

# Syracuse Manuscript

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S BLACK AND LATINO/A ALUMNI MAGAZINE

COMING BACK  
TOGETHER 2020

A Virtual Gathering





Shelley Thomas-Harts '02,  
Shanel Bailey '19 and  
Vanessa Williams '08 at the  
OTHC Vanessa Williams  
Benefit Concert at the  
Schomburg Center in  
New York City in 2019.



# Syracuse Manuscript

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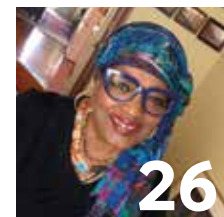
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**On the Cover:** Alumni and friends participating in Virtual CBT. Left to right, top to bottom: Cheryl Wills '89, Janis Mayes, Kevin Richardson H'20, Yamiche Alcindor, Rosann Santos '95, Anthony Herbert '15, Sunny Hostin, Juli Boeheim G'97 and Jim Boeheim '66, G '73, Vanessa Williams '08, Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, Bea González G'04, Marcus Solis '91, Tara Favors '95, Eddie "DJ-EJ" Dowdell '94, Malcolm-Ali Davis '18, Fatimah Muhammad-Moody '90, Shanel Bailey '19, Michael Blackshear '91, Kristin Bragg '93 and Michael Barbosa '96

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## The Power of Community

Hello Orange Family,

As we close out an extremely challenging and unconventional year, I want to simply say “thank you.” This year, despite all that has happened, you have continued to support our students and stay connected through a variety of multicultural advancement programs. Your actions demonstrate that the power of our community is strong.

Together, we created the Virtual Connection Series featuring Black and Latino/a alumni from a variety of fields offering expertise on critical topics, including political activism, mental health, financial planning and more. We recognized the impact of the Syracuse 8 with a virtual 50th Anniversary Program in partnership with Syracuse Athletics called Then, Now and Forever Orange, which was a master class on racial reconciliation, advocacy, sacrifice and forgiveness. And we created the first-ever Virtual Coming Back Together (CBT) reunion and Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Telethon—raising almost \$700,000 to benefit the OTHC program. During the telethon, Chancellor Syverud announced that Kevin Richardson will receive the first honorary undergraduate degree awarded by Syracuse University, thanks to your advocacy and the advocacy of our students. We are so pleased to officially welcome Kevin into our amazing Orange family and look forward to celebrating with him during Commencement next year.

One of my favorite programs during Virtual CBT was the Orange Table Talk session, featuring men’s and women’s roundtables where you inspired, empowered and encouraged one another with open and honest conversation about your lives. Despite the challenges we’ve all faced this year, we came together as a community to create change, honor our heroes, fund our amazing students and support each other. The power of our community was the bright spot in this difficult moment, and I’m grateful.

Thanks to your generosity, we are excited to share that we have almost 90 OTHC Scholars this academic year—up from 42 in 2016. The OTHC endowment has grown by 43 percent since the launch of the Forever Orange Campaign and continues to rise. Several donors decided to step up their giving in the midst of the pandemic, the resulting financial crisis, and the racial reckoning our country is now facing. Others chose to encourage our students by speaking at OTHC Leadership Program sessions or by mentoring OTHC Scholars. Some of you have created opportunities for our students within your companies through internships or jobs. Others advocate for our students while serving on advisory boards across campus. All of these things are critical to their success, especially now.

Thank you for ensuring that our students are able to obtain the Syracuse education that will change their lives, as it has changed our lives. Thank you for staying connected and supporting one another and our University. Thank you for being part of a community that is changing the world in many ways, large and small. It’s a great time to be Orange! I hope to see many of you in 2021 at our next CBT reunion.

With Orange Love,

Rachel Vassel '91  
Assistant Vice President  
Office of Multicultural Advancement



Fatimah Muhammad-Moody '90



Tara Favors '95



Rosann Santos '95

# Coming Back for a Cause

**Virtual reunion helps raise almost \$700,000 for student scholarships.**

**D**espite a pandemic that has put a pause on large in-person gatherings, Syracuse University's Black and Latino/a alumni demonstrated their unstoppable Orange spirit on Oct. 16 during a unique and unprecedented Virtual Coming Back Together (CBT) reunion. Hundreds of alumni from across the country and globe tuned in during the 13-hour event to explore issues, network, reconnect, and most of all, to pay it forward and support the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship program.

"Our Virtual CBT exceeded all expectations," says Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement. "This event enabled us to engage alumni who have not previously been able to attend an in-person reunion as well as to build fundraising momentum for OTHC. When it's safe for us to gather again—hopefully, in September 2021—I have no doubt we will see record numbers of attendees and dollars raised."

The program began with a greeting from Chancellor Kent Syverud, who welcomed alumni from inside Syracuse University's newly renovated stadium, providing a sneak peek. "I can't wait until we can pack the Loud House again," he told those watching.

Additional welcomes came from CBT co-chairs Rosann Santos '95 and Fatimah Muhammad-Moody '90, both members of the Office of Multicultural Advancement Alumni Advisory Council, who thanked alumni for their participation and encouraged support for OTHC, a theme that would continue throughout the day and evening. "Our goal is still the same: to uplift students of color at SU, connect and engage," said Muhammad-Moody, chief executive officer of LinkVisum Consulting Group. "Students need our support and encouragement now more than ever," echoed Santos, director of strategic initiatives for student affairs at John Jay College.

## Issues Explored

A hallmark of the CBT experience is opportunity for professional development, networking and personal growth by exploring issues and ideas while highlighting the successes of Syracuse University's Black and Latino/a alumni. The Virtual CBT was no exception.

The daytime programming kicked off with a career development talk from Ramon Escobar, vice president of talent recruitment and vice president of diversity and inclusion at CNN Worldwide. Escobar stressed the personal responsibility of choosing to be a leader in your life and career, the challenges of being a person of color in the workforce, and ways to promote diversity and inclusion in corporate America. Following his message, alumni and students had the opportunity to participate in breakout sessions with alumni human resources and career services leaders, including Tara Favors '95, vice president and human resources business partner at American Express; Desiree Sanchez '05, senior director of human resources for Affinity Health Plan; Jenna Collins G'19, associate director of alumni professional development and outreach at Syracuse University; and Limnyuy Konglim '05, head of the U.S. liaison office for the International Catholic Migration Commission.



Cheryl Wills '89



Yamiche Alcindor



Angela Y. Robinson '78

“All of the alumni are really willing to give back in whatever way they can and to help you take that next step,” says OTHC scholar Gabriel Prepetit '22, who participated in the session. “I want to come back some day and be the person presenting the seminar and telling students, ‘you can do this too.’”

Next up was Let’s Talk Politics, an incredible panel of self-described “Black girl magic,” featuring Cheryl Wills '89, news anchor at NY1 (who also served as master of ceremonies for the day’s events), Angela Y. Robinson '78, director of operations for the National Association of Black Journalists, and Yamiche Alcindor, White House correspondent for PBS NewsHour. In a wide-ranging political conversation, the three veteran journalists touched on topics ranging from a Black woman running for vice president to Trump’s attack on Alcindor during a White House press conference to voter suppression.

“Instead of asking people *who* you’re voting for, we should be asking *how* they’re going to vote because a lot of people don’t have 12 hours on a Tuesday to stand in line,” said Robinson.

Alcindor, speaking of her personal experiences with President Trump, said that for her, journalism is a mission. “I’m there to ask questions and get answers to ‘kitchen table’ questions, not to be a sideshow,” she said.

All three women were filled with pride by Kamala Harris’s candidacy for vice president, and that if elected, she “sits at the door of the presidency,” said Robinson. “Won’t that be a notion?”

### Faith and Justice

In a Community Forum on COVID-19 and Social Justice, faith leaders Rev. Charles Wynder Jr. '86, chaplain at St. Paul’s School in Hampton, Virginia, Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland Tune '90, chief operating officer of the National Council of Churches, and Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows of the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis, explored a variety of social justice issues and their impact on communities of color. Conversation extended beyond COVID-19 to cover the ongoing protest movement over police injustices and immigration policies at our southern border that have included separating children from parents and forced hysterectomies.



Charles Wynder Jr. '86, Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland Tune '90, and Bishop Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows explored COVID-19, social justice issues, and their impact on communities of color.

“These are not partisan issues but ‘love my neighbor’ issues,” stressed Wynder.

In addition to discussing how their faith guides their views on issues, the three also talked at length about the impact of current events on the mental health of people of color, citing a lack of openness within the Black community regarding mental health issues and the need for that to change.

“Going to counseling should be matter of fact,” said Baskerville-Burrows, who acknowledged that cost can be a barrier for those seeking help, and encouraged people to explore resources that may be available through their church.

### Latino/Hispanic Heritage

In an in-depth conversation exploring issues of self-identity and workplace discrimination, broadcast journalist Marcus Solis '91 of WABC-TV in New York City, interviewed Sunny Hostin, Emmy Award-winning journalist, former federal prosecutor, and co-host of ABC’s *The View*. A celebration of Latino/Hispanic Heritage Month, the conversation centered on Hostin’s recent memoir, *I Am These Truths*.





Marcus Solis '91



Sunny Hostin



Jennifer Sanders

Sharing Puerto Rican descent and upbringing in New York City public housing, Solis and Hostin discussed the challenges of achieving success as people of color. “My parents always told me to be excellent because nobody can take excellence from you,” recalled Hostin, who says she’s always had to work twice as hard to get half as far and to dispel any belief she got her job because her employer was “checking a box. I’m the first one on set at *The View* each morning and the last to leave,” she said.

Hostin shared experiences of workplace discrimination based on her gender and biracial identity and emphasized the need for people of color to help bring others into the room. “There are those who are content to be the only one,” she says. “I’ve never felt that way.”

A particularly poignant exchange centered on Hostin’s given name, Asunción. Solis asked her how she became known as

Sunny. Early in her journalism career, Hostin appeared on *Court TV* with Nancy Grace, who struggled to pronounce Asunción and pressed Hostin for a nickname. On occasion, Hostin conceded, family members would refer to her as Sunny as a term of endearment. From that point on, she was known as Sunny Hostin.

“I still regret it,” she says. “I feel like the name change resulted in a loss of my Latina identity.”

Drawing from her experiences as a journalist and prosecutor, Hostin pointed to four seminal issues the nation is grappling with, which she says all disproportionately affect people of color: the pandemic, economic downturn, issues of policing, and reckoning over systemic racism. “The identity of the nation is at stake,” she said. “We have to decide whether we will be a multiracial democracy or a segregated, racist nation.”

## Taking Care of Business

It wouldn’t be a proper CBT without handing out some awards. The afternoon programming included a special tribute to Bea González G’04, former vice president for community engagement and special assistant to the Chancellor, who retired on July 1, and Janis Mayes, associate professor of African American studies and creator of the Paris Noir program, who will retire on Jan. 1, 2021. Both women have been influential in the lives of students of color at Syracuse University for decades. After video tributes highlighting their legacies, González and Mayes each opened a gift of thanks and shared tearful remarks live with viewers.

Alumni and students then had the opportunity to participate in casual conversation in Orange Table Talk sessions focusing on topics of interest to them. In the women’s session, hosted by Maria J. Lopez ’05, G’12, assistant director of scholarship programs in the Office of Multicultural Advancement, discussion centered on careers, physical and mental health and family. Over in the men’s session, hosted by Jason Poles ’99, director of advancement for the Southwest region, talk focused on finances, entrepreneurship and fatherhood.



Bea González G’04 with her award from the Office of Multicultural Advancement.



Connie Orlando '89



Wes Dias '74



Michael Blackshear '91

## A Night of Action

While the daytime programming was interspersed with messages of thanks from OTHC Scholars and the accomplishments of the Office of Multicultural Advancement, fundraising and the need to pay it forward for current students took center stage during the first-ever OTHC Telethon, held during the evening of the virtual reunion.

The two-hour telethon was the culmination of what Vassel calls “a mini-campaign” that launched over the summer, a push to raise \$500,000 in the few months leading up to Virtual CBT.

Traditionally, CBT has provided the impetus for increased alumni giving in support of OTHC. With CBT 2020 postponed for a year, Vassel didn’t want to lose that momentum, especially during a time of increased need. “COVID-19 has disproportionately increased financial need for students of color,” she says. “At the same time, heightened awareness of racism and racial injustice—which also play a role in students’ ability to obtain higher education—have prompted many individuals to consider how their own actions can make a difference. That includes financial support.”

The OTHC Telethon, hosted by Jennifer Sanders, former news anchor for Syracuse’s NewsChannel 9, featured personal messages from current OTHC scholars about the impact of the OTHC program on their lives.

“OTHC is crucial for students of color because it’s our place away from home, our place to be ourselves,” said Taylor John ’22.

“The OTHC program is motivating and reminds you that there’s a community of people, a network, willing to support you,” added Bryan Cordova ’21.

The evening also included entertainment: jazz saxophone from Charles “Rahmat” Woods ’72; a performance of “Wake Up Everybody” by Malcolm-Ali Davis ’18, Shanel Bailey ’19, and Blake Brewer ’21; a rendition of Nina Simone’s “Four Women” by Tenee Levette ’89, Collie Aziza ’88, Tamar Smithers ’07 and Dianna Giselle ’87, produced by June Grant ’87; and Vanessa Williams ’08, singing “Love Is” with Broadway star Darius de Haas.

Sanders spoke with Williams about her ongoing support of Syracuse University, which includes her creation of the Vanessa Williams Endowed Scholarship Fund in 2019 to support underrepresented students in the College of Visual and Performing Arts.

Williams was one of a number of alumni who made appearances to talk about their endowed scholarships, including Anthony Otero ’96 and José Vilson ’04, who promoted the Latino Alumni Network at Syracuse University Scholarship; Connie Orlando ’89, who established the Connie Orlando ’89 Endowed Scholarship; Charles ’90 and Monica Houston ’90, who created a scholarship to fund students of color in accounting; Gwynne Wilcox ’74 and Wes Dias ’74, who spearheaded an endowed scholarship funded by the Class of 1974; and Shelly and Rob Light ’78, who endowed the Light Family Newhouse Scholarship.

A tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Syracuse 8 protest included an update on the Syracuse 8 Scholarship Fund, which was launched by Art Monk ’80 in 2008. Anthony Herbert ’15, the first recipient of the scholarship and now a young executive working in information technology, offered gratitude for the scholarship support. Greg Allen ’73, a member of the Syracuse 8, called Anthony “a true mark of excellence for the Syracuse 8 Scholarship,” and paid thanks to Monk for initiating the scholarship, which he called “an integral part of the Syracuse 8 legacy.” He also thanked Deborah ’84 and Darlene Harris ’84 for their generous and exemplary philanthropy, which Allen said “will keep the scholarship going long after we’re all gone.”

