

Acclaim!

# 40

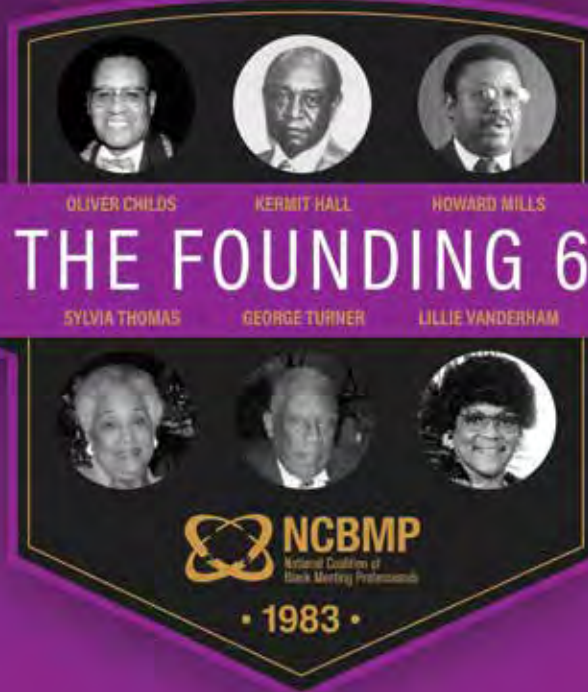


**NCBMP**  
National Coalition of  
Black Meeting Professionals

DEC. 6-9, 2023  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

It was February 23, 1983, when six visionary leaders founded the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners. Forty years on we are celebrating their courage foresight and ingenuity here in Atlanta. Today, the strength and influence of the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) and its membership is a testament to our founders. Thank you to our members, partners and industry allies. It's because of you that NCBMP's future looks brighter than ever.



### IT'S YOUR TURN TO MAKE HISTORY



#NCBMP #NCBMP40

#### - The Founders -

##### **Oliver Childs**

Director, Resource Development, OIC International, Educator, Hotel & Restaurant Management Department at University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)\*

##### **Kermit Hall**

Director of Conventions, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.\*

##### **Howard Mills**

Director of Conferences, National Urban League, Inc.\*

##### **Sylvia Thomas**

National Convention Coordinator, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.

##### **George Turner**

Conference Committee, National Black Police Association

##### **Lillie Van Landingham**

First Vice President, National Pan Hellenic Council, Inc.\*

*Positions and companies coincide with NCBMP's founding in 1983. Deceased \**

# Congratulations

to the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals!

## We applaud you!

Visit Greater Palm Springs celebrates the **National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals** for four decades of groundbreaking achievements, paving the way for excellence in every gathering. Here's to 40 more years of inspiration and innovation!

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# NCBMP Commemorates 40th Anniversary With Engaging Convention in Atlanta

By Todd McElwee

An event 40 years in the making lands at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis from December 6-9. Continuing its mission of being the preeminent organization in educating Black meeting professionals and those believing in equality, the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals' (NCBMP) 40th Annual Conference will present its attendees the content, connections and celebrations befitting of four decades of empowerment and advocacy. They will respond with

heartfelt affirmations of NCBMP's mission and examples of personal successes

"The 40th Annual Conference will be three days of education, rejuvenation and celebrating our past while looking to our future," said Kevin Richardson, NCBMP Board Chairman. "We are looking forward to reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones, as we aim to live by our brand promise of doing business with our friends."

Educational sessions explore a myriad

of today's pressing issues and professional questions while also helping establish a base of knowledge for what's coming down the road. The eclectic slate delves into everything from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to women's place in the workplace to artificial intelligence to professional/personal balance to audiovisual and other media matters and more.

Showcased speakers include Aurora James, Founder, Brother Vellies & The

—see page 24

## 40TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE AGENDA

### December 6, 2023

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
NCBMP Golf Tournament

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
NCBMP Golf Clinic

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM  
Board Meeting

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
Committee Meetings  
New Member Orientation

4:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Registration

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
Opening Reception

9:30 PM - 11:00 PM  
Afterglow Pool Party

### December 7, 2023

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Registration/NCBMP Community Hub

8:30 AM - 10:15 AM  
Breakfast & Opening Session with Aurora James

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM  
Concurrent Breakout #1A  
The Language of Diversity

Concurrent Breakout #1B  
Building Bridges, Creating Opportunities: How to Develop a Strong Network in the Hospitality Industry

Concurrent Breakout #1C |  
Contracts Un-Cut

Concurrent Breakout #1D  
The Formula for Experience Design

11:45 AM - 1:15 PM  
Lunch & Fireside Chat with Tia White

1:30 PM - 2:30 PM  
Concurrent Breakout #2A  
Maximizing Your Investment and Value in Your Event AV Budget

Concurrent Breakout #2C  
The CMP Journey

Concurrent Breakout #2D  
Never Fear, AI is Here. Get to Know Your Event Planning Friend

2:45 PM - 3:45 PM  
The Politics of Tourism

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
Student Education Committee

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM  
Hosted Dine Around

9:00 PM - 11:00 PM  
NCBMP 40th Celebration

### December 8, 2023

7:00 AM - 5:30 PM  
Registration / NCBMP Community Hub

7:30 AM - 8:15 AM  
Annual Business Meeting (Voters - Members Only)

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM  
Lifetime Membership Honorees Breakfast

10:15 AM - 11:15 AM  
Concurrent Breakout #3A  
Socially Committed & Legally Compliant Meetings: Aligning Your DEI Strategy with the Law

Concurrent Breakout #3B  
Connected Confidence

Concurrent Breakout #3C  
How AI Can Be Your Competitive Edge for Delivering Personalized Event Experiences

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM  
Luncheon - Keynote (Industry Panel) | Partnership vs Tokenism

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM  
Concurrent Breakout #4B  
I'm Not Intimidating, They're Intimidated

