

# Syracuse Manuscript

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S BLACK AND LATINO/A ALUMNI MAGAZINE



**Celebrating Academic Excellence**  
Our Time Has Come graduates  
record number of Scholars and Leaders





OTHC Scholar Alyssa Griffin '23  
(profile on page 10)



# Syracuse Manuscript

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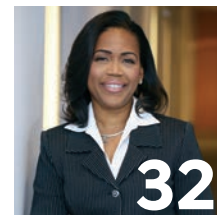
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**On the Cover:** Our Time Has Come Scholars Nadia Nelson, Nomar Diaz, Nyah Jones, Nicholas Nizza and Raquell Carpenter celebrate their Syracuse University graduation.

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Rachel Vassel

## Hello, Orange Family,

Commencement is my favorite time of year at Syracuse University. The tulips are in bloom, the sun is (hopefully) shining, parents have completed tuition payments, final exams are done and joy and happiness abound.

Commencement means “a new beginning” and it truly is the perfect description. Do you remember the moment? For me, it was a combination of fear and excitement, relief and concern and the possibility of an exciting life and career to come.

Our students are at the top of the heap as seniors, then back at the bottom again in entry-level jobs or new graduate programs. Following their many academic accomplishments, they’re trying to figure out how to be successful once again. They’re learning that life is a series of ups and downs, continual learning, uncertainty and constant change.

I smile to myself each year as I witness our graduates’ emotional struggles on Commencement Day, because I know for sure what they may not yet realize: Syracuse University has prepared them well for whatever comes next. They will make it. They will figure it out. And they will have an entire Orange network to tap into along the journey.

Because of you, the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) graduating seniors are members of the largest OTHC cohort in our program’s history at 164 students and 57 graduates. This growth is due to a 12-fold increase in OTHC donors since 2017.

This graduation season, we thank you for your generosity and all that you do throughout the year to support, encourage, advise and advocate for current students. You make it possible for our newest alumni to be the best that they can be.

As we approach CBT 2024 and the end of the Forever Orange fundraising campaign, help us to reach \$15 million in OTHC gifts and pledges by making a gift of any size. I know we will have a lot to celebrate with your ongoing commitment to this incredible program, which continues to boast a 100% graduation rate!

You are part of an amazing legacy at Syracuse University.

With Orange Love,

Rachel Vassel '91, G'21  
Associate Vice President  
Office of Multicultural Advancement





# THEIR TIME HAS COME

**Three new Our Time Has Come Scholarships awarded for the first time in 2022-23 illustrate the breadth of student support provided by the program.**

## THE KEVIN RICHARDSON SCHOLARSHIP

Perhaps no one is more excited about the presence of Kevin Richardson Scholars on the Syracuse University campus than Kevin Richardson H'20 himself. "I've been blessed with many things in my life, but to have my name attached to students at Syracuse University for generations, that's legacy," he says.

In 1989, Richardson was one of five teenagers wrongly accused and later convicted in the infamous Central Park jogger case. In 2019, his story was fictionalized in the widely viewed Netflix series *When They See Us*, leading to an interview with Oprah Winfrey. That interview, when Richardson talked about his thwarted desire to study music at Syracuse University, captured the hearts and minds of Syracuse's diverse alumni.

Within months, Tara Favors '95 made the lead \$25,000 gift to establish the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Kevin Richardson Scholarship. Richardson, who had been invited to campus for a visit by the Office of Multicultural Advancement, was surprised with the announcement at a reception in his honor. "I still remember the tears in his eyes and in his wife's eyes," Favors says.

A year later, Richardson became the recipient of the first undergraduate honorary degree given in Syracuse University history. "To be on stage when they called my name and to receive all that love is something I'll never forget," he says.



Kevin Richardson with Khadi Babou and Ashley Romero, the inaugural recipients of the Kevin Richardson Scholarship

Richardson's most recent pinnacle moment came last fall, when he came to campus for the Night of Black Excellence Gala and had lunch with the inaugural Kevin Richardson Scholars, Khadi Babou '23 and Ashley Romero '24. "It was kind of surreal," he says.

For Richardson, it was important to let the young women know he was more than just a name. "I'm totally approachable



Ashley Romero



Tara Favors

**“Now that there are actually Kevin Richardson Scholars, I feel like we’ve come full circle and fulfilled the vision. But I’d love to see this continue to grow and support additional scholars each year. It’s not too late to get involved with this effort.”**

— TARA FAVORS

Babou describes Richardson as a very humble and reserved man. “His humility allowed us to become instantly comfortable and able to form a bond,” she says.

The Kevin Richardson Scholars are selected on the basis of academics, as well as involvement in community service or social justice issues. Babou, a senior from Harlem, New York, is majoring in communication and rhetorical studies with a minor in economics. She has volunteered with the Police Athletic League in Harlem, helping young boys with basketball and life skills, and at the Syracuse Northeast Community Center. Romero, a junior from the Bronx, New York, is majoring in policy studies and citizenship and civic engagement and is a leadership intern at the Shaw Center. Passionate about providing access to higher education to low-income, underrepresented students, Romero is president of J.U.M.P. Nation (the Juvenile Urban Multicultural Program), a mentorship

and available as a mentor or just someone to talk to if they’re in a dark space,” he says. “I know how that feels.”

organization that partners with Syracuse City high schools to decrease the dropout rate.

Named an OTHC Scholar as a senior, Babou says she feels like she’s become part of an exclusive community. “In addition to the financial support, I have the opportunity to network and meet people from distinct backgrounds and form new connections,” she says.

Meeting Richardson has been an unexpected bonus. “It is an honor to receive this scholarship, named for someone who’s endured so much and was able to overcome his hardship and create a better life for not only himself, but also his wife and kids,” she says. “He is definitely someone I look up to and I am glad to call him a mentor.”

Although she initiated the scholarship fund, Favors stresses many contributed to reach the endowment level. “Now that there are actually Kevin Richardson Scholars, I feel like we’ve come full circle and fulfilled the vision,” she says. “But I’d love to see this continue to grow and support additional scholars each year. It’s not too late to get involved with this effort.”



Tracy Acquan



### THE SYRACUSE BLACK LAW ALUMNI COLLECTIVE x WILLIAM H. JOHNSON ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

**A** fair and just legal system is one that is demographically representative of the communities they serve, yet the legal profession remains one of the least diverse of any profession. The desire to change that led Felicia Collins Ocumarez L’98, G’98 to spearhead an endowment fund to support underrepresented law students at the Syracuse University College of Law.

After attending her 20-year law school reunion in 2018, Collins Ocumarez created the Syracuse Black Law Collective (Syracuse BLAC) to serve as a bridge between alumni law professionals and Syracuse law students—the next generation of African American jurists and legal practitioners.

The group’s first initiative was to launch a fund drive for a \$150,000 endowment to provide need-based scholarships for students at the College of Law on a perpetual basis. Collins Ocumarez, general counsel and chief sustainability officer at the African Asset Finance Company, made a major gift toward the scholarship, named in honor of William Herbert Johnson L1903, the first Black graduate of the College of Law.

“Syracuse BLAC bears the distinction of being the first formal organization for Black alumni at the Syracuse University College of Law and our endowment is the first of its kind within the OTHC program,” she says.

Second-year law student Tracy Acquan was named the first recipient in December 2022. “It’s humbling, being the inaugural recipient of a scholarship in honor of the first African American graduate of the school,” she says. “It’s so big.”

Equally meaningful is the fact the scholarship was created and funded by Black law alumni.

“These are people who understand my experience,” she says. “I feel like they are pushing for my success even if they don’t know me.”

A native of the Bronx, Acquan earned her undergraduate degree from New York University, where she majored in philosophy with a minor in law in society. She worked for three years in the New York City Mayor’s Office of Correspondence during the de Blasio administration. She served as intern coordinator and responded to constituents, directing them to resources and helping solve their problems. “I always wanted to go to law school and working in public service solidified that,” she says.

While a student at the College of Law, Acquan has worked at the Betty and Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic, where she helps veterans secure disability benefits, and as a procedural advisor to Syracuse undergraduates who need assistance with the student conduct process. She was recently named editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Global Rights and Organizations*, the first Black student to hold the post.

“We help shed light on human rights issues and violations



Felicia Collins Ocumarez

# “The Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective x William H. Johnson Endowed Scholarship advocates for civil and human rights in pursuit of social justice in honor of the first Black Syracuse College of Law graduate, William Herbert Johnson. The University must continue to honor its commitment to advancing social impact through OTHC scholarships.”

—FELICIA COLLINS OCUMAREZ

globally,” she says. “My goal is to use the journal to give voice to the voiceless.”

Acquan spent last summer interning with Syracuse City Court Judge Vanessa Bogan and presently interns with both the Federal Public Defenders Office and the City of Syracuse’s Bureau of Administrative Adjudication, which ensures that property owners comply with building codes. “Its goal is to create a safe and healthy environment for Syracuse residents,” she says. “I like being an advocate and resource for people.”

Being part of the OTHC program has provided a new avenue for that. “This scholarship is about alumni giving back to support underrepresented law students like me, but it’s also allowed me to give back and mentor undergraduate students interested in pursuing law,” she says. “That gives me joy.”

After establishing the scholarship, Collins Ocumarez and Syracuse BLAC played a major role in correcting a historical injustice by successfully petitioning the New York State Bar Association for the posthumous admission of Johnson to the bar, something he was denied after his law school graduation because no local attorneys at the time would write supporting letters on his behalf due to racism. He was admitted in 2019.

“His strong will carried him through the slap in the face he was dealt when he wasn’t admitted to practice law, but that didn’t stop him from fighting to help other African Americans obtain jobs, to seek justice and earn respect from the Syracuse community,” says his grandson Tom Johnson ’75. He believes his grandfather would be humbled by the scholarship in his name. “That’s the kind of man he was, letting his actions speak for themselves,” he says.

Syracuse BLAC continues its involvement at the College of Law sponsoring programs and panels, but began with the endowment, “because the financial need was so great,” says Collins Ocumarez. “The Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective x William H. Johnson Endowed Scholarship advocates for civil and human rights in pursuit of social justice in honor of the first Black Syracuse College of Law graduate, William Herbert Johnson. The University must continue to honor its commitment to advancing social impact through OTHC scholarships,” she says.

## THE COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

In May 2020, the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police sparked outrage across the United States, prompting reexamination of racial injustices and reflection on systemic racism and unconscious bias. At the same time, a nationwide pandemic spurred the popularity of online lectures, forums and courses.

It was in this context that the College of Professional Studies launched Voices Matter: Why You Should Talk About Race, a six-week virtual course in the Spring 2021 semester. Formerly known as University College, the College of Professional Studies is Syracuse University’s part-time division, offering degree and certificate programs, as well as noncredit courses.

Voices Matter was designed to stimulate dialogue and empower participants to take action regarding U.S. and global racial issues. The course was taught by Jeff Mangram ’88, G’89, G’06, associate professor in the School of Education, and Candice Haste Jackson, associate teaching professor in the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics and now associate dean of student services.

The course was also initiated with a goal to make a difference. Tuition proceeds from the course were used to establish a scholarship for students with financial need studying through the College of Professional Studies, with preference to students from underrepresented groups.

“Traditionally, scholarships were only for full-time enrolled students,” says Jeffry Comanici ’88, executive director of post traditional advancement. “By establishing this scholarship through the OTHC program, we now have a dedicated scholarship for students pursuing part-time degrees.”

Comanici raised additional funds from donors, allowing the fund to grow to the necessary level to pay out a scholarship. Leondra Tyler became the inaugural recipient this semester.

Tyler, from Cicero, New York, began studying part time at Syracuse University in 2018, typically taking two courses per semester. She earned her associate degree last year. She’s now working toward a bachelor’s degree in neuroscience and psychology, with a goal to attend graduate school and conduct psychology-based research.

Despite her status as a part-time student, Tyler has worked hard to be an active member of the University community. She began working at Hendricks Chapel in 2020, and for the last 18 months, has run the food pantry there. “I really want to be involved on campus and take advantage of everything SU has to offer,” she says.

That includes study abroad opportunities. A student in the part-time Higher Education Opportunity Program, Tyler says her tuition and books are mostly covered. Receiving the College of Professional Studies Scholarship helped cover the additional expenses associated with traveling abroad. This semester, she’s a full-time college student for the first time, studying at Yonsei University in South Korea. “I wanted a very different cultural experience,” says Tyler, whose Korean language study will fulfill her elective requirements.





Leondra Tyler in Seoul, South Korea

Michael Frasciello G'15, dean of the College of Professional Studies, says Tyler personifies the motivation for establishing the OTHC scholarship for part-time students. “We know that for many non-traditional students, the cost of attendance is the single greatest barrier to entry to a college education. They may have family responsibilities, or they are working,” he says. “So, by providing scholarships and financial support to this population, we’re making a Syracuse University education accessible and affordable to everyone.”

**“Traditionally, scholarships were only for full-time enrolled students. By establishing this scholarship through the OTHC program, we now have a dedicated scholarship for students pursuing part-time degrees.”**

—JEFFRY COMANICI

## Make A Difference

Since it was established in 1987, the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund has provided financial support to Syracuse University students from underrepresented backgrounds, many of them first-generation students. The OTHC scholarships bridge financial gaps in students’ University financial aid—and, along with the professional development, mentorship opportunities and peer support offered by the program—help students be successful at Syracuse University and beyond. Despite the generosity of alumni and friends, only 20% of qualified OTHC applicants are awarded a scholarship.

You can make a difference by contributing to an existing scholarship or creating a new fund. Scholarship funds can be established with \$25,000 and become active scholarships once the \$100,000 endowment level is reached. To learn more, visit [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/give-now/how-to-give/](http://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/give-now/how-to-give/) or contact Rachel Vassel at [revassel@syr.edu](mailto:revassel@syr.edu).

