

BlueSKY

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2023 **INAUGURAL ISSUE!**



THERE ARE ALWAYS BLUE SKIES

BEYOND WHAT WE SEE



THE BLUESKY ORIGIN STORY

A behind-the-scenes look at
the BlueSKY collaborators

BLUESKY GOES HOME

with President Michael J. Sorrell:
A Modern Day Super Hero

PLUS

Reimagining Balance
Dialogue with Dr. Z
Moving Forward
Reflections
... and more!

For Karl and Julie Molock, thinking big is looking beyond what they see. Looking back, they see the impact their grandparents had on their entire family, from education to entrepreneurship.

Read more on page 6.

BY THE BOOK

Notable releases and reviews

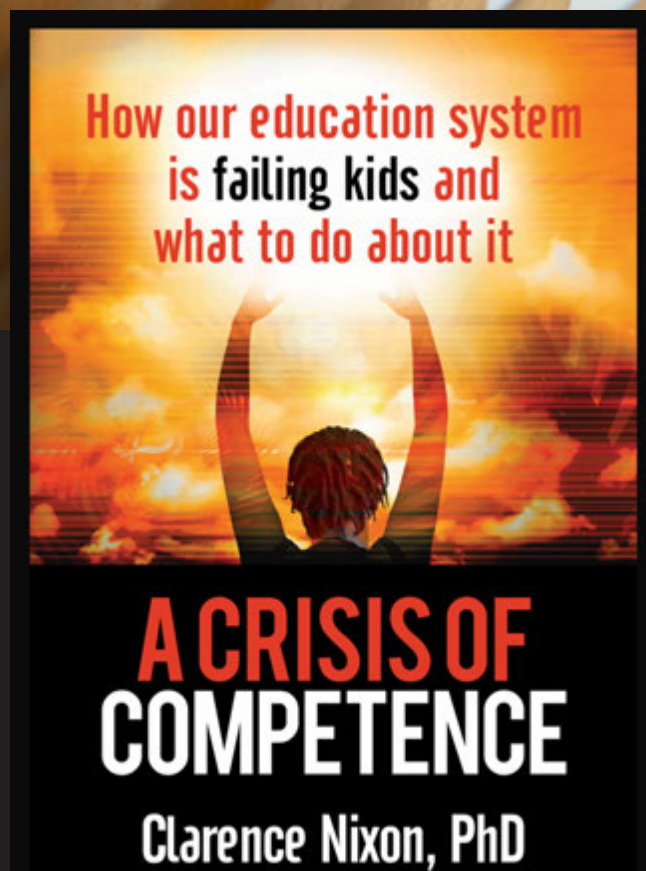
Trends in standardized test scores reveal an alarming truth: our educational system is failing our students, and America is falling behind other nations in producing competent students for a global economy. Author Dr Clarence Nixon Jr. is a professional educator and consultant to Fortune 500 companies. After seeing the trend and developing a highly successful educational non-profit to reverse it, he wrote both to challenge and inspire in business and civic arenas, together with educators and parents, to reverse the decline in student competence. The author's proven track record with t.Lab can light the way for everyone engaged with the education of American youth.

As measured by standardized tests, our students' core competencies have been trending down for decades. Simultaneously, other nations' students are outperforming those of America. Unless this changes, America will suffer greatly.

The several influences producing this threatening juxtaposition must be identified. The needed paradigm shift must be laid bare for parents, educators, and administrators to implement. The threatening influences must be disarmed and made to support student excellence.

Many examples of success, from the author's own educational non-profit, prove that the competency decline is reversible. Time-tested wisdom has produced civilizations and movements, from the Bible to Martin Luther King Jr, and many in-between.

America's future can be rescued when the educational years produce competent students. Although the challenges discourage many, the author provides the path to new faith in education.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Clarence Nixon Jr. is the Founder and CEO of t.Lab, a high-performance learning laboratory for families and students from pre-kindergarten through undergraduate. t.Lab was established to increase the competitiveness of US based students while leveraging a global leadership model. He is also the Managing Partner of CNC Group LLC, a management consulting firm specializing in "business transformation" turnaround management, as well as co-Chairman of Acquire One LLC, a Michigan-based private equity firm. Dr. Nixon is a past President and CEO of Real Times, Inc, one of the largest African American Newspaper chains within the U.S. Possessing a wide range of management and technology skills, Dr. Nixon is regarded for his general management skills including marketing, product development, engineering, manufacturing, sales, finance, human resources and information technology.

02 BY THE BOOK

Notable releases and reviews

05 WELCOME TO BLUESKY
06 BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

There's so much more we can be

14 HBCUS KNOW 'Y'

HBCUs and the YMCA will revive, reclaim and preserve our collaborative history

32 BLUESKY GOES HOME WITH

President Michael J. Sorrell
A Modern Day Super Hero

42 REINVENTING BALANCE

Keeping things level with Jes Averhart

44 BLUESKY CREATIVE STUDIO

It's not just fonts and colors

46 THE DIALOGUE WITH DOCTOR Z

Talking Health Equity Hot Topics
with Today's Health Equity Leaders

48 WHO IS DOCTOR Z?
68 MOVING FORWARD

Enhancement and Performance
Coaching with Jayson Wells

70 REFLECTIONS

Updates from our first year



BlueSKY Collaborative Partners (BSCP) is a national full-service fundraising consultancy, specializing in brand-focused, strategic leadership and customized solutions in areas that are critical to your success.

Our team is an extraordinary group of thought leaders with unique perspectives, based upon incredibly diverse backgrounds, lived experiences and long tenure with some of the largest and most impactful organizations in the world. The BlueSKY team has extensive relationship networks, and will employ a local, regional and national approach to fundraising, relationship management and strategic engagement.

BlueSKY Magazine is published by BlueSKY Collaborative Partners.

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For more information:


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We are bound
only by our
limits, even
when the
boundaries
are limitless.



@blueskycollaborative

WELCOME TO BLUESKY

Connecting with you, for good.

To say this magazine is a lifetime in the making is NOT an exaggeration. All those involved, behind the scenes and in front of them, have been working tirelessly to create the careers and relationships that make this magazine — this organization — possible. Every person featured throughout these pages, and those that will appear in future issues, are big thinkers focused on a mission of doing BETTER. They are industry rookies and veterans alike, working TOGETHER to make an impact across our communities. I'm humbled to be part of this amazing, talented group.

BlueSKY Magazine is our way of sharing not only what we do, but who we are... who YOU are. It's about the work that we hope to accomplish, alongside some of the most creative thinkers in their industries. People like Dr. Michael Sorrell, who is leading Dallas' Paul Quinn College into the new world of higher education with a vision that puts family first. Or Dr. Zerita Buchanan, who is making a difference in Atlanta — as a dentist and an advocate for health equity. Or retired professional athlete Jayson Wells, who has as much passion for mental health awareness as he did for playing basketball. And even our founders, Julie and Karl Molock, who reflect on the impact their families had on forging paths to doing better. Cover to cover, we know the people behind the stories will energize and encourage YOU to do better.

Like BlueSKY Collaborative, every person and organization you'll read about shares a mission of making a difference in some way. There is a lot of work to do, and we're ready. We want to reach across all the boundaries — economic, geographic, political, religious, racial — and work with the best minds in every industry to create impactful, positive change. The scope of that change is limitless — and so are the ideas and solutions that will come from collaborating.

At BlueSKY, the key to accomplishing these goals is building lasting, meaningful, relationships with infinite possibilities. It's why we're called BlueSKY. It's why we're 'connecting for good.' It's why we're here.

Enjoy our first issue, and remember — there's so much more beyond what you can see.



Erik

Erik M. Klaver
Chief Creative Officer

BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

For as long as we can remember, Karl and I have been dreamers. Not in the ‘fairy tale’ sense, but more about our imagination. With every year, something new would pique our interest, propel our curiosity — convince us that there was more. More to see. More to feel. More to DO. That last part runs in our families. We like to DO things.

Our grandparents did things. IMPORTANT things. So did our parents, our siblings and extended families. Many of us will keep doing important things until we’re forced pass them on. And to do important things, you need to think big — no restrictions, no ‘yes, but’s, no naysayers. Just positive, big-thinkers looking beyond what we see.

That is the origin story of BlueSKY Collaborative Partners, a national full-service fundraising consultancy, specializing in brand-focused, strategic leadership and customized solutions in areas that are critical to your success.

BlueSKY is also the shared attitude of our extraordinary group of thought leaders. With unique perspectives and incredibly diverse backgrounds, our lived experiences and long tenure include some of the largest and most impactful organizations in the world: United Way Worldwide, McKinsey & Company, Morehouse College, The Bank of America Foundation, Teach for America, College Possible, Wells Fargo, PR Newswire, The Associated Press, Cisco Systems, Deloitte Consulting and The Ohio State University.

And while we see, experience, and live things differently, we also share a common belief that the sum is greater than its parts, that a rising tide raises all boats. We are united in moving the needle. In fostering trust, respect and understanding. In connecting for good.

We're excited to bring you our first issue of BlueSKY Magazine, and to collaborate with organizations who share our same vision. Every day is a new opportunity to be 'blue sky'. To see beyond the clouds or the rain and know that when you're doing good, the skies are always blue...



BlueSKY
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS
Connecting for Good.

Karl and I met in high school, but our parents were close friends — our fathers were fraternity brothers and our mothers were lifelong volunteer advocates

BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 08

HAPPY... ANNIVERSARY?

This September, Karl and I will joyously celebrate the one year launch of BlueSKY Collaborative Partners. Looking back, it has been a journey of faith, optimism and hope. So many people we deeply admire provided much needed guidance, prayers, encouragement and support. We deliberately chose the name BlueSKY because we wanted to collaborate with aspirational organizations, to operate as a think-tank, strategically guiding clients in evaluating their biggest dreams and ideas — without restrictions or judgment. We're incredibly proud that so many of those companies are moving forward with BlueSKY to launch initiatives that will be first-of-its-kind, transformational and major legacy work.

As our country continues to adjust to a post pandemic world — engaging over video conferences, digital platforms and mobile apps — BlueSKY consciously took an "old-school" approach to establishing impactful relationships. We traveled the country, meeting partners in person, where THEY were most "at home", so we could truly absorb their vision, respectfully evaluate their big ideas and to craft a road map for project execution.

From coast-to-coast, we visited college campuses, national nonprofits and community/faith-based organizations — from Delaware to Oregon, New York to California, Georgia, North Carolina and the District of Columbia to Texas, Michigan and Nevada. We held impactful and informative planning and ideation sessions and attended scholarship galas, symposiums and conferences. And, at each visit, we would ask our partners our favorite opening question, and the one that provides our team with continued, overwhelming optimism...

"How would you really change the world, if your ability to raise money were not an obstacle?"

The ideas that have been revealed are brilliant, transformational, hopeful and an absolute joy to explore. Together we'll bring these ideas into action and help advance our broader communities with the ultimate goal of closing the wealth gap through access to education, leadership development, entrepreneurship and homeownership.

WE DIDN'T LISTEN. OR, DID WE?

Growing up, Karl and I were taught to "respect our elders and accept their guidance." Like most younger generations, we largely listened to our parents. But, like most of that same generation, we also didn't realize it was more than just words. The examples and guidance our families provided gave us a deep sense of community, and shaped our views on the importance of servant leadership. But our communities provided us with something even bigger — a passion for positive and inclusive collaboration. Those role-models, those communities, became our families — from our neighborhoods in Delaware to our respective HBCU campuses. And all these years later, it's incredibly ironic and humbling to look back and see our parents' lives reflected in our own. That the work being done by BlueSKY, by Karl, myself, our siblings and our extended families, has been so influenced by the words our parents' didn't say.

IT STARTED WITH GRANDMA

The launch of BlueSKY was inspired by my grandmother, Marjorie Hunt Sills Duckrey, a powerful trailblazer. Born on a rural, North Carolina farm in the mid 1900s, "Grandma Marjorie" was the eldest of ten children and the only one in her family to obtain college and advanced degrees. Although Grandma Marjorie died when I was only nine years old, my parents did a phenomenal job in keeping her memory vividly alive. And it is her memory that inspires me — her memory that constantly gives me courage to keep moving forward.

After losing her battle with breast cancer, news was shared in a long obituary and photo published in the **New York Times**. Normal at the time and to a much younger me, unremarkable. But as an adult, I'm continually struck by how impactful her life had been: an admin in the Office of the President at the historic **Shaw University** in Raleigh; the first black female president of the **Girls Clubs of America**; a corporate director of a major financial services institution; and, a member of the Philadelphia, PA, school board. **She launched her own consulting firm with her husband (William) and son James (my Dad) in the early 1970s, listing listed herself as Executive Director, William as President, and James, CEO.** Now, in her shadow, I have the honor of engaging with so many visionary college presidents who, like her, truly impact thousands of young leaders.

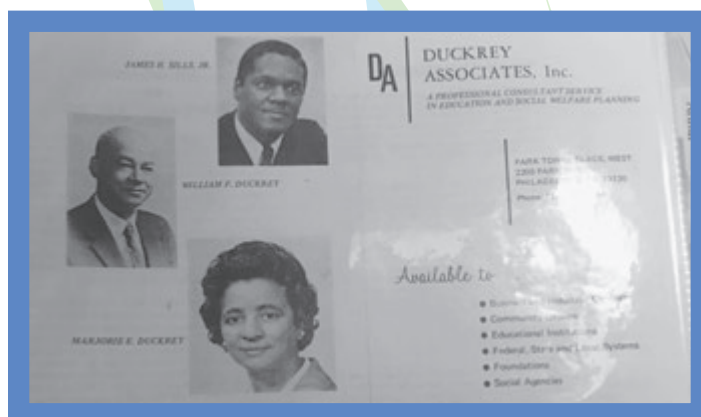
PASSING ON THEIR LEGACY

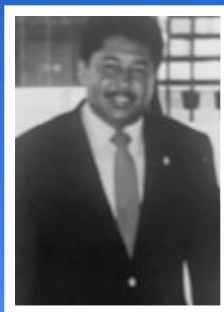
Though he had only a 5th grade education, my grandfather understood the importance of education. He and my grandmother, inspired by the transformational leader, **Dr. Benjamin E. Mays**, encouraged my father to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta. **Today my parents — James and Evelyn Sills, who met while at Atlanta University Center schools — continue their parents' legacy.** They provide a sense of hope, stability and encouragement rooted in their southern upbringing and strengthened at **Morehouse and Clark Colleges.**

My father has a quiet, very powerful leadership style, honed at Morehouse and during his storied career. The list of his accomplishments humbles me each time I read it, while at the same time reminding me of what is possible. Though his successes are numerous, he's most proud of the work he did to establish The **Delaware Community Reinvestment Action Council (DRAC)**, a community-based advocacy nonprofit. During its early years, my father was instrumental in negotiating \$100M+ agreements with three major banks, delaying several merger/acquisition attempts in order to secure additional small-business and mortgage resources for low-income communities.

While much of his activism occurred in my early twenties, it wasn't until I looked back (again) at news articles to feel the weight of what he had accomplished. Though I would be absolutely terrified attempting to delay Wall Street investors and bank leaders, Dad was fearless, grounded by data, faith and his tremendous skills in building consensus. Today, DRAC still serves the Delaware community and has served thousands of its residents.

And, all these years later, we're still so tremendously proud of my father's career, from his election (the first African American Mayor in Wilmington) to his 50-plus years as a tenured professor at the University of Delaware. From his work in the late 80s collaborating with business and education leaders recruiting diverse students from HBCUs, to the invaluable guidance he still gives us today, his passion and commitment are BlueSKY's north star.





As co-founders of BlueSKY Collaborative partners, Karl and Julie want to set a personal example on the importance of philanthropy. As a Clafin alum and member of Kappa Alpha Psi, Karl has honored three long-time Clafin administrators — and distinguished Kappa men — through **The Reginald Shaw, William Senior, and George Lee Endowed Scholarship Fund**. These men had a major impact on the development of Clafin University students and young men in particular. Their encouragement was instrumental in preparing young people for the workforce and making a societal impact. A testament to their dedication, their focus on achievement lives on today in the many lives that they touched.

BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 09

WE FEEL CONNECTED

Growing up in Delaware, and **with over 100 HBCU alums in our extended families**, it's gratifying that our first official BlueSKY client was **Delaware State University (DSU)**. Working with DSU **President Dr. Tony Allen**, a national thought leader and Chairman of the **White House HBCU Advisory Council**, has been a transformative experience. The entire BlueSKY family is grateful for his outstanding leadership, as well as the invaluable insight of **Dr. Vita Pickrum, Dr. Patrice Gilliam Johnson, Dr. LaShawne Pryor** and members of the **University Executive Cabinet**.

