

OCTOBER
—14, 2024

RISE 
san diego



usbank
PRESENTS

 **ILIA AWARDS**

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN ACTION AWARDS

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CONGRATULATIONS

RISE San Diego and the 2024 ILIA Award Winners

THANK YOU for your leadership and service to our community.



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The Black InGenius Initiative
The Nonprofit Institute

2024 ILIA AWARDS PROGRAM

— 5:00 PM —

Reception with **DJ DAUCHÉ**

— 6:15 PM —

Welcome Performance by **TRACY LEE NELSON**

— 6:30 PM —

Indigenous Welcome by **RUTH-ANN THORN**

Invocation by **LEAH GOODWIN**

Board Chair Welcome by **TAMARA MUHAMMAD**

Executive Director Welcome by **DOMINIC PORTER**

Collective Resilience Award

Next-Gen Influencer Award

Restorative Practitioner Award

Poetry Reading by **KELSEY O. DANIELS**

Community Change Agent Award

Culture Shifter Award

Organization for Change Award

The Legler Benbough Legacy Award

The Anthony M. Medina People's Champion Award

Closing Performance by **TRU7H**

— 8:30 PM —

Program End

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 14, 2024

Dear RISE Familia and Friends:

This year, RISE commemorates ten years of neighborhood-first, culturally rooted, and community-competent work in the San Diego region. Since its inception, the organization has strived to make room, make space, and make place for community members not fully or authentically represented. This past year, RISE graduated its ninth cohort of Leadership Fellows, welcomed fourteen social-justice focused artists and creatives for the Far South Border North collaborative, reimagined a future for enhanced collective impact, and welcomed a tenth cohort of Fellows in conjunction with the celebration of our tenth anniversary. From its inception, the organization has been purposed to reflect our communities' voices, sentiments, and needs through programs and initiatives.

One of those initiatives was the creation of the Diversity & Inclusion Awards Luncheon. This event was designed to honor community members who are leading impactful change in their neighborhoods. Throughout the years, this event has honored some of the most resourceful, determined, convicted, and purposed individuals shaping a better life for their fellow San Diegans. It did not matter the name; what mattered was the change. The event served as an opportunity to celebrate and connect to determine how, as a collective, we can do more to support the work and, most importantly, those served.

Tonight marks the eighth year since this event was created! The name of the event has shifted, but the ethos has not. On this day, as we celebrate this year's Inclusive Leadership in Action Awards nominees, we sit with honoring the legacy of those who set the stage before us. We acknowledge and appreciate those who felt the importance of Diversity & Inclusion before it was a hashtag, training module, or reading list. We recognize that diversity is not a checkbox, and inclusion is not a task item. When we celebrate the cultures, identities, lived experiences, backgrounds, ideologies, and histories of others, we honor our collective humanness. When we honor the importance of inclusion, we respect the gifts offered through meaningful representation. When we highlight the work being done on behalf of our communities to support our neighbors by these select individuals and organizations, we acknowledge the beauty of service and selflessness while advocating for support.

This event was curated to serve as a monument to the power of connectivity and connectedness. This event is designed to elevate our humanity and purpose as members of the same tribe. As an organization, it is essential that we cultivate space for celebration and acknowledgment while also rooting us all in the practice of collective action. I am humbled and honored to share space with such impactful leaders, regardless of formal or informal roles, and thank each of our nominees for their actions and compassion. We hope that on this day, we make space for appreciation and the activation for continued support. This awards ceremony serves not as a flash-pan moment but a continuous movement.

We thank our incredibly supportive sponsors, community partners, team members, and attendees. You all make this work meaningful and ensure that our humanity is not lost in our hubris. Thank you all!

In community,



Dominic Porter
Executive Director





Connecting communities and championing change

We're honored to support RISE San Diego and recognize the leaders building a brighter future.

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RISE san diego

ABOUT US

Our **MISSION** is to elevate and advance urban leadership through dialogue-based civic engagement, dynamic nonprofit partnerships, and direct training and support to increase the capacity of urban residents to effect meaningful community change.

