced racial discrimination in federal disaster recovery programs. The **NAACP** has a longstanding interest in ensuring issues of community engagement and environmental justice center on the communities most impacted by disasters. The **NAACP** will continue investing in the development of disaster resilience frameworks to protect and support Black and low-income communities.

Black people have long faced racial discrimination in federal disaster recovery programs.



Photo Source: **NAACP.com**

The **NAACP** advocates, agitates, and litigates for the civil rights due to Black America. Our legacy is built on the foundation of grassroots activism by the biggest civil rights pioneers of the 20th century and is sustained by 21st century activists. From classrooms and courtrooms to city halls and Congress, our network of members across the country works to secure the social and political power that will end race-based discrimination. That work is rooted in racial equity, civic engagement, and supportive policies and institutions for all marginalized people. We are committed to a world without racism where Black people enjoy equitable opportunities in thriving communities.

The Legal Defense Fund – also referred to as the **NAACP-LDF** - was founded in 1940 as a part of the **NAACP**, but now operates as a completely separate entity.

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NEWS

SBA ANNOUNCES NEW GRANT FOR AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS

The **U.S. Small Business Administration** (**SBA**) has announced a new funding opportunity as part of its *Made in America Manufacturing Initiative*, the agency's targeted effort to restore the U.S industrial base, bring back American jobs, and promote our nation's economic dominance and national security.

The *Manufacturing in America Grant Initiative* will provide three eligible applicants up to $1.1 million total to deliver training and technical assistance to support small manufacturers in the **SBA's** *Empower to Grow* (*E2G*) *Program* – including those businesses in key industries such as timber, energy, aluminum, and steel. **SBA's** *E2G Program* is designed to provide eligible U.S. small businesses with free business courses, hands-on training, and one-on-one consulting to support their growth, operations, hiring, regulatory compliance, and government contracting competitiveness.

*"The **SBA** is investing in small manufacturers across the country – arming them with the training and tools to dominate critical industries and drive our industrial comeback,"* said **SBA** Administrator **Kelly Loeffler**. *"With this new grant, the agency will accelerate the return of American supply chains, production power, and economic independence. Under **President Trump's** leadership, we are rebuilding the backbone of American industry – and with it, the jobs and communities that are at the heart of our nation."*

To be eligible for this funding opportunity, an applicant must:

- Be a for-profit or not-for-profit entity (including, but not limited to small businesses, other-than small businesses, trade and professional associations, and educational institutions).
- Have been in existence continually for at least the past three years.
- Have experience providing technical assistance, tools, or training, etc. relating to small manufacturing businesses on a regional or national basis; and
- Demonstrate that it has the capacity to provide hands-on manufacturing-related training and technical assistance to small business concerns.

The deadline to submit proposals electronically via *https://www.grants.gov* is May 12, no later than 11:59 p.m. EDT. To learn more about this grant opportunity, visit here.

THURGOOD MARSHALL FUND *CONGRATULATES* HBCU'S

The **Carnegie Classifications of Higher Education** (Carnegie Classifications) and the **American Council on Education** (**ACE**) announced today its new Student Access and Earnings Classification which included eleven *HBCUs* earning its highest rating and being designated as Opportunity Colleges.

The new classification examines the extent to which institutions serve students using two measures: access and earnings. Access measures the level to which institutions are serving student populations that are reflective of the locations they serve and earnings is reflective of how much money graduates earn compared to peers in the job market. Schools which measure high on both the access and earning measures were deemed Opportunity Colleges.

TMCF member schools designated as Opportunity Colleges in the new classification include **Albany State University**, **Alcorn State University**, **Florida Agricultural** and **Mechanical University**, **Howard University**, **Tuskegee University**, **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** and **Winston Salem State University**. Other **HBCUs** recognized as Opportunity Colleges include **Hampton University**, **Morehouse College**, **Spelman College** and **Xavier University of Louisiana**.

*"Today's announcement from the **Carnegie Classifications on Higher Education** and **ACE** naming these eleven remarkable historically Black colleges and universities as Opportunity Colleges shines a light on what great work being done at our institutions who have served as a gateway to the middle class for more than 180 years,"* said **TMCF** President & CEO **Dr. Harry L. Williams** said. *"I also want to congratulate **ACE** and the **Carnegie Classifications** on creating this new classification as a way to examine the quality of higher education institutions in a more holistic way that focuses on real outcomes for students. **TMCF** was pleased to work with them as partners as they examined community feedback to develop the new measure."*

NAACP *CELEBRATES* VOTING RIGHTS VICTORY

The **NAACP** celebrates a federal court's decision in favor of the **Association's Alabama State Conference** members and plaintiffs, ruling that the state's congressional map must include two districts where Black voters have the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice for the remainder of the decade. After a two-year trial, the court has ruled that Alabama's 2023 congressional map not only violates Section 2 of the *Voting Rights Act* but was enacted by the Alabama Legislature with racially discriminatory intent.

The **NAACP** argued that Alabama's congressional map was diluting the voting strength of Black residents by *"packing"* a large number of Black voters into a single district while fragmenting other communities. In October 2023, the Supreme Court mandated that Alabama draw a new congressional map to include a second district with a Black majority, which resulted in the current map. This court-ordered map was used in the 2024 elections and resulted in Alabama electing two Black representatives to Congress for the first time in history.

NAACP President & CEO, **Derrick Johnson**, released the following statement celebrating the voting rights victory: *"Our democracy cannot and will not function without the Black vote, and this decision is a victory for Black America and our democracy. For over a century, the Black vote has been relentlessly suppressed, but our voices will not be silenced. Black voters in Alabama have reclaimed their rightful place in the democratic process, regaining the power to shape the future of our nation. The **NAACP** remains committed to our fight for equity in the voting rights process and the ability of Black Americans to elect leaders who will represent their interests."*

"The court's decision underscores a fundamental truth: voting rights legislation is a vital guardrail against racial discrimination in our electoral systems," added **Bernard Simelton**, President of the Alabama State Conference of the **NAACP**. *"This ruling is not just a legal victory, it's a message to states across the nation that the **NAACP** will fight against gerrymandering and voter suppression. We will continue to ensure that all Black voters have an equal voice in our democracy — because representation is power, and democracy cannot exist without it."*

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Photo Source: **NAACP.com**

BLACK WALL STREET **HISTORY MONTH 2025** *RECOGNIZED*

In a bold move to reclaim the narrative, honor the past, and ignite a new global economic awakening, **BlackWallStreet.org** is proud to announce the official establishment of May as *"Black Wall Street History Month"* around the world.

