

## The State of Black Children: Standing at the Crossroads of Recovery and Resilience

February 16, 2023 | 10:00AM – 12:00PM CT

### Speaker Bios

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[Sharon Jones](#) – Chief Equity Officer, CHILDREN AT RISK

Sharon Watkins Jones is the Chief Equity Officer at CHILDREN AT RISK. Her career has included positions of leadership in public affairs and higher education administration. She is a former Director of Political Strategies at ACLU of Texas and Director of Career and Technical Education at Lone Star College System. She is also the owner of WatkinsJones political consulting. Sharon volunteers extensively. She is an advocate for GirlTrek, a black women's wellness organization. She is a life member of NAACP, a member of The Links, Inc., Texas Spring Cypress Chapter and has been a member of Delta Sigma Theta Public Service Sorority, Inc for 35 years.



[Amanda McMillian](#) – President and CEO, United Way of Greater Houston

Amanda McMillian assumed her position as President and CEO of United Way of Greater Houston on May 1, 2020. Prior to joining United Way, she served as Executive Vice President & General Counsel for Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, where she was a member of the executive committee and was responsible for Anadarko's legal, human resources, and real estate and facilities functions. Before her tenure at Anadarko, Amanda practiced corporate and securities law at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP.

### Finding a Way to Good Health



[Dr Anjanette Wyatt](#) – President, American Pharmacists Association Foundation

Dr. Anjanette Wyatt is the President and CEO of Clinical Care Pharmacy in Houston as well as the President of the American Pharmacists Association Foundation. Dr. Wyatt is a community, science and pharmacy advocate. She began her career at Eli Lilly and Company where she received the Lilly STAR Award. She also worked at St. Luke Episcopal Health in the World-Renowned Texas Medical Center in Houston, Texas. She has worked as an Adjunct Professor for Texas Southern University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and at Randalls/Tom Thumb Corporation.



[Nakeenya Wilson](#) – Founder, RESTORE Family Support Services

With a background in public and higher education, Nakeenya Wilson is a restorative justice practitioner and consultant with schools across the state. Her work in this area has been primarily focused on addressing alternatives to traditional school discipline in an effort to eradicate the school to prison pipeline. In addition to training and consultation, Nakeenya facilitates community building, harm circles, and family group conferences within schools to resolve conflict and restore relationships between educators, students, and families.



[Sereka Barlow](#) – CEO, YWCA El Paso Del Norte Region

Sereka Barlow is the CEO for the YWCA Paso Del Norte Region and previously served as the Chief Operations Officer for the Hospitals of Providence, Sierra Campus, El Paso, Texas for the past 4 years. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Allied Health, Dental Hygiene, from the University of Louisiana at Monroe and a Masters in Healthcare Administration from Baylor University, U.S. Army Health Care Program. Sereka has over 25 years of healthcare leadership experience. In June of 2017, she retired from the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant Colonel while serving as COO or Deputy Commander for Administration at William Beaumont Army Medical Center, Fort Bliss, Texas. She was recognized in 2019 and 2020 by the Becker's Hospital Review as the top *African American Leaders in Healthcare to Know*. She continues to serve the community of El Paso as the Chair for the El Paso Museum of Art Foundation Board, the Foundation Chair for the El Paso – Southern New Mexico Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, INC., and a member of the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation and Allocation Committee.



[Dr. Sean Haley, Ph.D.](#) – Executive Director, Center for Civic & Public Policy Improvement

Sean A. Haley, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of the Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement (CCPPI), which strives to uplift individuals and communities through advocacy and programming in the areas of Affordable Housing, Health, Education, and Safety and Criminal Justice. As a seasoned leader, facilitator, innovator, and executive coach, he has implemented strategic improvement initiatives anchored in design processes, partnerships, and community engagement strategies in diverse communities across the country. Sean has served as a consultant to major change agents, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, International Center for Leadership in Education, Institute for Public School Initiatives, and National CARES Mentoring Movement. He is a graduate of Morehouse College (B.A., Psychology) and UT Austin (Ph.D., Educational Psychology/M.Ed.). Sean is committed to servant leadership as reflected in his volunteerism, which in part includes serving as: Board Chair, Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Houston Galveston; Board, Patient Care Intervention Center; Board, Prevention Institute; Steering Committee, Health Equity Collective; Advisory Board, University of Houston Honors College; Community Advisory Board, HEALTH Research Institute; Community Advisory Board, Change Happens, Good Life Outcomes; and service in numerous other organizations and coalitions.

## Paving a Smooth Path to Fair Justice



[Joe Herbert](#) – Founder, DEFEND

Joe Herbert has been an attorney since 1994. He practices primarily in the area of business transactions. Joe has launched several programs aimed at benefiting underserved children including GSB (Give Something Back), TAFU (This Ain't For You) and D.E.F.E.N.D. (Dedicated to Empowering the Futures of Economically Neglected Nonviolent Defendants). D.E.F.E.N.D. focuses on rescuing children and young adults from the Jim Crow effects of mass incarceration by raising money to pay lawyers to provide first-time defendants with quality legal representation. From CY 2014 to CY 2016, Joe led a group which operated two fast food restaurants focused on providing entry level jobs to underserved children.