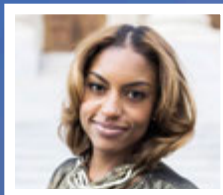
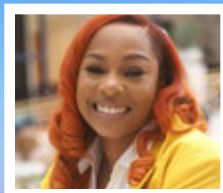
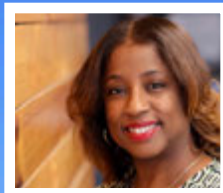
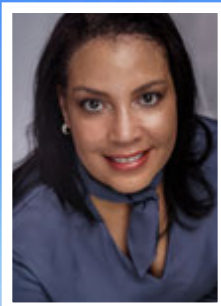
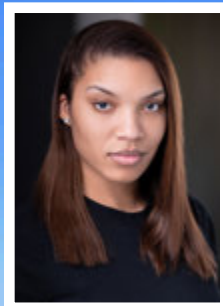
That connection with DSU goes even deeper — **Karl's father, Guy O. Molock, Sr., entered Delaware State College as a freshman at the age of 16 and went on to become a prominent Delaware educator**. After his retirement as a school district leader, Mr. Molock spent two decades serving as **Executive Director of FAME (Forum to Advance Minorities in Engineering)**. As director of one of the first STEM-related nonprofits in the US, Mr. Molock was a pioneer, interacting with major Energy and Technology companies for financial support, internships and research.



WE LEARNED "THE RIGHT WAY"

Watching our family and community leaders meant learning to operate the "Delaware Way" — collegial, opinions grounded in data, the absence of personal grudges and a passion for collaboration, especially when sharing differing viewpoints. That approach became our *modus operandi* — the foundation for BlueSKY, our team and our partners. It both grounds us and helps us see infinite possibilities. It focuses us and reinforces the reasons we are here. And it reminds us that while our society can be incredibly polarizing, people have more in common than not.

EVERYONE at BlueSKY understands the value in positivity, of compromise, and of collaboration. And we know there are still big thinkers at every level, in every community. **From Delaware's own President Biden to our Congressional leaders, from college presidents to local business owners, we feel a sense of hope and optimism**. That same hope and optimism, along with much gratitude, extends to our mentors, prayer partners, life coaches, colleagues, partners and friends who have helped us find the courage and strength to keep moving forward.



As one of 15 women in my family to attend Spelman College, I want to acknowledge this extraordinary Institution for building strong, phenomenal female leaders and helping us establish a lifetime network of sisterly support. I'm beyond blessed to have launched BlueSKY with support and guidance from 11 Spelman alums, including three that I've known since our Freshman year — their thought leadership has been invaluable!

BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

LOOKING FORWARD AND LOOKING BACK

When we're younger, we're told that we 'have our entire lives in front of us'. With a youthful exuberance, we leap into the world with no fear, ready to challenge the status quo and 'leave our mark'. Our paths are limited only by our imagination — we are full of passion, energy and optimism. We're looking at what could be and enjoying the view. We make mistakes, we learn, we move forward. 'What if...' is a statement.

As the years pass, that youthful exuberance turns to hardened experience. We've seen the 'real world' and know a bit more about life and responsibility — careers, families, financial demands that all play recurring roles in every decision we make. We're looking back and admiring the view. We take fewer chances, claim 'we know' things and move forward more hesitantly. 'What if...?' becomes a question.

The Intersection of these two stages is where BlueSKY lives. The Intersection of imagination and science, of passion and experience, of optimism and reality. It is the place where we can learn something new looking forward AND looking back.

To see the REAL, impactful work of our families, we must also look both forward and back. When we look back, we see how our own pursuits, ideas and passions are a direct, tangible result of the commitment to community and servant leadership that was modeled for us. Both Karl and I were blessed to have extraordinary mothers as role models — Evelyn P. Sills was a devoted volunteer advocate, with interests in the elderly, housing, food insecurity and education. Her incredible warmth and engaging personality was the heartbeat of the Sills family. Inez Molock, still a fierce advocate for equal opportunity and youth success, remains a guiding force in our family and treasured for her guidance and advice.

When we look forward, we strive to be better models of that commitment, for our families and in honor of those who showed us the path, even when we weren't looking.

We are at The Intersection. A place where we surround ourselves with those who share our same passions. A place where we can imagine change beyond what we see. A place where we share the idea that no matter how bad the weather, there are blue skies ahead. We're excited to have you join this amazing journey. ■



HBCUs KNOW 'Y'

HBCUs and the YMCA will revive, reclaim and preserve our collaborative history

Michael DeVaul, National Executive Director, Boys and Young Men of Color

YMCA OF METROPOLITAN DC

From the early 1900s, Historically Black Colleges and the YMCA partnered to strengthen the outcomes and the career pathways to drive a more inclusive economy. Historically, there were student Ys on 22 HBCU campuses. Working with the White House and the HBCU Consortium, our focus is to build

THE PROBLEM WE ARE SOLVING

over 65-70% of the freshman class enrollment at 101 HBCUs to date is female. Together, HBCUs and the YMCA can increase male enrollment **without** supplanting female enrollment.

poverty rates. The YMCA Boys and Young Men of Color (BYMOC) strategy seeks to recreate these equitable communities and the characteristics and conditions present in them.

The YMCA Boys and Young Men of Color (BYMOC) strategy builds on, and invests in, pathways to success that will inspire and transform personal identities so that boys and young men of color reach their full potential. This initiative began in 2020 with 26 YMCAs in 16 states and will scale to reach 100 cities across the nation. The initiative moved to a full strategy in 2022, adding 28 cities and moving to 54 cities and 25 states in total. Through this strategy, the Y hopes to recreate the kind of equitable communities shown to improve the well-being of boys and young men of color, individually and collectively, so they can achieve economic and social mobility in adulthood.

The Y's commitment and conviction to this work launched alongside efforts of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The collective impact we seek is grounded in our unique collaborative history of developing strategies to nurture the potential and co-creating stronger career pathways for Boys and Young Men of Color.



on this history to revive, reclaim, restore, and better preserve a collective impact partnership to increase the enrollment of boys and young men. Together the HBCU and YMCA platforms can join forces to build a stronger on-ramp across the nation.

YMCA BACKGROUND

This strategy is based on research findings from Opportunity Insight's longitudinal study on race and economic opportunity, which showed that neighborhoods where young men of color do well, and as well as whites, shared commonalities: less discrimination, less racial bias, and lower

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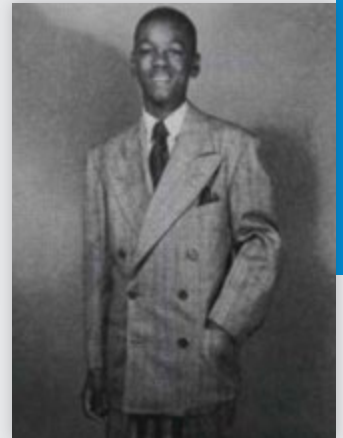
THE Y IS FAMILY

The YMCA is very special to the Sills family — Julie's father, James, has had an impactful (and ongoing) 80-plus year relationship with the YMCA, while Julie has had a long relationship with Suzanne McCormick, CEO of the YMCA, USA. To express their profound gratitude, the Sills family is excited to announce philanthropic support of the YMCA, USA's Boys and Men of Color strategy. The Sills family, led by Mark P. Sills (CEO-Urban Youth, Inc., www.urbanyouthinc.com) and Julie Sills Molock will launch a multi-year, national leadership development and 5-on-5 Basketball showcase series, for young people (6th-12th grades), with a major portion of event proceeds benefiting the YMCA network across the United States. The James H. Sills, Jr. "YMCA Leadership Development Series and Basketball Showcase" will begin in late 2023.

An only child, James' parents divorced when he was ten years old. With his mother in England working for the Red Cross, James and his father lived at the historic Raleigh, NC, YMCA, sharing one room for several years. Leaders of the YMCA provided James with much needed guidance, support and mentorship, helping him keep on a more positive path throughout his school years.

Sills enrolled at **Morehouse College** where he was mentored by **Dr. Benjamin E. Mays** — the college's longest serving President and a former leader with the YMCA. After graduation from the **Atlanta University Graduate School of Social Work**, Sills and his young family — knowing not one soul — moved to Wilmington, DE and were immediately directed to visit the historic Walnut Street YMCA. There, YMCA staff gave advice and suggestions for housing and helped Jim establish his eventual deep network in the community.

Throughout his 65 years in Delaware, Sills served as an elected official, President of the NAACP, the local School Board and was a tenured professor with the University of Delaware. The primary constant in his life — the Walnut Street YMCA — served as a focal point for activities ranging from community meetings and special events, and was the location for his victory party after being elected Mayor of the City of Wilmington.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The statue honoring James H. Sills, Jr., will remain part of the Sills' family legacy for years to come; James H. Sills, Jr. as a young man; Julie Sills Molock, far right, has long-standing relationships with **Suzanne McCormick** (YMCA, USA CEO, left) and philanthropist **Peter Buffett**; Mark P. Sills, CEO of Urban Youth, Inc., deeply understands the importance the YMCA has to his father James and the entire Sills family.

Sills chartered a memorable and productive career with a commitment of service to "a Wilmington that works for all," and was recently honored with a statue erected in his likeness. The event, hosted by Delaware Congressional, State and City officials, also included **Michael DeVaul**, National Executive Director of the YMCA Boys and Men of Color strategy. This honor was humbling to Mr. Sills, who has always held to the belief — imparted to him by Dr. Mays during his undergraduate years — that "Black men have a responsibility to act as leaders and to engage in public service...to strive to live constructive, honorable lives." ■

HBCUs KNOW 'Y'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14



Source materials have been digitized:

Search Collection — University of Minnesota Archival Collections Guides: ummn.edu

Learn more about our plans on Advancing Equity for All

and why Boys and Young Men of Color is a focus on our homepage: www.YMCA.org/bymoc

GOALS AND IMPACT

The strategy will strive to create equitable communities by:

- Developing and increasing organizational capacity-building to create supportive environments, more culturally responsive approaches, and alignment. We will co-create experiences and strategies that nurture identity development and character, provide education support, and preserve and restore their overall well-being with demonstrated results.
- Coordinating and unifying community services, youth development programming, and support services to help remove barriers and to increase the engagement of local/national resources by joining forces with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to develop and mechanize our proof of concept and re-establish an age-appropriate roadmap for middle to a post high school placement based on students' identified career interests.
- Collaborating with HBCUs to establish community coalitions to create stable and accessible community support systems, facilitate community-led solutions and advocate for policy change and resource mobilization.

THE YMCA'S BOLD VISION

By 2024, the Y will improve the well-being (academic, social-emotional, financial and health) of boys and young men of color – aged 11 to 17 – and will become a proven contributor to their success. The goal of this initiative is to promote clear pathways to skill building and improve outcomes in numerous areas such as: academic achievement, positive identity, personal and professional agency, social-emotional health and wellbeing, career readiness, financial stability, and civic engagement. Additionally, the initiative will establish rigorous partnerships at the national and local levels to address and embrace systems change.

Investing now creates and ensures a more inclusive economy and will demonstrate a return on the investment through a scalable, affordable cost per student.

The YMCA seeks to collaborate to identify 15 new cities at a cost of \$5,000 per student to engage student voices, work together with families, mentors, local agencies and organizations, and build a clear and compelling case that reaches students to achieve their full potential. We will move students through the transitions of middle and high school and introduce them to campus life, college students through a proximate relationship that already exists. The 15 cities that will be chosen will also agree to elevate the collective history reimagined with the 22 formal relationships that already exist.

SIX KEY METRICS:

- 70% of BYMOC will access high-quality, nurturing, and more culturally responsive neighborhood environments and communities.
- 75% of BYMOC will have stabilized and improved grades by reducing suspensions and improving school attendance.
- 100% of BYMOC will have completed pre- and post-assessment for social-emotional learning.
- 75% of BYMOC will increase access to high-quality post-secondary and career-ready pathways.
- 75% of BYMOC who identify as HBCU college-bound will enroll
- 60% of participating students enrolled in an HBCU will graduate

THE COHORT

- The BYMOC's equity work is operationalized at the community level by a cohort of local Ys representing 54 cities and 25 states. In addition to Ys in these 54 cities, all Ys support this initiative through committed local leadership, collaborations, Y-to-Y peer mentoring, and agree to provide additional resource sharing to the BYMOC strategy.

With our focus on concentrating our efforts on ages 11-17, can the YMCA work together with HBCUs to become an organizational on-ramp to increase male participation on campus?

We believe we can! ■



"To be male, poor, and either African-American or Native-American is to confront, on a daily basis, a deeply held racism that exists in every social institution"

Camille Busette, Brookings Institution

HISTORY MAY TELL US YES

As you see below, The YMCA has long supported BYMOC in HBCUs, having relationships with 22 students Ys on HBCU campuses from 1890s into the 1960s.

The Y Archives tells us what we have in the files on the following. As you may know, these were not separate buildings, but students Ys typically existing inside their student activity centers:

- Delaware State College
- Howard University
- A and M College (Florida)
- Bethune-Cookman College
- Edward Waters College
- Albany State College
- Clark College
- Fort Valley State College
- Savannah State College
- Grambling College
- Southern University, Baton Rouge
- Fisk University
- Prairie View A & M
- Hampton Institute
- Texas Southern University
- Alabama A & M
- Alabama State College
- Selma University
- Talladega College
- Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute
- Philander Smith College





Sponsorship Opportunities Available!

2nd Annual

Boys & Young Men of Color Conference

Invest in an Equitable Future for Boys and Young Men of Color

The YMCA Boys and Young Men of Color (BYMOC) Strategy ensures equitable outcomes for boys and young men of color by removing systemic barriers, providing relevant services and support systems, and creating nurturing environments that promote confidence and growth.

Conference Sponsors:

- Champion authentic grass-roots changemakers
- Stand with national leaders collaborating on efforts to promote civil rights, diversity, and inclusion
- Showcase their solutions and approaches to create more equitable communities
- Sponsor the conference and connect with:

58 Cities & 27 States

+ 200 Attendees, 7 Speakers & 20 Workshops

+ 7 Plenary Sessions over 4 Inspirational Days

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FACTS & FORECASTS

An in-depth look at the communities we serve.

101 HBCUs LOCATED IN 19 STATES, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

52 PUBLIC Institutions / **49 PRIVATE**, Non-Profit Institutions

125%

INCREASE in the number of HBCU students from 1976 to 2020

While there was a 47 percent increase (from 223,000 to 327,000 students) between 1976 and 2010, enrollment decreased by 15 percent (to 279,000 students) between 2010 and 2020.

INCREASE in the number of non-black HBCU students from 1976 to 2020

HBCUs enroll students of all races, a composition that has changed over time. In 2020, non-Black students made up 24 percent of enrollment at HBCUs, compared with 15 percent in 1976.

160%

64%

NUMBER of enrolled female HBCU students compared to male students in 2020

Female enrollment at HBCUs has been higher than male enrollment in every year since 1976. The percentage of female enrollment at HBCUs increased from 53 percent in 1976 to 64 percent in 2020.

NUMBER of HBCU students attending a four-year institution in 2020

The remaining 12 percent attended 2-year institutions; about 77 percent of HBCU students attended public institutions, while the remaining 23 percent attended private nonprofit institutions

88%



GO AHEAD.



THINK BIG.

We're built for big ideas.

Imagine assembling a team of 'experts' to complete a particular task — folks **known** to have very specific knowledge in a very particular subject. Who makes your list?

At BlueSKY, we asked ourselves that exact question (and more), only from a different perspective — how do we assemble a team that can address ANY subject. Who's on OUR list? Where are they? How do we convince them to work together towards a common goal? And what, from our point of view, makes them an 'expert'? We had a LOT of questions. Turns out, we already had the answers.

Thanks to decades of experience, our list had compiled itself. Our network of colleagues spanned almost every category imaginable — from location to industry to background. Together, we've worked on projects of every size, for clients of every size, in markets of every size. And we ALL shared a mindset that set us apart — our experiences brought us knowledge to be considered 'experts', but we weren't done learning. In fact, we all knew that we would NEVER be done learning. And when you give people the space to share who they are, big things go from possible to probable.

Over the following pages, our experts used that space to give you insight to who they are, what they do, and an understanding of why they're built to be BlueSKY Big Thinkers.

THINK BIG.



DR. TERRY MILLS

Advancing diversity, inclusive environments and academic excellence

To say Dr. Terry L. Mills is a highly-accomplished sociologist, professor and administrator is a drastic understatement. With a PhD in Sociology from the University of Southern California (USC), a distinguished career in higher education and extensive experience at renowned institutions such as the University of Florida, Morehouse College, and John Carroll University, Dr. Mills has made significant contributions to the field of sociology, particularly in the area of intergenerational relationships.

And few things are as complex as relationships between different age groups — how these interactions shape individual experiences, social structures, and cultural norms is a lifelong study. Throughout his career, Dr. Mills has held positions at all levels, shaping his exceptional leadership skills and forging his commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion in academia:



MATT MCNAIR

**Successful lawyer, leader in higher education,
master fundraiser, social justice champion**

On one hand, Matt McNair is what you might call 'perfectly mid-west': friendly, strong, positive and will treat a stranger as if he/she were family. Yet his experience reads like a lead character from a Hollywood blockbuster: successful lawyer, leader in higher education, master fundraiser, social justice champion.

The early part of Matt's career was spent practicing law — in the Navy JAG Corps, as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, practicing corporate and securities law, and as Chief Deputy Attorney General for the State of Nebraska.

Unsurprisingly, his success led to a sequel. Ready for his next challenge, Matt moved into higher education where he focused on fundraising (completing three successful campaigns), corporate partnerships, economic development, and technology commercialization. He honed his skills at some of the nation's most revered institutions: as VP for Development at the University of Nebraska Foundation; as Chief Advancement Officer for the College of Engineering at The Ohio State University; as the inaugural

THINK BIG.



