



URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA

DECLARATION
EQUITY, INNOVATION, & BLACK FUTURES



Gala

OCT. 15, 2026

7:00 PM

ERNEST N. MORIAL CONVENTION CENTER

OUR VISION

We envision a Louisiana in which a legacy of well-being and economic security passes from one generation to the next and where Black and other people of the global majority are living their full potential.

OUR MISSION

To build a Louisiana where Black and other people of the global majority have economic self-reliance, generational wealth, civil rights, and equitable representation.



Urban League of
Louisiana

DECLARATION
EQUITY, INNOVATION, & BLACK FUTURES



URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA

2026 GALA HONOREES

John Westley Boyd, Jr.

**Fourth-Generation Farmer, Civil Rights Activist, and
Founder and President of the
National Black Farmers Association (NBFA)**

Alana Odoms

**Civil Rights Attorney, Nationally Recognized Speaker, and
Executive Director of the ACLU of Louisiana**

Dr. Christal Jackson

**Social Impact Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Author, and
Founder of Mosaic Genius and
Head and Heart Philanthropy (HHP)**

Paula Williams Madison

**Chairman and CEO of Madison Media Management and
a principal owner of The Africa Channel**

Jerome “Big Duck” Smith

**Co-founder, Tambourine & Fan
New Orleans Civil Rights Leader, Freedom Rider,
Community Organizer, Mentor, and Culture Bearer**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Ronald Carrere, Chairman of the Board
Christy Slater, Senior Vice Chairman
Sharonda Williams, Vice Chairman
Dennis R. McSeveney, Treasurer
Kellen Mathews, Secretary

DIRECTORS

Matthew Brady
William Brent
Marie Vanessa Clincy
Michelle Craig
Shaneika Dabney-Henderson
Dr. Darvelle Hutchins
Will Ferbos
Miles Francis
Valencia Goodly
Michael Griffin
Deborah Grimes
Ashley Aubrey Harrison
Lauren Hébert-Pryor
Justin Jack
Kathy E. Johnson
Makesha Judson
Dr. Kim LeDuff
Rhonda McMillan
Courtney Nicholson
Dr. Alexis Parent-Ferrouillet
Britney Hurst Temple
Ricardo Thomas
Tiffany Young



Urban League of
Louisiana





Urban League of
Louisiana

4640 S. Carrollton Avenue, Ste. 210
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119
(504) 620-2332
www.UrbanLeagueLA.org

Dear Esteemed Patrons, Benefactors, and Champions of the Urban League,

Welcome to the 2026 Urban League of Louisiana Annual Gala! Tonight, we gather under the powerful theme *Declaration: Equity, Innovation & Black Futures*. This theme is both a statement of purpose and a call to action. It invites us to consider what is possible when equity guides our progress, innovation drives transformation, and Black communities are empowered to shape the future we all share.

For 88 years, the Urban League of Louisiana has worked to advance economic opportunity, civil rights and equity across our state. Our mission calls us to build a Louisiana where Black and other people of the global majority have economic self-reliance, generational wealth, civil rights and equitable representation. That work requires vision, partnership and a willingness to build something better.

Tonight, we celebrate the people who have helped shape our present and are helping build a more equitable and prosperous future. We proudly recognize this year's honorees for their extraordinary contributions to Louisiana and beyond. Their leadership, courage and commitment remind us that meaningful change happens when we invest in people, challenge barriers and create new pathways to opportunity.

Our thanks go to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center for serving as the Sustaining the Movement sponsor for this year's Annual Gala. We are especially grateful to President & CEO Mr. Jim Cook, whose partnership has been important in moving our mission forward.

As we celebrate tonight, let us also look ahead and declare our commitment to a Louisiana where equity is not simply an aspiration, but a foundation. Enjoy this evening of fellowship, culture, celebration and purpose. Cheers!



