



2026

*Trailblazer*  
Awards Banquet

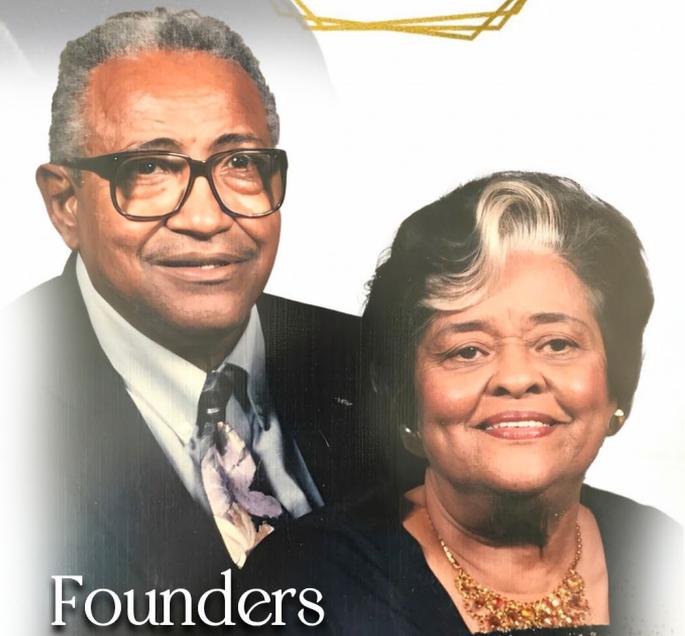
Honoring our Central Valley African American Leaders

February 27th, 2026

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

*Clovis Veterans Memorial*

*Clovis, CA 93612*



Founders  
Jack & Rosa Kelley

# THE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN *American and Cultural Museum*

During the early years of Fresno County's development, many Black families moved west to California, settling in the San Joaquin Valley. Among those families were farmers, sharecroppers, musicians, teachers, land owners, preachers, business owners, and professionals. Although many were educated, most were average working-class folks working two or more jobs to make ends meet. In other words, African Americans have a long and storied history of contributions to the San Joaquin Valley's development, specifically Fresno County. Unfortunately, for decades the history of African Americans went untold, even within the African American community. It was in the early 1980s that the history and the contributions of African Americans to the development of this community were first told.

In 1983 as a part of Fresno's One Hundred Year Centennial Celebration, the foundation for what would later become known as the African American Museum was first established. As a part of that Centennial Celebration, the pictorial presentation of African American history in Fresno was exhibited. The presentation was intended to demonstrate the contributions made by early African American settlers toward the growth, development, prosperity and cultural richness of Fresno County. The exhibition was so well received that those who had assembled the presentation continued to develop and show the exhibit whenever requested.

In 1988, the African American Historical Exhibit moved into its first permanent exhibit hall. The space was the Old Administration Building at Fresno City College which State Center Community College District donated. The Museum remained in that location until the building was condemned in 1989. In 1989, the Museum was incorporated as the African American Historical and Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley. Shortly after, the Museum moved into the building located at 1700 Tuolumne, where it remained until 1991, when the Museum relocated around the corner to 1400 Fullon Street.

During the preceding years, the Museum Board had worked diligently to find a permanent home for the Museum. In June 1993, the Museum moved into its newly purchased and renovated home at 1857 Fulton Street. The moves were made possible through the efforts of the City of Fresno, the County of Fresno, and the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

Since completing the Museum rehabilitation, the facility has been used for various artistic, cultural, and historical presentations. In addition, the building has served as a community center for numerous community groups and organizations. In addition, the African American Museum has hosted community forums, meetings, workshops, and recreational activities.



## *Board Chair Welcome*



As Board Chair, it is my great honor to gather with you tonight to celebrate the trailblazers among us, individuals whose vision, courage, and commitment have opened doors and created pathways where none existed before.

Trailblazers do more than achieve personal success. They challenge assumptions, uplift communities, and inspire the next generation to believe that progress is possible. Their leadership reminds us that meaningful change is built through persistence, collaboration, and a willingness to stand for something larger than ourselves.

