



*400 Years of
African American
History Commission
Distinguished 400 Award*

This accolade is intended to recognize the distinguished members of our society who have served their community through non-profit, philanthropy, public service, and volunteerism while implementing a positive influence benefiting those in an underserved population. We respectfully highlight the resilience and contributions of these nominees.

Nominees

Cassandra Newby-Alexander - Professor of history at Norfolk State University. She received her B.A. from the University of Virginia and her Ph.D. from the College of William and Mary in May 1992. Since then, the Norfolk, Virginia native has focused much of her research and writing on the history of African Americans in Virginia.

Clarence Avant - is an American music executive, entrepreneur, and film producer. Avant was famously known for managing prominent singers such as Little Willie John, jazz singer Sarah Vaughan, Kim Weston, Luiz Bonfá, Wynnton Kelly, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Pat Thomas, rock and roll pioneer Tom Wilson, whom Avant partnered with in the Wilson Organization, jazz producer Creed Taylor, and Jimmy Smith. Mr. Avant has also received awards such as; Thurgood Marshall Lifetime achievement award, Living Legends award, Honorary Doctorate from Morehouse University, and was inducted into the NAACP Hall of Fame. His willingness to aid newcomers has made him a remarkable and well respected man in his field.

Eurica Huggins Axum - is the co-founder and Director of International Affairs for the African Diaspora Ancestral Commemoration Institute (ADACI), a twenty-five-year-old Washington, DC nonprofit community-based educational and cultural organization. She has interactions with local, national and world-renowned scholars, artists, cultural institutions, as well as government and community leaders. She established branches of ADACI in Senegal, Nigeria and Brazil. Ms. Axum is co-founder of the International Coalition for the Commemoration of African Ancestors of the Middle Passage (ICAAMP). She also serves as a Board Member as well as a Chair for the Pan African Diaspora Women's Association (PADWA).

Raymond H. Boone - founded the Free Press, a weekly newspaper widely read in Richmond's African-American community, in 1992. The newspaper won several honors for excellence in journalism. Mr. Boone was an editor and vice president of the Baltimore-based Afro-American Newspaper Group and twice served as a Pulitzer Prize jurist. Boone taught journalism at Howard University in Washington D.C., he was inducted into the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame, one of many individual honors he won. In a statement, Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones commended Boone for offering readers "a window into the world of black Richmond."

Willie Brown - has been an extraordinary example of achievements for African-Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the nation. He was speaker of the house for the state of California, and the Mayor of San Francisco. He has been an inspiration and helped many in the San Francisco area. A school was named in his honor. Willie L. Brown Jr. Middle School helps children low-income children, and the school is also within the top 100 middle schools in California.

Reuben J. Boyd, Jr. - is Pastor of Third Street Bethel A.M.E. church, in Richmond, VA. He co-founded Clergy Against Racism. The Clergy consist of Christians, Jewish, Muslims and other religions. Through worship and fellowship clergy against racism are empowering the people in Richmond to fight racism.

London Breed - is the first African American female Mayor in San Francisco, and she was the director of the African American Art & Culture Complex.

Jerome Bridges - is a park ranger and historical interpreter at Historic Jamestowne. For more than 30 years, Mr. Bridges has been bringing lesser-known stories to light, feeling a responsibility to give voice to black Americans, whose contributions as important players in the course of U.S. history have often been marginalized and overlooked.

Amos Brown - is the president of the San Francisco NAACP and the pastor of Third Street Baptist Church. His congregation goes into the community to house the homeless every night. Mr Brown has been an African American civil rights advocate for many years within the San Francisco Bay Area.

Sheyann Webb Christburg - was named the “Smallest Freedom Fighter” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At age eight, Sheyann would sneak out of her house to attend mass meetings. She was the youngest participant to take part in the first historical attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery also known as “Bloody Sunday”. She also participated on the “Turn Around Tuesday March.” She later authored a book illustrating her experience entitled Selma Lord Selma. The book was turned into a 1999 television movie.

Christy Coleman - began her career at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, eventually serving as director of interpretive program development while overseeing all programming and tours in the historic area. Ms. Coleman served as president and CEO of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. She was named president and CEO of the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar in Richmond in 2008. In 2013, Coleman helped orchestrate the merger of the American Civil War Center with the Museum of the Confederacy to create the American Civil War Museum, which is located in Richmond and Appomattox. In 2019 Time magazine featured Coleman on a list of “31 People Who Are Changing the South.”

Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon** - was a pioneer in the religious/spiritual movement in New Thought in the early 1950's. She was directly responsible for integrating a major New Thought educational organization in 1955 that began to open doors for other African Americans seeking to gain education in religious /spiritual thought. Rev. Colemon went on to build a movement as the founder of several large organizations within the African-American New Thought movement, including Christ Universal Temple (CUT) and the Universal Foundation for Better Living (UFBL). The Johnnie Colemon Theological Seminary is named in her honor.

Doris D. Crenshaw - is an icon of the civil rights movement and Rosa Parks protégé, born in Montgomery, Alabama. She became a youth organizer during the Montgomery bus boycott. Ms Crenshaw works with African American leaders, youth, and members of the community.

Frank Davie - In 1979, helped expand the Black Hair Care Industry by creating a revolutionary product line called “Worlds of Curls”. His products helped expand not only the african american market but also the Hair Care Industries for “People of Color” throughout the world. Mr. Davie has donated almost half a million dollars in scholarships to African American youth.

Mark Dean, Ph.D. - is an IBM engineer who helped create the hardware that allowed peripheral accessories like printers, disk drives, and keyboards to be plugged directly into the computer. He holds three of IBM's original nine Personal Computer patents. His later breakthroughs included work that led to the creation of the color PC monitor and the first gigahertz chip, which allows a machine to compute a billion calculations per second and is instrumental in everything from computer systems to gaming consoles today.

Vincent deForest - In 1970, DeForest and his late brother, Robert, established what became the Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation and Community Development in Washington. For 18 years, working with the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Historic American Buildings Survey, the institute conducted national studies that led to more than 60 sites in 22 states and the District of Columbia being designated national historic landmarks. Through his work and that of his brother, home of the first African American woman, Maggie Walker, a pioneering black civic leader and banker in Richmond, Virginia, was named a national historic landmark in the National Park System.

Dorothy DeWitty** - served Tulsa Public Schools for over thirty years as secretary, Librarian, and Counselor at Charles S. Johnson Elementary school, and as Principal at Walt Whitman Elementary School. She was also the Senior Bookkeeper of the Negro Teachers Credit Union. Additionally, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. member authored the historical account of Tulsa entitled Tale of Two Cities, North and South. Mrs. DeWitty made historical contributions as a member of the Inaugural Tulsa City Council, as President of the League of Women Voters, and as a Trustee for the University Center at Tulsa. She served on many boards and was chosen as Director of the North Tulsa Action Agency.

Leon Dixon - is an author, scholar and mentor for many, he is the cofounder of the Kansas City chapter of Black United Front and Kansas City chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is the co-founder of the WEB DuBois Learning Center (TLC) that is entering its 47th year of providing tutoring and enrichment services to a largely African American youth and adults since 1973. Most amazing was his ability and community influence to attract and retain gifted and well educated staff (some still in place over the years) willing to volunteer time, talent and resources .

Colita N. Fairfax - is a professor at Norfolk State University. She has twenty years of experience in higher education, with a successful track record in teaching, publishing, and research. Her publishing and research reflect her interests to create technical knowledge in areas of theory, policy and practice.

Benjamin Foster, Jr., Ph.D. - has a long successful career of service and leadership in education and the advancement of multicultural education, African American studies, educational equity and social justice through education. Dr. Benjamin Foster Jr. initiated the successful introduction and passage of the historic legislation infusing the study and teaching of African American history\studies in the Public High Schools in the State of Connecticut. He spearheaded the legislative initiative by sponsoring the first Connecticut statewide event commemorating the 400 years of the African American history per Public Law 115-102.

Norman Francis Ph.D. - was the longest tenured President of any college or university (1968-2015) before he retired as President of Xavier University, by which time he had been visited and commemorated by Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, Jesse Jackson, and Pope John Paul II. He is also a United States veteran and lawyer. Mr. Francis also served as chair of the HBCU Capital Financing Advisory Board and on the Louisiana Recover Authority to oversee the recovery of Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina devastated the state.