SUJEIRY SANTOS

## Fostering Community

J.U.M.P. Nation (the Juvenile Urban Multicultural Program) is a student mentorship organization that works with Syracuse City high schools to curb the student dropout rate. “Mostly, the Syracuse students are people of color, first generation or from low-income backgrounds,” says Sujeiry Santos ’23. “We go into schools to connect with students through conversations about the difficulties they face and motivate them to pursue post-secondary pathways.”

A policy studies, and citizenship and community engagement (CCE) double major, Santos drew from those experiences for her CCE capstone project. She built a website for J.U.M.P. to provide resources for high school students beyond the talk sessions, including links to scholarship opportunities, internships, professional development and mental health resources.

Santos hopes to continue similar work professionally, working for a nonprofit that helps marginalized communities obtain post-secondary goals. Although a senior, Santos is enrolled in an accelerated master of public administration program, allowing her to earn an M.P.A. in one year. “I’m currently finishing my undergraduate degree while also taking graduate classes,” she says. “I earn my B.A. this semester and continue with graduate classes this summer and next year. I earn my M.P.A. in May 2024.”

A native of the Bronx, Santos came to Syracuse University

through the Trio Student Support Services (SSS) program and now serves as an SSS ambassador, helping to mentor first-year students. This year, she was president and treasurer of La Lucha, which raises cultural awareness of the Latino/a community and heritage.

“In both cases it’s about helping students build a community and feel seen,” she says.

Santos says she’s benefited from her association with the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) program. She joined as a Leader in her sophomore year and received an OTHC scholarship as a junior. “With Syracuse being a predominantly white institution, it can be hard for students of color to feel heard and have our accomplishments celebrated,” she says. “OTHC is a space where Black and Latinx students are connecting through their success with other students, alums and professionals. It’s allowed me to build my community, and professional skills, while also lifting some of my financial burdens.”

Since coming to Syracuse, Santos has worked as a transportation intern in the University’s student jobs office, where she helps plan and organize bus schedules for students volunteering off campus. “We help transport hundreds of University students across the city,” she says.

Beyond logistics, she is proud to help facilitate students to get involved off campus. “SU physically and metaphorically lives on a hill,” she says. “A lot of students aren’t aware of the issues occurring outside of campus, especially with Syracuse being one of the poorest cities in the U.S. There are a lot of ways SU students can be involved within the community,” she says.

During her final undergraduate semester, Santos conducted her policy studies capstone project working at La Casita Cultural Center on Syracuse’s Near West Side as a communications and program intern. “I have volunteered there before and wanted to continue working there to build a connection with La Casita to further build cultural awareness,” she says.

“When I first came to Syracuse University, there was a cultural shock that often led to me feel like I had to continuously prove myself,” she says. “But because I was very involved on campus, I was able to find diverse spaces and build those communities for myself.”

Sujeiry Santos





NYAH JONES

# Breaking Barriers in Sports

**N**yah Jones '23 had her bet on the Philadelphia Eagles in this year's Super Bowl. It wasn't just the team's stellar performance over the season that impressed her, but the tangential involvement of her professional idol: Nicole Lynn, the first Black female sports agent to represent a National Football League draft pick, Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts.



Nyah Jones

"I wrote about her in my essay to apply to Syracuse University," says Jones, a sport management major in the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.

An athlete and avid sports fan in high school, Jones began researching careers in sports, specifically the intersection of law and sport. "I quickly realized that women, particularly women of color, are really underrepresented in this space," she says. "That's when I knew I wanted to be an agent."

She found a perfect fit with the curriculum of the Falk College's sport management program. "Coming to Syracuse is probably one of the best decisions I've made," she says.

In addition to her classroom studies, Jones has worked hard to get all the practical

experience she can. She served as manager of both the men's basketball team and the football team, responsible for managing practice activities and assisting from pre-game through post-game on game days. "They have different demands," she explains. "Football had more early mornings, but basketball has more games. They're both a huge time commitment, but, honestly, my greatest experiences at Syracuse," she says.

Jones has interned with sports organizations ranging from the Spisak Agency, founded by women to represent women athletes, to the golf services department at Oak Hill Country Club outside Rochester, New York, which regularly hosts major tournaments. She spent the final semester of her senior year back home in Chicago, doing her capstone internship with Priority Sports Entertainment.

It was a bittersweet experience. While Jones was sad to be off campus for her final undergraduate semester, she says the internship experience was invaluable. "I worked in the coaches, broadcasting and front office departments," she says. "I was able to see actual contracts that went out and assist with marketing efforts."

Being off campus was also made easier by the knowledge that she'll be back on campus again next fall, as a graduate student in the master's in public relations program at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

"The National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) requires you to have either a master's degree or juris doctorate in order to sit for the exam to become an NFLPA-certified agent," she says. "I'm excited to get my master's in public relations, but I will probably go on to law school as well."

Despite her laser focus, Jones hasn't been all about sports as an undergrad. She joined the Student Government Association as a first-year student, first as part of the General Assembly, then as a member of the finance board, and was elected comptroller in her junior and senior years. "It's hard work but I've learned so much," she says. "Getting to interact with students, hearing from them about their needs, and having the opportunity to fill those gaps is really great to be a part of."

Jones is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar. "OTHC has made me more confident and more comfortable in my skin, feeling like I can be a leader and that there's nothing that I can't do," she says.

At times, Jones says she's doubted that becoming a sports agent is an attainable goal for her as a Black woman. "But then I see the amazing things my peers are doing, and I think, 'If they can achieve, I can too.'"

"Being around students who are driven, intelligent and involved in so many things really inspires and encourages me," she says. "They push me to be better."

ALYSSA GRIFFIN

## Engineering Social Justice

**A**s a high school student in Boston, Alyssa Griffin '23 did a research project that examined redlining policies as a social justice issue. "It was something I knew about abstractly but seeing it firsthand in Syracuse—how they split an entire community with the I-81 highway—really fueled my passion to make a difference."

Griffin, a civil engineering major, plans to pursue a master's degree in structural engineering so she can influence future decision making and design with an eye toward equitable and sustainable communities. "I want to work at the intersection of infrastructure and social justice," she says.

Griffin understands how important her viewpoint is to the field; she is the only Black female in the civil engineering program in her class year. Last summer, she interned at Nitsch Engineering in Boston, a female-founded firm. "I've never been more inspired by the presence of women in leadership roles within engineering," she says. "Witnessing their remarkable accomplishments and contributions was truly empowering."

She obviously made a positive impression. Griffin was selected to represent the firm at a day-long workshop with Harvard University Housing on the interaction among design, building materials and human health. "I was able to contribute ideas and participate in brainstorming," she says. "I was just an intern, but the others were people in charge of an entire expansion project."

Griffin hasn't shied away from experiences that make her the

only Black woman in the room. Having attended a predominantly Black high school, she purposely chose Syracuse for its greater diversity. Last year, she joined Syracuse's Club Ski Race Team. "The ski team was a bit of a culture shock, but I never felt excluded," she says. "Skiing makes me happy."

Griffin grew up skiing, a pastime none of her peers shared. "My parents actually met skiing as part of a Black ski club in Boston," she says. "During the winter, we would drive up to New Hampshire every Sunday to ski at this little mountain called Pats Peak."

But just because she's willing to put herself out there, doesn't always make it easy. "Sometimes I do feel isolated," she says. While her parents have been a great support, she's also found encouragement through participation in the WellsLink Leadership Program, WISE Women of Color in STEM and as an Our Time Has Come Scholar.

"It is an amazing feeling to be engaged in meaningful discussion with intelligent and diligent Black students," she says. "We actually talk about how it feels to walk into a room when you're one of the only Black students. Such conversations help me know I'm not alone in my experiences."

Griffin is also grateful to her OTHC mentor, Gisele Marcus '89, a Syracuse University Trustee, with whom she is in regular contact. "Seeing a Black woman who has had success at such a high level is hugely inspirational. She's also been a great support."

Griffin is somewhat of a mentor herself, serving as a peer career coach for the College of Engineering and Computer Science, helping students craft resumes and cover letters and prepare job applications. "I am always open to trying new things and being challenged," she says.



Alyssa Griffin



JORDAN PIERRE

# Authentically, Unapologetically Himself

**A**tending Syracuse University has expanded the world for Jordan Pierre '23, no experience more so than spending a summer in London and Florence with the Syracuse Abroad program. “There are two forms of incarceration. One is to be behind bars and the other is to be a victim of limited exposure,” he says. “Through traveling abroad, I realized how limited my perspective of the world is.”

A first-generation college student from Brooklyn, New York, Pierre says he is the first in his family to travel outside the United States. “Where I’m from, many people never have the opportunity to leave the community, let alone the country, so, to have the opportunity to gain exposure to the life outside the one I have grown to normalize was a privilege,” he says.

The experience is one of many he has packed into his four years at Syracuse University, where he’s majored in broadcast and digital journalism. Just a few months into his first year, he became involved in the #NotAgainSU protest, which addressed the concerns of marginalized groups on campus and led the University to take actionable steps to create an environment that fostered diversity. “When you believe in something, you have to take a stance and go full force,” he says.

For him, it was important for the University to respond to the needs of all students and for his fellow students of color to leverage the power of their voice. “A lot of times in society, you feel like you have to suppress your identity to be in certain spaces,” he says. “But there is a beauty in being who you are, to being authentically and unapologetically yourself.”

It works for him. Pierre has served as an orientation leader, a Syracuse Abroad Global Ambassador and as a member of the J.U.M.P. Nation (the Juvenile Urban Multicultural Program), a mentorship program to reduce the high school dropout rate in the City of Syracuse. He ran for Student Government Association president, losing by only 150 votes, and currently serves as president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

In 2021, after the George Floyd murder, Pierre created VOICE by Pierre, a clothing brand featuring T-shirts and hoodies printed with messages of social commentary, such as “Use your platform to amplify the voice of the unheard,” which he considers his mission statement. “It’s important to understand our privileges and assist those coming behind us,” he says.

He understands that firsthand, as the beneficiary of an Our Time Has Come scholarship. Pierre says the OTHC program has opened doors of opportunity for him. Aspiring to become the “male Oprah,” Pierre introduced Carmelo Anthony at his CBT book talk, led an on-campus interview with Speedy Morman '16

and served as a student host for the inaugural CBT Orange Legends Golf Tournament. “I’ve met so many alumni and the opportunity to gain exposure to those who came before me is inspiring,” he says.

Pierre is no stranger to seeking out opportunity. As a high school student at Brooklyn’s Eagle Academy for Young Men, he was part of the Jeter’s Leaders program, funded by Derek Jeter’s Turn2 Foundation. It was a college tour with the program that brought him to Syracuse University, where he witnessed John Gillon G’20 make a buzzer-beating three-pointer to clinch a thrilling victory for the men’s basketball team over Duke on Feb. 22, 2017. “People were painted orange. I’ve never seen that kind of pride,” he says. The S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications’ top ranking didn’t hurt either.

Pierre was accepted to Syracuse through the HEOP program, and it’s been full throttle ever since. Despite his many achievements, he says it’s important to remember where you came from. Last summer, Pierre interned with New York City Schools Chancellor David C. Banks, who was the founding principal of Eagle Academy.

As part of that experience, he visited schools during their summer programs to speak with students. “At one school, I was talking to two little girls. One said, ‘I’m going to be president,’ and the other said, ‘I’m going to be her vice president,’” Pierre recalls. “It reminded me how big we dreamed as children and to never stop dreaming. I’m ready to step out into the real world and become the person I’m destined to become.”



Jordan Pierre

## ADORE ELLIS

# From Streetwear to Couture

**A**s a high school senior, Adore Ellis '23 created her first piece of streetwear—a hand-painted denim jacket. “Everybody loved it, and I started customizing clothing for people at my school,” she says.

Now a senior fashion design major at Syracuse University, Ellis continues making clothing for classmates and beyond. She is the creator of the clothing brand LAVE, which stands for “Love Adore’s Versions of Everyone,” urban streetwear—hoodies, sweatpants, stacked jeans and graphic T-shirts—that she hopes make people feel good about themselves while wearing.

“What attracts people is that each piece is unique,” says Ellis, who has sold out four pop-up shops on campus. “You’re not going to see anyone else wearing it, which also makes the pieces collectible.”

LAVE is on hold while Ellis prepares for the Senior Fashion Design Show, the culmination of her four years of study. She’s taking her inspiration from *The Wiz*, creating six looks inspired by characters from the show, in confluence with locations meaningful to her in Harlem.

“This is me paying homage to where I’m from,” she says. Her favorite piece is a men’s suit inspired by the flying monkey, which will be representing the Apollo Theater. “If you perform at the Apollo Theater, that means you’ve made it,” says Ellis. “This is my way of saying I plan to make it in fashion.”

Ellis says a major influence for her “baby couture” collection was her semester abroad studying at the London College of Fashion, where she studied menswear and fashion styling. “I realized I want move more towards cut and sewing pieces that take way more time to design and create,” she says.

In her first experience as a stylist, Ellis and her fellow students were challenged to create a photo shoot. Working with a partner, Ellis had to find a model, photographer and location and style a look with layered clothing. “I went on LinkedIn and started messaging photographers in London, looking for someone willing to participate,” she says.

She struck gold with a photographer who had published magazine work. “He ended up submitting our shoot to a bunch of outlets, and it ran on Vogue.com,” Ellis says. “He emailed me with it on my birthday, which was a great present. I was like, ‘I don’t need anything else.’”

Ellis applied to the Syracuse University fashion design program after spending three weeks on campus through the College of Visual and Performing Arts Summer Ambassador Program. “I took classes on art history, fashion history and created a garment out of pieces of paper,” she says. “At that point, it was the best experience of my life.”

The fashion design program is notoriously demanding. Ellis

started with a cohort of 20 students in her first year. Eight remain. “In the beginning, it was very intimidating. I’ve always felt the pressure to stand out,” she says.

Outside of fashion, Ellis works part time as a student lead for the Office of Student Engagement at the Schine Student Center, is a member of the Caribbean Students Association and an Our Time Has Come Scholar. “Financially, the scholarship has been a tremendous help to my parents, but the program has also provided so many opportunities,” she says. “I’ve made great friends and done things I never would have, like sit in the front row at a basketball game.”