This historic declaration marks a significant turning point in preserving and elevating Black economic history, beginning with the iconic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma—commonly known as *"Black Wall Street."* More than just a remembrance of what was lost during the *1921 Tulsa Race Massacre*, the month-long global observance seeks to honor what was built: a thriving, self-sufficient Black community that stood as a beacon of possibility.

"This is not just about history. It's about legacy, justice, and the future," said **Ben Johnson**, Global Administrator of **BlackWallStreet.org**. *"We are globalizing the story of Black Wall Street—not just to remember what was destroyed, but to honor what was created, and to multiply that vision across the world."*

The movement to designate May as *Black Wall Street History Month* stems from decades of silenced suffering erased economic triumphs, and deliberate historical omission. For over a century, the story of Greenwood and other thriving Black communities has often been reduced to a footnote in U.S. history books—if mentioned at all. In 1921, 300-400 Black residents were killed, 15,000 were displaced, and more than 40 square blocks of wealth, innovation, and opportunity were destroyed in the worst act of white racist terrorism in American history. Yet, this tragedy has only recently entered mainstream awareness because of the leadership of **BlackWallStreet.org**.

"Black Wall Street was not an anomaly," said **Dr. Michael Carter, Sr.**, Founder and President of **Black Wall Street USA** and CEO of **BlackWallStreet.org**. *"It was a blueprint. A living, breathing testimony to what Black people can build when we are free to dream, own, and thrive. May is our declaration to the world that we remember—and that we are rebuilding."*

By anchoring the month of May—a period of reflection and renewal—as a time to educate, honor, and activate global communities, **BlackWallStreet.org** hopes to enshrine the achievements of Black Wall Streets worldwide as part of our collective cultural fabric.

What began in Greenwood is not isolated. From Durham's Black Wall Street in North Carolina, to Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia, to Africville in Canada, Brixton in the UK, and Soweto in South Africa—Black communities around the world have historically created, sustained, and defended enclaves of economic self-sufficiency and cultural excellence. *Black Wall Street History Month* is a call to elevate those stories and unify them under one global banner.

"When people walk down Greenwood Avenue today, they feel the echoes," said **Vincent Beasley**, Chief of Staff of the **Black Wall Street USA** Office of the President. *"The voices of shopkeepers, barbers, doctors, and teachers. Those voices were silenced by violence, but not erased. May gives us space to listen again—and to speak back with power."*



Through international partnerships, academic alliances, grassroots mobilization, and digital outreach, **BlackWallStreet.org** is building a month-long, multimedia campaign to include history tours, documentary screenings, curriculum distributions, digital archives, global panels, investment opportunities, and commemorative ceremonies across cities.

Each May will bring a renewed focus on different themes, starting with the 2025 inaugural theme: *"Rebuild the Vision."* Future years will center around generational wealth, education, political power, global diaspora unity, tech innovation, and healing justice. The month will also serve as a time for municipalities and national governments to reckon with their own roles in the systemic economic marginalization of Black communities, and to take measurable steps toward reparative justice.

"We're not asking for permission. We're making it plain," said **Johnson**. *"This is an act of cultural sovereignty. We are declaring Black Wall Street History Month, and we invite the world to join us—not just in memory, but in movement."*

The global launch of *Black Wall Street History Month* will be headquartered in Tulsa, with a slate of events planned in partnership with surviving families, cultural organizations, universities, and civic leaders. Kickoff ceremonies will include a symbolic candlelight vigil, a reopening of the **Historic Vernon AME Church**, the unveiling of the Global Wall Street Archive, an international youth summit, and a worldwide moment of silence streamed on May 31st. *"This is more than a tribute,"* said **Rick Reese**, Deputy Chief of Staff of US Domestic Affairs for B**lack Wall Street USA**. *"It's a resurrection. We are restoring dignity, visibility, and pride to people who were denied all three for generations. May is our monument, carved in time."*

From Tulsa to the world, **Black Wall Street History Month** is a living, breathing campaign of recognition and transformation. It seeks not only to preserve the past but to mobilize the present and empower the future. *"I live and breathe Tulsa, and I've walked past those plaques and memorials often,"* said **Raheemah Raheem**, State Director of **Black Wall Street Oklahoma**. *"But now, we're not just remembering. We're doing. We're building. We're teaching our kids that they come from greatness, not grief."*

"This month means our elders are seen, our children are taught, and our communities are mobilized," added **Ethel Cain Russell**, Deputy Chief of Staff of US States for **Black Wall Street USA** and founder of the **POP Movement**. *"Black Wall Street History Month is not just a moment. It's a movement. And it starts now."* Other events include the Black Wall Street Rally starting on May 15th through the 17th, when thousands of bikers and supporters arrive in the Greenwood district.

Additional programming throughout the month will spotlight youth-led entrepreneurial expos, international Black film showcases, virtual and in-person roundtable discussions with global Black business leaders, and interfaith remembrance services. These efforts are intended to bridge generational divides, unite diasporic communities, and foster environments where Black innovation is celebrated, funded, and protected.

Educational institutions are being encouraged to integrate *Black Wall Street* history into their spring curricula and participate in the *"31 Days of Black Wall Street"* educational challenge, which provides lesson plans, daily reflection prompts, and guest speakers from the descendants of Greenwood survivors and modern-day entrepreneurs.

"Our goal is nothing short of transformational," said **Dr. Carter**. *"We want May to be a classroom, a church, a boardroom, a street rally, and a healing space all at once. Because the legacy of Black Wall Street deserves more than acknowledgment—it deserves activation."*

Beyond Tulsa, **BlackWallStreet.org** has already engaged with leaders from Lagos, London, Johannesburg, and Kingston to establish local observances and collaborative economic forums, ensuring the month reflects both a shared history and a shared vision for the future.

As global attention turns toward Greenwood each May, the hope is that communities everywhere will take inventory of their own local heroes, builders, and lost legacies, using this momentum to fuel a broader economic renaissance rooted in dignity and self-determination. *"It's a global table now,"* said **Reese**. *"We're inviting people to bring their stories, their vision, their pain, and their brilliance. Black Wall Street is no longer just a place. It's a principle. It's a call to excellence."*

BlackWallStreet.org calls on educators, legislators, activists, artists, faith leaders, business owners, and everyday citizens across the globe to recognize and uplift May as *Black Wall Street History Month*. The time is now to connect the pain of our past to the power of our potential.



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH!

(Black PR Wire) Each May, **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH** serves as a vital reminder: mental health matters, and this year's theme, *"Turn Awareness into Action,"* challenges us to move beyond conversation and create real change. Awareness is important, but it's only the first step.