BRETT SAVAGE SIMON

Creative, collaborative, content and strategic expertise.

Brett Savage-Simon is a seasoned communications pro with over three decades of media/journalism, public relations, content marketing and branding experience. She's led and advised corporate and national non-profit communications programs, specializing in communication planning, issues, crisis management, media training and social media strategy.

Brett brings creative, collaborative, content producing and strategic expertise to communications campaigns. A storyteller by nature fueled by her love for writing, Brett taps into her journalism experience to develop compelling and engaging content. Her experience spans multiple industries, advising and leading comms efforts in education, finance, healthcare, consumer and the non-profit sector. With deep HBCU roots; Brett is a proud alumnus of Spelman College, daughter of Howard University (the real HU) alumni and mother of a recent HU graduate and current Spelman student. Her motto is Howard by blood; Spelman by choice. She is a member and former President of Spelman's Northern New Jersey Alumnae Association and member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. where she chairs the local chapter's Information and Communications Committee. ■

TERRY...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

- As Associate Dean for Minority Affairs at the University of Florida, he developed and implemented initiatives to support underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, fostered inclusive campus environments, and promoted diversity throughout the university community.
- As Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Morehouse College, he provided strategic direction and oversight for academic programs within the division. He also collaborated with faculty members to develop innovative curricula, fostered interdisciplinary collaborations, and supported faculty research and professional development.
- Inaugural Chief Diversity Officer at John Carroll University, overseeing campus-wide diversity initiatives and ensuring that diversity and inclusion were integrated into all aspects of the institution's operations. He also led efforts to enhance cultural competency, implemented training programs on implicit bias, and fostered a welcoming and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff.



In recognition of his expertise and dedication to promoting diversity and equity, Dr. Mills has been recognized for his visionary leadership, strategic planning skills, and ability to build collaborative partnerships. His inclusive and student-centered approach has been instrumental in creating supportive academic environments and nurturing the success of students from diverse backgrounds.

Beyond his administrative roles, Dr. Mills has maintained an active research and teaching career, inspiring and mentoring students in the field of sociology. His commitment to intergenerational relationships and social change has resulted in numerous publications in reputable academic journals and presentations at national and international conferences.

His multifaceted background as a sociologist, educator, and administrator uniquely positions Dr. Mills as a transformative leader at BlueSKY and in higher education. His dedication to advancing diversity, fostering inclusive environments, and promoting academic excellence has made a profound impact on students, faculty, and institutions as a whole. ■



MATT...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25



leader of the Corporate Engagement Office at Ohio State, where he served as VP for Economic and Corporate

Engagement and President of the Ohio State Innovation Foundation; and finally, President of the Oregon Health & Science University Foundation.

Prepared to prove that three's a charm, Matt is busy writing the sequel to his sequel — as a consultant with universities and non-profits in the areas of strategic partnerships and fundraising. He focuses his practice on aligning systems and goals, intentionally designing culture, and change management.

Through all this success, Matt has managed to remain grounded, humble, and rooted in his belief in doing good for others. Based in Portland, Oregon, Matt is committed to his community, serving as President of Cardinal Advisors, LLC and founder of TrustLab, a nonprofit whose mission is to bring together police and community by healing trauma and engaging community members to design a public safety system that serves all communities. From east coast to west, Matt McNair is one of BlueSKY's true stars. ■

THINK BIG.



JACQUELINE YOUNG

Convening stakeholders, providing resources, creating solutions

Jacqueline Young is the youngest of five children, almost a generation (24 years) from her oldest sibling. With four generations under one roof, there was something for everyone, from Greatest Generation to GenX. As such, Ms. Young had the benefit of being exposed to broad and diverse perspectives as the world changed, shaping her world view.

Both of her parents were educators that benefited from an HBCU education at Delaware State University. So it should come as no surprise that she was taught the importance of getting her education. Her father — a teacher in a segregated school in Delaware and then as a high school horticulture teacher — was a mentor to many young men he met through his lawn care business, in his classroom and on his baseball team.

The twelfth of thirteen children and daughter of a pastor, Jacqueline's mother knew all about big families. A stay-at-home mom for many years, she was also a teaching assistant while Jacqueline was growing up. Her parents modeled the importance of family, hard work, mentorship, and community.



KITTIE FAHEY

An award-winner, on Broadway and off

With more than 30 years of nonprofit operational and management experience, Kittie Fahey has led teams in the areas of major and principal gifts, sponsorship, events and volunteer management, raising nearly one billion dollars for human services, arts and environmental causes. Passionate about philanthropy and community, Kittie is a visionary thinker and not afraid to take risks.

She is a frequent investor in Broadway musicals and plays, well-traveled, appreciator of fashion and culture, and lives with her dog, Dooley. This year, Kittie won her first Tony Award for the Best Revival of a Musical; *Parade* serving as co-producer. Kittie splits her time between Minneapolis and New York City. ■



THINK BIG.



CLARENCE WILLIAMS

I've been successful. Now I want to be significant.

Mr. Williams is a manifestation of how HBCUs not only nurture students but also provide an environment for social awareness, community involvement and career success. Mr. Williams was born and raised in Washington, D.C and like many HBCU students today Mr. Williams was raised by a single parent (mom). Mr. Williams went on to become his family's first-generation college graduate after being recruited by the first HBCU in the nation, Cheyney University, to play football.

Mr. Williams earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Telecommunications Technology from Cheyney University in 1990. While a student at Cheyney, Mr. Williams was initiated into Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated and was told by his older fraternity brothers that he had to become a leader on campus once he went over as a Kappa. Therefore Mr. Williams whom up to this point in his life was an individual who would typically be in the background became the Treasurer of the Student Government Cooperative Association and then became the President of the Student Government Cooperative Association the following year.

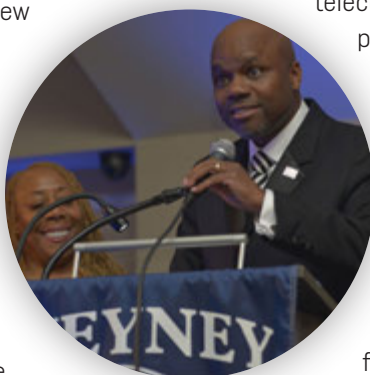
CLARENCE...

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WHAT DOES HBCU FAMILY MEAN TO YOU?

We often hear HBCUs embrace students like family; shortly after graduating from Cheyney University one of Mr. Williams' professors, (Clarence Harris) gave him a piece of paper with a number on it and said call these people for a job. Mr. Williams called them, and they brought him in for an interview and then gave Mr. Williams an electronic test focusing on the theory of electronics and the function of integrated circuits. At this point Mr. Williams was very proud of the education he received at the first HBCU, Cheyney University, he realized they prepared him for a successful career; he learned everything that was on that test in one class. Mr. Williams passed the test and was hired by Communications Test Design Inc. as an Electronic Technician. Due to his leadership experience in college Mr. Williams was quickly promoted to fiber optics repair department supervisor and was later promoted to other leadership roles as Project Manager, Global Program Manager and Business Vertical Lead.

Thirty-one years after receiving that piece of paper from his college professor, Mr. Williams retired from a successful career at Communication Test Design Inc., a worldwide leader in the telecommunications industry focusing on engineering, repair, and logistics. To this day Mr. Williams keeps in touch with Professor Clarence Harris; that's what you call HBCU Family.



EXPERIENCE

Prior to retiring Mr. Williams managed and led one of the seven Business Verticals within the Network Services Division at Communication Test Design Inc. He managed global operations with the responsibility for providing repair, engineering, IT, forward and reverse logistics for a major telecommunications service provider. Mr. Williams was responsible for managing a \$40M annual budget, monthly P&L goals, allocating budget resources, managing operational costs and monitoring financial activities. Accountable for driving new business opportunities, leading

programs to achieve objectives, set priorities, oversee daily business activities, improve overall business functions, develop strategic plans, communicate business goals, identify areas in need of improvement and implement corrective actions. Led IT development efforts to provide automation and streamline processes. Review and execute contracts and respond to RFP's. Responsible for building a team to support the Business Vertical and ensure end to end customer satisfaction. Track and measure performance to ensure all expectations related Key Performance Indicators and Service Level Agreements are achieved. Provide quarterly business reviews with customer and weekly business updates internally to CEO, President and executive team.



HBCU LEADERSHIP

Mr. Williams served two terms as the President of the Cheyney University National Alumni Association. He also served as President of MEN of BACA (Bronze Association for Cultural Advancement) and under his leadership the organization was recognized by the Tom Joyner foundation for raising \$50,000 in one month for scholarships to Cheyney University. Mr. Williams served as President of the Cheyney University Alumni Chapter of Delaware and under his leadership the chapter was recognized four consecutive years as the "Outstanding Chapter of The Year" and became known as the "Dynasty Chapter." Mr. Williams served several years as the Chair for the Past President's Council of Cheyney University National Alumni Association.

Mr. Williams has been recognized four times by the Philadelphia Tribune Magazine annual edition of "Philadelphia's Most Influential African Americans" for his professional, political and community involvement. Mr. Williams has served on numerous alumni committees and represented the National Alumni Association on several Cheyney University Executive Search Committees. Mr. Williams received several National Alumni Association awards including but not limited to Social Service, Service & Loyalty, and Outstanding Leadership.

THINK BIG.



DAVID COLLINS

A credit to the visual and performing arts.

As a young man growing up in Brooklyn, NY, David developed a strong interest in photography. He would frequent photography stores that hired accomplished photographers as part-time staff. For the price of a roll of film, he would often receive valuable photography lessons. Today, the exceedingly versatile professional photographer and multi-media specialist combines his love of the lens and technology to create beautiful images.

Over the years, David has perfected the art of capturing important moments in ways that defy imagination, garnering reactions that are as powerful as his images. "Like the great mystics, David's imagination and creative eye locate the significant facets of the individual life that are often overlooked by the less-observant. His work causes one to be still and to take note of how the reaches of the past become glowing affirmations in the present. An excellent singer, photographer and graphic designer, David is a credit to the visual and performing arts, a true Renaissance man."

- Robert M. Franklin, Ph.D. President Emeritus Morehouse College ■

CLARENCE...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

ENTREPRENEUR

As an entrepreneur, in 2005 Mr. Williams co-founded Stomp & Clay Productions, LLC an innovative hybrid company with expertise in Brand Marketing & Event Planning, providing services to a diverse group of clients and fortune 500 companies. Stomp & Clay Productions, LLC has built an exceptional reputation for setting the PACE (Professional, Ambiance, Creativity and Entertainment) in event planning.

MY JOURNEY

Mr. Williams' journey started at the first HBCU Cheyney University, where he excelled in leadership positions as an undergraduate and alum. His leadership was constant with Communications Test Design Inc. as he spent 27 of his 31 years in a corporate leadership role. As his journey continued, in parallel he co-founded an event planning company. This journey has equipped Mr. Williams with a unique toolbox containing HBCU knowledge, alumni engagement experience, fundraising, event planning, strategic planning, and corporate leadership experience.



Through his wife Mr. Williams has known BlueSKY founder Julie Sills-Molock for over 25 years and coincidentally Mr. Williams' journey greatly aligns with BlueSKY's vision and mission.

MY PURPOSE

Throughout his journey Mr. Williams has enjoyed a great deal of Success and now he wants to be Significant by working with BlueSKY and utilizing his toolbox from his journey to make a huge impact on HBCUs. ■

JACQUELINE...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Jacqueline took to heart the importance of higher education, receiving a Bachelor of Electric Engineering degree from the University of Delaware, a Master of Science degree in electrical engineering from University of Maryland at College Park as a National GEM Consortium fellow, and an MBA from the Kellogg School at Northwestern University.

A solution-driven professional with over 25 years of experience in relationship management, sales leadership, account management, strategic planning, and economic development, she also took her parents' passion into her own career. Most recently, Jacqueline has fueled her passion for job growth and economic impact by working as an Economic Development Manager at DTE Energy located in Detroit, Michigan, where she collaborates with partners to land impactful projects and advance community development.

Working for DTE Energy and Corning Incorporated, Jacqueline's experiences have allowed her to see that finances, resources, access, intention, exposure, strategy, relationships, training, and opportunity are all key in making opportunities that include everyone.

Moving forward, Jacqueline wants to use her skills to take a more active role in convening stakeholders, providing resources, creating solutions, and bringing opportunities to underserved communities. Jacqueline is excited that her personal goals align well with BlueSKY's strategic focus, mission and vision.

We're excited, too, Jacqueline. ■

AT HOME



Photo courtesy of Michael Sorrell



At home with BlueSKY collaborator, Paul Quinn College President

Dr. Michael J. SORRELL, Esq.

by Ardis M. Blanchard



Photo: Victoria Jackson Photography

A Modern Day Super Hero

With his finger on the pulse of the city that surrounds his moderate, yet imposing Dallas, Texas campus; his mind on transformative education changing the landscape for learning and leadership across the country; and his heart for people that prevails over everything, Paul Quinn College President Michael J. Sorrell is prepared to make memories; destined to make history and determined to make a difference at his institution and beyond.

SORRELL TO THE RESCUE

No easy task, but if anyone could resuscitate the once dying and dilapidated academy, it would be "Prez" as Sorrell is affectionately known. He doesn't wear an "S" on his chest, may not be more powerful than a locomotive, or be able leap tall buildings on the campus of the nation's first HBCU work college in a single bound. But, to the academic community he's leading, the corporate and educational partners he's engaging, the city he's changing and the citizen's he's impacting each day, Dr. Sorrell is a real life superhero. And since his appointment in 2007, Prez has been using his superpowers to remake the private, faith-based, liberal arts college into a model for urban higher education.

"I'm here for the work and we're going to get something done."

Without a blueprint to follow, the scholar, lawyer, impresario and now first-time college president concentrated on academic rigor, experiential learning and entrepreneurship to build this bold new prototype. Starting with the obvious—cleaning up the campus, upgrading buildings, filling key faculty and staff roles, improving recruitment and retention, balancing the college's budget, and reinstating its accreditation—Sorrell rolled up his sleeves and got busy. "I'm here for the work and we're going to get something done," he stated.

That was an understatement. A decade and a half later, the college's longest-serving president would get a lot done and be credited for implementing some of the institution's most effective and innovative initiatives, including a much-needed Business Casual Student Dress Code and free campus Clothes Closet; rigorous Honors College, essential Writing Hub, culturally immersive Study Abroad program and the "New Urban College Model," an effective financial structure that significantly reduced tuition, fees and student loan debt. Yet, ironically, it would be a "farm" that captured the nation's attention and put Paul Quinn, a campus focused on becoming a model for urban higher education, in the spotlight.

Inspired by the school's ethos that "the needs of the community supersede the wants of the individual," Prez planted the seed for the We over Me Farm, an organic garden converted from the college's football field after he disbanded the gridiron program that was costing the school \$600,000 annually to operate. Sorrell saw the conversion as a way to save Paul Quinn and he was right. Since its inception 11 years ago, the two-acre organic farm sponsored by PepsiCo and run by student employees has grown more than 100,000 pounds of fresh produce to help lower student tuition, address food insecurity in the city, support neighborhood charitable organizations, promote healthy eating and donate food to grocery stores, restaurants and communities throughout Dallas.

Today, many regard the farm as Sorrell's greatest and most courageous endeavor, but he begs to differ. "Your next must always be better than your now," revealed the confident and perpetually creative Prez who vows that he's just getting started. "I have lots of great ideas and I think it's special to be able to make them happen here."

FAMILY FIRST

What won't happen at Paul Quinn, however, is a lot of activity that consumes the faculty's and staff's time outside of business hours. "Every event that you schedule in the evening is a missed opportunity for employees to have dinner with their families, help their children with homework or say goodnight to their kids," said Sorrell who pushes back on hosting dinner meetings and other evening events whenever possible as part of his efforts to maintain a family-first culture at the college that's good for employee morale and promotes a healthy work-life balance.

Without that balance, Sorrell might not be present for things like his 13-year old son Michael's speed and agility training where he's able to praise the young basketball phenom for how hard he's working and encourage him to reach his full potential. He could also miss precious daddy-daughter time with 8-year old Sage who has started a new daily routine Sorrell explained. "Every morning my daughter comes into our room, gives me a big

AT HOME WITH DR. MICHAEL SORRELL



hug and expects me to tell her how much I love her, how proud of her I am and how much I missed her the night before." Ultimately, it's times like these that allow Sorrell to sit in the stands, watch his kids compete and cheer them on, while also supporting their academic journeys, guiding their personal development and encouraging their dreams. "At the end of the day, my children have to be better than I was and the only way that can happen is if I invest in them in a way that will produce that result."

Making that investment in his family is something the Chicago native learned from his late mother who, on her deathbed praised her son for being smart, ambitious and kind, but cautioned him about being too driven. "'I've got all the memories...I was there for your games, your sister's recitals and for your dates,'" the former social worker reminded Sorrell, emphasizing that his father, who owned and operated a successful barbecue restaurant on the city's Southside, missed many of those moments because he was always working.

While grateful for the comfortable, upper middle-class lifestyle her husband's strong work ethic afforded them, she advised her son that when he looks back at how he spent his life, "It's the memories of your family that will sustain you," she told Sorrell. "So don't be so busy making a life for your family that you miss having a life with your family." His mother's last words didn't just resonate with Sorrell; they became the guiding principles for how he lives his life and leads his institution.

