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# Syracuse Manuscript

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S BLACK AND LATINO ALUMNI MAGAZINE

## Rhapsody in Gold

Delta Sigma Theta Inc. chapter celebrates 50 years,  
\$1.2m scholarship endowment





Debra Wallace '80 and Imani Wallace '16, mother-daughter members of Delta Sigma Theta Inc., enjoying the 50th anniversary weekend

# Syracuse Manuscript

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**On the Cover:** Shawn Outler '89, Syracuse University Trustees Gisele Marcus '89 and Sharon Barner '79, and Fatimah Moody '90 celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Kappa Lambda chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

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Rachel Vassel '91, G'21

## Hello Orange Family,

As we close out another tremendous year, the word *joy* is in my heart and on my mind. According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the definition of *joy* is a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. It comes from the Latin word for *rejoice* and is a universal emotion that everyone understands. It fuels us and lifts us up. Joy is what is found when our Orange community comes together, particularly when we are in service to others.

Some moments of joy that our team experienced over the past six months have included:

- **The OTHC Year-End Ceremony and Commencement 2023** — We're always excited to celebrate the accomplishments of our students (and their families)! The Scholars' academic achievements, speeches, plans for graduate study and job announcements made us proud.
- **CBT Martha's Vineyard** — The Vineyard is always a great time! We hosted an alumni reception, a screening and panel discussion and an ACC mixer in our happy place. A few of our friends at Harvard and Duke came along this time.
- **DST Weekend Celebrating Kappa Lambda Chapter's 50th** — In addition to the cute gift boxes, the Hall of Languages lit up in red and a glamorous golden gala, the \$1.2 million benefitting Our Time Has Come was a tremendous milestone. We enjoyed seeing sisterhood in action!
- **Awarding Fall 2023 OTHC Scholarships** — Every year your gifts benefit a new crop of OTHC Scholars about to embark on the support, camaraderie and connections that they'll experience throughout the academic year. Reducing student debt is one of the most joyful things that we do each year.

Don't get me wrong: 2023 has not been an easy year by any means. We faced many challenges, individually and collectively, and in some ways it feels like the world around us is falling apart. But despite what we see and experience, we can always find joy when in good company. I am grateful for each of you and the many ways that you bring joy to our beloved alma mater, our Orange community and current students. Your dedication and generosity help us to make this very special place on the Hill better for the next generation.

With CBT on the horizon (registration and hotel blocks open in the spring), a lot of joy is waiting for you here on campus in September 2024. Our CBT co-chairs, Tara Favors '95 and Sammy Cueva '93, along with our dedicated team, are working hard to ensure that it's the best CBT yet. Don't miss it. We cannot wait to sprinkle a little joy on you!

With Orange Love (and Joy),

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

Jim Brown with his son, Aris, and wife, Monique



# A LEGEND AMONG MEN

## Remembering the Life and Legacy of Jim Brown

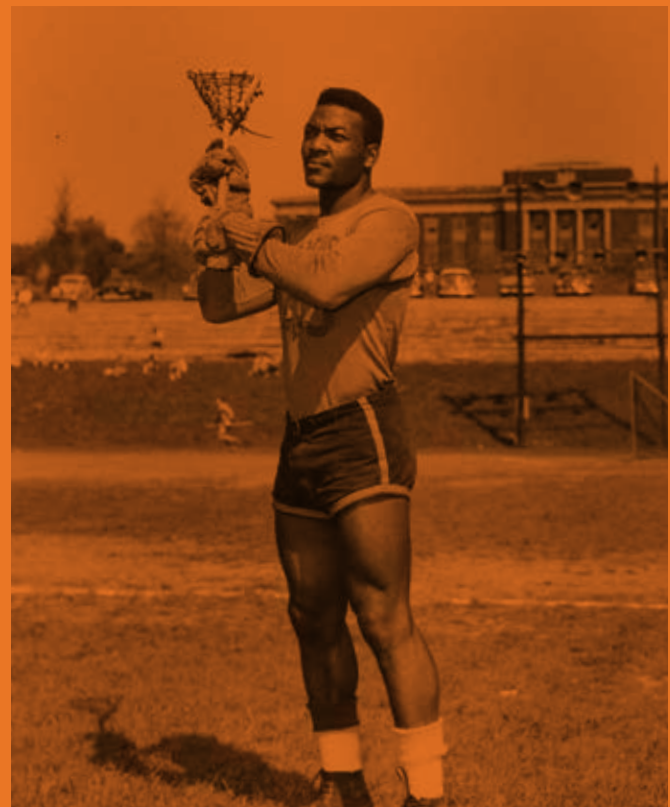
**O**n a warm spring day in 1957, Jim Brown '57 competed in a track meet against Colgate University, winning the high jump and javelin competitions and coming in second in the discus, allowing the Orange to win the meet. Then he ran over to Archbold field, put on his lacrosse jersey and, still wearing his track shorts, led an 8-6 Orange lacrosse victory over Army, securing an undefeated season.

Brown is unquestionably one of the greatest athletes who ever lived. But when he died in May, he was lauded for a legacy that transcends sport: as a social justice pioneer, an actor and as an advocate for Black enterprise.

"To the world he was an activist, actor and football star," his wife Monique said in announcing Brown's passing. "To our family he was a loving and wonderful husband, father and grandfather. Our hearts are broken."

Brown's legacy is forever bound to Syracuse University, where his No. 44 holds legendary status, the first number retired by the University (also honoring Ernie Davis '61 and Floyd Little '67, H'16), which also uses the digits in its phone number prefix and zip code.

"I remember my dad making me watch his highlights as a kid so I could appreciate his greatness," says Syracuse Football Head Coach Dino Babers. "He was the best of the best and will be forever remembered as a Syracuse legend and the best of all time."



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, SCRC, SU LIBRARIES

**B**rown was born on St. Simons Island, Georgia, a barrier island that centuries earlier received hundreds of slaves arriving from Africa. Brown's mother worked as a domestic. His father was a boxer and semi-pro football player who left shortly after Brown was born. As a young child, he was raised for many years by his grandmother, but moved to Manhasset, Long Island, where his mother was working, when he was 8.

Moving from a Southern, predominantly Black community to a Northern, mostly white town, was undoubtedly a major change, but Brown had a special asset: He was an athletic prodigy. Whatever sport he took up, he became the best.

He excelled at football, basketball, track and lacrosse, a sport popular in the Northeast due to its Native American origins. At Manhasset High School, where he was elected student government president, he earned 13 varsity letters. During his senior year, he was all-state in football, averaging 14.9 yards per carry as a halfback and linebacker. In basketball, he averaged 38 points per game as a shooting forward. According to biographer Dave Zirin, Brown was also good enough on the baseball diamond to catch the eye of the New York Yankees, who offered him a minor league contract.

But Brown had his heart set on playing college football. Despite the fact that he was Black and it was the 1950s, he was approached by some 40 colleges. His high school coach was pushing for Ohio State. But another important mentor, local attorney Kenneth Molloy '42, G'47, who had played lacrosse for Syracuse, was after Brown to attend his alma mater.

Brown chose Syracuse. Believing he was a football scholarship recipient, the 17-year-old arrived at Syracuse in 1953 to begin his University career. In reality, a scholarship did not exist. Partly because of his skin color, SU wanted to try him out first. Without Brown's knowledge, Molloy decided to fund Brown's first year of college. "Coming from a small town where everyone knew and loved Jim, I passed the hat," Molloy told the *Syracuse University Magazine* in 1996. "However, that only met half the requirement, so I picked up the rest."

Brown more than lived up to expectations and got his scholarship sophomore year and beyond. By the time he graduated, he cemented his athletic legacy at Syracuse with an unprecedented 10 varsity letters: three in football, three in lacrosse, two in basketball and two in track. In those days, first-year students were not eligible to play varsity, so he accumulated those 10 letters in just three years of participation.

On the football field, Brown was a running back and placekicker, setting standards by which all future Syracuse



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, SCRC, SU LIBRARIES

Brown watches game film with coaches Roy Simmons Sr. '26 (left) and Ben Scharzwald (seated).



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, SCRC, SU LIBRARIES



Brown's No. 44, later worn by greats Ernie Davis and Floyd Little, was the first to be retired by Syracuse University.

players would be measured. As a senior in 1956, he was a unanimous All-American and finished fifth in Heisman Trophy voting. That season he set the Syracuse 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. In the Cotton Bowl, he rushed for 132 yards, scored three touchdowns and kicked three extra points.

Brown was also named first team All-American in lacrosse, one of only five Black players to earn the D-I honor between 1957 and 1996. Brown was so dominant in the sport that his performance actually spurred a rule change, requiring players to keep their stick in constant motion while carrying the ball instead of simply holding it close to their bodies, known informally as the "Jim Brown rule."

He led Syracuse to an undefeated season in 1957, finishing second in the nation in scoring. Brown scored five goals in one half against the nation's top players that year in the North/South All-Star game.

"You couldn't stop him," longtime Syracuse lacrosse coach Roy Simmons Sr. told CBS in 1991. "He weighed 229. He could run as fast as he had to run to get the job done. Durable. Never got hurt. He was just the greatest."

Brown played basketball for two seasons, as a sophomore and junior, playing on the same team as his roommate, Vincent H. Cohen Sr. '57, L'60, and Emanuel "Manny" Breland '57, averaging 13.1 points per game for the Orange and earning a reputation as a ferocious rebounder. In one game, against Sampson Air Force Base, Brown scored 33 points despite not starting.

Brown also made his mark in track and field at Syracuse. He competed in a variety of events, including the high jump, javelin and discus. He finished fifth in the decathlon at the 1954 National AAU meet.

**B**rown was instrumental in recruiting other talented Black athletes to Syracuse, most notably Little, Davis and John Brown '62.

"I think it was important for him to see other Black athletes come," John Brown said. "I went back to school and bragged about meeting and being taken around by Jim."

This was the 1950s and there were only a small number of Black students on campus. When Jim Brown first got to campus, he was invited, along with other members of the freshman football team, to a meeting at the home of the athletic director. Brown was the only Black player on the team, and when he knocked on the front door, the woman who answered let it be known that he wasn't welcome through the front door.

It wasn't the first indignity he would face. Like other Black athletes of his era, Brown was explicitly directed by the athletic staff not to fraternize with white female students. But Brown had decided early on that he would not allow himself to be treated as a second-class citizen. He reportedly quit the basketball team because of an unofficial rule at the time that only two Black players would be on the court at once. (When Brown started the team, Breland was out with an injury, so Brown was a starter. As the non-scholarship player, Brown would be the alternate once Breland was back.) Brown was regularly subjected to racial epithets during football games on the road, and when the team traveled to Dallas for the 1957 Cotton Bowl, Brown required protection from the FBI because of racial threats.

In addition to his athletic pursuits, Brown was a member of ROTC at Syracuse. When he graduated from Syracuse with honors as a Class Marshal in 1957, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Army ROTC program. He continued his military training commitment at Fort Benning, Georgia, as an Army Reserve officer and served for four more years, when he was honorably discharged from the Army Reserve with the rank of captain.

That military service was concurrent with the beginning of his

professional football career. 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 Rookie of the Year honors, was a two-time league MVP and was selected for the Pro Bowl in every season. In 1964, the Browns won the NFL championship.

At Cleveland, Brown would serve as a mentor once again for former Syracuse teammates John Brown and Ernie Davis. "When I first got to the Browns, Jim took us aside and said, 'You guys are businessmen,'" John Brown said. "So, he took me downtown to a clothing store to get fitted for suits. He told us to carry an attaché case so we looked professional."

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, SCRC, SU LIBRARIES

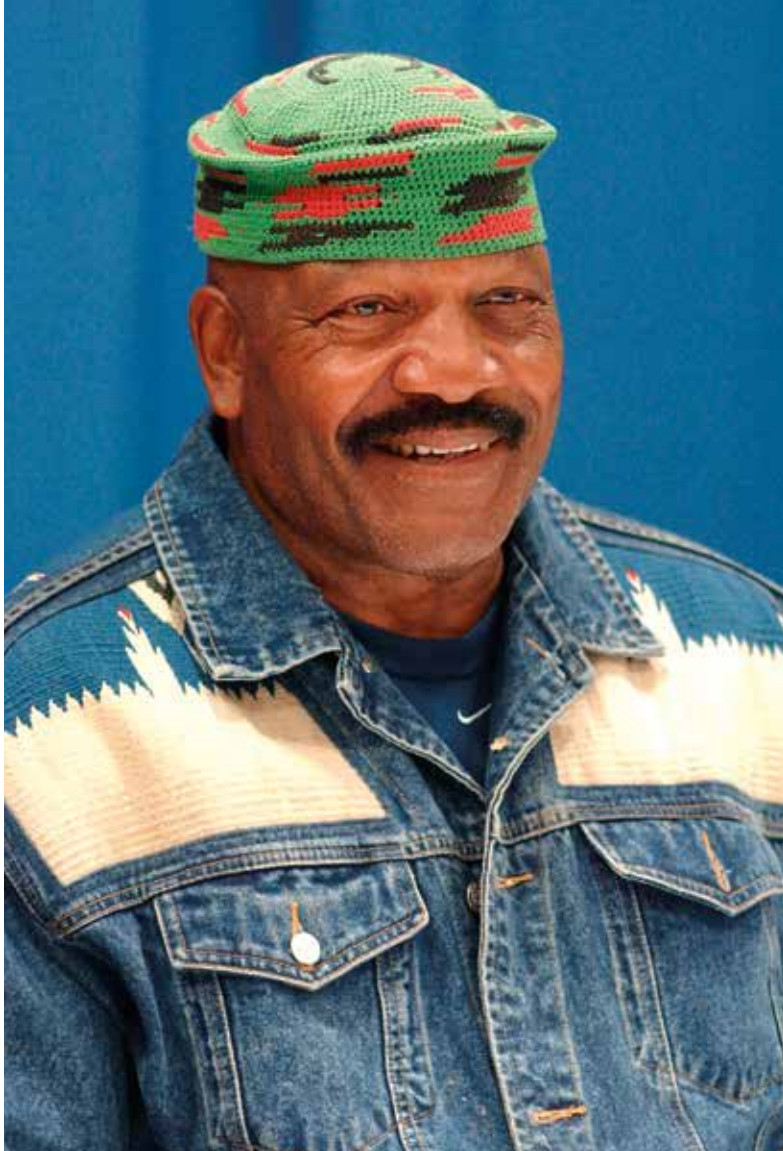


Brown with Marie Fleming, mother of Ernie Davis, Floyd Little, Robert Konrad, Jr. '02 and Michael Owens '09 at the retirement ceremony for the No. 44

In 1964, Brown was asked to appear in his first film *Rio Conchos*, which he filmed during the off-season, playing a Union soldier. But the filming interfered with training camp. Following a disagreement with Browns owner Art Modell, Brown retired at age 30 having set records in single-season rushing, career rushing, rushing touchdowns, total touchdowns and all-purpose yards. He was also the first player to ever reach the 100-rushing-touchdowns milestone. The Browns later retired his No. 32 jersey.

"I had played all of the football I wanted to and was ready to move on," Brown told the *Syracuse University Magazine*. "I was prepared to take the step because I had one film under my belt and I was doing another one when I retired. Besides, there was more money in acting."

Brown, who Gloria Steinem once called "the Black John Wayne,"



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, SCPC, SU LIBRARIES



Top right, Brown speaking at a dinner honoring Melvin A. Eggers' 20th year as chancellor of Syracuse University in 1991. Bottom right, Brown participating in a CBT Athletes Roundtable with other former Syracuse University athletes

would amass more than 50 movie and TV credits during his acting career, primarily in the 1960s, including *The Dirty Dozen*, *100 Rifles*, *Three the Hard Way* and *The Running Man*. He also became involved in the civil rights movement, aligned with activists such as Malcolm X. "My fight was and is to get racism and inequality off the backs of others," he said at the time. "I will complain strongly about the mistreatment of minorities in this country and the inequities that a lot of people suffer. If you are a healthy country, you can't accept racism, lack of opportunity and the status quo. You have to speak out and fight against it in every way you can."