Henry Louis "Skip" Gates - is an American literary critic, professor, and filmmaker. He serves as the director of the Hutchins Center for African American Research at Harvard University. Gates has created fifteen documentary films, including the Wonders of the African World, African American Lives, Faces of America, Black in Latin America, and Finding Your Roots. He has also written leading publications for the New Yorker.

David Givens - is the Director of Archaeology for Jamestown Rediscovery. He specializes in visualizing lost landscapes of Colonial Virginia and currently is directing the archaeology of the Angela site, an excavation focused on one of the first Africans to arrive at Jamestown in 1619. Mr. Givens holds a master's degree with distinction in historical archaeology from the University of Leicester.

Ulysses Lee “Rip” Gooch - is a former pilot, aviation entrepreneur, and Kansas politician. Gooch was a member of the Kansas Commission on Civil Rights, 1971–74; member of the Wichita City Council, 1989–93; and a Kansas state senator (D-Wichita, 29th District - central-northeast Wichita) from 1993 until retiring in January 2004 as the state’s oldest serving senator, at 80. Gooch was one of the first inductees to the Black Aviation Hall of Fame

William B. Grace- “Samori Toure” - has been an avid researcher, historian and mentor for many. Mr. Grace is co-founder and Executive Director (now retired) of the WEB DuBois Learning Center (DLC) that is entering its 47th year of providing tutoring and enrichment services to a largely African American youth and adult underserved population since 1973. DLC’s Mission is: “...is to raise the performance of underserved communities through supplemental education services and computer technology to hundreds of children in the Kansas City area each year and has developed and matured as an institution and educational resource in the community.”

Lois Gregory - Is the owner of The Learning Tree Cultural Preparatory School, a black owned private school that has been running for 40 years. The Learning Tree Cultural Preparatory School is the only black owned private institution school in the country. The school is notable for being the only school to incorporate African and African American History in its curriculum. Gregory has traveled with hundreds of students abroad for educational purposes. Her students assumed prominent roles as writers, doctors, lawyers, and positions in the medical field. The school is assisting to children with disabilities.

Hugh Harrell III** - was one of the co-founders of the Weyanoke Association for Red-Black History and Culture. He was also a singer and co-founder of Legacy Weyanoke. Mr. Harrell was known as a musician, storyteller, community activist, and historian that insisted that African Americans should tell the story of their history.

Bishop Henry Hearns - was born to sharecropper parents in Byhalia, Mississippi. Hearn, who originally only completed a 6th grade education, ultimately became a graduate of Tennessee State University. He served 50 years as Senior Pastor of Livingstone Cathedral. Bishop Hearn was elected to four consecutive terms on the Lancaster City Council. He went on to serve for 10 years as Vice Mayor and two terms as Mayor. He is currently serving as the Mayor Emeritus being the only African American to be elected and serve the City of Lancaster, California.

Gerri Hollins** - was a lifelong singer and educator of Hampton Roads’ contraband slave history. Former Vice President of Citizens for Fort Monroe National Park and founder of the Contraband Historical Society, an organization aimed at locating descendants of contraband slaves.

Carlyle Holder - Is an executive leader with 37 years of involvement in criminal justice. Within the last 27 years with the United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, he acted as a supervisor, manager, and executive. For 12 years he served as the Chief Executive Officer. Holder became the first known retired federal African American warden to formally launch a life’s work to help assist returning citizens who were once incarcerated at his duty station. He strived to assist them in their transition back to their communities, families, and the workplace.

Senator Maxine Cissel Horner - served in the Oklahoma State Legislature for over 18 years before retiring. Senator Horner was the first African American Women Senator for Oklahoma. She held the position as Democratic Caucus Chair, Vice Chair, Adult Literacy Advisory Comm, Appropriations, Education and Chair, Government Operations, Judiciary, Redistricting, Congressional Redistricting and Tourism. Senator Horner is best known for commitment to education and the arts. She is the founder of the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame located in downtown Tulsa in the historic and restored train depot building – The Jazz Depot celebrated its 20th year. She has received numerous awards including being inducted into the Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma Afro-American Hall of Fame in 1999. Senator Horner spearheaded the creation of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, a body that met between 1997 and 2001 to find facts and make recommendations about the Tulsa disaster.