Our **VISION** is thriving, resident-led urban neighborhoods providing safe and healthy opportunities for youth and families to live, work, and play.

Towards these, RISE has established four program pillars:

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leveraging adaptive leadership frameworks, group relations theory, and cultural competency to empower leaders to tackle seemingly complex challenges within and alongside their communities.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Fostering critical and authentic dialogue and resident-led action around issues impacting urban communities throughout San Diego County.

TRAINING & PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthening nonprofits, social enterprises, minority-led small businesses, and regional organizations through DEIA consultation, technical assistance, capacity-building training, Incyrian: and strategic partnerships.

RISE ARTS

Nurturing, advocating, and amplifying the intersection of arts and social justice in San Diego to support artists and emerging organizations with roots in communities of color.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

RISE Urban Leadership Program (RULFP) focuses on the personal and professional development of each Fellow through intensive forums, the development and implementation of a self-selected community project, and coaching and peer learning throughout the fellowship year. Through an adaptive leadership approach that requires active engagement and deep reflection, fellows are offered the next phase of their development and training, enabling them to lead more effectively in the face of the complex, contentious, and seemingly intractable challenges present in their communities.

On the RISE (OTR) uses leadership development strategies to create meaningful experiences for high school students from underserved communities that empower and inspire them to participate in social change. Through OTR, students acquire a higher level of self-awareness, understand the relationship between their past and their future, identify an issue that they are passionate about, connect the issue to a movement or cause and build a network of meaningful connections. These outcomes culminate in the development of a CAPstone (Community Action Project) plan along with a personal narrative that explores their personal story, leadership experience, community issues, and their action plan.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The **Community Impact Showcase** is a public presentation of community-driven projects and programs designed and/or further developed in the RISE Urban Leadership Fellows Program and the Nonprofit Partnerships Training program. The annual showcase features a collection of project exhibits and a judged pitch competition for project funding.

The **Inclusive Leadership in Action Awards (ILIA)** celebrates the work of individuals and organizations throughout San Diego County who are dedicated to the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Since 2017, RISE has sought nominations from the community of individuals and organizations that are doing the work to make a real difference in the San Diego region. Award honorees are selected from these nominations and announced each October at the RISE ILIA Awards event.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

RISE Now is a virtual program that captures important solution-focused conversations relevant to urban communities in the now. The facilitated dialogues are designed to highlight the issues and needs of impacted community members and identify solutions from those actively engaged with their communities. RISE Now is centered around emerging leaders who are leaning into the work of real systemic change.

The **RISE Urban Breakfast Club** provides a forum for San Diego residents and leaders from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors to connect, network, and engage with one another civilly over conversations about the impacts of a variety of issues on our urban communities.



TRAINING & PARTNERSHIPS

Nonprofit Training & Technical Assistance supports small nonprofits and minority-owned businesses throughout the county to attain sustainability and achieve growth through training and hands-on technical assistance that aim to reduce barriers to business success. RISE cultivates the role of participating businesses in becoming models for equitable workforce principles and serving as a pipeline for employment, economic development, and resident leadership within the communities they serve.

RISE Consult, a holistic approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training, takes a comprehensive approach to organizational and leadership development from an adaptive leadership perspective: novel innovations around diversity, equity, and inclusion are brought to work, and we help translate theory into action and invite deep inquiry into challenging problems. RISE Consult takes seriously the complexities that organizations face and fosters inclusive action that is grounded in racial equity and social justice.

RISE ARTS

Capacity-building Training workshops and technical assistance cohorts for individual artists and smaller arts and culture groups and nonprofits that are seeking to build business skills and knowledge critical to their sustainability and growth. These opportunities are designed to offer learning spaces for growth, networking, and collaboration.

Community Art Talks developed in collaboration with local artists and cultural practitioners. The series focuses on the intersection of arts, culture, and social justice and is grounded in shared learning, advocacy, equity, and representation, and visibility in the arts.