When Ellis interned at Levi Strauss in San Francisco, she was given names of area alumni who might serve as resources should she need them. “The program is a great support system,” she says.

Ellis will return to San Francisco after graduation as an assistant designer at Levi Strauss. “I’m looking forward to what I’m sure will be a great learning experience,” she says. “I hope to end up in Europe as creative director for a famous fashion house.”



Adore Ellis





Candice Ogbu

## Honoring Unsung Heroes

A highlight of Syracuse University’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration is the presentation of Unsung Hero Awards. The award, created to honor King’s vision of creating positive change in a troubled world, is given to community members, students, faculty and staff who have made a positive impact on the lives of others but are not widely recognized for their contributions. This year’s honorees include:

**Candice Ogbu** is a senior double majoring in neuroscience and psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Our Time Has

Come Scholar was honored for her efforts to promote diversity and inclusion on campus as well as her work as a health advocate.

During her tenure as chair of the Student Association’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Ogbu created multiple programs and hosted events, including a panel of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) Syracuse professionals to visit with Syracuse University and Nottingham High School students about pushing beyond their perceived limitations and seeking bold opportunities.

Ogbu served internships working as a peer health advocate (PHA) at Planned Parenthood and as a COVID-19 impact analyst with the City of Syracuse. As a PHA, she helped develop a mental health retreat hosted by Planned Parenthood that is now used as a model for other Syracuse organizations hosting mental health retreats. She also developed a free citywide resource list, to fulfill needs she saw in the Syracuse area, and is working to create a campus organization called PP Generation, focusing on student leaders looking to advocate for sexual, reproductive and gender rights. In her work with the city, she helped implement a COVID-19 testing system for essential city workers.

“I am beyond grateful to have been selected for such a prestigious award,” says Ogbu. “For me, this award is about shining a light on organizations like Planned Parenthood and the Syracuse COVID Office, who have been vital to the Syracuse community.”

**Nichole Henry** is director of admissions and recruitment for the College of Professional Studies. In her 20-year career at Syracuse University, Henry has helped hundreds of students gain access to higher education because of her persistence to learn more about supporting post-traditional students and empowering them to continue their quest of lifelong learning. In addition to her work in admissions, Henry has devoted time, energy and her doctoral research to the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP). She has balanced work and life responsibilities along with her advocacy efforts of supporting those from marginalized backgrounds both through academic studies and her everyday experiences. She is also a lead instructor of First-Year Seminar and a mentor in the fullCIRCLE program, which promotes academic success, identity development, community leadership and social responsibility among students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Outside of work, Henry serves as a dialogue facilitator for InterFaith Works and is president of the Delta Alpha Gamma Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., of which she is a charter member.

**Thomas Wilson**, is a member of the InclusiveU program dual majoring in broadcast and digital journalism and political science. Wilson’s ability to connect with people and share stories is a remarkable resource for the Syracuse University community. Wilson immerses himself into campus life through internships and his work at Schine Student Center. He often shows his support of and interest in the community by showing up. He cares enough to take the time to learn.

Wilson is a news anchor at Citrus TV, where “he loves to deliver the news.” Through an internship with Orange Television Network, he is also executive producer and show creator of *Thomas on the Town*, a show where he goes “into the field” interviewing Syracuse University community members on a wide variety of topics.

Wilson is highly involved with the Syracuse University Catholic Center. At Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday Masses in the Catholic community, both at Hendricks Chapel and at the Catholic Center’s St. Thomas More Chapel, he puts the books away and makes sure all is set for the next scheduled Mass. After Thursday Mass at the Catholic Center, at its Community Night Dinner, Wilson’s engaging personality and kind, attentive presence are frequently sought out at whatever table he chooses to sit.

Additional honorees include local high school students Trinity Brumfield and Camille Ogden and community educator and activist Oceanna Fair.



Nichole Henry



Thomas Wilson

## Omega Psi Phi Celebrates 100 Years at Syracuse University

On Feb. 18, 1922, Omega Psi Phi became the first historically Black Greek-letter fraternal organization to be chartered at Syracuse University. On the weekend of April 22-24, 2022, brothers representing five decades reconvened in Syracuse to celebrate the Kappa chapter's 100 years of brotherhood, scholarship and service to Syracuse University and the surrounding community.

"The opportunity to celebrate your chapter's centennial is a monumental occasion," says David L. Jackson '17, who chaired the weekend's events with Ronald Harvey '12. "The fraternity provided me a lot of opportunities and support in terms of academics and great friendships, so helping to organize this celebration was a way to pay homage to the brothers who made it possible for me to be part of the legacy."

Jackson says the legacy of the Kappa chapter includes extensive community service. He points to a backpack drive that supports students at Van Duyn Elementary School and canned food drives for multiple community centers. "Our legacy is not just that we've turned 100 years old, but that as a campus organization, we've worked to make an impact on the Syracuse community over those decades."

Despite concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 120 Kappa chapter Ques descended on Syracuse from all over the United States, including Jackson from Miami, Harvey from Dallas, Zaire Franklin '17 from Indianapolis, Michael Blackshear '91 from

Atlanta and Vincent Cohen Jr. '92, L'95 from Washington, D.C., the latter two members of Syracuse University's Board of Trustees.

The centennial weekend kicked off on Friday evening with a welcome reception and after party.

On Saturday, the focus turned more introspective, beginning with a chapter rededication ceremony that morning, led by Omega Psi Phi Grand Basileus Andrew Ray, "a tremendous honor to have his presence and participation," says Jackson.

"During that ceremony, the brothers retook the oath that affirmed them to the principles and ideals of Omega," says Benjamin Jeffers '74, graduate advisor to the Kappa chapter. "To see 120-plus brothers return to the place where their Omega experience began was a great and truly unique experience."

After the ceremony, the brothers held a leadership workshop for undergraduate men, Black Men Build, at the Hall of Languages. "We have some notable members within our ranks, so this was our attempt to share our experiences and knowledge, to talk about what manhood means today," says Jackson.

The day culminated with the Centennial Banquet held at the Syracuse Marriott that evening. For Jackson, who served as chapter basileus while an undergrad, one of the highlights was the viewing of a video created for the event to capture the chapter's history. "I had an opportunity to speak to brothers who joined a fraternity in the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s, up to 2000," he says. "Hearing voices of individuals that paved the way and about

Members of the Omega Psi Phi Kappa chapter during their anniversary celebration





*“Our legacy is not just that we’ve turned 100 years old, but that as a campus organization, we’ve worked to make an impact on the Syracuse community over those decades.”*

– DAVID L. JACKSON

what the chapter was like during their time on campus was something that resonated deeply in my heart because they are the reason those that followed are here.”

In conjunction with the Centennial weekend, Kappa Chapter alumnus Joseph Edwards ’83 brought his nationally acclaimed one-man show, *Fly*, to Syracuse, with four performances at the Redhouse Arts Center between April 20 and 23. “This was a way to showcase some of the talents of the individuals within our chapter and our fraternity,” says Harvey.

According to Edwards, the centennial weekend was an occasion to reflect on the chapter’s 100-year legacy. “We have been a force fighting for social justice and inclusion all these years,” he says. “We didn’t have the phrase ‘safe space,’ but Omega Psi Phi has

been creating a safe space for Black and Latino students on our campus for 100 years, while at the same time being scholars and serving our community.”

The weekend left a lasting imprint on all those who attended. “I’m still riding the wave,” says Jackson, a month after the event.

For Warren Dixon ’24, the Kappa chapter’s most recent initiate, the weekend was a profound illustration of what makes the fraternity so special. “The greatest moment during this beautiful weekend was when brothers from multiple eras stood on the Quad and shared songs, pictures and marches,” he says. “I am overjoyed I was able to attend this event, and more importantly, to be one of the newest pieces of Kappa Chapter of Omega Psi Phi.”

Post-celebration, the chapter continues to cement its Syracuse legacy through the Omega Psi Phi endowment within the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund. “Our goal is for continued growth and expansion of the principal base amount, so that we can increase the level of financial support to underrepresented students attending Syracuse University,” says Blackshear. “The cost for higher education is increasingly rising and becoming, for some, cost prohibitive. We have to find creative and innovative ways to support students’ journey in pursuing a higher education, so that they may have a firm foundation in life and professional success. We hope our endowment, along with other similar endowments, may assist with providing such a foundation.”



## Noura Allen Joins College of Professional Studies

**T**he College of Professional Studies has named Noura Allen director of diversity and inclusive excellence. In this new role, Allen will lead, develop and implement strategies to align the College of Professional Studies’ diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA) initiatives and will partner with University departments to advance efforts to provide a welcoming and affirming environment for all post-traditional Syracuse University students.

Allen joins Syracuse University from Virginia Commonwealth University, where they served as the assistant director of residence life for multicultural affairs since 2018.

Allen holds a master of science in higher education leadership from Old Dominion University and a bachelor of science in psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University. They have presented research and facilitated a series of courses and training regarding DEIA initiatives in the workplace.

“The College of Professional Studies is poised to be a trailblazer for DEIA initiatives at Syracuse University through their approach to transparent and authentic leadership,” says Allen. “I believe that my lived experience has uniquely prepared me to lead this team, and I am excited to do the hard work that needs to be done.”



Noura Allen

## King Celebration Focuses on Civil Rights in Syracuse

Syracuse University celebrated its 38th Annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Jan. 22, bringing together more than 2,000 members of the Syracuse University and Greater Syracuse communities. The theme of the celebration was Civil Rights and the City of Syracuse, with the Rev. Phil Turner, pastor of Syracuse’s Bethany Baptist Church, giving the keynote address.

“In choosing this theme, the planning team sought to highlight the timeless values that Martin Luther King Jr. taught through his example: the values of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service. We want to apply that here and now in the City of Syracuse,” says Malique Lewis ’24, who served as co-chair of the celebration with the Rev. Brian Konkol, dean of Hendricks Chapel.

“Dr. King’s dream was for us to be a beloved community,” Lewis told those in attendance. “A community that stands together. A community that chooses love over hate. A community that chooses to shine its light to defeat darkness. A community that continues the legacy of the great Dr. Martin Luther King. I want you to look around because tonight, we are that beloved community.”

In his keynote address, Turner spoke on “Planting New Seeds and Cultivating a New Culture.” He told of growing up in the South and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and singing patriotic songs in his segregated school. “Like most people born in America, I was taught to love my country. While I was loving my country, I began to realize that the pledges in those songs were not intended to be shared with me. As a little boy, I was disheartened,” he said. “Where were the good and decent people and why didn’t they take a stand to stop this inhumane condition?”



Rev. Phil Turner, pastor of Syracuse’s Bethany Baptist Church, spoke about civil rights history in the City of Syracuse.

Turner went on to touch on Syracuse’s history of enforcing segregationist policies, like the destruction of the historically Black 15th Ward to build Interstate 81 and the lingering impact of that action. He said those in attendance have an “obligation to plant new seeds” of respect, care and hope in an effort to dismantle the “poisonous seeds” of white supremacy and the persisting impacts of slavery and racial segregation.

“The time has come for untruths to be abandoned,” Turner said. “America was founded on seeds of untruth, and the motive was fueled by the pursuit of money, material gain and power. . . . We’ve been trying to fix a racial divide that was designed to never be fixed. Therefore, we must abandon what has grown from the seeds of untruths.”

Throughout the evening, performances were given by Eesa Grayson, the MLK Community Choir, the Royalty Step Team, Brianna Gilyard ’23 and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

The program was preceded by a traditional dinner and, for the first time this year, an art exhibition was held in the JMA Wireless Dome’s Club 44 featuring the work of four local artists: Syracuse University Professor Emeritus David MacDonald, Jaleel Campbell, Jessica McGhee ’19 and Vanessa Johnson.



AMELIA BEAMISH

Jessica McGee (center) connects with a community member at the 2023 MLK Celebration in Club 44 of the JMA Wireless Dome.



Sofia Rodriguez



## Sofia Rodriguez Named Senior Class Marshal

**O**ur Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar Sofia Rodriguez '24 was named a Senior Class Marshal for the Class of 2024. In this role, she will spend her senior year serving as an all-University representative for her class and will lead the student procession during the 2024 Commencement.

A junior from Miami Gardens, Florida, Rodriguez is majoring in communication and rhetorical studies in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. She is a Posse Leadership Scholar who has earned Dean's List recognition each semester and the Highest Academic Achievement Award as an OTHC Scholar.

She has served as a resident advisor for the last two academic years and a peer leader for the First Year Seminar. To support first-generation college students, Rodriguez has organized guest speakers, discussions and community-building opportunities through Many2Come. She is also an active member of the Black Student Union, a club that creates and supports spaces for the Black community.

Building upon her academic experiences, Rodriguez applies her communication skills to further her passion for creating connections among her peers, alumni and the greater Syracuse community. As a co-host of "Shades of 'Cuse," Rodriguez aims to expand the network of current students and Posse Scholars by

sharing the stories of alumni. She has done the same as an OTHC Scholar by supporting alumni and community events that bring people together.

Beyond her roles on campus, Rodriguez is the founder and communications director for a nonprofit organization, With Love, that serves undocumented Latino/a refugees with translation, housing, food and job search resources. She also spent last summer as a communication and policy intern with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute in Washington, D.C. As a Posse Scholar, she has interned with the Posse Foundation to assist with fundraising efforts and event management to benefit scholars.

Rodriguez says being selected as a Senior Class Marshal signals that she has accomplished what she set out to do when joining Syracuse University: "giving my all to this community and helping us do better while being better," she says. "I hope to use the role as a tool to foster communication and help create more equitable space for those who may be unseen or forgotten."

"Being selected as a Senior Class Marshal means that every sacrifice my mom and dad made was worth it. I would not have made it this far without their support and dedication to my successes," says Rodriguez.

## OTHC Scholars Honored at Chancellor's Home

**O**n March 30, Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud and his wife, Dr. Ruth Chen, hosted graduating Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholars and Leaders and their families at their home for a recognition ceremony and reception.