Judy Reese Morse
President and CEO



Ronald Carrere Jr.
Chairman



**National
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.
For An Equitable Future.*

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO

80 Pine Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10005
Phone 212.558.5336

www.nul.org
presidentoffice@nul.org



October 15, 2026

Dear Friends of the Urban League,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the Urban League of Louisiana's 2026 Empowerment & Policy Conference and Annual Gala themed *Declaration: Equity, Innovation & Black Futures*, a timely gathering centered on the future we are committed to building together.

This gathering represents an important opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to building a more equitable future.

For more than a century, the Urban League Movement has stood at the forefront of the fight for civil rights, economic opportunity, and equity. The Urban League of Louisiana continues that proud legacy by bringing together leaders, advocates, experts, and changemakers to examine the issues shaping our communities and develop solutions that move Louisiana forward.

I commend the Urban League of Louisiana for creating space for these essential conversations and for its continued leadership in advancing economic mobility, education & youth development, workforce development, health equity, civic engagement and social justice. I also congratulate all of the Gala honorees and thank them for their remarkable leadership and the lasting impact they have made in their communities and beyond.

May the conversations and connections sparked here strengthen our resolve to advance equity, champion new ideas and help create a future in which Black communities can thrive and shape what comes next.

I am grateful for your partnership in the Urban League Movement and remain unwavering in my support of the Urban League of Louisiana and its mission.

Let's continue to unite to advocate, innovate, and build a future defined by equity and opportunity.

Yours in the movement,

Marc H. Morial
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League



CONGRESSMAN TROY A. CARTER, SR. PROUDLY SERVING LOUISIANA'S SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

October 14, 2026

Greetings to the Attendees of the 2026 Empowerment & Policy Conference!

I am honored to serve you as a Member of Congress representing Louisiana's Second Congressional District and 1st Vice Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, offering remarks to the attendees of the Urban League of Louisiana's 2026 Empowerment & Policy Conference, themed "Declaration: Equity, Innovation & Black Futures". I am honored to serve as speaker during the Opening Plenary, as you convene leaders, advocates, policymakers, professionals, students and community members from across Louisiana and the nation around policies, ideas, and collective action necessary to advance Black communities, more importantly during this midterm election year. We must never forget the struggles of our ancestors, as we all stand on their shoulders, who fought to allow us to where we are today.

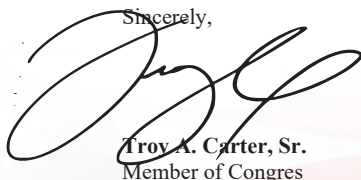
As a Black man, Congressman, and proud member of the Congressional Black Caucus, I will use my role to continue to fight for the nation that I love to finally achieve its potential of justice and inclusion. I firmly believe that we can be a nation where we tackle the scourge of racism and hatred through policy changes, activism, accountability, and conversation.

Today, and always, I re-commit myself to advancing policies that defend civil and voting rights, promote racial justice, educate our children, invigorate our local economies, and improve public health and safety. Let us never forget to always do our part fight for a stronger future and an America that honors and uplifts the Black community all 365 days a year."

Every month is an opportunity to honor the pioneers who paved the way for justice and equality. Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Ida B. Wells are four of the many leaders that come to mind. Their passion and courage inspire us to continue the work of building a world where every individual is judged on their character, not color.

A special thank you to the Honorable Marc H. Morial, Mrs. Judy Reese Morse, Mr. Charles Phipps, Esq. and the entire staff of the Urban League for all your hard work. You inspire us to strive for a future where freedom, dignity, and equality are realities for everyone. Let's move forward with hope and determination for the future.

Sincerely,



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



MAYOR HELENA MORENO
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Dear Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the City of New Orleans, welcome to the 2026 Urban League of Louisiana Empowerment & Policy Conference and Annual Gala. We are proud to host this gathering of leaders in business, government, education, advocacy, and community service as you explore this year's theme, Declaration: Equity, Innovation & Black Futures.