Jawana Jackson - is the CEO of The Jackson Home in Selma, Alabama. It became the official residence for social and human rights leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ambassador Andrew J. Young, Dr. Ralph Bunche, two of which became Nobel Peace Prize recipients. At the time of the Selma to Montgomery March, the home was owned and occupied by Dr. and Mrs. Sullivan Jackson, a local dentist and educator and their 5 year old daughter Jawana. During the Selma Movement the Jackson's risked their lives to support The Voting Rights Movement in America. The home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Bob Johnson - has been bringing cultural events to the Atlanta Metro for three decades. He founded and developed the World Natural Hair, Health & Beauty Show and helped to put natural hair on the map as a professional business and an industry. Bob started the Juneteenth Atlanta non-profit organization in 2012. His goal is to offer a Juneteenth celebration in Atlanta Georgia that can accommodate the Southeastern United States. Bob, along with his team, is on track in pursuing his vision of building the Juneteenth Atlanta Black History Parade into one of the largest and most significant parades anywhere.

Fred Jordan - was the founder of the African American Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco. Mr. Jordan has helped many people secure jobs and San Francisco city contracts. He has stood up for Labor laws and a number of other civil rights causes within the San Francisco community.

Sadie Roberts-Joseph - was the founder/curator of the Odell S. William's Now and Then African American Museum, educating her community and visitors from around the world about African American history and culture. She also founded Community Against Drugs and Violence (CADAV); a grassroots organization created to provide a safe haven for children living in Baton Rouge's drug infested neighborhoods. In 2003, in her capacity as Louisiana State Director of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJOF), Roberts-Joseph was instrumental in the creation and passage of Louisiana's legislation recognizing Juneteenth as a state holiday to commemorate the emancipation of freed slaves. In 2019, she was part of the Louisiana planning group that created the 2019 River Walk in association with the 400 Years of African American History Commission's "LET'S TALK" - The International Day of Drumming and Healing.

Tom Joyner - is the creator and lead personality of the The Tom Joyner Morning Show. Beginning in 1994 the show started airing in syndication with over 4 million listeners. Tom Joyner was elected into the Radio Hall of Fame. He has received Impact Magazine's "Joe Loris Award" for Excellence in Broadcasting. He has received Billboard's "Best Urban Contemporary Air Personality" award. Impact Magazine's "Best DJ of the Year Award" was renamed "The Tom Joyner Award" because he received it so many times. The Tom Joyner Foundation has raised more than \$60 million to help keep students in historically black colleges and universities. The Foundation, just like the morning show, his website, events and his other endeavors, exists to "super serve" the African American community.

Gaylene Kaynoton - is a native of Detroit Michigan & a graduate of Hampton University and the Civic Leadership Institute. Gaylene has lived in Hampton Virginia for almost 30 years. Gaylene is the President of Gaylene, LLC - Management & Marketing Company. She is active in the community and serves on the Board of several state and local organizations the Executive Board for the Urban League of Hampton Roads, 1st Vice President for the Hampton NAACP, serves on the Hampton Arts Commission, serves on the Hampton Child Development Center Board, and serves on the Chesapeake Bay Academy Board

Reverend William Lawson - is a retired pastor who created an institute in an effort to better his community. He involved himself in the Civil Rights movement when he and fourteen other Tennessee State University students held a sit-in to protest segregation at a lunch counter. In honor of his dedication the community named a non-profit institution the William A. Lawson Institute which served as a preparatory academy for boys.

Angel Lee - is the founder of Beautiful Human Hair foundation which provides cancer patients with wigs. She has also been a victim rights activist for many years and provides clothing for victims.

Opal Lee - started as an educator in the Fort Worth ISD and was promoted to a counselor after acquiring her master's degree. After retirement she formed a nonprofit organization called Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity that focused on providing affordable housing for families and employment referral opportunities for those who needed it. Ms. Lee helped establish the Tarrant County Historical & Genealogical Society and has served on the Habitat for Humanity and the Metroplex Food Bank board. She is credited with saving the Metroplex food bank when it was destroyed by arson by continuing to deliver food to families in need. She was made the board chairman of the renamed Community Food Bank which services 500 families a day.