Brown continued to use his fame as a platform for issues he believed in, becoming a forerunner for athletes involved in social initiatives. In June 1967, Brown organized The Cleveland Summit, a meeting of the nation's top Black athletes, including Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor—who later became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar—to support boxer Muhammad Ali's fight against serving in Vietnam.

In Brown's third career, he began working to curb gang violence in Los Angeles. In 1988, he founded the Amer-I-Can Foundation for Social Change, an organization created to provide life management skills training to young Black men on the street and behind bars. Believing that the socio-economic programs plaguing the nation could all be traced to lack of self-esteem and life skills

development, Brown's organization created a life skills curriculum to emphasize the importance of motivation, attitudes and habits, goal setting, emotional control, family relationships and financial stability, among others. Today, the foundation is led by Brown's wife, Monique, who has been actively involved in the organization for more than 25 years.

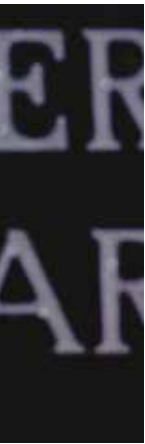
For nearly two decades after Brown graduated from Syracuse University, he didn't look back. That began to change in 1980, when he returned to campus to receive the LetterWinner of Distinction Award. He also met Larry Martin, a Syracuse University development officer who was charged with cultivating alumni on the West Coast.

Martin began reaching out to Brown when he visited Los Angeles and the two developed a relationship.

A few years later, Robert Hill was leading Syracuse University's Office of Program Development (now Office of Multicultural Advancement) and was in the process of creating the first reunion for the University's Black and Latino alumni. He wanted the buy-in of some prominent alumni to create buzz and asked Martin to make an introduction.

Brown hosted a group at his Hollywood Hills home, which





included alumni Floyd Little, John Mackey '63 and others. While most of the alumni embraced the idea, Brown was less receptive. "Jim is a debater. He likes to debate people, and he and Robert got into a very intense discussion," Martin recalls. "It was like two gladiators doing battle. I think Jim was trying to see if Robert really believed what he was selling or if he was just a talking head for the University."

Hill says Brown told him, "I don't need to come back for a party. If you want me to come back, give me something meaningful to do."

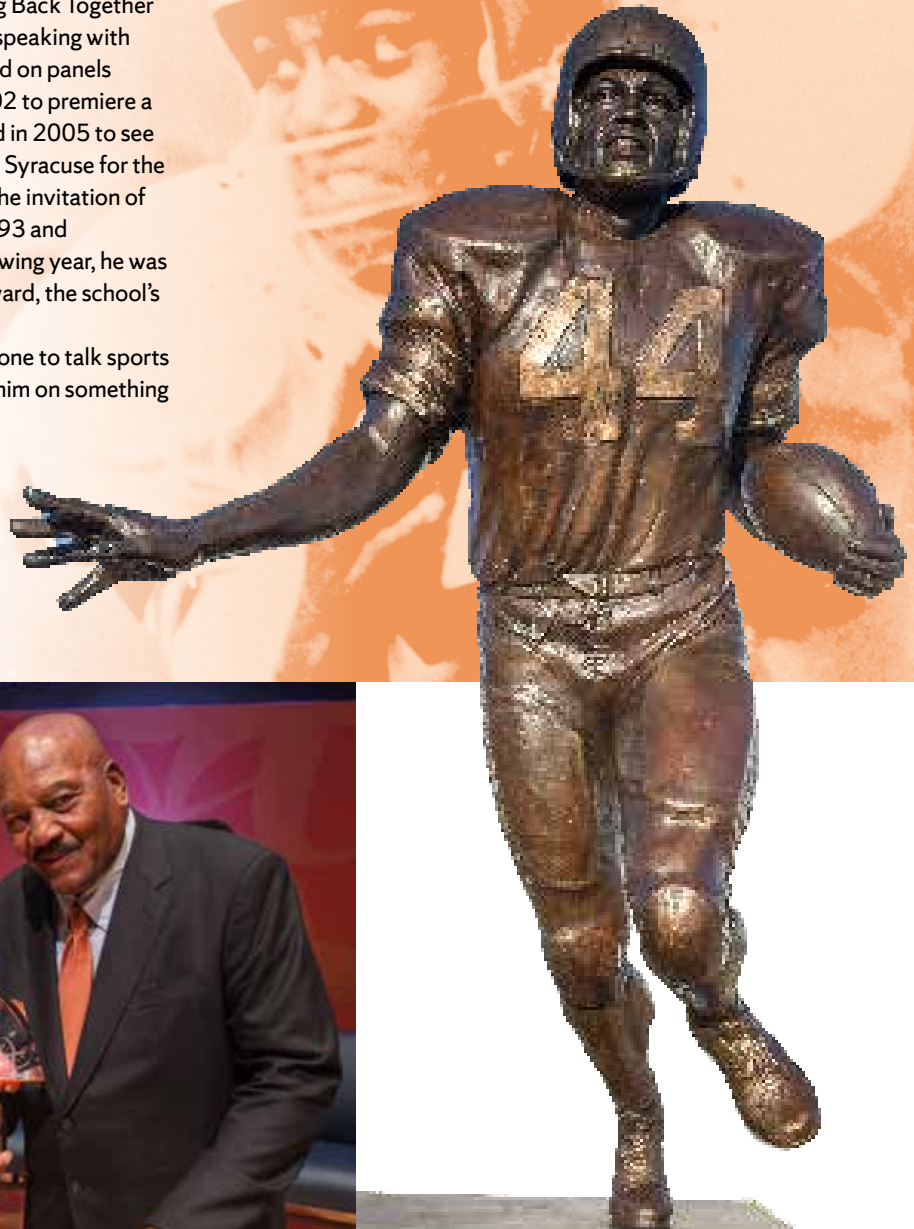
And while Brown didn't attend the first Coming Back Together reunion, he participated in subsequent reunions, speaking with student athletes about their unique challenges and on panels regarding social justice. He was on campus in 2002 to premiere a documentary on his life directed by Spike Lee and in 2005 to see his jersey number retired. In 2015, he returned to Syracuse for the World Indoor Lacrosse Championship games at the invitation of his former lacrosse teammate Oren Lyons '58, H'93 and introduced Lyons at the opening dinner. The following year, he was back on campus to receive the George Arents Award, the school's highest alumni honor.

"Jim was very loyal," recalls Martin. "He wasn't one to talk sports highlights or sign autographs, but if you engaged him on something substantive, he was all in."

Brown is the only man enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame (1995), National Lacrosse Hall of Fame (1984) and the Professional Football Hall of Fame (1971), where he was inducted in his first year of eligibility. In 2016, he was in the inaugural class inducted into the ROTC Hall of Fame.

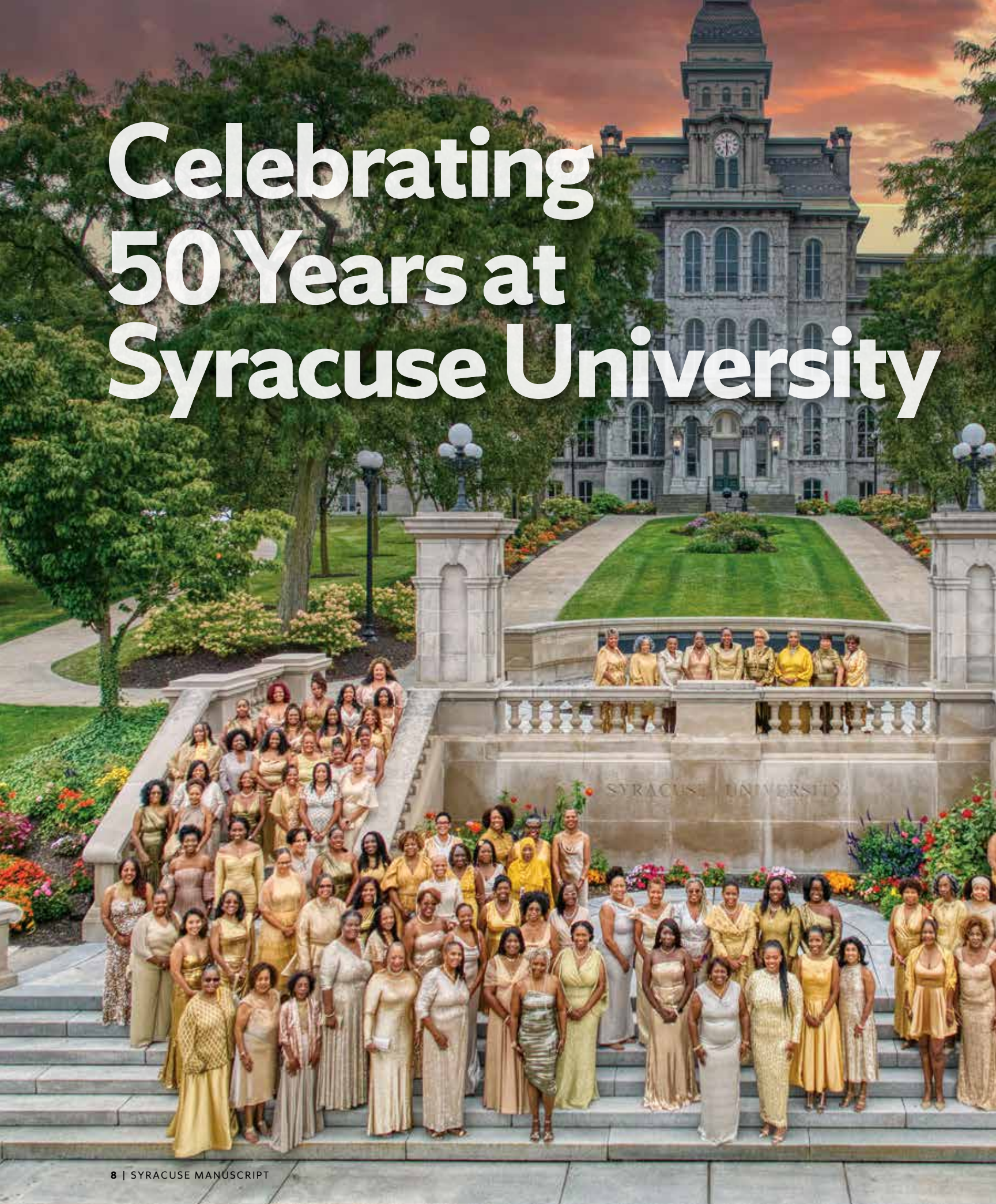
At Syracuse University a nine-foot bronze likeness of Brown anchors Plaza 44, outside the Ensley Athletic Complex, which also includes statues of Davis and Little, legendary figures in their own right who would likely not have come to Syracuse had it not been for the first, as well as Coach Ben Schwartzwalder.

"That guy across from me is human, and so am I," Brown once explained of his competitive nature. "He'll never out-work me. He'll never out-think me. And if you can't out-work me, and you can't out-think me, you'll never beat me."



Brown receives congratulations from Peter W. Yenawine '69 on his Arents Award.

# Celebrating 50 Years at Syracuse University





## Members of the Kappa Lambda chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Inc. create a historic \$1.2 million scholarship endowment to mark the occasion

**D**eborah Walls Foster '75 vividly remembers the day her mother brought her to Syracuse University as a first-year student in 1971. "We were there for hours before I saw another Black student," she says. "My mother was having second thoughts about leaving me there."

But, while Foster was sitting in the cafeteria, along came Gayle Hooker '76. The two became instant friends and decided to room together. "There were maybe 750 Black students out of about 15,000, so it was daunting to find community," recalls Hooker.

In 1973, the two were among 21 Black undergraduates who came together to become charter members of the Kappa Lambda chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., establishing the only Black sorority on campus at the time and becoming known as the chapter's 21 Black Pearls.

Over the next five decades, more than 400 women joined the chapter in 35 membership lines, creating a legacy of leadership, philanthropy and service that continues today. In September, more than 200 of those women came back to Syracuse University to celebrate the chapter's 50-year anniversary. At the same time, they marked a monumental achievement: the culmination of a 10-year fundraising effort that raised \$1.2 million to support underrepresented students at Syracuse University.

The accomplishment is not surprising to anyone who knows the women involved. "Kappa Lambda isn't an ordinary chapter, but one that consistently pushes boundaries and breaks glass ceilings year after year," says Natasha Benjamin '11, who was initiated in 2010. "Kappa Lambda is a Syracuse University Hilton Cup recipient and the first National Panhellenic Council Sorority to receive the Chancellor's Cup. The women who have come through the chapter hold positions at the highest level within the nation's top higher education institutions; are CEOs, CMOs, CFOs and COOs; and have achieved notable firsts within their respective roles."

**D**elta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. was founded in 1913 by 22 young women studying at Howard University who sought to create an organization rooted in sisterhood, scholarship, service and social action.

The sorority's first act of service was participating in the Woman Suffrage Procession of 1913. The 22 founders wanted to provide Black representation at a critical time when women's rights were evolving.

In its first decade, the organization worked to expand nationally. In 1920, Past National President Sadie Tanner Mossell journeyed to Syracuse University to charter the organization's seventh chapter, Eta chapter.

One of the original Eta chapter's most notable alumnae was Helen Holt Williams '31. A social worker in New York City for many years, she was among Syracuse University's oldest living graduates when she died in 2010, just two months shy of her 100th birthday. Williams was a donor to the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship and in 1995 received a Chancellor's Citation from then-Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw, who recognized the racial barriers she had to overcome in earning her bachelor's degree.

Due to a lack of Black student enrollment and the harsh racial climate of the time, Eta chapter was eventually dissolved and reestablished years later at Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, Georgia.

In 1973, members of the local Syracuse alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Inc. approached Robin Jacobs-Yanthis '75 about recruiting young women to attend an informational meeting to bring a chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Inc. back to the Syracuse University campus. One of those was Rosalyn Allman-Manning '75, who came to Syracuse from New York City.

Aside from being Black collegians, Allman-Manning says the other thing the charter members had in common was that they were all service minded. "I was raised in the church, as were many others. A few had been Girl Scouts. Others had been members of Jack and Jill," she says. "We all had an interest in giving back to the community."



OTHC Scholar Iyanu Addoba '23, Hailey Williams '23, OTHC Scholar Dayel Pope '23 and Mercedes Tucker '24

The chapter's first service project was establishing a Girl Scout troop for young Black girls in Syracuse, and it later held information drives about sickle cell anemia. Through the decades, chapter service projects would include collecting books for the Onondaga County Justice Center, after-school programs at the Dunbar Center, hosting the annual Total Women Retreat, producing workshops to fight domestic violence, holding the annual Jabberwock Talent Showcase and more.

By the time Candice Carnage '90 came to Syracuse University in the 1980s, Kappa Lambda women were a well-established force on campus. "I'd heard about Delta Sigma Theta before I came to Syracuse, but when I saw the dynamic women on campus

representing Delta, I knew I needed to be a part of that," says Carnage, who became a member of Kappa Lambda's 15th line in 1988.

Growing up in Hartford, Connecticut, Chanee Fabius '09 says the Delta Sigma Theta alumnae in her area were leaders in the community. It was only natural for her to seek the group out when she came to Syracuse University. "They aligned with my values," she says. "Kappa Lambda is a chapter of brilliant leaders serious about serving the Syracuse and broader communities. Members of Delta Sigma Theta sit at all kinds of tables and are always leading the charge to impact wherever we are for the better."