RISE STAFF & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Congratulations to the nominees!

Community • Collaboration • Careers



AWARD CATEGORIES

COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE ADVOCATE

Honors an individual who has shown dedication and action to address and support a community's ability to come together to combat or resist adverse circumstances. It recognizes the work of fostering adaptation, growth, and resiliency within communities to more readily respond to and recover from problems together.

COMMUNITY CHANGE AGENT

Honors an individual who has shown dedication and action to make real, sustainable, and systemic change through the creation of innovative programs, policy, platforms, or partnerships. It recognizes the work of assisting the community's ability to thrive in areas such as education, social enterprise, health and wellness, or advocacy.

CULTURE SHIFTER

Honors an individual who has shown dedication and action in shifting the culture of organizations and communities alike. It recognizes the effort of guiding groups to face a new challenge, disrupt outdated or harmful norms, and become more reflective and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

NEXT-GEN INFLUENCER

Honors an individual between the ages of 16 and 25. It recognizes the voices of young adults who have shown dedication and action within their communities and are growing into their roles as action-driven thought leaders.

AWARD CATEGORIES

RESTORATIVE PRACTITIONER

Honors an individual who has shown dedication and action in fostering spaces of healing and compassion for others. It recognizes the commitment to restorative practices delivered with grace, empathy, and a strong ethic of care in support of diverse community groups.

ORGANIZATION OF CHANGE

Honors an organization that has shown dedication and action to confronting challenges and spearheading opportunities to support and uplift San Diegans in meaningful and impactful ways. It recognizes the efforts of organizations and their teams to deliver exceptional programming and services for the communities they serve.

THE ANTHONY M. MEDINA PEOPLE'S CHAMPION

Honors an individual who has been an advocate and champion for under-served or marginalized communities. It recognizes advocacy in words and in action to bring about meaningful change for the people. The award is named in honor of the late Anthony M. Medina, a RISE Urban Leadership Fellow ('18) and ILIA award recipient ('19), who founded People's Legal Services to provide free and low-cost legal support to underserved communities.

THE LEGLER BENBOUGH LEGACY AWARD

An internally nominated and selected award, this honors an individual or organization/group whose commitment to the community is represented in both its deeds and words. It recognizes those that actively and continuously support organizations and community groups leaning into the work of systemic change in communities across San Diego County. The award is named in honor of the Legler Benbough Foundation, which believed in RISE by providing seed funding to grow the organization and has continued to be one of its strongest supporters.



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EMCEE

COURTNEY OCHI is committed to creating transformative experiences to inspire educators into radical ways of design. As a Partner in School Design at Thrive, she empowers educators to reimagine what school can be for both students and adults. A RISE Fellow ('19) and a RISE Urban Principal Preparation Program Fellow, she serves as a mentor for the current RISE cohort. Courtney earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from USD, and was also an inaugural fellow in its Nonprofit Institute Horizon Leadership program.

EMCEE

RONALD PRESTON CLARK is an educator and writer with an extensive background working with young people, particularly young Black men. He serves as lead teacher/facilitator for USD's Black InGenius Initiative (BiGI) and founded Club FBS (Fitteds, Books and Sneakers), a book club and mentorship program serving over 100 Black male students. Ronald is a RISE Fellow ('18), a RISE Urban Principal Preparation Program Fellow, a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., and the award-winning author of *Vinnie: a love letter*.



RECEPTION ENTERTAINMENT

DAUCHÉ, an internationally acclaimed touring DJ and creative producer, transcends genres with her mastery in crafting immersive sonic landscapes. With over a decade in the industry and fueled by a passion for R&B, neo-soul, and hip-hop, her commitment to celebrating culture shines in every performance. Dauché's role as the inaugural resident tour DJ for R&B ONLY LIVE is a crowning achievement, where she shared stages with Jon B, Mya, Lloyd, BJ The Chicago Kid, Tank, Teedra Moses, and many more.