Turning that awareness into action could mean checking in on a friend who's been quiet lately, speaking openly about your own struggles, or advocating for better mental health resources in your community or workplace. It's about shifting from passive empathy to active support. Together, we can reduce stigma, encourage compassion, and build a world where mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health.

From anxiety and depression to burnout and chronic stress, mental health challenges are part of the human experience and should be properly addressed. We wouldn't ignore a physical injury, so why treat mental challenges any differently? This month, commit to small but meaningful steps: learn the signs of mental distress, share resources, support a loved one, or prioritize your own emotional health. If you're struggling, know that you're not alone, and help is available.

Together, we can reduce stigma, encourage compassion, and build a world where mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health. Awareness is powerful but, when we act, we create change. Let's make this month not just about understanding mental health—but about supporting it, by supporting each other.

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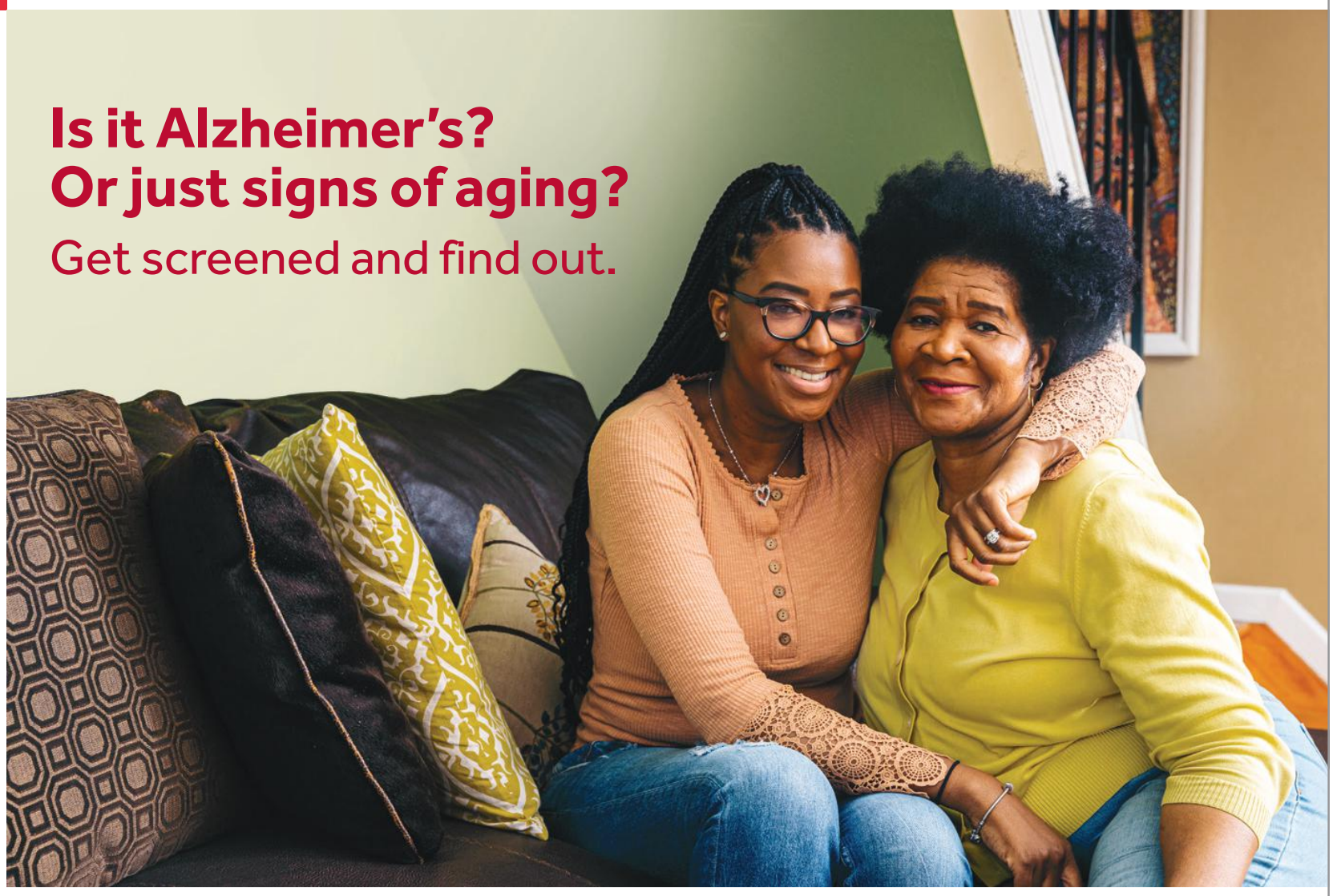
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Is it Alzheimer's?
Or just signs of aging?

Get screened and find out.

If you have trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating or making decisions that affect everyday life, the sooner you can find out what's going on, the better.

Early screening of your cognitive health allows for earlier detection and diagnosis of potential Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia. Early diagnosis means more time to plan for the future, express your preferences for care, adapt your home environment and seek support. We can help you learn about available resources.

Early diagnosis also provides opportunities to try new treatments. For those who are experiencing possible early cognitive decline, we offer the opportunity to participate in ongoing research studies/clinical trials that may help slow the progression of Alzheimer's symptoms. Our Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease — one of 10 centers in New York State — is funded in part by a grant from the New York State Department of Health.

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FISK JUBILEE SINGERS EXHIBIT TO OPEN

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC (**NMAAM**) will soon present **Jubilation! Ambassadors On A Sacred Journey,** an immersive 2,500-square-foot exhibition celebrating the profound legacy of the **Fisk Jubilee Singers**. This exhibition will debut at **NMAAM** on May 10, 2025, and will remain on display through the summer.

The exhibition illuminates the significant role the **Fisk Jubilee Singers®** played in shaping American music and defining Nashville as Music City. Their resilience, artistry, and unwavering dedication to preserving African American spirituals continue to inspire generations. This exhibit serves as a powerful tribute to their cultural impact, ensuring that their legacy resonates across time and continues to inspire change and unity.