Tonight, we recognize those who have turned obstacles into opportunities, who have led with integrity, and who continue to light the way forward. Their stories are not just moments of recognition; they are a call to action for all of us to lead boldly, serve generously, and imagine what more we can accomplish together.

On behalf of the Board, thank you for being part of this celebration. Thank you for supporting the work that makes progress real. And most importantly, thank you to our honorees for showing us what is possible.

Welcome, and enjoy the evening.

***Ms. Lynnette Brown, M.B.A., M.Ed./AET***



## Guest Hosts



**Anthony Bailey** is an award-winning journalist marking 20 years in broadcast television, including the past 11 as Morning Weather Anchor for CBS47 Eyewitness News.

During that time, he has covered a range of weather events, wildfires, and heat waves here in California. Before returning to California, he made stops in Michigan and Ohio.

He has provided steady, reliable coverage during some of the most challenging weather events, earning the trust of viewers across every community he has served.



**Sydney A. Charles** is a News Anchor at KSEE24 News.

Originally from Los Angeles, her reporting and anchoring career has taken her across California and the Pacific Northwest.

She loves telling the stories of the voiceless and underrepresented groups in the valley, something she highlights in a digital segment for Nexstar Media Group.

She's also very passionate about community service, and a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Charles holds a Master of Science in Journalism from USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and a Bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of California, Irvine.

# *17th Annual Trailblazers Awards Banquet*

*Welcome, Special Thanks, and Introductions*  
Ms. Lynnette Brown, Board Chair

*Invocation & Singing of the Black National Anthem* - Pastor BT Lewis

*Welcome, Guest Hosts* - Sydney Charles & Anthony Bailey, KSEE24 & CBS47

*Opening Performance - Ballroom Waltz*  
featuring Iota Phi Lambda Debutants & Escorts

*Special Honor* - Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.  
Chancellor Carol Goldsmith - Partnership Legacy  
of the AAHCM & SCCC

## *Introduction of the 2026 Trailblazers*

Honorable Lori Wilson  
Danay Ferguson, Rising Star Award  
Dr. Derrick Johnson, Rosa Conley-Kelley Excellence in Education Award  
Marcell Woodruff, Jesse E. McDonald Excellence in Community Service Award  
Rizpah Bellard  
Taylor Kimber  
Dr. F. Niddi Griffen-Meyers  
Yolanda Randels, MPH  
Myrick Wilson  
Michael White

## *Posthumously Honored*

Alfonso Ward (1939 - 2025), Jack Kelley Award of Valor for Distinguished Service  
Pastor Eddie Mandella Daniels (1908 - 1987), Fellowship Baptist Church

Have a Great Evening!  
Thanks for your support!



## *Our Board Members*

### *Board Chair - Ms. Lynnette Brown*



Ms. Lynnette Brown is the only child of Leroy Hamilton Brown (rest in heaven) and Carolyn Brown. She proudly represents the Brown's family and showcases the love and commitment they have for the community of Fresno. Lynnette has a passion for mentoring students while stressing the importance of education, life skills, setting future college & career goals, and supporting victims of Domestic Violence.

In 2008, Lynnette started her career in education at California State University, Fresno. There she was an Administrative Support Coordinator II, Department Manager, President of Black Faculty & Staff Association, first African American Chapter 309 President of CSU Employees Union, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Designee, advisor for Black Students United, and several other committees throughout her tenure until 2021. She then transitioned her employment to Fresno Unified School District (FUSD).

Lynnette is currently a Project Manager with FUSD, Department of Parent University. She is currently leading one of FUSD Goals and Guardrails Initiative, College & Career Family Engagement; supporting families with resources guiding their students to both college and career after high school. Lynnette recently led a grant funded project from PG&E Corporation called "Step Toward Success" which provided tennis shoes to 480 FUSD Underserved students throughout 22 elementary schools. She has shared that leading this project was more than just ordering tennis shoes for students. It was knowing that students will have comfort as they walk to school, comfort knowing they won't be teased about holes in their shoes, comfort knowing they have name brand shoes and fit in with others.