Concurrent Breakout #4C  
Balance or Burn

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM  
General Session / Fireside Chat with John Hope Bryant

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM  
Student Education Committee

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM  
Business Exchange (Expo)

6:30 PM - 7:30 PM  
40th GALA Cocktail Reception

7:30 PM - 10:00 PM  
40th GALA

### December 9, 2023

8:30 AM - 10:00 AM  
Inspirational Breakfast

# Leaders Reflect on NCBMP's Future

Leadership is in no short supply at NCBMP. Building off the foundations set by the organization's founders and those who subsequently took the helm, Jason Dunn, Sr., Executive Director; Kevin L.S. Richardson, Chairman; and other board and committee members are positioning NCBMP for success in its fifth decade. The

**"People can tell the difference between authentic efforts towards DEI goals versus superficial stances with no substance."**

*—Jason Dunn, Sr.*

organization recently reached out to former chairs, some of whom served as president as well, to get their thoughts on NCBMP's past, the industry's present and what lies ahead.

## What does celebrating 40 years of NCBMP mean to you?

**Ana Aponte-Curtis (Former Chair, Former President)**

It is with pride to see how far we have come and to see NCBMP at the table ensuring that diversity and inclusion are not only talked about but put into action.

**John Crump, JD, CMP, CAE (Chairman Emeritus)**

It means 40 years of continuous service to enhance the leadership and development of the meeting industry.

**Stella Beene-Venson (Former Acting Chair, Former President)**

The question of what NCBMP means to me takes me back to the reasons why this great organization was established. As young hospitality professionals we were taught the importance of doing business with our friends and importance of giving back to those who come behind us.

## When did you become involved with NCBMP, and what led you to the organization?

**Jason Dunn, Sr. (Executive Director, Former Chair)**

In 2001, Cincinnati race issues peeked with unrest after Timothy Thomas was shot and killed by Cincinnati police, which called me to action in supporting the economic boycott of the city as a student. The economic boycott was categorically successful resulting in major entertainers and MICE canceling events in Cincinnati.

I later joined the CVB and helped to lead in reshaping Cincinnati as a multicultural destination by advocating for the power of relationships vs transactions. NCBMP was at the helm of all of the discussion and it was the members of NCBMP that helped to build the city's reputation. I will always point to those initial years post the unrest and the influence of NCBMP as the cornerstone of my career.



Snow

**Richard Lee Snow (Chairman Emeritus)**

While I attended a meeting in 1993, it was 1998, when I became Executive Director of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and have been a member of the organization ever since.

## Over the past few years, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) has gotten more attention within the meetings industry. In what areas have you seen success, and which topics/concerns need to be addressed or need more work?

**Dunn**

I think as an industry we must weigh progress within reason, particularly when the goals are measured by treating people with fairness and respect. These questions have to be answered through the lenses of a balanced eye. I think there is categorical movement.



**Kevin L.S. Richardson (Chairman)**

**"I see more diversity than when I first entered the hospitality industry. Now, it is time to see more Blacks owning."**

Many organizations have diversified their content, advertising and marketing. The strategic alliances with PCMA, MPI and Destinations International with NCBMP lend itself to the belief that the industry is redefining itself.

On the other hand, the EIC equity study clearly laid out that racism is still evident within the rank and file of our industry. There is still a lack of Black and Brown talent in leadership within DMO's and associations and considerable micro-aggressions towards Black and Brown employees. Further, there are clear differences of investment dollars and ROI expectations when it comes to diversity markets



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**Leaders** *—from page 4*

or initiatives in comparison to other segments or industry advances.

**Frederick M. Bell**  
(Former Chair)

In my opinion DEI has created more opportunities for some but has eliminated others.

**Crump**

DEI has gotten some attention. However, percentagewise (management in hotels), little has changed.

**Snow**

Organizations have, at least, begun to talk more openly. Yet, there is such a long way to go. Our numbers in senior leadership across the industry have



Bell

grown, but not significantly. More importantly, as opportunities in key roles in other organizations such as MPI, PCMA, and others arise, we can't allow them to be at the expense of NCBMP.

**Why would you recommend an organization or individual become involved with NCBMP?**

**Beene-Venson**

To become a part of this great history to carry it on into the next generations.

**Bell**

Because of the close family like environment that make it easy to do business. This also help you to understand each other profession.

**What do you expect to see when NCBMP celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2033?**

**Aponte-Curtis**

That NCBMP has a full staff, membership and support has increased

by leaps and bounds.

**Bell**

Still standing strong, growing, and every Black meeting planner and supplier become a member.


**Dunn**

I want to position NCBMP to succeed by building equitable financial resources to our peers. The industry has been slow to equally invest with their treasures as they do with our peers. My goal is to unpack the 'why' and build a bridge to establish open communication in an effort to achieve monetary parity.

**Richardson**

I'm looking forward to this organization becoming an international organization representing people and conventions worldwide.

**Snow**

Fifty years of anything is exceptional, so I expect an exceptional celebration! 

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# Cheers to 40 years!

VisitPITTSBURGH shares a heartfelt congratulations to the **National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners** on 40 years of success!