Stacey Koju, Chair of the Board of Trustees of **NMAAM**, shared: *"The **Fisk Jubilee Singers** have played an undeniable role in shaping the cultural and musical landscape of America. We are honored to present this exhibit at NMAAM, allowing more people to connect with their extraordinary journey."*

Dr. Agenia Clark, President of **Fisk University**, expressed: *"The **Fisk Jubilee Singers** are a cornerstone of **Fisk University's** legacy, a legacy built on resilience, excellence, and a commitment to change. This exhibit not only honors their monumental contribution to music, but it also underscores the vital role that **Fisk** continues to play in shaping culture and empowering the next generation of changemakers. Their journey reminds us that music is not just an art form—it's a movement that drives progress and unity."*

The exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the history of the **Fisk Jubilee Singers**, beginning with their first performance in 1871, which helped raise critical funds for their school, **Fisk University**. Their music—a blend of African traditions and spirituals passed down through generations—would go on to influence the soundscape of

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC



America. Through their voices, the **Fisk Jubilee Singers** shared the stories of endurance, faith, and cultural pride, introducing the world to the powerful sounds of African American spirituals. The exhibit is designed to engage visitors with the history and emotional power of the **Fisk Jubilee Singers'** story. Through dynamic audio-visual displays, visitors will experience performances that reflect the conditions that gave rise to their iconic spirituals. The **Virtual Jubilee** section of the exhibit will feature historical recordings and a vibrant light display, immersing audiences in the singers' legacy. Visitors will also have the opportunity to explore Ambassador Panels, which provide personal stories of the original group members, and **The Prelude,** which introduces the annual *Jubilee Day* at **Fisk University**. The exhibit will also feature **Fast Forwards,** which connect thematic chapters through evocative images and phrases, and **The Coda,** where the exhibition culminates in a powerful section that brings their journey full circle.

This exhibit not only honors the **Fisk Jubilee Singers'** historic contributions but also emphasizes their lasting influence on American music and culture. It celebrates their work as pioneers who used music as a tool for resilience, empowerment, and social change.

NMAAM is the premier institution dedicated to preserving and celebrating the many music genres created, influenced, and inspired by African Americans. With expertly curated collections and interactive technology, the museum educates the world on the profound role African Americans have played in shaping the American soundtrack. **NMAAM** is a global destination for music lovers of all generations, inspiring, educating, and transforming the appreciation of American music. For more information, visit *http://www.nmaam.org*.

Fisk University is a highly ranked historically Black university, according to **U.S. News and World Report**, and is the oldest institution of higher learning in Nashville, Tennessee. **Fisk's** outstanding faculty and students continue to enhance the University's international reputation for academic excellence. **Fisk's** scholars continue to make strides in all areas of the industry from Social Justice to the sciences. A **Fisk** education prepares students to become beacons in servicing the community and well-rounded leaders and scholars in their respective fields. **Fisk** offers more than 20+ undergraduate and graduate programs in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Clinical Psychology with a bridge Masters to Ph.D. program through a partnership with **Vanderbilt University**. For more information, visit *Fisk.edu*.

BOOKS

DANCE MOM STAR *RELEASES* DEBUT BOOK

Triple threat **Nia Sioux** is finally telling her side of the story with her debut book, ***Bottom of the Pyramid: A Memoir of Persevering, Dancing for Myself, and Starring in My Own Life***, releasing on November 4, 2025, with **Harper Horizon**.

Young dancer **Nia Sioux** was only nine years old when she stepped into stardom as one of the original cast members of **Lifetime's** reality TV show ***Dance Moms***. **Nia** learned new choreography week after week and competed against dancers from across the country as well as at her own studio. Perhaps her greatest obstacle was suffering through her dance teacher's ranking of the girls against each other in her infamous pyramid, where **Nia** spent the majority of her time on the bottom—all in front of an audience of millions.

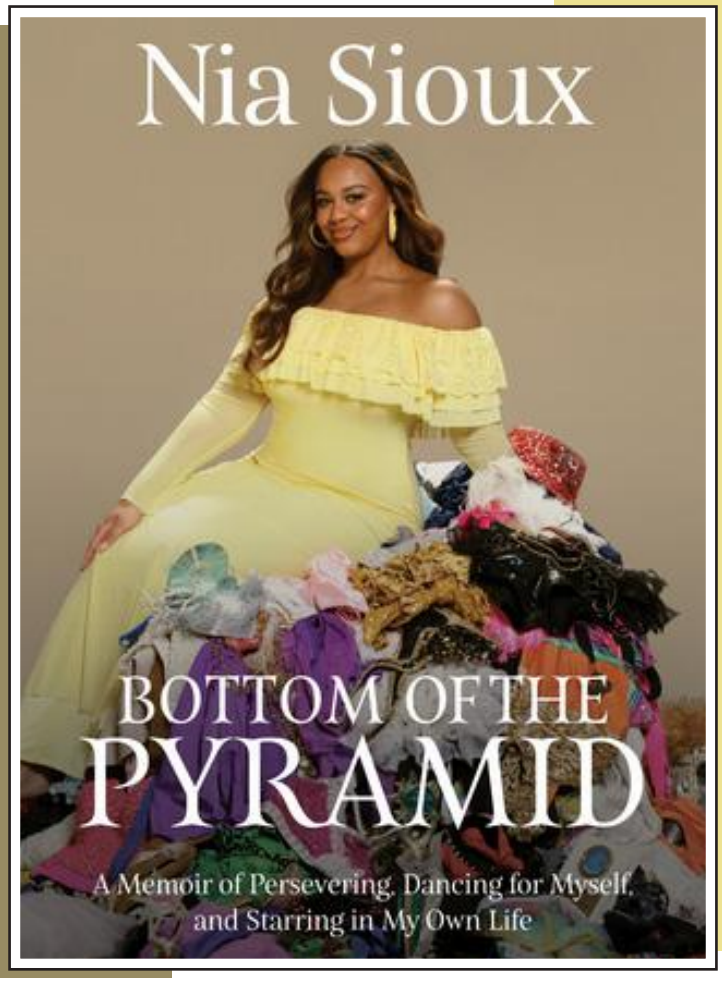
But there was much that viewers didn't see. How the challenges she experienced in the studio went far beyond what made it into the show. How she was ostracized for not fitting into an aesthetic that wasn't designed for girls like her. How her friendships and her mental health crumbled under the strain of the show. How she lost control of her story and her voice.

Don't be fooled—this is a story about resilience. **Nia** is not looking for pity, sympathy, or validation as she reflects on her experiences. Instead, she is choosing to use her story as a celebration of triumph. **Nia** finally gets to tell her story in her own way and in her own words. In this captivating memoir, **Nia** reclaims both the spotlight and her narrative.