Representatives from Syracuse University’s Black and Latino/a Greek organizations also checked in with updates on their endowment totals, as well as fundraising goals for CBT 2021, urging members to “give generously and often.”

Several major gifts and new endowments were announced (see related article starting on page 8), including a campaign by the Black Oranges, a group of former student athletes; corporate support of \$150,000 from Juvare, spearheaded by Reggie Acloque ’99, senior vice president, software and engineering; the establishment of planned gifts from Candice Carnage ’90





Charles "Rahmat" Woods '72



Kevin Richardson H'20



Charles '90 and Monica Houston '90

and Charles Wynder Jr. '86; and a gift from Shelia Payton '70 to create the Shelia Payton '70 Last Mile Endowed Scholarship “to help bridge the gap between the money they have and the money they need to continue or complete their study,” she said. “I encourage current and future alumni to give back to Syracuse so the next generation of SU students will have the same opportunities we have had. Every dollar helps.”

## A Grand Finale

But the program was not done. It was time to check in on the Kevin Richardson Endowed Scholarship, created in fall 2019 to honor Richardson, one of five teenagers wrongly convicted and sentenced in the highly publicized Central Park jogger rape case. He was only 14 years old at the time of his arrest. The story of the Exonerated Five was told in a Netflix miniseries, “When They See Us,” and the men were interviewed by Oprah in a follow-up special. Asked about their aspirations before their arrest, Richardson said he’d dreamed of playing the trumpet at Syracuse University.

Richardson’s response made an immediate impact. Jalen Nash '20, then a senior political science major, launched a student petition to give Richardson an honorary degree. Unbeknownst to him, efforts were already in the works by the Office of Multicultural Advancement, which had been fielding an outpouring of calls and emails from Black and Latino/a alumni asking what they could do. In response, the Kevin Richardson Endowed Scholarship was launched and announced during a campus reception in Richardson’s honor in September 2019. The \$25,000 lead gift was provided by Tara Favors '95 and her family, her teenage sons having been particularly moved by “When They See Us.”

Favors joined the telethon to share her efforts to fundraise members of the classes of 1995 and 1996—who would have been Richardson’s Syracuse University peers—to get the scholarship endowed at \$100,000. She then invited Chancellor Syverud to the telethon for a special announcement.

“On behalf of the faculty, staff, students and a quarter-million Syracuse University alumni, it is my distinct honor to congratulate Kevin Richardson as the recipient of an honorary undergraduate degree, the bachelor of fine arts in music,” said Syverud.

The University had planned to award the honorary degree during the May 2020 Commencement, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “We look forward to honoring you in person as soon as we can,” Syverud said, adding that this is the first honorary undergraduate degree given in the University’s 150 history.

“While a very young man, you were tested in ways no one should be tested. Your response has been to approach the world with wisdom, compassion and activism, attributes you will find in so many graduates of Syracuse University, who you now join. I warmly welcome you to the Orange family, where your example inspires us all.”

Richardson, watching the telecast live, was emotional, thanking both the Chancellor and his fellow alumni. “This means the world to me. After all my trials and tribulations, to be here to accept this honor is surreal,” he said. “Thank you to everyone for believing in me. I will do you all proud.”

Throughout the evening, giving links were posted for the scholarship funds discussed, providing easy access for viewers to contribute. Sanders announced that the mini-campaign and telethon had exceeded its \$500,000 goal—raising almost \$700,000 for OTHC.

The telethon concluded with one final fundraising plug from Vassel: “Let’s give Kevin the graduation gift he deserves and get his scholarship endowed!”

***If you missed Virtual CBT, you can review highlights of the day at [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/events/virtual-cbt/](https://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/events/virtual-cbt/).***

# Major Gifts Support OTHC

In November 2019, as part of Syracuse University's Forever Orange Campaign to raise \$1.5 billion in private philanthropy, the Office of Multicultural Advancement set a goal to raise \$2 million in 2020 from Syracuse University's diverse alumni for the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund.

A year later, the world is a different place. The COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted normal routines and caused unprecedented challenges, not to mention loss of jobs and loved ones for many families. At the same time, the country is undergoing profound reflection and reckoning on issues of social justice and structural racism.

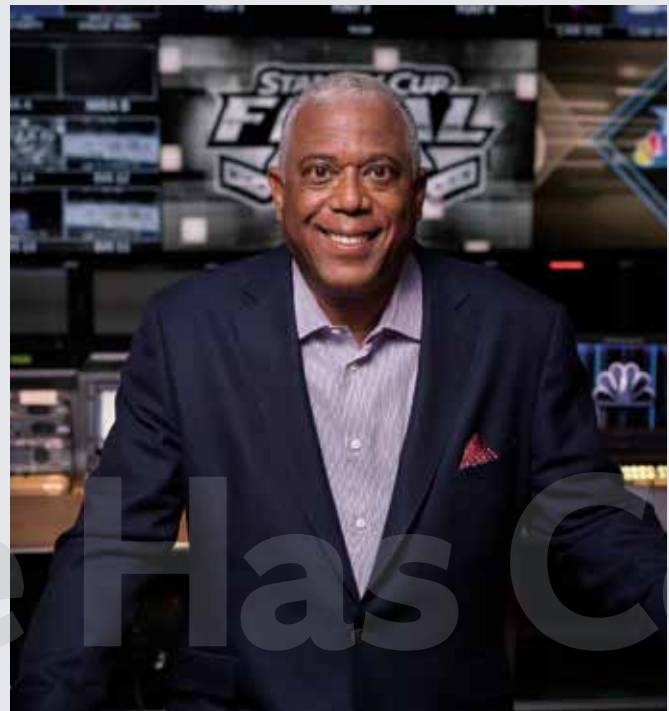
Despite recent challenges—and in some cases, because of them—alumni continue to dig deep and give big.

“With philanthropy, timing is everything,” says Rachel Vassel '91, assistant vice president of multicultural advancement. “Recent events have prompted alumni to make generous gifts in support of our students, understanding both the financial strain COVID-19 has placed on many families and the importance of providing access to higher education to all students.”

Several recent gifts at \$25,000 and above—including three at \$100,000—are testimony to the desire of alumni to increase the diversity of Syracuse University and the ability of underrepresented students from all income levels to earn a Syracuse degree.

**L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. '79** was motivated to increase his financial giving to Syracuse University by student protests during the 2019-20 academic year. “The University was challenged by students of color,” he says. “Some people may have backed off from supporting Syracuse, and I wanted to make sure that students in need didn't lose out on any opportunities because of that.”

The veteran sports producer/director has created the L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. '79 Endowed Scholarship Fund to promote diversity in the field of telecommunications by supporting underrepresented students studying television, radio and film. “The Our Time Has Come program has consistently had remarkable graduation rates for students of color and I'm pleased to be able to support students in this way,” he says. (For more about Atkinson, see page 35.)



L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. is a veteran sports producer/director, currently working for NBC.

In addition to a major gift to the Alpha Phi Alpha Scholarship, **Andrew Bryan Burnett '88** has created a new endowment, the Joyceleen and Stephen Burnett Scholarship Fund, which will support an underrepresented student in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. The scholarship honors Burnett's mother, whose labor and sacrifice sent six children to college, and his late brother, who was tragically murdered before he had the chance. “My brother's dream of going to college will be lived by each recipient of this scholarship,” Burnett says.

As an undergraduate studying aerospace engineering, Burnett says he typically never had his tuition paid until finals were over. “I basically sat in class, not being registered, while I came up with the



Entrepreneur Andrew Bryan Burnett created a scholarship endowment to honor the memory of his mother and brother.

money to pay tuition,” he recalls. “I want to help students of color at Syracuse so that their experience is not as difficult as it was for me.”

A prolific entrepreneur, Burnett is currently CEO and managing director of The Accela Group, a management consulting firm; CEO of Soromma Technologies, a networking and cybersecurity company; and also has companies developing mobile apps. “Through some of these ventures I’m hoping to give even more,” he says.

**Jamille McCullough '95** is honoring the memory of her late mother, Gloria Hall '74, a graduate of the School of Social Work, with a major gift to the OTHC Scholarship program for the support of an underrepresented student. “My mother was fiercely loyal to Syracuse and would not support me financially in attending another institution,” she says.

McCullough has had a successful career working in human resources for multinational companies. Currently, she is director of human resources for iRobot in Europe, the Middle East and Africa and is based in London. She says COVID-19 prompted her to reflect on her values and priorities. Her desire to give back was fortified by the worldwide protest movement after the murder of George Floyd, as well as her own spiritual calling.

“I have been blessed financially and want to provide support to a minority student who otherwise would not have the opportunity to attend a prestigious university,” she says. “Hopefully my gift will inspire others.”



Jamille McCullough with her fur baby Matteo

**Roland Williams '97**, a football standout at Syracuse University and in the NFL, has created the Orange Legends Scholarship to inspire alumni to collectively help under-represented students on campus.

“I was one of the first people in my family to attend a four-year university,” he says. “During my time at Syracuse University, not only did I receive a world-class education, I learned firsthand the critical importance of diversity and inclusion in every part of campus life,” he says. “The Orange Legends Scholarship provides a way for successful alumni from sports, entertainment and business to unite and provide the much-needed financial support students of color need to survive and thrive.”

Williams’ lead gift of \$100,000 to fund this endowment has already sparked an influx of support from other Syracuse sports legends including \$25,000 gifts from Juli and Jim Boeheim '66, G'73 and basketball standout Sherman Douglas '89.

Williams attended Syracuse University on a full scholarship, earning both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in public relations from the Newhouse School of Public Communications. After college, Williams spent eight years in the NFL, most notably as a member of the legendary St. Louis Rams’ “Greatest show on Turf” offensive unit, breaking numerous records en route to a Super Bowl victory. Following his professional football career, Williams has enjoyed success as a sports analyst for ESPN, NBC and CBS Sports; as an international team-building and performance expert; and now as president and co-founder of J2 Medical Supply, one of the fastest-growing medical supply companies in the nation.

“With all the challenges facing our country, now is the time for all of us to find more ways to make the future more equitable for everyone,” he says. “I am excited about this positive step in that direction.”



Roland Williams



STELLA ADEGITE '09

## Defending New York

**W**hen New York City emerged as the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic last March, Governor Andrew Cuomo moved swiftly to shut down the city and the state in order to slow transmission. While many workplaces ground to a halt, the New York State Office of the Attorney General was in high gear.



Stella Adegite is an assistant attorney general for the state of New York.

“Our office played a critical role in making sure that challenges to the governor’s executive orders were actively defended,” says Stella Adegite, an assistant attorney general in the downstate office, located in New York City. “In the early stages of COVID-19, our office was particularly important in ensuring the health and safety of New Yorkers.”

As a member of the Attorney General’s Litigation Bureau, Adegite defends cases brought against New York state agencies and officers in civil proceedings and actions in Federal District Courts and New York State Supreme Courts, including

constitutional challenges, administrative legal issues, and employment discrimination claims. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state was challenged over its ban on mass congregations and other policies that impacted individuals’ personal choices. “We are essential workers, available to defend these policies because they impact the health and safety of the residents of New York state,” she says.

Adegite is a native New Yorker who attended Queens Gateway to Health Sciences for high school, graduating as valedictorian. She chose Syracuse University based on generous financial aid—she’s one of five children—and the fact that it was the first school that accepted her.

Adegite majored in psychology and international relations with a minor in political science and was a member of the Renée Crown Honors Program. She had a work-study job in what was then called the Office of Program Development, working for Larry Martin, Evelyn Walker and Angela Morales-Patterson. That’s where she learned about the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship.

“It was obvious the program did a lot of good for students,” she says. Heading in to her junior year, Adegite found she had unmet financial needs of her own that her parents couldn’t help her with. She applied to the program and was accepted. “Becoming an OTHC Scholar prevented me from having to take out additional loans,” she says.

Adegite also credits the guidance of the program development staff members with helping the first-generation student stay on track through college. “They made sure I did not lose a sense of myself or make choices that would negatively impact my future,” she says.

Working in the office gave Adegite a unique perspective on the program beyond personal impact. “I believe it’s critical to the success of the next generation,” she says. “There are so many students who come to college through sheer determination but struggle to pay for housing, a meal plan or books. OTHC helps set students up for success so they don’t have to enter the workforce saddled by the burden of student loan debt.”

Adegite pursued law out of an interest in human rights and earned her degree from Howard University College of Law in 2012. She volunteered for a year in the attorney general’s office, then spent two years prosecuting child abuse cases as an attorney for the New York City Administration for Children’s Services before being offered her current position. “I’ve always been interested in the human experience and helping people,” she says. “Law is the avenue I chose to do that.”

Adegite says that her desire for personal growth did not end with college or law school. “Every year, I pick something to learn so I continue to improve,” she says. Her most recent achievement was learning to swim. “For a long time, I had a deep fear of water,” she says. Prompted by an upcoming trip that included a week on a small boat, Adegite set out to overcome her fear. “It was a very tiring pursuit. I wouldn’t say I’m a strong swimmer, but I was able to enjoy my trip instead of worrying the whole time about what might happen,” she says. “That was empowering.”

REGGIE ACLOQUE '99

# Helping First Responders to Respond

**A**t the end of 2019, Reggie Acloque took a leap of faith and left a satisfying 20-year career in digital technology at GE to join a new venture. His company, Juvare, makes software that helps corporations, hospitals, government agencies and municipalities with emergency management and response.

“A disaster can be anything from a hurricane to a mass shooting incident to a pandemic,” says Acloque.

Needless to say, he and his company couldn't be busier. Current events have “generated greater interest in our software solutions, allowing us to continue to help first responders,” he says. “Our software is used to manage service requests, track incidents, and track medical supplies and personal protective equipment,” he says. But that's just a start.

For example, in April, the state of Illinois needed volunteers to help with increased COVID-19 testing. The state employed Juvare software to manage requests for volunteers and ensure those individuals had the appropriate credentials and certifications.

“It's been a perfect storm of activity,” Acloque says of his tenure thus far. “Everyone is still dealing with the pandemic and now the U.S. is experiencing hurricanes and wildfires.”