OPENING PERFORMANCE

TRACY LEE NELSON (Luiseno/Kumeyaay) is an award-winning musician, artist, and actor. An honoree at the 2018 Native American Music Awards and nominee at the 2017 Indigenous Music Awards for his album, *Blues Loving Man*, he has been named as one of the finest Native American blues artists by Native People Magazine. His artwork has been displayed at the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian and San Diego Museum of Art. Tracy is an enrolled tribal member and former tribal chairman of the La Jolla Indian Reservation.



INDIGENOUS WELCOME

RUTH-ANN THORN is a documentary filmmaker and host of Art of the City, a program featuring Native American artists that airs on GlewedTV and FNX (First Nations Experience). She is the editor-in-chief of Off the Easel magazine and a contributing writer for Art World News. Ruth-Ann has produced six cultural films showcasing the diverse Indigenous art, history, and culture of North America. Her tireless efforts to celebrate Indigenous traditions have made her a respected figure in both her community and the art industry.



INVOCATION

LEAH GOODWIN believes that the arts are a universal tool for healing. Her exemplary career in the arts encompasses everything from public arts management, to visual and performing arts program development and consultation, to the creation and implementation of award-winning arts in education and arts in hospital programs. Leah is a Fulbright Scholar and an accomplished and published poet and writer. She was appointed to the California Arts Council by Governor Newsom and currently serves as its vice chair.



POETRY READING

KELSEY O. DANIELS is an artist, organizer, and baddie scholar from Southeast San Diego whose work centers on storytelling, world building, and dreamwork as tools for liberation. As a fat, Black, queer, disabled femme, Kelsey honors her ancestors and descendants by revoking consent from the failed experiment of white supremacy and dreaming up worlds that are affirming and lit. She curates a creative universe called Black Dream Experiment that explores Black dreaming as a collective practice.



CLOSING PERFORMANCE

WILNISHA "TRU7H" SUTTON (she/her) is an activist who uses her lived experience to empower others to overcome. Having always wanted to give back to those impacted by injustice, her heart has led to her leadership in the anti-human trafficking movement and helping others on their healing journey by providing survivor-centered services. Wilnisha is a proud RISE Fellow ('19) and a powerful speaker on human trafficking, racism and activism, self-love, and empowering others to be their authentic self.



AND NOW PRESENTING..

2024 ILIA AWARD NOMINEES

2024 ILIA AWARDS NOMINEES

JULIUS A. ALEJANDRO

JULIUS is an adjunct faculty in entrepreneurship at San Diego Community College District, a business consultant, and Village Up San Diego nonprofit executive. With over 15 years of experience in grassroots organizing and startup ecosystems, he strives for innovative approaches to solving social issues through collaboration. He received a master's from National University, a bachelor's from SDSU, a Green Belt in Lean Six Sigma from SDSU, and a certificate from Notre Dame in foresight and innovation.



NILAJA C. ARANMOLATE

NILAJA is a theater graduate of the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts (SDSCPA) and who is continuing her education with a full tuition scholarship to UCLA. Her academic achievements include the National Society of High School Scholars, SDSCPA Yale Book Award, and San Diego Unified School District Golden Pyramid Scholar. Also interested in fashion and design, she founded the SDSCPA Fashion Club, served as an intern for San Diego Fashion Week, and modeled during New York Fashion Week.

AIKO ARENAS

AIKO is the general manager of Snoice, where she is committed to empowering employees to reach their full potential through a culture of growth and collaboration. Passionate about self-development, she continuously strives to refine her leadership skills to inspire and guide others effectively. Her leadership is characterized by a dedication to nurturing talent and fostering an environment where both individuals and teams thrive.