For generations, the Urban League movement has worked to advance civil rights, economic empowerment, and greater opportunity for underserved communities. Since 1938, the Urban League of Louisiana has carried this mission forward in our region and across our state, helping build pathways to economic self-reliance, generational wealth, and equitable representation. This conference provides an important opportunity to exchange ideas, strengthen partnerships, and advance policies that support a more prosperous Louisiana.

Thank you for your commitment to building stronger communities and expanding opportunity for all. I hope you enjoy your time in New Orleans and experience the culture, hospitality, and spirit that make our city so special.

Welcome to New Orleans!

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena Moreno'.

Helena Moreno
Mayor, City of New Orleans



1300 PERDIDO STREET | SUITE 2E04 | NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA | 70112
PHONE NUMBER 504.658.4900 | FAX 504.658.4938 | WWW.NOLA.GOV

HONORED GUESTS



CONFERENCE & GALA CHAIRPERSON

JIM COOK

CEO & President

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

Jim Cook leads the strategic direction and operations of the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (NOENMCC), one of the largest convention facilities in the United States. He oversees major initiatives including the planned 1,000-room Omni New Orleans headquarters hotel, the River District mixed-use development, and a \$763 million capital improvement plan designed to strengthen New Orleans' ability to attract global conventions, trade shows and major events. Cook brings more than 40 years of experience in the hospitality industry, spanning hotel operations, culinary leadership and executive management. He began his career in Boston, working his way through kitchen roles before studying culinary arts and food service management at Johnson & Wales University. He recently earned a Masters in Business Administration from LSU - Shreveport.

Prior to joining the Convention Center team, he wrapped up a 26-year career with Starwood Hotels/Marriott International by leading the 1,110-room Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, overseeing large-scale operations, extensive meeting space and community engagement efforts. A respected leader in New Orleans' hospitality sector, Cook has served as chairman and longtime board member of New Orleans & Company, Chair of the Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Assn, Chair of the New Orleans Police and Justice Assn, Chair of the New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, Chair of the Business Council of New Orleans and the River Region, and a Commissioner of the Downtown Development District.



Urban League of
Louisiana



HONORED GUESTS



TOASTMASTER

THE HONORABLE SIDNEY J. BARTHELEMY

Former Mayor, City of New Orleans

Sidney J. Barthelemy is a distinguished New Orleans public servant, civic leader, and former Mayor of New Orleans whose decades of service have left a lasting impact on the city and state. A native of New Orleans' Seventh Ward, Barthelemy began his career in community service, including work with Total Community Action and the Urban League of Greater New Orleans.

He went on to make history as the first African American elected to the Louisiana State Senate since Reconstruction and later served on the New Orleans City Council. In 1986, he was elected the 57th Mayor of New Orleans, serving two terms and leading the city through a period of significant civic and economic development.

A former president of the Louisiana Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, and National Association of Regional Councils, he understands the complex forces that shape urban areas culturally and economically.

Throughout his career, former Mayor Barthelemy has remained committed to public service, community advancement, and creating greater opportunities for future generations.



Urban League of
Louisiana



HONORED GUESTS



MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES

GINA SWANSON

WDSU News Anchor

Gina Swanson is an award-winning journalist and veteran news anchor who has been a trusted voice in New Orleans for more than 15 years.

A native of New Orleans and graduate of Edna Karr Magnet High School, Gina earned her bachelor's degree in Mass Communication from LSU and a master's degree in Political and Public Affairs Reporting from Northwestern University.

Since joining WDSU in 2008, Gina has covered some of the region's most significant stories. A five-time Emmy winner, she has also been recognized with a regional Edward R. Murrow Award and a Sigma Delta Chi Journalism Award. Beyond the newsroom, Gina is committed to mentoring the next generation of journalists and serving her community.