Sonia Issa '24, the current chapter president who was initiated last spring, wanted to be part of that rich history of empowering Black women and unwavering commitment to community service. "Delta Sigma Theta's mission aligns perfectly with my personal values, and I knew I wanted to be a part of that legacy," she says.

It was those values that spawned the chapter's historic fundraising campaign.

It all started back in 2013, when Delta Sigma Theta became the first Black Greek organization at Syracuse to create an OTHC endowment fund, setting a goal to raise \$100,000 by CBT 2014.

When the group came close to meeting that goal, sorority member Gisele Marcus '89 started crunching numbers and challenged her sorority sisters to raise \$1 million to commemorate the chapter's 50th anniversary. "It was a smarter investment vehicle than making an annual scholarship gift each year and then starting over from scratch the next year," said Marcus at the time. "We wanted to leave a legacy."

Over 10 years, the group exceeded that goal, raising \$1.2 million toward its OTHC endowment fund. "I am thrilled that our sorority has reached this important milestone," says Marcus, now a member of the Syracuse University Board of Trustees. "This endowment is part of our long tradition of service at Syracuse University and will ensure investment in the next generation of students."

The unprecedented gift is the collective effort of a predominantly Black female donor base—more than 66% of living Kappa Lambda members contributed to the fund. The sorority's campaign created 108 new donors to the University; 48 members were added to The Hill Society, which recognizes individuals contributing at least \$2,500 annually.

"We are incredibly proud of these dedicated alumnae for this extraordinary achievement," says Syracuse University Chief Advancement Officer Tracy Barlok. "This endowment will make the Syracuse University experience possible for future generations of students."

Sorority members are deservedly proud of their trailblazing achievement and traveled to campus from across the country for a weekend of festivities, held Sept. 22-24.

The celebration, co-chaired by Carnage, Issa and Annette Campbell Anderson '92, was a year in the planning and included two virtual events to build excitement: one held Jan. 13, the organization's Founder's Day; and another on April 27, the actual 50th anniversary of Kappa Lambda's chartering.

But the main event was the weekend celebration, which opened on Friday night with a Red and White Sneaker Ball at the Schine



OTHC Scholar Ryan Nkongnyu '25, Shawn Outler '89, Candice Carnage '90 and OTHC Delta Sigma Theta Inc. Scholar Monday Carter '25

Underground, with line sisters showing their spirit and connection with matching shirts.

In keeping with the organization's service mission, the group held a book drive for Van Duyn Elementary School in Syracuse and collected personal hygiene items for Vera House. On Saturday morning, members attended a presentation on organ donation. "There are very few Black organ donors, and our chapter has been impacted by two members who needed kidney donation," says Carnage. "We're trying to spread the word that the need is great and the procedure is safe. We had three people sign up for organ donation on the spot."

At 5 p.m., all of the members present gathered on the steps of the Hall of Languages for a group drone photo, followed by a VIP reception with University officials, including Chancellor Kent Syverud and his wife, Dr. Ruth Chen; Dean of Hendricks Chapel Rev. Brian Konkol and his wife, Kristen; soror Candace Campbell Jackson, senior vice president and chief of staff to the Chancellor; Dawn Sinlgeton, vice president of student transition, access and inclusion; Sheriah Dixon, dean of students; Marcelle Haddix, Distinguished Dean's Professor of Literacy, Race and Justice; Sharon R. Barner '79 and Marcus, members of the Syracuse University Board of Trustees; and Rachel Vassel '91, G'21, associate vice president of multicultural advancement.

The pinnacle event was the gala, Rhapsody in Gold, held in the Goldstein Auditorium. Emceed by soror Devika Parikh '88, the evening program included original music performed by KL Sisters with Voices, a group of 12 Kappa Lambda sorors; a spoken word performance by Collie Williams '88; a video presentation featuring interviews with founding members; tributes, speeches and awards; and a presentation of the historic endowment by Marcus.

"We are extremely proud of our sorors who have risen to the occasion," says Issa. "They truly embody the mission of Delta Sigma Theta Inc."

While significant focus was on the chapter's fundraising achievement, the real heart of the weekend was sisterhood. Membership in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. is lifelong, and a majority of the Kappa Lambda sorors are active in alumnae chapters in their home communities. But the bond with their line sisters and other chapter members is incomparable.

"I have shared almost every memory of my adult life with these women," says Benjamin. "They've become an extended family I've had the pleasure of doing life with for the last 13 years."

"My sorors are some of my closest friends," adds Fabius, who was initiated in 2007. "They have been there when I was grieving, when I was celebrating, when I needed to vent and when I needed to laugh."

They also worship together. The weekend's closing event was a Sunday service at Hendricks Chapel led by Rev. Leslie Copeland '90, chief operating officer of the National Council on Churches, followed by brunch, a final opportunity to soak up each other's company before heading their separate ways.

In the week following, Carnage says she was filled with the glow of the weekend as she continued to hear from sisters about the wonderful time they'd had. "We built this weekend out of love, and it truly was magical," she says. "I can still feel all the love we gave and got in return this weekend: sharing, loving, laughing and crying."

For charter member Allman-Manning, the most fulfilling aspect of the weekend was the opportunity to witness her legacy in action. "Seeing these young, educated, energetic and dynamic sorors who put together this amazing weekend that was conducted so professionally with every moment in sync was impressive indeed," she says. "But as I've reflected, I wondered why I would expect anything less. After all, these are Kappa Lambda women."

# Ambassadors for Africa

**T**hrough the Afrofuture festival, brothers Abdul Abdullah and Rashad Abdallah want to showcase African culture while bringing opportunity to the continent.

In December, Africans from across the diaspora flock to Ghana for weeks of festivals and cultural events, which increasingly also attract Black Americans and others from around the globe. One of the biggest draws is Afrofuture (formerly known as Afrochella), held in Accra, Ghana, between Christmas and New Year's Day, a multi-day festival of music, fashion, food and culture.

Afrofuture was created by Abdul Karim Abdullah '10 and his childhood friend Kenny Apyapong. "So many narratives have been written for Africa, but not by Africa, and I wanted to be able to change that and to drive that change," says Abdullah. "So, I combined all the things I'm passionate about—music, food, fashion and art—to bring people together on the continent."

At their inaugural festival in 2017, which they self-funded, Abdullah and Apyapong expected a crowd of 2,500. When attendance topped 4,700, they knew they'd struck a chord.

In their second year, the festival grew from 4,700 to 12,500 and garnered corporate partnerships and the endorsement of the Ghana Tourism Bureau. In 2019, the festival became the anchor event for the country's Year of Return tourism campaign and sold out with an attendance of 16,000.

"Our initial goal was to build an event in Ghana to bring people together. But we didn't realize the ripple effect our event would have," says Abdullah, who along with Apyapong was named a tourism ambassador by the country in 2021 and was part of Vice President Kamala Harris' delegation to Ghana in March. "We brought so many people into Ghana from surrounding countries; we realized we had the ability to connect people to the continent in a larger way."

Today, Afrofuture attracts attendees from six continents, including 40% of its audience from the United States. Although artists from Germany, Jamaica, and the United States have performed, Abdullah is proud of the spotlight placed on African artists and their music. "When we started, Afrobeats was not a well-known genre and certainly not heard on American radio," he says. "Now, some of our former artists are headlining Coachella."

Abdullah and Apyapong both grew up in the Bronx, and were raised by Ghanaian parents. Although an American kid, Abdullah says he was surrounded by Ghanaian culture. His father owned the popular restaurant Accra, a beacon for Africans in New York City. "People would come off the plane from Ghana straight to our



Abdul Karim Abdullah

restaurant," Abdullah says. "We've served presidents, heads of state and many celebrities, and had a satellite location at the Nigerian Embassy"

But he wasn't always appreciative of his heritage. After his father decided his sons needed a greater immersion in Ghanaian culture, Abdullah was sent to live with his grandmother for seven years as a youngster, returning to the Bronx for junior high.

"It was a culture shock. When I returned to the United States, I didn't look back," says Abdullah, who would not return to Ghana for another 13 years. But after a visit over the Christmas holidays in 2014, he felt differently about his family's homeland. "I wanted to correct my inner young child who was running away from the continent because I didn't understand it," he says.

By then a working professional, Abdullah felt it was a disservice to go back and not connect with people and help share ideas. "So, we created a space to be able to do that with the festival."

Despite its size and scope, serving as CEO of Afrofuture is not Abdullah's only endeavor. Abdullah is director of global clinical trials for Bristol Myers Squibb, where he manages two cancer studies with budgets upward of \$20 million, each conducted in approximately 180 sites in 80 countries.

"I'm very passionate about it," he says. "In the beginning, seeing how the research impacted the patients was very important to me. I wanted to delve deeper into that, and now I manage the people who manage the hospitals, so it's a different perspective," he says.

It was working with a trial collecting samples at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon that got Abdullah thinking about Africa as the land of opportunity. "This had never been done before, and I realized that if hospitals were starting to do research in Africa, there was a lot of opportunity," he says. "That began to guide my thought processes to focus my vision and hopes on the continent."

Of course, none of this was on Abdullah's mind when he came to Syracuse University as an undergraduate planning to pursue medical

school. “I was the first in my family to go away to a private university like Syracuse,” says the fifth of 12 children. “It was a big deal.”

Abdullah majored in psychology and minored in biology, joined Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc. and was active in the African Student Union and Student African American Society. Although a good student in the Bronx, he found the teaching style and coursework at another level and initially struggled. “It wasn’t until my sophomore and junior year when I got a good community around me that I was able to turn it around,” says Abdullah.

Because of that, he decided to get research experience to bolster his application before applying to medical school. Abdullah took a job at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) as a research assistant, where he discovered a passion for research and project management.

He spent eight years at MSKCC, becoming the project manager of regulatory processes at the institution and later managed six satellite sites across New York, opening them and helping pharmaceutical companies implement trials. After earning a master’s degree in public health, Abdullah wanted a new perspective and moved to the pharmaceutical industry. He has held his current position at Bristol Myers Squibb since May 2022, working remotely, which is conducive to his frequent travel.

He’s gearing up for Afrofuture 2023, which begins Dec. 27, with an expected attendance of 40,000 over two days. Leading up to the festival itself, Afrofuture is hosting a film festival, with the winner representing Ghana at the Cannes Film Festival.

Also on the docket is a tech meetup, which will bring together many of the festival’s sponsors— such as Meta, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube and Sony Music—with aspiring African professionals. “We were the first to work with Meta on the continent. X referenced us as a reason they opened an office in Ghana,” says Abdullah. “We see this as an opportunity to help qualified people get jobs. Why bring somebody from America to Africa to do a job that somebody on the continent can do?”

The other major venture is a collaboration with Black Health Connect, an organization for Black health professionals that provides networking opportunities with a common goal of advocating for increased diversity in health care, career advancement and improving health equity. In addition to holding a health care mixer, Black Health Connect will host a health fair in conjunction with Afrofuture that will provide various health testing services in the city of Accra. The initiative is being led by Abdullah’s younger brother, Rashad Abdallah ’12 (the spelling difference in their last names is due to an error made on his birth certificate that no one bothered changing), a pharmacist in San Diego and director of Black Health Connect.

“Our goal is to be able to connect healthcare professionals in Africa to health care professionals in Europe and the Americas,” he says. “We have 150 volunteers who will conduct blood glucose testing, cholesterol testing, rapid HIV testing, mental health and first aid education and host a blood drive.

“This will be the first health fair, but next year we plan to host additional health fairs in Kenya and South Africa.”

Abdallah grew up predominantly in Ghana, coming to the Bronx for his junior year of high school. He had planned to attend Utica University and room with Apyapong, but when he received his acceptance to Syracuse, he chose to join his brother instead.

Abdallah majored in economics and pre-pharmacy studies. He served as an ambassador for the College of Arts and Sciences, joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., worked at Health Services as a pharmacy associate and was part of the medical transport team. He went on to earn a master’s in public health from Hofstra University and a doctorate in pharmacy from the Keck Graduate Institute of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. While in pharmacy school, he interned at one of the biggest hospitals in Ghana. “One of the things I learned is that the country was suffering from brain drain. Young people were coming to the U.S. and Europe for education and not going back. I want to help reverse that.”

In 2021, Abdallah married his Syracuse University sweetheart, Tiffany Bender Abdallah ’11, in Ghana. “Many of our friends traveled to Africa for the first time to witness our marriage and they loved the experience,” he says. “That is the same thing we want people to experience with Afrofuture: for people to visit Africa. I think they will discover the experience to be different than stories they’ve heard of Africa growing up. And that is the success of Afrofuture.”



Tiffany and Rashad during their wedding festivities, which highlighted the beauty and traditions of the continent, sparking the #HarlemToTheHomeland

# Buying Local

## Shavon Greene is a champion for Black-owned businesses in Syracuse.

**S**havon Greene '10, G'18 is passionate about supporting Black-owned businesses in her adopted city of Syracuse, New York. In 2018, Greene published the first Black-Owned Syracuse online directory ([blackownedsyracuse.com](http://blackownedsyracuse.com)), a labor of love that began as her thesis project for a master's program in journalism innovation at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, a program that emphasizes digital media.

"I saw a void—both in terms of something to help guide Black visitors to Syracuse to establishments that might interest them and a source for locals to support Black-owned businesses," Greene says. "My goal was to serve as a resource for Black entrepreneurs and the community members who want to celebrate and support them."

She began with businesses she already knew and patronized, asked friends for suggestions and put out a call for others on social media. "Throughout history, small Black-owned businesses have been an important part of the Black community," she says. "Unfortunately, these businesses typically receive the least amount of funding, so my goal is to create connections and economic opportunity."

The process of creating the Black-Owned Syracuse directory inspired Greene to launch an event to celebrate. In August 2019, she held A Taste of Black 'Cuse, a three-day food and drink festival featuring Black-owned food vendors.

"It was very ambitious and somewhat overwhelming," says Greene, who was planning on using what she'd learned to improve and grow the festival the following year until that became impossible due to the pandemic.

Five years later, the second Taste of Black 'Cuse is planned for August 2024, during what she's calling Black Joy Week, a week of events that bring attention to issues that impact the Black community.

She's also working on launching her next entrepreneurial vision: opening a bookstore in Syracuse featuring books written by Black women. "Auntie's Book Bar is a childhood dream and I've been researching and planning for years," says Greene, who began crowdfunding for the project last summer. "Thanks to Black-Owned Syracuse, I have the courage and community needed to move forward."

Growing up in Barnwell, South Carolina, Greene says she always had a book in her hand. With a love for storytelling, it was only natural that she gravitated to journalism when it was time for college.

Greene came to the Newhouse School to major in magazine journalism. While a student, she honed her skills writing for *The Daily Orange* and the *Student Voice*, a monthly magazine,

where she served as editor. She also was president of the Black Communications Society, helping bring Harry Belafonte, Spike Lee and *Essence* editor Susan L. Taylor to campus during her tenure.

Selected for the Time Inc. summer internship program, Greene was able to spend a summer interning at *Essence*, a connection that led to freelancing opportunities after graduation.

Unfortunately, the print magazine industry was in decline. Unable to find a full-time editorial job, Greene freelanced and ultimately decided to return to the Newhouse School to earn a master's degree to learn new media, which led her to her new passion.

"Black-Owned Syracuse has given me a sense of community and purpose in Syracuse," says Greene. "Without it, I may not have stayed."

To support the growth of her entrepreneurial ventures, Greene works by day as a technical writer for Carrier Corp. With firsthand experience in how hard it is to start a business with limited funding, she decided she

wanted to help give another Black business owner a boost. In January, she launched the Black-Owned Syracuse Founder's New Year Boost Grant, awarding \$1,000 to Erika Turner of Loveline Jewelry and Designs.

"Black women are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs but overall, receive the least amount of funding," she says. "This is my way to make a difference."