"I have been silent for far too long and now it's time for me to use my voice to share my story – not for validation, affirmation or proof – but for me," said **Nia**. *"My voice and my story matter and it is a reminder that you matter too. There are many people who might find themselves at the "bottom of the pyramid" and I want them to know, you're seen and heard."*

In addition to going behind the scenes of the seven seasons of ***Dance Moms***, **Nia** shows how she fought against the negative perceptions that dominated her tween and teen years and emerged as a confident young woman secure in her talents and her direction. Anyone who has ever felt misunderstood, overlooked, or stuck at the bottom of the pyramid will be inspired by **Nia's** story of overcoming. *"Despite barriers and constant naysayers, assumptions and criticisms, only you know who you are inside and out,"* **Nia** says. *"And you have the power to create your own narrative, your own level of success."*

Nia Sioux is a dancer, singer, and actress who has performed on the small screen and in live performances, proving to be one of today's most popular triple threats. Known for her breakout role as an original cast member in **Lifetime's** hit series ***Dance Moms***, **Nia** has since starred as a series regular on The ***Bold and the Beautiful***. She has appeared in several movies, including ***Imperfect High***, and two of her own digital series, one of which she served as an executive producer for. She was featured in **Variety's** *Power of Young Hollywood 2023* list. A graduate of **UCLA** with a degree in American Literature and Culture, **Nia** continues to use her social media platforms to positively impact the lives of others. She highlights the accomplishments of inspiring others who have achieved extraordinary things in her Role Model Monday series. **Nia** is especially committed to encouraging voting, body positivity, and social justice.





CBCF LAUNCHES NEW LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIP FOR *SCIENCE*

The **Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.** (**CBCF**) is proud to announce the launch of the *Innovation Leader Scholarship*. This groundbreaking initiative aims to support the next generation of diverse leaders in engineering and computer science, empowering them to drive innovation and shape the future of technology.

The *Innovation Leader Scholarship* will provide financial assistance to five outstanding rising sophomore, junior, and senior students pursuing degrees in engineering or computer science. Recipients must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA and be enrolled at an ABET-accredited college of engineering that is part of the Advancing Minorities' Interest in Engineering (AMIE) network. Eligible institutions include:

- **Alabama A&M University**
- **Benedict College**
- **Central State University**
- **Florida A&M University**
- **Hampton University**
- **Howard University**
- **Jackson State University**
- **Morgan State University**
- **Norfolk State University**
- **North Carolina A&T University**
- **Prairie View A&M University**
- **Southern University A&M**
- **Tennessee State University**
- **Texas Southern University**
- **Tuskegee University**
- **University of Maryland Eastern Shore**
- **University of the District of Columbia**
- **Virginia State University**

This initiative reflects **CBCF's** commitment to expanding access to opportunities for underrepresented students in the STEM fields. By investing in the next generation of engineers and computer scientists, **CBCF** is fostering a pipeline of Black talent ready to lead and innovate in the technology industry. As a **CBCF**-led initiative, this scholarship program aims to advance equity in education and provide pathways to career success for students from historically Black colleges and universities (*HBCUs*) and minority-serving institutions (*MSIs*).

Applications for the Innovation Leader Scholarship opened on February 3, 2025, and recipients will be notified in May 2025.

NONPROFITS JOIN FOUNDATION'S SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACCELERATOR



Since 2019, 24 local nonprofit organizations have participated in the **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Social Enterprise Accelerator** (**SEA**), a 30-month process to strengthen their entrepreneurial capacity by launching or growing revenue generating ventures that are mission-aligned. Administered by the **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Nonprofit Support Program**, each organization developed and implemented business plans to boost revenue and heighten their mission impact, with the guidance of **No Margin, No Mission**, a national consulting firm that helps nonprofits become stronger and more vibrant through earned income, social enterprise, and entrepreneurial practices. To date, these 24 organizations have collectively generated more than $16 million in revenue from their social enterprise ventures.

Now, four additional nonprofits have been chosen to participate in the S**ocial Enterprise Accelerator 2025**. Each organization attended a series of learning labs and consultations with **No Margin, No Mission** over the fall and winter, after which they applied to join this group. Over the next two and a half years, the four organizations will learn from one another as they build and execute their business plans, raise start-up capital, and launch or grow their ventures.

One of the participants in the third round of the **SEA** was the **Stowe Center for Literary Activism**, an organization that is committed to amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities by fostering a deep connection between literature and social change. Drawing inspiration from **Harriet Beecher Stowe**, the center is dedicated to preserving her legacy while advocating for justice and equality through literature, education, and community engagement. By hosting programs, workshops, and events, the center empowers individuals to explore the intersection of literary works and social activism, creating a space where stories ignite conversations and inspire action.

Stowe on the Go, the Center's new social enterprise, brings literary activism directly to people, organizations, and communities through a unique set of offerings not available elsewhere. With a menu of facilitated experiences designed to help hone deep listening and constructive conversational skills that lead to better understanding of each other, **Stowe on the Go** uses a variety of museum collection items to ground each conversation in historical context and provide a springboard for discussion that helps lead to common ground. This approach not only helps participants practice skills for engaging in difficult conversations with open minds and respect for differences but also leads to more cohesive groups that better understand one another. The goal is for each person to say: *"I will think about what you just said."*

"Launching an entrepreneurial new venture and embracing a more business-minded approach has given us the opportunity to expand our work in a way that will help us support and extend our other programs," said **Karen Fisk**, Executive Director of the **Stowe Center for Literary Activism**. *"We are grateful for the **Hartford Foundation's** support, and our team is excited about the future of **Stowe on the Go**. This initiative is just the beginning, and we envision additional mission-driven enterprises that will further our efforts to promote justice, equality, and social change through literature, education, and community engagement."*

*"The **Social Enterprise Accelerator** has served as a platform for nonprofits to learn and raise unrestricted dollars necessary to become thriving, sustainable organizations with greater impact in our region,"* said **Hartford Foundation's** Associate Director of the Nonprofit Support Program **Meher Shulman**. *"The leadership, readiness, and culture demonstrated by this cohort will facilitate their efforts to strengthen their entrepreneurial capacity through this exciting 30-month process. Congratulations to these enterprising nonprofits."*

The **Hartford Foundation for Public Giving** is the community foundation for Hartford and 28 surrounding towns. Through partnerships, the Foundation seeks to strengthen communities in Greater Hartford by putting philanthropy in action to dismantle structural racism and achieve equity in social and economic mobility. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than $1 billion since its founding in 1925.

NBA ALL-STAR GETS LIFE-SAVING TRANSPLANT

It wasn't too long ago that we reported on an 11-year **NBA** vet and three-time Dunk Contest champion, **Nate Robinson**, who played for the **Knicks**, **Celtics** and **Bulls**, and his quest that he spent the last four years searching for a kidney. The all-star got real and even shared he'd only survive a *"week or two without a dialysis machine."*

In a July 2024 update, **Robinson** said he continued to face what many other Black Americans living with kidney failure struggle with—finding a donor within a difficult, complex healthcare system that often fails people of color.