"What we have done at Paul Quinn is created an environment where it is very clear that family comes first," he said, adding that the college provides several opportunities for its staff to feel supported.

"...don't be so busy *making* a life for your family that you miss *having* a life with your family."

The Early Talent Identification Program, for example, offers a Summer Experience for high achieving K-7 graders and "...one of its benefits is that employees' kids can participate and come to work with their parents all summer and nobody pays," said Sorrell, emphasizing that, "It's great that the kids grow up together and form a village—something that has always tied [our communities] together."

Designed to create an even deeper bond among the institution's families, is the college's unprecedented new admissions policy. Appropriately named the Village Program, the policy invites qualified students enrolled at the college and receiving financial aid to bring two friends or family members to matriculate with them. It is thoughtful leadership like this that confirms Sorrell's arrival at Paul Quinn was not a coincidence, but a calling.

"Everyone in my family who went to College, with the exception of me and one of my first cousins, went to an HBCU," said Sorrell. "So we are a family that owes its economic stability and in many respects its intellectual consciousness to the fact that Historically Black Colleges and Universities got it right." If not for Dillard where his grandmother, mother, Godfather, aunt and first cousins attended, and If not for Hampton, Howard, Morehouse, Spelman and Talladega, where his sister and other relatives were educated, Sorrell believes his family might not have obtained the confidence, wealth or success their HBCU experience presented them. "So on a very basic level, this is thank you," he said, affirming his commitment to the quaint, yet burgeoning college he first learned about in the back of JET Magazine.

COURTING DESTINY

The iconic weekly periodical (now digital) was a staple in African-American households across the country, including his. And it was in the popular Chicago-based publication's section featuring Black college team rankings that Sorrell read about Paul Quinn's national basketball championship in 1990. The 6'4" former power forward had no idea at the time that he would be adding Paul Quinn to his career roster, much less that he'd be running point for the oldest HBCU west of the Mississippi River one day.

But basketball had a funny way of showing up at so many intersections in Sorrell's life. It brought him to Oberlin as a freshman college recruit turned two-time team captain and fifth all-time leading scorer by his senior year in 1988 and It followed him to Duke University where during law school Sorrell connected with former Blue Devil superstars Christian Laettner and Brian Davis. Years later the former teammates founded Blue Devil Ventures, LLC and Sorrell became their attorney and advisor. In 2007 the group made an official bid to purchase the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies—a potential \$360 million acquisition.

While they awaited the outcome of their bid for the Western Conference franchise, Sorrell—who at the time was a practicing attorney at a downtown Dallas law firm—had his eye on yet another major investment. But he didn't want to acquire it; he wanted to lead it. Paul Quinn College was back on Sorrell's radar after he discovered that several guys he played recreational basketball with at the "Y" were alumni of the institution and some were also his Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity brothers. As games with them picked up, so did Sorrell's social calendar and his curiosity about the influence Paul Quinn had on his new friends' lives.

AT HOME WITH DR. MICHAEL SORRELL

*Photo courtesy of Paul Quinn College*

"These were some of the best people I'd ever met," boasted Sorrell, admitting that there was definitely a disconnect between the positive and productive individuals who were befriending him and the very disparaging and derogatory comments he heard from outsiders about the school that helped groom them. In an effort to connect the dots and figure out how a college that produced such genuine and upstanding citizens could be so heavily disregarded, Sorrell got busy with his game plan to support the struggling HBCU, initially by anonymously donating to the school, then later expressing his interest to serve as its next president. "I appreciated the way they made a stranger feel welcome in a strange land," he said. "I wanted the opportunity to help rebuild the broken institution as a way to thank them for their gift of friendship."

Becoming President of Paul Quinn wouldn't be that easy, but his determination did land him a spot on the College's board. Six years would pass before Sorrell would get his official shot at the presidency—around the same time that he learned that the deal with the Memphis Grizzlies did not go through. It was a disappointing loss to Sorrell and Blue Devil Ventures, but a major win for Paul Quinn College that has never played second string to Sorrell's NBA ownership aspirations.

His biggest assist, however, would come a year later after a brief and random exchange with a beautiful young lady he encountered at a restaurant. Sorrell never thought he'd see her again, but as faith would have it, he and Natalie Jenkins would get a little help from a mutual friend who introduced them because she thought they'd make a perfect couple and it's easy to see why.

"It's all about the reality of having a place that HBCU students can go and be fortified."

For starters, their professional prowess and intellectual pedigree are closely aligned. She graduated with honors from Spelman College and earned her MBA from Wharton, while fellow high achiever Sorrell received his Bachelor's from Oberlin, Master's from Duke University, Juris Doctorate from Duke University School of Law and PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. Likewise, she would enjoy a successful career in private equity on Wall Street and later at McGraw Hill before relocating to Dallas to work for a prestigious publishing house and eventually land her current role as Deputy Chief Investment Officer for the Employees' Retirement Fund of the City of Dallas. He was also recruited to Dallas to work at a top law firm in the city before serving on the college's board and ultimately as Paul Quinn's president.

One unsuspecting date night in 2008, Sorrell suffered an unexpected seizure that led to cardiac death. Thankfully, Natalie administered CPR until the medics arrived. Unconscious for nearly 72 hours, Superman Sorrell said he awakened looking more like Iron Man with multiple wires protruding from his arms and chest. He wasn't feeling much like a superhero at that moment, but he was feeling grateful. "She saved my life," declared Sorrell who was already planning to pop the question, but was convinced now more than ever that he would marry Natalie.

In 2009, Natalie Jenkins Sorrell became his better half and the new First Lady of Paul Quinn College. Nearly one-and-a-half decades later the dynamic duo continues to make an indelible impact on campus and throughout Dallas as one of the city's indisputable power couples.

IN GOOD COMPANY

But the modern-day Superman, with his Lois Lane by his side, isn't just saving Paul Quinn; He's also helping to revive the cities and communities surrounding his campus and beyond—a task he cannot do alone. Therefore, the college is collaborating with a myriad of corporate partners who are showing interest in his institution for the right reasons, he explained. Simply put, "...They understand the importance of investing in diverse talent, and they see what the college can become," said Sorrell.

One of the college's newest partnerships is with The Container Store, which recently opened a mini retail shop on campus. Featuring a custom Elfa system, the expert organization retailer offers Quinnite paraphernalia, storage solutions and other specialty items as part of Paul Quinn's Work Program where corporate partners provide students with paid, real-world work experience and the tools they need while completing their bachelor's degree with minimum to no debt.

The container store joins existing partners, Target, PepsiCo, Macy's, Lowes and Chipotle, which offer students a unique opportunity to fulfill their economic and educational dreams by pursuing their degrees in-person or remotely while they work as part of the Guild Program. Likewise, In partnership with the Dallas Mavericks, Paul Quinn established LISTEN (Leadership, Innovation, Sports Management, Technology, Entrepreneurship, and Networking), a major that promotes a new way of looking at leadership. And Trammell Crow partnered with Paul Quinn to build the 30,000 square foot Trammell S. Crow Living and Learning Center, the first new facility erected on campus in 40 years.

AT HOME WITH DR. MICHAEL SORRELL

*Photos courtesy of Michael Sorrell*

Paul Quinn has also developed relationships with Fortune 500 companies such as Walmart, the Walt Disney Company, Toyota, AT&T, Bank of America, USAA, JPMorgan Chase, Liberty Mutual, and Southwest Airlines, as well as with several educational partners including Dallas Independent Schools, St. Marks School of Texas, St. Philip's School & Community Center, Greenhill and the Hockaday Schools, to name a few. In fact, it's not surprising that new companies are constantly reaching out to Paul Quinn to determine how they can collaborate with one of the most innovative small colleges in America and be a part of the new model for urban higher education.

It's also understandable that many are determined to work directly with President Sorrell given his reputation for reinventing education at Paul Quinn that is serving as an effective example for other colleges. "It's all about the reality of having a place that HBCU students can go and be fortified," Sorrell maintained. And he should know.

One of the most decorated college presidents in the country, Dr. Sorrell has been named one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders by Fortune Magazine; one of "31 People Changing the South by Time Magazine;" one of the top 100 Emerging Leaders in America by The Root Online Magazine; and one of America's 10 Most Innovative College Presidents by Washington Monthly Magazine. He is also Education Dive's only three-time recipient of the HBCU Male President of the Year Award, receiving the honor in 2012, 2016 and 2018. His academic awards are too numerous to name, as well, but among them are the A. Kenneth Pye Award for Excellence in Education from Duke University's School of



AT HOME: captures HBCU presidents immersed in their favorite pastimes with their favorite people in their favorite places.
HERE ARE SOME OF PAUL QUINN PRESIDENT MICHAEL J. SORRELL'S FAVORITE THINGS...

FOOD FAVES

Blackened salmon, collard greens and black-eyed peas. While the salmon is his attempt to stay healthy, the vegetables are no doubt a nod to Chicago-born Sorrell's deep Southern Waterproof, Louisiana and Natchez, Mississippi family roots.

As for desserts, Peach Cobbler tops his list! "But if you leave chocolate chip cookies out, my inner fat boy will definitely come out," jokes Sorrell who admits he's no chef, but can make a mean breakfast.

MUSIC THAT MOVES ME

"I have really eclectic taste in music." His late father taught him to appreciate the Blues, but Sorrell is also fond of the three R's: Rap, R&B and even some Rock. His absolute favorite genre, however, is House music. "Play some house music and I just might lose my mind," he quips. Sorrell and his college roommate once won a coveted weekly guest DJ spot at a club in Ohio where they packed the house with the popular Chicago-born high tempo dance music.

Outkast and Tupac earn GOAT status with Sorrell.

HAPPY HOBBIES

To say that Sorrell enjoys playing and watching basketball is an understatement. The game allows him to get in a good workout and playing at the YMCA further connects Sorrell to his community. Volunteering is a given and reading is a must in the Sorrell household. In fact, He is currently in the process of writing two books. He also loves to eat and travel.

STANDOUT SPORTS

A no-brainer, basketball is Sorrell's favorite sport. His hoop dreams started when Sorrell was a kid, took him through college and have helped him net some of his closest friends and most meaningful opportunities.

"I will always have love for my hometown team the Chicago Bulls!" said Sorrell who's also a Mavericks fan and gives a shout-out to the Golden State Warriors.

But as for his favorite player, hands down, his son Michael Augustus.

TRAVEL TIPS

South Africa, Hawaii and Sorrell loved visiting Cuba. "I always find my way back to Chicago," said Sorrell, "I try to get there several times a year; especially because my sister still lives there."

Brazil and Greece are definitely on his bucket list for travel. Ultimately, Sorrell added, "I really want to travel with my family and give my kids the ability to see the world through their own eyes."

MY MANTRA

SORRELL SWEARS BY THE 4LS, which Paul Quinn College and its students have embraced under his leadership as part of the college's "We over Me" philosophy.

LEAVE places better than you found them.
 LEAD from wherever you are.
 LIVE a life that matters.
 LOVE something greater than yourself.

AT HOME WITH DR. MICHAEL SORRELL

*Photos courtesy of Paul Quinn College*

Law Alumni Association; the Social Innovator Award from Babson College; the Vision Award, Center for Social Entrepreneurship from Middlebury College; the Distinguished Alumni Award from Duke University and the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education; and an honorary degree from Austin College.

The recipient of both the Dallas Bar Association's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Justice Award and the City of Dallas' Father of the Year Award, along with the Dallas Urban League's Torch for Community Leadership Award for his outstanding contributions to the Dallas legal community, Dr. Sorrell also graced the cover of Dallas CEO magazine in 2021. Yet the JP Morgan Chase Advancing Black Pathways, Amegy Bank, Hockaday School, Dallas Teach for America and Duke University Law School board member continues to make headlines across the nation. And his next big feature will no doubt center around his biggest dream to date: establishing the first ever national HBCU.

Last, but not least, his corporate and collegiate board affiliations include the Duke University's School of Law, the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, the Dallas Foundation and EarthX.

Undeniably, Sorrell's resume reads like one belonging to Superman— a man who possesses abilities beyond those of ordinary people, fits the role of a hero and uses his power or influence to help the world become a better place. Yet, he sees Thurgood Marshall, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth, and others like them as the real heroes and heroines. "I grew up wanting to be like them," Sorrell shared. "But what I have grown to care about most is that I am a man that my children and my wife are always proud to claim."

Spoken like a true superhero! ■

REINVENTING BALANCE

Burned out? Stop living like you're on fire.

I took a month off!

Kinda. A year ago I snatched every block of uncommitted time on my calendar and...held it for me! I treated it like recess, and decided that whatever I felt like doing, I was gonna do.

When I finally pulled myself together, I realized this was less about her and way more about me, my lack of emotional boundaries and my season of overcommitment. Fast forward to today and I feel really good. I'm bringing more of the good stuff into my day and saying 'no' when it doesn't serve me, even if it's hard.

Triangle executives, small business owners, members of my cohort and employees across all levels are telling me: "Jes, we're tired. We're crispy-crunchy burned out."

It was in these conversations that it dawned on me... the self-awareness around this issue is high. We know we're burned out. We're trying to course correct. We're all trying! But the long-term solution to burnout is deeper than a bubble bath or a walk in the park. The things we've been told will fix it, often don't. They are merely a temporary solution. In fact, it's possible that self-care routines are adding pressure instead of providing restoration. So, friends I think we're in the red zone now. It's time to dig deeper – a lot deeper.

That said, I've been in the boxing ring with burnout for months uncovering better resources, finding new answers and support. I've met with executives from Microsoft, SAS, IBM, ChannelAdvisor, Cisco and...the gloves are off. Over the next several issues, I'll share the keys to active rest, recovery and renewal... offering practical new insights that will help us all give burnout the TKO it deserves. ■

NOTE: If you want to get a head start, grab *Living Beyond Burnout* a handy book/workbook that I designed for easy reference in times of chronic stress and overwhelm. You got this...we're in this together.



My "come to Jesus" happened when a friend called to download her day and I teared up. I didn't have it in me. The straw. The camel. I didn't have it in me to care. As awful as that is to admit.

That feeling is called compassion fatigue and it's one of the first signs of burnout. So, I did what any self-respecting human would do who makes a career out of personal development – I finished crying and bought a slice of salted caramel cake from Nantucket (a local restaurant with wicked delicious desserts).

I'm going to do that again tomorrow... and again the next day. Rinse and repeat.

Here's the thing, I know I'm not on this island by myself. Burnout has a tight grip on many of us right now. I had the unique opportunity to speak to hundreds of women during women's history month and share space on panels discussing mental health and self-care. The feedback and 1:1 conversations after each event were enlightening to say the least and reinforced an assumption.

Jes Averhart, CEO of **Jes & Co.**, is a coach, consultant, author (*Living Beyond Burnout*) and creator of the Reinvention Road Trip program. Jes helps individuals and fortune 500 companies increase their personal satisfaction and professional impact through proven Reinvention Road Trip methodology.

A photograph of three women in a modern office setting. One woman in a pink shirt is sitting on a chair, smiling and looking at a laptop. Another woman in a dark top is sitting at the table, also smiling. A third woman in a yellow top is leaning over the table, writing in a notebook. There are yellow flowers in a vase on the table. The background features a large window with a brick wall and some framed pictures on the wall.

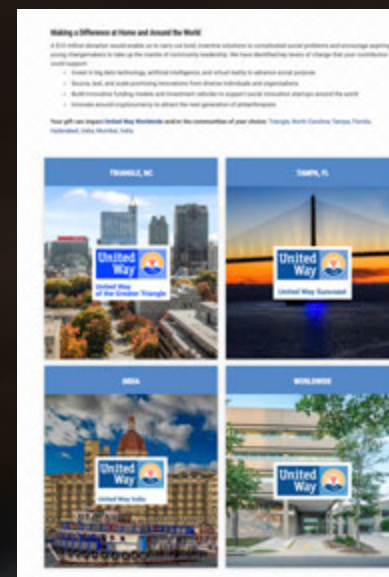
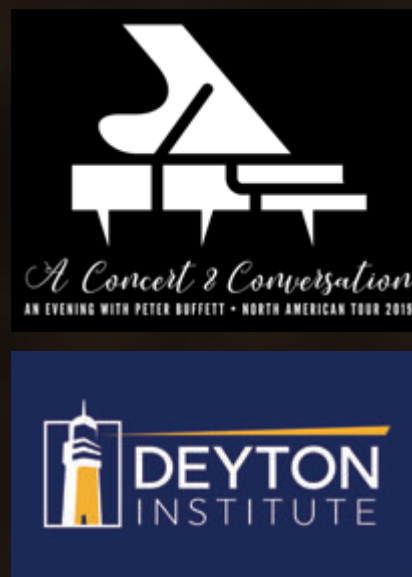
We're tired.
We're crispy-crunchy
burned out.

CREATIVESTU

Your brand is
your DNA —
it makes up
everything
you are

BlueSKY's Creative Studio is a collection of award-winning creatives, brand champions, authors, programmers and veteran talent who have built their careers around building relationships. Critical to the process is our working together and combining expertise to build digital assets that strengthen your brand and support your mission.

That collaboration happens internally as well. Across the entire BlueSKY organization, our SMEs bring a willingness to work together towards the best solutions for YOU — there are no 'silos' in the SKY.