Shavon Greene



# Higher Education Law

**As general counsel, Melissa Jackson Holloway makes sure universities stay legally on track.**

**W**hile in the third grade, Melissa Jackson Holloway '91 participated in a mock trial, assigned to represent Goldilocks in a lawsuit brought against her by the three bears.

"I argued that she had narcolepsy and that's why she fell asleep," Holloway recalls. "I'm not sure what that had to do with her breaking in or eating their food, but I won the case. My teacher declared that I should be a lawyer, and I stuck with that."

Today, Holloway is vice chancellor and general counsel at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, the nation's largest public historically Black university, with responsibility for legal affairs, compliance, enterprise risk, internal audit and Title IX. She has spent the majority of her legal career working in higher education.

"Higher ed is essentially a corporate entity. We buy and sell property, we hire and fire, we create intellectual property, we serve as a landlord, we're our own municipality, plus we educate students and are subject to state and federal regulations and educational policies," says Holloway, who manages the stresses of her work as a marathon runner and Peloton enthusiast. "No two days are alike and there's never a dull moment, although ideally I'm spending more time on routine matters and less on crisis management."

In some regards, working for an historically Black university is the fulfillment of a dream. Growing up in public housing in Niagara Falls, New York, Holloway had hoped to attend an HBCU, but her need for substantial financial aid made that an unrealistic goal. She anticipated attending a SUNY school. Her brother suggested that as long as they were in Binghamton, they might as well swing by and visit Syracuse University. A diehard Syracuse basketball fan, Holloway was in.

As luck would have it, just as Holloway's tour group was passing the former Carrier Dome, out came star basketball players Derrick Coleman '15, Stevie Thompson '90 and Rony Seikaly '88, who came over to chat with the prospective students. "It was amazing," she recalls. And then Syracuse offered a generous financial aid package that made the cost of attendance less than a state school.

The summer before she started at Syracuse, Holloway shadowed an attorney who specialized in mergers and acquisitions, an experience that inspired her to major in business to offer a foundation for corporate law. She joined Zeta Phi Beta sorority, was active in the Student African American Society, the Black Student Union, the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble and the National Association of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and worked in the Law Library throughout her undergraduate years.

It was one of her Syracuse professors who suggested she look at law schools outside the comfort zone of the East Coast. "There's a

lot of wonderful schools in the Midwest and beyond that are specifically seeking to enhance diversity at their schools," he told her.

As a lark, she applied to a couple of midwestern schools and was admitted to the University of Wisconsin Law School with fellowship support. Then she received a call from the dean of the school on a Friday evening asking her what was holding her back from accepting their offer. When she told him she wasn't sure she'd be comfortable there, he flew her to campus and connected her with people and programs in her areas of interest. "I would have never landed there without that personal touch," she says.

Holloway earned a law degree from Wisconsin, then stayed in Madison, where she accepted a corporate law position. Four years later, after the birth of her son, she realized she might need a more family-friendly environment. The chair of her firm was a board member at the University of Wisconsin, and she had worked on some legal matters for the school. He told her that two campuses were hiring legal counsel and suggested she apply.

Holloway spent eight years as general counsel of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, followed by similar positions at North Carolina Central University and Ball State University before joining North Carolina A&T as general counsel in 2019. She was promoted to her current position in 2021.

In June, she became chair of the National Association of College and University Attorneys, an organization that honored her with its Distinguished Service Award in 2020.

Although she has little direct work with students, Holloway says one of the most satisfying moments of her job occurs each year at commencement, when she's able to sit on stage and see thousands of students—many of them first generation like her—and every member of their families.

"I get to see that I contributed to not only changing each student's life, but potentially changing their entire family's life as well," she says. "Because I know for me, higher education changed my family's life, not just mine."



Melissa Jackson Holloway

# Representation Matters

**Creative Guild founder Jasmine White uplifts BIPOC voices through her work and support of other diverse creators.**

Coming to predominantly white Syracuse University from Paterson, New Jersey, where nearly everyone was Black or Latino, was an adjustment for Jasmine White '15. “When you come into a space where you are viewed as a minority, you have to learn so many things,” she says. “But thankfully, I knew that there wasn’t anything minor about me or my experiences.”

White—who was a dual major in television, radio and film; and English and contextual studies—channeled those experiences into a web series, *#blackpeopleproblems*, that she created with funding from the late S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications Dean Lorraine Branham. “It was a way to laugh at some of the experiences we were having,” she says.

A second series she created as a student, *The Circle*, focused on LGBTQ relationships. “Everyone was watching web series at the time, and there weren’t that many about queer people. I just wanted to see a relationship show,” she says.

Today, White’s diverse storytelling has found a larger audience. *Hotline*, which airs on Amazon Prime, RevoltTV and OTV, focuses on transgender attorney Hazel Clarke and how her experiences working at a suicide hotline inspire her to delve into her callers’ lives. In addition to being people of color, most of her lead cast members are queer or transgender.

“This is a demographic that doesn’t have escapist TV,” says White. “Everything about trans people focuses on them transitioning, about their suffering, and I’m like, they deserve to watch TV and just see a badass character having a human experience,” she says. “TV is medicine, and we all deserve that.”

White says she came to Syracuse University interested in creative writing. “I thought I was going to be the next Alice Walker,” she says. She got involved in the poetry group Verbal Blend, which she credits with helping build her self-confidence. And she was heavily influenced by watching Issa Rae’s *Awkward Black Girl* on YouTube, which inspired her own college web series.

After graduating, White worked briefly in advertising before spending five years working as a junior executive on the movies team at LifetimeTV, while dreaming of writing for the network. “That’s where I learned the business of TV, where I learned to walk and talk like an executive,” she says. “It gave me the confidence to produce another series, but this time with a bigger budget and more experience.”

White conceived *Hotline* and wrote a 60-minute pilot script. She spent months workshoping the script with friends, then invested her \$10,000 savings to create a trailer, which helped her

raise an additional \$15,000 to complete production. “I may get nervous, but I’m never afraid to bet on myself,” she says.

Then a friend sent her a grant application from an organization called Creatives Rebuild New York, which would prove life changing. In 2022, White became the recipient of a \$1.85 million grant to produce original content for BronxNet. She’s now a full-time writer and producer, with her Newark, New Jersey-based J.P. White Productions dedicated to creating healing stories about BIPOC.

White has also launched The Creative Guild ([thecreativeguild.org](http://thecreativeguild.org)), which aims to be the largest ecosystem for creative professionals on the planet by practicing collective economics. “Why compete for resources when we could be working together?” she says. The organization’s biweekly newsletter reaches more than 5,000 creatives to share information on industry events and opportunities.

“We’re currently preparing for our first major milestone. We want to champion one creative and help fund their project,” she says.

Meanwhile, White is currently shopping around a new series, *#Stressed*, about a plus-sized influencer named Ashanti. When a blackmailer threatens to expose her secrets, she must compete in the cutthroat world of beauty pageants to prove that her success is more than just a digital illusion.

For White, the series is another avenue to increase representation. “I know how hard it is for plus-size women to get work. Casting people should be about who is the most talented, not who looks a certain way,” she says. “My legacy involves changing this industry for the good of us all.”



Jasmine White

# Marketing Motherhood

**Magnolia Salas Cloyd is using social media to connect and assist young mothers.**

**U**nlike women of earlier generations, Magnolia Salas Cloyd '12 says she felt somewhat unprepared when she became a full-time homemaker and mother. "I'd focused for years on being a career woman," she says.

After nearly a decade of working in communications and marketing, Cloyd made a shift in February 2021, choosing to stay home after the birth of her first son. She and her husband, Ricco Cloyd '11, now have two boys under age 3.

"My focus right now is at home, and I've had to do a lot of growing to be effective with my time; to interact with small children as their primary caregiver and teacher. It's all been brand new," she says.

That learning curve is what inspired Cloyd's new business venture, Strength and Grace (@strengthgraceco), an Instagram account that serves as a platform to connect young mothers and allow them to share insights about homemaking and motherhood.

Cloyd says she's drawing heavily from her career experience to create her brand and connect with users online. "People often overlook marketing, but the business doesn't run if you have no customers," she says. "Being able to really connect with your ideal market in a way that resonates and builds trust, that's really important."

She's drawing from the same tool kit to assist her husband, who works by day as a project manager at a nuclear power plant, on the launch of his new podcast, *One Man's Way* (@one.mans.way), which will explore issues of being a husband and father.

"COVID made us reexamine what kind of life we want to build for our family and these new ventures are an expression of that," she says.

Cloyd met her husband as a first-year student at Syracuse when they were both living on the same floor in Dellplain Hall. They started dating the following year and were married in 2017.

A native of New York City, she came to Syracuse University to study business. During her senior year, she took part in the D'Aniello Entrepreneurial Internship Program, which places students with young entrepreneurial businesses where they can get lots of hands-on experience. Cloyd worked as a marketing intern for a local startup company, developing promotional direct mail material for prospective merchants and customers and managing the company's social media presence on multiple platforms. At the end of the internship, her boss recommended her to a friend at Syracuse University Career Services, which was hiring a communications and marketing coordinator.

Cloyd says being a Syracuse University employee gave her a totally different perspective on the institution, including all the

services she'd underutilized as a student. "When you have access to so much, sometimes you overlook it and don't take advantage," she says. "I liked being in a position to make Career Services programs accessible and available to help students understand what was available to navigate their career paths. And to be able to demonstrate my school pride as an employee was rewarding."

After four years, Cloyd followed her fiancé to Columbia, South Carolina, where he was working. She was hired as public information officer for the Richland County government, leading a re-branding effort and collaborating with county departments and county leadership to strategize and design public education campaigns. "It wasn't like at the University where you're encouraged to be fun and creative," she says. "We were dealing with a much broader audience and needed to try and resonate with everyone."

But Cloyd is enjoying putting her creativity in overdrive to help launch she and her husband's new ventures, and in parenting her young family. "It's busy," she says. "My hands are full."



Magnolia and Ricco Cloyd with sons Xavien and Evron

# Creating Access

**Venida Rodman Jenkins has launched an endowment to support underrepresented students in the Newhouse NYC program.**

Over her three years as an adjunct instructor teaching the Race, Gender and the Media course in the Newhouse NYC program, Venida Rodman Jenkins '88 came to an unsettling realization. Most of her students were white.

Given that she's spent a bulk of her career creating spaces of belonging for underrepresented people, Rodman Jenkins began thinking about why that was and came up with a simple answer: cost.

Students participating in the Newhouse NYC program are placed in internships during the day and take classes in the evening, securing their own housing for the semester. But, even with a paid internship and roommates, New York City rent is cost prohibitive for many.

"Because of the generational wealth gap, it may be a financial hardship for some communities of color to participate, which is a real shame, because these kinds of internships are great resume builders and often lead to jobs," Rodman Jenkins says.

Last spring, she and her husband, Todd Jenkins, created an Our Time Has Come Scholarship endowment to help defray that expense for students who want to participate in the program.

"I wanted to do something to create access," she says.

The suggestion of a scholarship endowment struck a chord for Jenkins, as she had lost her mother, Lucy Rodman, just two months earlier. "My mother was a nurse administrator who led the education committee at church and used to raise funds for students going off to college. She had a tremendous spirit of generosity and giving that inspired us to do this," she says.

Rodman Jenkins was raised in Teaneck, New Jersey, and was recruited to the track and field team at Syracuse. Interested in a career in public relations or journalism, she applied to the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, but was instead accepted into the College of Arts and Sciences. She majored in psychology and was co-director (along with the late Ervin C. Allgood '77) of the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble. She remains affiliated through the organization's alumni group TAG-BCCE.

After graduation, Rodman Jenkins saw a job listing for a reporter at a group of weekly community newspapers in Bergen County, New Jersey. Despite a lack of published clips, she passed the writing test and was offered a job. She worked there for four years and spent seven years as associate editor for a travel trade publication. Then came 9/11, which brought the travel industry to a halt. Rodman Jenkins, along with much of the staff, was laid off.

But concurrent with her job, Rodman Jenkins has been attending New York Theological Seminary. About to graduate with a master of divinity, she considered going into the ministry full time. A pastor friend steered her toward a position as an advocate for victims of sexual violence. After two years, she took a position directing the Violence Against Women Prevention Program at



Venida Rodman Jenkins and husband Todd Jenkins with her father, Robert Rodman, at a kick-off event held to launch a scholarship endowment, an effort inspired by the memory of her late mother, Lucy Rodman

Seton Hall University, which was followed by a similar position at the University of Connecticut. In 2012, she joined the New Jersey City University, where she is director of the Speicher-Rubin Women's Center for Equity and Diversity, creating educational initiatives that foster equity and inclusion.

She's also co-pastor of Forefront Church, an interdenominational progressive congregation in Brooklyn. "It's a place that is open to all identities, particularly those who have been marginalized in churches," says Rodman Jenkins. "We have a shared leadership model with three pastors of diverse identity who preach on a rotating basis."

Getting hired to teach at Newhouse was a full-circle moment for Rodman Jenkins, having not been admitted as an undergrad.

"I think it's important to share our roadblocks to encourage others not to feel too discouraged when things don't turn out as planned," she says. "Even if things don't work out exactly as you'd hoped, they can work out in a way where you're still able to make an impact."

She's doing that, both in the classroom and, eventually, through the endowment fund. She and Todd held a kickoff event at their home last May to launch their effort and encourage others interested to join them in supporting the Newhouse NYC Scholarship Fund.

"The reality is we need more opportunities for underrepresented students," she says. "I hope that this makes a difference in people's lives."

GABRIELLE PINKNEY

## A Classical Voice

**E**ven as a 6-year-old singing at her hometown church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Gabrielle Pinkney '24 had a voice that made people take notice. "A church member came up to me and told me I had the potential to do classical voice," she recalls.

Within a couple of years, she got involved in choral music and eventually attended a performing arts high school, the Governor's School for the Arts, in Norfolk, Virginia, where she discovered her love for opera.

"As much as I love the art form, there aren't many people who look like me who are on stage or even in the audience," she says.

Pinkney has taken on the challenge of broadening that audience for her senior thesis, "This is Our Story, This is Our Song," through the Renée Crown University Honors Program. She's in the midst of developing a virtual workshop for youth aged 12 to 14 to expose them to the art form. "I really want to reach out to the

underrepresented community and give them access to resources that would help to debunk the stereotypes that are associated with the art form. Anybody can enjoy opera," she says.

Pinkney came to Syracuse to take advantage of the music industry major in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, which combines theoretical and practical education in areas such as music production and music management with training in music performance—for Pinkney, a concentration in classical voice. "For me professionally, I want to have the opportunity to perform on stage and do what I love as a musician, while also being a force to be reckoned with behind the scenes," she says. "I hope to someday pursue a career in entertainment law."

She's made the most of her experience, serving as a VPA Ambassador, a VPA Leadership Scholar, the director of the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble and as a member of the First Year Players, a performing arts group, as a first-year student.

Pinkney is also social media chair of the Renée Crown University Honors Program and in 2021, was one of five black honors students who founded the Black Honors Society to foster community among current and future BIPOC students in the program. "We host mental health sessions, community service events and social activities," she says.

Last year, the group partnered with the National Society of Black Engineers to hold the first Black Excellence Gala on campus, bringing Kevin Richardson H'20 and Dr. Gezzer Ortega '03 to campus as speakers. "It was an amazing experience to be a part of that and to foster a sense of community for Black students on campus," she says.

Pinkney has also found a sense of community through the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Leaders Program, which she joined her sophomore year. "It's been a great networking opportunity and way for students to build friendships and make connections during our time here at Syracuse and after graduation," she says. "I think of us as the OTHC squad."

Among the most meaningful experiences in the program has been the opportunity to sing at the annual senior ceremony held at the Chancellor's House each spring. "I've enjoyed being able to attend, even though I wasn't a senior, and getting to hear the speakers share the impact the program has had on their collegiate development," she says. "This year, as a senior myself, it will be an extra-special moment as an OTHC member."