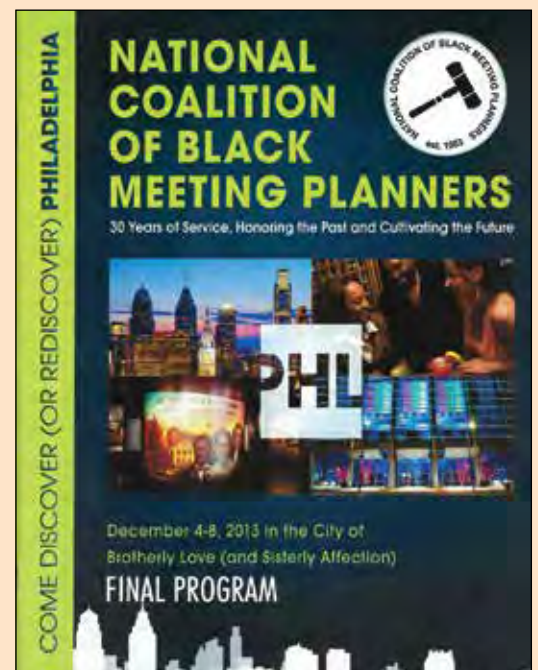
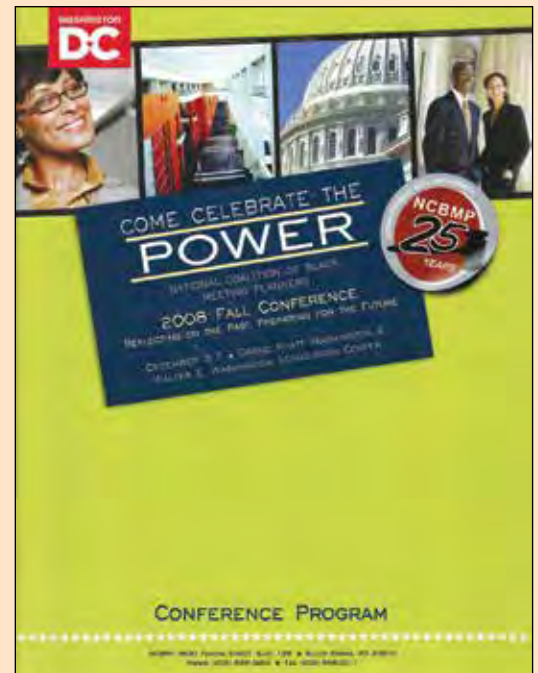
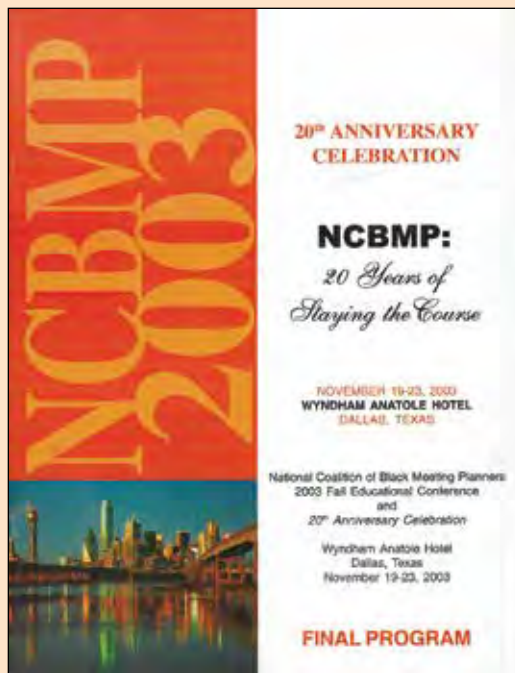
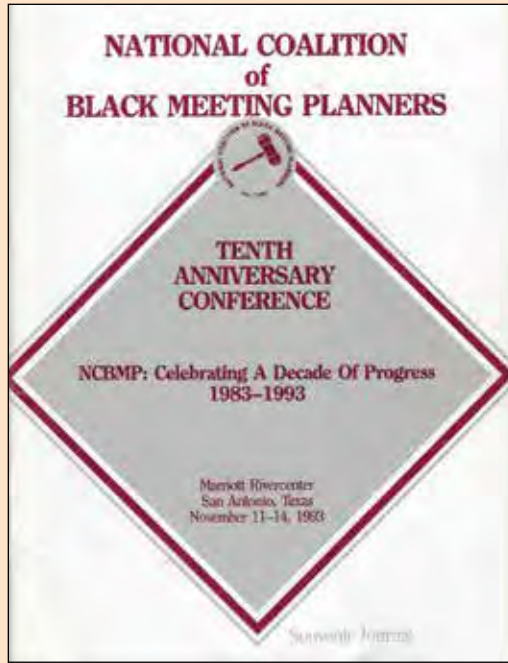
Cheers to many more years of maximizing a greater return on the meeting dollar, effecting positive change in the hospitality industry, and establishing a voice in the hospitality industry on issues that affect the African American community.



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Looking Back: Past NCBMP Conference Program Covers





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# National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals Celebrates 40 Years of Vigorously Advocating For Equity And Inclusion In Tourism Around The World

By Jason Dunn, Sr., Executive Director, National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP)

The National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP), founded in 1983, is a non-profit organization dedicated to the training needs of Black hospitality professionals, and more, that support Black meetings and events. Since its founding, NCBMP has made a significant impact in the hospitality community by advocating for equity and helping its members maximize their return on investment.



Dunn

President Lillie Van Landingham, Secretary Sylvia Thomas, and Treasurer George Turner provided the leadership, which has resulted in the premier professional organization for Black meeting professionals and association executives in the nation.

As one of the leading organizations in the Hospitality and Tourism industries, during the early years, NCBMP held its meetings at the National Urban League office in New York. Later, meetings took place in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. The Marriott Corporation provided facilities for the first conference of the NCBMP. John Dixon, then General Manager of the JW Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., provided invaluable assistance during the first meeting for the 42 participants who were flown to the conference via Eastern Airlines through the effort of Charles Wright. Today, a board of 16 Directors guides the NCBMP, which is comprised of over 1,500 members!

"We remain steadfast in our dedication to amplifying the voices and contributions of Black professionals in the tourism industry. For 40 years, NCBMP has provided our members



with networking and professional development opportunities, enabled our members to build connections as well as allow for collaboration with their professional peers who share a commitment to fostering a productive and engaging culture where Black and Brown people feel a sense of belonging," said NCBMP Board Chairman, Kevin Richardson.