Acloque was raised in New York City by his Haitian-born mother. He followed his older sister Rachel Acloque '97, G'98, to Syracuse University, where he had his first exposure to computer technology. “I was fortunate to have a lot of friends and colleagues at the University who were doing interesting stuff with technology, from website development to building code. That piqued my interest,” he says.

Acloque became passionate about the marriage of business and technology and ways to bring the two together, majoring in information management and technology in the School of Information Studies. He served as the internship/co-op director for the Black and Latinx Information Science and Technology Society, and through that organization, made a connection at GE.

After graduation, Acloque accepted a position with GE Power in Atlanta, Georgia, where he participated in its Information Technology Leadership Program. For the next 20 years, he held a succession of technology and software development roles, working his way up from project manager to the executive level. Along the way, he earned an MBA degree with a concentration in entrepreneurship from Kennesaw State University.

“I could have stayed at GE for another 20 years, but I'd reached a point in my career where I wanted to have more of a societal impact,” he says. While he never could have predicted the advent of COVID-19, that desire has been met.

Acloque credits Syracuse University with providing a solid educational foundation, and the support of the Office of Supportive Services and the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship Fund with helping him achieve that education.

“Coming from a single-parent household, my siblings and I were fortunate to go to college but we had to work to come up with the funding,” says Acloque, who served as president of the Haitian American Student Association. While he was appreciative of his OTHC Scholarship as an undergrad, he's doubly grateful now. “I understand the math better now,” he says of his reduced loan burden. Beyond the financial impact, he says receiving that support from “people that looked like yourself and cared about your success” was also a motivation.

Still based in Atlanta, Acloque sits on the advisory board for the School of Information Studies and holds a similar role at Georgia State University. He's also a member of the Syracuse University Regional Council in Atlanta, helping develop philanthropic, social and professional development programs for alumni and students in the area.

“Syracuse University gave me a fantastic education but it also shaped me as an individual and provided me with a friendship network that endures to this day,” he says.

Reggie Acloque



ANA GABRIELA URIZAR '13

## Immigration in the Workplace

**A**s a corporate immigration attorney at the New York City law firm Fragomen, Ana Gabriela Urizar assists large multinational corporations with immigrant petitions to fill specialized employment needs. Most of her clients are technology companies recruiting talent from India and China in the areas of science, artificial intelligence and other areas of computer science and technology.

It's a more complicated process than it used to be. "Recent executive orders regarding immigration have been a direct attack on business immigration and the work visa," says Urizar. "The president's mentality is that he's protecting the U.S. market by preserving these jobs for American nationals but that's a very superficial analysis because most of these companies try to hire from the U.S. first. There's just a lack of professionals with advanced skills in math, science and technology," she says. "Hiring from abroad actually helps our country be competitive in the fields of technology and science."

Not only are there bans on workers from specific countries, Urizar has had to assist foreign nationals with valid employment in the U.S. who have gotten stuck abroad while traveling for work or family reasons when new executive orders were issued. "It's challenging," she says.

And that was before COVID-19. Now, fluctuating travel restrictions and quarantine requirements complicate matters further. "Not only is movement restricted, but there are consulates closed all over the world. Those that have reopened have a backlog on paperwork of seven to eight months," she says.

As a new mother—Urizar has a one-year-old daughter—she has also found an added challenge in working from home during the pandemic. "I love spending time with my daughter but I really miss going into the office with my colleagues and having that adult time," she says. "Now I'm in mommy mode the whole day while trying to be a lawyer."

Although she says her firm has been particularly conscious and understanding of the challenges of being a working parent during COVID, Urizar says the reality is that she's working longer hours. "There's no nine-to-five anymore," she says. "I'm sending emails all day and night."

Urizar joined Fragomen in 2018 after earning her law degree from the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law. She was first exposed to employment-based immigration law while a student intern in the law office of Sylvia M. Montan L'94, whom she met as an undergraduate through the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship program. "She became my mentor," she says.

Urizar credits Montan's guidance to helping her land her corporate job. "Being an OTHC Scholar impacted me in so many ways," she says. "The program was a complete package—financial and emotional support while we were on campus, and providing



Corporate immigration attorney Ana Gabriela Urizar helps companies recruit specialized talent from overseas.

these valuable connections to alumni professionals who could help us once we graduate. I don't think I would be where I am today without that."

Because of her own immigration history—she came to the U.S. from Guatemala with twin sister, Ana Lucia '13, L'16, at age 15—she has felt compelled to give back. Urizar's pro bono efforts have included participating in workshops for Citizenship Now! and legal clinics for the New York State Bar Association. She has also helped clients prepare U-visa applications through the nonprofit organization Her Justice.

"Where you were born shouldn't dictate your future," she says. "Everyone should have the right to choose where they live, work and pursue their dreams."



ANA LUCIA URIZAR '13, L'16

# A Champion for All People

**A**s a staff attorney with the Immigration Advocacy Project at Queens Legal Services, Ana Lucia Urizar helps immigrants with applications for asylum, visas and citizenship. “These are people who can’t afford to hire an immigration attorney and we help them for free,” she says.

The majority of her clients are Spanish-speaking people from Latin American countries. For Urizar, the work is deeply personal. She and her twin sister, Ana Gabriela '13, immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala at age 15, and aside from her time at Syracuse University, she has always lived in Queens. “I’m working in my home community, which is awesome because Queens has the highest percentage of immigrants of the five boroughs,” she says.

Urizar attended the Syracuse University College of Law with the goal of becoming an immigration attorney and spent her first two years as a lawyer working at the Manhattan nonprofit Sanctuary for Families. She joined Queens Legal Services in December 2018. Despite doing similar work throughout her career, Urizar says she’s seen increasing demand. “Since I graduated and started working, more and more immigrants are looking for protection,” she says. “People are terrified. The stakes are higher now. They are worried about being deported, potentially being sent back to a country where they were tortured.”

Fortunately, Urizar has yet to have a client deported, but she says that’s largely due to the time lag in the immigration system. “Most of my current trials are not scheduled until 2022, and if we lose, we still have the right to appeal,” she says. “But for clients,

that’s awful too, spending many years waiting to know whether or not their petition is granted or they’re going to be deported.”

While working in public interest law is personally satisfying, it’s not without sacrifice, as Urizar graduated from law school with more than \$100,000 in student loan debt.

She’s grateful it wasn’t worse, having received support for both her undergraduate at law school education at Syracuse University from the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship Fund.

“As a first-generation student of color, I didn’t come from generational wealth,” she says. “I had the burden of financing my education, taking on debt to pursue my dreams.”

Financial assistance from OTHC alleviated some of that burden. “The OTHC Scholarship is absolutely necessary to guarantee the success of many first-generation students of color,” she says. “Without the financial help, we would be years behind in achieving financial stability.”

In addition, OTHC helped give Urizar a sense of belonging on the University’s predominantly white campus. “There weren’t a lot of people who looked like me and sounded like me. I definitely had imposter syndrome,” she says. “Having a sense of community and belonging through OTHC made a huge difference. And being able to see ourselves in the successful alumni speakers helped create and build confidence.”

Outside of work, Urizar says she is a “big nerd who likes to read and learn.” She participates in three book clubs, including one with fellow immigration attorneys, where they read books authored by women of different nationalities and meet over food from the corresponding cuisine. Most recently, she’s joined a Zoom book club organized by her college friend Sha Goode '13 that focuses on books and discussions about race. The most recent book read was *The New Jim Crow*.

“We’re a very diverse group. Sometimes it’s uncomfortable to have these conversations with friends who are not people of color,” she says. “Because I wasn’t raised here, it has provided historical perspective and been incredibly eye opening.”

Whether through her work or outside interests, Urizar never tires of the opportunity to explore other cultures. “Being in New York, a place that’s so rich culturally, it would be a waste not to take advantage of all the beautiful perspectives and voices and learn from them,” she says.



Ana Lucia Urizar serves her home community of Queens as an immigration attorney.

JUSTIN FRAZIER '07, G'08

## Finding Balance in Numbers

Justin Frazier believes time management is the key to being successful. As an undergraduate at Syracuse University, he spent his first three years as a walk-on sprinter on the track team, for which he was named a Big East Academic All-Star and an Arthur Ashe Sports Scholar by *Diverse* magazine. In his senior year, he stepped back from track but joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., all while pursuing accounting studies in the Martin J. Whitman School of Business.

“Being involved in multiple activities taught me to be mindful of my responsibilities, to be aware of how much time I had and to get things done,” he says.

Frazier says he was fortunate in receiving an Our Time Has Come Scholarship that helped him pay for books and other campus expenses. “I also appreciated the opportunity to meet and talk with people I met through the program,” he says.

Time management continues to play an important role in Frazier’s life, helping him juggle career, family, fitness activities and volunteerism.

A certified public accountant, Frazier is a vice president in the accounting group for SMBC Capital Markets, a position he’s held since 2015. The company is a derivatives trading firm and market maker focusing on interest rate, currency and commodity swaps. “I wear multiple hats, working with internal controls for the business, daily operations of the ledger and on any projects that arise that may impact accounting,” he says.

Frazier didn’t set out to become an accountant. But while many of his college classmates struggled during introductory accounting, he thought it made perfect sense. “The concepts were logical and seemed like a foundation that could translate to multiple arenas,” he says.

A marketing major initially, he says he kept “inching closer” to accounting, taking additional classes, then picking up cost accounting as a dual major, and finally as a junior, switching

completely to the CPA track. “It became obvious it was a natural fit for me,” Frazier says.

That decision was solidified during a summer internship in Manhattan with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), in which he worked as part of a small auditing team at J. P. Morgan Private Bank. Although he had little previous experience with auditing and accounting, he enjoyed the “detective work” and, at the end of the internship accepted an offer to join PwC’s auditing group, deferring for a year to complete a master’s degree in accounting at Syracuse University.

Frazier spent six years at PwC, working with top-tier audit clients within the firm’s banking and capital markets division before making the switch to his current role. “Switching to the private sector made sense for me since I enjoy having more influence and contact with accounting record keeping and operational activities within my company,” he says.

Frazier has been active with the National Association of Black Accountants since 2004. As a student, he served as senior vice president, secretary, and vice president of external affairs, and as a working professional, he has held various leadership roles within the association’s New York chapter and eastern region. He has also served on the national scholarship committee.

This year, Frazier and his family relocated from New Jersey to California so that his wife, Hanan Frazier ’05, could pursue a new professional opportunity as head of compliance for Varo Money. Frazier was able to maintain his job working remotely, so he was ahead of the curve when COVID-19 sent most professionals home from their offices.

Frazier says his current situation was made possible because his firm understands the value he offers. He encourages those starting out to speak up, offer feedback and ask questions, something he hesitated to do earlier in his career. “That impacted me negatively and I learned from the experience,” he says. “I’ve learned that it’s better to express opinions and show the value you can add than to sit quietly in a room. Just being able to do the work well isn’t always enough.”

Outside of work and family (he and Hanan have two young boys), Frazier is passionate about fitness and a balanced lifestyle. A former personal trainer, he continues to participate in his own functional fitness weekly, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, competed in obstacle course racing.

“Time management is key,” he says.



Justin Frazier

## Sofia Rossi

**S**ofia Rossi '22 is passionate about community engagement. The Westchester County, New York, native came to Syracuse University to take advantage of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs' unique interdisciplinary major in citizenship and civic engagement (CCE), which she has combined with a policy studies major. "I want a career in the nonprofit government agency sector," she says.

A signature component of the CCE major is creating a relationship with a community organization. Rossi has worked with students at the Syracuse Boys and Girls Club of Central Village since her first semester at Syracuse University. She plans to draw from that experience for her capstone CCE Action Plan, which is intended to tackle a problem or societal issue encountered during a student's community placement.

"I want to analyze how the federal and state education systems are failing districts of color by failing to prepare and empower students to civically participate in government agencies, nonprofits, to vote and to be advocates," says Rossi, who plans to carry out her CCE Action Plan at the Boys and Girls Club of Central Village. "My plan is to teach a Social Justice Through a Creative Lens program that will empower students and teach them tangible skills to make change in their own communities and beyond."

But that's far from the extent of her community involvement. Rossi has also volunteered for two years with Vera House, a Syracuse organization that works with victims of domestic violence. She is the youngest volunteer at the organization, which typically does not accept student volunteers. "But I'm proactive," she says. "I like a challenge."

Rossi assists individuals with the process of filing orders of protection and/or custody petitions from family court. "I used to go to the courthouse once a week. Now I do it virtually," she says.

Since the advent of COVID-19, she's unfortunately seen an uptick in cases. "Home is not a safe space for everyone, particularly when forced to quarantine with abusive partners or family members," she says.

Rossi is also active on campus, working as a secretary at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, serving as a mentor for the CCE department and holding offices in the Student Association, including co-chair of both community engagement and student life.

Rossi was accepted into the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) program as an incoming first-year student. She grew up in a bilingual household, but attended a predominantly white high school that did not embrace or teach about other cultures. "That's something I really wanted in college," she says. "Through OTHC, I've been introduced to a diverse array of alumni, and I'm able to interact on a day-to-day basis with students who all are passionate about different things and have similar backgrounds to my own."

Through her experiences with the OTHC community and her CCE major, Rossi says she's expanded her perspective significantly through interactions with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences. This fall, she'll draw on that as a facilitator for the SEM 100 course required of all first-year students. "I hope to create a safe space to engage students in conversations about diversity, inclusion and equity," she says.



Sofia Rossi, of Brazilian descent, has enjoyed exploring her Latinx heritage while at Syracuse University.



## Dakota Chambers

**D**akota Chambers '22 describes herself as a storyteller. Her goal is to diversify the stories that get told. "I feel like people who look like me and have my experiences aren't always represented as best as they can be," she says.

At Syracuse University, Chambers is a dual major in television, radio and film and sociology, with a minor in Spanish. "A lot of people think that's an odd combination but for me it makes perfect sense," she says. "Studying sociology helps me understand all the different perspectives I hope to be able to reflect, and television, radio and film is giving me the skills to tell those stories," she says.

*"I feel like for my generation, there's a lack of coming of age stories for Black teenagers that aren't about police brutality or drugs and violence. We don't have a lot of 'feel good' stories, and that's what I'd like to develop."*

The Spanish minor is her attempt to connect with her father's Costa Rican heritage. She didn't learn the language growing up, but last year wrote stories in Spanish for *Noticias*, the Spanish live news show on Citrus TV.