The Chancellor's House event, a highpoint of the OTHC senior-year experience, was also attended by members of Syracuse University leadership. "This ceremony and reception is a special opportunity to recognize our graduating seniors, commemorate their experience at Syracuse University and recognize their successes," says Maria J. Lopez '05, G'12, assistant director of scholarship programs in the Office of Multicultural Advancement. "Receiving this recognition in the presence of the Chancellor and other senior leadership is very meaningful for our Scholars, many of whom are first-generation students or have overcome other obstacles and worked very hard to earn their Syracuse University degrees."

At the ceremony, students were presented with OTHC stoles to wear at

*"To be recognized among my peers, advisors and administration leaves me feeling proud that as a first-generation student, I am continuously on the path of accomplishing my parents' dreams, and most importantly, my dreams."*

— NADIA NELSON

Commencement. This year, 57 OTHC Scholars and Leaders were to graduate from Syracuse University, the largest cohort to date. "These graduates are testimony to the generosity of our alumni," says Lopez. "Due to their continued support, we have been able to increase the number of scholarships we can provide and the number of students we can support through leadership development and mentoring opportunities."

The keynote address was given by Aisha N. Thomas-Petit '98, a magna cum laude graduate of the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, who earned a degree in marketing. Thomas-Petit is chief people and diversity officer of AMC Networks, responsible for overseeing AMC Networks' people and culture strategy, including global talent acquisition, leadership development, employee engagement, compensation, and the company's benefits and rewards programs as well as fostering a culture that attracts and retains the industry's best leaders and storytellers.

Our Time Has Come Scholars and Leaders gathered at the Chancellor's House for the annual ceremony honoring graduating seniors and award recipients.







Maria J. Lopez, Aisha N. Thomas, Ashley Bruce, David Barbier Jr, Bryan Crowe and Nyah Jones at the Chancellor's House

Thomas-Petit began by sharing remarks she'd made 25 years earlier as a speaker at the School of Management graduation. "To all my brothers and sisters in the audience today, I represent you. For some see us as an exception to the rule, but I can tell you that we, as educated women and men of color, have contributed to becoming the norm."

While people of color have more presence within the corporate world today, Thomas-Petit said that her experiences being a "first" or "only" over her 25-year career brought opportunity to inspire, enlighten and empower. "The human-to-human connection made the difference," she said.

Thomas-Petit challenged students to have the confidence to know who they are and to share who they are. "Bring your full self into every space and watch its power," she said. "One of the reasons we don't make more progress in diversity, equity and inclusion efforts is because we are too busy grooming people to be the same. I tell executives all the time, especially on the topic of allyship, if you don't know me, I mean really know me, how can you advocate for me?"

"I am here because more than a few people said my name and spoke of my contributions when I wasn't in the room," she said. "Someone put in a vote of confidence in who I am. Someone saw me being my whole, 'supposed to be here' self."

Remarks were also made by OTHC Scholars Ashley Bruce '23 and David Barbier '23.

Bruce credited the OTHC program for contributing to her professional development and self-discovery. "I have been able to identify capabilities within myself that I wasn't aware of," she said. "I learned how to advocate for my individuality and honor my own contributions and achievements."

Barbier shared his experience as the child of Haitian and Cuban immigrants coming to Syracuse. "During my time at SU, I shadowed CEOs, studied in South Korea, Italy and Spain, lived in Los Angeles, wrote television pilots, even had a movie audition . . . moments I wouldn't trade for the world, Barbier said. "I dare you to dream of the life you wish to live and seize it"

In addition to graduating seniors, the ceremony recognized OTHC Scholars with exceptional academic standing, regardless of class year. Nine scholars were honored for GPAs of 3.9 or above: Olivia Henderson '23, Nadia Nelson '23, Brandon Richards '23, Tashakee Ledgister '24, Kaura Reyes '24, Sofia Rodriguez '24, Myla Thomas '24, Arianna Kuhn '25 and Jacquelyn Trotman '25.

"The OTHC program has been instrumental in my academic success," says Nelson, who majored in policy studies and political science with a minor in sport management. "Knowing that there are advisors, students and alumni who believe in my academic and professional dreams enough to provide me support and resources has motivated me to excel academically. To be recognized among my peers, advisors and administration leaves me feeling proud that as a first-generation student, I am continuously on the path of accomplishing my parents' dreams, and most importantly, my dreams."



Joshua Jimenez, Nashon Ash, Abraham Kenneh and Shaquan Alleyne enjoy the reception.

## Tracy Barlok Named Interim Chief Advancement Officer



Tracy Barlok

**T**racy Barlok has been named interim chief advancement officer. Barlok joined Syracuse University in September 2022 as special assistant to the Chancellor for advancement and external affairs and was named to her current post in December. Before joining the University, Barlok served as the vice president for advancement at the College of the Holy Cross, a position she held from July 2012 to July 2022.

Barlok has more than three decades of experience working in the field of higher education. During her tenure at Holy Cross, the college raised more than \$510 million for a range of initiatives, including new and renovated building projects, faculty and student support,

financial aid and athletics. She led the design and execution of the largest and most successful fundraising campaign in Holy Cross history, which raised more than \$420 million for strategic priorities, including four transformational building projects.

In her last 18 months at Holy Cross, Barlok facilitated the launch and successful completion of the college's \$40 million Hope + Access Campaign for financial aid, which secured 90 new endowed scholarships and raised \$56.3 million to support students.

Barlok began her career in advancement at her alma mater, Colgate University, where she served as director of alumni affairs, director of special gift programs and special assistant to the president. At Skidmore College, she served as director of leadership gifts, director of the college's successful \$200 million campaign and associate vice president.

Barlok succeeds Matt Ter Molen, who led Syracuse University's fundraising and alumni engagement efforts for more than seven years. Ter Molen assumed the role of vice president for institute advancement at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in January.

## Suzette Meléndez Named Faculty Fellow for Diversity and Inclusion

**S**uzette Meléndez, a longtime teaching professor in the College of Law, has been named Faculty Fellow for the Office of Strategic Initiatives in Academic Affairs and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

As faculty fellow, Meléndez will undertake several Universitywide initiatives associated with both offices, as well as various aspects of the University's Academic Strategic Plan. She will be involved in the research and preparation of policy and recommendation reports on DEIA priorities and topics and will support development and facilitation of programming for faculty of color recruitment and retention initiatives. She will also lead and guide the University's strategy for collaborations and partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions.

Meléndez has been at the College of Law since 2002. In 2021, she was named its first associate dean for equity and inclusion. She chaired the College of Law's Inclusion Council and co-chaired the implementation of a two-credit DEIA student requirement for fall 2024. In her capacity as associate dean, she was responsible for developing a program for the Inaugural Consortium Summer Residency for 22 students from the Atlanta University Center, a consortium of four historically Black colleges and universities, that successfully took place in Syracuse in May. She also assessed bias reporting processes and provided professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Meléndez chairs the University Senate's Race, Ethnicity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and has been faculty advisor to the Latin American Law Student Association and the Family Law Society for most of her time as a faculty member. She is also a coach for the annual appellate advocacy competition of the Hispanic National Bar Association.

"I'm honored and pleased to receive this appointment, and I am excited to work on new projects and continuing objectives with the Office of Strategic Initiatives and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University level," Meléndez says. "This is such an important focal point for the University. I look forward to contributing to the momentum to advance equity and inclusion efforts designed to dismantle biased systems that act as barriers to learning, belonging and engagement on our campus and beyond."



Suzette Meléndez



## Special Collection Acquires Notable Archives of Black History

Syracuse University Libraries Special Collections Research Center recently acquired two notable collections related to Black history.

The African Market Literature Collection consists of 77 Nigerian and Ghanaian market literature publications produced from the late 1950s, just before independence, through the early 1970s and the earliest years of the new African states. The collection includes work from Nigeria's first female novelist; the first recorded piece of erotica published on the African continent by a native African; Nigeria's (and possibly Africa's) first detective novel; and early published works from notable writers such as Chinua Achebe and others.

The largest consolidation of publications originates from the Onitsha Market in Nigeria, one of the largest in west Africa, where working people—taxicab drivers, waiters and day laborers—wrote and published their own works of fiction, poetry and instructional pamphlets. Found in the collection are tales of life in the big city, love and loss, industry and riches, representing lively and unique voices at a crucial historical moment on the African continent.

Special Collections also purchased the Masood Ali-Wilbert Warren Papers. Masood Ali-Wilbert Warren was a Black American painter, sculptor and Korean War Army veteran. He was known primarily for his many bronze busts of high-profile entertainers, celebrities and politicians. Spanning the years 1935-1986, the collection contains correspondence and photographs relating to his career, original artwork (sketches and watercolors) and photographs of finished artworks.

Of particular note are the hundreds of sketches as a result of Masood's practice spanning decades of documenting residents of New York City, largely in Harlem, moving through everyday life in the city.

Special Collections holdings are available to researchers from both within and outside the University. The SCRC acquisitions team is adding to the collection with a reparative framework and a strategic priority to collect, preserve and provide access to materials from historically underrepresented groups.



## Carlos Caicedo Bastidas Wins National Science Foundation Grant

Carlos Enrique Caicedo Bastidas, associate professor in the School of Information Studies and director of the Center for Emerging Network Technologies, was recently awarded a three-year, \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in collaboration with Rutgers, Columbia, Princeton, Duke and CUNY to support his research on information systems design.

Caicedo has contributed to the standardization of an information model called the spectrum consumption model (SCM), which is used to define how a wireless device (transmitter or receiver) uses spectrum and the boundaries of that use.

"The project prototypes a management system for spectrum sharing within and among disparate services such as communications and active and passive scientific uses," he says.

According to NSF, this work is critical because enhancing spectrum sharing will increase the amount of wireless activity that can be supported in the limited available spectrum. In this

way, the project helps sustain future economic growth, social benefits and scientific discoveries that are threatened by growing spectrum congestion.

The project involves two facilities in West Harlem, New York City: the COSMOS testbed sponsored by the NSF Platforms for Advanced Wireless Research program and the Cooperative Science Center for Earth System Science and Remote Sensing Technologies, sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



Carlos Enrique Caicedo Bastidas

## Adrian Autry Named Men's Basketball Head Coach

A new era of Syracuse basketball began with the appointment of Adrian Autry '94 as head coach of the men's program March 8. Autry, a former standout guard for the Orange and member of the coaching staff since 2011, is only the eighth head coach in the history of the program.

Autry succeeds the legendary Jim Boeheim '66, G'73, who led the Orange for 47 years.

"There have been very few stronger influential forces in my life than Syracuse University and Jim Boeheim. They have both played such important roles and without either of them, I am certain I would not have this incredible opportunity before me," says Autry. "I have spent much of my time in the game of basketball learning from Jim and am so grateful to him for preparing me to carry on the winning tradition that is Orange basketball. It's hard to imagine a world without him on the bench, but together with our coaches, student-athletes and fans, we will build on decades of success as a winning program."

As an undergraduate, Autry came to Syracuse from New York City, where he was star player at St. Nicholas of Tolentine High School in the Bronx. He was named to the 1990 McDonald's All-American team, earned first-team All-New York City three times and played on the 1988 New York City and New York State championship squads.

*"We are fortunate to have someone of Coach Autry's talent, experience and character taking the reins of Syracuse basketball. Not only is he an exceptional Xs and Os coach, he's also an outstanding recruiter, selfless mentor, dedicated community leader and a passionate Orange ambassador."*

—JOHN WILDHACK

Autry played guard at Syracuse from 1990 to 1994 and is one of just three players to lead Syracuse in assists in each of his four years. He finished his SU career with 1,538 points and still ranks fifth in career assists and sixth in career steals. He earned his Syracuse degree in speech communications, which he followed

with an 11-year pro career, playing for teams in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Turkey and Venezuela.

Autry worked briefly as a real estate settlement agent before pursuing coaching, initially at the AAU youth and high school level. In 2008, he was hired as director of basketball operations at Virginia Tech University, becoming assistant coach a year later. He came to Syracuse in 2011 as assistant coach and was named associate coach in 2017. In that role, he coached the Syracuse forwards and recruited all positions for the Orange.

"We are fortunate to have someone of Coach Autry's talent, experience and character taking the reins of Syracuse basketball," says Syracuse Athletic Director John Wildhack '80. "Not only is he an exceptional X's and O's coach, he's also an outstanding recruiter, selfless mentor, dedicated community leader and a passionate Orange ambassador. I am thrilled to see what he will do with this program as its head coach."

"He knows basketball. He knows how to coach," adds Boeheim of his successor. "The program is in good hands."



Syracuse head basketball coach Adrian Autry with athletic director John Wildhack



## NSF Grant Supports Syracuse Program to Increase Diversity in Astrophysics

Syracuse University is helping create a new research and education program intended to diversify the field of gravitational-wave astrophysics, specifically to increase the number of Hispanic and Latino/a students to the field.

Through a five-year, \$937,000 grant from the National Science Foundation's Partnerships in Astronomy and Astrophysics Research and Education program, the program builds on an existing collaboration between California State University

Fullerton (CSUF), a primarily undergraduate Hispanic-serving institution, and three Ph.D.-granting partners: Syracuse University, Northwestern University and Washington State University.

This new program will develop a pathway for CSUF students to enter doctoral programs at the three partner universities, including financial and academic support as they transition. The program intends to provide students with a long-term roadmap for their STEM careers and ensure that admitted students complete the Ph.D. degree and facilitate their becoming leaders in gravitational-wave astrophysics by providing sustained mentoring and actively fostering partnership opportunities.

Principal investigators at Syracuse University are Stefan W. Ballmer, professor of physics, and Georgia Mansell, assistant research professor of physics, both integrally involved with the Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory, which provided the first direct observation of gravitational waves in 2015.

"Diversifying astrophysics is critically important to enable scientists and enrich the field," says Mansell. "It's easy to say these things, but what's most important is doing something. I'm grateful to be part of a team that puts in the work when it comes to DEI and happy that the NSF is investing in this initiative."