**"We remain steadfast in our dedication to amplifying the voices and contributions of Black professionals in the tourism industry."**  
 —Kevin Richardson

NCBMP began in 1983 with six dedicated members who also functioned as officers of the fledgling organization. The founding officers, Chairman Kermit Hall, President Howard Mills, Vice President Oliver Childs, Vice



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**40**  
**YEARS**

***Congratulations***

**NCBMP on 40 Years!**

Thank you for all you do for the industry!

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# The NCBMP Student Program: A Foundation of Success

## Sharmagne Taylor, CMP

(University of Houston), First Student Member, Former Supplier Member, Planner and Board Secretary, 2005-2009

While studying hotel and restaurant management at what would become the University of Houston Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership, I was fortunate to be introduced to National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners (now Professionals) and NCBMP's co-founder, Howard F. Mills, Sr. on his visit to Houston for an MPI event in 1983. Mr. Mills invited me to attend the second conference of NCBMP at the Sheraton Bal Harbour in Miami and allowed me to invite two more University of Houston students to join me. Eastern Airlines, through a partnership established by Charles Wright, provided complimentary airfare and the host hotel provided accommodations for all students to complete the complimentary registration package. For many years, NCBMP would extend this all-expenses-paid opportunity to at least 25 students and offer discounted accommodations for their academic advisors, for each NCBMP conference.



Sharmagne Taylor, CMP

James A. Hurd, Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., an NCBMP board member, allowed me to assist him in developing the Career Awareness Program guidelines and it was expanded to include hospitality students from other blossoming hospitality curriculums. The program would benefit from stellar leadership by Sondra "Sandy" Henderson, now retired, former director of conferences for National Rural Electric Cooperative, who standardized processes and guided the expansion. Most importantly, NCBMP would advocate for

increased opportunities for entry-level management and advancement through the ranks in the Hospitality Industry for all African Americans and those of African descent who were grossly underrepresented in key roles.

As a result, many former students were able to master critical networking skills, connect with potential mentors and career sponsors and reach new heights in both the organization and the Industry.

NCBMP embraced me as a student first, then President of the Career Awareness Program, a speaker, a supplier in sales with two major chains, a business-owner and planner and later a board member and officer. This preparation allowed me to prosper in business and to return to my own college to serve on its Dean's Advisory board for over a decade, become a distinguished alumnae and receive Distinguished Service recognition from the University of Houston. My story is not unique. It is a direct result of advocacy in action in an organization where members were committed to breaking barriers, providing access, and creating a pipeline of leaders that would follow in their giant footsteps.

Here are just a few leaders who were former students in NCBMP and are still making an impact today!

## Derrick Morrow

(Howard University), Area Vice President & General Manager, Hyatt Regency Atlanta

Derrick Morrow was named Area Vice President & General Manager of Hyatt Regency Atlanta in March 2020 after working in other prominent hotel sales leadership positions.

Morrow is a native of Washington, D.C., and attended Howard University. As a student majoring in Hotel Management, he was given the

opportunity to attend the NCBMP conference in Los Angeles.

"To say that trip changed the trajectory of my career would be an understatement," he said. "NCBMP allowed me to see and interact with professionals in the industry that looked like me. I was able to establish some great lifelong relationships by being involved with NCBMP."

Morrow's 32-year Hyatt career began in 1991 as associate director of sales at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta with the support of Valerie Ferguson, the first Black female general manager for a major hotel brand in the U.S., who he connected with at NCBMP and who served as a mentor and sponsor throughout his journey.

Morrow has taken leadership roles in each of the communities he has served, supporting local charities, forging partnerships and championing inclusion and diversity.



Derrick Morrow

He is an executive board member of the Atlanta CVB, Central Atlanta Progress and other Atlanta hospitality and community organizations. He and his wife have two children.





And the Award Goes to...

Pioneer Awards - see page 22



Students —from page 12

**Monica R. Smith, CMP, CASE, CDME**

(Cornell University) President & CEO, Southeast Tourism Society; Former CVB President

Monica Smith serves as the President & CEO of Southeast Tourism Society (STS) and has over 28 years of experience in the hospitality and tourism industry. Prior to joining the staff of STS, she served on its board of directors while she was the Vice President of Sales and Services for Visit Jacksonville and as the President & CEO of Visit Macon. Her other destination sales and marketing experience includes positions with the Pasadena CVB, Visit Newport Beach and Destination Cleveland.

Smith is a graduate of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration and was involved for many years in the university's CAAAN alumni admissions outreach. She has a passion



Monica R. Smith, CMP, CASE, CDME

for developing the next generation of tourism leaders and educating communities on the importance of tourism as an economic and community development strategy.

"As I reflect on my first NCBMP conference as a student, I see the significant impact that it's had on my career to date. That was my first exposure

to meeting industry tradeshow and the planner-supplier relationships. It was inspiring to learn from Black CVB and hotels sales leaders, and Black meeting planners. The most significant thing I learned was about CVBs as a potential career path. I didn't know then that it would spark the beginning of a long-term commitment to NCBMP as a member, and eventually a successful career as a CVB sales leader and CEO. Today, I still have relationships with many tourism leaders that I met at the first conference. The relationships that I established, and lessons learned during my years as a NCBMP member still have a major impact on my role with Southeast Tourism Society. Daphne Herrin was one of the leaders of the NCBMP Student Program when I attended my first conference. She is now the meeting planner for two of our annual STS events, so the impact of NCBMP on my career continues!"

Smith also serves on a number of national and regional boards and committees.

—see page 14

 **Students** *—from page 13*

**Marc O’Ferrall**

*(Bethune-Cookman University) CEO of the O’Ferrall Management Group, Multi-Unit McDonald’s Operator, connection made through Rosana Wright at NCBMP*

**N**ow in his 20th year as CEO of the O’Ferrall Management Group, O’Ferrall knows what it takes to build a sustainable franchise, growing his business ten-fold through a robust blend of operational excellence, organizational vision casting, strategic brand execution, and a strong dedication to people and community.