This year, Chambers will begin work on her Honors thesis, which is likely to take the form of a film script. "I feel like for my generation, there's a lack of coming of age stories for Black teenagers that aren't about police brutality or drugs and violence," she says. "We don't have a lot of 'feel good' stories, and that's what I'd like to develop."

This semester, Chambers is taking classes online from her family home in Columbus, New Jersey, where she's been since last March, when she had to abruptly leave her study abroad semester in London because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Fortunately, it was spring break and my parents were there visiting me when we got the news so they were able to help me pack up and we traveled home together," she says.

Despite the switch to remote learning, Chambers is doing her best to stay involved with the campus community. Over the summer, she worked with incoming students through the SummerStart program, held virtually for the first time. Similarly, during the academic year, she's an academic coach with the Center for Learning and Student Success, helping first- and second-year students with study strategies.

She's also an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar, receiving the honor as an incoming first-year student. "It's a wonderful

program," she says. "Although I came to Syracuse with a GPA over 4.0, I wasn't offered a merit scholarship, so the financial support has been very helpful. OTHC reminds me that there's a community at SU that does care about me and wants me to succeed, a community that has helped me feel like I belong at Syracuse when sometimes I didn't feel like I did."

Chambers says one of the highlight experiences as a Syracuse University student was participating in the launch of the Forever Orange fundraising campaign. "The big launch event was very exciting," she says. "But the smaller luncheons we had after with alumni of color were a really cool experience because we got to connect with those alumni on a deeper level. Realizing the network that I'm becoming a part of was both powerful and inspirational."

Dakota Chambers visited Toledo, Spain, while studying abroad.



# Bryan Cordova

In 1947, construction firm Levitt and Sons purchased a seven-square-mile plot of farmland on Long Island and set out to build the first uniform suburban community in the U.S. The result was Levittown, widely recognized as the first modern American suburb.

As a youngster, Bryan Cordova '21 moved to Levittown with his family, and over the last 15 years, witnessed his father transform their originally small home with a second story and several additions. Cordova credits that experience for partly inspiring his interest in architecture. Now in his final year of Syracuse University's five-year undergraduate architecture program, he plans to study the history of Levittown and its influences on domestic life in America as the foundational research for his senior thesis. He hopes to ultimately work in architecture in an urban environment such as New York City.

A first-generation college student—his parents are originally from Ecuador—Cordova says he has been transformed by his experiences at Syracuse University. He has been active in intramurals, including the men's gymnastics team, and serves as a peer advisor for the School of Architecture. He's also a global ambassador for Syracuse Abroad, having spent semesters studying in Florence and London.

Cordova says his year studying abroad was one of the most impactful of his life. "Leaving the country for the first time and being able to learn from different cultures and environments broadened my perspective in unimagined ways," he says. As an architecture student, the experience was doubly profound. "The first time I saw the big Duomo in Florence was overwhelming," he says. "It was one of the most beautiful things I'd ever seen. Being able to witness all of the historical art and architecture was very powerful."

It was also humbling. "As a first-generation student, I'm acutely aware that not everyone has the opportunities I've been afforded by Syracuse University," he says. In fact, his semester in London almost didn't happen.

Cordova had spent spring 2019 in Florence and was accepted into the London program for the following fall. But over the summer he discovered his financial aid package wouldn't cover all of the expenses of a second semester abroad. While researching funding opportunities, he discovered the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) program. "Being named an OTHC Scholar and the scholarship I was awarded made the difference that allowed me to spend the semester in London," he says. "It was an amazing educational experience and also culturally interesting to compare life in the different countries."

Once back on campus, Cordova connected in person with his fellow OTHC Scholars and particularly valued being able to expand his campus community of Hispanic students, he says. "The diversity of my experiences at Syracuse University has really made me appreciate the global presence of our surroundings."



Architecture student Bryan Cordova is studying the cultural influence of his hometown—America's first suburb—on American life.

## Gabriel Prepetit

**G**abriel Prepetit '22 is fascinated by large-scale structures—sports stadiums, office buildings and retail centers. His dream is to combine his study of civil engineering and architecture to work on that scale. “I’m not sure yet if I want to focus on the design or the engineering and construction but that’s what I hope to figure out in my upper-level classes,” he says.

Syracuse University was his dream school to pursue that goal, offering high-caliber schools of engineering and architecture, and the perfect combination of size and distance from his hometown of Northborough, Massachusetts.

Prepetit was selected as an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar as an incoming first-year student. In addition to the financial support, he has particularly valued the meaningful interaction with alumni through OTHC mentoring and professional development programs.

“It’s been very inspirational to meet people who come from similar backgrounds who have gone on to become very successful,” says Prepetit, a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and the National Society of Black Engineers who has served as an engineering teaching assistant. “Having mentorship from someone who has been there and gets it is important,” he says.

It’s also something he enjoys paying forward. Growing up, Prepetit was involved in scouting, attaining the rank of Eagle Scout as a senior in high school. “I really enjoyed all the things I learned

along the way and, as I progressed, being able to take charge and guide younger scouts to achieve a goal,” he says. “There are so many things I was exposed to that I probably never would have been otherwise.”

He’ll have the opportunity to build on those leadership skills as student co-chair of Coming Back Together (CBT) 2021 next September. “The leadership programs we’ve had through OTHC have been fantastic. In less than two years, I’ve already received valuable life lessons, so helping to support this reunion is a way for me to give back,” he says. “I’m really looking forward to all of the various speakers and networking programs of the CBT events.”

Prepetit is the son of Haitian parents who came to the U.S. as teens. “Many of my experiences have been totally foreign to my parents,” he says, noting activities ranging from scouting and high school football to fraternity life. “I’ve appreciated hearing from alumni who have come from similar backgrounds. If I can help younger students coming behind me, that’s something I want to do,” he says.

Gabriel Prepetit looks forward to networking with alumni as student co-chair for CBT 2021.





# Cameron Joy Gray

**F**ilm major Cameron Joy Gray '22 was preparing to embark on her sophomore film project last March when COVID-19 forced Syracuse University to shut down in-person instruction and send students home. "A classmate and I had hired an actress from New York City and arranged to put her up in an Airbnb with her mother," Gray recalls. "Now what the heck were we supposed to do?"

Her professor insisted that students were still going to make films, only now those films would relate to their pandemic experiences. "We had four weeks to come up with a completely new idea, develop a script and storyboards, and get it shot. It was insane," says Gray. Her film featured a girl who finds an old telephone in her attic and, through it, connects to people living during the Cold War era. "I was trying to draw parallels between the mass hysteria over communism and what we were experiencing with COVID-19. It wasn't as successful as I would have liked."

Nonetheless, it set her on an introspective creative path that carried her through the summer. Gray began writing scripts for a series she's calling "Lessons From My Grandmother," drawing from video interviews conducted for a family genealogy project. Although her grandmother passed away before her interviews were complete, the project has been a constructive way for Gray to cope with that loss.

She's developing the project further this fall in her autobiographical film class. "It's a perfect fit. I just created a trailer for one of my first assignments," she says."

Having adapted to virtual classes, Gray is working on doing the same with her extracurricular activities. As the chaplain's assistant to the Historically Black Church Chaplaincy at Hendricks Chapel, Gray has been involved with hosting virtual programming to engage students. "We've had services, fellowship spaces for students and now a speaker series. I'm editing the videos for those," she says. "We're also hoping to work with Hendricks Chapel to co-sponsor a series on race and religion with speakers from other universities and churches."

Cameron Joy Gray is student co-chair for CBT 2021.



As a mentor in the Dimensions program, Gray was delighted that, despite limitations on social interaction, 18 new students signed up this fall for the peer-to-peer mentoring program for self-identified women of color. "I'm really looking forward to meeting my mentee and finding creative ways for us to engage," she says.

Gray says another program that has not suffered is Our Time Has Come (OTHC). "As an OTHC Scholar, I continue to have opportunities to connect with alumni, to make real connections with people who are content creators or in the entertainment industry," she says. "I'm so grateful. This is my second year in the program and my award was very generous. Many have been impacted by the pandemic so the fact that people are still willing to give back and contribute to the scholarship fund is extra meaningful."

## Taylor M. John

**R**aised in a Caribbean American household of Guyanese, Jamaican, Chinese and Cuban ancestry, Taylor M. John '22 was influenced at an early age by a variety of cultures that inspired her passion for travel and languages. John has visited more than 15 countries—studying in China, Italy and Cuba during high school—and speaks Mandarin.

John says it was travel that exposed her to inequities in healthcare accessibility. “In Jamaica, I saw the difficulties my family had to get access to vaccinations, medications and doctors we take for granted here,” she says. “Quality care is only available for those who can afford it and most cannot.”

At Syracuse University, John has focused her education on global health, majoring in international relations and citizenship and civic engagement, with a minor in Chinese. “I hope to be a doctor and work with an organization like the United Nations or

Doctors Without Borders,” she says. “I want to travel to more neglected places of the world to experience radically different cultures and perspectives from mine, providing healthcare where it’s not readily available.”

After completing her undergraduate degree, she plans to work as a translator or teacher in China, obtain a masters degree while working, and then apply to medical school.

John’s upbringing influenced her in another way—she says she grew up “bleeding Orange.” Between her father, Trevor M. John '96, and her 10 cousins who attended Syracuse University, there was no question about which college team to pull for on game day.

Nonetheless, when it came time to go to college, John chose to be a renegade and headed to Rutgers University as a pre-med student. It wasn’t the right fit, and John transferred to Syracuse University for her sophomore year. “This was always supposed to be my home,” she says. “I just took a detour.”

She wasted no time diving into campus life. John joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, at Rutgers but discovered she was the only active AKA at Syracuse—all of the active members had graduated the previous spring. John became chapter president and worked with the local AKA graduate chapter to bring in 15 new members. “That was something I was really committed to,” she says. “I wanted to do everything I could to bring back a long-lasting active membership.”

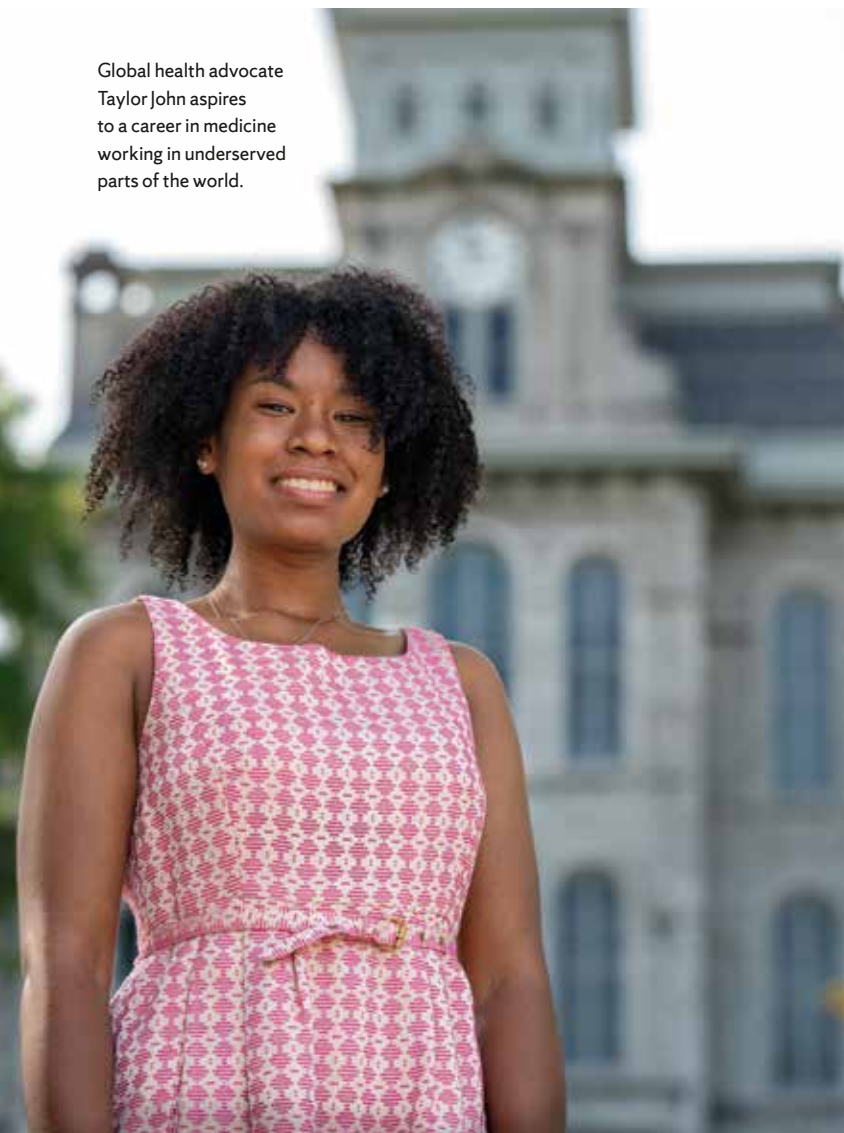
In addition, John currently serves as president of the National Panhellenic Council; is co-chair of diversity affairs for the Student Association; a campus ambassador for One Love, an organization that promotes safe and healthy relationships on college campuses; a peer health advocate for Planned Parenthood; and a member of Phi Sigma Pi National Honor Fraternity and Iota Iota Iota National Women’s Honor Society.

She’s also an Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholar. “The program definitely helped me build a foundation and relationship with the community of color, which I really appreciate,” she says. “I’ve met a lot of like-minded individuals, people that love the same things as me and are passionate about doing well.” Despite virtual programming, she looks forward to connecting with her OTHC peers.

John concedes that her first year at Syracuse University was not the norm, punctuated by ongoing student protests and cut short by COVID-19. Nonetheless, she’s never regretted her transfer.

“I’m such an Orangewoman; I love this school,” she says. “Nothing is going to get in the way of me staying here.”

Global health advocate Taylor John aspires to a career in medicine working in underserved parts of the world.





# Students Need Your Support, Now More Than Ever

Since it was established in 1987, the Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship program has supported Black and Latino/a Syracuse University students through financial awards, professional development programs and mentoring, changing lives in the process.

OTHC Scholars are more than just students who need help with the cost of attending college. They are leaders in campus organizations and top-performing members of their class, many with aspirations to attend graduate or professional school. In short, they represent the promise of a Syracuse University education.

The alumni and student profiles on the previous pages are testimony to the program's impact. But our ability to help Black and Latino/a students does not meet the demand. Currently, only 30 percent of qualified scholarship applicants are awarded a scholarship.