ENTERTAINMENT

ROYAL ESSENCE BAND



MECCA NOTES



HONORED GUESTS



JOHN WESLEY BOYD JR. is a fourth-generation Black farmer, civil rights activist, and the Founder and President of the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA). Boyd's journey as, an advocate began in the 1980s, when he experienced firsthand the challenges Black farmers face in accessing loans and agricultural assistance. A lifelong advocate and prominent voice for Black farmers and agricultural communities, Boyd has dedicated his career to addressing discrimination in agriculture and protecting the rights, land, and economic opportunities of Black farmers across the United States.

He owns and operates Boyd Farms in Baskerville, Virginia, a 1,500-acre family farming operation spanning three farms where he grows soybeans, corn, and wheat and raises beef cattle. Through the NBFA, Boyd has become a prominent national voice on issues including agricultural policy, farmland preservation, access to credit and federal resources, and the protection of Black land ownership. His advocacy has brought national attention to the longstanding challenges facing Black farmers and the importance of preserving agricultural land as a pathway to economic security and generational wealth. Boyd's work reflects a lifelong commitment to farming, civil rights, and economic justice.



Urban League of
Louisiana



HONOREES



ALANAH ODOMS is a civil rights attorney, national commentator, and devoted mother to her daughter, Élan Jolie Hebert. As Executive Director of the ACLU of Louisiana, she is the first Black woman to lead the organization in its 70-year history. Under her leadership, the ACLU has advanced landmark litigation and advocacy challenging racial gerrymandering, mass incarceration, immigrant detention, discriminatory policing, and threats to First Amendment freedoms.

The ACLU's statewide redistricting campaign helped secure a second Black congressional district and a second Black seat on the Louisiana Supreme Court. Through Justice Lab and its immigration habeas program, the organization has secured more than \$2 million for victims of police violence and freed nearly a dozen immigrants detained by the federal government.

A frequent commentator on MSNBC and CNN, Alanah is the author of *The Love Amendments: Reclaiming Our Freedom in Turbulent Times*, forthcoming from Broadleaf Books in August 2027.

Previously, she served as Deputy General Counsel and Director of the Division of Children and Families at the Louisiana Supreme Court. A Rutgers Law School-Newark graduate, she has received the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Award, the Torch Lighters Award, and the 2026 Jill of the Year honor.



Urban League of
Louisiana



HONOREES



DR. CHRISTAL M. JACKSON

is a distinguished social entrepreneur, philanthropist, author, and the Founder of Mosaic Genius and Head and Heart Philanthropy (HHP). For more than two decades of experience, she has worked at the intersection of philanthropy, entrepreneurship, economic opportunity, and education, with a focus on advancing sustainable outcomes for communities of color. Her work includes AGAPE, an initiative established in New Orleans' historic Tremé neighborhood to foster relationships between the philanthropic community and the region's economic revitalization efforts.

Through Mosaic Genius, Jackson works to build ecosystems for wealth creation by connecting emerging and established investors, supporting diverse entrepreneurs, and expanding access to capital and opportunity. Through HHP, she convenes philanthropists, investors, social entrepreneurs, and thought leaders around issues of critical importance to communities of color in the United States and globally. Jackson is also the author of *Mosaic Genius: Building Beautiful Things with Broken Pieces and Women of Color Pray*. She is a graduate of Spelman College and Duke University, and has been recognized by EBONY as one of its Future 30 Leaders of America.



Urban League of
Louisiana



MEDAL FOR CIVIC & ECONOMIC RIGHTS



THE URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA MEDAL FOR CIVIC AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS RECIPIENT

PAULA WILLIAMS MADISON

is an award-winning journalist, media executive, entrepreneur, investor, and civic leader whose distinguished career spans journalism, entertainment, sports, and business. She spent more than two

decades with NBCUniversal, where she held senior leadership positions including Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer and President and General Manager of KNBC in Los Angeles.