Samella Lewis - has expresses the African American's struggle and culture through her art. Lewis earned her Masters degree in 1948 and in 1951 she became the first African American woman to receive a doctorate in fine arts and art history. Senator Mamie Locke - African-American politician and educator. Senator Locke was a member of the Hampton, Virginia city council 1996–2004, and mayor 2000–2004. Since 2004, she has been a member of the Senate of Virginia from the 2nd district.

Senator Kevin L. Matthews - Senator Matthews founded and spearheads the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, designed to commemorate the catastrophic 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre that devastated Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District--"Black Wall Street". The Centennial Commission is rekindling the spirit of entrepreneurship while cultivating cultural tourism by: (1) developing opportunities for African American business and commerce; (2) creating informational and teaching/learning offerings that build the community's historical knowledge base, including a teacher's institute and curricular materials; (3) building a world-class, experiential museum; (4) enhancing Greenwood District infrastructure and connectivity; and (5) fostering community collaboration and collective impact.

Alden McDonald - is a business man and banker. He is the founder and CEO of Liberty Bank and Trust Company, headquartered in New Orleans, La. and has over ten branches in other cities and states. He is a distinguished member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Debarah McFarland - has spent most of her life helping her community in need. Before founding the nonprofit, Dream Girls Academy Inc, she was engaged with helping youth, wives/mothers and families with academic challenges, finding legal help for the youth with juvenile delinquency issues, mentoring African American youth through anger management training and self-love. She has often fed those physically hungry out of her own kitchen. Mrs. McFarland is an active member of her local church and works full time for the City of Champaign Illinois.

Colonel Charles McGee - is a retired African-American fighter pilot who was one of the Tuskegee Airmen and a career officer in the United States Air Force for 30 years who flew a total of 409 combat missions in World War II, Korea and Vietnam

Leland Melvin - is an American engineer and retired NASA astronaut. After retiring from the astronaut corps with over 500 space hours, Mr. Melvin held several administrative positions at NASA including Associate Administrator for Education. In this role, Mr. Melvin was responsible for the development and implementation of NASA's education programs that inspire interest in science and technology. Mr. Melvin's is dedicated to STEM/STEAM education goals and committed to inspiring communities to create positive change. Mr. Melvin is an accomplished photographer, motivational speaker and best-selling author of Chasing Space.

Sybil Haydel Morial - involvement in human and civil rights dates back to the early 1950s. At that time, shortly after the Brown v Board of Education decision, Mrs. Morial participated in some of the first tests for integration of New Orleans' universities, attempting to enroll at both Tulane and Loyola. In 1962, when the Louisiana Legislature enacted racist laws in response to the court decisions outlawing segregation, she was the lone plaintiff in a successful challenge to a statute prohibiting public school teachers from being involved in any organization advocating integration.

Rev. Ronald V. Myers, Sr. M.D.** - is recognized as the leader of the Modern Juneteenth Movement in America, was a physician, medical missionary, Baptist minister, jazz musician, composer and human rights activist. He became the first ordained and commissioned medical missionary to America's poorest region, the Mississippi Delta, by the Wisconsin Baptist Pastors Conference and Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church, in Milwaukee, in 1990. Arriving in Mississippi, he opened clinics and he founded the American Pain Institute and the Myers Foundation For Indigent Health Care & Community Development. Under his leadership, the Washington Juneteenth Congressional Event was held by the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation, Juneteenth America, Inc. & the National Association of Juneteenth Jazz Presenters. He was the founder and chairman of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation National Juneteenth Holiday Campaign, and the National Juneteenth Christian Leadership Council.

Wade Nobles Ph.D. - is a pre-eminent scholar who has been facilitating the mental health and well-being of people of African descent for over 50 years. His theoretical propositions and scholarly writings have been aimed at healing the rupture and extending the splendor of the Afrikan Spirit. Dr. Nobles is the author of African Psychology: Toward its Reclamation, Reascension and Revitalization, Seeking the Sakhu: Foundational Writings in African Psychology, The Island of Memes: Haiti's Unfinished Revolution. Since 1996, he has co-led "The Enyimnyam Project", a unique and special study-development project designed to connect Africans from the Diaspora with Africans from the continent. He is one of the founders of the Association of Black Psychologists and Professor Emeritus of Africana Studies at San Francisco State University. Additionally, he is the founder and Executive Director of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Black Family, Life, and Culture, Inc.