Gabrielle Pinkney

FIDEL RIVERA

## Technology and Sport

Combining personal and professional passions doesn't always happen, but for Fidel Rivera '24, a summer internship at Nike world headquarters did just that.

As a teenager, Rivera taught himself to alter phone and computer software and developed a passion for tech, leading him to Syracuse University to study information management and technology. He also secured a campus job as a facility supervisor at the Barnes Center at The Arch. During vacation periods, he worked at Nike's New York City flagship store on Fifth Avenue, known as the House of Innovation, which solidified his love for the brand.

Rivera was able to meld those experiences last summer as a privacy analyst intern for Nike at the company's world headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, one of 293 interns selected from more than 51,000 applicants. Working with a team of privacy compliance analysts, Rivera focused on projects that ensured consumer data was privacy compliant with various state and federal regulations. "I spent a lot of the summer looking at how machine learning and artificial intelligence could be successfully implemented," he says.

Midway through the internship, the company held its annual Nike Intern Combine, a team competition in which interns from

every area across the company came together and were charged with presenting a new idea outside of Nike's current business model. Twenty-two teams were culled to four finalists, with Rivera's team selected as the winner.

"Our concept was to bring Nike gyms to life," he says. "The idea was to tap Nike's relationships with elite athletes to help create training programs and serve as guest instructors. We employed a lot of data and analytics as to how Nike could be competitive against existing companies such as Equinox or Planet Fitness."

Rivera says he drew from his experiences working at the Barnes Center and supporting Nike consumers at the retail level. "It made it easier to comprehend what a Nike gym could look like," he says.

Rivera says his Nike retail experience was unusual among interns. "Many of the other interns came from target schools or were Division I athletes," he says. "I consider myself very fortunate to have been selected. It was an amazing experience. I learned from some of the smartest people in the world, made great friends and expanded my network nationwide."

He credits former Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar Alex Muñoz '13 for sharing the opportunity. Rivera connected with Muñoz, lead digital operations engineer at Converse (which is owned by Nike), while looking for internships on LinkedIn. Muñoz offered to refer Rivera for the internship, which likely assisted in securing an interview.

Rivera has been an OTHC Scholar since his first year at Syracuse. "The program has been one of the most essential parts of my college experience," he says. "The generous scholarship, the opportunities to grow my professional development and the alumni network have all been invaluable."

Rivera is also part of the McNair Scholars program, a brother and president of the Archias Chapter of Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity Inc., and spent a semester in Spain with assistance from the Gilman Scholarship program.

"I've had a great experience at Syracuse," he says. "If you work hard, take advantage of opportunities and stay consistent with your efforts, you'll be in a position to succeed."

Fidel Rivera



SOFIA RODRIGUEZ

# Representing Her Community

**W**hen the Class of 2024 heads into to the JMA Wireless Dome for Commencement, the processional will be led by Sofia Rodriguez '24, one of two students selected as Class Marshal.

The honor is the most recent of many during her college career, which began with earning a full-tuition scholarship to Syracuse University through the Posse Foundation and was followed by her selection as an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar and Remembrance Scholar. Academically, she has landed on the Dean's List each semester.

And while Rodriguez has become accustomed to being noted for her achievements, here's what she really wants you to know about her: "I'm hilarious," she says. "I could basically be a comedian."

Rodriguez credits humor for allowing her to navigate a variety of spaces and roles—from the classroom and internships to serving as a resident advisor and a peer leader for the First Year Seminar. "I like to see people laugh, smile and enjoy themselves. The ability to do that makes me more comfortable and makes others more comfortable. Humor has been the keyway for me to make connections and break down barriers."

She may be funny, but she's also a force to be reckoned with. At age 8, Rodriguez set her sights on becoming president of the United States. "I realized I was just a Cuban girl from Miami, but that became my dream," she says.

As a high school student, Rodriguez was selected for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) NextGen Leadership program, which brought her to Washington, D.C., for a week to learn about politics and policy. Later as a college student, she interned with the organization as a communications intern, writing memos, working with constituents and helping write policy.

While interning at CHCI, she co-founded the nonprofit With Love to provide resources to the influx of Latine refugees in Washington, D.C., coming from Texas and Florida due to the anti-immigration policies of those state's governors. "Right now,



Sofia Rodriguez

the organization works remotely, but once I am professionally established, I hope we can have our own facility and staff," she says.

At Syracuse University, Rodriguez majors in communications and rhetorical studies, which she has focused on racial justice and policy. No longer seeking to hold the nation's highest office, she changed her goal to become a political communications consultant working to reach Latine communities.

"I want to help bridge the gap between U.S. politics and the Latine communities where I come from," she says.

Rodriguez says one of her most life-changing experiences at Syracuse has come through being an OTHC Scholar. "OTHC has provided me a real home on campus," she says. "It's very comforting having that community of peers that looked like

me, knowing that no matter where I entered a room, there was an OTHC Scholar that was rooting for me. Coming to a predominantly white institution, I never thought it would be possible to find mentors like Miss Maria [Lopez '05, G'12] and Miss Angela [Morales-Patterson], who have helped me navigate my SU life, my professional life and believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

Rodriguez has paid that forward through the continuation of Many2Come, an organization to support first-generation students through guest speakers, discussions and community-building activities. "It's really a space for first-year students to come together on campus and find some commonality," she says.

She understands firsthand that many first-generation students represent the hopes and dreams of their entire families. "My family—my parents—are my driving force," she says. "I work so hard, not just to make them proud, but to someday help them have the life they deserve. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them, and I'm forever proud to be a Rodriguez kid."

GUERDYNA GELIN

## Promoting Education Equity

**G**uerdyna Gelin '24 is committed to using her education to make positive change. As a member of the Renée Crown University Honors Program majoring in policy studies, Gelin has combined her senior thesis work for those two programs to examine educational redlining.

"Equity in the classroom is very hard to achieve, particularly in disadvantaged populations," says Gelin, who is from White Plains, New York. She became interested in the topic through summer internships at Southern Westchester BOCES and the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, both educational nonprofits. "In theory, redlining has been banned, yet still impacts education," she says. "My research examines why that is and how, as a society, we can improve on that through policy change."

Although a pre-law student, Gelin will be putting theory into practice, having accepted a two-year position with Teach for America post-graduation, assigned to teach at the elementary level in Philadelphia. Once armed with that practical experience, she plans to attend law school to impact law and policy.

Gelin is president of the National Black Law Students Association, pre-law chapter, at Syracuse University and has interned at the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office in Syracuse, a position secured with connections made through the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Program. "The alumni network was one of the reasons I chose to attend Syracuse University and the connections I've already made through OTHC have been invaluable," she says. "In addition, you never know who they know."

Gelin joined the program as an inaugural Leader in spring 2021 and became a Scholar the following semester. That semester, she attended the Coming Back Together reunion, a profound and impactful experience. "Being able to interact with so many successful alumni of color was really transformational," she says. "It provided real-life examples of what we're working toward."

She has tried to make the most of her undergraduate experience, working at the front desk of the Intercultural Collective in the Schine Student Center and interning and mentoring for the WellsLink Leadership Program. She's also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. and was selected as a 2023 Remembrance Scholar. She participated in the Deloitte Consulting Apprenticeship Program and interned with Our National Conversation, a nonpartisan organization that seeks to depolarize citizens on hot-button issues.

"Basically, I got to write policy proposals, explainers and op-eds on issues I'm passionate about, such as health care and education," she says. "The goal is to free the dialogue from hyper-partisanship."

Gelin also spent two weeks last summer traveling Italy through the Syracuse University course Mediterranean Food and Culture.

"We visited places that aren't the typical tourist spots in Italy," she says. "We went to different regions to learn about the foods produced there and learned about local culture at the same time," she says. "It was my first time abroad and very immersive. I would love to go back."

Gelin says her Syracuse University experience has been all she hoped for and more. "I've been able to explore lots of interests and discover what I'm really passionate about," she says. "Through my diverse experiences in law and policy, nonprofit work and education, I have developed a nuanced understanding of the importance of effective policy solutions and community engagement. That's where I hope to make a difference."

Guerdyna Gelin





BILHISSA FADIGA

# Creating Diverse Spaces

**W**hen Bilhissa Fadiga '24 read about the controversy surrounding a major retailer's advertising campaign, her first thought was "how did they let that come out?"

But she knew the answer. "The rooms in which those decisions are being made are not diverse enough," she says. "I want to be in a corporate position to have a say in what is not appropriate."

Harlem-raised by West African parents—she speaks both Susu and Mandingo—Fadiga is majoring in public relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. During fall semester of her junior year, Fadiga was part of the inaugural cohort of the Newhouse DC program, taking classes in the nation's capital while serving as a corporate communications intern at Grassroots Analytics, which does database management for political campaigns. "I was very grateful for the opportunity but learned that politics isn't the right professional fit for me," she says.

She found that this past summer while interning with IBM. "I've never felt more valued as a communication student," she says of the experience. "I had not really thought about communications in the tech space before, but the internship was very hands-on and project-based. I came away knowing I want to work in communications within a corporate setting."

On campus, Fadiga is public relations director for the Syracuse University chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, charged with creating promotional posts to inform students about Black professionals the organization brings to campus as well as increasing awareness through word of mouth. She's also a Newhouse Ambassador, engaged with showcasing special events and DEI activities on the school's Instagram account. "I've been helping with the pipeline of diverse students to offer mentorship and help them navigate the school," she says.

"I'm very big on spaces being diverse. I've sat on panels at Newhouse about making people feel accepted and comfortable, and speak with students from all types of backgrounds, who sometimes say, 'You just seem so brave. How do you enter these spaces?'" Fadiga relates. "I tell them, 'Yes, sometimes you feel awkward, but I don't want to miss out on any opportunity because I feel uncomfortable.'"

One place Fadiga is at home is the Our Time Has Come Program. A Scholar since the beginning of her junior year, she credits the program with advancing her professional development. "The opportunity to learn from all of these people of color who



Bilhissa Fadiga

have gone on to amazing careers is definitely motivational," she says. "I'm very interested in getting feedback on things I can do better before I enter the workspace."

Outside the classroom and her extracurriculars, Fadiga is known to many Syracuse students through her campus job as a floor monitor at Bird Library and her talent as a hairdresser. Since her first year on campus, she's run her own hairstyling business, Jolie Did My Hair, doing formal and graduation hairstyles, wig installs, hairpieces, and hair crimping and curling. "I'm the child of a hair braider. My mother was a professional hair braider in Harlem for a long time and even though she never really wanted her kids to do hair, I picked up the talent," says Fadiga. "It's been a fun way to make money on the side and also get to know a lot of students here."

Because they didn't have the opportunity themselves, Fadiga says her parents have always stressed education, particularly her mother. "She honestly didn't know what I would do in communications, but she never doubted that I would do well and find a good career," she says. "I'll always be grateful for that."

# Our Time Has Come Program Celebrates Ban

Since 1987, the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Program has created opportunity for Syracuse University's underrepresented students, who have used the program as the launch pad for professional success.

The 2022-23 academic year marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of OTHC and, by all measures, the pinnacle of the program's success. In total, 123 OTHC Scholars receive financial support, and 41 Leaders participated in OTHC leadership development programming.

Three OTHC scholarship funds reached the endowment level and paid out scholarships for the first time in 2023: the Kevin Richardson H'20 Scholarship, the College of Professional Studies Scholarship and the Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective x William H. Johnson Endowed Scholarship.

In addition to scholarship support, a key component of OTHC is leadership development programming, which includes monthly Saturday morning seminars with invited presenters. During 2022-23, those speakers, listed in order of appearance, included:

- **Dwayne Murray '97**, deputy director, Syracuse University Office of Veteran and Military Affairs
- **Mary Grace A. Almandrez**, vice president for diversity and inclusion, Syracuse University Office of Diversity and Inclusion

- **Richard Nash '80**, CEO/owner, Playtyme Entertainment
- **Ryan Nash**, race car driver
- **Ronald Taylor Jr. '15, G'16**, product policy manager, Youth Safety and Wellbeing
- **Kueth Duany '03**, co-founder and CEO, Duany Group Ltd.
- **Aprille Duany '02, G'04**, founder and creative director, Aprille Duany
- **Tremayne Robertson G'11**, operations director for diversity, equity and inclusion, Virginia Commonwealth University Massey Cancer Center

While the OTHC Program continues to boast a 100% graduation rate, OTHC Scholars and Leaders also make their mark while students at Syracuse University.

Three OTHC Scholars were also named Remembrance Scholars in 2022-23: David Barbier Jr. '23, Fabryce Fetus '23 and Nadia Nelson '23.

OTHC was represented in campus leadership through Nyah Jones '23, Student Association comptroller; Aldrick Cade '23, Student Association Supreme Court Justice; and Ashley Bruce '23, vice president of University Union.

OTHC Scholars and Leaders received numerous honors during 2022-23, including:

2023 OTHC graduates on Commencement Day



# ner Year in 2022-23

- **David Barbier Jr. '23**, selected as a student representative for the live broadcast of Boost the 'CUSE, Syracuse's annual giving day
- **David Barbier Jr. '23** and **Jordan Pierre '23**, named OTHC Philanthropic Ambassadors
- **Candace Ogbu '23**, received an Unsung Hero Award in conjunction with campus MLK Celebration
- **Fidel Rivera '24** and **Lizmarie Montemayor '24**, awarded Gilman Scholarships
- **Jose Arturo Venegas '24**, awarded Goldwater Scholarship

In conjunction with Convocation or Commencement:

- **David A. Barbier Jr. '23**, received the Julian R. Friedman Award for Internationalism from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
- **Chelsea Brown '23**, selected as University Scholar and Commencement student speaker

- **Nyah Jones '23**, received the Sport Management Director's Award for Academic Promise
- **Abraham Kenneh '23**, received the Katie Bennett '10 Undergraduate Leadership Award and was selected as School of Information Studies Convocation speaker
- **Jordan Pierre '23**, selected as S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications Student Convocation speaker, a speech that went viral on social and national media

"We are grateful to alumni for the ability to help grow our program and to increase the number of students we can support," says Rachel Vassel '91, G'21, associate vice president of multicultural advancement. "And we are so proud of our students who take full advantage of all Syracuse University has to offer and represent the program so well. Their future is bright."



To support the OTHC Program, please visit [multiculturalalumni.syracuse.edu/support/](https://multiculturalalumni.syracuse.edu/support/)

## Multicultural Breakfast Held During Orange Central

**A**lumni on campus for Orange Central and Law Alumni Weekend this fall enjoyed mingling with each other and current students of color at the annual Multicultural Breakfast. In addition to breakfast and informal conversation, attendees received an update from Rachel Vassel '91, G'21, associate vice president for multicultural advancement, and enjoyed inspirational stories from alumni and current Our Time Has Come Scholars. Featured speakers included:

**Tracy Acquan**, a third-year student at the Syracuse University College of Law and the inaugural recipient of the Our Time Has Come Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective x William H. Johnson Endowed Scholarship, named for the first Black graduate of the College of Law. A native of the Bronx, she earned her undergraduate degree from New York University, where she majored in philosophy with a minor in law in society. Acquan has interned in both the Office of the Federal Public Defender and the City of Syracuse's Bureau of Administrative Adjudication, 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 is editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Global Rights and Organizations*, the first Black student to hold the post.