Madison made history as the first African American woman to lead a major network-owned television station in a top-five U.S. market. She is a former principal owner and CEO of the WNBA's Los Angeles Sparks and served on the league's Board of Governors. Today, Madison is Chairman and CEO of Madison Media Management and a principal owner of The Africa Channel, an international media company dedicated to sharing African and African diaspora stories and perspectives with global audiences. She is also an author and filmmaker whose work explores her family's Jamaican and Chinese heritage.



Urban League of
Louisiana



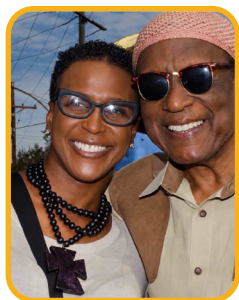
MEDAL FOR CIVIC & ECONOMIC RIGHTS



**THE URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA
MEDAL FOR CIVIC AND ECONOMIC
RIGHTS RECIPIENT**

JEROME "BIG DUCK" SMITH

was a New Orleans civil rights leader, Freedom Rider, community organizer, mentor, and culture bearer whose life was dedicated to justice, youth, and the preservation of New Orleans culture. As a young man, Smith participated in sit-ins, boycotts, and Freedom Rides and was an active member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).



In 1968, he co-founded Tambourine & Fan, a community organization that has served generations of young people in New Orleans' Sixth and Seventh Wards through mentorship, education, athletics, cultural programming, and leadership development. Smith devoted decades to teaching young people about their history, culture, and responsibility to their communities while helping preserve New Orleans' brass band, second line, and Black Masking Indian traditions. A beloved figure throughout Tremé and the city, Smith was recognized for a lifetime of service, including an honorary degree from Xavier University of Louisiana in 2022. He passed away on August 21, 2026, at age 87, leaving a legacy carried forward by generations of New Orleanians.



Urban League of
Louisiana

DECLARATION
EQUITY. INNOVATION. & BLACK FUTURES

PROGRAM

Entertainment**MECCA Notes**

Opening **Gina Swanson**, Mistress of Ceremonies
WDSU News Anchor

Invocation**Chuck Morse**
Pastor, New Birth Missionary Baptist Church
New Orleans

Remarks**Ronald Carrere**
Chairman of the Board, Urban League of Louisiana
Associate Vice President of Government and
Community Relations, Xavier University of Louisiana

Greetings**The Honorable Helena Moreno**
Mayor, City of New Orleans

Presentation of Gala Chairperson**Judy Reese Morse**
President and CEO
Urban League of Louisiana

2026 Chairperson Remarks**Jim Cook**
CEO & President
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

Remarks and
2026 Honoree Presentations.....**Judy Reese Morse**

Acknowledgments Mistress of Ceremonies

The Honoree Toast..... **The Honorable Sidney Barthelemy**
Toastmaster
Former Mayor, City of New Orleans

Entertainment**Royal Essence Band**

SPECIAL THANKS

Jonathan Barnes

CHL Linens

Cherie LaCour Duckworth

Klassi Duncan

Fancy Faces

Carla Goudia

J.R. Thomason Photography Videography

Ronnie King

Judy R. Morse

New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

Gilma Pavon

Sazerac

Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits

Gina Swanson

Tracy Stewart/Exceptional Events

Urban League Young Professionals

Urban League Staff

Volunteers

Cathy Washington

Windsor Court Hotel



Urban League of
Louisiana



SPONSORS

Thank you to our generous sponsors.