UDIO



IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT YOUR BRAND.

A brand is simply the standards of any product or service: it's the who, what, where, when and how you plan on communicating and delivering on your messages. Your brand is everything, from where you advertise to your distribution channels to your visual and verbal communication. Essentially, your brand is your DNA — it makes up everything you are and tells the story of where you came from, where you're headed, and what purpose drives you forward.

At BlueSKY, we protect your brand as if it were our own. Everything we do, at every level, is centered around supporting the brand you have established.

WHY ARE WE SO PROTECTIVE?

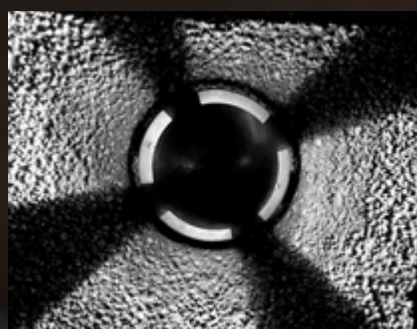
Every project, regardless of its size, scope or purpose MUST employ strategies that support and reinforce brand recognition. Good creative may go unnoticed, but bad creative can impact not only a consumer's reaction, but also their opinion of your brand. Even further, good creative on its own, even when supporting the brand, falls short of its potential if it doesn't connect to the consumer.

Connecting with each other provides an opportunity to inform and to learn. The most effective creative impacts the consumer because it was designed FOR the consumer. And creative that informs has the best chance of creating strong brand awareness, brand preference and brand loyalty. Understanding your brand, consumers and market is the driving force behind our creative.

The Creative Studio is a unique group of creatives, all industry veterans who have spent their careers becoming masters. We share a passion for uplifting, powerful content that drives positive awareness — projects that make a difference AND make an impact, around the corner or around the globe. ■

**Have big ideas you want to see become big actions?
We're built for that.**

email Erik: erik.klaver@blueskycollaborative.org



*BlueSKY's Chief Creative Director **Erik Klaver** has spent more than three decades in brand development, creative concept, design and production. Over the years he's worked with terrific organizations focusing on the brand as a whole, from the ideas to the competition to the audience. Whether it's flat sheets or flat-rates, pixels or points, his north star is building relationships on respect, hard work and a good laugh along the way.*



THE DIALOGUE WITH DOCTOR Z.

Talking Health Equity Hot Topics with Today's Health Equity Leaders

For our first issue of The Dialogue, we have a conversation with Dr. Nasrien Ibrahim, an Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologist, researcher, physician activist, and author. While focused on advancing health equity and alleviating the effects of structural racism in organ allocation, Dr. Nasrien believes we all have a duty to dismantle systems that have perpetuated disparities in all facets of medicine.

Dr. Zerita C. Buchanan: To start our interview off, I'd love for you to tell us about yourself. Where did you grow up and where did you receive your education?

Dr. Nasrien E. Ibrahim: So that's usually a difficult question for me because it's a little complicated. My dad is from Sudan and my mom is from Egypt. I was actually born in Saudi Arabia because that's where my dad works. I lived there until I was 15 years old. My parents wanted us to have the best chance at an education as possible, and so they made the decision for us to immigrate to the United States.

I went to University of Cincinnati for undergrad and medical school. I also stayed there for residency and my first cardiology fellowship. Cincinnati is essentially what I consider home in the United States. After that, I went to the University of Colorado to do my advanced heart failure and transplant training, and then I moved to Boston to do a fellowship in clinical research.

I worked for a few years, and then now I'm currently one of the Commonwealth Fund Fellows in Minority Health Policy, and I'm also getting my MPH in Health Policy at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health. I'll be an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and faculty at Brigham and Women's Hospital this fall.

Dr. Z: : Awesome. So your parents are in healthcare in Saudi Arabia?

Dr. Ibrahim: Yes. My dad's an oncologist. My mom is a general practitioner, but she does not work anymore. She stayed home and decided to raise four kids. So that became her profession, a professional homemaker and really, the queen of our household and the reason we were all able to achieve our goals.

Dr. Z: : Did you always know you would go into medicine?

Dr. Ibrahim: I always wanted to be a doctor because I would go to work with my dad, and I was always so impressed by the work that my dad was doing. I have childhood memories of how my dad seemed like a superhero to me.



Dr. Zerita C. Buchanan is a fourth-generation dentist and a proud HBCU graduate. Dr. Buchanan received her Doctorate of Dental Surgery from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Dentistry and her MPH in Health Policy from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Dr. Z: : Currently your work is focused on alleviating the effects of structural racism and organ allocation. How did you get into this work?

Dr. Ibrahim: It's really because of all the experiences I've had as a trainee and faculty member just seeing how the selection process happens and who ends up not being selected or not being eligible for transplant. A lot of times it's patients from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. It's patients that don't have the financial means or it's patients living in rural areas that don't become candidates for transplant. And so for me, every story that had essentially traumatized me during my training in my early years as a faculty member, became the fuel for the fire. For me to say, okay,

there's a huge problem. I've read about it, but now I've seen it. What can we do to try to make this better?

Dr. Z: What does a patient go through when they need a heart transplant? What steps do they have to do to get on the transplant list?

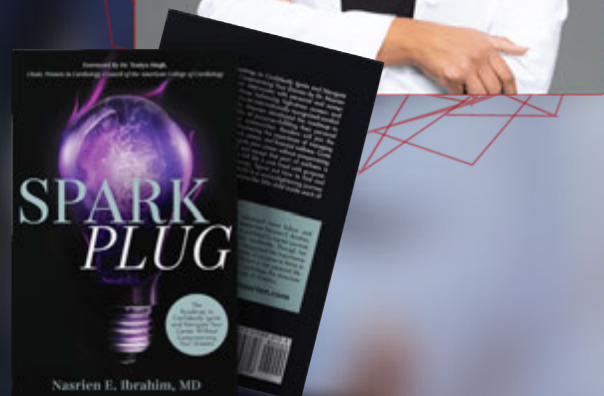
Dr. Ibrahim: It's usually a long and complicated process and essentially we look at you from head to toe. I like to think of it as three buckets where we evaluate things. Number one is the medical bucket - are you sick enough? Is the heart sick enough that it needs to be transplanted? But then also is the patient too sick? So maybe this is the thing that happens a lot of times with racial and ethnic minority patients that they're too sick to be transplanted. And what I mean by that is that they have multi organ failure for example that now when we put a brand

new heart in, there's way too many organs that are failing that they're not going to survive the operation. So that usually is a manifestation of late referrals. And we're not going to talk too much about referrals here, but it's really important to send the patients early enough so that they're not too sick for us to consider them for transplant. That's the easy part. The other bucket is the financial bucket and I like to consider insurance in that bucket. So do you have health insurance? But also does your health insurance cover heart transplant? Some patients are uninsured and some patients are under-insured. So unfortunately, in America, healthcare is not free. And if you read about it, there's something called a "wallet biopsy". So we want to make sure patients have enough money that after they're transplanted that they're able to cover the copayments after transplant.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

"My mom is the queen of our household and the reason we were all able to achieve our goals."

Dr. Nasrien E. Ibrahim
www.drnasrien.com



THE DIALOGUE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

Are they able to afford transportation to and from the transplant center? Sometimes it's a housing issue. Are they able to afford housing that's close enough to the transplant center if they live very far away? There's this great perspective piece in health affairs about poverty being a contraindication for transplant. And then the last bucket is the psychosocial assessment. And in this assessment, you're evaluating things like mental health and substance use history and whether they have a caregiver. And that's usually the area that's the grayest and there's the most potential for bias when we're making decisions about who's eligible and who's not. Then there's a committee sitting in this room and voting on whether or not we think you should proceed to the list.

Dr. Z: Wow, those are very detailed steps that people have to take in order to receive a transplant. Out of those that you described, is there one that you feel like is a larger health equity problem or is it the whole system together?

Dr. Ibrahim: I think it's the entire system, but anytime you start asking for things like verification of finances or psychosocial evaluations, those have the most potential for disparities and inequitable decisions because the rules are not equal across transplant centers. So some transplant centers might ask you to show proof of having \$5,000 in the bank. Another transplant center might say \$10,000. Some centers might have a bucket of money that they're able to help you financially. So I think the financial piece and the psychosocial piece have

the most room for disparities based on structural racism in the US.

Dr. Z: Wow. So one thing I really admire about you is not only are you providing direct patient care, but you also are doing work in this space outside of the hospital. Can you tell us a little bit about your nonprofit? What's the mission of the nonprofit and the impact that you all have made so far?

Dr. Ibrahim: Yeah, this is a project that I've been thinking about for several years. And I always knew I wanted to do this, but it wasn't until the sudden death of my childhood friend in February of 2022 that I said, no more thinking and I'm going to start doing. And that month I found an attorney and we established the Equity in Heart Transplant Project. It's a 501(c)

Who is Doctor Z?



Zerita C. Buchanan, DDS, MPH

Senior Vice President - Health Equity, Innovation, & HBCU Engagement

I AM HBCU

Dr. Zerita C. Buchanan is a fourth-generation dentist and a proud HBCU graduate. Her commitment to health equity led her to be recognized as a "Healthcare Hero" by her alma mater Spelman College. A beneficiary of many mentorships, Dr. Buchanan is hoping to ensure the future of healthcare looks more inclusive. She is a public health expert and specializes in transforming the under-represented minority student experience. Dr. Buchanan is passionate about health policy, HBCU pipeline development, workforce diversity, and healthcare innovation.

Her "first steps" were indeed toward Spelman as she is a true "Spel-House" baby. She was born in Atlanta, GA, to Drs. Brian K. Buchanan (Morehouse College '83) and Rahmelle C. Thompson (Spelman College '81, Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine '88). Dr. Buchanan graduated from the Paideia School in Atlanta and had her heart set on following her mother's footsteps to Spelman. While in college, she founded the 1st HBCU chapter of the national non-profit organization "Operation Smile" and was initiated into the Eta Kappa Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. After majoring in Biology at Spelman, Dr. Buchanan received her Doctorate of Dental Surgery from The University of

(3) public charity. And what we do is we provide financial assistance to patients who are eligible for transplant, who need a heart transplant, but they're just lacking the finances. So essentially this is a band aid solution because like I said, a lot of these issues are very deeply rooted. These are systemic problems.

So what we do is any patient in the United States that needs a heart transplant, but their center says, no, we're not going to put you on the list because you can't afford housing closer to the transplant center or you need to show us this proof of \$5,000 to be able to cover medication, copayments, anything really financial. We cover for the patients. We're willing to even cover child care. Our nonprofit would pay for daycare to relieve that financial burden.

North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Dentistry and her MPH in Health Policy from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She is an active member of The Dogwood City (GA) Chapter of The Links, Inc. and holds an adjunct professor appointment at Morehouse School of Medicine in the Department of Medical Education.

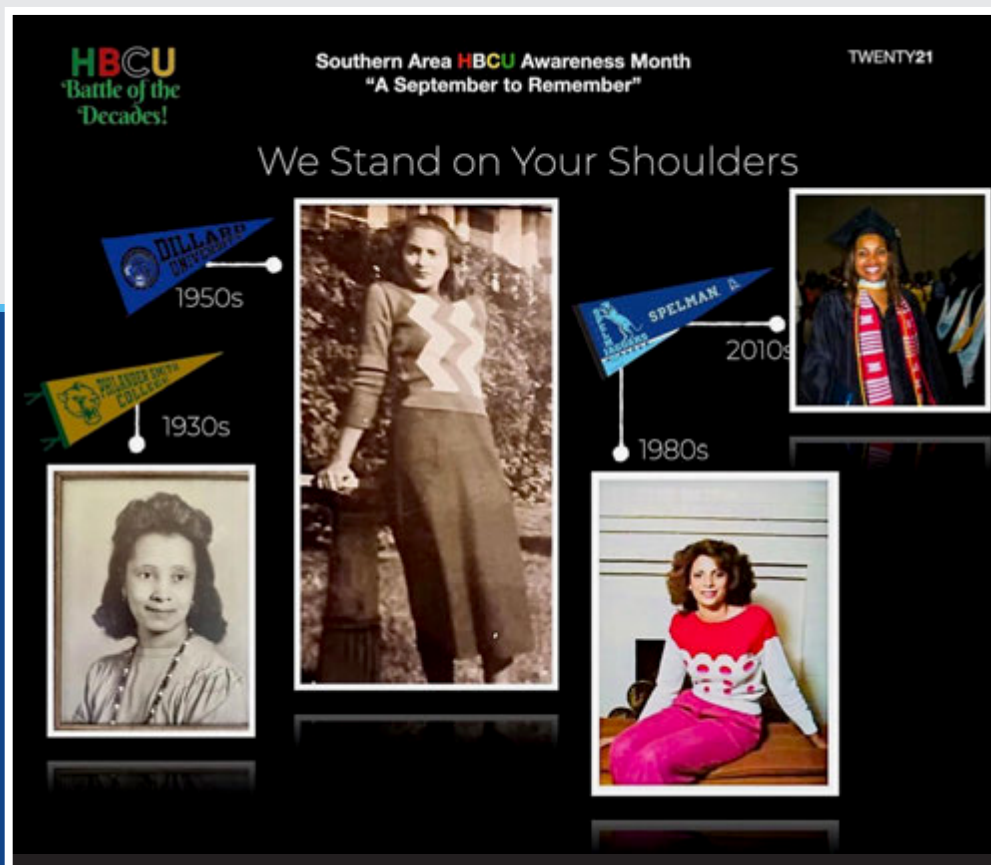
WHAT DOES HBCU FAMILY MEAN TO YOU?

Growing up, Dr. Buchanan was no stranger to the powerful legacy of HBCUs as she heard stories of her relatives attending. It was, in fact, her great-grandfather Dr. John B. Thompson Sr., who was the 1st dentist in her family when he

Georgia, for example, medicaid in Georgia does not cover heart transplants for anybody 21 years or older. But remarkably, Emory transplants those patients. But they only cover the cost of that hospitalization and that operation. So the patients have to fundraise for post operative costs. And what we do is we provide financial assistance to those patients. And so far in total, we've helped ten patients, and seven of them have been from Georgia.

Dr. Z: : That's great. So in a year you've been able to make you save ten lives. That's amazing. I know you also wrote a book. Can you tell us a little bit about that and if you have any words of inspiration for the future generation of students who are interested in cardiology and heart transplant?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50



received his Doctorate of Dental Surgery from Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in 1923. Dr. Thompson practiced dentistry in Monroe, Louisiana, for 44 years and was a member of the Pelican State Dental Association. In the late 1930s,

he was appointed to take charge of the Louisiana State Hospital Board's mobile dental clinics. He passed his love of dentistry down to his son, Dr. John B. Thompson Jr., who

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50

THE DIALOGUE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49

Dr. Ibrahim: Absolutely. So my book is just about how do you live life being a badass in your job, like, whatever you decide is going to be your job or your career, but also being a badass outside of your career and your job. Because sometimes I feel like as physicians or clinicians, we live in this little bubble where we forget about life outside of work, and it's about taking care of yourself, taking care of the people around you, taking care of your communities.

My advice to people that want to go into cardiology is we need you. A paper just came out saying that over 2.5 million black Americans live in areas and regions in the US that are cardiology deserts. So there are no cardiologists in the areas that they live in. So the need is there. It's an incredible field. The field does

not have enough Black physicians, and there's so many opportunities, there's so many pipeline programs for people that want to come into this field.

It's really important that we diversify it to better serve our communities.

Dr. Z: Great. And what's the name of your book and where can people purchase it?

Dr. Ibrahim: Spark Plug. And it is on Amazon. And any money that I make from selling the book goes directly to the nonprofit.

Dr. Z: Perfect. Well, I just want to take a moment to say I am so proud of you, so proud of the work you're doing. And oftentimes we hear about people doing phenomenal things, but we don't give

them their flowers while they are here. So I just want to say we are so grateful as a community to have leaders like you advocating for us, for people who may not have a voice at that table. So thank you for everything that you've been doing.

Dr. Ibrahim: Thank you, my last words are, we all have the ability to make a difference. Just look around the spaces you're in, look around the rooms that you're in, and even small changes can have an enormous impact in the future. So just have the courage to speak up, to advocate for change. And again, look around you. Whether you're a firefighter, whether you're a teacher, whether you are a clinician, we all have the opportunity to make a difference. So look around you and see where change is needed. ■

WHO IS DR. Z?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49

graduated from Dillard University and Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in 1955.

The women in Dr. Buchanan's family also pursued their education at HBCUs. Her great-grandmother Zerita Mitchell Thompson graduated from Philander Smith College, and her second great-grandmother Corrine Johnson Peek graduated from Tuskegee University. Her grandmother, Rahmelle Peek Thompson, received her degree from Dillard University, and her aunt, whom she is named after,

Zerita Thompson Becker, received her undergraduate degree from Tennessee State University.