[Trina McReynolds Bailey](#) – Attorney and Author

Trina Bailey recently retired from a more than twenty-five-year career as a trial attorney, with the last decade serving as the managing attorney of a law firm. Leaving the active practice of law has freed her to pursue passion projects like writing and advocacy on behalf of causes she believes in passionately, like the support of vulnerable youth. She's the author of several books, including a duet series titled *Turning Eighteen: A New Adult Survival Guide —10 Tips for Avoiding Legal Drama* (Parts I and II) as well as *Leaving the Nest: 10 Soul-Searching Quizzes to Guide Your Teen to Adulthood*.



[Na'Shon Edwards, Sr.](#) – Professor of Community Development, University of Texas San Antonio and Kansas State University

Na'Shon, Sr. currently serves as the Director of Constituent Services & Housing Researcher for Houston City Council District F under the leadership of Councilmember Tiffany D. Thomas. Na'Shon Z. Edwards, Sr., has been an active researcher in the realm of Community Development in both urban and rural regions, specifically Waller and Harris Counties. Na'Shon, Sr. has worked with rural and municipal governments to improve the quality of life in limited-resource communities using philanthropic and academic practices, which often included partnerships with local NGOs and community groups. In 2020, Na'Shon, Sr. established a Memorandum of Understanding between the Prairie View A&M University Community Development Graduate Program and the Waller County Commissioners Court to support a study that would investigate indicators for regional improvement as it pertained to health, equity, and community resiliency. This M.O.U. was the first of its kind in the history of both the PVAMU CODE program and Waller County Commissioners Court.



[Devika Kornbacher](#) – Co-Head, Tech Group, Clifford Chance/CHILDREN AT RISK Board Member and past Board Chair

Devika Kornbacher is the Co-Head of Clifford Chance's Tech Group, a cross disciplinary team of 600+ lawyers globally, advising on Tech risk and opportunity. She received a bachelor of science in engineering from the University of Houston and her juris doctor from Harvard Law School, where she led the Black Law Student Association's Street Law program, educating youth about their Fourth Amendment rights. Devika is also the Immediate Past Chair of the Board of Children at Risk.

## **Building a Bridge to Quality Education**



[Kathryn McCartney](#) – CEO, Head Start of Greater Dallas

Ms. McCartney has an undergraduate degree in social work, master degrees in early childhood education and educational technology, and has worked in the field for over thirty years. Ms. McCartney has worked with several research projects targeting Head Start children, including the Preschoolers at Academic Risk: Early Childhood Educators' Professional Development Research Project, the Texas Head Start Public School Transition Project, and the Infant Health and Development Project with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of North Carolina Frank Porter Graham Center. This project served disadvantaged mothers with infants and preschool children. Ms. McCartney was also instrumental in the implementation of the Language Enrichment and Activities Program (LEAP), a pre-reading curriculum developed at Head Start of Greater Dallas that is now in use in programs across the country. She has held several positions since joining the Head Start of Greater Dallas program in 1995, from Transition Director to Education Services Director to the Chief Operations Officer / Head Start Director. She has worked closely with all content areas, including the Early Head Start Program. Ms. McCartney also works with several school districts in the Dallas metroplex that partner with Head Start of Greater Dallas.



[Dr. Marla Sheppard](#) – Deputy Chief of Academics, KIPP Texas - Houston

Dr. Marla Sheppard is currently the Deputy Chief of Academics in KIPP Texas Public Schools- Houston Region. She is responsible for setting academic vision for the 34 schools in the Houston area. Prior to her role at KIPP, she was Deputy Superintendent in Kansas City (MO) Public Schools where she and her team led the district to gaining Full Accreditation for the first time in over 20 years. She has also served as an Assistant Superintendent of School Leadership in Fort Bend ISD and as a turnaround principal in Houston ISD (Fleming MS and Yates HS). She has won numerous awards throughout the course of her career and she believes that all children should be taught well because they each have a destination.



[Dr. Dameion Crook](#) – Principal, Micky Leland Young Men's College Preparatory

Dr. Crook is the founding principal of Mickey Leland College Preparatory for Young Men (Leland Prep) which began serving young men in 2011. Under Dr. Crook's leadership, Leland Prep works to develop the full potential of young men by fostering an educational environment that encourages critical thinking, inspires confidence, and promotes the social development

necessary to create productive citizens and successful leaders. Leland prep is nationally ranked as the 38th most challenging high school in the nation. Dr. Crook remains deeply involved in professional affiliations where he seeks to collaborate with other educators for the betterment of the Houston ISD school community he serves. To that end, Dr. Crook is a member of the Association of Supervision of Curriculum Development, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association, Houston Association of School Administrators and the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators. In November 2018, Dr. Crook was named Principal of the Year by National Alliance of Black School Educators and was honored by Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner with a proclamation declaring January 8, 2019, Dr. Dameion Crook Day.