**Jeannette Pina '96**, senior vice president and chief compliance officer U.S. and Latin America, MetLife. Pina majored in international relations at Syracuse University, followed by law school at the University of Pennsylvania. Over 20-plus years, Pina has forged a career as a corporate attorney through a series of

roles with increasing levels of responsibility at global Fortune 50 companies, leading large legal teams, managing external stakeholder considerations and navigating complex corporate structures and highly regulated environments. As a senior vice president at MetLife, she is known for providing sound advice on corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, and compliance issues to senior management and the board of directors. Pina is a member of Sigma Lambda Upsilon sorority, the first NALFO sorority to create an Our Time Has Come Scholarship fund, and is a lead donor to the fund. She serves on the Syracuse University Office of Multicultural Advancement Advisory Council and as a board member of Versant Health.

**Savalle Sims '92**, executive vice president and general counsel, Warner Brothers Discovery. Sims majored in transportation distribution management and marketing at Syracuse University, followed by law school at Notre Dame University. At Warner Brothers Discovery, Sims oversees the company's global legal teams and manages all legal issues across nearly 20 offices worldwide. Most recently, she led deal planning for Discovery Inc.'s largest acquisition to date and navigated all legal matters surrounding AT&T's sale of WarnerMedia assets to form the new company Warner Bros. Discovery. Among her many industry achievements, Sims was named to the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications' Luminary Class, has been recognized on Cablefax's Diversity List each year since 2013 and was featured in the Black General Counsel Project as part of Bloomberg Law. Sims is married to Turnell Sims '90 and is a donor to the Our Time Has Come Program.

## Dawn Singleton Named VP of Student Transition, Access and Inclusion

**D**awn Singleton joined Syracuse University as the new vice president of student transition, access and inclusion July 1. She previously held leadership roles at Rowan University over the last 12 years, most recently serving as assistant vice president for student success and inclusion programs.

At Syracuse, Singleton oversees New Student Programs; the Intercultural Collective—home to the Disability Cultural Center, LGBTQ Resource Center, Multicultural Affairs and Native Student Program, 113 Euclid, 119 Euclid (which transitioned to the Student Experience division upon Singleton’s arrival); and the Center for International Services. Singleton will also work to support the experience of graduate and professional students at the University. In addition, Singleton leads the division’s efforts surrounding diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, working closely with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

“Dawn’s career has been marked by an impressive track record of leading student-centered initiatives, improving outcomes and supporting diverse student populations, all guided by a strong commitment to students and enhancing their belonging, success and engagement. Her breadth of experience, leadership and passion for this work will contribute greatly to our ongoing efforts in fostering a University welcoming to all,” says Senior Vice President and Chief Student Experience Officer Allen Groves.

Singleton brings more than 15 years of higher education leadership experience at a variety of colleges and universities, with roles in residential life, student development, and student success and inclusion, but her passion for student affairs started even earlier, during her time as a resident advisor while an undergraduate student. Throughout her experience, she has

focused on building pathways for students from their first year to graduation, encouraging their persistence, retention and belonging.

“As the Student Experience division, our work is intentionally framed in a way that considers all the ways we engage students. Creating welcoming, supportive environments across their experience is critical to creating sense of belonging, which is the core focus and passion of my work,” says Singleton. “I am looking forward to learning about and being part of Orange traditions, experiencing the vibrancy of all that’s happening on campus, meeting students and being part of this community that has been so welcoming to me, and in turn, supporting each student in feeling that sense of belonging and welcoming so that they can achieve success.”

Singleton earned a doctorate in educational leadership from Rowan University. In addition to her experience as a student affairs leader, her research has focused on intersectional analysis related to gender, ethnicity and culture, as related to the advancement of women in leadership roles within the United States and South Africa. She has also taught classes on topics in higher education and women’s and gender studies.



Dawn Singleton

## Bria Sowell Joins Multicultural Advancement Staff

**B**ria Sowell '14, G'16 has joined the Syracuse University Office of Multicultural Advancement (SUMA) team as its new director of development based in New York City at Lubin House.

Sowell joins Syracuse from Drexel University, where she served the Thomas R. Kline School of Law as director of development and alumni engagement. In this role, she led all fundraising plans and strategies, including leadership annual giving, annual fund giving, major gifts, volunteer engagement and alumni relations.

“Bria is knowledgeable, diligent, energetic and strategic in her fundraising approach, and I am thrilled to welcome her to our team,” says Rachel Vassel '91, G'21, associate vice president for multicultural advancement.

Sowell has deep connections within the alumni populations that SUMA serves. A member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., she has supported the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Program as a donor and is passionate about diversity and inclusion, targeted engagement, student support and donor stewardship.

A frontline fundraiser for the past seven years, she increased

engagement at the Drexel School of Law by 25% through programming and events, and single-handedly doubled the number of Dean’s Council members (the law school’s leadership giving program).

“I am passionate about helping others, especially those who look like me, have the same positive experience that I did at SU, through keeping our community connected and raising scholarship support to provide access and opportunity,” says Sowell. “I look forward to building partnerships that will help create a more just and equitable world, because if you change the campus, you change the world.”



Bria Sowell

## Mary Schmidt Campbell Gives Annual Wali Lecture

Mary Schmidt Campbell G'73, G'87, H'21 returned to campus Oct. 5 to give the 2023 Kashi and Kameshwar C. Wali Lecture in the Sciences and Humanities, an annual event where the sciences and humanities converge to foster dialogue and new perspectives on current topics. The lecture honors the life, work and legacies of Professor Emeritus Kameshwar C. Wali and his wife, Kashi.

Schmidt Campbell's lecture, "Towards a Model of Equity in Graduate Education," covered the expectations, assumptions and practices that she and her husband, George Campbell G'77, encountered at Syracuse University influencing their academic success.

Schmidt Campbell was the 10th president of Spelman College, from 2015 to 2022. She received a B.A. in English literature from

Swarthmore College and earned a master's in art history, as well as a Ph.D. in humanities from Syracuse University. She was also a curator at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse and an art editor at the *Syracuse New Times*. She holds numerous honorary degrees, including from Swarthmore and Syracuse.

Schmidt Campbell is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was elected to the Unity Technologies board in September 2020. She served as a member of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation board from 2008-2020 and currently sits on the boards of the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, as well as on the advisory boards of the Bonner Foundation and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.



Mary Schmidt Campbell

## Tyriese Robinson Named Inaugural Recipient of the Hon. Norman A. Mordue '66, L'71 Law Scholarship

Second-year law student Tyriese Robinson has been named the first recipient of a scholarship established in memory of the Hon. Norman A. Mordue '66, L'71.

The Northern District of New York (NDNY) Federal Court Bar Association (FCBA) Hon. Norman A. Mordue '66, L'71 Law Scholarship provides a Syracuse University College of Law student with the means to pursue a legal education and follow in the footsteps of Mordue, a decorated war hero who served as chief judge for the NDNY and taught trial practice at the College of Law as an adjunct professor. The NDNY FCBA established the scholarship after the passing of Judge Mordue in December 2022.

Robinson, a native of South Carolina, served in the U.S. Air Force. He was a GeoBase engineering technician and lead honor guard trainer at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. After the Air Force, Robinson completed a bachelor's degree in psychology at Clemson University, where he served as a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs federal work-study student, president of the Clemson Student Veterans



Tyriese Robinson

Association and in a number of volunteer roles across campus.

After graduating from Clemson, he selected Syracuse College of Law for his legal studies due to the University and college's dedication to serving veterans.

"I decided to come to law school because I felt that there was tension between how my community viewed the law and how the rest of the country viewed the law. I was already familiar with one aspect of the tension, so I decided to learn the other. I wanted to learn the law," says Robinson.

At the College of Law, Robinson is a student attorney in the Betty and Michael D. Wohl Veterans Legal Clinic, a member of the Military and Veterans Law Society and a volunteer with the Cold Case Justice Initiative.

"Being selected as the inaugural recipient of this scholarship means that I must continue to strive for excellence in honor of Judge Mordue's legacy," says Robinson. "His scholarship will serve as a valuable resource so that I cannot only graduate, but graduate in a manner that upholds the dignity and reputation of Syracuse Law."

## Craig M. Boise to Conclude Tenure as College of Law Dean at End of Academic Year

**C**raig M. Boise, dean of the College of Law since 2016, has announced his decision to step down as dean at the end of the 2023-24 academic year. Following a sabbatical, Boise will return to the College of Law to teach, mentor and continue his work as a legal scholar.

“Craig’s impact has been transformative,” says Gretchen Ritter, vice chancellor, provost and chief academic officer of Syracuse University. “Under his leadership, the College of Law has been exceptionally strong in research, which is not traditional for law schools, and it has been innovative and entrepreneurial, particularly as it relates to evolving the legal education space to meet the needs of today’s students, increasing accessibility and opening doors to those who may come from post-traditional pathways. Craig has been an outstanding leader, partner and innovator and will leave behind an incredible success on which to be built.”

Boise came to Syracuse University from Cleveland State University College of Law during a period of great stress in legal education, when there were substantially fewer law school applicants and a soft legal job market.

“Craig saw these challenges as opportunities,” says Chancellor Kent Syverud. “He knew that law schools that could quickly pivot and creatively figure out ways to develop collaborative, interdisciplinary, novel and relevant course offerings and degrees would stand out competitively and attract talented students

and faculty. With the launching of the JDinteractive online J.D. program and other innovations in legal education, enhancing the college’s fiscal stability and expanding experiential learning and international program opportunities, Craig has propelled the College of Law to new heights. I look forward to his continued contributions to Syracuse University as a legal scholar and colleague.”

With 20 years of experience in legal education, Boise has been a sought-after leader in the field, having served on the American Bar Association’s 21-member Council of the Section on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, the accrediting body for all U.S. law schools; and the inaugural Advisory Council of the ABA Legal Education Police Practices Consortium, as well as various leadership roles with the Deans Forum of the Association of American Law Schools.

“No dean remains in the role forever. We are merely stewards of our institutions for the time that we serve, with the goal of leaving them better than we found them,” says Boise. “I’m gratified to know that the College of Law is in a strong position on all fronts and that we can embrace the future with confidence. What our outstanding faculty and staff have created together—supported by our remarkable alumni—will serve as a solid foundation on which the next generation of extraordinary Orange lawyers will build their professional lives as they, in turn, strengthen the college’s reputation and impact.”



## University Sheraton to be Converted to Residence Hall

Syracuse University has announced plans to convert the Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel & Conference Center into a nearly 400-bed, on-campus undergraduate residence hall. The Sheraton will close following Commencement 2024, at which point conversion of the property will begin. The new residence hall is anticipated to open in fall 2024.

This decision follows the completion of a comprehensive, three-year housing review which, among other things, found that undergraduate students wanted more options for living in University housing on North Campus that provide seamless access to various campus facilities and amenities.

“Today’s students are looking for a college experience that includes challenging academic programs, diverse extracurricular opportunities and comfortable, modern housing,” says Allen Groves, senior vice president and chief student experience officer. “By converting the Sheraton into a residence hall, we are creating new housing opportunities that make it easier for our students, especially our first-year and transfer students, to acclimate to life at

Syracuse, find their community and develop a sense of belonging.”

The conversion of the Sheraton space, which was approved by the University’s Board of Trustees, is the latest step in advancing the vision and strategic priorities of the Campus Framework, a 20-year roadmap designed to align the University’s physical presence with its vision and mission.

“Syracuse University is continuously assessing our footprint and considering ways to enhance and strengthen the living, learning and working environment for all members of our community,” says Brett Padgett, senior vice president and chief financial officer. “This includes renovating and repurposing existing space, procuring new space and working with community partners to identify opportunities for collaboration. The Sheraton presented an ideal opportunity to reimagine how our current space is leveraged and repurpose it to put it toward its best and highest use.”

Sheraton representatives will contact guests and groups with reservations scheduled after Commencement to discuss alternate arrangements for accommodations.

## New Student Representatives Appointed to Board of Trustees

Dylan France '24 and Nathanael Linton are among four new student representatives appointed to the Syracuse University Board of Trustees.

France is a senior studying finance and real estate in the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, where she is a Whitman Leadership Scholar and a member of the Renée Crown University Honors Program. She is minoring in global political economy in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Passionate about finance, she was recently promoted to senior analyst in the Orange Value Fund.

Beyond her schoolwork, France is an active member of the Syracuse community. She previously served as the president, internal secretary and a founding Syracuse University Black Student Union member. She is involved in the Syracuse Student Association as comptroller and a University Senate member.

France serves as one of two undergraduate student representatives for the 2023-24 academic year, her second year in the role. She participates, ex officio, on the Board Enrollment and the Student Experience Committee and reports to the Board at Executive Committee and full Board meetings.

Linton is a third-year law student in the College of Law. There he is a member of the Travis H.D. Lewin Advocacy Honor Society, both the national trial competition team as well as the appellate competition team, serves as a research assistant to Professor William C. Banks and is the managing editor of the *Journal of Global Rights and Organizations*.



Dylan France



Nathanael Linton

Before coming to the College of Law, Linton served on the board of trustees at his undergraduate college, Pace University. There, he served on the Academic Affairs subcommittee. His board obligations were accompanied by several other leadership responsibilities, including serving as the honors college president and student representative of the Northeast Regional Honors Council.

Linton serves as the law student representative for the 2023-24 academic year. He participates, ex officio, on the Board Academic Affairs, and Enrollment and the Student Experience Committees and reports to the Board at Executive Committee and full Board meetings.

# Delta Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Celebrates 50 Years of Reactivation

**O**n April 14, 1973, 30 young Black men searching for community at Syracuse University banded together to reactivate the dormant Delta Zeta chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. On April 22, 2023, 150 Alphas spanning the last 50 years of the Delta Zeta chapter gathered at Lubin House to celebrate that legacy.

“Those reactivating members of the Gold Line have an elevated place in the history of Delta Zeta chapter,” says journalist Rob Lewis ’84, who chaired the event along with James Fletcher ’75, a chief financial officer, and Phil Dunigan ’76, a retired physician. “We wanted to bring together as many members of the 1973 line as possible to celebrate their 50th anniversary.”

In addition to five decades of brotherhood, the event was attended by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. regional vice president Christopher Ellis Jr., who presented members of the Gold Line with their 50-year membership pins.

“The shared experience of getting pinned for my 50th anniversary with seven of my line brothers in front of the whole chapter in New York was very special,” says Dunigan. “This is usually something that happens individually, as a footnote at a regional or national convention.”

Recognized at the ceremony as an honored guest was Charles Wright, who in 1973 served as an advisor along with Ozel Brazil and Richard Smith to guide the 30 aspirants and facilitate the reactivation. Brazil and Smith were honored posthumously, and their family members accepted plaques in their honor.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. is the oldest Black Greek-letter fraternity in the United States, founded at Cornell University in 1906. The Iota chapter at Syracuse University was founded in 1910

but suffered periods of inactivity and was dormant until reestablished as Delta Zeta chapter in 1949. The chapter fell inactive again, until it was reactivated in 1973. That line and its 30 members marked a turning point, with the chapter remaining an active and vital part of the Syracuse University community and forever impacting the lives of the young men who became members.

Lewis says the vision for the event was to establish the connective tissue between the decades of brotherhood, with members from each decade reflecting on the contributions of the organization to the community and their own lives. Members of the Gold Line came from as far away as St. Thomas, Virgin Islands (attorney Douglas Capdeville ’74, G’77, L’77), and Olympia, Washington (Dunigan), for the event.

Dunigan, whose uncle had been an Alpha at Fordham University, says it was “an honor and necessary duty” to help reactivate the chapter in 1973, as there was a need on campus and in the regional community. Indeed, the reestablishment of Delta Zeta chapter spurred a reactivation of Alpha chapters throughout New York over the next two years, including Utica College, C.W. Post College and Hofstra University.

Gregory Brock ’76, a retired insurance executive who traveled with his wife to the event from Fort Myers, Florida, recalls not knowing much about fraternities before being urged by friends to join. “In retrospect, I can attribute many blessings in my life to being a member of Delta Zeta chapter and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,” he says. “To witness so many brothers from Delta Zeta chapter who continue to live out our mission every day in their personal and professional lives was great, and it was energizing and reaffirming to know that Alpha is still well represented and leading on the SU campus.”