Glenn Oder - is the Executive Director of the Fort Monroe Authority. From 2002–2012 he served in the Virginia House of Delegates, representing the 94th district in the city of Newport News.

Rev. Wheeler Parker Jr. - Rev. Parker is the last living witness to the kidnapping of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old African-American from Chicago who was abducted and lynched in Mississippi in 1955 after being accused of flirting with a young white woman. Born in Schlater, Mississippi, and reared in Chicago, Parker traveled with Till by train to the Mississippi Delta to visit relatives in August 1955. Parker, 16, and Till went to Bryant Grocery and Meat Market in Money, Mississippi, to purchase candy. Till allegedly whistled at Carolyn Bryant at the store. Four days later, Till was abducted at gunpoint from his great-uncle Moses Wright's home, with Parker present. Till's body was found in the Tallahatchie River soon after. An all-white, all-male jury acquitted Roy Bryant, wife of Carolyn, and his half-brother, J. W. Milam, of the murder charges that September.

Calvin Pearson - is a lifelong resident of Hampton, Virginia, Mr. Pearson values the importance of history. He has worked as a community organizer for over 40 years with various organizations, such as The Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Pearson is the founder and CEO of Project 1619, which is raising funds to commission and erect a Memorial in 2019 in remembrance of the 400th anniversary of the Africans first landing in 1619. The Memorial will be placed at Fort Monroe near the original landing site, formerly known as Point Comfort.

Mark Perreault - Is accepting this award on behalf of the Citizens for Fort Monroe National Park. This organization had a key role in advancing the preservation of the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources at Fort Monroe

Renee Raspanti - is a retired educator from the Point Option School in Newport News, VA. The Point Option School program offers a unique opportunity for students to experience teaching and learning in a non-traditional way. Ms. Raspanti was dedicated to giving her students varied life-lessons and created learning opportunities that instilled a sense of accomplishment and pride in their work.

Representative Don Ross - civil rights activist and journalist, was first elected to the Oklahoma State Legislature in 1982. During his 20-year career as a legislator, Ross focused primarily on education, the arts, labor relations, economic development, and affirmative action. He has also struggled to improve health services, social services, and cultural opportunities for African Americans and other minorities. Among the laws Ross has authored were Oklahoma's first affirmative action law, establishing preferences for minority vendors, and goals for higher education. Ross helped to establish a state holiday honoring the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and lobbied to have Interstate 244, which runs along the border of the Greenwood district of Tulsa, renamed for King. Ross was also the principal author of legislation updating Oklahoma's child labor laws. Representative Ross spearheaded the creation of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, a body that met between 1997 and 2001 to find facts and make recommendations about the Tulsa disaster.

Marvin S. Robinson II - tried for decades to get national recognition for the Quindaro Ruins in Kansas City, Kansas. Quindaro Ruins, once a stop on the Underground Railroad, was recently designated as part of a National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. In February 2019, Mr. Robinson stood in the back of the crowd humbled and speechless, as the new plaque was unveiled, designating the town site as a National Commemorative Site.

Wanda Sabir - is a journalist, author, and college professor in Alameda, California. She is also a Depth Psychologist, with deep roots in the bayous of Louisiana where she was born. Her interests and expertise are trauma and trauma healing—the Maafa, specifically ancestral memories, dream tending and the use of art to stimulate those forgotten conversations, especially among Diaspora descendants. She is co-founder of MAAFA San Francisco Bay Area, in its 24th Season October 2019, and co-founder of The International Coalition for the Commemoration of African Ancestors of the Middle Passage. She is a Transformative Justice (TJ) or Community Accountability facilitator and believes the true revolution starts at home.

Katherine Carper Sawyer - is one of the plaintiffs in the famous Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision in 1954. While most attention was focused on Linda Brown's central role in the most important school desegregation case in the nation's history, Carper in 1952 testified at the request of NAACP lead attorney Thurgood Marshall, in crucial preliminary court cases in her home town of Topeka, Kansas that ultimately led to the U.S. Supreme Court decision. Katherine Carper Sawyer played a special role in the historic Brown versus the Board of Education case. It might have been because Carper was likely of the oldest of the six children. When the Supreme Court decision was handed down on May 17, 1954, Carper was finishing the sixth grade and next year who would attend a Topeka junior high school, and upper level Topeka schools were already integrated. Only Topeka elementary schools were segregated pre Topeka v BOE.