SUSTAINING THE MOVEMENT



NEW ORLEANS

ERNEST N. MORIAL

CONVENTION CENTER

SPONSORS

PLATINUM BENEFACTORS



entergy



GOLD BENEFACTORS



Enterprise Mobility™



JPMorganChase

SPONSORS

SILVER BENEFACTORS



XAVIER
Ochsner
College of Medicine



Foundation
for **Louisiana**



REGIONS



Tulane
University



BRONZE BENEFACTORS



DEPAUL COMMUNITY
HEALTH CENTERS

GREATER
NEW ORLEANS
FOUNDATION



casey family programs

Walmart



DILLARD
UNIVERSITY



THE DAVID & LUCILE

Packard Foundation

BENEFACTOR SPONSORS

City Park Conservancy
Crescent City Chapter of Links, Inc.
Dillard University/Dr. Monique Guillory
Frilot LLC
Greater New Orleans Founders Network
Health & Wealth Consultants
Hope Credit Union
JaniKing
Liberty Bank
Louisiana Blue

Ochsner Health Systems
Power Coalition for Equity & Justice
Slater Consulting Group
The Business Council of
New Orleans & the River Region
Total Community Action, Inc.
UNO LSU Foundation
Urban League of Louisiana Guild
Women's Foundation of the South
Xavier University of Louisiana

OVER \$27 MILLION*

INVESTED IN SMALL & EMERGING BUSINESSES.

THAT'S MORE THAN A PROMISE. THAT'S PROGRESS.

Learn more about the SEB Program,
explore opportunities, and find
out how to get involved.

Visit mccnoseb.com

- Download the SEBconnect app
- Scan the QR code to register as an SEB vendor and explore current contracting opportunities



*2025 capital and operational spend



SMALL &
EMERGING
BUSINESS
PROGRAM

Connect to More.



We're in your corner.

For over 100 years, BankPlus has put community at the forefront of every banking decision. Because we believe building community is the heart of community banking.

Learn more at **bankplus.net**.

BankPlus[®]



Member FDIC.



Community like nowhere else

Community is at the heart of everything we do. From fueling economic growth to volunteering in the communities we share, we are committed to every family, neighborhood and business – and to a brighter future for the next generation.

A message from Entergy New Orleans © 2026 Entergy Services, LLC.
All rights reserved.



OUT OF MANY,
ONE

Bridging divides and building
connections across the South.

Join us at www.unumfund.org





Your dreams inspire us.

We're inspired by the strength, resilience and values of this region we call home, and we're passionate about creating opportunities for people and communities. Let's talk about your dreams today.



800-448-8812 • [HancockWhitney.com](https://www.hancockwhitney.com)

Hancock Whitney Bank, Member FDIC.

Building a future that works for everyone

At JPMorganChase we know that building a stronger, more inclusive economy that benefits everyone is good for people, business and society. When everyone's included, we're all more likely to succeed.

©2025 JPMorgan Chase & Co.



JPMorganChase



DECLARATION:
Equity, Innovation & Black Futures

Congratulations **Dr. Christal Jackson**

2026 HONOREE



Urban League of
Louisiana

*Celebrating your leadership, vision, and
commitment to strengthening our communities.*

William L. McElroy & Dr. Yolanda McElroy



PERSONAL BANKING

Extra protection
for your money.
Extra Is Our
Ordinary.

regions.com

 **REGIONS**
Equal Housing Lender | Member FDIC



Foundation
for Louisiana
new dreams | better lives

At work for resilient communities

POWERING POSSIBILITY.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.



Get Involved

BELONG. ENGAGE. INVEST. LEAD.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT.

Help Shape the Future of Louisiana

Your membership helps create pathways to economic stability, advance civil rights, and build stronger communities across Louisiana.

SCAN TO JOIN TODAY



**INVEST IN PEOPLE. STRENGTHEN FAMILIES.
BUILD COMMUNITIES. CHANGE SYSTEMS.**



Urban League of
Louisiana

DECLARATION

EQUITY, INNOVATION, & BLACK FUTURES





4640 S. Carrollton Avenue, Suite 210
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.UrbanLeagueLA.org

   **@UrbanLeagueLA**



**"Closing divides and building pathways to
shared prosperity, justice, and opportunity"**

4640 S. Carrollton Avenue, Suite 210
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.UrbanLeagueLA.org
   @UrbanLeagueLA