Georgia Mansell



Stefan W. Ballmer

## Carrie Mae Weems Receives Hasselblad Award

Carrie Mae Weems H'17, Syracuse University's first artist in residence, has been named the 2023 Hasselblad Award laureate by the Hasselblad Foundation, a prize that is often referred to as the "Nobel Prize" of photography.

"Syracuse University is proud to have Carrie Mae Weems, one of the most prolific, influential and intriguing artists of our time, as a member of our community," says Chancellor Kent Syverud. "She has a way of challenging cultural norms and shedding light on injustices that push us to question our own perspectives and beliefs. Her contributions to the world of art, and on communities and our broader society are extraordinary."

A MacArthur Fellowship recipient and the first African American woman to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, Weems has used multiple mediums (photography, video, digital imagery, text, fabric and more) throughout her career to explore themes of cultural identity, sexism, class, political systems, family relationships and the consequences of power.

As artist in residence, Weems engages with Syracuse University faculty and students in a number of ways, including working with students in the design, planning and preparation of exhibitions.



Carrie Mae Weems

Weems first came to Syracuse in 1988 to participate in Light Work's artist-in-residence program. Over the years, she has participated in several programs at Light Work and has a long history of engaging with students and the University community.

JERRY KLINGERBERG

## Debra Adams Simmons Named A&S/Maxwell Convocation Speaker



Debra Adams Simmons

**D**ebra Adams Simmons '86, a national leader in journalism and a champion of diverse media organizations, delivered the alumni keynote address at the 2023 College of Arts and Sciences and Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs undergraduate Convocation.

A dual English and broadcast journalism graduate with three decades of journalism experience as a reporter, editor and senior editorial executive,

Simmons was named vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at National Geographic Media in 2022.

In this role, Simmons helps lead diversity initiatives across the company's parent organization, The Walt Disney Company, including efforts to amplify underrepresented voices through authentic storytelling. This guiding principle was honed in part by her English classes and liberal arts professors at Syracuse University. "As a journalist you think, 'What are the stories that can

move the needle here, that can make a difference?'" says Simmons.

Before that, Simmons had worked since 2017 as executive editor of history and culture for National Geographic.

In her Convocation remarks, Simmons addressed the imperative to build a stronger local news and information ecosystem as the number of community news outlets continues to shrink and the industry battles for survival. "If local news vanishes, can local democracy, civic engagement and accountability survive?" Simmons asked.

She also discussed the importance of mentors in helping emerging journalists and other young professionals launch and successfully navigate their careers.

Simmons has maintained deep alumni relationships with Syracuse University. She is vice chair of the College of Arts and Sciences dean's advisory board, has funded an endowed Our Time Has Come Scholarship to support Arts and Sciences students and is helping the Syracuse University chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. reach its \$1 million scholarship goal. She was among the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications 50 Forward, recognized as part of the school's 50th anniversary celebration in 2015, and will serve as a facilitator and keynote speaker for the summer 2023 Newhouse DEIA Campus Immersion experience.

## OTHC Alum Anwar Nasir Gives VPA Convocation Address



Anwar Nasir

**A**rts management leader Anwar Nasir '06 delivered the keynote address to bachelor's and master's degree candidates of the College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) at their Convocation.

It was a homecoming of sorts for Nasir, a former Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar who earned a bachelor of science degree from VPA's Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies. Today, Nasir is executive director of

the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) in New Orleans, where he ensures the fulfillment of the LPO's longstanding mission to transform people and communities through music while helping to craft the next stage in the organization's growth. When he joined the LPO in July 2021, he became only the second African American to lead a major American orchestra.

Previously, Nasir was the chief revenue and advancement officer for the Omaha Symphony. During his tenure, he helped the organization launch its first creative rebrand in more than a

decade, retool its subscription packages to increase paid capacity, launch a centennial anniversary season and introduce a new music director.

A former professional dancer, Nasir has also held leadership positions with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Hollywood Bowl, Atlanta Ballet and Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation. In 2018, he was one of 12 selected for the League of American Orchestras prestigious, year-long Emerging Leaders Program, which is widely considered the orchestra field's premier program for cultivating the potential of rising professionals.

Nasir has been named an emerging leader in the arts and culture space by the League of American Orchestras and Arts for LA. He also serves as co-chair for the League of American Orchestras Equity, Diversity and Inclusion working group for staff of color and the Professional Development Committee of the International Ticketing Association and has been selected to the Tessitura Network's inaugural Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee. He is co-founder of the Black Arts Leadership Alliance, formed to support African Americans in pursuing and developing careers in arts management.

Nasir is a member of VPA's Young Alumni Council. He gave the keynote address at the 2022 OTHC Ceremony at the Chancellor's House.



## Nkenge A. Bergan Gives School of Education Convocation Address



Nkenge A. Bergan

**N**kenge A. Bergan '95, an expert in educational leadership and school climate training, gave the Convocation address to School of Education graduates.

Bergan is associate vice president for student development services of Kalamazoo Valley Michigan Community College, a post she's held since September 2021. She was previously director of student services

at Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), where she served 13,000 students and their families for more than 10 years.

At KPS, Bergan led a team of behavior specialists, culture/ climate coaches and campus safety professionals and was awarded a \$1 million grant to establish a Social Emotional Learning Professional Development Center. She created KPS's Culturally Responsive Education professional development program, was a member of the Equity Task Force, and as an Adverse Childhood Experiences master trainer, she helped plan a community trauma summit to seek "to eliminate policies, practices, and procedures that may be creating more trauma" in students KPS serves and the greater Kalamazoo community.

Bergan graduated from the School of Education in 1995 with a B.S. in inclusive elementary education. She earned a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from Western Michigan University and a certificate in education from Grand Valley State University in Michigan. She has been a member of the Board of Visitors for the Syracuse University School of Education since August 2021.

## 2023 University Scholars Named

**C**helsea Brown '23, Julianna Mercado '23, Ruchatneet Printup '23 and Savannah Stocker '23 are among 12 students named 2023 Syracuse University Scholars, the highest undergraduate honor the University bestows.

The Syracuse University Scholars are selected based on coursework and academic achievement, independent research and creative work, evidence of intellectual growth or innovation in their disciplinary field, a personal statement and faculty letters of recommendation.

"Syracuse University Scholars take advantage of all the educational, experiential and personal growth opportunities Syracuse has to offer and make the most of their time as students," says Vice Chancellor and Provost Gretchen Ritter. "We are proud to recognize their achievements and grateful for their contributions to the University."

Brown, an Our Time Has Come Scholar, is a television, radio and film major in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and a citizenship and civic engagement major in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. A Posse Scholar from Miami, she studied abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the Fall 2022 semester. She has served as a marketing intern at the Community Folk Art Center and a student mentor for J.U.M.P. Nation, a student organization that works with at-risk Syracuse high school students. Brown was selected to represent the University Scholars by speaking at Commencement.

Mercado is a biochemistry and forensic science major in the College of Arts and Sciences. An EMT, she is the founder of UpSkill, a nonprofit organization designed to support educational equity through accessible academic resources.

Printup is a film major in the College of Visual and Performing Arts and a Haudenosaunee Promise Scholar. He studied abroad in Italy during the summer of 2022.

Stocker is an inclusive education and special education major in the School of Education and a member of the Renée Crown University Honors Program.



Chelsea Brown



Julianna Mercado



Ruchatneet Printup



Savannah Stocker

## JAMAL SALMON

# Data Driven

Jamal Salmon '12 plays a major role in the motion picture industry. He's not a Hollywood star, director or producer, but he's influential when it comes to understanding audiences and promoting blockbusters.

As the senior vice president of global data analytics at Paramount Pictures, Salmon infuses data and information into studio executives' decision-making process on movies. Whether questions focus on advertising and marketing, targeting specific audiences or even adjusting trailers to amplify a movie's appeal, he provides data-driven guidance that shapes a film's fate. "My role is to help inform everything—from is this the right ad to run on *Monday Night Football*, to is this the right audience to advertise to for a film, to everyday questions of should we be making more or less of this type of movie?" says Salmon, an alumnus of Syracuse University's David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.

Salmon's work has helped propel the success of such box office smash hits as *A Quiet Place* and *Top Gun: Maverick*. With the proliferation of streaming services and changing viewer habits, Hollywood has had to adjust accordingly—and embracing data analysis is a key part of that shift. According to Salmon, who joined Paramount in 2017, incorporating data as part of the business strategy is relatively new for the film industry. "My favorite thing about my role is that I'm often tasked with trying to come up with solutions for problems that didn't exist even two years ago," he says. "I'm always solving new challenges in a space where people are watching movies at home and in the theater, and that pattern changes every single day."

Salmon previously held analytics positions at Netflix and Google. But he forged his foundation in analytics in the sports world. After earning a bachelor's degree in sport management, he joined Bloomberg Sports as a basketball/baseball analyst and then became a senior research analyst at ESPN, where he'd interned in college. He draws comparisons between the evolution of analytics in the sport and film industries. "For me, the biggest parallel is they're both environments that historically haven't had strong data representation," he says.

Growing up in Queens, New York, Salmon spent a lot of time watching ESPN's *SportsCenter* and feasting on box scores and stats.

"My connection to sports has always been through numbers," he says. "I could quote batting averages, league leaders and many different stats for baseball and basketball." And when he realized there were careers in the sport industry for a numbers guy like him, he looked to explore that path in college.

He says his Syracuse University experience was transformational. He built strong relationships with Falk College faculty advisors, who provided both academic and career guidance, and his career



vision began to take shape. Among his fondest campus memories are playing basketball, especially intramural league battles.

"The friendships I made at Syracuse have supported me not only in my personal life, but also in my career," he says. "Friends have shared opportunities, and I've been able to do the same for them. The opportunity, almost by chance, to meet them on this campus has changed my life."

Last October, Salmon was honored during Orange Central Weekend with the 2022 Generation Orange Award, which honors alumni within 10 years of graduation who have made an impact on campus and in their communities through their volunteer work and philanthropy on behalf of Syracuse University. Salmon supports the University as a member of the Office of Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council and through the Our Time Has Come Scholarship program.

"When I think about the opportunity to give to Syracuse University, it's through the lens of, 'What if I didn't have those four years, what would that mean to me?'" he says. "I know that a lot of opportunities are provided by giving back to the University. Contributing to the Our Time Has Come Scholarship gives that opportunity to so many students, especially students of color."



NOELIA DE LA CRUZ

# Ready to Tell Her Own Stories

**M**any people dream about taking a break in life to reassess professional goals and consciously reflect on their next steps. Noelia de la Cruz '11 is doing just that. After a decade working in publicity at HBO, de la Cruz left her position as vice president of streaming communications in January, planning to take a year to reset.

"I've loved my time at HBO and am really grateful and proud of everything I've accomplished, but after a fulfilling 10 years, it seemed like a good opportunity to close one chapter and begin another," she says. "I'm excited to see how the next year will unfold."

Part of her motivation is an acknowledgment that her career path happened more by "happy accident" than intent.

de la Cruz came to Syracuse University as an undergraduate to become a magazine journalist. "I really loved long-form storytelling," she says.

She served as managing editor of *Medley* magazine and as an editor of *The Onondagan* yearbook and contributed to *The Daily Orange*. She spent two summers interning at parenting magazines and, during a study abroad semester in Florence, interned for an English-language newspaper.

After graduation, she interned at numerous publications to get a foot in the door: *Money*, *Business Insider* and *New York*. She landed a freelance editorial assistant role working at *Parents*, developing stories for the website and managing the magazine's social media. "It was a good experience but they didn't have the budget to bring me on full time," she recalls.

Looking for more stable work with benefits, de la Cruz saw a listing for a communications assistant at HBO for someone with experience in digital and social media. "I wasn't planning on working in TV, but joining a team that would promote groundbreaking storytelling felt like a great way to start my career," she says.

She was right. Over 10 years, de la Cruz took on positions of increasing responsibility with HBO/HBO Max, helping to launch shows such as *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* and *Vice*, launching the PR Twitter and Instagram accounts, plus editing a blog and producing an employee podcast. Her most recent role focused on promoting the general

innovation and marketing for HBO and HBO Max programming, helping prepare executives for panels, conferences and interviews, and helping communications teams expand their reach beyond traditional print and broadcast platforms.

de la Cruz also became increasingly involved with VAMOS, the company's business resource group for Latino/a employees, becoming co-chair in 2022. "I'm passionate about my culture and am dedicated to helping others in my community succeed and level up," she says.

One of her priorities for her time off was to spend more time with loved ones. She spent the first two weeks of March with her family in the Dominican Republic, meeting elder members of the family for the first time whom she and her mother discovered through the ancestry website 23andMe. "It was a privilege to meet them and learn more about my family through their stories," she says.

Next, de la Cruz plans to nurture her love of writing, beginning with a writer's retreat in Sicily in May. "I've been working adjacent to storytelling for so long, I'm looking forward to exploring that passion myself again," she says.

An avid reader, she maintains a blog of book recommendations, [noeliasophiareads.com](http://noeliasophiareads.com). Recent reads include *A Swim in the Pond in the Rain*, by Syracuse University creative writing professor George Saunders '88, in which four Russians give a master class in writing, and *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*, a perfect segue into her sabbatical.

de la Cruz believes she might have a book of her own in her future and is looking forward to exploring other writing avenues beyond journalism. "Working with the creators of these fantastic shows on the network opened my mind up to the possibilities of what I could do with my skills," she says. "I don't know yet what the medium will be, but I definitely have stories to tell."



Noelia de la Cruz

RAFAEL BALBI JR.

## Helping Tech Companies Grow

**R**afael Balbi Jr. '11 came to Syracuse University as a computer science major but after one semester decided the field wasn't a good fit, switching to a degree in economics. Nonetheless, he's spent the last 12 years working in technology, helping numerous startups grow their business.