The need to provide all students with equal access to transformative learning opportunities has never been

more evident. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted students of color, with increasing numbers facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

Your support for the OTHC Scholarship Program is more important now than ever. Please consider the impact of your own Syracuse University education and pay it forward to help underrepresented students achieve their own dreams. As always, 100 percent of your contribution goes to help students in need.

**Become an OTHC Mentor.**

**Visit [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/](https://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/).**



2019-2020  
Our Time Has Come Scholars



# Our Time

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Kimberly Manning '99 and Robert Manning '83  
Helena Mitchell Lindsey '78  
Freddy Morales '97  
Anthony Noble '99  
Constance Orlando '89  
Oluwaleke Osinubi '01  
R. B. Rich and Melissa Rich '71  
Joachim Rogers '93  
Jessica Santana '11  
Gwynne Wilcox '74

#### GIVING LEVEL OF \$500 - \$999

Bernice Bauknight-Jalloh '75  
Bernadette Biggs '85  
Riccardo Galbato and Suzanne Galbato '98  
Abdulai Jalloh  
Brian Jones '88 and Terri Jones  
Kimberly Kreitner '88  
Lisa Lattimore '91 and Todd Lattimore  
Eve Marsan '96  
Shawn Outler '89  
Ellory Peck '76  
Donna Ponder '87  
Shamara Ray '93  
Stephen Scott '94 and Yava Scott  
Charles Stevens '77 and Jennifer Stevens  
Rodney Thompson '93 and Tracy Thompson

William Welburn '75  
Rachel Williams '04

#### GIVING LEVEL OF \$100 - \$499

Shahid Allah '86  
Sylvia Alston '85  
Morris Anderson '88  
Robert Anderson '95  
Leroy Antoine '15  
Shari Appollon '07  
Therese Banks  
Christopher Barbaro '91  
Paul Barbosa '11  
Mary Barrett '85  
Arnyse Black '95  
Jennifer Bloomfield '83  
Eric Booker '00  
Andrew Brydges '13  
Justina Burke '87  
Mary Byrd '58  
Darren Carr '08  
Candace Carter '99  
Carolina Chavez '00  
James Childs '86  
Darrell Claytor  
Ashley Clemente Serrano '15  
LaVerne Collins '80  
Lillian Collins  
Chasity Cooper '11  
Melissa Cox '93  
Jermie Cozart '97  
Walter Croft '70  
Joseph Cruz '74  
Margaret Cunningham  
Ryan Dennis '04  
Mervyn Devonish '75  
Robert Dick '63  
Caryn Douglas '98  
Patrick Douglas '15  
Brianna Downing '99 and Gregory Downing  
Keith Downing '97  
Deidre Elleman '75  
Noelle Ellerbe '95  
Martha Elliott '71  
Jennifer Erie '94  
Taharka Farrell '91  
Frantz Felix '00  
Lawrence Ford '80  
Michele Frank '89  
Michelle Frankson '84  
Jade Fulce '08  
Linda Fuller '76  
Francine Gennuso  
Sarah Glover '96

Gloria Gonzalez '98  
Gary Hahn '89  
Dolores Hamilton '94  
Christian Harley '14  
Ebony Harris '95 and Che Harris  
Kimberly Harris '09  
Trinace Hickson '08  
Jennifer Hollander '93  
Miko Horn '95  
William Howard  
Derrick Ingle '18  
Todd Jenkins and Venida Jenkins '88  
Janet Johnson '73  
Juleen Johnson '07  
Derek Jones  
Tanya Jones-Bosier '95  
David Kahn '63 and Linda Kahn '63  
Carolyn Kany '61  
Marion Kennelly '87  
Michael Lacour '85  
Giovannie LaRoc '09  
Rosalie Lesser '56  
Tamineca Lollis '01  
Dana Lyons '96  
Joanne Madhere '93  
Cheryl Manning Waithe '87  
Frances Martin-Childs  
Erica Mason '04  
Sydney McAlmont '14  
Christopher Moncrief '14  
Rachel Moo '98  
Paulette Morgan '85  
Kristen Moryl '00  
Sarah Muglia '64  
A. Muhammad '71 and Janean Muhammad  
Sade Muhammad '12  
Morey Myers '49  
Ingrid Myrie '94  
Henriette Myrthil '95  
Vanessa Nicholls '88  
Mary Nichols '73  
Gabrielle Page-Wilson  
Angela Peterson '83  
Shelton Prescott '96  
Shamieka Preston '97  
Patricia Price '95  
Cy Prince '84  
Layla Ramirez  
Reginald Raymond '93  
Caeresa Richardson '07 and David Richardson '08  
Joseph Rinaldi '92  
Theresa Rivera '86  
Victor Roberts '12

# Has Come

Lauri Rosario '13  
Stacey Rubain '96  
Donald Saint-Germain '12  
Mylene Salinas '10  
Kathy Smith '67  
Vance Spears '95  
Stephen Stevens  
Mark Stover '11  
Andrea Tarrant and Brian Tarrant '96  
Alicia Thomas '93  
Ileana Ungureanu '06  
Vincent Vannicola '69  
Gilbert West '71  
Klerayshal White '94  
Stefanie White '18  
Marie Wiles '96 and Timothy Wiles  
Grant Williams '85 and Maxine Williams '77  
Tiffani Williamson  
Stephen Willis '71  
Cheryl Wills '89  
Gregory Wilson '80  
Jill Wilson '60 and Robert Wilson '59  
Jess Withey '97  
Wainie Youn '07

## GIVING LEVEL UP TO \$99

Laura Baber '17  
Charles Baker  
Dowanna Baker '94  
Michelle Bal  
Susan Ballard and Troy Ballard  
Gabriela Bermudez '04  
Hannah Bibighaus '14  
Susan Bickford '79  
Jeanne Bissell-Hoge '89  
Cedric Bolton '18  
James Breed  
Sara Buhl '00  
Taber Buhl '00  
Lacy Burkhart '08  
Dawn Butler '74  
Bianca Caiella Breed  
Rebecca Canchola '99  
Eric Chandler '84 and Laurie Chandler  
Dina Clark '92  
Burton Clarke '71  
Ashley Cone '17  
John Cooley '59  
Mary Ann Cordone '64  
Christopher Cortney  
Zoraida Cozier '91  
Sharon Cross '18 and Michael Cross  
Frank Dariano '09  
Martin Davis '78

Megan DiDomenico '19 and Michael DiDomenico  
Dalton Dupree '15  
Dwight Elliott '94 and Racquel Elliott  
Ernestine English '77  
Deidre Flowers '92 and Mark Flowers  
Tim Fox '80  
Mary Franklin  
Aaron Ganaway '87  
Rosie Garcia '09  
Carli Gertler and Joshua Gertler '03  
Brigid Gillen '06  
Terrence Gilliam '87  
Donna Glassberg  
Brian Greenberg and Lauren Greenberg '90  
Leta Griffin '79  
Ciara Harrington '18  
Christopher Healey '04  
Alyssa Hernandez '17  
Ana Hernandez '18  
Maria Hettle '03  
Chinemere Iregbulem-McGrath '95  
Jason Jackson '05  
Christopher Johnston '95 and Renee Johnston '97  
Charisse Jones '91  
Mary Kane  
Wendell Kane '67  
Sabithulla Khan '10  
Jamei Kidder and James Kidder '01  
Peter King '80  
Laurie Kingsberry '82  
Fabiola Lara '13  
Angela Lawrie '90  
Dana Lester '95 and Timothy Lester '99  
Scott Lial '97  
Ruben Lira '17  
Maria Lopez '05  
Manish Mangal '04  
Jasmine Mangum '16  
Richard Mason '66  
Ashley McCarthy '12  
Carolyn McFarlane  
Kirsten Meneghello and Richard Meneghello '93  
Beatrice Mines and Michael Mines '79  
Daniel Nannini  
Anwar Nasir '06  
Jeffrey Neal '06  
Linda Norak '76  
Gezzer Ortega '03  
Gizelle Ortiz-Velazquez '84  
Cyrille Phipps '87  
Lori Porcher '85  
Eleanor Pourron '60  
Harold Ray '50

Damian Redman '95 and Jennifer Redman  
Jean Reilly '72  
Mary Remillard '15  
Jennifer Reynolds Lial '97  
David Reza '76 and Mary Reza  
George Rizzo '95  
Richard Robb '62  
Vivian Roman '95  
Lisa Ruiz  
Bonnie Ryan '00  
Jacqueline Safont '97  
Mackenzie Sammeth '21  
Samantha Sanchez '19  
Judith Sausen '72  
Shamel Schand '07  
Kathleen Scheimer '70  
Steven Schmidt '73  
Carolyn Silas '90  
Matthew Simo '95  
Anthony Small '97 and Keina Small '89  
Joseph Stallings and Patricia Stallings  
Josephine Summers '98  
Kisha Turpin '97  
Charmayne Tyler-Jackson '73  
Ifeanyichukwu Uwanaka  
Don Vassel '89 and Rachel Vassel '90  
Leslie Wagner  
Michelle Walker-Davis '82  
Dale Washington  
Jasmin Waterman '03  
Douglas Watkins '66  
Hillary Webb  
Jeffrey Weitzel '95  
Deborah Wilkinson and Norman Wilkinson '86  
Demetra Williams '98  
Darla Wilson  
John Zerio '86

If you'd like to support Our Time Has Come Scholars, please give to OTHC at [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/give-now/](https://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/give-now/). If you'd like to mentor a student, visit [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/](https://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/).

## Student Association Spearheads Racial Justice Fundraiser

In response to national protests and growing awareness surrounding racial injustice, racism and police brutality, the Student Association (SA) launched the Syracuse Racial Justice Fundraiser to support organizations in the Syracuse community doing important work for racial justice. This Universitywide fundraiser is open to anyone but is specifically targeted to University students, administrators, faculty, staff and alumni.

The fundraiser grew out of outrage at the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others, and the subsequent nationwide protest movement, says SA president Justine Hastings '21. "There's a new level of awareness," she says. "These events caused people who normally might not think twice about these issues to sit back and reflect about how they participate in complicity."

For many, that meant signing petitions, anti-racist reading and looking for ways to support organizations that do anti-racist work. Hastings saw it as an opportunity to help bridge the gap between Syracuse University and the Syracuse community. "There are a lot of organizations in this community doing great work for racial justice," she says.

Over the summer, SA partnered with six local organizations—the Syracuse Black Lives Matter Chapter (funds shared with CuseYouthBLM and Raha Syracuse), OG's Against Violence, Unchained, the Black Leadership Coalition of Central New York, Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse and the Syracuse Chapter of the National Action Network—as well as Syracuse University's Our Time Has Come (OTHC) Scholarship program, which supports Black and Latino/a students with scholarships, mentoring, and professional development programs.

Hastings says the mission of the fundraiser is "to serve the city of Syracuse and Central New York to reduce the violence that has afflicted our community through grassroots outreach and boots-on-the-ground effort to reach out to people and bring positive change."

The fundraiser website includes information on the organizations with donation links for each. Donations made go directly to the organizations. "By organizing and promoting this, we're providing resources for people interested in 'doing something' to promote racial justice," says Hastings. "For some, that may be making a financial donation. For others, that may be reaching out to see if they can join or volunteer."

OTHC is the lone Syracuse University entity. "The purpose of the OTHC program is to create possibilities for Black and Latino/a students at Syracuse University," says Hastings, herself an OTHC Scholar. "Because of past injustices and systemic racism, there are gaps in terms of economic accessibility for students of color. OTHC recognizes that. Right now, the program is supported primarily by Black and Brown alumni. Including it in this fundraiser gives it another audience."

As a means to both promote the fundraiser and explore the issues that spurred it, the SA hosted a panel discussion on Aug. 29 featuring leadership from the organizations included. "Our goal was to urge the Syracuse University community to look beyond campus and become more involved in the surrounding area," says Hastings.

Local activists and community leaders at the event spoke about the importance of cooperation between the University and the larger Syracuse community. Among others, Clifford Ryan, founder of OG's Against Violence, urged students to "come off the hill and get involved" in the city.

The panel was part of a series of events SA organized in conjunction with University Union and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to show solidarity with the Get Your Knee Off Our Necks March in Washington. The events also included a live stream of the march on Washington, a solidarity march around campus and a screening of the film *Selma*.

To support the fundraiser or learn more, visit [sa.syr.edu/fundraiser/](http://sa.syr.edu/fundraiser/).



Student Association President Justine Hastings (center) led a campus march in solidarity with the March on Washington.

EMILY STEINBERGER / THE DAILY ORANGE



## Salatha Willis Named Diversity Director for Athletics

Salatha Willis was appointed associate athletic director of diversity, culture and climate, a new position created at Syracuse University in July to create a highly engaged, inclusive and equitable culture for all of the University's student athletes, administrators, coaches and staff in the athletics department.

"Our society is going through an incredibly challenging time," says Syracuse athletic director John Wildhack. "If we're going to be a change agent, then we need to recognize that we need to change and we need to do better."

Willis, whom Wildhack calls "an extraordinary leader and communicator," had served as associate director of the University's Office of Student-Athlete Academic Development since 2013. In his new position, Willis will provide oversight and effective delivery of diversity educational and developmental programming, evaluate and measure the effectiveness of existing programs and services, and serve on and support University-wide committees and community groups.

"My goal is to commit and train our department in the areas of diversity, inclusion and equity across the board so that we can be better administrators, coaches and people," says Willis.

He's hit the ground running. One of his first efforts was the creation of a student engagement committee comprising athletes from each sport who are working together to create both programmatic and what Willis calls "symbolic" initiatives.

The latter includes the choice by some athletes to replace the nameplates on their team jerseys with social justice phrases, the creation of pre-game T-shirts expressing values they wish to share with fans and the adoption of a creed that will be spoken at every athletic event.

Willis says student athletes are planning community outreach activities within the Syracuse City School District, including a fundraiser—44 Hours of Giving—to raise funds for the Blessings in

a Backpack program, and a one-day free sports camp (to be held post-pandemic) intended to introduce students to sports where athletes of color are typically underrepresented due to cost, equipment or exposure (for example, crew, field hockey and lacrosse).

Across the board, students, staff and coaches will participate in diversity training. Willis is also launching efforts aimed to diversify hiring and to support the professional development of female employees and people of color in the department. The goal is to create initiatives that will "be bred into everything we do in athletics so that we can be more collaborative and have cultural competence," he says.