Although Fletcher had the opportunity to join the reactivating line in 1973, he initially deferred, but pledged the following year after watching brothers become active in student government and across campus. “They created a legacy that has been the bedrock of the chapter for 50 years, creating lifelong memories, friendships and commitment to the fraternity,” he says.

For retired U.S. Air Force pilot Milton Johnson ’83, the event brought back many memories of college life. “When I look back, being a Dean of Pledges was special because it provided a key role



Douglas Capdeville receiving his 50-year membership pin in Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.





Former chapter advisor Charles Wright receives the Brotherhood Award from Leonard Robbins '79 (left). Phil Dunigan and Rob Lewis (right)

in growing the fraternity,” he recalls. “We all form unique bonds, but being the dean and bringing in new brothers taught me lessons that I’ve used in life far beyond Syracuse University.”

Lewis was one of those members initiated during Johnson’s tenure. Although he’d been integrally involved in its planning, he says the event “felt like joining ancestry.com and finding all these relatives you never knew you had,” Lewis says. “Part of our initiation required us to reflect on history, but now we got to connect actual people to names on an organization chart. It was very, very moving to bring the family back together.”

That was true for Jared Green ’01, a geotechnical engineer who says he was honored to be in the room with Alpha brothers he’d admired for many years. “As a past president, I was humbled to be able to speak with both Michael Rucker ’74, the president in 1973, and with current chapter president Jordan Pierre ’23.”

Educator Ronald Taylor ’15, G’16 says he considers Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. the backbone of his personal development. When he heard the chapter was coming together to celebrate the 1973 line, he knew he had to be there. “This was probably the largest gathering of Syracuse brothers I have had the privilege to be part of,” he says. “It was a bit of a homecoming, seeing brothers who are my personal and professional mentors, including Charlie Lester ’81, Keith Brown ’82, Rob Lewis ’84 and Victor Holman ’82. My greatest takeaway was being able to spend time with and reflect on men who saw fit to invest in a rich tradition and legacy at Syracuse.”

Despite the reunion aspect to the evening, the event was equally impactful on collegiate members in attendance. Pierre was one of six undergraduates who traveled from campus for the event. “We have a moniker—DZ Rich Forever— meaning that the work that we

do as Alphas transcends the four years that we are within this institution; we are Alphas in the world and the work that we do impacts lives beyond these four walls of our institution,” he says. “This is the first time I’ve been able to see that lineage in person, to see how our chapter exists within the world at large.”

For Pierre, an Our Time Has Come Scholar who served as Delta Zeta chapter president during 2022-23, meeting members of the 1973 line was the most memorable aspect of the event. “Often you don’t think about history when you’re in the act of making it,” he says. “I don’t think they knew 50 years ago that we would still be what we are today.”

According to members, the chapter’s intermittent dormancy through the years was largely related to enrollment and a lack of financial resources for Black students. In keeping with the fraternity’s service motto—“First of all, Servants of all, We shall transcend all”—Delta Zeta alumni presented a \$100,000 check to Rachel Vassel ’91, G’21, associate vice president of multicultural advancement, to add to the existing Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Endowment within the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund, which provides need-based scholarships to underrepresented students.

“This was a real full-circle moment,” says Lewis. “We are not only keeping our organization moving forward but are accomplishing our goals of being fiscally responsible and paying it forward.”



**If you’d like to support Delta Zeta chapter with a gift to the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. Scholarship, please visit [giving.syr.edu/ways-to-give/index.html](https://giving.syr.edu/ways-to-give/index.html).**

# Connection and Collaboration on Martha's Vineyard

Every August, Black alumni from colleges and universities across the Northeast hold reunions on Martha's Vineyard, joining historically Black colleges and universities, who celebrate Legacy Week. Syracuse University alumni have gathered in Oak Bluffs for CBT: Martha's Vineyard since 2018, a mini-reunion always considered special for the historic significance of its beautiful locale.

For the first time in 2023, CBT: Martha's Vineyard included collaborative events with other institutions—Duke and Harvard universities—enhancing existing connections and forging new friendships.

The three-day reunion kicked off Aug. 14 with an ACC Mixer attended by 118 Syracuse and Duke alumni at Garde East Marina. Despite the longtime basketball rivalry, alumni in attendance found plenty in common: Syracuse grads who are Duke parents and vice versa, undergraduate alumni of one institution who earned graduate degrees at the other, fraternity and sorority membership, as well as industry and professional connections.

The SU/Duke partnership was conceived by Clarybel Peguero '97, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement at Duke University, who helped to launch her department at Duke using Syracuse's Office of Multicultural Advancement as a model, with instrumental assistance from Rachel Vassel '91, G'21, associate vice president of multicultural advancement. With Duke alumni interested in convening on Martha's Vineyard, Peguero reached out to Vassel about the possibility of a joint event. "The amount of interest shown by our Duke alumni was completely overwhelming. Their desire to get together to fellowship with each other and to network with Syracuse alumni was clear," she says. "Personally, I got to experience my alma mater and the institution where I have worked for 15 years coming together. I wore my blue and white dress to represent that Duke magic and proudly rocked a Syracuse name tag."

The next day, 275 Syracuse and Harvard University alumni and friends gathered at historic Union Chapel for *Leave! Leave Now!*, a film and talk given by Syracuse University artist-in-residence Carrie Mae Weems H'17. The presentation, a joint project of the Syracuse Office of Multicultural Advancement and the Harvard University Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, told the migration story of Weems' grandfather Frank Weems, a tenant farmer in Arkansas, who made his way to Chicago on foot after being beaten and left for dead by a white mob. Weems was introduced by her friend Cheryl Finley, inaugural director of the Atlanta University Center Art History + Curatorial Studies Collective, Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Art and Visual Culture at Spelman College and associate professor

in the History of Art Department at Cornell University. The presentation was followed by a discussion on reparations with the artist and law professors Paula C. Johnson (Syracuse), Cornell William Brooks (Harvard) and Kenneth W. Mack (Harvard).

On Wednesday evening, Orange alumni and friends came together for a final reception at the home of Camille Donald Simpson '95, who hosted the event in support of the Midwin Charles '95 OTHC Scholarship Fund. "Midwin was a dear friend that I had known since high school," says Simpson. "It was actually a visit to her at Syracuse that made me transfer to Syracuse in my sophomore year. I feel so connected to our alumni during the Martha's Vineyard events, and this year was particularly meaningful to me as it was a way to honor Midwin."

Charles was a prominent defense attorney in New York City and later a legal analyst on MSNBC and CNN. Following her death in 2021, friends established an OTHC scholarship in her memory.

"Midwin was the absolute best of everything that a Syracuse University student can strive to become in so many ways. To be able to work with the amazing Rachel Vassel, her Office of Multicultural Advancement team and close friends who all loved Midwin to help create and raise funds for a scholarship to honor and share her legacy with our wonderful Orange community and beyond is a wonderful privilege," says Michael Barbosa '96, a member of the SUMA Advisory Council. "We had a great time as always coming together as a community to do good and important work to support current and future SU students."

While Syracuse University's diverse alumni are always happy coming back together in any locale, doing so on Martha's Vineyard is distinctive, and alumni in attendance agree that this year was exceptional.

"Martha's Vineyard is a special place for a lot of African Americans and is a great spot for many schools to engage alumni," says Simpson. "The Syracuse events with Duke and Harvard highlight that. These types of joint ventures are not easy to accomplish but can happen on the Vineyard."

"I appreciate the creativity of the Office of Multicultural Advancement team for continuing to find new ways to bring alums together to provide fun and informative experiences," adds Dana Harrell '71, G'73. "It was a wonderful three days on the Vineyard."

## Alison Murray and Parrish Smith Join Alumni Association Board of Directors

**A**lison Murray '01 and Parrish Smith '14 are among five new members of the Syracuse University Alumni Association Board of Directors, beginning terms July 1, 2023.

As a student, Murray was an ROTC cadet and cheerleader. Today, she is a 20-year Army veteran who has continued to be a cheerleader for Syracuse University in each of the half-dozen cities where she has lived. Since graduating, she's been active with the Office of Multicultural Advancement, OVMA and the Daniel and Gayle D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families. She is an experienced digital health and virtual nursing provider and the president and CEO of In2uitive Solutions LLC.

Smith is a vice president at Neuberger Berman, a private investment firm in New York City. He calls his time on campus "well-rounded," having been involved in Greek life, served as an orientation leader, studied abroad and been active in several student organizations. Since graduating, he has served on the University's Generation Orange Leadership Council, something he considers a return on the investment Syracuse made in him.



Alison Murray



Parrish Smith

## Kimberlin Butler Delivers M.P.A. Convocation Address

**T**wenty years after earning an M.P.A. from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs as a Ronald McNair Fellow, Kimberlin Butler G'03 returned to Maxwell to deliver the keynote address at the school's 2023 Convocation. In her message, she shared her educational and professional journey to become the first senior director of foundation engagement at Mathematica, and she urged graduates to consider their role in advancing democracy and making the world better for all through connection, leadership and service.

"You have to choose not to be discouraged and see this moment as a chance to lead, partner with others and amplify your voice to make history," she says. "I'm personally invigorated by it. It's an invitation for equity-focused, cross-sector collaboration."

Butler says the MPA program gave her the tools to build bridges "across communities" and challenged her to work outside of her comfort zone. Mathematica harnesses data, analytics and technology to help its public- and private-sector clients address social challenges such as education and health disparities. "It's all about caring for those we are privileged



Kimberlin Butler

to engage in research," she says. "It's about doing the research with them, not for them. They own the story because they are living the experience."

Butler has more than 17 years of experience in public education, public affairs and philanthropy. Before joining Mathematica, she served as a strategy consultant for Greenway Strategy Group, as a director of strategic partnerships for Strive Together and as an education pioneer/manager for the U.S. Department of Education.

Butler is an avid volunteer, having served on the boards of Education Pioneers, the Urban League of Portland, the National Urban League and the MRG Foundation. She was among the recipients of the Women We Admire Top 50 Leaders of DC for 2023 Award and, she was named an Outstanding Atlantan and included in the Atlanta Business Chronicle's 40 Under 40 List.

In addition to an M.P.A. from Syracuse, Butler earned a B.A. in mass communication from Louisiana State University and a doctorate in educational and organizational leadership at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

## Kristyn Cook, Clothilde Ewing and John Wallace Named Letter Winners of Distinction

**K**ristyn Cook '97, G'99, Clothilde Ewing '00 and John Wallace '96 were among five former student-athletes honored in September at the 58th annual Letter Winner of Distinction dinner.

Director of Athletics John Wildhack '80 cited the honorees as “accomplished leaders who have given back to their communities in many ways” who serve as example for all who have worn or will wear the Block S. “We are excited to bring them back to campus to celebrate their success.”

Cook served as a team captain of the women’s basketball team as a senior in 1996-97 and was the 1997 Big East Scholar Athlete of the Year. She earned All-Big East Third Team honors as a sophomore and was a member of the 1995-96 team that won the Big East Conference co-championship. Cook tallied 963 points, grabbed 324 rebounds and had 131 assists and 91 steals in 91 career games at Syracuse. Cook was a 1996 Big East Academic All-Star and earned Athletic Director’s Honor Roll and Dean’s List honors in every semester at Syracuse.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in policy studies and a master’s in public administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. After Syracuse, she attended the American College of Financial Service and the General Management Program at Harvard Business School. In 2007, Cook began her career as an owner-agent at State Farm. She advanced through the company, holding various positions, including as an agency executive assistant, vice president of agency/sales, area vice president and senior vice president of agency and marketing. Cook is currently a chief agency sales and marketing officer, responsible for the marketing department and for the State Farm agency force. In her community, Cook has volunteered as a member of the Teach for America board of directors and on the member board of directors for The American College of Financial Services. She earned the 2018 Women Who Mean Business Award by *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, the 2017 Rising Star Champion Award by the Georgia State Riskies, and the 2016 Georgia Influencer by Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

A three-time Orange captain and goaltender for the Orange during the first three seasons of the women’s lacrosse program, Ewing graduated with a dual degree in political science and broadcast journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. She still holds Syracuse records for save percentage and goals against average in a season and career, and the single-game saves record (25 at Connecticut in 1999). In 35 career games, she recorded 285 saves and had a .552 save percentage.

The 1999 Orange won the ECAC Championship and the 2000 squad earned the program’s first NCAA Tournament invitation. Ewing was named to the 2000 Intercollegiate Women’s Lacrosse Coaches Association Division I Academic Squad and won 1999-2000 Arthur Ashe Jr. Sports Scholars Award.



Kristyn Cook



Clothilde Ewing



John Wallace

She began her professional career as an associate producer and assignment editor for CBS News. After four years at CBS, she became a senior associate producer at Harpo Productions. In 2011 she became the director of constituency press for Obama for America, the former president’s re-election campaign. Ewing remained in the political field for the next three years as the chief of strategic planning for the city of Chicago. In 2016, Ewing joined Tempus Inc. as the director of communications, where she stayed for three years until she moved to The Chicago Community Trust, where she is the vice president of strategic communications. Ewing is also an author of two children’s books: *Stella Keeps the Sun Up* and *Stella and the Mystery of the Missing Tooth*.

A standout men’s basketball player, Wallace still ranks third on the Syracuse career scoring and rebounding record lists. In 1996, Wallace helped lead the Orange to the NCAA championship game. During the NCAA Tournament run, he hit the game-winning three-point field goal against Georgia in the Sweet 16 that moved the Orange to the Elite Eight.

A first-year All-American, Wallace was a standout throughout his Orange tenure. He earned All-Big East honors in each of his four seasons at Syracuse, including All-Big East First Team recognition as a junior and senior. As a senior, he set the Syracuse record for most points in a single season, scoring 845 points. A first-round selection in the 1996 NBA Draft by the New York Knicks, Wallace played in the league for seven seasons. In 2020, his Syracuse No. 44 was retired.

Wallace enjoyed a nine-year professional basketball career, including with the Knicks, Toronto Raptors, Detroit Pistons, Phoenix Suns and Miami Heat, and played two seasons internationally with Panionios Basketball Club (Greece) and Snaidero Udine (Italy). After retiring from the sport, he worked as a public relations specialist with the Knicks, in client sales with Hildreths Glass Inc., as a business development manager for David Schuldiner Inc. and as a consulting specialist for Ghering-Tricot Corporation. Wallace is a board member for the Willow Street Foundation and Heavenly Productions Foundation. He earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Syracuse.

# Tara Favors and Sammy Cueva to Co-Chair CBT 2024

An important factor contributing to the success of each Coming Back Together (CBT) reunion are the alumni co-chairs who donate their time and talent to partner with the Office of Multicultural Advancement in planning and hosting the weekend. CBT 2024 will be no exception, with the dynamic duo of Tara Favors '95 and Zhamyr "Sammy" Cueva '93 in the co-chair roles.

"It's such an honor to be asked," both Favors and Cueva said, independently of each other.

Favors has had a long career in human resources, currently serving as chief human resources officer at Mutual of America Financial Group. A member of the Syracuse University Office of Multicultural Advancement (SUMA) Advisory Council, she spearheaded creation of the Kevin Richardson H'20 Scholarship through the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Program and later made a major gift to fund the Quiet Lounge at 119 Euclid, a cultural hub for Black students.

Favors, who attended her first CBT reunion in 2011 after missing several in a row due to family obligations, has been a regular ever since. "I'm a big believer in Syracuse University and a big believer in the friendships that come out of the school. CBT captures all that," she says.

Beyond the simple togetherness, Favors says it's important for students to see Black and Latino alumni come back to the school "to give them a vision of who they can be in the future and what achievements are possible."