EXPERIENCE

Dr. Buchanan has practiced dentistry alongside her father since 2014. Her dental reputation is one of modern approaches and innovative techniques. She is known for her compassionate bedside manner and great capacity to listen to her patients' needs. Her private practice, Dental Dreams, LLC, serves as an innovation hub for HBCU students interested in the STEM sciences. In 2022 Dr. Buchanan was awarded the Tory Burch Foundation Women of Color Grant and launched

the "Dental Dreams, LLC- Dental Assisting School" to expand access to dental care and promote health equity by using technology and innovation to train the next generation of culturally competent dentists and dental assistants. Since its founding, the "Dental Dreams, LLC – Dental Assisting School" has trained over 20 pre-dental students from Morehouse and Spelman as certified dental assistants. Dr. Buchanan also currently serves as the Assistant Director of Increasing Diversity in Dentistry (IDID), a national pipeline program for minority college students interested in pursuing a career in dentistry. Since coming on board with IDID, Dr. Buchanan has helped to grow



the membership to over 750 pre-dental students nationwide and raised over \$200,000 in donations to support the program's mission.

A dynamic keynote speaker, Dr. Buchanan has given students of color the courage and confidence to follow uncharted career paths in science and technology. She served as a Guest Lecturer at Spelman College, where she instructed science majors on topics of "Health Equity in Dentistry," "Human Anatomy & Physiology," and "Dental Medicine & Physical Assessment of The Head & Neck." In addition, she

has built a vast network inclusive of top healthcare leaders by serving as an HBCU engagement consultant to world-class institutions such as Harvard University, Tufts University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and UNC-Chapel Hill.

In 2022, Dr. Buchanan was selected for the prestigious Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Minority Health Policy at Harvard University. She was awarded the Joe Henry Fellowship by the Harvard School of Dental Medicine (HSDM) in honor of Dr. Joe Henry, the 1st African-American interim Dean at HSDM.

Her public health research is focused on the enduring impact racism has on the American healthcare system and how it relates to current-day oral health disparities. She's presented lectures at Harvard School of Dental Medicine on racial disparities in the dental workforce as well as the role of commercial dental insurance companies in the wealth gap between white and minority dentists. ■

THINK BIG.



ERIK KLAVER

Feed the good wolf, think big, dare mighty things

When asked 'Why BlueSKY?', Chief Creative Officer Erik Klaver related a recent experience for his explanation...

I was with one of my closest friends of more than 40 years, discussing (as old people do) TV shows we were watching. Chris explained that it was NO surprise that I enjoyed Ted Lasso. "Of course you do," he said. "Mr. Positive." Apparently my optimism is noticeable.

So it makes perfect sense that I would eventually become closely tied to BlueSKY Collaborative. I've been told there are few people more 'blue sky' than me, but Julie is certainly one of them. If you know Julie, then you know the name of her organization makes perfect sense.

For those of you who don't know Julie, you should understand that, like me, she wants to do big things and always tries to see the positive — to feed the good wolf. In fact, if you take only one thing away from this little piece of writing, please let it be this: feed the good wolf.

THE TWO WOLVES

A Cherokee Story

A young boy came to his Grandfather, filled with anger at another boy who had done him an injustice.

The old Grandfather said to his grandson, "Let me tell you a story. I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down, and hate does not hurt your enemy. Hate is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times."

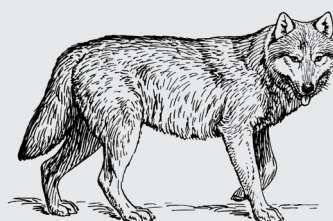
"It is as if there are two wolves inside me; one wolf is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offence when no offence was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way."

"But the other wolf is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, because his anger will change nothing."

The Grandfather continued, "Sometimes it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, because both of the wolves try to dominate my spirit."

The boy looked intently into his Grandfather's eyes and asked, "Which wolf will win?"

The Grandfather smiled and said, "The one I feed."



THINK BIG.



ADD SEYMOUR

Award-winning multi-platform writer; journalist and communicator

Add Seymour Jr., is an award-winning multi-platform writer, journalist and communicator who was written for a number of national publications, such as The Atlanta Journal Constitution and The Associated Press. He was won the Freedom Forum/Enterprise Foundation's National Excellence in Urban Journalism for a series on national public housing trends. Add has also extensively covered government and politics, race relations, and higher education.

He is a veteran public relations communicator, having worked for institutions such as Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University, along with writing for many other institutions. Add is also an accomplished freelance writer who has written for a number of national and regional publications and websites across the country. A former jazz DJ, Add is a native of Nashville, Tennessee and a graduate of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. ■

ERIK...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

Like many legends, the Cherokee story "The Two Wolves" isn't about the TRUTH of the story as much as it is its MORAL: life is much better when you feed the positive. I was reminded of this just recently, in a way I wasn't expecting.

Our friend Scott was one of those rare breeds — blonde hair, blue eyes, a smile that lit up the room and the personality to match. He had a way that made you feel important, like you were best friends. Scott was also a brilliant, fierce, dedicated and respected soldier who defined strength in every manner— a true warrior.

Scott never talked about the things he'd seen, heard or done during his time serving our country. He never talked about his accolades or accomplishments. Instead, he talked about his wife or threw some hilarious friendly jab at one of us. Whenever our group got together, things were always better with Scott there.

Then, a little over two years ago, we lost him to a very short yet amazingly painful fight with cancer. Even after his diagnosis, Scott never focused on his own battle.

Instead, he was always looking at how to make tomorrow better — for everyone. Scott kept feeding the good wolf, focusing on what he could do for ANYONE to ease THEIR burdens. His idea, his goal — his MISSION — was to make sure that the good wolf would be fed, long after he could not feed it.

To make sure Scott's mission was — and will be — forever preserved, his wife Christina started the Sterling Promise Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to providing colon cancer awareness and assistance to former and current members of the military. Not the most exciting, attractive topic for sure, but absolutely critical, especially for a group we typically envision 'too strong' to ponder the possibility of 'The C Word'.

Scott's mission was to ALWAYS feed the good wolf. He never even offered scraps to that 'other' wolf. Christina, carrying the responsibility and honor of that same mission, continues to provide nourishment for the good wolf.

For the second year in a row, and more than 1000 miles from our hometown,

a fundraiser was held that raised over \$60,000 for the foundation. It was an amazing evening and a chance to see old friends.

So, how does this relate to Julie, you ask? When I told her this story, she was as moved as I am. Her response? How can we help?

In other words, in typical Julie fashion, she wanted to know how BlueSKY can help feed the good wolf.

That's why Julie and BlueSKY are so important to me — because we want to feed the good wolf, to think big, to "dare mighty things". There are battles all around us, and working together means we win more than we lose. Surrounding yourself with those who are feeding the good wolf sure does make things better.

So let's go live life. Let's enjoy the amazing things we have around us and make tomorrow better. As Scott would say, get busy living or get busy dying.

Grab a snack, and let's go feed the good wolf. ■

Learn more about Scott
and The Foundation at
sterlingpromisefoundation.org

Sterling
Promise
FOUNDATION



THINK BIG.



JUANITA REYNOLDS

Strategic partner, mentor and leader in education

Dr. Juanita Reynolds, Chief Strategic Partnership Officer for BlueSKY Collaborative, has worked in education for over 25 years in various capacities and is considered an expert in organizational as well as school turnaround.

Most recently, Dr. Reynolds served as the Chief Strategic Partnership Officer for Education Farm and The PROPEL Center initiative. In addition to developing partnerships with university and corporate partners, she has served as a university faculty member; mentored and coached leaders; served as a teacher, district office and site administrator for elementary, middle and high schools; and at Honors Pathway and New Leaders for New Schools. In 2015 Dr. Reynolds received the Capital City Legends Award for her leadership and outstanding service and commitment to education. She is also a Trustee for Elite Public Schools. Dr. Reynolds, attended Howard University and CSU Hayward earning her Bachelors degree, she also holds two Masters degrees from Mills College, Teaching and Administrative Services credentials, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. She is married to her life partner of over 30 years, Melvin Reynolds and has two incredible children, Jasmine and Stephan Reynolds and cooks a mean garlic crab! ■



KAREN SOMMERVILLE

Leadership, detail and organization

Karen has had a career in both public and independent education for the past 20 years, bringing with her a high level of leadership, detail and organization. Her passion for making connections allows her to specialize in raising the level of client service and increased revenue. Having recently transitioned into corporate as a recruiter, Karen's true "happy place" has always been the beach. Out of her love for travel, her travel business was born — Get You Somm Travel, which curates travel experiences designed to meet the client's needs.

As a servant-leader with a consistent record of professional growth, it is important that her team grows professionally as well. An innovative and independent thinker, excellence in communication and writing continues to be her strengths. A proud alumna of Spelman College in Atlanta, GA, Karen volunteers in multiple capacities at her alma mater. When she is not spending time with her husband and their three adult children, you can find Karen traveling or volunteering. ■

THINK BIG.



NANDI EDOUARD

Students can create their own futures and change the world

Nandi Edouard has deep ties to her alma mater, Spelman College, where she received her Bachelors of Arts in Psychology. To strengthen her knowledge of education, Nandi received a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University and served as the Director of School Culture, Managing Dean of Students and New Teacher Development Lead at Prospect Schools in Brooklyn, NY English and Language Arts teacher at YES Prep Public Schools in Houston.

Currently, Nandi serves as the lead school founder and chief executive officer of The Simple Vue Academy. Opening in 2025, The Simple Vue Academy is a proposed 6-12 charter school in Cobb County, with a vision to provide students with a STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Arts, and Mathematics) based education, emphasizing entrepreneurship and financial literacy.



KELLYE BLACKBURN

The current social justice movement has reignited corporate DEI goals

It was August 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic and the summer of uprisings that stemmed from the Black Lives Matter protests. I had just started my new role as Director of Career Services at Grambling State University, and my phone was “ringing off the hook!” Diversity Equity and Inclusion was now front-page news, and virtually every HBCU graduate working at a Fortune 500 company had been charged with reaching out to their alma mater — or closest HBCU in their vicinity.

I quickly became weary and overwhelmed. Most corporate contacts would set a meeting on my calendar or post positions on our virtual campus recruitment platform with one purpose — to tick their diversity quota.

Other corporations wanted help implementing career development programs — only after they had gathered their internal teams, developed programs, and launched national press releases. When the programs had low participation or were struggling to achieve a profitable return, they called me, looking for answers.

THINK BIG.



KIERAN BLANKS

Trusted partners on a shared mission of transformation

The opportunity to collaborate with BlueSKY was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. If you know Julie, then you understand.

I had the privilege of working closely with BlueSKY Collaborative Partner's CEO during my time at Morehouse College. I've been deeply inspired by her incredible vision and unwavering dedication to leadership development, fostering collaboration, empowering educational institutions and nonprofit organizations, and uplifting historically underestimated communities. Her "BlueSKY" mentality is a reminder of the limitless potential that resides in all of us — a mindset that continues to inspire.

What BlueSKY has accomplished in such a short time has been nothing short of extraordinary. BlueSKY is a powerhouse of talent, expertise, and creativity, committed to their clients' success and driven by the desire to create meaningful and sustainable change — individuals who share my values and are similarly invested in leveraging their business and technical acumen for impact.



www.theblankslate.us

Through this door is the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

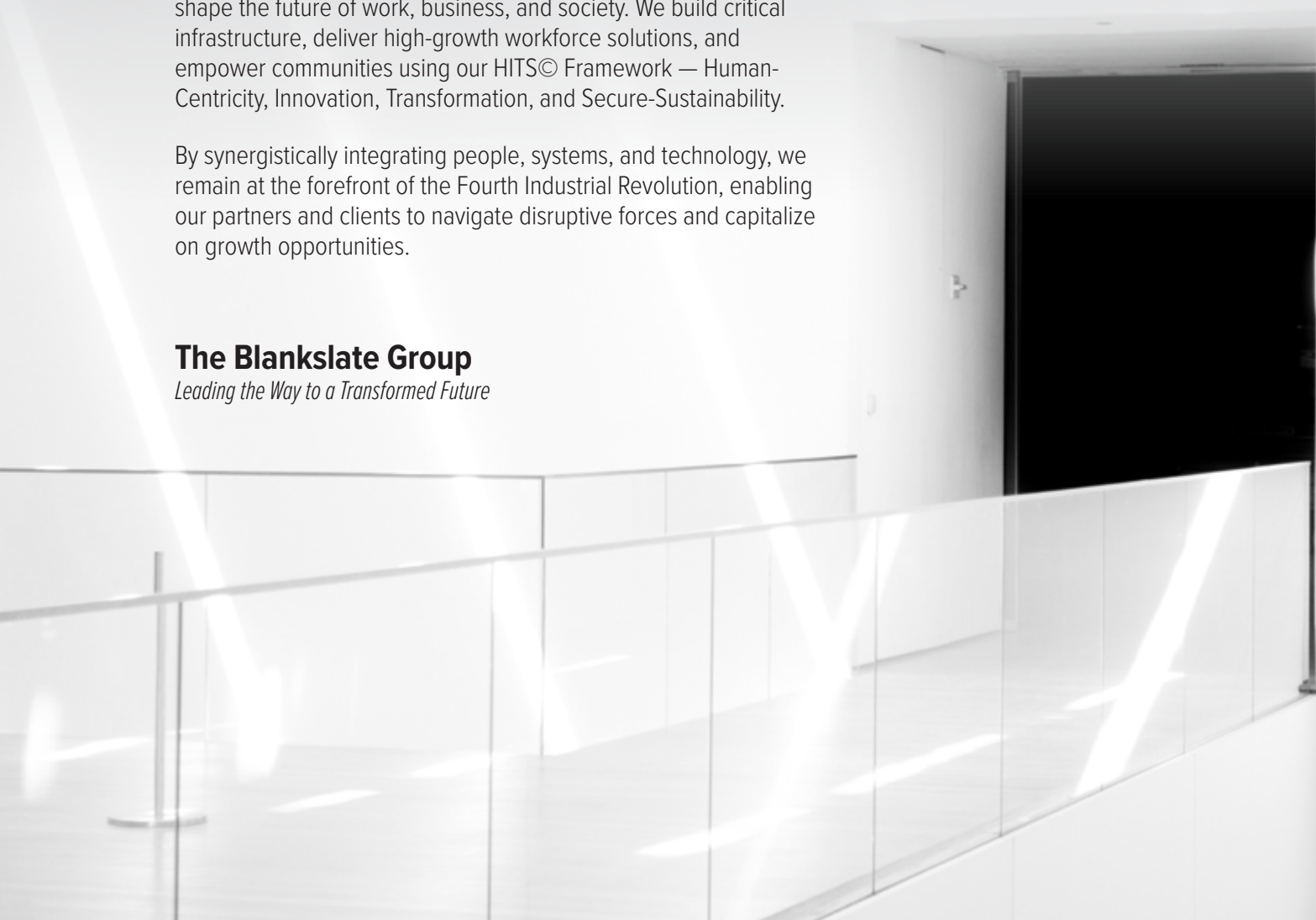
When you have the right partner walking with you, it's not as scary as it looks.

The Blankslate Group's client-centric, innovative solutions help shape the future of work, business, and society. We build critical infrastructure, deliver high-growth workforce solutions, and empower communities using our HITS© Framework — Human-Centricity, Innovation, Transformation, and Secure-Sustainability.

By synergistically integrating people, systems, and technology, we remain at the forefront of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, enabling our partners and clients to navigate disruptive forces and capitalize on growth opportunities.

The Blankslate Group

Leading the Way to a Transformed Future



NANDI...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

This innovative educational institution aims to create a sustainable pathway to entrepreneurship by equipping scholars with the skills, knowledge, and support needed to thrive in their chosen communities.

Nandi was born and raised in Cobb County, GA, and returning there to open The Simple Vue was simply natural — as a BES Fellow, she's working with her design team to reimagine the educational landscape.

Recognizing the challenges faced by economically disadvantaged students in Cobb County, where the graduation rate stands at 64.6%, The Simple Vue Academy has made it their mission to address these disparities. Through extensive community outreach, Nandi and her team have gained invaluable insight and feedback — they organized focus groups, community events, and surveys to ensure that the voices and stories of the community are heard and considered.

Through these conversations, it became evident that the region is demanding the next generation of students be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to thrive. Entrepreneurship has long been recognized as a key driver of economic mobility, particularly for disadvantaged groups. The Simple Vue Academy aims to bridge this gap by providing an entrepreneurial education that imparts real-world skills, empowering students to lead remarkable lives in a rapidly changing world.



Central to The Simple Vue Academy's educational approach are three core values that have emerged from community conversations and research on academic success: Voice, Ubuntu, and Empowerment.

Voice represents the belief that students should have agency in their learning, allowing them to become self-directed learners. By placing student voice and choice at the center of their classrooms, The Simple Vue Academy empowers students to explore their passions and contribute their ideas and opinions to the decision-making processes and curriculum development.

Ubuntu, a term derived from African philosophy, embodies the idea of interconnectedness and the importance of communities and teams working together to achieve common goals. The school adopts a two-generational approach, focusing on the whole family to create a legacy of educational success and economic prosperity that transcends generations. The Simple Vue Academy welcomes all families to the school community, celebrating their diverse cultures, seeking their input on the curriculum, and valuing their perspectives in collaboration with teachers, school leaders, and board members.



Empowerment is another fundamental value upheld by The Simple Vue Academy. Students are encouraged to develop a strong sense of self-confidence, allowing them to explore and choose their own paths while making informed decisions. Through offering exploration and choice, the school supports students in solving problems, meeting needs, and creating meaningful impact through their ideas, products, and services. The Simple Vue Academy aims to empower students to make a difference and contribute to making the world a better place.