Willis, who has a doctorate in educational leadership from Indiana State University, was a college athlete himself, playing basketball at Western Michigan University. After earning his bachelor's degree in computer science, he served in several professional roles at the school, including assistant director of admissions. He has also served as vice president of enrollment management and student affairs at Martin University in Indiana, as director of first-year programs and university testing at Indiana State University and as an academic counselor and compliance assistant at Colgate University.

"At every institution, regardless of my primary role, I've been involved in diversity and inclusion issues," says Willis, who has also been appointed to a new Atlantic Coast Conference panel for racial and social justice. "I'm committed to helping our department develop in these areas across the board leading to measurable results."



Salatha Willis

## Syracuse University Waives SAT, ACT Scores for 2021 Admission

In response to the extraordinary circumstances facing high school students and families due to COVID-19, Syracuse University will not require SAT and ACT test scores in the application process for fall 2021 admission.

"The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted the lives of countless college-bound students and introduced tremendous stress and uncertainty into the college admission process," says Maurice A. Harris, dean of admissions. "Test dates have been canceled. Social distancing requirements and other issues have constrained testing capacity. By making the submission of test scores optional, we hope to alleviate some of the stress on applicants to Syracuse University."

Harris says the option will also help applicants from around the nation and the globe whose access to testing facilities is limited.

"While we cannot change the realities of these unprecedented circumstances, we can change our processes to help first-year applicants in the 2020-21 application cycle," says Harris.

Students who are unable to submit standardized test results, or who choose not to, will not be disadvantaged, Harris says. "As they have always been, standardized test scores are just one component of our holistic review process. Now we will place greater emphasis on other required application credentials, including academic performance, the rigor of coursework and co-curricular engagement." Students who do not submit test scores will remain eligible for merit scholarships.

## Consummate Educator and Mentor Janis Mayes Retires



Janis Mayes

When Timeka Tounsel '10 was an undergraduate, the summer course Janis Mayes founded and directed, *Paris Noir: Literature, Art and Contemporary Life in Diaspora*, was a pivotal point of personal and intellectual growth. When she returned to Syracuse University several years later to serve as a program assistant for the course, which takes students to France for a multifaceted study of international Black culture and experience, she thought she'd feel like something of an expert. But about two weeks in it dawned on her that she was learning as much as she had when she'd been a

student and her experiences were being thoughtfully curated by Mayes. "I realized, oh, school is still in session! But that's what it is to be in the presence of Professor Mayes—one is always learning. She has an extraordinary ability to meet people at whatever point they are on their journeys and give us each what we need to grow."

Over the course of her 35 years on the African American studies faculty at Syracuse University, Mayes has made tremendous contributions as a scholar in the fields of African and diaspora literatures in French and English, Black women's writing and in the practice and critical theory of literary translation. She was instrumental in the evolution of the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University and has inspired Africana-focused cultural programs at other institutions as well. But her impact is most vividly expressed in the testimonies of students who have had her as an instructor, and whose lives have been shaped by the encounter. Mayes is retiring as of Jan. 1, 2021.

"I would not be who I am today if it wasn't for Professor Mayes," says Alicia Carroll '88. "While I thought I only needed science and math to become a doctor, it was what Professor Mayes taught me in the African American literature course I took with her that actually made it possible for me to fulfill my goals. She allowed me to fully walk into all of my gifts. She modeled discipline, excellence, openness, integrity—and expected the same of us. I have carried that with me my entire professional career."

Mayes' commitment to teaching and mentorship extended beyond the classroom. She invited her students into the world of illustrious artists, writers, musicians and intellectuals who were her peers. "It was because of the people she introduced us to—and who took time to talk with us, because of her—that I first saw myself as a scholar," says Kishauna Soljour '13, G'16, G'19, who credits Mayes with encouraging her to pursue the research that launched her career.

Mayes is guided by the central ethic that one's work should be anchored in a purpose larger than self-interest. "We are all here as part of a legacy, a history, and we have a responsibility to continue

and contribute to the work that matters for the larger community," she explains. Charles Wynder Jr. '86 was a student when Mayes first started teaching at Syracuse and says the clear-sighted morality of Mayes' approach made a profound impact on him. "I learned the importance of self-definition and self-determination from Dr. Mayes, and the importance of applying an ethical frame not just to the challenges of life, but also to the way one works and lives, to whom one aligns with and how one presents oneself in the world," he says.

Mayes often used jazz as a metaphor to explain the educational journey. It's a metaphor that struck a chord with Anthony Abeja '19. "Professor Mayes explained that everyone would get their chance to speak—their own solo in the spotlight—but our contributions were to be based on the ideas that others had shared. Our job was to listen, interpret and then add something unique that others could play off of. I realized it's not just the seminar that could be like jazz, but life too."

Jazz provides a fitting metaphor for Mayes' legacy. She was a young academic, recently returned from two years as a Fulbright Scholar and visiting professor in Côte d'Ivoire, when she received an invitation to apply for a position at Syracuse University (she later received a second Fulbright award to study in Senegal). Her scholarship was shaped by the national and international movements of the time, and when she came to visit, it was the energy of the Black student population here that secured her decision to transfer from her home state, Texas, to New York. She knew, she says, that these were the students she wanted to work with. And now, her impact and contributions continue to play out in the innumerable lives her mentorship has touched.

In Mayes' own words, retirement is just another step in the journey and she will relish it with same joy and intellectual curiosity that has defined her path so far. "Do I have plans? No. But I have many projects," she says with a smile. "There's still much work to be done."



Paris Noir students enjoying the City of Light



Bea González G'04

## Bea González Honored with Professional Development Program in Her Name

**H**onoring more than three decades of service in the field of continuing education, the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) has established the Bethaida “Bea” González Diversity in Leadership Scholars program. The goal of the program is to equip diverse professionals at any stage of their career with the skills and knowledge needed to move into leadership positions on campus.

The program’s namesake, Bea González G’04, former dean of University College, retired from Syracuse University in July as vice president of community engagement. During her 36-year career, she served UPCEA in many capacities, including as president-elect in 2013-14 and president in 2014-15. During her tenure as UPCEA president, González facilitated discussions about the needs of adult students and collaborated with UPCEA officers and members to provide services and access to students in higher education.

The new online professional development program is intended to address challenges of the profession and the importance of representative and diverse leadership—a cornerstone of UPCEA’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. “This is the most significant move we have ever made in the area of diversity and inclusive excellence, and I am deeply grateful to the great Bea González for lending us her name and reputation for leadership in this critical area,” says Robert J. Hansen, chief executive officer of UPCEA.

## Scholarship Program Created to Honor Former Dean Lorraine Branham

**A** scholarship program to recruit and support students from socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and other underrepresented groups to the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications has been created to honor former dean Lorraine Branham, who died in April 2019.

The Lorraine Branham Scholarship Program, supported both by school resources and donor funds, will provide under-resourced, talented students the opportunity to attend Syracuse University and the Newhouse School debt-free. “Lorraine was a champion of access to higher education and I’m confident this new multimillion-dollar investment would make her proud,” says Newhouse School Dean Mark J. Lodato.

This new program will supplement the Lorraine E. Branham Endowed Scholarship for Newhouse students from underrepresented populations, which was created in Branham’s memory by alumni and friends following her death.

Through the new program, as many as 10 scholarships will be awarded each fall; recipients will be known as Branham

Scholars. The program will also support “Finish Line” scholarships for rising juniors and seniors who need financial assistance to complete their education at Newhouse.

In addition, a merit-based Branham Prize will be awarded to an incoming first-year student as recognition of their accomplishments in the classroom and the communications space while in high school.



Lorraine Branham

ANTHONY GOLDEN/THE DAILY ORANGE



## Syracuse Stadium Completes Phase 1 of Renovations

**A**lthough Syracuse University athletics will compete without spectators this fall, a new and improved stadium experience awaits fans once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

On Sept. 25, the day before the football team's season opener against Georgia Tech, University officials unveiled first phase of Syracuse University's multi-year, \$118 million stadium project.

"This is an exciting day for Syracuse University, the City of Syracuse and the broader Central New York community," said Chancellor Kent Syverud. "From graduations to great moments in sports, some of the most memorable times in our lives and on our campus have taken place under the roof of our stadium. The completion of this phase of the project will transform the Stadium experience for our community and our fans."

Phase 1 renovations include a new fixed roof, center-hung scoreboard, videoboards, sound system and improvements to better comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The University was also able to make some improvements to restrooms and concession areas, although the complete renovation of those spaces won't be finished until 2022. In addition, installation of an air conditioning system is ahead of schedule.

Two changes should be immediately noticeable to fans. First, the roof will no longer require air pressure to stay inflated—so the loud "whoosh" and rush of air experienced when entering and exiting the building are now a thing of the past. "For the first time in 40 years, we'll be able to pin the doors open and allow people to walk right in without having to worry about pressure being released from the building," says Pete Sala, vice president and chief campus facilities officer.

Second is the stadium's new center-hung scoreboard, featuring four sides that are 62.5 feet wide and 20 feet high, reportedly the largest in college sports.

"It's huge," says Sala. "The corners are massive."

As with everything else, COVID-19 has impacted the project. Sala says his team is exploring design plans to make concession stands as touchless as possible. "We're going to model one of the stands to try to have as little interaction as possible. It's a different way to approach a concession stand. We don't know what that looks like yet, but we can try to get ahead of the curve and try to change the dynamics of the stand."

In addition, Sala says he doesn't expect to move forward with other major changes this fall because he wants to keep the space available for student use. "We need this facility not just for athletics but for our students now," he says. "Club 44 is going to be a classroom. We have a plan to have staffing at Gate N, P, G and H so students can come in during the day and spread out to study outside of their residence halls."

The Phase 1 renovation is part of the \$118 million initiative designed to create a new stadium experience. Syracuse University's 49,250-seat stadium serves as home to the football, basketball and lacrosse teams, and hosts concerts and other events. The building opened in 1980 and is the largest domed stadium on any college campus. The new roof replaces one that been on the building since 1999, which replaced the original roof.

Portions of the roof were given to members of the Class of 2020 as part of Commencement. Orange fans are also able to purchase a piece of the roof at [collectiblexchange.com](http://collectiblexchange.com).



## Cydney Johnson Named Vice President for Community Engagement and Government Relations

**C**ydney Johnson '77, G'96 has been appointed Syracuse University vice president for community engagement and government relations. Since 2018, Johnson has served as the University's executive director for state and local government relations, reporting to Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Innovation J. Michael Haynie.

In her new role, Johnson will lead the community engagement team as it continues to advance the University's robust portfolio of community-connected programs and initiatives. In addition to overseeing all facets of the University's community engagement efforts, Johnson will assume strategic responsibility for developing and implementing the University's legislative and advocacy agenda and will retain her responsibilities as senior advisor to University leadership on issues related to city, county and New York State government.

Johnson received her undergraduate degree and MBA from the Martin J. Whitman School of Management. She has

previously served as senior vice president of U.S. accounts at Blueprint LTD, a small global marketing firm; vice president of consumer marketing and sales at Oneida Limited; and director of development at the Whitman School. She also spent seven years as an adjunct professor in the David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics. Johnson is a member of the Central New York Regional Development and Planning Board and a board member of the Syracuse Partnership Council with the Syracuse City School District.



Cydney Johnson

## University Creates Team to Support and Engage Student Activists

**R**ecognizing the important role student activism plays in bettering the campus community, Syracuse University has established the Student Activism Engagement Team (SAET).

The team, appointed by John Liu, interim vice chancellor and provost, and Amanda Nicholson, interim deputy senior vice president for enrollment and the student experience, is composed of academic leaders, student experience staff, and faculty and student leadership. It is charged with supporting and facilitating student activism, including protests and demonstrations and engaging with students to empower the free expression of ideas. SAET will provide guidance to ensure that activism remains safe and healthy, particularly in light of public health guidelines in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are experiencing a truly unique time in our nation," says College of Engineering and Computer Science Dean J. Cole Smith, a member of the team. "Protest can lead to change that is urgently needed, and the strong voices we have heard are critical to identifying where inequity exists and examining our own roles in addressing it."

Smith says the team will fundamentally change the way that Syracuse University engages with student activists, bringing together individuals from around the University who interact with students on a regular basis. The team will facilitate protest while helping students ensure that their actions remain within their responsibilities to the community. "Our work will be to empower students, engage with people who want to effect change, and connect students who have ideas, concerns and requests for change with decision makers," he says.

Student participation is a critical part of the team's approach. "I appreciate that the Student Association has a seat at the table and will work alongside faculty, staff and administrators to help

student activists connect with decision makers to find common paths forward that successfully address underlying issues," says Justine Hastings '21, SA president.

Meredith Davis, associate vice president for student engagement, believes that Syracuse University students can be empowered voices for change, while also taking care of each other and the community. "We are hearing renewed calls for justice and an end to hate in communities across the country," Davis says. "This team recognizes the value of campus activism and its potential to deliver a transformative learning experience, helping students, faculty, staff and leadership to better understand and advance our approaches to fostering a more diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible campus and society."

### SAET members for 2020-21

- Jorge Castillo**, director, LGBT Resource Center
- Meredith Davis**, associate vice president for student engagement
- Marcelle Haddix**, Dean's Professor, chair of reading and language arts and chair of the University Senate Agenda Committee (ex-officio)
- Justine Hastings '21**, president of the Student Association (ex-officio)
- Jeffrey Mangram**, associate professor of education
- Diane Murphy**, professor and dean of Falk College
- Brice Nordquist**, associate professor and Dean's Professor of Community Engagement in writing studies, rhetoric and composition
- Christabel Sheldon**, director of the McNair Scholars Program
- Cole Smith**, professor and dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science
- Peter Venable**, dean of the Graduate School

## University Lecture Series Features Actor/Activist Wilmer Valderrama and Journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones

Syracuse University's premier speaker series, the University Lectures, launched its 20th anniversary season with dialogues with actor and activist Wilmer Valderrama and 1619 Project creator Nikole Hannah-Jones.

On Sept. 22, Valderrama took part in a conversation with David Barbier Jr. '23, an international relations major in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and a television, radio and film major in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Valderrama has amassed an extensive acting resume in film and television. He is most recognized for his portrayal of the character Fez on Fox's Emmy-nominated series *That '70s Show* (1998-2006), a role that garnered him numerous Teen Choice Awards. In 2016, he joined the cast of the hit CBS drama *NCIS* (then in its 14th season) as *NCIS* Special Agent Nick Torres.