Ms. Brown is the current Chairwoman of the African American Historical and Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley, member of The National Society of Leadership & Success, Interim Chair of FUSD African American Networking Group, member of Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), FUSD Community Schools Steering Committee and member of The Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce.

Lynnette is a mother of three; LaBronze, David Jr., and Priyah; G-Mama of 5; Ezekiel David, Julian King, Kyree D'Wayne Hamilton, Isaiah James, and Noah Riley (expected arrival Juneteenth). Lynnette holds a Bachelors in Business Administration, Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Higher Education Administration Leadership/Adult Education & Training, and a certificate in Project Management.



## *Our Board Members*

### *Board Treasurer: Sabrina Kelley MPH*



Sabrina Kelley, MPH, is a fundraising and marketing consultant serving nonprofits in the Central Valley and Northern California. She is an advocacy strategist and community relations expert with more than a decade of experience in strategic partnership development, philanthropy, asset-based community development, and communications, and she brings this experience to her role as treasurer of the board of directors at the African American Historical and Cultural Museum.

Currently, she serves on the board of directors of the Southwest Fresno Development Corporation and has served the city of Fresno under three mayoral appointments: Board of Commissioners for the Fresno Housing Authority, the City of Fresno's Transformative Climate Communities Operations and Oversight Committee, and Mayor Dyers' One Fresno Advisory Committee, which focuses on building diversity, equity, and inclusion in the City.

Sabrina is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Leaders Fellow and an alumna of California State University, Fresno, and holds a Master of Public Health, a B.A. in Journalism, and a B.A. in English Arts and Letters.

### *Board Member - Anthony Bailey*



Beyond the newsroom, Anthony is a dedicated entrepreneur and advocate for digital equity. He leads Bailey Ave Inc., a technology services firm providing website development, IT support, and live stream, sound, and video system design for small businesses and Houses of Worship. He is also the CEO of B3 Broadband, a new internet service provider focused on expanding high-quality connectivity in underserved communities throughout California's Central Valley.

In 2020, Anthony and his wife, Erica, founded Bridge Forward Technology, a nonprofit committed to closing the technology gap by increasing access to digital tools, training, and broadband resources.

Anthony currently serves as President of the Bakersfield (CA) Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and is a proud member of the National Weather Association.



## *Our Board Members*

### *Board Member, Dr. Lataria Hall*



Dr. Lataria Hall is a first-generation scholar/practitioner from the Central Valley with over 20 years as a professional in higher education. Dr. Hall currently serves as the Interim Vice Chancellor of Educational Services & Institutional Effectiveness at the West Hills Community College District.

Dr. Hall holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Social Work and a Master of Science (MS) in Rehabilitation from California State University, Fresno.

She completed her post graduate work at Northcentral University, where she earned a Doctorate degree in Education.

### *Board Member, Dr. Carolyn Drake*



Carol Drake was born in Orville, Ohio. She received her nursing diploma from Idabelle Firestone Nursing School in Akron, Ohio. She received her BSN and MSN from CSUF and her doctorate of Organizational Leadership from USC. In California she has worked at UMC as Med. Surg nurse, a Public Health Nurse for the County of Fresno and a nursing instructor and Nursing Director /Dean of Health Sciences at Fresno City College.

In her position as Nursing Director/ Dean of Health Sciences she and her colleague Pilar DeLa Cruz created the Paradigm Program, a contract program with the area hospital to allow qualified hospital employees to enter the nursing program. This helped Fresno City College to be the largest nursing program west of the Mississippi.

She recognized a need to increase more underrepresented students into the program and she along with other concerned Registered Nurses formed the Central Valley Black Nurses Association (CVBNA). She was also one of the Charter Members of Delta Sigma Theta Inc a community service organization. Dr Drake has received many accolades and awards over the years. She received the Rosa Park Award from CSUF, Top Ten Professional Women, Nurse of the year in Nursing Administration, Wall of Honor from State Center Community College District SCCC, as well as Wall of Honor in Nursing from CSUF, and Trailblazer Award from the African American Museum. In 2024 she was selected by BWOPA as the "Ella Hill Hutch Honoree" for community service. In 2025 she received the "Daisy Award" for extraordinary Nurse Educators from the Association of California Nurse Leaders.