"Economic thinking is all about looking at the world in terms of very large models and variables," he says. "Being able to view technology trends through the lens of an economist who is seeing how macro and micro factors are influencing one another, and then being able to have a strategic view on the future, is one of my superpowers that I've developed over time."

He joined Vimeo, a video hosting company, as a product manager in April 2020, shortly after the onset of the pandemic. "The pandemic really accelerated the world towards video-first solutions creating unprecedented demand," says Balbi, who became director of product management in February 2022. "The world continues to virtualize, and companies are looking to cut costs with more people working from home, so there's continued potential that's really exciting."

No doubt Balbi is passionate about entrepreneurship and drawn to new and developing technologies. As a recent college graduate, he secured venture capital from a European partner to launch Franklin's Lab, intended to help entrepreneurs turn ideas into businesses. The company never really took off, but it did get him a foot in the door in the tech space.

Balbi went on to serve as director of operations for the Lean Startup Machine, which taught entrepreneurs how to validate their business ideas, and also helped large organizations like *Time* magazine and the United States Postal Service modernize their software practices. He later held positions at several tech startups, including Maker's Row, LiveAuctioneers and Squarespace.

"Clearly, the tech space has matured quite a bit as these firms have grown exponentially, becoming public companies or part of a larger conglomerate," Balbi says.

In his current role at Vimeo, Balbi works with researchers and designers on various engineering teams to develop products that will meet the needs of its end users. "There's a lot of cross-functionality in terms of defining strategy or broader impact."

And he continues to share his knowledge to help others succeed. From 2014-18 he co-taught the online product management course through General Assembly and, for the last year, has taught product management through the executive education program at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

Balbi came to Syracuse as a first-generation college student. He was a member of Raices dance troupe and Lambda Sigma Upsilon Fraternity Inc., and helped transition what was then a campus governing body for the Latino/a Greek organizations to become part of the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), serving as the first NALFO president at Syracuse.

"Bringing NALFO to Syracuse formalized the structure of Syracuse Latino/a Greek organizations to be more widely recognized on a national level," says Balbi. "Through NALFO, these organizations are better able to tap into resourcing, support and organizational allyship that is offered on a national level."

It was in his first economics class at Syracuse that he met his future wife, Joannie Diaz-Balbi '11. The couple are expecting their first child this spring, adding to their household of two dogs. "We're looking forward to having a Syracuse baby," he says.

Balbi couldn't be at a happier point, personally or professionally. "I feel like my experiences and skills have paid off, resulting in now being a strategic leader who interfaces regularly with an executive team of a public company," he says.





DEANA CONCILIO-LENZ

# Creative Visionary

**D**eana Concilio-Lenz '92 has a natural eye. From producing music videos and live concerts to curating designer homes, her talent has always centered around the visual.

For the last eight years, Lenz has been creating new home environments for interior decor clients, combining vintage and handcrafted furnishings to create her signature modern, timeless look with a touch of the eclectic.

"If you have a talent, it can be used in multiple ways," she says. "The only thing that holds you back is fear."

This new direction expands on Concilio-Lenz's 20-year career as a successful producer and creative director, which began creating and directing stylized content, music videos and biographical pieces for Sony Music Entertainment, where she served as director of the Creative Services Department for seven years. She then joined Clive Davis as a producer when he started J Records.

She drew from those experiences to start her own company, DCL Media, in 2001, producing and directing content for music, fashion, digital and nonprofit clients, including Columbia Records, Make-A-Wish International, Marlo Thomas, Novartis, RCA Records, Recording Academy/Grammys, Save The Children, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group and the U.S. Ski Team. During this period, she also served twice as head of the production at AOL Studios.

"My forte is marrying ideas, substance and art together to create content that achieves my client's vision and then finding platforms to monetize that content," she says.

But Concilio-Lenz doesn't like to be kept in a box. In 2010, she began a master's program in decorative arts and architecture at Parsons School of Design. After completing her degree in 2012, she launched Deana Lenz Interiors. While her decor clientele differs from her media clients, she says she draws from the same skill sets, using her honed eye and creative thinking to help people live in beauty.

As a director, Concilio-Lenz always worked with a mood board on set to help guide her in achieving the desired effect. She does the same when designing a room or entire home.

Like most of her career moves, Concilio-Lenz says the business developed organically. She started the master's program to feed her own interests and the design firm unfolded from that. "To be honest, my kids were at an age that I was tired of getting on a plane all the time. Production budgets were shrinking. I wanted to try something new," she says.

Concilio-Lenz credits her Syracuse University education for allowing her to explore her varied interests. Although she majored in English and textual studies, she took a variety of electives, from film to women's studies. "I was able to dabble in a lot of different interests that I was developing," she says.



Deana Concilio-Lenz

Concilio-Lenz interned at MTV as a production assistant during the summer after her sophomore year, which she was able to continue through college over holiday breaks.

After graduating, she worked freelance for MTV, before landing a job at CNN. She wanted to be an on-air reporter but was told she was "too ethnic looking," so ended up as an assistant producer on *Showbiz Today*. Frustrated by the lack of creativity, she moved to Sony Music Entertainment as a producer/creative director, where she worked with numerous artists creating original music content.

Concilio-Lenz launched her Manhattan-based interior design firm with the assistance of a friend in the business who referred smaller projects her way. Over time, she developed her own reputation, designing apartments across New York City, homes in the Hamptons and in Telluride, Colorado. "I've had four meetings with a potential client about doing a hotel and restaurant," she says. "We'll see if that comes to fruition."

Regardless of the genre, she loves being an entrepreneur. "Going from working as a producer to interior design was confusing to some people, but I really am fulfilled being a multi-hyphenate creator," she says.

## GEOFFREY JOHNSON

# Supporting Families of the Incarcerated

**T**he United States is the largest jailer in the world with 2.2 million people incarcerated. Nearly 2.7 million children

nationwide have a parent in prison or jail. In Washington, D.C., approximately two out of three people of color without a high school diploma will end up in the criminal justice system.

Volunteering as a court-appointed special advocate for children in the foster system, Geoffrey Johnson '78, G'83 could see the direct impact between foster care and parental incarceration. At the same time, his wife, Avon Hart-Johnson, was conducting doctoral studies that included research on women who had incarcerated mates. Dinner conversation often revolved on social issues, including the lack of support and services for family members of those incarcerated. "We realized there were few, if any, area organizations that looked out for the children and families of the incarcerated," Johnson says.

The Johnsons decided to change that. In 2014, they founded the nonprofit DC Project Connect to provide crisis intervention and information resources to families affected by incarceration and to support reentry initiatives. Using trained volunteers, the organization offers on-site mentorship and life skills training for women and mothers who are preparing to transition from prison and reunite with their families. An ongoing Coffee Talk series delivers twice monthly sessions that provide women with services such as trauma-informed programming, resume writing and applying for jobs.

They also developed a family reunification curriculum, presented under the auspices of parenting classes at the D.C. Department of Corrections, Fairview Residential Reentry Center and Anne Arundel County Jail.

Another project uses reading circles to help children better understand their emotions and deal with difficult topics such as incarceration and prison visits. Children's books authored by Johnson and Hart-Johnson help parents learn techniques for bonding and rebuilding trust. Johnson and his wife have written several children's books to aid in this process, including *Rocko's Guitar* and *Jamie's Big Visit*. "The reading circles have given us an opportunity to see interaction between parent and child and witness parents having aha moments about how they can better talk to their children," says Johnson, who has become a certified trauma-informed support specialist and grief counselor.



Geoffrey Johnson with his wife, Avon Hart-Johnson

The reading circles began as part of a research project entitled, "Parents and Caregivers Perceptions of Storytelling as a Creative Intervention for Children of Incarcerated Parents," which itself was an outgrowth of a research idea the Johnsons conceptualized after conducting a research study in Great Britain prisons during 2016. The project inspired several journal articles and influenced the direct support and services to families. They have continued to disseminate their research at conferences nationally and abroad, including the International Children of Incarcerated Parents conference in Huddersfield, England.

Johnson's advocacy work follows a 30-year career in public service for the federal government, working as an analyst/auditor and criminal investigator for the U.S. Government Accountability Office and several Offices of Inspector General. Before retiring, he served as the assistant inspector general for investigations for the U.S. Peace Corps. He retired at age 55 and now devotes his energies full time as executive director of DC Project Connect.

Johnson credits his Alpha Phi Alpha brotherhood's service mission for inspiring the work he's doing today. A Washington, D.C., native, he came to Syracuse to study psychology. As an undergraduate, he was a peer counselor in the Office of Minority Affairs, where he was mentored by Evelyn Walker and Barry Wells. As a junior, he spent a semester studying abroad in Amsterdam.

Harlan London G'76, professor of child and family studies, was a faculty member abroad that semester and encouraged Johnson to explore fraternal bonds in Alpha Phi Alpha. He spent his last undergraduate semester studying abroad in Kenya; he returned to Syracuse to earn a master's degree in public administration.

"I really enjoyed investigating issues of fraud and misconduct around the globe for the government, but there is incredible satisfaction to give back to the community through our nonprofit services," says Johnson. "In the Washington, D.C., area, we are one of only a handful of nonprofits dedicated to assisting children and families of the incarcerated. I never imagined we would accomplish so much for this seemingly invisible population."



# Howard Woolley Supports the Student Experience in Washington, D.C.

**P**ractical experience is often the best experience. A gift from Syracuse University Trustee Howard Woolley '80 will support Syracuse students studying and interning in Washington, D.C.

Woolley, an alumnus of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, is president and CEO of the Howard Woolley Group, a strategic business and public policy advisory firm for the telecommunications and technology industries based in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the Newhouse Advisory Board and sits on the DEI subcommittee and is a Syracuse University Trustee.

The gift will support students with demonstrated financial need who are studying in the school's Newhouse DC program, based at the new Syracuse University Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship Institute, helping students to afford the extra costs associated with working at an off-campus internship, such as housing, travel and related expenses. Preference will be given to students who advance the University's interest in promoting the educational benefits of a diverse student body.

"The academic work and professional internships will be invaluable to the students' careers," says Woolley. "Their participation in the Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship Institute will be invaluable to society."

Newhouse Dean Mark J. Lodato says support from Woolley and other alumni will play a key role in the success of the school's D.C.-based initiatives. "We are grateful for alumni like Howard who share our vision for an expanded presence in Washington and who understand the myriad ways our students will benefit from educational and hands-on experiences in the nation's capital."



Howard Woolley

## Kiana Papin Awarded Fulbright

**K**iana Papin '22 is one of 10 Syracuse University students or alumni awarded Fulbright Scholarships for 2023-24. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program funds study/research grants and English teaching assistantships in more than 140 countries worldwide. Papin, who graduated last year with a degree in television, radio and film from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, will teach English at a sports-based boarding school in Montpellier, France.

An Our Time Has Come Scholar as an undergraduate, Papin has spent the last year in San Francisco working as a streaming media assistant on Disney live sports operations for ESPN+.

"I've studied French since I was 14 and had planned to spend a semester in France during my junior year, but wasn't able to due to the pandemic," she says. "I'm really excited to live in France, experience the culture and use my language skills. I feel like this has been years in the making."



Kiana Papin

# Gisele Marcus Leads Delta Sigma Theta to Hit \$1 Million Endowment

In September, the Kappa Lambda Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. will celebrate 50 years on the Syracuse University campus. If all goes according to plan, the chapter will also celebrate the achievement of raising \$1 million toward its Our Time Has Come Scholarship endowment, closing out a 10-year fundraising goal.

“Education is expensive, and we are proud to help close the gap for students who receive our scholarships,” says Gisele Marcus ’89. “We are also thrilled to have our organization play a leadership role in institutional support at Syracuse University.”

The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. endowment is significant in many ways. Not only is it the largest group endowment created at Syracuse University, but its benefactors are predominantly Black women, including many first-time philanthropists. “We’ve created a lot of new donors to the University,” says Marcus, a successful business executive who is professor of practice in the MBA program at the Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis.

“The alumnae of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., Kappa Lambda Chapter, have worked incredibly hard to deliver the largest OTHC endowed scholarship established by a donor group,” says Rachel Vassel ’91, G’21, associate vice president of multicultural advancement. “Their legacy of giving is especially meaningful this year when the chapter celebrates 50 years on the campus of Syracuse University. We are so proud of these dedicated and generous women whose commitment will support OTHC Scholars for many generations to come.”

The money has been raised solely through individual gifts or bequests, rather than events or specialty fundraisers. “In fundraising, there’s a tenet that people give to what they believe in. Those initiated into our organization are passionate about the sorority’s mission and believe giving back with time, talent and treasure is a lifetime commitment, beyond the collegiate experience,” says Marcus.

Their endowment supports female students from underserved groups attending Syracuse, with priority given to Delta Sigma Theta members. Since the 2014-15 academic year, the scholarship has supported 35 students. This year, eight OTHC students are supported by DST scholarships, two of whom are members of the sorority.

It all started back in 2013, when Delta Sigma Theta became the first Black Greek organization at Syracuse to create an endowment fund, setting a goal to raise \$100,000 by CBT 2014. “It was a smarter investment vehicle than making an annual scholarship

gift each year and then starting over from scratch the next year,” Marcus said at the time. “We wanted to leave a legacy.”

When the group came close to meeting that goal, Marcus started crunching numbers and challenged her sorority sisters to up the ante. “When I first proposed raising \$1 million, it seemed like too lofty of a goal. But when I shared a mathematical formula per sorority sister, per year, they could see it was an attainable goal,” she says.

With almost 400 Deltas who were initiated through the Kappa Lambda chapter, Marcus mapped out how a \$250 pledge per member for 10 years could raise the money. At CBT 2014, the current and alumnae members agreed to establish an endowment of \$1 million by 2023 to mark the 50th anniversary of the chapter with the gift.

The group set an annual target of \$100,000, establishing fundraising captains for each intake period. Marcus created detailed reports, tracking giving over 34 separate intake periods for almost 10 years. “It’s been a significant labor of love to provide the necessary reporting needed at the fundraising captain level,” she says. “To date, more than 1,200 transactions have been processed manually to create reporting metrics to fuel the engine of our grassroots campaign.”