[Dr. Khalilah Campbell Rhone](#) – Assistant Superintendent of Transformation, Houston Independent School District

Dr. Khalilah Campbell-Rhone has been with the Houston Independent School district for more than 23 years. A proud Houstonian and author, she is the product of the Houston Independent School District and later became a teacher in the same district. While teaching, she earned her Master's and Doctorate degree from the University of Houston. Campbell-Rhone has been

an adjunct professor at the University of Houston, taught English, History and Math, and held several leadership positions including, Principal, supporting principals as School Support Officer, as well as the Officer of Special Populations where in this role, she oversaw significant growth and development in Gifted and Talented, Special Education, Dyslexia, Interventions, Multilingual, On Time Grad and Virtual Learning for the district. Her life's mission is to give equitable educational opportunities to disenfranchised students and empower communities to advocate for every student.



[James Dirden](#) – Academic Performance Coach, Texas A+ Challenge

James Dirden is a passionate and dedicated educator who relishes the opportunity to help students maximize their full potential to become productive and successful citizens. James was Math Department Chair during his time at E.O. Smith Education Center (Houston ISD) and was named Teacher of The Year in 2003 (EO Smith Education Center) & 2012 (Phillis

Wheatley High School). He has taught resource mathematics and general education mathematics from 6th grade through Algebra I and holds Texas Teaching Certifications in Special Education (EC-12), Mathematics (4-8), and Mathematics (8-12). Prior to his career in education, he attained his Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from Xavier University of Louisiana and contributed to 5 scientific publications as a researcher for Xavier University and Morehouse School of Medicine. James has provided mathematics coaching at campuses in Houston ISD, Spring ISD, Alief ISD and Aldine ISD since 2013.

## Meeting Basic Needs on the Journey to Success



[Demethra Orion](#) – Chairwoman, Target Hunger

Demethra Orion is an astute business owner and community leader. With a Degree in Accounting from Prairie View A&M University, Ms. Orion's businesses include Orion Star Realty. She is a devoted and tireless community servant in numerous non-profit organizations. Has served with Harris County elections for 20 years in numerous capacities including a presiding Precinct Judge and is the first African American to serve as Board Chair for Target Hunger (A United Way Partner) and one of the top 3 food pantries in the state of Texas. She is an active member of The Links, Incorporated, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, A Charter Member of The Houston Metropolitan Chapter of The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, and a lifetime member of Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated. Her dedication to make a difference in her community was recognized by The Houston Chronicle.



[Felicia Jackson](#) – Family Support Services Manager, Houston Area Urban League

An advocate for positive youth development, Felicia Jackson has been inspiring youth to reach their full potential beginning her freshman year in college. She graduated with a degree in Sociology from Washington University in St. Louis and has a Master's in Public Administration from Texas Southern University. She is currently employed with the Houston Area Urban League as the manager for Family Support Services Department in which she manages services for Education and Youth Development and Health and Wellness. She has developed, implemented, and collaborated on many projects to ensure youth have the skills to succeed. She led a Houston initiative for a national project which engaged community partners from various sectors to address inequities in education and youth achievement. She has taught undergraduate degree classes and developed a program for college students to obtain a minor in community development. She is a strong proponent of positive youth development and manages several youth development projects with the Houston Area Urban League. She continues to volunteer in the community in which she resides and with her church regarding youth initiatives. Over the span of years as a professional and volunteer, she has inspired, encouraged, and mentored thousands of students – all whom have graduated from high school and all, through her persistence, have taken actions to achieve their life aspirations.



[Kendra Richardson](#) – Founder, Funky Town Fridge

Kendra Richardson is a thought leader, community organizer, yoga teacher, writer, public speaker, CEO, and founder of Fort Worth's FunkyTownFridge. FunkyTownFridge is a community fridge project that aims to combat hunger, empower our communities, reduce food waste, and educate the city of Fort Worth. Richardson is a native of Fort Worth from Stop 6, Tx. It was there through her parents' teachings of Black Radical thought where she began her journey towards the liberation of marginalized Black people throughout the diaspora. She earned her bachelor's degree in Sociology with an emphasis in cultural anthropology, minoring in early childhood education all through from Stephen F. Austin State University where she also served as the president of the NAACP.



[Leah King](#) – President and CEO, United Way of Tarrant County

Leah M. King serves as President and CEO of United Way of Tarrant County, a leading nonprofit organization that has worked to improve the lives of those in Tarrant County and throughout North Texas for 100 years. In her role, Leah is responsible for leadership and vision development of the organization as well as fiscal oversight, growing financial support, developing processes and new initiatives, facilitating cross-departmental and partner collaboration, and promoting a positive, multi-cultural environment. During Leah's time as CEO, United Way of Tarrant County has invested tens of millions of dollars in the Tarrant County community through direct service programming, volunteer efforts, donor designations, agency allocations, and the distribution of federal and state grants. In the last two years, United Way of Tarrant County has doubled its impact, helping more than 550,000 people through its resources.

### Thank you to our partners!