In his community, Valderrama serves on the board of Voto Latino and is the spokesperson for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's Ready 2 Lead program, which works to educate and empower Latino youth. Valderrama also recently co-founded HARNESS, a group dedicated to connecting communities to inspire action and power change. In 2013, Valderrama was honored with an ALMA Award for Outstanding Social Activism. His appearance was sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

On Oct. 8, Hannah-Jones was interviewed by Rawiya Kameir, assistant teaching professor in the magazine, news and digital

journalism department in the Newhouse School and a finalist for the 2020 National Magazine Award in the Essays and Criticism category.

Hannah-Jones covers racial injustice for the *New York Times Magazine* and has spent years chronicling the way official policy has created—and maintains—racial segregation in housing and schools. Her deeply personal reports on the Black experience in America offer a compelling case for greater equity. She was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2017 for “reshaping national conversations around education reform.”

Most recently, she spearheaded the *New York Times Magazine*'s 1619 Project on the history and lasting legacy of American slavery. Her powerful introductory essay was awarded the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for commentary. Named for the year the first enslaved Africans arrived in America, the project features an ongoing series of essays and art on the relationship between slavery and everything from social infrastructure and segregation to music and sugar—all by Black American authors, activists, journalists and others. Hannah-Jones' appearance was co-sponsored by the Syracuse University Humanities Center.

The Syracuse University Lectures bring to campus notable guest speakers of exceptional accomplishment who share their diverse global experiences and perspectives. The series was created through, and is supported by, the generosity of alumnus Robert B. Menschel '51. Due to COVID-19, the fall lectures were held virtually via Zoom.



Wilmer Valderrama



Nikole Hannah-Jones



## LaShan Lovelace Named Director of Diversity and Inclusion

LaShan Lovelace joined Syracuse University in June as the first director of diversity and inclusion. Reporting to chief diversity and inclusion officer Keith Alford, Lovelace will work with Syracuse University administrators and staff to create and expand diversity and inclusion initiatives and programming at the university.

“LaShan Lovelace has been an excellent addition to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion,” says Alford. “He has brought bountiful energy and innovation to our campus building on our shared focus of elevating equity.”

“I like to hit the ground running and I can say that I have done that,” says Lovelace. “I have a major opportunity to infuse systematic and strategic change, and since I started in this role I’ve been committed to doing so.”

The son of an Army veteran, Lovelace lived all over the world during his childhood. He says the experience of engaging with a wide range of cultures sparked his interest in diversity from a young age.

“At times it was challenging to not be rooted in one place, but it was also an opportunity,” he says. “I learned so much from the different cultures in the places where I lived. It’s played a major role in shaping who I am today.”

Since his first day, Lovelace has been working hard to get to know the people and groups that make up the University. He has spent time meeting with students to learn their goals and needs, holding panels with student organizations and groups, engaging with the community by meeting with nonprofit organizations and working to start a new committee for graduate students to understand their experiences.

“Students want to see change and know they have administrators advocating for their voice. I’m committed to building their trust in me as their advocate and working collaboratively with them to promote change,” Lovelace says.

ANNABELLE GORDON/THE DAILY ORANGE



LaShan Lovelace

Lovelace operates by what he calls the three As—awareness, accountability and advocacy. “It’s important to be aware of the importance of diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility, hold individuals accountable for their role in making a change and advocate for others whose identities are different than ours,” he says. “These three As are at the forefront of my platform and guide what I do every day.”

Lovelace earned a bachelor’s degree in sports management and a master’s in management and leadership from Liberty University. He previously held positions at Liberty and at Radford University, most recently serving as director for the school’s Center for Diversity and Inclusion, where he created programming for first-generation college students, low-income students and LGBTQ students.

If you would like to mentor an Our Time Has Come Scholar, visit [alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/](https://alumni-of-color.syr.edu/connect/othc-mentor-application/).



# The Syracuse 8: Then, Now and Forever Orange

**A**s the nation grapples with issues of race and racial equity, a virtual event sponsored by Syracuse University's Office of Multicultural Advancement and Department of Athletics on Sept. 30 provided a powerful example of progress and understanding. "The Syracuse 8: Then, Now and Forever Orange" was, as moderator Vera Jones '84 described, not just a panel discussion, but a conversation of reconciliation between former Orange football teammates Greg Allen '73 and the Rev. Joe Ehrman '73.

Allen, who is Black, was a member of the Syracuse 8, a group of Black Syracuse University football players who boycotted the team in 1970 after their petition for more equitable treatment was ignored. The boycott set off ugly protests; the players were banned from the team and ultimately sacrificed their football careers and any NFL prospects. Vilified for years, the Syracuse 8 are now viewed as pioneers among athlete activists.

Ehrman, who is white, recalled being largely apathetic to his Black teammates' demands at the time, more annoyed that the team would suffer from the loss of their skills on the field and the distraction of the boycott. Ehrman now says his attitude was "a great moral failure on my part, as a man, a teammate and a brother."

Both men talked about coming to Syracuse University in 1968. Allen recalled being picked up at the airport by Coach Ben Schwarzwald, whose first words on the ride to campus included a warning against dating white girls, a message he later learned had also been delivered to other Black players. Another pivotal exchange happened after Allen attended a campus meeting to discuss the possibility of starting a Black studies program at the University. Campus organizers had invited a cross section of students, including Allen, as a student-athlete. Shortly after, Allen was called to Schwarzwald's office, where the coach asked him if he wanted to be Black or he wanted to be a football player. He had to choose.

Ehrman came to Syracuse from Buffalo, New York, largely imprinted by his segregated upbringing. He says in 13 years of education, he never had a Black teacher or coach. "When people aren't part of your experience, you see them as other," he said. Ehrman went on to a career in the NFL, playing nine years with the Baltimore Colts and Detroit Lions. Losing his younger brother to cancer in 1978 was an inflection point in his life, prompting a reevaluation of his priorities. After his football career, he attended Western Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1985.

Ehrman refocused his life on urban ministry in Baltimore, to programs promoting societal change through sports and coaching programs, and began speaking out against the socialization of young boys and violence against women. In 2004, Syracuse

University honored Ehrman with an Arents Award (presented to alumni who have made outstanding contributions to their fields). In his acceptance speech, Ehrman acknowledged that the greatest education he received while at Syracuse University came from the actions of the Syracuse 8, acknowledging his own moral failing at the time.

One who took notice of those remarks was Allen, who had graduated from Syracuse, earned two master's degrees and forged a successful career as an insurance executive. He said he's never regretted his choice to take a stand for what was right all those years ago, calling his actions "a gift that helped make Syracuse University a better place" and impacted individual perspectives, such as Ehrman's. "Hearing Joe's words, Joe didn't change his mind, he changed his heart," said Allen.

Led expertly by moderator Jones, a former Syracuse University basketball player, WNBA commentator, and motivational speaker and author, the conversation was emotional for all participants. Ehrman repeatedly mentioned being moved by comments from Allen, who called the experience "one of the greatest evenings of my life."

One consensus: real change takes work. "We all have implicit biases but we don't have to accept them," says Allen. "We can challenge them."

**To honor the courage and sacrifice of the Syracuse 8, please consider a gift to the Syracuse 8 Scholarship Fund, which supports Black and Latino/a students at Syracuse University. To make a gift, visit [bit.ly/OTHCSYR8](http://bit.ly/OTHCSYR8).**



Greg Allen, a member of the Syracuse 8

# New Book by William Baker Shows It's Never Too Late to Correct Injustice

A forgotten piece of American history is told in a new book by the late (retired) Lt. Col. William Baker G'64, himself part of the story for helping reverse a decades-old racial injustice.

*The Brownsville Texas Incident of 1906: The True and Tragic Story of a Black Battalion's Wrongful Disgrace and Ultimate Redemption* (Red Engine Press, 2020) tells the story of the 167 members of the segregated First Battalion, 25th Infantry (Colored), who were discharged without honor from the U.S. Army by President Theodore Roosevelt following a shooting spree in the local town of Brownsville, Texas, and Baker's investigation that led to a reversal of that decision decades later.

At midnight on Aug. 13, 1906, a group of unidentified bandits set siege on Brownsville with a 10-minute barrage of bullets that damaged storefronts and homes, killed a bartender and wounded a policeman. Widespread panic among the white townspeople led to a rushed judgment against the unit of Black soldiers stationed nearby.

Army officials attested that the soldiers were in their bunks at the time and that their weapons did not appear to have been fired. After none of

*"He completed this investigation at the Pentagon in peril of his own career," she says. "But he considered achieving justice for those 167 innocent men his life's work and so that's what he did."*

—Dr. Bettye F. Baker

the soldiers confessed or pointed to others as being involved, President Roosevelt, citing a "conspiracy of silence," exercised his rights as commander in chief and discharged the entire unit without honor, trial or due process. The men were left without military benefits and little future opportunity.

Baker first heard about the Brownsville incident as a boy



In January 1974, President Richard M. Nixon signed legislation compensating the survivors and widows. Baker is at far right.





Baker received a graduate degree from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in 1964. His daughter, Janet Baker G'91, is also an alumna.

growing up in rural Georgia in the 1930s. One day, a man stopped by his grandparents' country home looking for food. By chance, in town the next day, Baker saw the man killed in a hit and run car accident. Baker's grandfather, himself a former slave, told his grandson that the man had once served in the U.S. Army but had experienced a great injustice. He had been a member of the discharged infantry stationed at Brownsville.

Fast forward to 1972. Baker was now an Army lieutenant colonel assigned to the Pentagon's newly formed Equal Opportunity Program. One day, documents crossed his desk regarding the Brownsville decision. It seemed California's first Black member of Congress, Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins, had asked the Army to reinvestigate the case; the Army was ready to reaffirm the original decision. Baker requested and received permission to investigate further.

Using original source materials from the National Archives, military records, and official government letters and memoranda, Baker concurred with investigations conducted but ignored in 1906 stating that the troops had been in their barracks when the shooting spree took place. He also found literal "smoking gun" evidence—a ballistics test showing that military shell casings from the scene were not fired in Brownsville, but had been fired on the rifle range at Fort Niobrara, Nebraska. With this evidence, he was able to persuade the Army to reverse Roosevelt's 1906 ruling, and in 1972, all 167 soldiers were belatedly granted honorable discharges. Only one, Dorsie W. Willis, was still alive, at age 87.

In 1973, Baker was honored at a White House ceremony and given the Army's Pace Award for meritorious service and its Legion of Merit. Robert F. Froehlke, secretary of the Army, commended Baker for bringing "favorable acclaim to the Army in the field of civil rights."

Baker retired from the military and spent the next 20 years forging a second career as financial manager for Rohm & Haas, a Philadelphia chemical company. But the Brownsville story never left him. While he considered his work leading to the reversal of their dishonorable discharge his proudest achievement, he felt

their important story needed to be told. After retiring a second time in 1993, Baker began researching and writing the book. He finished in 2018, days later dying of multiple myeloma at age 86. Although he had tried for years to find a publisher interested in the project, he had not been successful.

But his widow, Dr. Bettye F. Baker, would not be deterred and the book was published earlier this year. "I had lived with that story for 40 years as well," she says. "It was a big part of our lives." She is currently working to garnish interest in a film adaptation of the book.

Bettye vividly recalls that after the men were exonerated, her husband had to take the order to the National Archives to be registered. "It was a glorious moment when he put on his dress blues and drove across the 14th Street Bridge to register that order," she says.

She believes that her husband's upbringing in the Jim Crow South imprinted a sensibility about the importance of Black lives from the injustices he witnessed and experienced himself. "He completed this investigation at the Pentagon in peril of his own career," she says. "But he considered achieving justice for those 167 innocent men his life's work and so that's what he did."

## Milestones

**Dwayne Murray '97** was named professor of military science at Alabama A&M University. Murray participated in ROTC at Syracuse University and enlisted as an information systems operations analyst two weeks after graduation.



# L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. Joins SUMA Advisory, Endows Scholarship

**T**he experience of watching sports on television involves far more than the competition itself. Behind the scenes is an entire production team orchestrating the cameras, audio and interviews to create the product viewers see at home. And if you've been watching high-profile sporting events over the past 30 years, you've likely been watching the work of L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. '79.

With more than 39 years of television experience, Atkinson is a nine-time Sports Emmy Award winner for his work on 13 Olympics, as well as NBA and NFL coverage on NBC.

Atkinson began his broadcast career working in local television. Once he started working coverage of Washington Redskins football, he knew he wanted to pursue sports full time.

"It's live action so you have to really be on your toes," says Atkinson. "You're making instantaneous decisions while telling a story all at the same time. We're documenting unfolding, unscripted action while weaving storylines behind the scenes."

Atkinson has spent the bulk of his career at NBC Sports—from 1990-2002, and again since 2011. In between he served as a freelance director for ESPN, where he directed NCAA football, Wimbledon and French Open Tennis. He is currently in his ninth season as the coordinating studio director for the NHL on NBC, directing the network's pre-game and post-game shows, studio coverage of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, and remote studio coverage of the Stanley Cup Final. Additional directing assignments include the Olympics, Tour de France, college football and a variety of other studio and remote programs.

Thankful for the professional training he received as a student at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Atkinson served on one of the Newhouse School's first advisory boards. He's had Newhouse students intern with him during Olympic broadcasts, and through the years, he's always supported the University financially.

But recent events highlighting racial inequity—both on campus and off—spurred Atkinson to make a larger commitment.

Atkinson's major gift to the Our Time Has Come Scholarship program has funded the L. Kelly Atkinson Jr. '79 Endowed

Scholarship Fund to promote diversity in the field of telecommunications by supporting Black and Latino/a students studying television, radio and film.

Aware of protests by students of color at Syracuse University last year and of the University's challenges in responding, Atkinson feared those events might deter some alumni from supporting the University. "I didn't want deserving students to lose out on opportunity," he says. "In some ways, the student unrest spurred me to make sure students who remained at Syracuse had the support to complete their degrees."

By endowing a scholarship, Atkinson says he's able to make a more immediate impact than by making smaller annual gifts. He's taken his commitment a step further by joining the Syracuse University Office of Multicultural Advancement (SUMA) Advisory Council. "In light of the racial reckoning going on across the country and the conversations taking place in all realms of society, this is an opportunity for me to have a voice at Syracuse University," Atkinson says. "Sometimes there's strength in numbers. I hope to add another diverse voice to assist the University as they are dealing with these challenges."



L. Kelly Atkinson Jr.

**Kenyona Cheney '20** married Dylan Thomas on Aug. 7.



**JaShel Jones '15** joined Bloomberg Media as communications manager in January. She previously served as senior account executive at KWT Global.