BARRIO LOGAN COLLEGE INSTITUTE

BARRIO LOGAN COLLEGE INSTITUTE'S (BLCI) mission is to break the cycle of poverty by preparing underserved students to be the first in their families to attend and graduate college through no-cost after school programs that begin in third grade. BLCI targets low-to-moderate income, first-generation students who are predominantly BIPOC, including a large percentage of English Language Learners and refugees. To date, 100% of its College and Career Success program graduates have pursued secondary education..

JACQUELINE DE ANDA

JACQUELINE is a first-generation college student from a low-income background who is now in her first year at UC Berkeley. Throughout high school, she dedicated herself to giving back to her community through various leadership roles. She served as a student engagement intern with the San Diego Unified School District, where she worked to bridge the gap between students and administrators, and at Barrio Logan College Institute she was an active participant in its Circulo De Mujeres planning committee.



ALIYA L. FREDERICK, MD, PHD

DR. FREDERICK is a child neurologist and assistant professor at UCSD and Rady Children's Hospital. As one of 2% of physicians that identifies as a Black woman, she knows that representation matters. She is an active faculty advocate and member of several mentoring programs dedicated to increasing the number of diverse individuals in the pipeline for careers in healthcare. Through her DEI leadership roles at Rady, Dr. Frederick champions a culture of inclusion and belonging in the workplace.

FRESH SOIL MENTORING & TRANSITIONAL CENTER

FRESH SOIL is a nonprofit that mentors girls in gangs, teen moms, and formerly human-trafficked victims. Its mission is to help these young women overcome their challenges and achieve their full potential through restorative practices, emotional literacy, and positive peer communication.



LAUREN BALCITA GARCÉS

LAUREN is a city-wide event producer and artist focused on community empowerment and sustainable, inclusive economic development. Her event production passion and engagements are dedicated to providing platforms and connections for diverse communities and cultures to be highlighted, bridged, and empowered. A leader and advocate in the community, she serves as co-chair for the San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition and as a City of San Diego Consolidated Plan Advisory board member.

blac.

Black Leadership Alliance Coalition.

BLAC

BLAC (Black Leadership Alliance Coalition), formerly Joueur Confidence, is a transformative nonprofit dedicated to driving socioeconomic development in the Black community through mentorship, mental health resources, and workforce development. Through education, opportunity, and unity, BLAC is dismantling economic disparities that lead to crime and violence, developing talented young Black and underrepresented leaders, and creating the progressive and equitable future we all aspire to achieve.

JOY BOE

JOY is the founder and director of Revision, a nonprofit that since 2017 has provided inclusive access to art, culture, and environmental education that allow neurodiverse artists and artists with disabilities opportunities to work as professionals. Joy has been active in social services since 2005 as a grassroots advocate and ally. Her love of environmental design is reflected in both Revision workspaces, which operate as green-certified studios. She is a scrap weaver, a mom, and cat lover.



CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, ESCONDIDO

With a mission of bringing people together to discover, create, and celebrate both the visual and performing arts, **CALIFORNIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, ESCONDIDO** is the cultural center of North San Diego County. Its unique campus offers an extensive education program and free community events, and its activities are guided by a Board of Trustees, administration, and staff who are dedicated to furthering arts entertainment and arts education that provide cultural enrichment for residents of

LATISA S. CARSON, MD

DR. CARSON is a double board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist and medical weight loss specialist and the only female African-American obstetrician-gynecologist in solo private practice in San Diego County. She is a health equity advocate for reproductive rights and justice and equal access to healthcare. A graduate of the University of Kansas School of Medicine, she is married to her college sweetheart: they have two children and enjoy traveling to national and state parks together.





GIRL SCOUTS SAN DIEGO

GIRL SCOUTS SAN DIEGO builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Its strategic vision is to be viewed and valued as the go-to partner for developing and elevating girl and women leaders in San Diego and Imperial counties. Beyond traditional leadership development, its relevant programs and experiences foster a sense of well-being in girls, so they are well-rounded individuals poised for success in life.