The Simple Vue Academy is pioneering an educational model that combines academic excellence, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy, addressing the specific needs of the Metro Atlanta community. By actively seeking input from the community and emphasizing collaboration, the school is ensuring that its design is tailored to the unique requirements and aspirations of the students and families it aims to serve. With their emphasis on STREAM education, entrepreneurship, and the development of real-world skills, The Simple Vue Academy is poised to make a significant impact on the educational landscape in Cobb County, preparing students to not only create their own futures but also to change the world. ■

KELLYE...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63

The company representatives that had the most success recruiting and engaging students on campus were, like me, truly passionate about helping HBCU students succeed. They valued my HBCU recruitment expertise, understood that recruiting on HBCU campuses is different and accepted suggestions about what recruitment methods worked on each specific HBCU campus.

As a graduate of two HBCUs (Spelman College and Clark Atlanta University) and having served as a Director of Career Services for two others (Morehouse College and Grambling State University), I connected first-hand experience with out-of-the-norm ideas to effectively recruit top HBCU talent.

The current social justice movement has reignited corporate diversity and inclusion goals. DEI teams are being created and tasked with more effective diversity recruitment strategies. At BlueSKY, we're creating innovative programs to enhance recruitment efforts for under-represented minorities — a challenging and obtainable effort that requires the experience and thought-leadership found at BlueSKY.

Our experience, innovative approach and veteran talent adapts to your challenges and helps develop recruiting partnerships with HBCUs. Our unique collaborative excels at sharing insights on innovative programs, increased student and faculty participation, internship and employment placement, and increased return on corporate investment. Working with BlueSKY on diversity and inclusion and HBCU career development, you'll become part of the family I am so excited to join. ■

KIERAN...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63

What sets them apart is their unwavering commitment to a holistic approach to consultancy. BlueSKY firmly believes that the only limit to what we can achieve is our own imagination. This philosophy permeates every aspect of our work and is the foundation of the exceptional value we provide to our clients.

Unlike traditional consulting firms, BlueSKY goes beyond the surface-level approach of providing recommendations or implementing solutions. We understand that true transformation requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, we embark on a collaborative journey with our clients, forming deep and long-lasting partnerships built on trust and shared goals.

In essence, BlueSKY is a group of trusted partners on a shared mission of transformation. We bring together diverse perspectives, deep industry knowledge, and a relentless drive for excellence to deliver results that go beyond expectations. Our holistic approach, rooted in collaboration and co-creation, sets us apart and enables us to create lasting, positive change for our clients and the communities they serve.

With a purposeful, genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is integrated in every facet of our organization. We firmly believe in the power of representation and creating inclusive spaces, where every voice is not only heard but also valued. This stems from a deep understanding of existing systemic barriers and a strong desire to dismantle them, empowering underrepresented groups and fostering a more equitable future.

Supporting their commitment to diversity and inclusion is BlueSKY's collaborative nature. True transformation requires engaging in deep dialogue and partnership with stakeholders at every step of the process. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the solutions developed are not only effective but also sustainable.

BlueSKY Collaborative Partners transcends the boundaries of traditional consultancy by embodying a genuine desire to make a positive impact. Their inclusive and collaborative approach, combined with their unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion, sets them apart as trailblazers in their field. It has been an absolute privilege to work alongside them and witness firsthand the transformative power they bring to organizations, institutions, and communities. ■



THINK BIG.



DAVID LOPEZ

Supporting diversity, from California to Kentucky

David Lopez was born and raised in the richly diverse, cross-border region of San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico). That upbringing cemented in him the importance diversity has in our communities. David has 20+ years of experience in supporting equity in business development, executive management, and program and operations across both for-profit and non-profit sectors. His strategic consulting is informed by time spent in executive leadership roles, including Global Knowledge Lead for Fundraising and Development at Teach For All, Chief Development Officer at Metro United Way, Founding Executive Director at Teach For America - San Diego, and Co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer at USAdelante.



MARIE LOWE

If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn... *Ignacio "Nacho" Estrada*

Marie Lowe, a retired Elementary School teacher with 26 years of teaching in the Atlanta and Fulton Public School System, knows teaching extends well outside the classroom. A Georgia native with a love of walking, reading, and spending time with family and friends, Marie grew up on the southwest side of Atlanta with her three brothers. After graduating from Northside High School, Marie attended Clark College (Clark Atlanta University) where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood.

Her college experience included more than just her degree — she and her husband Bruce reconnected junior year at CAU and married June 1983. Daughters Kimberly and Jennifer witnessed Marie's commitment to education, watching her earn a Master of Education for Curriculum & Instruction: Reading.

During her 26 years of service as a classroom teacher/Grade Level Chair, Marie also mentored undergraduate and graduate student teachers from Atlanta Christian College and Georgia State University. Assisting the next generation of educators was a rewarding experience, allowing her to further extend her emphasis on education.

THINK BIG.



KEVIN GUILLE

Focused, growth-oriented leadership that produces results

A native of DC and raised in Prince George's County, Maryland, Kevin Guile has always been an ambitious leader. Active in sports and the only three-year letterman in his class, Kevin was recruited to play college football at Cheyney University. After an injury changed his path, Kevin focused his efforts on activities on campus, including President of the DEX Business Club and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

After graduating from Cheyney with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration ('91), Kevin began his professional career working for a Miller Beer Distributor in the Philadelphia region. With a relentless work ethic and business acumen he gained at Cheyney, Kevin was quickly promoted to Senior Sales Manager, coordinating sales, forecast planning and analysis for six company distributors and one of the biggest distributors on the east coast. His tenacity helped reverse declining volume and market share, and restored profitability and high-performance sales growth.

Kevin went on to work for PepsiCo, Sunny Delight Beverages and Britvic NA, managing some of the nation's largest national customers (Wal-Mart, 7-Eleven, BJ's and Sunoco). He was responsible for creating strategy initiatives, implementing marketing programs, and driving incremental growth for his customers. These opportunities allowed Kevin

KEVIN...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

to oversee multi-million-dollar P&L management accounts and execute profit and performance improvement for his customers.

While at PepsiCo, Kevin was recognized as best-in-class for five consecutive years for outpacing his competitors and increasing his company's share by 15 points over a five-year span. He led all national managers in growth for several consecutive years within the company.

Kevin brings to BlueSKY his vast experience working with Fortune 500 companies and several beverage companies. From creating "Go to Market" strategies and category management implementation to relationship and account management, his expertise focuses on business, market and channel development. He has led successful launches of innovation brands for various companies and streamlined operations with elimination of waste and redundancies of resources.

But it isn't just the bottom line that Kevin is passionate about — his experiences have prepared him to lead team building, organizational development, consensus building, and strategic and tactical planning. His skills, experience and passion have also prepared Kevin to take on a roll in his non-profit commitment to the organization he holds so close to his heart — Cheney University.

As President of the National Alumni Association, Kevin was instrumental in assisting with the renewal of Cheney's



accreditation with the Middle States Commission of Higher Education. Aiding Cheney in meeting its obligations to the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, he implemented new strategies to modernize the alumni association, centralized messaging and focused on activities that aligned with the university's purpose and mission. Thanks in part to his leadership, the Washington (DMV) Alumni Chapter won "The Most Philanthropic" Chapter Award for several years straight. In addition, the chapter has won the "Outstanding Chapter of the Year" six consecutive years since he joined.

And if all that isn't enough to occupy his time, Kevin is also the co-founder of an event-planning company, Stomp and Clay Productions, LLC, providing brand and marketing services to a diverse group of clients and Fortune 500 companies.

Known for helping clients reach their strategic imperatives and executing premiere cultural events, Stomp & Clay has built an exceptional reputation for setting the PACE (Professional, Ambiance, Creativity and Entertainment) in event planning. He looks forward to bringing all of the expertise and execution elements to the BlueSKY Collaborative Partners.

Like BlueSKY, Kevin loves working with people and organizations committed to accomplishing a common goal. He looks forward to bringing his work experience and non-profit expertise to BlueSKY, to help advance education, amongst the other great causes BlueSKY supports. ■

DAVID...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67



David, his wife, Sarah, and their son, Isaiah, live in the Greater Louisville region in Kentucky. As a volunteer leader, David is deeply involved in various regional causes, which includes serving as board chair of the Louisville Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, board member at La Casita Center, and a member of the executive board at the Rubel School of Business at Bellarmine University. His latest passion project is an initiative called Nueva Fuerza that is focused on growing the number of Latinx/Hispanic leaders running for elected office in the Greater Louisville region. ■

MARIE...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

"I believe learning should be fun, engaging, challenging, and exciting for students. Yes, there are times when core subjects can be boring or tedious. But the end reward is when you see that sparkle in their eyes as they gain understanding about their lessons."

While enjoying retirement from the demands of being a full-time teacher, she hasn't stopped teaching. Marie (and Bruce) enjoy time with their granddaughter, and Marie spends her extra(?) time crafting and tutoring.

Yes, tutoring — she still works part-time in an after school program, tutoring first- through fourth-grade students. Always looking forward, Marie lends her experienced, respected passion to the BlueSKY family. ■

MOVING FORWARD

Meet Jayson Wells: Optimist, Coach, President of BlueSKY Sports

Over the course of the last year, Jayson Wells has been one of Atlanta's most sought-after, rising personalities. From his online presence to his in-person coaching, Jayson is in a state of constant movement — forward. Through two different interviews, we get insight into what keeps him moving.

Who Is Jayson Wells?

As a kid, I started playing basketball because my friends and I enjoyed the game. Because I played a lot, I got good at it. Because I got good at it, opportunities started to present themselves. Because I can put a ball in a basket, my life has been one big blessing.

(But)... Learning how to not only move through the valleys of life, but also how to sit in the valley and learn how to climb the next mountain, has been a major anchor in my life. I've been cut from teams, divorced, unemployed, filed bankruptcy, and foreclosed on a house — all in a span of 13 months.

I've learned how to truly step into my resilience and allow myself to tap into and understand the younger version of me and how I dealt with disappointment. It's a reminder that I've been here before, and I'm still standing. Which means I've got what it takes to do it again! It ties into my lifelong motto, "there is no finish line."

What is Life Like Post-Basketball Career?

Since retiring the game, I've found myself even more connected to my passion and purpose in life — coaching. I continue to travel the world helping teams (employ) the values and the principles that I've experienced around leadership, team development, and culture development. I've worked with some of the most recognizable names and organizations in the world and have the opportunity to stay rooted in my three P's, PEOPLE, PURPOSE, and PERFORMANCE!

What is Shoes Have Souls?

Shoes Have Souls is about sharing our love of shoes with our passion to make positive change. It's broken down into two main areas — content/communication and the Foundation.

The Shoes Have Souls Podcast is open dialogue in which we use the subject of shoes to share the power of story. Shoes have always been a connection point for people, so living in this new self-proclaimed "sneaker head era" we decided to combine two major areas of human connection, shoes and stories.



The Shoes Have Souls Foundation is our non-profit arm where we believe every person should experience the feeling of confidence and self-worth as they take steps in the journey of life. In our vision to provide 158 million pairs of shoes worldwide is our rooted purpose of lovingly uniting the world as team.

What Do We Need to Know?

That we exist! Moving forward, there are several different ways to get connected. Someone interested can reach out to the organization at info@shoeshavesouls.org. Another way to connect with us is to submit your "Soul Story" to stories@shoeshavesouls.org. Stories collected will be used as potential guests for the podcast or as we build our collection of stories for the Shoes Have Souls soon coming book. ■

What was your favorite childhood memory?

My favorite childhood memory actually ties into my love for shoes. I vividly remember going to the mall with my friends as we walked into shoe stores to look at all the new releases. From the Suede Clyde Puma, Shell-toe Adidas, Bo Jackson's, Deion Sanders, Air Revolutions, Air Max, or the Jordan 4, from an early age shoes spoke to me loud and clear!



I am simply a culmination of all the great people that have poured into me through my life.

REFLECTIONS

BE REFLECTIONS

Looking back at our first year.

BlueSKY Collaborative Partners is built on the strength of diverse perspectives, subject matter experts, broad relationship networks and lived experiences. Though we only launched in 2022, our team has been incredibly fortunate to engage with clients in states across the country, including **Delaware, Texas, Georgia, District of Columbia, Minnesota, Nevada, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Wisconsin, and the Carolinas.** Throughout the magazine you'll find Reflections, where we share (with much gratitude!) some of the connections from our first year.



CAPITOL HILL VISIT

The BlueSKY team was incredibly inspired by the opportunity to meet with policy makers, education advocates and elected officials on Capitol Hill. These leaders are champions for impactful initiatives, aimed at increasing access to education, workforce development and entrepreneurship. BlueSKY was joined by key client partners, including **Forest Harper, CEO of INROADS** and **Michael DeVaul, National Executive Director of the YMCA, USA, Boys and Men of Color Strategy**.

Further, we were honored to engage with **Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE)**, a leading advocate for talent pipeline development, and the Founder of the Future of Work Congressional Caucus, as well as **Dr. Dietra Trent, Executive Director-White House Office on HBCUs** and members of her team, as well as **Laura O'Neill** from the **Department of Commerce**. ■



REFLECTIONS

DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY (DSU)

The first official BlueSKY client, **Delaware State University (DSU)**, is led by national thought leader **Dr. Tony Allen, who is also Chairman of the White House HBCU Advisory Council**. We're grateful for his outstanding leadership, as well as that of **Dr. Vita Pickrum, President, Delaware State University Foundation**; **Dr. Patrice Gilliam Johnson, Dean-School of Graduate, Adult and Extended Studies**; **Dr. LaShawne Pryor, Assistant Vice President-Advancement**, and members of the **University Executive Cabinet**. The past nine months have been a transformative experience and we look forward to our impactful collaboration. ■





ABOVE: Dr. Tony Allen, President, Delaware State University

THE HBCU PHILANTHROPY SYMPOSIUM

In response to a palpable paradigm shift in major funders' philanthropic engagement and priorities, the HBCU Philanthropic Symposium was established and presented by **Delaware State University** in 2010. For HBCUs and other Minority Serving institutions, this paradigm shift meant that funding from traditional sources and resources would become more difficult. A new reality dictated that HBCUs would need to think differently and more strategically about philanthropy and fundraising.

The symposium continues to grow through partnerships with **CASE** (Council for Advancement and Support of Education), the **Kresge Foundation**, **Thurgood Marshall College Fund**, **CCA** (Complete College America), **United Negro College Fund**, Association of Public Land-grant Universities, and others. **The HBCU Philanthropy Symposium (www.hbcusymposium.com) will celebrate its 13th year in Washington, D.C., from July 30th through August 2nd. This year's theme is "Assessing Today: Planning for Tomorrow."**

Keynotes, presentations, networking and conversations will all focus on how we can ensure the sustainability and future of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including ways to drive student success, enhance student-talent pipelines and career pathways, grow alumni engagement, secure scholarship money, and build innovative partnerships with other schools and the private sector.

Each HBCU shares the goal of changing the life trajectories of young people of color. We graduate outstanding, career-ready individuals, despite fewer resources than other colleges and universities. In fact, it's not unreasonable to say that HBCUs provide America's best Return on Investment in higher education today, offering lower tuition and less student debt than Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

Discussions during this year's Symposium will most certainly include funding technology and physical enhancements, expanding HBCU research and contracting capacity, making HBCUs even more affordable, and preserving and growing each and every HBCU (public and private) with particular emphasis on smaller institutions. ■





ABOVE: Dr. Vita Pickrum, President, Delaware State University Foundation



LEFT: Dr. Tony Allen, Dr. Dietra Trent, Dr. Aminta Breau, Dr. Kevin James

REFLECTIONS

BEEFLECTION2

INROADS BENEFIT GALA

INROADS led by **CEO Forest T. Harper**, held their annual Benefit Gala, **presented by P&G** and held Wednesday, May 3, 2023, at Union Station in Washington, D.C. Each year, this black-tie affair brings together corporate and community leaders in support of the INROADS mission, opening doors of opportunity for underrepresented youth. Those who attended the event celebrated diverse students, supporting life-changing leadership development, mentoring, and career readiness programs, including the **INROADS College Links and INROADS Internships Programs**. As a disruptor for good, INROADS and our supporters are uplifting the next generation of leaders, and creating a more equitable and inclusive workforce that's enriched by diversity. ■







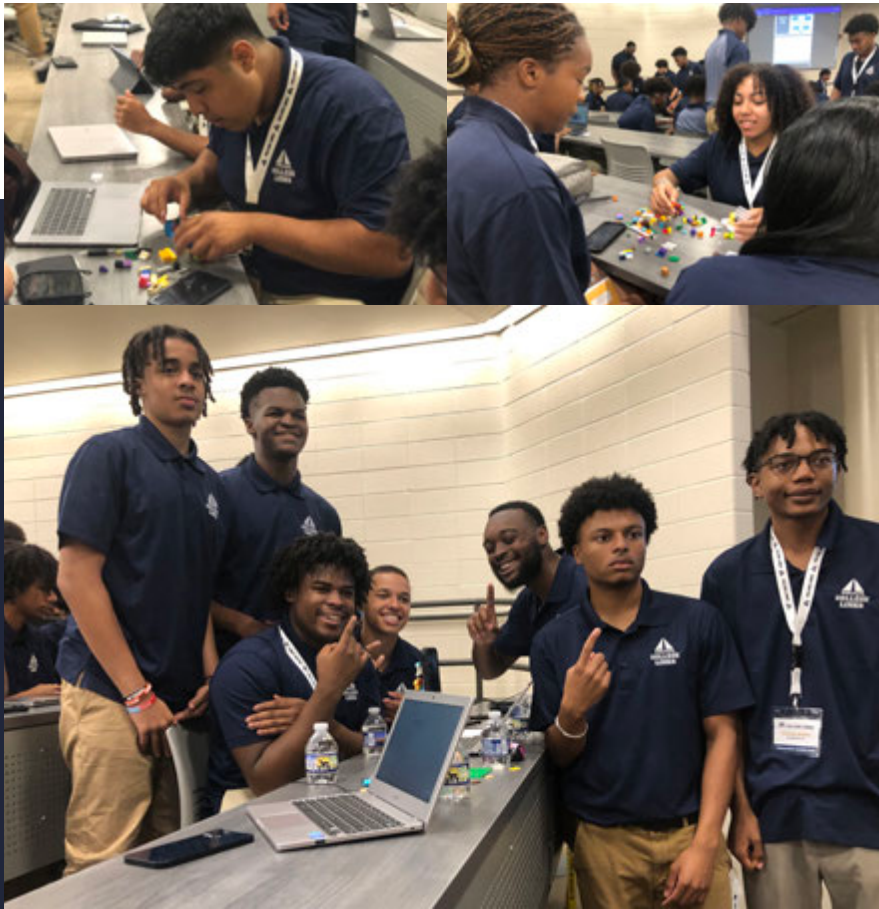
COLLEGE LINKS

PROGRAM



INROADS' College Links program works with diverse high school students to help them explore careers, develop essential leadership skills, and prepare for college, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and business fields. The program is open to students of all backgrounds but is targeted to youth from under resourced schools, students of color, students from immigrant families, students from families with low incomes, and first-generation college students. College Links is designed to give scholars broad exposure to the work world and the college world they will one day enter, ensure high school graduation, and increase college success. The program also helps develop a pipeline of highly skilled, diverse candidates entering high demand, high wage careers. Through intervention and support for students at a critical time in their development, College Links helps students build self-awareness, confidence, and critical thinking skills.