What started as a single-unit operation in Miami, it has grown into a 26-unit franchise and key performance leader of the 800-store region.

O’Ferrall now employs over 2,000 team members and senior-level leaders. Doing the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion for decades, he



Marc O’Ferrall


lives what he leads, investing wholeheartedly in the development and engagement of both team members and consumers who are often underrepresented or misrepresented.

As a result, O’Ferrall has played a significant part in McDonald’s ownership of the largest quick-service restaurant share of the African American consumer segment.

Having first acquired several underperforming units in Mississippi, O’Ferrall took a bottom-up approach to leadership, empowering team members to achieve operational excellence and elevate their service expectations.

He secured profitable celebrity partnerships; contributed to national sales growth of 30% during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; and drove double-digit YOY revenue, profit, and retention gains.

O’Ferrall earned his Bachelor of Science in Hotel & Restaurant Management from Bethune-Cookman University before working with Walt Disney World, Hilton Worldwide, and Loews Hotels.

O’Ferrall accredits the NCBMP for driving him to succeed stating: “Seeing professionals of color in my younger formative years provided me with the belief and motivation to know that anything in this industry that I set out to accomplish was indeed possible. Thank you to NCBMP for molding my career!” 



The San Diego Tourism Authority congratulates the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals on their remarkable 40th anniversary and four decades of unwavering dedication and impact in the hospitality community.



We are proud to celebrate our President & CEO, Julie Coker, for being recognized as NCBMP’s 2023 Pioneer of the Year. Julie’s visionary leadership and dedication to inclusivity and diversity continues to elevate our industry.



# Congratulations ON 40 YEARS!

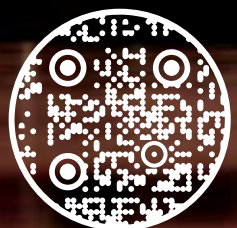
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## Students —from page 14

### Dwayne Ashley

*(Wiley College) Founder, CEO & President, Bridge Philanthropic Consulting, LLC, the largest black-owned fundraising company in the US; Mentored by the late Tommy Dortch, former board member of NCBMP; Previous president of Thurgood Marshall College Fund*



Dwayne Ashley

Dwayne Ashley started his career with a Hotel and Restaurant Management degree from Wiley College, an historically Black university in Marshall, Texas. He became a student member of NCBMP in 1984 and was mentored by James Eaglin of the National Bar Association and motivational speaker Patricia Russell McCloud, whom he met through NCBMP. Ashley was hired and cultivated by former NCBMP Board member, the late Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., as the first National Executive Director of the 100 Black Men of America. Dortch mentored Ashley in planning the group's national convention.

With over 30 years in the philanthropic industry, Ashley has utilized his knowledge helped create opportunities for people of color through his founding of Bridge Philanthropic Consulting (BPC), the nation's only full-service Black-owned fundraising firm. He has sought to align with organizations that shared his values regarding the betterment of Black and Brown people and, which have raised over \$1 billion to support those communities.

His spirit of charity was instilled by witnessing his great grandmother's establishment of one of the first schools to educate Blacks in Heflin, Louisiana. The weaving of her legacy into Louisiana's rich history pushed Ashley to forge his own path and attend Wiley College and the University of Pennsylvania's Fel's School of Government.

After college, Ashley joined notable organizations like the African American Development Officers, The Giving Institute, and the Association of Fundraising Professionals. He is also a member of community-based organizations like One Hundred Black Men of New York and Divine 9 fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, where he has been honored with the 'Bigger Better Business' award leading to his five-time inclusion in Ebony magazine's list for most influential Black Americans. 🌍

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## Students —from page 16

### Jacquelyn “Lynne” Washington, CMP, CED

(UMass) Senior Manager, Experiential Marketing, Iron Mountain, former student, supplier, and planner

Lynne Washington currently manages a cross functional team of marketers to build programs which impact company revenue,



Jacquelyn “Lynne” Washington

customer retention, and relationships for Iron Mountain, a *Fortune* 1000 company. She has built a career on understanding how to win and retain customers through thoughtfully curated experiences.

Washington’s fascination with meetings, events and hospitality started by leading the school dance and church fundraising committees. An article in *Essence* about the American Hotel and Motel Association started her on her course. While at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, she became aware of NCBMP and she went to her first conference in Chicago. This experience began a career-long affiliation with the organization.

After college, Washington interned with the Philadelphia CVB at the time the city developed the Minority Advisory Council to attract minority groups to the city. At Adam’s Mark Hotels, her efforts opened the door to the company hiring more people of color to work with diverse groups across the country.

In her six years at SAP America, she held roles of progressive responsibility up to leading a team of 13 planners and overseeing a global conference of 10,000. She then started her own event and marketing company, helping clients connect with their customers in meaningful ways for appreciation and brand research. Key clients included Universal Studios, Marriott International, and the NPHC.

As a student member, the NCBMP helped to frame the industry for Washington as a real option for her. It opened the door for professional education from industry leaders that was unavailable elsewhere. Members provided support and guidance as student members navigated the beginning of their careers.

She is actively involved with St. Cyprian Catholic Church and provides service in the community through Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

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# Our Time with NCBMP

In the days and weeks leading up to its 40th Annual Conference, the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) asked a selection of longtime friends about the organization's place in their lives. They responded with heartfelt affirmations of NCBMP's mission and examples of personal successes..

## What does NCBMP mean to you?

**Pamela Ellis Benson**, Owner *InteleTravel/Travel Network Consortium, former National Sales Manager, Richmond Region Tourism, 1989*

It has always been a "safe space" for African Americans in the industry to network and do business with friends. It offers the opportunity to speak on behalf of a people as a whole and make viable and necessary adjustments regarding issues of diversity.