Although retired she is active in community organizations. She currently is the Director of the Phlebotomy program at The AGape College of Business and Science. She is president of Health Education Association, a health education consulting group.



*Congratulations to  
our Honorees!*



*Special Honor*

## Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.

Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc is a National Business and Professional organization established June 1, 1929 in Chicago, IL. We focus on financial literacy, entrepreneurship, leadership development, education and civic and social services. Our National Programs American Education Week, Black History Month, Business, Career Exploration and Scholarships. We have chapters across the United States and the Virgin Islands.

The Gamma Eta Chapter was established in Fresno, California on July 21, 1956. Gamma Eta Chapter is about community service and making positive change in the community by collaborating and taking initiative with other diverse groups. Providing young ladies with opportunity to enhance personal, civic and leadership development through structured educational workshops. Providing young ladies with the opportunity to receive scholarships to get a higher level of education or Professional Technical training. Scholarships are offered through the Sorority and the Emerald Debutante Ball.

This year, March 15th, marks 40 years since the first Debutante Ball was launched. We have helped over 300 young ladies with scholarships for higher education. Gamma Eta has been in service to the community for almost 70 years and will continue to be in service.



## *Trailblazer*

**HONORABLE LORI WILSON**  
Assemblywoman, California's 11th District

Assemblywoman Lori D. Wilson was elected in April 2022 to represent California's 11th Assembly District, which includes all of Solano County and portions of Contra Costa and Sacramento Counties. Assemblywoman Wilson is the only Black woman in California history to be appointed Chair of the influential Assembly Transportation Committee and made history as the first legislator to be elected Chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (2023-2024) as a freshman.

In addition to her legislative leadership, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Assemblywoman Wilson to serve on the Governor's Military Council. Established in 2013, the Council provides a sustained focus on growing California's defense and national security missions in state administration. Assemblywoman Wilson's track record in the California State Assembly includes delivering policies that create good jobs, keep the community safe, and improve the quality of life for her constituents and the people of California.



## *Rising Star Award*

**DANAY FERGUSON**

Founder & President of Reading Heart

Danay Ferguson is the founder and president of Reading Heart, a youth-led literacy organization dedicated to making books accessible, exciting, and visible for children and families across California and beyond. What began as a simple idea to share books has grown into a nationally recognized movement that has distributed more than 900,000 books to schools, shelters, and community spaces, helping foster a lifelong love of reading.

At just eight years old, Danay made history as the youngest registered entrepreneur in Fresno County, launching Reading Heart and proving that age is not a limit to leadership or impact. Her commitment to literacy and community service quickly earned regional recognition, including an African-American Heritage Award proclamation presented by California Assemblyman Henry T. Perea, honoring her dedication to volunteerism and educational advocacy.

Danay's influence in the field of literacy has been recognized statewide and nationally. Danay received the CATE Award of Merit from the California Association of Teachers of English for her outstanding contributions to language arts education and her work promoting reading engagement among youth. Her story, leadership, and the impact of Reading Heart have been featured by outlets such as CNN, NBC, ABC, and People Magazine, highlighting youth-driven change and the power of community literacy efforts.

Looking ahead, Danay is focused on expanding Reading Heart's presence throughout California, strengthening partnerships with schools, community organizations, and local leaders in both urban and rural regions. Her long-term vision includes establishing permanent infrastructure by securing 5-10 acres to serve as a headquarters, creating a lasting home for Reading Heart's programs and ensuring its ability to serve more communities nationwide and statewide for generations to come.



*Rosa Conley-Kelley  
Excellence in Education Award*

**DR. DERRICK JOHNSON,**  
Leader in Higher Education and Athletics

Dr. Derrick A. Johnson is a distinguished higher education executive with more than two decades of leadership experience in academic affairs, student success, athletics administration, and institutional advancement. He currently serves as Associate Dean of Physical Education, Kinesiology, and Health and Athletic Director at Fresno City College, where he provides executive oversight of academic programs, faculty development, and student success initiatives while advancing the institution's mission of equity, inclusion, and excellence.