TJ HARRIS

TJ is the visionary CEO of BLAC (*formerly Joueur Confidence*). A proven leader dedicated to generational progress and systemic change in Black and brown communities, he harnesses transformative leadership, mental health initiatives, and workforce development to empower young Black and underrepresented adults. Using a strategic approach, he crafts impactful programs that drive leadership development and career growth and foster lasting socioeconomic change.



SAMIRA HASSAN

Activist, poet, writer, and aspiring journalist **SAMIRA** was born and raised in the diverse, beautiful neighborhood of City Heights. Throughout her childhood, she participated in Activism programs, San Diego Opera's music and theater programs, spoken word, theater performances, and canvassing her neighborhood where she is still an organizer and advocate today. A mosaic of her community, with every step she takes Samira remembers to honor her family, mentors, friends, and City Heights.

THE HIGH STEPPERS DRILL TEAM INC

For over twenty years, **THE HIGH STEPPERS DRILL TEAM** has offered after school programming to vulnerable and underserved youth ages 15-18 with a safe space to participate in drill and step competitions. It further trains and equips students with life skills through programs focused on academic excellence, health and drug education, violence prevention, self-esteem and etiquette, and creative youth development where youth can forge lifelong bonds.



RACHEL HOLIDAY

As a leader who focuses on promoting disability diversity and inclusion in the education and nonprofit sectors, **RACHEL** has over six years of experience supporting adults with I/DD and is passionate about educating employees on the benefits of working with the disability community. She is a participant in the LEAD San Diego Impact group, an ACRE-accredited Customized Employment trainer, and earned a certification in partnerships from Georgetown and a bachelor's from the University of Phoenix.



RYLIE JENNINGS

RYLIE is the lead thought curator and founder of Baddies Mean Business, a women-focused media and events company humanizing media valuing free-thinking, creativity, and innovation. Her podcast of the same name fulfills this mission by sharing the stories of ambitious female leaders working at the intersection of social entrepreneurship, creativity, and joy. Rylie is a proud Afakasi (Samoan mixed-heritage) woman with a deep love for family, food, and experiences, and she loves to cook, travel, and plan events.



MONICA KELLY

As founder and CEO of Fresh Soil Mentoring and Transitional Center, **MONICA**'s on a mission is to inspire change for girls and young women in a positive environment throughout the community. She is passionate about creating a safer and healthier community for youth and seeks to partner with other organizations and agencies that share her vision.



LATOYA MCKELVIN-WESTPOINT

A San Diego-based movement educator and the founder of Movement Matters Collective, **LATOYA** weaves her passion for mindful movement into empowering experiences that celebrate wellness for all and champion social justice. For Latoya, movement is a powerful tool for healing, connection, and social change. Her work celebrates the strength and resilience of Black women while fostering a more inclusive and equitable world through the joy of movement.





MOVEMENT MATTERS COLLECTIVE

MOVEMENT MATTERS COLLECTIVE (MMC) offers a culturally-affirming approach to wellness exploration and a haven for those seeking mindful movement, accessible wellness, and a strong sense of belonging. With a particular focus on serving historically marginalized communities, especially Black and Brown women, MMC is dedicated to breaking down barriers and creating a space where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. Its workshops and community events foster connection, resilience, and self-discovery.

ELIZABETH MUNOZ

ELIZABETH is the CEO of Jr's Trauma Care Initiative, which she co-founded after her only child, Juan Carlos Munoz Jr, became a victim of gun violence in 2015. She coordinates the South Bay Leaders Alliance, serves as the San Diego chapter coordinator for Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, and leads the survivor network to Sacramento and Washington DC to advocate for survivor bills. A charge nurse for over twenty years, she works alongside her husband Carlos and enjoys leading special ministries in her church.



MAYA C. MURCHISON

MAYA is a young leader for diversity and equity. She participated in Black Students of California United for three years, most recently as president, and founded the African American Mentorship Program, a national award winning initiative to bridge the gap between high school and middle school students and foster a sense of belonging and pride for Black teens. A graduate of Eastlake High School, Maya enters UC Berkeley this fall as a Regents' and Chancellor's Scholar.