"The Black people I know who go through this—[getting a kidney] is always harder for them," **Robinson** says. *"For some reason, they make it harder for us, bro. To get healthy, to get a kidney, to do anything. Our people go through tough times."*

In an interview with **Daily Mail's** sports vertical, he kept it brutally honest about what's next for him if he doesn't get a new kidney.

◢ HOW HIS LIFE-SAVING KIDNEY TRANSPLANT CAME ABOUT

But now there is good news to report.

A man named **Shane Cleveland**, from Bremerton, Washington, who lives with his wife, **Kara**, and their four daughters, heard the call from this decorated basketball player and stepped in as a donor. In February 2025, **Cleveland's** selfless act gave **Robinson** a new lease on life, bringing him back from the brink and putting him on the road to recovery.

Cleveland had been at a spring football game at the **University of Washington** with several of his kids when it was announced on the video board that **Robinson** was in need of a kidney, along with a QR code to provide information to help The Washington man jumped at the chance to help and had seen the impact that being a donor has with his wife, **Kara**, having donated previously, he explained in the video. **Cleveland** didn't actually meet **Robinson** until the day after the procedure, and **Kara** said that the ex-**Knicks** star had *"the most gracious speech"* for **Cleveland's** daughters, who expressed concern about their father being a donor before the surgery.

"They walked in and he's like, 'your dad saved my life. I've always wanted to be a grandpa, and I didn't grow up with a grandpa, you know what your dad did? He just gave me that gift. I get to be a grandpa someday. I'm going to be around to be a grandpa,'" **Kara** recalled. **Shane's** selfless act not only saved **Nate's** life, but also forged a deep bond between them. **Nate** described the transplant as a rescue, underscoring the profound impact of **Shane's** generosity and the lasting bond they **now** share. With renewed energy, **Robinson** is already looking ahead – to coaching, starting with his daughter's basketball team, and getting back in shape. *"I want to look better than my kids when I'm 40,"* he said with a laugh, showing the same grit that made him a fan favorite.

Robinson and **Cleveland** were reunited as part of the Playmaker video that was published recently, which included an emotional moment where **Cleveland** surprises **Robinson** and his family while being interviewed.

Robinson shared a touching video detailing how **Shane Cleveland's** kidney donation changed everything for him. A moving video captures the emotional moment when **Nate** hugs **Shane** and expresses his gratitude for the second chance at life.

"I got this guy right here to thank for [my kidney]. Some people don't get to meet their guardian angels. I got a brother in mine," **Robinson** said in the video regarding **Cleveland**. *"Mine is my brother, man. He helped me a lot, big time. I was struggling and he came through in the clutch."*

◢ KIDNEY FAILURE & AFRICAN AMERICANS

African Americans experience kidney failure at a rate three times higher than White Americans. This disparity is linked to higher rates of diabetes and hypertension, which are leading causes of kidney failure, along with other factors like genetics and socioeconomic influences.

Early Warning Signs of Kidney Problems:

➤ *Changes in Urination:* Noticeable changes in urination patterns, such as urinating more often, especially at night, or changes in urine color (like foamy or bloody urine), can be early indicators.

➤ *Swelling:* Swelling or puffiness in the legs, ankles, feet, hands, or face can occur as kidneys struggle to remove excess fluid and sodium from the body, according to Providence.

➤ *Persistent Fatigue:* Feeling unusually tired or weak, even after sufficient rest, can be a sign of waste buildup in the blood due to impaired kidney function.

➤ *High Blood Pressure:* Kidney disease can disrupt the body's ability to regulate blood pressure, leading to persistently elevated levels.

➤ *Itchy Skin:* The build-up of waste products in the blood can cause skin irritation and itching.

➤ *Difficulty Concentrating:* Kidney disease can affect mental clarity and concentration.