Benson

**Marlinda A. Henry**, *Immediate Past Chairwoman, Director of Events and Planning, Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, 2012*

Gathering with African American professionals that I enjoy doing business within the hospitality industry. To me, NCBMP signifies a community that fosters collaboration, networking, and professional development opportunities for Black meeting professionals.



Henry

**Reneka A. Edwards**, *Citywide Sales Executive, Atlanta CVB, 2010*

NCBMP is a supportive personal and professional family of like-minded individuals who can collaborate and share without malintent and create effective partnerships that bring about positive and effective change in the industry.

**Joyce Leveston, Sr.** *VP of Convention Centers, OVG360/ Oak View Group, 2020 and prior to 2009*

It means "Family." It means that when one succeeds, we all succeed. It means that we can never not be part of the larger whole because we make up substantial economic impact so our voices and business matters.



Leveston

## What is your favorite NCBMP memory?

**Stephanie Monroe Brown**, *Director of Sales, Explore St Louis, 2003*

Atlanta! Elliott Ferguson and his team hosting in ATL. The details to that conference were on point. The police escort to the Magic Johnson theater was impressive. The sessions were informative. The detail/decorum for final banquet. It was my first one. Elliott was so large and in charge.

**Frank Seales Jr.**, *Convention Committee Chairman, National Bar Association, 1995*

Watching an Emu chase then NCBMP Board Chairman John Crump around an Australian animal sanctuary.

**Twila Jones, CFMP**, *Senior Sales Manager, Experience Columbia Senior Sales Manager, 2006*

One of my favorite moments at NCBMP was singing on the annual NCBMP choir. My very first year I had a solo and that exposure was better than purchasing a supplier sponsorship!



Jones

**Ana Aponte-Curtis**, *Vice President Events, NAACP, 1998*

The conferences, all of them; having fellowship and always learning.

**Kevin J Johnson**, *National Meeting Planner, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., formerly Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council, 2023*



Johnson

The Newport Beach Conference as President and St. Louis Conference – throwing out first pitch at St. Louis Cardinals game.

## What was the first business connection you made as a result of your connection with NCBMP?

**Donna M. Glover**, *Vice President, National Accounts & Tradeshows, New Orleans & Company, 1993*



Glover

Booking National Dental Association in New Orleans, led to booking so many more groups that were members of NCBMP. I was filling in for a colleague that could not make the site. Bob Johns, Executive Director asked my leadership why I was not his sales rep. I became a member of NCBMP, and not only booked NDA, but booked NBNA, DST, NBA, Natl Black MBA, Natl Black Police Assn, CBTU and so many more.

**Sharon Seay**, *CEO and Principal Planner, The Simply Collection of Events, LLC., 1992*

Working with the Las Vegas CVB - Mr. Roosevelt Tosten for my first conference as an Executive Director and Planner for my organization, the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association. I had just transitioned from Supplier to an ED.



Seay



# Congratulations to the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals on your 40th Anniversary!

We're honored to join in celebrating this momentous milestone. For four decades, the NCBMP has been a shining beacon of unity, empowerment and inclusivity. As you move forward, we stand alongside you in support of your unwavering commitment to excellence.

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau mirrors that commitment. Our vibrant community celebrates diversity and embraces inclusivity, making it an ideal backdrop for meetings. In Miami, every culture is celebrated.

Thank you for your many years of staying the course. We look forward to supporting you for many more to come.



[MiamiMeetings.com](http://MiamiMeetings.com) | [MulticulturalMiami.com](http://MulticulturalMiami.com)



# NCBMP Honoring Al Hutchinson, Elliott Ferguson and Julie Coker as Pioneer Award Honorees

By Todd McElwee

It's appropriate to recognize Al Hutchinson, President & CEO, Visit Baltimore; Elliott L. Ferguson, II, President & CEO, Destination DC; and Julie Coker, President & CEO, San Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA); as trailblazers but the description is incomplete. No, the trio are pioneers; not only clearing paths for others but also laying foundations for success along the way. Highlighting their contributions and achievement, the National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) are honoring them as this year's Pioneer Award honorees.

## Al Hutchinson

In 1992, Hutchinson joined the industry as a sales manager for the Richmond bureau focused on the SMERF market. He said NCBMP is where he

**"Their recognition and contributions to the industry are just a small window into really comprehending the talent of our members."**

**—NCBMP Executive Director  
Jason Dunn, Sr.**

first met the key decisionmakers in this market, earned his first destination business success and worked on personal brand development.

Hutchinson joined Visit Baltimore as President & CEO in 2016. Previously he was President & CEO of Visit Mobile, where he was recognized as the 2016 Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Alliance's Tourism Promoter of the Year. He's served with the boards of the United States Travel Association, Religious Conference Management Association, American Bus Association (ABA) and Tourism Diversity Matters (TDM).

"If not for the NCBMP early connections and mentorships, I probably



Al Hutchinson



Elliott L. Ferguson, II



Julie Coker

would not be sitting in the President & CEO seat today," said Hutchinson. "NCBMP gave me the opportunity to excel and gain confidence that I could be successful in this Industry. I'm extremely grateful for the relationships that I have developed because of the NCBMP over the past 30 years, and for this I say, 'Thank You and congratulations for your 40 years of proven work!'"

## Elliott L. Ferguson, II

Ferguson has served in his current role since 2009. He was U.S. Travel's National Chair in 2019-2020. Prior to joining Destination DC, Ferguson was vice president of sales at the Atlanta CVB. He holds positions on the Executive Board of U.S. Travel and the Board of Brand USA, while also serving as chair of Event Leaders 100. He is immediate past chair of Tourism Diversity Matters and served on the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board. Last month he was inducted into U.S. Travel's Hall of Leaders. He was in the Air Force National Guard from 1985-1992.