In April 2021, a strategic planning committee was formed to focus on the race to the finish line. The committee consists of Lori Britton ’92, Candice Carnage ’90, Pat Jenkins Hurlock ’85, Marcus, Fatimah Moody ’90, Shawn Outler ’89 and Shannel Parker ’99. At that time, the group had raised \$450,000 with 37% participation.

With the endowment currently at \$912,000, Marcus says the final push is on to meet the goal by August 2023. “We’d love to have 100% participation of our membership in this effort. We currently stand at 52% participation, exceeding the national alumni giving average at U.S. colleges of 23.2%,” she says. “We ask that each member gift a minimum of \$22 in honor of the 22 Founders of Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority Inc.

According to Vassel, the Deltas’ fundraising has made an impact beyond their own scholarship. “They have served as an example and have inspired other organizations to step up and start their





Gisele Marcus

own scholarships,” she says. “Their giving has had a substantial ripple effect across the Greek organizations and beyond.”

“I’m proud that we’re pacesetters, but in the end, we all have the same goal to increase support for underrepresented students at Syracuse,” says Marcus, a member of the Office of Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council who was elected to the Syracuse University Board of Trustees in 2021. “This is about more than bragging rights; it’s about helping our diverse students achieve a higher education.”

In September, members of the Kappa Lambda chapter will return to Syracuse for a weekend of service and celebration. They will also honor the 21 Black Pearls who were the charter members of the Syracuse chapter. “Little did I know the impact that my charter line of 21 undergraduate collegiate Black women would have,” says charter member Laraine Jones ’75.

“We gave birth to a legacy of brilliant, visionary Black women that came behind us and are now leading us to collectively pull our resources together to fund scholarships for other young African American students attending Syracuse University,” she says. “I am humbled to be part of this journey.”

# Milestones

**Barbara Brandon-Croft ’80** has published *Where I’m Coming From* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2023), a compilation of the trailblazing comic strip of the same name that ran from 1989 to 2005, focusing on nine Black women talking about their joys and struggles. The book also includes reflections from the author and memorabilia from the strip’s heyday. Brandon-Croft is the first Black woman cartoonist to achieve national syndication.

**Michael Boulware Moore ’84** is chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer at Blackbaud, a cloud computing provider that serves the social good community. Previously, he served as founding president and chief executive officer of the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina. He is also a Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress in South Carolina’s 1st district, running for the seat his great-great grandfather once held.

**Wanda Elizabeth Garraway ’88** earned a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Pennsylvania. She is founding principal of the Maurice Sendak Community School in Brooklyn, New York.

**Clothilde Ewing ’00** published her second children’s book, *Stella and the Mystery of the Missing Tooth* (Simon & Schuster, 2023), in March.

**Shanique Bonelli-Moore ’02** was named chief diversity and social impact officer at the Clorox Company in July 2022. Previously, she served as global head of inclusion at the United Talent Agency.

**London Ladd ’06** received the Communication Arts 2023 Award of Excellence for a *New York Times* editorial illustration, based on the novel *Perish* by Latoya Watkins.

**Travis Mason ’06** was named the first chief policy officer of Merlin, the leading developer of safe autonomous flight technology for fixed-wing aircraft. Mason comes to Merlin with more than 12 years of technology policy and regulatory experience, having worked with Fortune 100 companies and startups in aviation, health care, finance and sustainable energy. Before joining Merlin, he served as the vice president of certification and regulatory affairs at Airbus.

**Hervens Jeannis ’09** and his wife, Muriel, welcomed a baby boy, Asher Dean Jeannis, born June 12, 2022.



**Sadé Muhammad ’12** has been named chief marketing officer of Time, overseeing the brand’s integrated marketing, customer success, branded content and communications, as well as Time’s newly created impact division. Previously, she was vice president of the diversity and inclusion practice at Forbes.

# Michael Blackshear Honors His Father's Legacy by "Paying it Forward"

**A**s a Syracuse University undergraduate, Michael Blackshear '91 always wanted to study abroad. But the necessity of having to work part time during the school year and summer made that impossible. "Not having that experience has always been a regret," he says.

Last year, Blackshear created a \$100,000 scholarship endowment at the Martin J. Whitman School of Management to support future generations of underrepresented students and increase diversity in the field of finance and business. He hopes the scholarship funding will open opportunities for students that he couldn't realize himself.

The gift was a tribute to his father, the late Honorable Cornelius Blackshear, who died in 2021 and had instilled in him the concept of "paying it forward." Blackshear also recently created an endowment at Fordham Law School (which his dad attended and where he is an adjunct professor) in his father's name for \$100,000 to support future generations of underrepresented students and increase diversity in the field of law.

When Blackshear was a child, his father worked as a police officer, attending John Jay College, and later Fordham Law, at night. He became the first African American to be appointed as a U.S. trustee and was a distinguished bankruptcy judge for the Southern District of New York for more than 20 years. Those who knew Judge Blackshear well would say that he lived a life of service, purpose, conviction and passion.

"If it wasn't for my father, I wouldn't be where I am today," says Blackshear, chief compliance and privacy officer and head of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for Ryan Specialty. "My father gave me so much in my life but didn't want anything in return. What he expected was for me to give to others, pay it forward, be a servant leader and always lean into the storm. This is my way to honor him, but also my journey to grieve and mourn his passing."

Over 30 years, Blackshear has built a career in the field of compliance and risk management, mostly in the insurance industry. He joined his current company, Ryan Specialty, in 2019 and in summer 2022 added responsibilities as head of DEI, a new function within the company.

"I'm trying to operationalize an inclusive and belonging culture so that in five or six years, there will no longer be a need for this role. I am optimistic and leaning into the storm," he says.

*"If it wasn't for my father, I wouldn't be where I am today. My father gave me so much in my life but didn't want anything in return. What he expected was for me to give to others, pay it forward, be a servant leader and always lean into the storm. This is my way to honor him, but also my journey to grieve and mourn his passing."*

—MICHAEL BLACKSHEAR

One of his biggest areas of focus is education and awareness. "What I'm finding in the DEI space is that some people feel that the status quo is OK—that the world is supposed to be segregated and not integrated," he says. "We all sometimes gravitate to what we're comfortable with. Sometimes it takes meeting someone that looks and thinks differently from them to change that thinking."

Blackshear's passion comes from his own experiences. As a Syracuse University undergraduate, Blackshear was one of only two Black finance graduates in 1991. "Not only were there few peers of color, there were also very few professors of color that I could connect with or mentors or sponsors for me to engage with," he says. "I felt isolated in my chosen field of study."

As an alumnus, Blackshear has committed himself to changing the experience for current students. A longtime member of the Management Advisory Council at the Whitman School, he became an inaugural member of the Office of Multicultural





Michael Blackshear has created a scholarship endowment at the Whitman School of Management to support underrepresented students and increase diversity in the field of finance.

Advancement advisory Council in 2019 and in 2020, became a member of the Whitman Advisory Council, which supports the dean in his leadership of the business school.

“Through my involvement, I’m hoping to impact students’ perceptions of the possibilities and opportunities that exist for their own futures,” he says.

In 2021, Blackshear was voted to the Syracuse University Board of Trustees, where he’s hoping his viewpoint can make a wider institutional impact. He’s particularly concerned about the upcoming Supreme Court decision that may impact affirmative action policies at colleges and universities. “This decision may have a devastating direct impact when it comes to diverse enrollment, so it’s important for us to educate ourselves on the issues and have a strategy to mitigate any potential adverse decision,” he says.

In addition to his recent endowment at the Whitman School, Blackshear was involved, along with his fraternity brother Derrick Hostler ’88, in reinstating the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity’s Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund in 2017 to support future leaders at Syracuse University.

“I always hope that my story may inspire another. So, if you have taken the time to read this article, thank you,” he says. “For those that are looking for any takeaways—dream big, and if those dreams do not scare you, then you have not dreamt big enough. And if you are blessed to have fulfilled all of your dreams, please do not forget to turn around and help another fulfill theirs.”

# Shanel Bailey Lands Role on New Grease-inspired Television Series

In the new television series *Grease: Rise of the Pink Ladies*, Shanel Bailey '19 plays Hazel, a newcomer to Rydell High School. Bailey says acting the role didn't feel like much of a stretch when she arrived on the Vancouver, British Columbia, set a month into production.

"Because my character is a new student to school, she's not in the first couple episodes," Bailey says. "By the time I arrived, everyone else knew each other and the routine. I'm not sure I was acting so much as I was genuinely terrified," she jokes.

But it didn't take long for Bailey, a graduate of Syracuse University's B.F.A. musical theater program and a Broadway veteran, to settle in. Conceived as a prequel to the iconic 1978 movie *Grease*, the new television series is a musical production. "My favorite days on set were the big ensemble musical dance numbers," she says. "That felt like home."

Bailey came to the series straight from performing in *Book of Mormon* on Broadway. She was originally cast in the musical in July 2019, only two months after graduating from Syracuse University, performing as an on-stage swing and understudy to the principal character, Nabalungi. Nine months into her run,

COVID-19 hit, and Broadway shut down for more than a year.

Bailey was back home with her mom in Queens, New York, babysitting to make ends meet. When television productions restarted, she began auditioning for TV roles and landed episodes of *The Equalizer*, *The Good Fight* and *That Damn Michael Che*, before being invited back to *Book of Mormon* when rehearsals resumed in August 2021.

With COVID a continuing threat to Broadway, Bailey continued auditioning for TV roles, including *Rise of the Pink Ladies* in November 2021. One morning she awoke from a dream that she'd received a call back for a final audition, only to receive a message from her agent with that exact news. But there was no additional audition. They were calling to let her know she had the part of Hazel. Two months later, she was on a plane to Vancouver, where the series shot over seven months.

Bailey loved her time with *Book of Mormon* and had the opportunity to play the lead role nearly 20 times during her tenure. Working in television has stretched her skills in new ways. "It's an entirely different animal," she says. "Theater is very communal. The cast and crew are all working together from start to finish over a three-hour period. Television is done in short bursts over long days. You do your part and trust that it's all going to come together."

*Rise of the Pink Ladies* premiered on Paramount+ April 6. Aside from the song and dance, Bailey says it's a show about teenagers navigating social issues, relationships and the transition into adulthood. She describes her character as somewhat of an outsider. "She's not only new to school, but a young Black woman in the 1950s. She's smart, kind of a science nerd, but she's trying to stay under the radar and find her place," she says. "I think the show does a good job of acknowledging that life wasn't peachy keen for everyone without being preachy."

While waiting for the show to air, Bailey was back in New York performing in the Lynn Nottage play *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, where she also played a young woman in the 1950s. Her performance earned accolades from *The New York Times* and other reviewers.

Bailey has high hopes for *Pink Ladies*. "We're hopeful for a second season," she says.



Shanel Bailey on set



## Taylor Hamilton Named Luce Scholar

**T**aylor Hamilton G'18 has been named a 2023-24 Luce Scholar, becoming only the third Syracuse University student or alumnus to receive the prestigious fellowship.

The Luce Scholars, established by the Henry Luce Foundation, is a nationally competitive fellowship program that provides stipends, language training and individualized professional placement in Asia for 15 to 18 scholars each year.

Hamilton earned a master of public administration and a master of arts in international relations from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and completed a Certificate of Advanced Study in conflict resolution. She studied the regional geopolitics and economy of East Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the influence of non-state actors.

She is currently a management consultant, advising government agencies and social impact organizations on change management,

organizational design and operational transformation.

Hamilton is eager to begin her Luce placement. "A year in Asia with Luce will be transformative by providing me with a rare opportunity to work in Asia and contribute on equal footing with other professionals in the realm of urban studies, giving me a more holistic view of community development," she says. "Since the Luce Scholar program presents an opportunity for soft diplomacy, I would also like to share urban policy approaches that U.S. cities have found work to support their citizens, especially vulnerable communities, such as low-income households, Black and Hispanic households, refugee-led households, gender and sexual minorities and tribal communities."



Taylor Hamilton

## Alumni Honored with Maxwell Awards of Excellence



Deniece Laurent-Mantey

**D**eniece Laurent-Mantey '09 and Juan Carlos Izaguirre G'06, G'07 were honored by the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at the School's annual Awards of Excellence Ceremony on April 27.

Laurent-Mantey received the Compass Award, which honors early career alumni for exceptional impact within 15 years of graduating.

She previously served as the director for Africa at the White House National Security Council, where she led more than 18 government agencies to execute President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s L'68, H'09 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit last December.

The undertaking involved 49 African countries and their heads of state and thousands of visitors. The event yielded \$15 billion in trade and investment commitments and \$55 billion for advancing U.S.-Africa shared priorities. "It was a great experience putting all those pieces together to really deepen America's partnership with African nations," says Laurent-Mantey, who earned a bachelor's degree in international relations.

Laurent-Mantey began her State Department career in 2009 and served as a special assistant to Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry from 2012 to 2014. For the next five years, she was the acting deputy director for West Africa in the Bureau of African Affairs. It was during this time that she accompanied the assistant secretary for Africa to Liberia during the Ebola outbreak to visit treatment centers built by U.S. troops.

Her own trajectory, she says, was molded by the overall atmosphere at Maxwell. "It's a community of people who are just dedicated to doing good and helping each other succeed."

Izaguirre received the Charles V. Willie Advocate Award for his work advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility at Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the World Bank and as a leader of GLOBE, the bank's LGBT+ employee resource group.

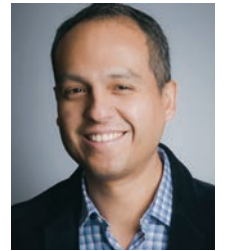
The LGBT+ community faces criminal charges or persecution in 70 countries, putting World Bank employees from that community in danger. "We try to make sure leaders are aware of any situation where the risk of the community is more severe," Izaguirre says, adding that raising awareness within the World Bank gives visibility to the lives of LGBT+ individuals in the regions the bank serves.