Under Dr. Johnson's leadership, Fresno City College has earned three state championships and more than thirty conference championships. He also spearheaded the establishment of the college's first Student Athlete Advisory Committee and the African American Male Empowerment and Development chapter, strengthening student engagement, retention, and equity-focused success initiatives. Johnson also played a crucial role in addressing food and housing insecurities among student-athletes on campus.

Throughout his career, Dr. Johnson has overseen multi-million-dollar budgets, developed innovative student support programs, and secured significant funding through corporate partnerships, sponsorships, and fundraising efforts. Previously, he held senior leadership roles at Middlesex County College, Elizabeth City State University, Riverside City College, and Benedict College, where he consistently advanced institutional priorities through strategic planning, accreditation, and cross-campus collaboration. At Benedict College Johnson also served as a Head Baseball Coach and led them to two Conference Championships.

Dr. Johnson earned a Doctor of Education from East Tennessee State University, a Master of Sports Science from the United States Sports Academy, and a Bachelor of Science from the University of South Carolina at Aiken, where he was a standout baseball student-athlete and was drafted by the Florida Marlins. He currently serves as President of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and remains deeply committed to excellence, equity, and transformative leadership in higher education.

Dr. Johnson is married to April Johnson, and they have three daughters Journey, Mylinh, and Zannah. Dr. Johnson is also a member of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.



*Jesse E. McDonald Excellence  
in Community Service Award*

**MARCEL WOODRUFF**

Youth & Community Development Strategist

Marcel Woodruff is a strategist, innovator, and community practitioner with more than 25 years of service at the intersection of youth development, culture, and systems change. His work has consistently focused on designing and implementing solutions in complex environments shaped by inequality, violence, and institutional neglect. Known for translating lived experience into actionable strategy, Marcel brings a rare combination of on-the-ground credibility and high-systems thinking to every space he enters.

Over the course of his career, Marcel has mentored and supported thousands of young people across California, particularly those navigating the impacts of poverty, incarceration, and community violence. His mentorship has extended beyond individual guidance to building programs, creative platforms, and leadership pipelines that center dignity, agency, and long-term transformation. From arts-based initiatives and restorative practices to reentry and justice-focused programs, his work emphasizes innovation rooted in relationship, culture, and ethical patience.

Today, Marcel works in philanthropy, where he applies decades of praxis to strategic grantmaking, learning, and systems alignment. In this role, he helps institutions move beyond transactional funding toward approaches that strengthen ecosystems, shift power, and produce sustainable community impact. Grounded in both strategy and story, Marcel continues to bridge community wisdom and institutional resources to advance more just, humane, and effective forms of social change.



# Trailblazer

## RIZPAH BELLARD

Agricultural Innovator and Housing Advocate

Raised in Guinda, CA, Rizpah Bellard is a graduate of Cornell University and a visionary leader in the agriculture and affordable housing sectors in Fresno, CA. Leveraging her academic foundation and professional experiences, Rizpah has effectively bridged the gap between socio-biological issues and community needs. Her work in Fresno addresses critical challenges such as food insecurity, mental health, and homelessness.

As the President of Nova Farming, Rizpah has made significant strides in the agriculture sector by successfully selling high-quality, all-natural beef to Kern County School Districts and the Central California Food Bank, providing a nutritious protein option to underserved communities. In addition, she has developed and pioneered an innovative K-12 agriculture education curriculum, introducing young learners to the fundamentals of agriculture, and inspiring them to consider careers in the industry. In the realm of affordable housing, Rizpah advocates for support for individuals facing mental and physical disabilities. She currently houses 15 tenants in West and Southwest Fresno, providing stability to those in need.

Rizpah earned her Master of Arts from The University of Denver's Josef Korbel School of International Studies, specializing in Human Trafficking and Forced Labor. Her accolades include a Fulbright Scholar Award (2020), recognition in COWGIRL Magazine's 30 Under 30 Class of 2024, and being named CAFF's New Farmer of the Year (2024). Her work has garnered media attention, including features in the Fresno Bee, ABC30, KSEE24, and KVPR. In October 2024, Congressman Jim Costa visited her Fresno ranch to honor her contributions with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition. Rizpah has also received the Operator of the Year award from the Fresno County Independent Living Association for three consecutive years, highlighting her dedication to the unhoused community.