MARIKO NAKAWATASE

MARIKO is a dynamic, results-oriented professional dedicated to leadership development, community outreach, and strategic organizational management. Driven by a desire to empower others, she earned a degree in philosophy, politics, and law and an MPA from Arizona State University. She is actively involved in initiatives fostering meaningful dialogue and valuing everyone's perspectives. Whether organizing impactful community events or volunteering, she consistently contributes to the betterment of San Diego.



NANDI

As a nonprofit on a mission to serve, support, and empower Black women professionals and students in the community college system, **NANDI** stands at the intersection of misogyny and racism, armed and ready to dismantle harmful practices in educational spaces that are rooted in patriarchy and white supremacy. NANDI recognizes that the need for representation and engagement of Black women professionals and students is imperative in order to advance their unique issues in the community college system.

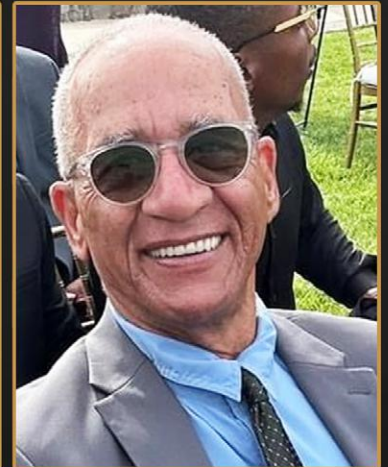


CHAROLETTE PATTON-LOGAN

CHAROLETTE is a community activist, advocate, and Certified Addiction Treatment Counselor with expertise in counseling, mentoring, and organizational vision boards. Her extensive experience includes founding and serving as artistic director of The High Steppers Drill Team, Inc and forming a transitional living program and family advocacy program. She has a master's in science, a dual bachelor's in social work and management, and associate degrees in science and behavioral sciences/alcohol and drug studies and office informational systems.

BARRY POLLARD

BARRY is a San Diego native who is president of the Urban Collaborative Project, which manages community-wide efforts to address health, social, and economic disparities among our families using a self-healing model. He is a former chairperson of the City of San Diego Citizens Advisory Board, member of the San Diego Police Department's Police Policies and Practices Commission, and Central Leadership co-chair for the County of San Diego.



RADY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

RADY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL-SAN DIEGO is a nonprofit pediatric care facility. Its mission is to restore, sustain, and enhance the health and developmental potential of children through excellence in care, education, research, and advocacy.





JESSE RAMIREZ

JESSE is a passionate community advocate and a land use policy expert. He has worked on numerous projects and policies that have resulted in millions of investment dollars for disadvantaged communities like City Heights that improve quality of life and increase community resilience for those who need it the most. In his free time, Jesse likes to volunteer with Ocean Discovery Institute and snorkeling at San Diego's beautiful beaches.

SAN DIEGO REFUGEE COMMUNITIES COALITION

Established in 2019, the **SAN DIEGO REFUGEE COMMUNITIES COALITION** (SDRCC) is a collective of ethnic-community based organizations with a vision to transform San Diego County into an equitable and accessible place where refugee communities thrive. SDRCC leads coordinated action that addresses structural inequities faced by refugee communities via its members, who have been on the front lines of providing essential services to low-income refugee families for years.



AGIN A. SHAHEED

AGIN is from an African American family that has been in residence in San Diego since 1887. He served as special advisor to the Commodore of US Naval Pacific Fleet Race and Human Relations, and at San Diego State University his roles included pupil advocate for improvement and achievement of African American males and program manager of race and human relations. Agin is a founding member of the San Diego Black Genealogy Society and currently serves as education director of the LA South Chamber of Commerce.