Izaguirre's efforts with GLOBE complement his expertise promoting consumer protections that enable the poor to safely save, borrow and buy insurance.

His first project with the World Bank in 2007 was a consumer protection pilot operating in two Eastern European countries. Over the following six years, he co-authored "Good Practices for Financial Consumer Protection" and expanded the program worldwide, including his native Peru.

As a senior financial sector specialist with CGAP, he helped shepherd the groundbreaking adoption of financial inclusion guidance for banking supervision that includes consumer protection. "Financial services are just a means to an end, and that end is better economic development, better economic opportunities, better resilience, especially for low-income customers," says Izaguirre, who earned both a master's in public administration and a master's in international relations from Maxwell.

Izaguirre attributes his ability to operate globally to his Maxwell experience, in which he lived in a community of international students, thrived on the variety of his coursework and studied abroad in Beijing. "Maxwell was a great experience at so many levels," he adds. "It really helped me navigate a range of issues that made me a much better person and professional."



Juan Carlos Izaguirre

## Remembering Carlmon Jones, Syracuse University's First Black Coach

In August 1970, Carlmon Jones G'74 integrated the Syracuse University football coaching staff when he was hired as offensive coordinator, news that made both *The New York Times* and *Jet* magazine. Jones was the first Black coach at Syracuse University in any sport and one of very few Black coaches in Division I football.

It was an unlikely appointment for a recent college graduate with no coaching experience, but the circumstances of Jones' hiring were anything but typical.

Four months earlier, a group of Black Syracuse football players boycotted the team over grievances with the program, becoming known as the Syracuse 8. After several meetings between the players and Chancellor John Corbally—facilitated by their faculty advisors John L. Johnson and Allen R. Sullivan G'66, G'70—Chancellor Corbally directed Coach Ben Schwartzwalder and Athletic Director James Decker to hire a Black coach.

By mid-June, Decker reported to the Chancellor that they couldn't find any qualified Black coaches. But the Chancellor had been prepped for such a response by Johnson and Sullivan. He told Decker, "If you really want to find a Black coach, you must go where they are: the HBCUs."

Schwartzwalder reached out to legendary Florida A&M football coach Jake Gaither and asked him to recommend a coach. Gaither suggested Jones, a tackle and captain of the 1969 FAMU Rattlers, who had just graduated. Schwartzwalder hired Jones as assistant freshman coach based solely on that recommendation.

But the Syracuse 8 were concerned that Jones had no coaching experience. The University paid the cost for player Dana "DJ" Harrell '71, G'73 and Sullivan to fly to Tallahassee, Florida, where they had been invited to Gaither's home to meet Jones.

More than 50 years later, Harrell vividly remembers the "teachable moment."

"We told Coach Gaither we thought an experienced coach would be better suited for what was sure to be a challenging, racially charged environment, and he stopped us right there," Harrell recalls.

"No experienced coach who is trying to build a career is going to stick his head into that mess up at Syracuse," Gaither told them. "What you need is a young man who will be willing to stick it out for two or three years in exchange for having a DI program like Syracuse on his resume, and what you get is integration now."

The message struck a chord. Jones came to Syracuse, and although Harrell never returned to the team to play for him, he remembers him as a fine man. Jones won the respect of not only the Syracuse 8, but also the white football players. In 2008, the Syracuse University Football Club awarded him its Zunic Award for his courage, character and commitment to Syracuse football.

After his first year, Jones assisted the varsity team from 1971-73, earning a master's degree in education in the process.



Carlmon Jones with his wife, Pamela

He returned to Florida, where he coached varsity football at Gibbs High School in St. Petersburg for several years, before moving into school administration in the Pinellas County School System. He had a 35-year career in education, serving as an assistant principal.

After he died Jan. 12, 2023, he was remembered warmly by former Syracuse players.

"Carlmon was a man of utmost integrity [who] knowingly came into a very difficult situation, which he handled with dignity, class and maturity well beyond his years," says Paul Paolisso '70.

"Coach Jones added an element of fun to every practice, always ready with a wonderful smile, and it was a pleasure to have had him be a part of my life at Syracuse," adds Karl Lombel '72.

Jones' son, Carlmon, says his father was extremely appreciative to both Gaither for recommending him and to Schwartzwalder for the opportunity at Syracuse. He credits his dad for getting him involved in football at a young age, helping him secure a football scholarship to North Carolina Central University and inspiring his own career as a school principal.

Jones was a life member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the National Rattler F-Club and the Florida A & M University Sports Hall of Fame. He was a member of Traveler's Rest Missionary Baptist Church in St. Petersburg.

He is survived by his wife, Pamela Robinson Jones; son, Carlmon Justin Jones; daughter, Phaedra Jones Best; grandson, Jayden Best; and a host of other relatives and friends.



# IN MEMORIAM

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES



**Jim Brown '57**, of Los Angeles, California, died May 18, 2023. Considered one of the greatest athletes of all time, Brown was also well known as an activist, actor and community leader.

Brown was born on St. Simons Island, Georgia, and grew up in Manhasset, Long Island. A standout high school athlete across multiple sports, he was recruited to Syracuse University to play lacrosse.

At Syracuse, Brown was a four-sport letterwinner in football, lacrosse, basketball and track and field. During his senior football season, he was a unanimous All-American and finished fifth in Heisman Trophy voting. That year, he set the SU record for highest rush average in a season (6.2), most rushing touchdowns in a game (6) and most points scored in a game (43). He ran for 986 yards—third-most in the country despite Syracuse playing only eight games—and scored 14 touchdowns. His career at Syracuse started the legacy of the number 44.

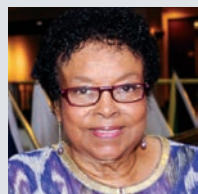
A two-time lacrosse All-American, Brown was the nation's second leading scorer as a senior (43 goals in 10 games). As a sophomore, he was the second-leading scorer for the basketball team and earned a letter on the track team. In 1955, he finished in fifth place in the National Championship decathlon.

In 1957, the Cleveland Browns selected Brown with the sixth overall pick in the National Football League Draft. During his nine-year NFL career, Brown earned NFL Rookie of the Year honors, was a two-time league MVP and was selected for the Pro Bowl in every season. The Browns retired his number 32 jersey.

Following his football career, Brown pursued acting and broadcasting, and was social activist. He appeared in several films throughout the late 1960s and 70s and served as an analyst in football and boxing. In 1988, he founded the Amer-I-Can Program, which focuses on working with at-risk and high-risk youth in underserved schools and juvenile detention facilities and has had a significant impact with adult incarceration and reentry programs.

Brown is survived by his wife, Monique; their children, Aris and Morgan; his daughter, Kim; and his sons, Kevin and James Jr.

*News of Brown's death came as this magazine was going to press. More coverage of his life and legacy will be included in our next issue.*



**Roslyn Pope G'74**, of Arlington, Texas, died Jan. 18, 2023.

Pope is best known for writing "An Appeal for Human Rights" while a senior at Spelman College, a manifesto that was published in three Atlanta newspapers and later was reprinted in *The New York Times*,

*The Nation* and *The Harvard Crimson*. New York Sen. Jacob K. Javits had it read into the Congressional Record.

"Every normal being wants to walk the earth with dignity and abhors any and all proscriptions placed upon him because of race or color," Pope write. "In essence, this is the meaning of the sit-down protests that are sweeping this nation today."

Pope was born in Atlanta and excelled both musically and academically from an early age, performing as a pianist with the Atlanta Symphony while in high school.

At Spelman, Pope was president of her class all four years. After her junior year, she was awarded the Merrill Scholarship, which funded students to go anywhere of their choosing to participate in the study of their choice. Pope went to Paris to study under Nadia Boulanger, the renowned French music teacher and conductor who taught many of the leading musicians and composers of the 20th century.

In Paris, Pope experienced feeling like an equal human being for the first time and returned with a new-found determination to fight discrimination. She was among the founders of the Atlanta Student Movement that staged lunch counter protests and in 1960, she penned her famous Appeal.

Pope graduated from Spelman in 1961 with a major in music and minors in English and French. She continued her education at Georgia State University, where she earned a master's in English. She was later awarded a grant to attend Syracuse University and earned a doctorate in humanities.

Pope accepted a faculty position at Penn State University, where she taught in the Department of Religious Studies and was head of the music department. In 1976, she relocated to Dallas, where she became chairperson of the humanities department at historically Black Bishop College. She retired from teaching in the early 1980s after accepting a position in advertising with Southwestern Bell, where she excelled in sales and remained for 20 years until retirement.

Pope is survived by her daughters, Rhonda and Donna Walker; her brother, Webster R. Pope; grandchildren; and other relatives.



**Walter Broadnax G'75**, of Jamesville, New York, died Dec. 2, 2022. He was Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Public Administration and International Affairs in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and a Life Trustee of Syracuse University.

Born in Star City, Arkansas, Broadnax grew up in Hoisington, Kansas. He earned a bachelor's degree from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, a master's degree from the University of Kansas and a Ph.D. in political science from Syracuse University.

Throughout his career, Broadnax alternated between executive jobs in public service and teaching and administrative positions in some of America's finest institutions of higher education, shaping a career that led him to be considered one of America's most respected scholar-practitioners in the field of public policy and management. He served as deputy assistant secretary for what was then the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare during the Carter administration and as deputy secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services during the Clinton administration; president of the Center for Governmental Research Inc. in Rochester, New York; president of the New York State Civil Service Commission; and director of Children, Youth and Adult Services for the state of Kansas.

Before joining the Syracuse University faculty in 2008, Broadnax's academic posts included serving as professor of public policy and management in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Maryland, where he directed the Bureau of Governmental Research; dean of the School of Public Affairs at American University in Washington, D.C.; and president of Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, a position he held for six years.

"As a teacher, scholar and lifelong public servant, Walter has always been an inspiration," says Maxwell School Dean David M. Van Slyke. "Walter's humility, intellect and commitment to making a positive difference could be seen in the magnanimous ways he interacted with people from all walks and stations in life and treated them with dignity, respect and compassion."

Broadnax was elected to the Syracuse University Board of Trustees in 1999. In 2001, he received the George Arents Award, the University's highest alumni honor, for excellence in public service. After his retirement in 2017, he and his wife, Angel, established an endowment fund to provide scholarship and financial assistance to a graduate student or students at the Maxwell School.

Broadnax is survived by his wife, Angel; his daughter, Andrea A. Broadnax-Green; and several nieces and nephews.

Those who wish to contribute to Broadnax's memory may give to the Walter D. and Angel W. Broadnax Endowed Scholarship Fund at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.



**Harlan London G'76**, of Syracuse, died Dec. 19, 2022.

London was a teaching faculty member at Syracuse University for 24 years and a former chair of the Department of Child and Family Studies in the College of Human Development (now the David B. Falk

College of Sport and Human Dynamics). He worked with his wife, Arcenia Phillips London G'72, G'75, a Syracuse city school teacher, on instructing teachers how to teach with an emphasis on diversity. When he retired in 2006, London was advisor to the University's vice chancellor and provost on diversity in the curriculum.

A native of Ethel, Arkansas, London was an active member of the choir in high school, which led to a music scholarship to attend Philander Smith College (PSC), a historically Black college in Little Rock, Arkansas. There, he sang with the internationally renowned PSC choir.

Before moving to Syracuse in 1961, London earned a bachelor's degree in social science at PSC, a bachelor of divinity degree at Gammon Seminary in Atlanta, and a master's degree in counseling at Boston University. He earned a Ph.D. in social science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

London was a skilled researcher and a respected scholar who loved teaching undergraduate students above all other work. His research and publications focused on urbanization, family structure, social class, ethnicity and education. He maintained affiliation and leadership in national organizations of family

studies over a span of his career. He was also a leader in the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity's mentoring program for high school male students as they transition to college.

"He was a gentle giant who taught some of the early courses on diverse family systems," says Jaipaul Roopnarine, Pearl S. Falk Professor of Human Development and Family Science who worked with London as a young faculty member. "Above all, he was a very kind and caring person who always displayed humility and compassion."

London and his family belonged to Rockefeller United Methodist Church for more than 50 years. He returned to singing Negro spirituals after retirement and was a frequent soloist at many churches across the Syracuse community.

London was predeceased by his wife, Arcenia; brothers Ernest, Marian, Robert Jr. and Marvin; sister, Rosemary; and son, Doran. He is survived by his children, Judy London Palmer and David Harlan London; his grandchildren, David Palmer and Jaren Palmer; his siblings, Dorothy London Ross and Mel London; and other family.



**Derek M. Terrell '94**, of New York City, died Dec. 1, 2022.

Terrell graduated from Bayard Rustin High School for the Humanities in New York City and attended SUNY Morrisville before Syracuse University.

A member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., he was known for his infectious personality, laughter and enthusiasm for life. He worked as a paralegal aide for the New York City Police Department and was presented with an NYPD flag at his memorial service.

Terrell is survived by his wife, Nina; and daughters Laila and Olivia.



**Dorcas MacDonald**, of Syracuse, died May 7, 2022.

MacDonald was born in Newport News, Virginia. She attended Hampton University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in music teacher education and met her husband, David MacDonald, whom she married in 1967.

They attended graduate school at the University of Michigan where Dorcas earned a master's degree in library information science while David earned an M.F.A. in ceramics. They both joined Syracuse University in 1971, Dorcas as a librarian and David on the art faculty.

Dorcas retired from Syracuse University in 2012 and was named librarian emerita. A longtime quilter, she began taking on a small number of consignments each year. She was also active in her church and volunteered with several community programs.

She is survived by her husband, David; her children, Joseph, Jennifer and Jeffrey; grandchildren Kharee, Joseph and Diego; siblings Timothy, Robin, Hazel and David; and many nieces and nephews.





Kenia Santana '23, member of Sigma Lambda Upsilon Señoritas Latinas Unidas Sorority Inc.



**Office of Multicultural Advancement**

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# CBT 2024 September 12-15, 2024 SAVE THE DATE