"I'm humbled to receive the Pioneer Award from the National Association of Black Meeting Professionals as it means so much to be recognized by my peers and the board of directors," said Ferguson. "I remain focused on making sure there are opportunities for people who look like me at all levels of our industry, and that we remain committed to having uncomfortable conversations and taking action to ensure we attract and keep top talent from all backgrounds to push this industry forward."

## Julie Coker

Discussing her involvement with NCBMP, Coker noted Hyatt Hotels Corporation has supported the organization for many years. She was introduced to NCBMP in 2007 as the General Manager of Hyatt Penn's Landing in Philadelphia and attended their annual conference in Washington, D.C., at an event Hyatt hosted for customers.

"This was the first time in my then 18-year career that I attended an industry event where the majority of the attendees looked like me," she said. "I was inspired and grateful for the networking opportunities, the encouragement from others who had traveled a similar path as me, but most importantly, having a safe space to be my authentic self. I deepened my engagement with NCBMP when I assumed the role of SVP of Convention Sales at the Philadelphia CVB (PHL-CVB) in 2010. During my tenure in PHL, I, along with Stephanie Boyd at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, hosted the NCBMP Annual Convention. I continue to support NCBMP's efforts now that I am here in San Diego." She joined SDTA in 2020.

"I am grateful to Jason and the board of NCBMP for this recognition. Receiving the Pioneer Award is an honor that echoes the spirit of courage, perseverance, and the willingness to venture into uncharted territories. I am proud of the accomplishments we have made in our industry, understanding there is still much work to be done."



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Fifteen Percent Challenge; Tia White, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Industry Expert; Dr. George Fraser, Founder & CEO, FraserNet, Inc.; John Hope Bryant, Founder, Chairman and CEO, Operation Hope, Inc.

James is the Founder of the Fifteen Percent Pledge, Creative Director and Founder of luxury accessories brand Brother Vellies, and Vice Chair of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. She's been awarded the Council of Fashion Designers of America's Founders Award and named to the TIME 100 and Bloomberg 50. In 2020, she founded the Fifteen Percent Pledge, a non-profit that is closing the racial wealth gap by partnering with retailers to diversify their shelves and commit 15% of their purchasing power to Black-owned businesses. By 2030, the organization aims to drive \$1.4 trillion of wealth generation by Black entrepreneurs and increase Black business representation by 14.6 %.

**"The 40th Annual Conference will guide you to new industry relationships, understanding current events, introduce you to progressive education and challenge your intellect."**

White is an engineering and product executive currently serving as General Manager of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning - Adtech and MarTech at Amazon Web Services (AWS). She was the first Black woman to be hired as a GM at AWS in Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, and Analytics. Passionate about Diversity, Equity Inclusion (DEI). She was appointed to serve on the AI+Ethics Advisory Board of Omnicom Precision Marketing and on numerous non-profit boards including Rewriting the Code, which supports early-career

women from 800-plus colleges and universities in 81 countries with a passion for technology.

FraserNet, Inc., leads global networking and economic development for people of African descent. Born in Brooklyn, Fraser spent 20 years in executive leadership positions with Procter & Gamble, United Way and Ford Motor Company before starting FraserNet Inc. in 1987. He is the author of six best-selling books, a member of the Minority Business Hall of Fame and Museum, and in 2016 was awarded the The President's Lifetime Achievement Award by President Barack Obama.

Bryant has been referred to as the Conscience of Capitalism by the CEOs of Delta Air Lines, Walmart, First Republic Bank and others. Operation HOPE, Inc. is the largest not-for-profit and best-in-class provider of financial literacy, financial inclusion and economic empowerment tools and services in the United States. He is also Chairman and CEO of John Hope Bryant Holdings, Bryant Group Ventures and The Promise Homes Company (Promise Homes), the largest for-profit minority-controlled owner of institutional-quality, single-family residential rental homes in the U.S. Bryant's organizations have provided more than \$3.5 billion in capital for the underserved over the past 30 years. He started the 1 Million Black Businesses Initiative (1MBB), designed to help create grow or strengthen one million black businesses by 2030.

Other highlights include Clarence Anthony, CEO & Executive Director, National League of Cities, and the politics of tourism. Amy Calvert, CEO, Events Industry Council, Sherrif Karamat, CAE, President & CEO, PCMA & CEMA; and Don Welsh, President & CEO, Destinations International, presented Partnership vs. Tokenism where they discuss the power of authentic partnerships with NCBMP and about how tokenism has in some ways stalled progress within the hospitality industry. During the NCBMP Business Exchange 2023 the groundwork for doing business with our friends was laid for all who participated.

Socially, the 40th Annual Conference's dance card setup as a one to

be discussed for decades. Topping the marquee: the NCBMP 40th Celebration with hip-hop legends Doug E. Fresh and Chubb Rock.

A hip hop icon, who started spawning hits in the early 1980s, Fresh's

**The 40th GALA continues the commemoration of NCBMP's rich history, featuring award-nominated R&B performer Vivian Green.**

peers have dubbed him "The World's Greatest Entertainer." Chuck D, Co-founder of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame group Public Enemy, coined the moniker after touring with Fresh. Prince was such a fan of his live performances skills he insisted Fresh tour with him for several years in that late 1990s, ultimately asking him to perform with him at the White House during the Obama Administration.

Rock is a Brooklyn hip hop artist/radio host who released several successful hip hop albums in the early 1990s. In 2008, his single "Treat 'em Right" was ranked number 82 on VH1's 100 Greatest Songs of Hip Hop. Rock also released "Obama We Believe" in support of President Obama.

The 40th GALA continues the commemoration of NCBMP's rich history. Preceded by a cocktail reception it features award-nominated R&B performer Vivian Green during an elegant evening of honoring the milestones and achievements of the past four decades.