TARYELL SIMMONS

TARYELL is a champion for equity, diversity, and inclusion. He is the interim director of the County of San Diego Office of Equity and Racial Justice, hosts the RISE Urban Nation Podcast, and has led initiatives to foster diversity, including developing the "Inclusive Conversations for Leaders" toolkit after George Floyd's death to help leaders navigate difficult conversations about race in the workplace. Taryell's work promotes a culture where diversity thrives, ensuring every voice is valued.



LILIANA SORIANO GARISTA

LILIANA is currently the policy director at Youth Will, where she is leading its efforts to help minimize the gaps where youth are disconnected from education and the workforce and also helping youth use their voice to support bills that address the Tijuana River Valley crisis. A first-generation Latina born and raised in City Heights and a 2023 graduate of UCSD, Liliana's lived experiences inspire her organizing work to ensure she is helping underserved communities and youth reach their full potential.



JAMILA K. STOCKMAN, PHD, MPH

DR. STOCKMAN is a professor and vice chief of global public health at the UCSD School of Medicine. Her research has focused on understanding racial and ethnic disparities and improving health equity in HIV prevention and treatment and syndemic gender-based violence, substance abuse, and adverse mental health. As a Black woman in academia and health sciences, her lived experiences offer unique approaches to conducting research with and mentoring racial and ethnic populations and other disadvantaged populations.

TURQUOISE TEAGLE

After a ten-year career in the US Navy serving during DADT, **TURQUOISE** has focused their work on advocating for rights and equality for all. As a non-binary person of color, they faced bullying and medical mistreatment; their nine years of advocacy efforts helped open a new VA clinic dedicated to women's health. Turquoise's career is now devoted to helping more members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially those experiencing homelessness, and they currently serve as a case manager for Doors of Change.



MERCEDES L. TIGGS

MERCEDES is an educator, consultant, and Licensed Clinical Social Worker who is an assistant professor/behavioral health counselor at Palomar College and an adjunct social work professor at San Diego City College. She is the founder and owner of Eight16 Culinary Therapy, which is driven by a passion for transforming lives and building healthier, more mindful communities through the fusion of cooking, mindfulness, and holistic healing. She received her BS in criminal justice from SDSU and master's from USC.



XAVI VALDEZ

XAVI is the founder and executive director of Lambda Rising Soccer Club, a nonprofit offering inclusive soccer programs for youth and adults in the LGBTQ+ and Ally communities. She played soccer for the youth Mexican National Team, earned an NCAA Division I scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and built a coaching career in the Washington, DC area before moving to San Diego with her wife and daughter. Xavi holds a BS in sports management, a USSF C License, and a USC Advanced National Diploma.

WHAYLE MENTALITY LLC

WHAYLE MENTALITY was founded by entrepreneurs and former athletes who are dedicated to building a wealth mindset and creating opportunities. With a mission focused on education, experience, and engagement, the organization empowers individuals by sharing insights and fostering growth. By demystifying the path to success, they inspire their community to thrive and achieve their dreams.



JANELLE WILLIAMS MELENDREZ

JANELLE serves as the executive officer of equity and engagement at Southwestern College. A visionary leader and equity practitioner with an unwavering commitment to social justice, she works to nurture cultures of belonging and champion systemic change. Janelle serves on the board of NANDI, which is uplifting women of African ancestry in the community college system, and is co-president of (R)EVOLVE Consulting, which helps organizations nationwide to operationalize equity and inclusion practices

JACINTA WONG

JACINTA is a dedicated leader with a rich background in community service, nonprofit management, and government work. Originally from Chicago, she learned the importance of community, cultural preservation, and civic engagement from an early age. Since relocating to San Diego in 2023, Jacinta has taken on the role of executive director of the San Diego Chinese Historical Museum where she aims to foster dialogues that promote peace and have a positive social impact.



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ASL Interpretation: Deaf Community Services

Catering: Feast on This

Desserts: Maya's Cookies

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Florist: Rackley's Floral and Gifts

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Photographer: Ale Uzarraga

Nominator Studio Sessions: The MK Lab

Videographer: Solorio Film



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