# Forbes Taps Sadé Muhammad for New Inclusion Role

**F**orbes has named Sadé Muhammad '12 director of representation and inclusion (R&I) partnerships, a new role to work with marketers and brands on campaigns and strategies that advocate and drive systemic change around diversity, equity and inclusion.

“As a leader in R&I, Sadé will work with brands to spur critical conversations that engage everyone and drive our world forward together,” says Forbes’ chief revenue officer Jessica Sibley. Muhammad will also focus on connecting those campaigns to Forbes’ audience.

“All of us at Forbes have a unique and shared responsibility to tell the right stories, leverage the right voices and compel change,” says Muhammad. “We help marketers build more inclusive systems, processes and products within their organizations and the marketplace.”



Sadé Muhammad

Forbes says it reaches more women and people of color across all demographics compared to other large media business publishers.

Muhammad joined Forbes in 2016 and worked directly with marketers while on the BrandVoice team, Forbes’ content marketing platform. She saw an opportunity to collaborate with underrepresented communities and create opportunities across the Forbes platform, as well as draw talent into the workforce from those communities.

This new representation and inclusion practice is “proactive from our end,” Muhammad says.

“There’s a lot of work to be done and at Forbes we have the opportunity to influence behavior. With that opportunity comes a responsibility to solve and to serve—that’s the commitment we’re making with this practice,” says Muhammad.

“We bring the full power of Forbes—our first-party research, signature journalism, industry-leading branded products—with the critical relationships we have with leaders, entrepreneurs and our Under 30 community to challenge existing systems and processes in front of us, and to create true equity,” she says.

Muhammad earned a degree in magazine journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Prior to Forbes, she held positions at NBCUniversal and Black Enterprise News. A member of the Kappa Lambda chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority, Muhammad is the daughter of Injil Muhammad '86 and Michele Muhammad '87 and the niece of Fatimah Muhammad-Moody '90.

## Milestones

Kenny Hernandez '11 married Alba Peña on Oct. 17.





# Milestones



**Kelsey Davis '19, G'20** was named to Adweek's list of Young Influentials who are shaping media, marketing and tech. Davis is the founder and CEO of CLLCTVE, a platform connecting college creators and brands targeting Gen-Z consumers.



**Darius Joseph '14** will join CBS 58 Sport Zone in Milwaukee as a sports anchor in December. He was previously a sports anchor and reporter in Syracuse.



**Malcolm-Ali Davis '18** marked his 20-year entertainment career with the release of his first album XX in August.



**Nicole Osborne '14, G'20** is engaged to be married to Erin Smith '15. The couple met as undergraduates while residing in DellPlain Hall and now live in Syracuse. Smith is an account manager at Sonnet Software and Osborne is a policy associate at Education Strategy Group. She has served on the Generation Orange Leadership Council since 2016. A summer wedding is planned.



**Lisa Y. Gordon G'90**, president and chief executive officer of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity, was the recipient of the 2020-21 Orange Circle Award. The honor is presented by Syracuse University annually at Orange Central to recognize altruistic members of the Orange community who have done extraordinary things in the service of others.

**If you have a milestone you'd like to share, please send your information and photo to [suma@syr.edu](mailto:suma@syr.edu).**

# College of Law Honors Alumni of Color

**F**elicia Collins Ocumarez L'98, G'98 and José Bahamonde-González L'92 were honored by the Syracuse University College of Law at its annual Law Alumni Weekend, held virtually Sept. 24-26.



Felicia Collins Ocumarez

Collins Ocumarez, in-house council in the legal division of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) in the corporate, consumer, insurance and legislation branch, is the 2020 recipient of the Black Law Student Association (BLSA) William Herbert Johnson Legacy Award. Named for the school's first Black graduate, the award is a particularly fitting honor for Collins Ocumarez, who spearheaded efforts to have Johnson posthumously admitted to the New York bar last year. She is co-founder of the Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective

(Syracuse BLAC), which serves as a bridge between Black alumni professionals and current students. The group has launched a fund drive for a \$150,000 endowment to provide need-based scholarships to Black students at the College of Law.

Collins Ocumarez is a joint degree graduate from the College of Law and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and has clerked for Chief Judge Susan Gertrude Braden (Retired) at the United States Court of Federal Claims. Prior to joining the FDIC, Collins Ocumarez held senior legal positions at Amtrak, the Gallup Organization and Halliburton. She also held positions as a manager at Arthur Andersen and worked in New York City's Financial District in public and municipal structured finance. She is currently working on a dissertation at the George Washington University Law Center on minority communities and blockchain technology for a master of laws degree in government procurement.

"The BLSA Legacy Award is deeply meaningful because the nomination is from my community; the community that I am committed to protecting, building and sustaining," says Collins Ocumarez. "I look forward to continuing to demonstrate that commitment."

Bahamonde-González is the 2020 Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA) Legacy Award Recipient, which recognizes the dedicated efforts that members of the Latin American community have made in overcoming the underrepresentation of Latino/a people in the legal field.

Bahamonde-González is the first chief diversity, inclusion and professional development officer at Baltimore-based law firm Miles & Stockbridge. In this role, he leads the firm's initiatives and programming in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion and lawyer professional development. He is a member of the firm's leadership team and pro bono committee.

A highly regarded diversity and inclusion professional, Bahamonde-González previously spent 23 years at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, serving as associate dean for professional education and in other related associate dean positions. He continues to provide the Professional Development Lecture Series to students in the master of science in law and master of laws programs, as well as promote pro bono opportunities to juris doctor students.

Bahamonde-González was the inaugural chair of the Diversity Advisory Council for the president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore Campus, and throughout his career at the law school, served as advisor to the Latinx Law Student Association and OUTLaw student groups. An active member of the National Association for Law Placement since 1992, he has served as vice president, and currently serves as chair of its Diversity Committee's LGBTQ Work Group. He also received the Maryland Hispanic Bar Association 2018 Outstanding Achievement Award for his work counseling and mentoring Latino/a law students and lawyers.

"I am humbled and honored to receive the 2020 LALSA Legacy Award; ¡Muchas gracias!" says Bahamonde-González. "I also want to share this award with my fellow diversity, equity and inclusion professionals in law firms and law schools across the country. To all of you, please do not give up! Let's keep working together toward the goal of making our legal workplaces and law schools more inclusive and equitable for all of us and, more importantly, for those that are coming right behind us."



José Bahamonde-González

# IN MEMORIAM



**Roland “Bubba” Grimes ’86, G’99**, a native of Washington, DC, died on Sept. 28.

A member of the Syracuse University football team during the 1980s, Grimes was active in the Syracuse community and a champion for social justice. Along with teammate Franklin Redd ’88, Grimes created a group called Terminating Apathy

on the Syracuse Campus, intended to introduce people from all walks of life to each other in an effort to mend racial tensions on campus.

After earning an undergraduate degree in family and community services and a master’s degree in rehabilitation/school counseling, Grimes remained in Syracuse, playing and coaching semi-pro football, establishing credit unions in poorer neighborhoods of the city and publishing a newspaper on the Southside.

Grimes returned to the Washington area 10 years ago and worked as a guidance counselor at Bishop McNamara High School in Maryland. He also hosted the Roland Grimes Sports and Entertainment Show online, interviewing an eclectic lineup of guests that included athletes, politicians and community leaders.

Grimes was survived by his parents, Roland and Wyemia Grimes; his children Jasmin, Taylor and Darius Grimes; and siblings Sonia Brooks and Carmen Grimes.



**Bridget L. Lawson G’08**, of Syracuse, died on Sept. 22.

Lawson was assistant director of the Syracuse Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Engagement. She previously served as the coordinator of academic services for the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP).

Leonese Nelson, program director for CSTEP, says Lawson’s impact “reached beyond the campus community to the greater Syracuse community. She was a true advocate for students.”

Lawson earned a bachelor’s degree in human services from Cazenovia College and a master’s in social work from Syracuse University. She was near completion of a Ph.D. in cultural foundations of education in the School of Education, and her degree will be conferred posthumously.

Throughout her doctoral studies, Lawson worked as a graduate assistant for initiatives such as Early College High School at Nottingham, Say Yes to Education and Writing Our Lives.

Lawson’s scholarly interests focused on social justice in education as it relates to students of color and their experiences in urban public schools; specifically, the achievement gap, access to quality education and college

persistence. Lawson founded BeFree Consulting, offering social justice, diversity education and youth development training to community organizations and schools.

In 2017, she joined Syracuse University’s School of Education as an academic counselor and coordinator of academic services.

Lawson was an active member and the class leader of the Young Adult Missionary Society of the People’s AME Zion Church, a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and an executive board member of Image Initiative. Beyond her contributions to Syracuse University, Lawson had worked for the Syracuse City School District as a substitute teacher, for the Center for Community Alternatives, the Dunbar Association, Contact Community Services and SUNY Oswego.

Lawson was predeceased by her mother, Donna Marie Kaigler-Lawson, and her father, Leonard Charles Lawson. She is survived by her sisters, Stephanie Newport and Alesha and Andrea Lawson; brothers Brian and Keith Lawson; and other extended family members.



**Kenneth Ontario Miles G’11**, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, died on Aug. 15.

A native of Washington, D.C., Miles attended the University of Virginia on a football scholarship and helped the Cavaliers win a share of the ACC Championship in 1989. He earned a bachelor’s degree in studio art and a master’s degree in social

foundations of education while at Virginia, and began his career there as an academic and life skills coordinator before heading to Syracuse University in 1997, where he earned another master’s degree in education.

Miles joined Syracuse University as director of academic support for football, where he helped the team achieve a 100 percent graduation rate. Under his leadership, the football program earned the American Football Coaches Association Achievement Award in 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001. The 1999 citation recognized Syracuse for achieving the highest graduation rate among Division I-A programs in the country.

Miles became the assistant dean of student services for the School of Information Studies and then the executive director of admissions and diversity enrollment management. In 2006, he was named associate athletics director for student support services. That same year, he established the Kenneth O. Miles Scholarship at Syracuse University through the Our Time Has Come Scholarship Fund to help Black and Latino/a students cover the cost of their higher education.

“Kenny exuded positivity and an affirming tone at all times,” recalls Keith A. Alford, Syracuse University’s chief diversity and inclusion officer. “He sought to uplift, and



# IN MEMORIAM *continued*

we all benefited from his humanitarian spirit. I am deeply grateful that our paths crossed.”

His accomplishments at Syracuse helped Miles ascend the ranks and landed him at Louisiana State University, where he spent 11 years as the assistant vice chancellor of the Cox Communications Center for Student Athletes. In fall 2019, he joined the University of Michigan as the executive senior associate athletic director for their Academic Success Program.

Imbued with the teachings of his Jesuit education, Miles’ mantra was “a man for others,” and he exemplified that in everything he did. His legacy will be the hundreds of athletes and mentees that he worked throughout his exemplary career.

Miles is survived by his mother, Lessie Walker; his daughter, Alexandra Ontario Miles; his brother, Jeffrey Miles; his sister, Tiffany Miles; girlfriend Michelle LeBlanc; stepchildren Henry Flournoy III, and Dari, Danielle and Darian LeBlanc; ex-wife, Beth A. Miles; and a host of extended family.



**Jesse Lewis Campbell ’14** of Ypsilanti, Michigan, died on March 16.

Campbell graduated from Ypsilanti High School, where he was active in music and art. At Syracuse University, he studied communication design and was a member of the Black Celestial Choral Ensemble, serving as chaplain. He also tutored students in the

Syracuse City School District through the Syracuse University Literacy Corps.

After graduation, Campbell returned to his hometown and worked at Signs for Tomorrow, Ypsilanti Community Schools and for Little Lamb Day Care.

Campbell was a lifetime active member of his church, New Grace Apostolic Temple, where he was part of the mass choir, men’s choir, the praise team and drama ministry. He was also part of the deaf ministry and signed for the deaf and hearing impaired during services.

In addition to his love of music, Campbell loved art and did freelance graphic design. He is remembered for his sense of humor, cheerful demeanor and boundless encouragement of others.

Campbell is survived by his parents, Jerry and Robin Campbell; his grandmother, Irene Campbell; and his siblings, Jerry Campbell, JeTuan Stephens, Shaenue Micou, Rickia Brann, Jerome Roper, Camille Allen, Latisha Campbell, Chris McClellan, Statia Hamilton and Mikel Brown.

## CBT 2021 Sept. 9-12 Hotel Information

**The Scholar Hotel** (formerly the Genesee Grande)  
1060 East Genesee Street  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
315.476.4212

**Room Rates:**  
Double — per night \$159\*  
Queen — per night \$159\*  
King — per night \$159\*

**Crown Plaza Hotel**  
701 East Genesee Street  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
315.479.7000

**Room Rates:**  
Double — per night \$169\*  
King — per night \$169\*

**Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel and Conference Center**  
801 University Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
315.475.3000

**Room Rates:**  
Double — per night \$152\*

**Marriott Syracuse Downtown (formerly Hotel Syracuse)**  
100 East Onondaga Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315.474.2424

**Room Rates:**  
Standard Rooms (single or double) — per night \$169\*

**Courtyard by Marriott Syracuse Downtown at Armory Square**  
300 West Fayette Street  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
315.422.4854

**Room Rates:**  
Double — per night \$179\*  
Queen — per night \$179\*  
King — per night \$179\*

**Parkview Hotel**  
713 East Genesee Street  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
315.701.2600

**Room Rates:**  
Double — per night \$169\*  
King — per night \$169\*

**Embassy Suites Syracuse — Destiny USA**  
311 Hiawatha Blvd. West  
Syracuse, NY 13204  
315.303.1650

**Room Rates:**  
One Bedroom (2 Queen) — per night \$189

**Aloft Syracuse Inner Harbor**  
310 W Kirkpatrick Street  
Syracuse, NY 13204  
315.422.1700

**Room Rates:**  
Queen — per night \$129  
King — per night \$129

\* Above rates at all hotels are subject to sales and lodging taxes, per room, per night. Quoted rates are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Ask for the Syracuse University Coming Back Together (CBT) Rate.**



**History Makers:** Joseph R. Biden Jr. L'68 has become the first Syracuse University alumnus elected president of the United States. His running mate, Kamala Harris, is the first woman and first person of Black or South Asian descent to be elected vice president. She is also a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., the oldest Greek-letter organization established for Black women.



**Office of Multicultural Advancement**

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