Other events include the Lifetime Membership Honorees breakfast, golf outing/clinic, Inspirational Breakfast and opening reception.

NCBMP is excited to announce the locations for upcoming annual conferences:

2024: Birmingham, Alabama

2025: Portland, Oregon



# VISIT INDY CONGRATULATES THE NCBMP ON 40 YEARS OF IMPACT!



Opportunity breeds success, and for the last 40 years the NCBMP has advocated for opening doors to Black meeting professionals. Through your work in education and advancement, you prepare and develop current and future leaders with the tools they need to flourish. The impact is felt in destinations across the world as Black planners lead events and meetings while exhibiting the standards learned from engagement with NCBMP. Thank you for a 40-year legacy and for inspiring the next generation of industry leaders.

[VISITINDY.com/MEET](https://VISITINDY.com/MEET)





# A Night at the Apollo



Founders  
Sylvia  
Thomas  
and  
George  
Turner.



## CONGRATS, NCBMP!

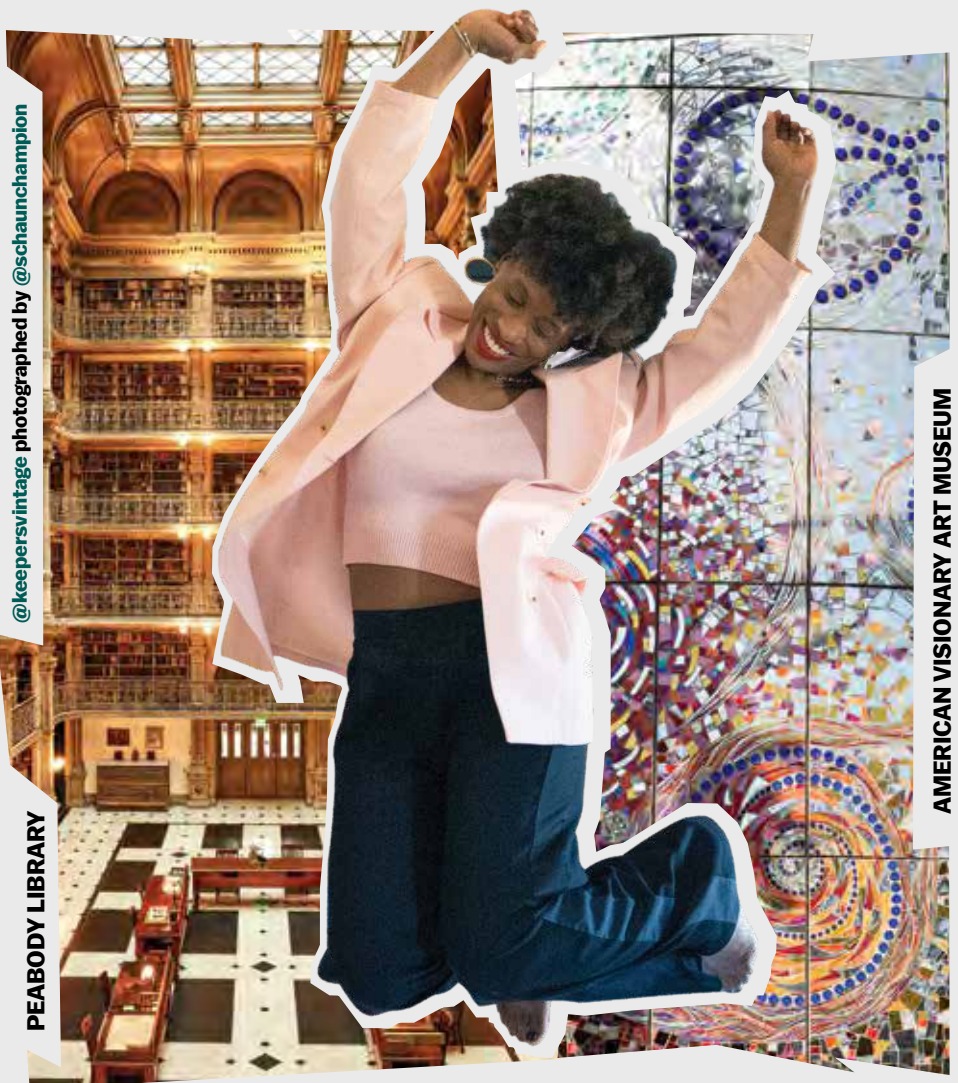
***Congratulations NCBMP on  
40 years of Leadership and  
Advocacy for African Americans  
in the Hospitality Community.***

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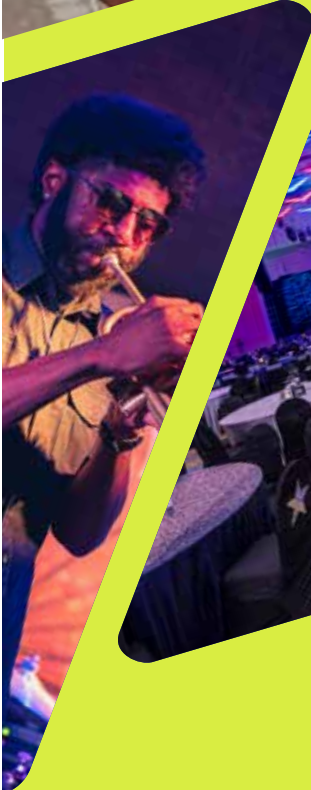
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# CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF THE NCBMP.

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# CHEERS TO 40 YEARS!

We are thrilled to join **NCBMP** in celebrating this wonderful milestone — our mutual 40th anniversary. We honor all of the great things you have accomplished and look forward to all that is to come.

Connect with our team and learn more about the **Chicago Northwest region** at [CHICAGONORTHWEST.COM/INCENTIVE](https://CHICAGONORTHWEST.COM/INCENTIVE).