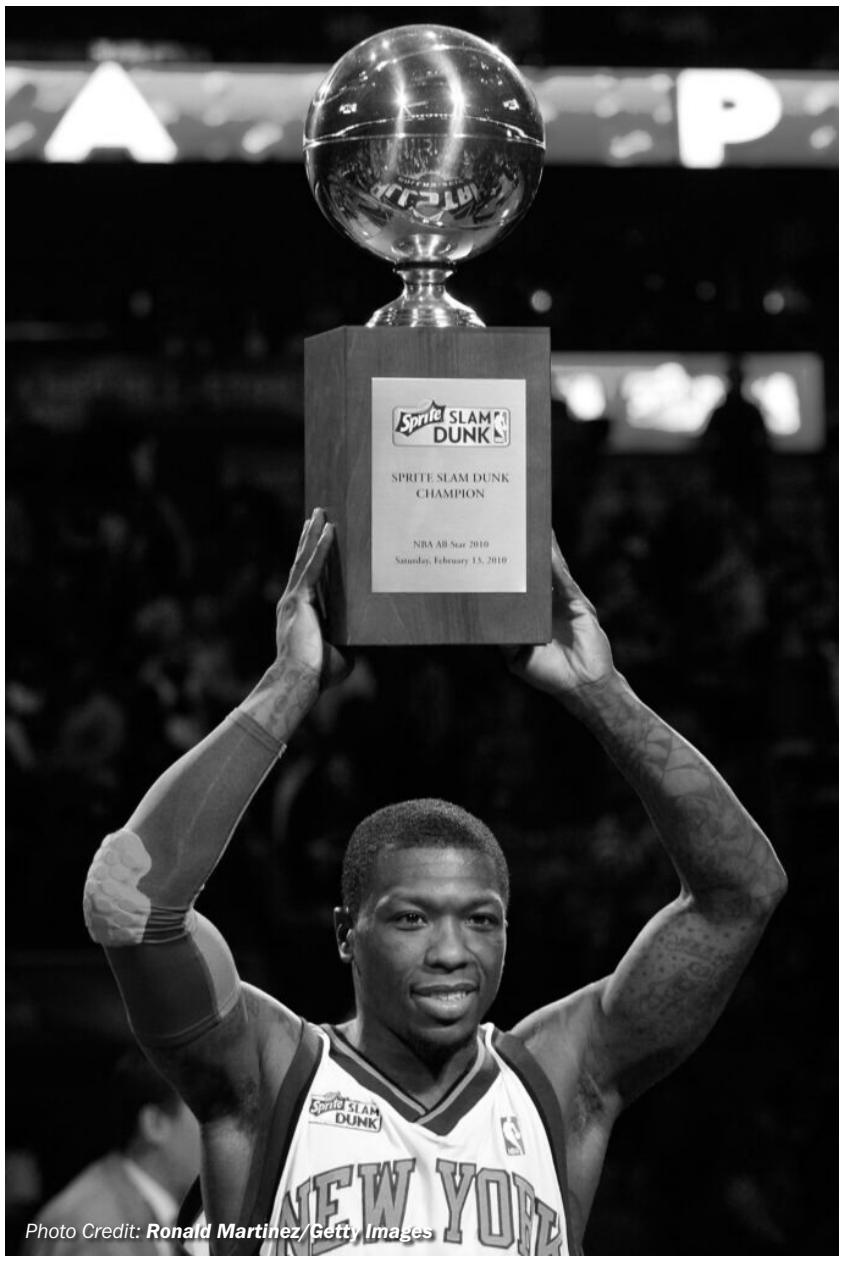


Photo Credit: **Ronald Martinez/Getty Images**

◢ A LESSON WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM ROBINSON

Robinson was diagnosed with kidney disease in 2006 and had said in the past that he had managed the illness by checking into hospitals for dehydration and vomiting at first. A *"bad"* case of COVID in 2020 led him to start dialysis treatment and in 2022, he acknowledged publicly that he had undergone treatment for renal kidney failure.

Robinson explained how his condition, diagnosed early in his **NBA** career, forced him to manage blood pressure closely just to stay on the court.

*"When I was in the **NBA**, my kidneys weren't failing yet, so I was still relatively healthy. I had to keep my blood pressure low so they would let me play. Before every game, I had to calm down for the tests so I could get cleared. It was a game before the game."*

But the fight was tough on **Robinson**.

"Dialysis is hard to explain. Your kidneys stop working, so the machine cleans your blood and puts it back in. You get stabbed with two needles three times a week for four hours each time. That was my life for four years.

The mental part was the hardest. There were times I wanted to give up, but I've never quit anything in my life. I had a support system—my mom, my grandma, friends. They sat with me during dialysis. Without them, I wouldn't have made it."

"God sent me an angel [referring to Cleveland]," **Robinson** said teary eyed. *"His name is **Shane Cleveland**—he gave me a healthy kidney. They told me and it was the best gift I ever received. I cried like a baby for three or four days."*

UNCF HOSTS STUDENT LEADERSHIP WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

Each year, the challenge grows for employers trying to find and hire the next generation of culturally diverse, talented leaders. At **UNCF**, we believe the solution isn't just who you hire, it's also how you prepare them. That's where the **Student Leadership Conference**, or **SLC**, comes in.

Now in its 16th year, the **UNCF Student Leadership Conference** is more than a professional development conference; it's a professional transformation. Each May, rising juniors and seniors from across the country, including students from historically Black colleges and universities (*HBCUs*), gather for a three-day impactful experience designed to empower, inspire and elevate.

➲ Why the UNCF Student Leadership Conference Matters More Than Ever?

Gen Z, the true digital natives, have been entering the workforce at a pivotal moment. Shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, this generation has navigated remote classrooms, virtual internships and evolving definitions of professionalism. While they are tech-savvy and socially conscious, many have missed out on key in-person growth moments. The **SLC** bridges that gap. It helps students move confidently from campus to career through workshops, real-time coaching and a one-of-a-kind business simulation that mirrors real-world work environments.

➲ Training Interns to Thrive from Day One

Students may enter the program as interns, but they leave ready to perform like professionals. From mastering hybrid and remote work tools like **Slack**, **Zoom**, **Google Workspace** and **Microsoft Teams**, to building a presence in digital and in-person environments, **SLC** prepares students to be seen as valuable assets from day one. Thanks to a unique partnership with **Macy's**, participants also receive professional headshots and are styled in workplace-ready looks. The **SLC** team truly believes showing up with confidence starts with feeling prepared.

➲ What Sets UNCF's SLC Apart

➞ **Student-Centered Design**: Every session is built with student input and feedback.
➞ **Career Readiness**: Students practice real-world skills, from workplace etiquette to executive decision-making.
➞ **Mentorship That Matters**: Industry leaders in business, technology, healthcare, nonprofit and more serve as mentors and coaches.
➞ **National Peer Network**: Participants gain access to an alumni network of high-performing, like-minded peers.

➲ Student Spotlight: Shaniaya Griffin



Photo Source: ***Black PR Wire***

Shaniaya Griffin, a finance major at **North Carolina A&T State University**, attended the **2024 Student Leadership Conference**. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, **Griffin** is the oldest sibling, cousin and grandchild in her family, and she will be the first to graduate from college. She first discovered **UNCF** while applying for scholarships in high school, and then through her internship. Reflecting on her experience, she said, *"**SLC** helped me with my overall communication and helped me understand exactly what I want to do when I get older."* After attending an *HBCU*, completing **SLC** and finishing her internship, she added, *"I'm able to express myself more. Even my parents said they've never heard me talk like this before. They said, 'You just sound so grown up.'"*

When asked if she would encourage her younger siblings and cousins to attend an *HBCU* and **SLC**, **Griffin** said, *"I do want them to attend an HBCU because it gives them confidence and lets them see people who look like them crossing these different paths."*

She also believes the conference prepared her for the unpredictability of life and work. *"It made me feel equipped and connected,"* she said, thanking **UNCF** and the **SLC** team for organizing a space that builds real-world skills and lifelong connections.

➲ Building the Future Workforce. One Student at a Time

In a world that's changing rapidly, preparation is everything. The **UNCF Student Leadership Conference** is where HBCU interns and diverse students become confident, capable professionals.

By investing in them now, **UNCF** isn't just shaping the workforce. **UNCF** is shaping the future of American leadership.



END NOTES

ADOBE CELEBRATES RETURN OF CINEMATIC SHORTS

The **NAACP**, in partnership with **Adobe**, is thrilled to announce the highly anticipated return of the **NAACP Cinematic Shorts Competition** and the launch of the **NAACP Creative Fellowship**. These programs reaffirm the **NAACP's** commitment to securing equitable opportunities in the entertainment industry and empowering emerging talented creatives. Through these initiatives, the **NAACP** and **Adobe** are ensuring that the next generation of storytellers have the resources, mentorship, and visibility needed to thrive.

The **NAACP Creative Fellowship** in partnership with **Adobe**, is a 14-week paid program designed to equip emerging post-production professionals with skills in video editing, motion graphics, sound design, and social media content creation. This elevated opportunity is open to individuals with some editing experience who are ready to launch their careers in post-production. After an extensive application process, four talented fellows will be selected to participate in industry mentorships, **Adobe** Creative Cloud training, hands-on work experience and exclusive networking opportunities.