Kathy J. Spangler - is a nationally recognized leader with more than 35 years of experience in public and non-profit management, most recently as vice president of Save the Children in Washington, D.C., and currently serving as the director of the 2019 Commemoration marking the 400th anniversary of four landmark events in Virginia history.

Daniel Stevens - is a researcher and Public Historian dedicated to highlighting and showcasing the Color of History. Daniel Stevens (also known as Truthstorian) is one who is committed to uncovering Hidden and Untold History. There is more to the story than what you learned in History Class.

Chris J. Suggs - At 19-years-old, Chris is a nonprofit CEO, award-winning speaker, community leader, and neighborhood hope dealer. Since 2014, Chris has served as the Founder & CEO of Kinston Teens, a nonprofit organization focused on youth empowerment and community development. Chris is the Chairman of Black Youth Network, Inc., a national nonprofit with a mission of connecting and empowering young African-American leaders, and since 2016 has served as the youngest commissioner on the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission.

Erika Taylor - is the founder of Kansas City Call To Action and Member of the National Negro Baseball League donation committee. She serves on various boards and does all she can to meet the needs of others.

Emelda Tolbert - has over 20 years of community service providing support, engagement, and mentoring to hurting women providing targeted support for those struggling with cancer either in hospice, undergoing chemo, or seeking natural supports as well as providing women on a journey out of domestic violence into a healthier life and employment.

Bishop Mark C. Tolbert - is Pastor of Victorious Life Church, the Diocesan Bishop of the Heart of America Council of Churches (MO/KS), 1st Assistant Presiding Bishop of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, President of Sparrow CDC, Founder and Director of Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy Charter School, an accredited School District with a yearly waiting list of students to be enrolled, and on the Board of Commissioners for the Kansas City Police Department. He supports and encourage success in the areas of entrepreneurship, debt cancellation, responsible money management and balance budget in all areas and levels of his influence with youth and adults.

Vincent A. Tucker - is an entrepreneur. He currently serves as Chairman of the Central Regional Advisory Committee for the Carolina Virginia Minority Supplier Development Council and serves on the Board of Directors for the Central Virginia Better Business Bureau. Mr Tucker is the owner of Quality Moving Services.

Rev. Jesse C. Turner - is the first African American in Pine Bluff to receive two MLK Drum Major Awards from two presidential administrations (Obama and Trump). Mr. Turner is the recipient of the "Coin of Excellence" bestowed by Bud Cummins the United States Attorney, Eastern District of Arkansas. Rev. Turner spearheaded the naming of a portion of Interstate I-530 in honor of the late Wiley A. Branton, Sr. Rev. Turner is credited with bringing five national programs to the city: Pine Bluff National Ten Point PEN OR PENCIL Expansion Hub; Pine Bluff CARES Mentoring Movement; NAFJ PEN OR PENCIL Initiative; Pine Bluff Weed and Seed; and the 400 Years of African American History Commission activities.

Claude Vann, III - is a former Hampton University assistant professor of Military Science. After he retired from the Army in 1998, he served at Hampton University before accepting a position at Newport News Shipbuilding. In 2008 he took an early retirement, and accepted a voluntary recall to active duty, during which he was the Chief, Family Housing at Fort Monroe until the installation closed in 2011. He was also inducted into the US ROTC Hall of Fame.

District Elder William Vann Ph.D. - For over twenty years has been involved in the design, support, and implementation of programs to strengthen and encourage young people with a specific focus on young men. He has directed his emphasis towards the plight and hopelessness that is plaguing young men in our society. Vann specializes in young men between the ages of eleven and twenty that live in urban environments. He believes that every young man has seed potential to become great they just need someone to cultivate that potential.