Her goal for the weekend is to put more emphasis on connecting with students, both personally and through financial support. "I really want to make sure that we do that without losing the heart and soul of the fun of it all," she says.

Cueva, also a member of the SUMA Advisory Council, is a successful New York City restaurateur with a background in



Tara Favors



Sammy Cueva

special events planning that extends to his student days at Syracuse. Nonetheless, he did not attend his first CBT until 2017, when he was awarded the Chancellor's Citation for Excellence in Entrepreneurship. "The event was special and helped me reconnect with so many friends. It gave me a new purpose to give back and help create those same memories for others," he says.

That year, Cueva funded a bench on the Orange Grove to commemorate the University's nine Latino Greek organizations that are members of the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations. In 2020, he helped lead his fraternity, Lambda Upsilon Lambda, to become the first Latino fraternity at Syracuse to launch a scholarship endowment through the OTHC program.

Cueva says he accepted the co-chair role to continue to educate and inspire Latino alumni to participate in CBT. "CBT does not have the same gravitas for Latino alumni that it does for the Black community, which has made it a staple event," he says. "I'm eager to work on building the same momentum for the Latino community by helping drive content and marketing to attract attendance."

Cueva believes CBT is a wonderful showcase of Latino and Black excellence to the current student body and administration, allowing alumni to serve as a resource for students who "face the same financial and/or cultural

challenges we faced when we attended, especially when many of us navigated the system with limited access to information and resources" he says.

"We as alumni are part of those needed resources. It is a wonderful feeling to be in the same room with like-minded individuals who have a drive to succeed and want to encourage their community to strive for greatness."

## Syracuse Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. Alumni Chapter Celebrates 50 Years

Members of the Syracuse Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. celebrated the 50-year anniversary of their chartering on Oct. 14 with a gala at Drumlins Country Club. The affair, co-chaired by Kevin Robinson '19, Ernest Daily G'22 and Maurice Etheredge '85, celebrated the contributions of the chapter to the greater Syracuse community over five decades, most notably supervision of the collegiate Delta Beta Chapter at Syracuse University and building a \$65,000 endowment over the last 20 years to support college scholarships.

"Our chapter has committed itself to supporting Syracuse youth, particularly in the African American community, by serving as big brothers, and tutoring and mentoring middle, high school and college students," Etheredge says.

Melvin Stith G'73, G'78 joined Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. as an undergraduate at Norfolk State University. When he arrived in Syracuse to attend graduate school, there was not an established Kappa alumni chapter in the city, but he soon found a community of other Kappa men. He and 11 others petitioned their national organization to start a chapter, which was officially chartered Sept. 29, 1973, and has been active ever since.

The Syracuse Alumni Chapter has focused on service to the greater Syracuse community, primarily through assisting young men with life challenges through its Guide Right Program, which aims to develop young men through mentoring, leadership and character growth.

The chapter has been honored for its efforts as small Chapter of the Year in the Northern Province, and members have served in regional and national fraternity leadership, including charter member Ronald R. Young serving as Grand Polemarch (national president). Most recently, Etheredge completed an eight-year term as the Northern Province Keeper of Records.

In March 1993, the Syracuse Alumni Chapter dedicated a scholarship in memory of charter member M. Gilbert Kirkland and began awarding an annual scholarship to a young Black man in the greater Syracuse community to help support his college education. Later, a second scholarship was dedicated to Merle R. Greene. To date, the chapter has presented 70 scholarships and has grown the annual scholarship amount from two \$250 scholarships per year to two \$2,000 scholarships per year. "We are proud of our scholarship students and the part we have played in helping them achieve their goals," says Etheredge.

One of those is Keyshawn Blakes G'21, who attended Buffalo State University with assistance of a Kappa Alpha Psi scholarship and went on to earn a master of science in higher postsecondary education from Syracuse University. He also became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. when he was initiated into the



Members of the Syracuse Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. celebrating 50 years of their charter. Charter members are in the first row.

Syracuse Alumni Chapter in 2019, becoming the only chapter scholarship recipient thus far to become a member of the fraternity and chapter.

"Being involved in Kappa has changed my life," says Blakes, now director of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion at Onondaga Community College. "I've learned not only how to be a better leader, public speaker and professional, but also the tools for becoming a better man in my community. I really benefit from the abundance of professional development opportunities and know I always have people willing to mentor and support me through any obstacles."

Blakes shared the impact the organization has made on his life at the anniversary celebration. "Helping young men of color attain a higher education is something I'm extremely passionate about," he says. "I want to make the next 50 years even more transformational."

Daily says the event was an occasion to honor charter members in a meaningful way while they're alive to receive the appreciation. "It was also a great opportunity to see younger brothers step up within the chapter to lead the event and guide us into the next 50-plus years."

That was the consensus of those that came together to celebrate the legacy of the chapter. "Knowing that a Kappa chapter I helped create 50 years ago continues to have a positive impact on the Syracuse community is very meaningful," says Stith, dean emeritus of the Whitman School of Management. "I was happy to be in attendance to enjoy this festive celebration."

# Dwight Freeney Inducted into College Football Hall of Fame

**D**wight Freeney '02, one of the best pass rushers in collegiate and professional football history, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame during the 65th National Football Foundation (NFF) Annual Awards Dinner Dec. 5.

Still the career sacks leader in NCAA history, the Hartford, Connecticut native becomes the 10th Syracuse alum to enter the College Football Hall of Fame as a player. There are also nine coaches in the hall of fame who spent at least a portion of their career at Syracuse. In addition to his selection to the College Football Hall of Fame, Freeney was a finalist for the 2023 Professional Football Hall of Fame.

In conjunction with the honor, Freeney was celebrated by the NFF with an on-campus salute on Nov. 3 in the JMA Wireless Dome during Syracuse football vs. Boston College.

"Holding the NCAA record for career pass sacks per game, Dwight Freeney unnerved opposing quarterbacks while leading the Orange to three bowl berths and authoring one of the best defensive performances in Syracuse football history," said NFF President and CEO Steve Hatchell. "We are thrilled to honor him at the JMA Wireless Dome as a member of the 2023 College Football Hall of Fame Class."

A 2001 unanimous First Team All-American, Freeney was a finalist for the Bednarik, Lombardi and Nagurski awards, and he finished ninth in 2001 Heisman Trophy voting. He holds the NCAA record for career pass sacks per game (1.61), and he finished his career as the NCAA leader in single-season sacks with 17.5 in 2001. He had eight forced fumbles in 2001, which places him third in the NCAA record books, and he averaged 0.67 forced fumbles per game in 2001. His 4.5 sacks against Virginia Tech Oct. 21, 2000, set a conference record.

The 2001 team captain and MVP, Freeney currently holds school records for career (50.5) and single-season tackles for loss (25.5 in 2001) and forced fumbles in a career (14). He finished his career with 104 tackles and 34 sacks, second only to College Football Hall of Famer Tim Green on Syracuse's all-time list.

Freeney led the Orange to three bowl berths, including a 20-13 win over Kentucky in the 1999 Music City Bowl and a 26-3 victory over Kansas State in the 2001 Insight.com Bowl. During his four seasons in upstate New York, he helped guide the Orange to a 31-17 record and a No. 25 final national ranking in 1998 and the No. 14 spot in 2001. His efforts landed him an invitation to participate in the 2002 Senior Bowl.

A two-time unanimous First Team All-Big East performer and a two-time First Team All-ECAC selection, Freeney helped Syracuse claim the 1998 Big East title, and he shared Defensive Player of the Year honors with College Football Hall of Famer Ed Reed (Miami) in 2001. Syracuse University will retire his jersey next year.

Drafted in the first round of the NFL Draft (11th overall) by the Colts, Freeney played in Indianapolis from 2002-12, San Diego (2013-14), Arizona (2015), Atlanta (2016) and Seattle/Detroit (2017). He was a seven-time Pro Bowl selection, and he was named First Team All-Pro three times (2004-05, 2009) and Second Team All-Pro in 2003. He helped the Colts win Super Bowl XLI in 2007.

Freeney founded the Dwight Freeney Foundation, which gives back to underserved communities. He is a supporter of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, and his charitable donations have also included the West Indian Foundation, Blue Hills New Testament Church of God and Bloomfield High School, his alma mater.



Freeney with his wife, Brittany, daughter Olivia and Syracuse Director of Athletics John Wildhack '80

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

# Milestones

**Lisa Brabham '86** was honored by NYC Health + Hospitals on Doctors' Day 2023 for her work as an obstetrician/gynecologist. She serves as director of gynecology at NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull in Brooklyn, New York.

**Cyrille Phipps '87** completed a short film, *Mama Duke*, that premiered at the Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles in 2022 and was subsequently screened at the 2022 Coney Island Film Festival and the Roxbury International Film Festival in Boston. She's now working on a short documentary based on the book, *We're Not Ok*, which examines the challenges Black faculty members experience in academia, particularly at primarily white institutions. She is an assistant professor of communication and media arts at Marymount College in Manhattan.



Cyrille Phipps (far right) speaking at the Coney Island Film Festival



Lisa Brabham



Chase Vassel

**Fatimah Muhammad-Moody '90** has been elected Eastern Regional Director of Jack and Jill for 2023-25.

**Sylvia Montan L'94** has joined the board of Impact 100 NYC, an organization that funds transformative change to help people and communities of New York City overcome adversity.

**Joannie Diaz '11** started a new position as the head of Early Careers Business Talent Acquisition, Americas at Bloomberg. She and her husband, **Rafael Balbi '11**, welcomed a baby boy in April.

**Lucia Damerau '13, L'16** has been named director of immigration legal services at OLA of Eastern Long Island (Organización Latino Americana).

**Chase Vassel '22** was named director of partnerships for the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

**Adore Ellis '23** has been promoted to assistant designer of men's tops at Levi Strauss & Co. in San Francisco.

**Congratulations** to the following alumni who have been named to the inaugural cohort of the 'Cuse50 Alumni Entrepreneur Award winners, which recognizes the 50-fastest growing businesses owned or led by Syracuse alumni:

**Joshua Aviv '15, G'17, SparkCharge**

**Kelsey Davis '19, G'20, CLLCTVE LLC**

**Tamekia Flowers-Ball '97, Ephiphany Blue**

**Kori Hale G'13, CultureBanx**

**Kelo Makelele, IVMF '19, '20, RedTrace Technologies**

**Paul A. Murdock '85, MCG Consulting Services**

**Sheena Parker, IVMF '18, '19, 4SYT Industries**

**Giacona M. Williams '10, Grova Creative**

**S Office of Multicultural Advancement**

# CBT Business Conference

## March 1-2, 2024



# IN MEMORIAM



**Maria Elaine Carrington-Lockhart G'79**, of Norfolk, Virginia, died March 3, 2023, after a long illness.

Born in Syracuse, New York, she was educated in Syracuse public schools and graduated from Central Tech High School in 1962. She studied English and received a

B.A. degree from Le Moyne College in Syracuse in 1974. She taught English in Syracuse from 1974 to 1980 and earned a master's degree from Syracuse University in 1979.

Carrington-Lockhart left Syracuse to become a professor at Howard University, where she taught radio, television and film in the School of Communications from 1981 to 1990.

In 1989, she earned a doctorate in educational administration from American University.

She spent the next 20 years in Africa working in education. Her first stop was in Monrovia, Liberia, followed by time spent in South Africa. In 1999, she was named Peace Corps associate director for education in Nairobi, Kenya. She supervised and placed Peace Corps volunteer teachers in secondary and elementary schools throughout Kenya until 2004.

Carrington-Lockhart returned to the United States in 2004 and joined the United States Department of Education as a senior education program specialist until her retirement in 2021.

She is survived by her husband, James Lockhart; a son, Larry Heath-Rubama; a daughter, Michelle Rubama; two stepdaughters, Angela Lockhart Fisher and Lisa Lockhart McCoy; three grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.



**Elise Finch G'98**, of Mount Vernon, New York, died July 16, 2023.

An Emmy-winning meteorologist, Finch was born and raised in Mount Vernon. She earned a bachelor of science degree at Georgetown University, a master's degree in broadcast journalism from Syracuse

University and completed the Broadcast Meteorology Program at Mississippi State University. She also held a seal of approval from the American Meteorological Society.

A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., Finch began her career as a production coordinator at E! Entertainment Television. She moved up to CBS and Fox affiliates in Youngstown, Ohio, and the ABC affiliate in Austin, Minnesota, where she served as an anchor and reporter. She began reporting the weather on weekends at her next stint, for the CBS affiliate in Phoenix. She jumped networks to NBC, serving as a meteorologist for the *Early Today Show*, MSNBC and NBC Weather Plus. Finch returned to CBS in April 2007, joining the team of meteorologists at CBS New York, where she remained until her death. She was remembered by colleagues as a gifted and consummate professional who took great care with her work.

Finch is survived by her daughter, Grace; husband, Graig Henriques; her parents, James and Charlette Finch; her sister, Kiya Finch-Roberts and cousin, Jasmine Bellamy '92.



**Elijah Percell Skeete '17** of Lawrenceville, Georgia, died March 15, 2022.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Skeete earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from Syracuse University and launched a career in software and web development in the greater Atlanta area,

where his family had relocated. Most recently, he served as web developer for State Farm Insurance Agency.

# IN MEMORIAM

## Scholar, Teacher, Activist, Poet Mĩcere Githae Mũgo

**Mĩcere Githae Mũgo**, of Syracuse, New York, professor emerita of African American studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and an internationally known scholar, teacher, activist, poet and playwright, died June 30, 2023, after a heroic battle with multiple myeloma.

Mũgo joined the Syracuse University community in 1993. A Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence, she served as chair of the Department of African American studies, co-director of the University's Africa Initiative, founder and president of the Pan African Community of Central New York and founder and president of the United Women of Africa organization.

"Mĩcere served as a guiding light in the humanities and in University leadership, tirelessly connecting the academy to the community. Central to this endeavor was literature and African orature, or African oral culture as an Indigenous site of foundational and experiential knowledge," says Herbert Ruffin II, associate professor of African American studies. "Using this approach, Mũgo seamlessly intersected Pan African studies with the arts, literature, social justice and women and gender studies in her lifelong pursuit to improve the human condition by making 'scholarship...an agent for social transformation for all people, not just the privileged.'"

Born in Kenya, she was at the forefront of desegregation of that country's schools. She was the first Black child to attend the all-white Limuru Girls' School, a prestigious girls high school in Kenya.

She received a bachelor's degree from Makerere University in 1966, a master's degree in literature in 1973 from the University of New Brunswick and completed a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto in 1978. In 1980, Mũgo was elected as the first female dean of the faculty of arts and social sciences at the University of Nairobi.

Mũgo became a target of the Kenyan government because of her university job and opposition to government leadership. After repeated harassment, she fled the country with her two young daughters in 1982.

She came to the United States and became a lecturer at St. Lawrence University in Canton. She taught creative writing courses and Swahili to prisoners and traveled extensively throughout the United States, speaking to raise awareness of the conditions in Kenya.



She returned to Africa and became a professor at the University of Zimbabwe from 1984 to 1992. During this time, the Kenyan government revoked her citizenship, and she became a citizen of Zimbabwe. She regained her Kenyan citizenship in 2009.

In 1992, Mũgo returned to the United States as a visiting professor at the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University and joined the Syracuse faculty the following year. Mũgo's retirement in 2015 was marked with a two-day symposium, A Tireless Pursuit, that celebrated her global impact and drew participants from around the world.

Mũgo authored numerous works of poetry, philosophical and political texts and was a literary critic. In 2021, she was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Royal African Society. She was also a recipient of the Nelson Mandela Leadership Award.

Mũgo is survived by her daughter Mũmbi wa Mũgo, and siblings, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her daughter Njeri Kũi Mũgo died in 2012.



Gabrielle Pinkney '24.  
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on page 19



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