TO LEARN MORE INROADS.ORG/COLLEGE-LINKS



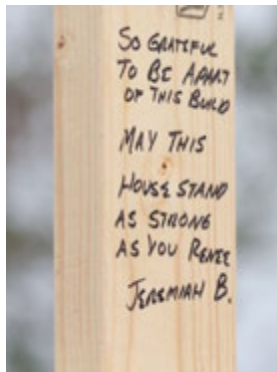
First launched in 2010, College Links provides guidance and support to over 750 diverse, promising young people with career and leadership development, personal coaching, mentorship, and hands-on career exploration and immersion activities, helping them to prepare them for work in the 21st century. College Links prepares students through a career pathways model: workshops, mentoring, specialized career exploration, connections to college internship opportunities, and a National Career Academy leadership conference. The program is currently offered in fifteen markets: Atlanta, Birmingham, Charleston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, Oakland, Orlando, San Antonio and Washington, D.C. Programs are launching soon in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Charlotte.

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOMES

- 90% of scholars reported that CL prepared them for career success
- 100% of seniors graduated from high school

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

BlueSKY was thrilled to meet with members of the **Habitat for Humanity International** Leadership team at their Atlanta headquarters. This impactful organization helps families build and improve places to call home, a cause important in communities across the nation. Supported by volunteers, Habitat for Humanity helps “build a world where everyone has a decent place to call home.” ■





ABOVE: Brett Savage Simon, Jes Averhart, Stephanie Yeargan, Julie Sills Molock, Tolly Love, Sandy Smith, and Michael Cox.

Since its founding in 1989, the **"A Candle in the Dark" Gala** has become one of the nation's premier events to celebrate African American achievement and raise much-needed scholarship funds for deserving students. This exceptional evening of elegance and accomplishment has honored more than 221 luminaries over the past 34 years. Gala attendees included **Morehouse College President, Dr. David A. Thomas, Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens, Trustees Billye Aaron, Former Ambassador Andrew and Carolyn Young, Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Dale Jones and Jonathan Parris.** ■





WALLIN EDUCATION PARTNERS

BlueSKY Collaborative partner, **Wallin Education Partners**, ensures college and career success for high-potential students from low-income backgrounds, and through their efforts helps build diverse, equitable and vibrant communities. They do this through a comprehensive model of financial aid, holistic support, and collaboration with business, education, community, and philanthropic partners. Wallin is currently working with nearly 1,600 scholars and has been doing this work for over 30 years. Wallin Scholars achieve outstanding results with a 6-year graduation rate of 90% or higher. Wallin supports students attending HBCUs throughout the country and is embarking on an innovative and deepened approach to their HBCU work. For example, they recently convened a group of business, education and community leaders for a community conversation with **Dr. Michael J. Sorrell**, President of Paul Quinn College. In August, Wallin will be launching a special HBCU scholarship for Minnesota students. ■



Community Conversation

with **Dr. Michael J. Sorrell**
President of Paul Quinn College

Hosted By

 **WALLIN**
EDUCATION PARTNERS







ABIS

ADVANCEMENT OF BLACKS IN SPORTS

The Game Beyond the Lines

ADVANCING BLACKS IN SPORTS (ABIS)

In August of 2020, visionary youth development leader and technology executive Gary Charles founded national nonprofit **Advancement of Blacks in Sports (ABIS)**. ABIS seeks to achieve racial equity in sports through financial literacy and entrepreneurship programs for student-athletes, and by advocating for talented leaders of color secure coaching jobs.

As an influential figure in grassroots basketball, Gary has personally mentored some of the most notable Black athletes over the last 20 years, and also helped legendary NBA player Kobe Bryant secure his first shoe deal. While working his primary job as a Wall Street systems programmer, Gary started the Long Island Panthers basketball program, which produced dozens of NBA players, including Lamar Odom, Wally Szczerbiak and Joakim Noah.

Thanks to his Panthers program, Charles met sports marketing whiz Sonny Vaccaro in 1990, who invited him to the NCAA Final Four and taught him the politics of major college basketball.

"So he started explaining to me about college basketball and the way it worked, and my eyes opened," Charles said.

What he saw was disappointing — young Black athletes being denied opportunities to capitalize from their talents, while the programs they play for and the people who coach them are not.

"Why is it that they're making all the money, but these players are not?" Charles asked himself at the time. "There is something wrong with that."

'The NAACP of Sports'

Fast forward to the George Floyd case, the COVID epidemic and meetings held remotely, primarily over Zoom or cell phones. In response to the racial inequity he witnessed and identified, Charles began consulting with friends in coaching about creating an organization to navigate these challenges. He reached out to people like Dave Leitao, former head coach

of the DePaul University men's basketball team and Florida State University men's head coach, Leonard Hamilton. Charles recalled the words Hamilton told him. "Gary, you're the only person in America that can do this. You have always been above suspicion. Everyone loves you, and everyone trusts you. You're the one that can bring us together."

Knowing inequity was felt by women's sports as well, Gary connected with more than 30 women coaches, including Dawn Staley, University of South Carolina's women's basketball head coach, as well as Nikki Fargas, president of the WNBA Las Vegas Aces, former women's basketball head coach at UCLA and LSU.

"I'm all in," Dawn said. "What do you want me to do?"

Fargas, a 2023 Champions & Legends honoree, came on board to help support his vision.

As his organization approaches its three-year anniversary, the goal is as clear as ever. "ABIS wants to become the voice for equity in sports," said Charles. "We want to be the NAACP of sports."



ABIS recently hosted the *Champions & Legends Weekend* at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. ABIS honored distinguished sports figures like NBA Hall of Famer Tracy McGrady, Las Vegas Aces Team President Nikki Fargas, ESPN analyst and former NFL player Ryan Clark and legendary rap artist Chuck D of Public Enemy, among other notable luminaries.

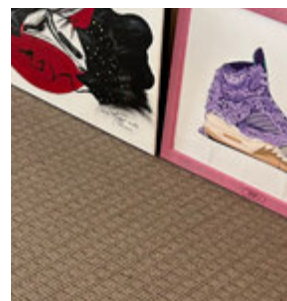
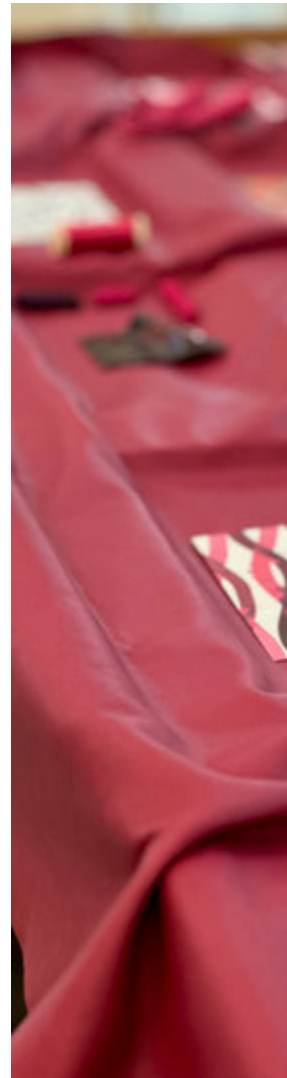
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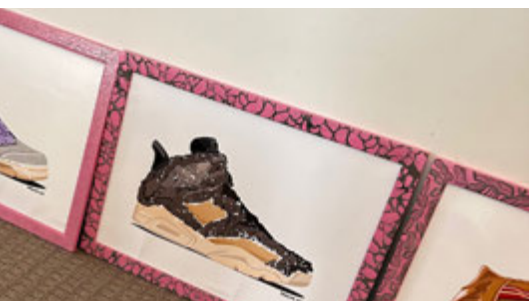
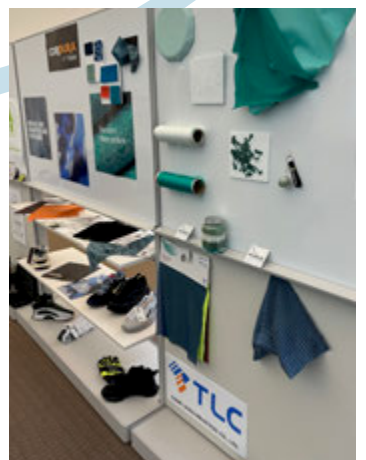
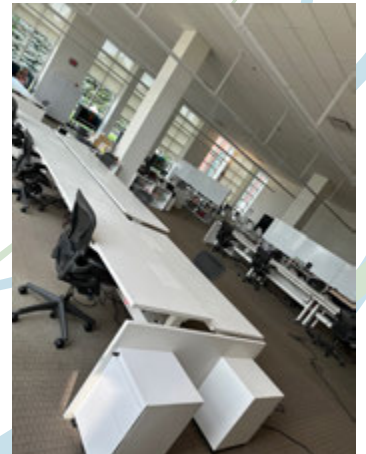
PENSOLE LEWIS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS & DESIGN

The HBCU community has produced talented industry veterans across many industries. It's surprising to learn, however, of the lack of design opportunities within the HBCU ecosystem.

Dr. D'Wayne Edwards, President of Pensole Lewis College in Detroit and one of the most preeminent footwear designers in the world, is looking to change that in unexpected ways. BlueSKY team is beyond thrilled to collaborate with Dr. Edwards and the entire team at Pensole Lewis to help create the largest and most diverse design and innovation talent pipeline across the globe. ■



ABOVE: Haydee Franco, D'Wayne Edwards, Julie Sills Molock, Jacqueline Young, Erik Klaver



BLACK DIRECTOR'S HEALTH EQUITY AGENDA (BDHEA) NATIONAL SUMMIT

BlueSKY was honored to attend the **Black Director's Health Equity Agenda (BDHEA) National Summit**, focusing on the **Race to Health Equity**. During this critically important event, leading visionaries from the healthcare industry met to discuss how far we have to go in order to achieve TRUE equity in healthcare. The two-day summit was in support of BDHEA's belief that the most effective route to eliminating disparity is a multi-pronged approach that looks at the needs of the whole person. That path must seek solutions that build on existing, effective programs while examining new ideas, and connect programs with policy-specific rules and regulations which are meant to achieve (or prevent) a specific goal or outcome. The conversations and strategies that came from this year's summit will ensure that more people and health care entities benefit from the results of BDHEA's work. ■



ABOVE: Caretha Coleman, Attorney John Daniels, Jr., Julie Sills Molock



RIGHT: Billye Aaron and Dr. Rahmelle Thompson



MODERATOR
Marion Phillips III
 Senior VP-Community Development & DEI, U.S. News & World Report

PANELISTS
Wright Lessiter III
 CEO, CommunityHealth

Penelope Sutton-Wallace
 Chief Operating Officer, Yale-New Haven Health

Eugene A. Woods
 President and CEO, Allyn Health

Summit



REFLECTIONS
BELECTION?

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE

The **National Museum of African American History and Culture** is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. It was established by an Act of Congress in 2003, following decades of efforts to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans. To date, the Museum has collected more than 40,000 artifacts and nearly 100,000 individuals have become members. The Museum opened to the public on September 24, 2016, as the 19th museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

In partnership with philanthropist **Deborah Brittain**, Karl , Julie, and BlueSKY team members were honored to host an information session with Smithsonian Museum Development leaders, Tampa Bay area philanthropists and key supporters of the Museum's **Living History Campaign**. ■



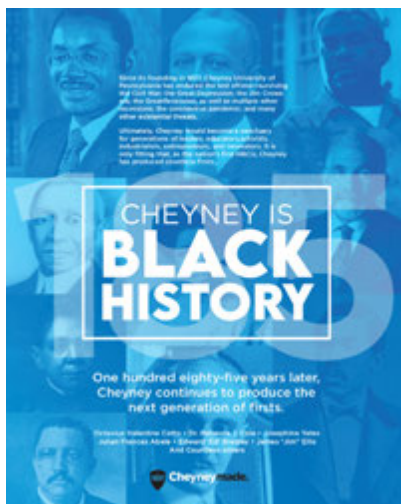


REFLECTIONS

BEET ECTION?

CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Proudly standing as the nation's oldest HBCU, **Cheyney University of Pennsylvania** has been a stalwart and highly respected institution of higher education since 1837. For 186 years our alumni have emerged as leaders and left their mark on the social, economic, and political history of Philadelphia, the surrounding region, the nation, and the world. Building on this legacy, the vision for Cheyney University is to become the premier model for academic excellence, character development, and social responsibility. The BlueSKY team is honored to collaborate with Cheyney University and look forward to advancing **President Aaron A. Walton's** transformative vision for the Institution. ■





LEFT: Clifton Anderson, Aaron Walton, Julie Sills Molock, Clarence Williams, Kevin Guile



ABOVE: Aaron Walton, Robert Bogle (President and CEO, Philadelphia Tribune), Kevin Guile, Clarence Williams, Senator Vincent J. Hughes (D-PA, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee)

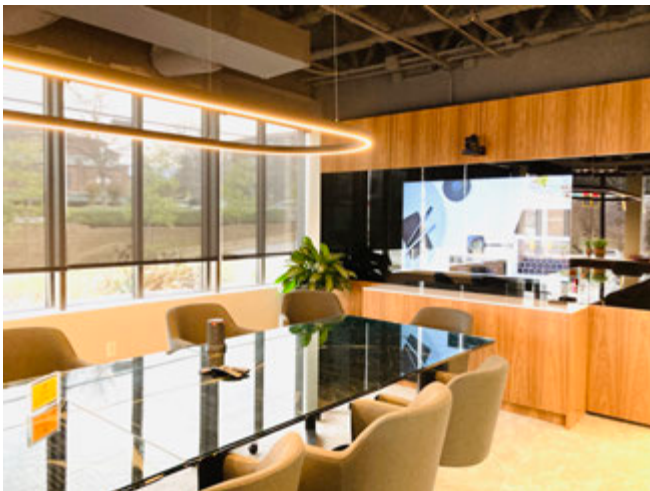
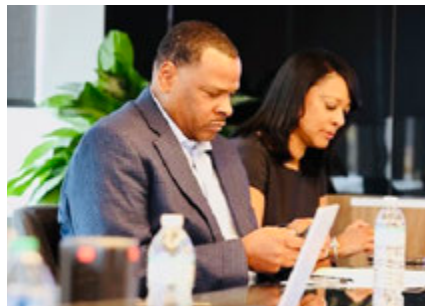


REFLECTIONS

BEET ECTION?

RUSSELL INNOVATION CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURS (RICE)

BlueSKY was fortunate to convene an impactful planning session with 15 Atlanta-based colleagues earlier this year. The meeting was one of the first with a BlueSKY-centered focus concentrating on our mission and how we align around it — internally and externally. It was especially meaningful to utilize the amazing **Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs (RICE)** to host this group of thought leaders. A Black business generator, RICE serves as Atlanta's critical collaboration hub for the African American business community. ■





ABOVE: Kai Jackson Issa, Zerita Buchanan, Add Seymour, Terry Mills, Pamela Bishop, Marie Lowe, Julie Sills Molock, Karl Molock





Thank you

Deepest gratitude to everyone that gave us guidance, support, prayers and opportunity. Evelyn P. Sills and Guy O. Molock Sr.'s boundless optimism and generous spirit lives on and continues to make an impact.