Galyn A. Vesey, Ph.D. - was a participant in the legendary Dockum Drug Store "sit-in" during the summer of 1958. As a retiree, Dr. Vesey has developed what he calls the "Research on Black Wichita: 1945-1958" project. Utilizing a wide va-

riety of source materials, including focus group methodology, individual interviews and various types of documentary evidence, Vesey is completing a manuscript that focuses upon five areas: education; socio-cultural activity; business and economic development; political activity; and religious institutions and spiritual foundations. As he states on the project's website, his primary intent is to "assist Wichita's Black pioneers in telling their own stories.

Wally's Jazz Café - is one of the oldest family owned jazz clubs in America. It serves as an important community gathering place and is considered by many to be a training ground for up-and-coming musicians from local colleges including the renowned Berklee College of Music. Wally's is piloting an education program entitled the Student to Student Music Project where children are exposed to the fast-paced, high-energy world of Jazz music through instruction by student musicians. The Bostonian Society has honored Wally's with a historic marker and the Museum of African American history will feature Wally's in an exhibit this fall.

Dr. Gladys Mae West Ph.D. - is among a small group of women who did computing for the U.S. military in the era before electronic systems. Hired in 1956 as a mathematician at the U.S. Naval Weapons Laboratory, she participated in a path-breaking, award-winning astronomical study that proved, during the early 1960s, the regularity of Pluto's motion relative to Neptune. Thereafter, from the mid-1970s through the 1980s, using complex algorithms to account for variations in gravitational, tidal, and other forces that distort Earth's shape, she programmed an IBM 7030 "Stretch" computer to deliver increasingly refined calculations for an extremely accurate geodetic Earth model, a geoid, optimized for what ultimately became the Global Positioning System (GPS) orbit..

Al Williams - is the president of the African-American Historical and Cultural Society. Mr. Williams has worked tirelessly to bring history of African-Americans within the San Francisco community preserving the past and motivating our young people about our future.

William Wiggins - is a historian and scholar of American, African American, Russian, African, Urban, Oral, Social and Intellectual, and Comparative histories, among others. He is the CEO of Cliosult and Associates, and continues to write, teach, character act, and lecture.

All Nominees

Cassandra Newby-Alexander
Clarence Ava
Eurica Huggins Axum
Ray Boone
Reuben J. Boyd, Jr.
London Breed
Jerome Bridges
Amos Brown
Willie Brown
Wally's Jazz Cafe
Christy Coleman
Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon
Mr. Frank Davie
Dorothy DeWitty**
Vincent Deforest
Leon Dixon
Colita Fairfax
Dr. Benjamin Foster, Jr.
Henry Louis Gates
Willam Grace
Lois Gregory
David Givens
Ulysses Lee "Rip" Gooch**
Hugh Harrell**
Gerri Hollins
Senator Maxine Cissel Horner
Bob Johnson
Fred Jordan
Sadie Roberts-Joseph
Tom Joyner
Gaylene Kaynoton
Rev. William Lawson
Angela Lee
Opal Lee
Samella Lewis

Mamie Lock
Senator Kevin L. Matthews
Leland Melvin
Alden McDonal
Debarah McFarland
Charles McGee
Hugh Molly
Sybil Haydel Morial
Dr. Ron Myers**
Rev. Ronald V. Myers, Sr. M.D.
Wade Nobles
Dr. Wade Nobles
Glenn Oder
Calvin Pearson
Mark Perrault
Renee Raspanti
Mr. Marvin S. Robinson II
Representative Don Ross
Wanda Sabir
Katherine Carper Sawyer
Kathy Spangler
Daniel Stevens
Chris J. Suggs
Erika Taylor
Emelda Tolbert
Bishop Mark C. Tolbert
Vincent Tucker
Rev. Jesse C. Turner
Claude Vann
William Vann
Dr. Galyn A. Vesey, PhD.
Wally's Café
Molly Ward
Bill Wiggins
Al Williams

**Deceased

The 400 Years of African - American History Commission is a federally authorized committee officially enacted by Public Law 115-102 as signed by the President of the United States in January 2018. The Secretary of the Interior is charged with providing oversight which occurs through the National Park Service. The Commission is tasked to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities throughout the United States to recognize and highlight the resilience and contributions of African- Americans since 1619. The Commission is to lead efforts to acknowledge the impact that slavery and the laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States, educate the public about the arrival of Africans in the United States; and encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, economic, and other organizations throughout the United States to participate in commemorative activities.