Rizpah Bellard is a trailblazer in agriculture and community service, committed to innovation, education, and social equity in Fresno and beyond.



## *Trailblazer*

**TAYLOR KIMBER**, Central California  
Coordinator, Governor's Office of External Affairs

Taylor Kimber serves as the Central California Coordinator for Governor Gavin Newsom's Office of External Affairs, where she connects community voices with state leadership and helps make big policy feel personal. A proud third-generation Fresnan, she is passionate about bridging the intersection of government, media, and community impact.

Before joining the Governor's Office, Taylor worked with the Central Valley Community Foundation under the leadership of former Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin, served as a journalist at ABC30 Action News, and later became a District Representative for a Congressman in the Bay Area; experiences that strengthened her commitment to public service, storytelling, and advocacy.

Beyond her career roles, Taylor has been deeply involved in community leadership. She served as a member of BWOPA (Black Women Organized for Political Action) Fresno Chapter in 2023, and in 2018 was named "Woman of the Year for Outstanding Community Service" by the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club for her work with Fresno County Young Democrats and the California Young Democrats.

Taylor holds an Associate Degree in Political Science from Fresno City College and a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and Media Technologies from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in Public Administration - which, in her own words, is "just a fancy way of saying she's learning how to make change stick."

Rooted in a family legacy of civic leadership—as the granddaughter of former Fresno City Councilman Les Kimber and the daughter of Mark Kimber, publisher of the California Advocate, Fresno's only African American newspaper—Taylor views storytelling as a form of public service and brings that sense of purpose into every space she enters. When she's not in a meeting, Taylor loves to spend time with her family and friends, traveling, shopping, or brunching her way through the weekend!



# *Trailblazer*

**DR. F. NIDDI GRIFFEN-MEYERS**  
Nurse Educator and Health Equity Leader

Dr. Griffin-Myers' distinguished career in nursing education spans more than four decades, marked by pioneering achievements and deep commitment to advancing health equity. Beginning her academic career as an Assistant Professor at California State University, Stanislaus (1988–1992), she was later promoted to Associate Professor (1993–1998). In 1998, she joined California State University, Fresno (CSUF), where she achieved the rank of Full Professor and served until her retirement in May 2023 as a distinguished Professor Emeritus. From 2014 to 2018, she held the position of Chief Director of the School of Nursing at CSUF.

Dr. Griffin-Myers made history as the first Black woman to hold each of these academic ranks within the San Joaquin region of the California State University system—a true trailblazer in nursing education.

A graduate of the University of San Francisco, Dr. Griffin-Myers earned her doctorate in International/Multicultural Education with a minor in Curriculum and Instruction. Over her 43-year academic career, she developed undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula, taught across California from Oakland to Bakersfield, and created innovative mobile health and nursing entrepreneurship initiatives. She established credentialed Nurse Educator courses at the master's level, published research on community health and health disparities, and pursued a cross-national Nurse Practitioner exchange program between CSUF and the Lagos University Teaching Hospital. At CSUF, she also founded the African American Nursing Students Association (ANSA) to mentor and retain Black nursing students.

With more than 55 years of clinical experience, Dr. Griffin-Myers has provided hospital-based care in Texas, Missouri, and throughout California. She served as Chief Family Nurse Practitioner for the Merced County Health Department and practiced widely as an Advanced Practice FNP from Modesto to Fresno. Her research contributions include a master's thesis on the perceptions of pregnant Hmong women (1982–1985) and a doctoral dissertation on health disparities among Black women in Stockton (1989–1992). The latter, housed in the Library of Congress, developed a tool now used by other researchers in health disparity studies.

A life-long learner, Dr. Griffin-Myers later earned certification as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. She currently serves as President of the Central Valley Black Nurses Association and remains an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (since 1987) and Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (since 1994).