*"Partnering with the **NAACP** on these groundbreaking initiatives reflects **Adobe's** unwavering commitment to empowering the next generation of creators. The C**reative Fellowship** and **Cinematic Shorts Competition** provide more than just access to tools — they open doors to mentorship, industry connections, and real-world experience. We're honored to support these talented storytellers as they shape the future of film and post-production."* said **Amy White**, Global Head of Corporate Social Responsibility & Social Impact Communications at **Adobe**.

The fellowship will kick off with a week-long retreat in Los Angeles from June 2nd - 6th, where fellows will receive state-of-the-art creative storytelling training from **Adobe** Trainer **Christine Steele** and engage in career-building experiences with top industry professionals.

*"The talent, passion, and innovation we saw reaffirmed the importance of providing access and mentorship in post-production and filmmaking. We're excited to once again partner with **Adobe** to continue this work, ensuring that these voices not only have a seat at the table but are empowered to shape the industry's future,"* said **Kyle Bowser**, Senior Vice President, **NAACP** Hollywood Bureau.

Taking place during the upcoming ***116th NAACP National Convention***, the **Cinematic Shorts Competition** returns with an even greater mission — to provide a platform for young filmmakers (ages 18-29) to showcase their storytelling skills and engage in hands-on production experiences.

Participants will be paired in teams of two, receive video equipment, and work under the guidance of a professional mentor to produce a 5-7-minute short film. During the convention, filmmakers will have 72 hours to conceptualize, shoot, and edit their films, working under the guidance of Program Executive Director, **Logan Coles**. Their final 5-7 minute short films — whether narrative, documentary, or avant-garde — will explore key **NAACP** focus issues such as Race & Justice, Health & Well-Being, Inclusive Economy, and Education Innovation. At the conclusion of the ***116th Convention***, these completed films will be screened for attendees, who will cast their votes for the most compelling piece.

The winning filmmakers will each receive a $10K grant to produce a short film in collaboration with the **NAACP** Hollywood Bureau and **NAACP+ Studios**, an expense-paid trip to Los Angeles to attend the ***57th NAACP Image Awards*** and surrounding events, and exclusive one-on-one meetings with high-level industry executives to support their career advancement.

The **NAACP** advocates, agitates, and litigates for the civil rights due to Black America. Our legacy is built on the foundation of grassroots activism by the biggest civil rights pioneers of the 20th century and is sustained by 21st century activists. From classrooms and courtrooms to city halls and Congress, our network of members across the country works to secure the social and political power that will end race-based discrimination. That work is rooted in racial equity, civic engagement, and supportive policies and institutions for all marginalized people. We are committed to a world without racism where Black people enjoy equitable opportunities in thriving communities.

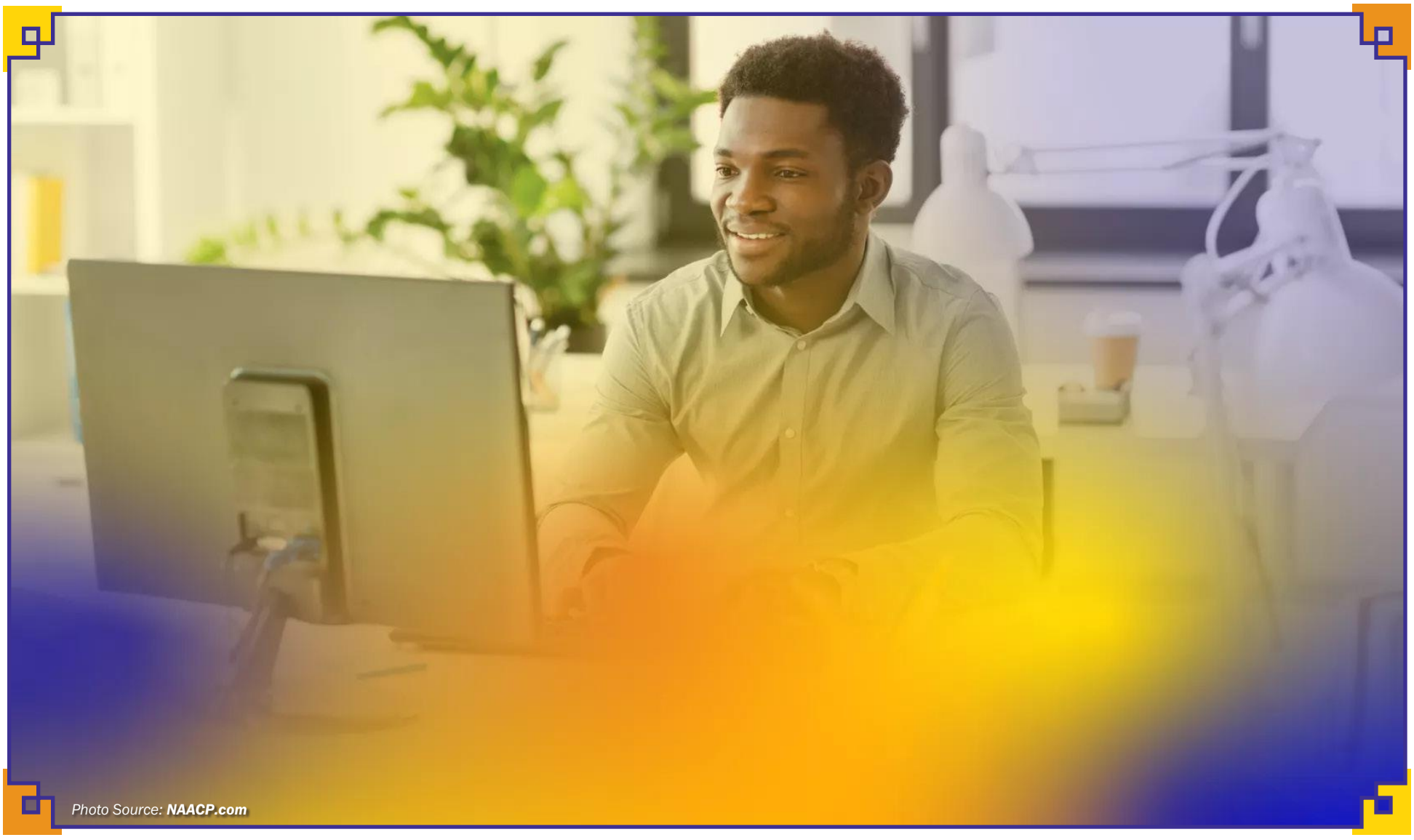


*Photo Source: **NAACP.com***

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