## *Trailblazer*

### **YOLANDA S. RANGLES** Executive Director WFFRC

Yolanda S. Randles is a dedicated community leader and servant-hearted advocate whose life reflects a deep commitment to service. A lifelong Girl Scout, she has faithfully lived the Girl Scout Promise by helping people at all times and uplifting her community through action and leadership.

Raised by a single parent in a family of nine siblings, Yolanda learned early the value of hard work, perseverance, and education. She went on to earn a Master's degree in Public Health with honors from California State University, Fresno, along with a Bachelor's degree in Health Science from CSUF and an Associate's degree from Fresno City College.

For more than 20 years, Yolanda has served as Executive Director of the West Fresno Family Resource Center. Under her leadership, the agency has expanded significantly, providing vital programs and services to underserved families throughout the Fresno community. Her work has helped thousands of youth and families access educational support, health resources, mentorship opportunities, and community programs designed to create lasting change.

Among the center's impactful initiatives are annual back-to-school events serving more than 2,000 families, youth mentorship programs that have helped students pursue higher education and careers in healthcare, and the Sweet Potato Project 2, which builds positive partnerships between students, families, law enforcement, and local organizations. More than 150 students have completed the program, gaining leadership skills, academic support, and meaningful opportunities for growth.

A Sunday School teacher, devoted wife of more than 30 years, mother of six, grandmother of eleven, and breast cancer survivor, Yolanda leads with faith, resilience, and compassion. Her contributions have been recognized with numerous awards, including the Black Excellence Service Award and the City of Fresno Service to Community Award.

Through her unwavering dedication, Yolanda S. Randles continues to inspire hope, strengthen families, and create pathways to opportunity for generations to come.



# Trailblazer

## MYRICK WILSON, SR.

Founder, Mad Illustrators and CaliFresno Catering

Myrick Wilson was born and raised in West Fresno, California. Raised by entrepreneurial parents, he learned early the value of hard work, self-reliance, and building something meaningful from the ground up.

For more than 20 years, Myrick—owner of Mad Illustrators and, more recently, CaliFresno Catering—has partnered with businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community leaders to create opportunity and lasting impact. His work blends creativity, entrepreneurship, and service, with a strong focus on uplifting underserved communities. In 2006, he expanded this mission by developing a workforce training program designed to support at-risk and formerly incarcerated individuals, helping them gain job skills, confidence, and a clear pathway forward.

Born in the late 1960s, Myrick was influenced by an era when many talented Black men used blue-collar skills to build successful businesses. That legacy continues to shape his commitment to mentorship, ownership, and economic empowerment.

Myrick places a strong emphasis on youth development. He has volunteered with Fresno Street Saints and Prison Fellowship, worked closely with Joe Avila, Director of the Angel Tree Sports Clinic, and organized annual trips to Stanford University for more than 1,000 youth between 2008 and 2018. These experiences provided access to sports, faith-based mentorship, and exposure to broader educational and career possibilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Myrick played a critical role in community outreach and public health awareness. He was among the first to post warning signage locally and produced public service advertisements in four languages—English, Spanish, Lao, and Punjabi. His efforts led to partnerships with Black Wellness & Prosperity and the African American Coalition Fresno COVID-19 Equity Project, where he served as the primary printer for public health materials.

Through consistent quality, fast turnaround times, and fair pricing, Myrick has built a strong statewide reputation. His work has supported major initiatives such as the Count Me In Census campaign and collaborations with organizations including First 5 California, the California Black Power Network, and BWOPA—continuing a legacy of service, leadership, and community impact.

Myrick has been married to Sonya Williams Wilson for 25 years; two children, Myrick Wilson Jr. and Denim Kani Wilson, both of Fresno.



# *Trailblazer*

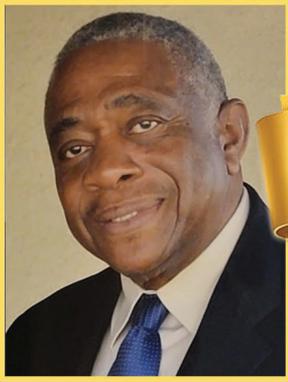
## **MICHAEL WHITE**

Beauty Industry Leader and Entrepreneur

With more than 27 years of dedicated experience, Michael White has built a career defined by mastery, innovation, and a deep commitment to client-centered care. As a non-surgical hair replacement specialist and hair extension expert, he has transformed countless lives by restoring confidence and providing personalized solutions for individuals experiencing hair loss or seeking enhanced beauty options. His warm professionalism and sincere dedication to each client foster an environment where every individual feels genuinely seen, supported, and valued.

Beyond his technical skill, he has proven himself a visionary salon owner. Over the course of his career, he has successfully opened five salon locations and has mentored and guided more than 30 professionals into becoming salon studio owners in the Central Valley. His leadership has helped shape the landscape of the beauty industry, fostering growth, opportunity, and entrepreneurship for the next generation. He continues to expand his impact by building, and opening doors throughout the industry.

A true people person, he values relationships and community as much as artistry. His contributions extend outside the salon, where he actively supports and partners with various organizations, giving back through service, mentorship, and involvement. His journey reflects not only exceptional talent, but also compassion, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to empowering others—both in their appearance and in their lives.



*Jack Kelley Award of Valor  
for Distinguished Service*

**ALFONSO WARD  
(1939 - 2025)**

Alphonso Bud Ward, affectionately known as “Ward”, was born June 25, 1939 in Marshall TX. He was the second oldest of seven children born to the late Columbus and Odessa Lefall Ward and they moved to Fresno, CA in 1945.

In 1957 Ward graduated from Edison High School, Fresno, CA. As an individual of immense integrity, fortitude of character, and patriotism, he enlisted and honorably served his country as a member of the United States Army. While stationed at Fort Benning Army Base in Georgia, he met Mae Ola Smith. They married February 1, 1961, and subsequently moved to Fresno, CA.

Ward completed his Associate of Arts Degree in Carpentry from Fresno City College in 1967, then attended Fresno State. He briefly worked at Rancher's Cotton Oil Company and shortly thereafter began his law enforcement career with Fresno Police Department. In 1968, he joined the Fresno County Sheriff's Office and was employed for 17 years and active member of the Black Peace Officers Association.

Being industrious, he decided to try his hand in agricultural farming for approximately 10 years while he was employed with the sheriff's office. He also became a member of the National Black Farmers Association. After an accident that resulted in serious injuries, he medically retired in 1986. During his recuperation period, he honed his cooking skills and was often requested to cook for various functions at St. Rest Baptist Church. Ward continued to serve the Fresno Community with respect for others and compassion for those most in need while working at the Poverello House as lead chef.

Ward leaves behind a lifetime of memories and family that will carry his light forward



# *Trailblazer*

## **PASTOR EDDIE MANDELLA DANIELS (1908 - 1987)**

Rev. Dr. Eddie Mandella Daniels was born in 1908 in LeCompte, Louisiana, during a period when African Americans faced profound social and legal barriers in the United States. From an early age, his life unfolded at the intersection of faith, service, and history. He later married Sammie Mosley, his devoted wife of 49 years, with whom he shared a life rooted in commitment, perseverance, and purpose.

Rev. Dr. Daniels served his country during World War II as a U.S. Army Sergeant and as an original Chaplain of the 473rd Amphibious Regiment. In this role, he provided spiritual leadership and moral guidance to soldiers during one of the most consequential conflicts of the twentieth century. Historical accounts note that in 1945, during the Battle of Iwo Jima, he gave the command to raise the United States flag on Mount Suribachi, a moment that came to symbolize sacrifice, courage, and national resolve.

Beyond his military service, Rev. Dr. Daniels devoted 42 years to ministry as a theologian and educator, grounding his work in principles of Biblical justice. His calling extended beyond the pulpit, reflecting a deep commitment to living out faith through education, advocacy, and global engagement. Throughout his life, he embodied a theology rooted in justice, dignity, and service to humanity. He was Pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church for 38 years.

Rev. Dr. Eddie Mandella Daniels' legacy stands as a testament to faith in action—demonstrating how spiritual leadership, education, and service can shape lives, communities, and history across generations.



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