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Phone: 785.864.4760  
Toll Free: 800.584.2957  
Email: kubac@kualumni.org  
Webpage: kualumni.org/ban

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**KU Black Alumni Network**

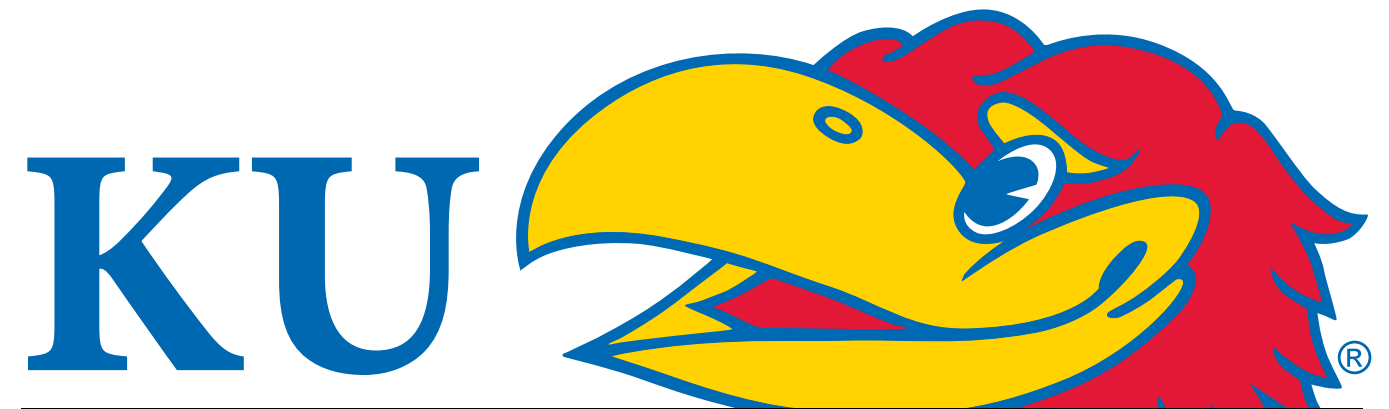


**Get Involved!**

The mission of the KU Black Alumni Network, an affinity network of the KU Alumni Association, is to engage alumni and support African American students, faculty and staff.

Becoming a dues-paying member of the KU Alumni Association is a great way to re-establish your connection to KU. If you have any questions, please email the Black Alumni Network directly, at [kubac@kualumni.org](mailto:kubac@kualumni.org).

One way to engage with other alumni is via the KUBAN Facebook page. To update your contact information, visit Update My Alumni Contact Information. We look forward to hearing from you!



# Black Alumni Network

Fall 2021

**Greetings Jayhawks!**

**A message from your KU Black Alumni Network President**

With the fall season comes KU football and Homecoming weekend. I cannot believe we last met for the KU Black Alumni Network (KUBAN) Reunion Weekend in October 2019. So much has occurred over these past two years—the continued racial unrest, a global pandemic and, on a positive note, the election of Kamala Harris, our first Black female vice president.

Because of ongoing concerns about the pandemic, the 2021 Reunion Weekend—which this year celebrates the 45th anniversary of KUBAN—will be held as a virtual event. The Reunion Weekend committee, led by Dr. Idalene Williams and Jill M. Hall, and the Leaders and Innovators committee, led by Caleb Bobo and Dr. Tonya Waller, have been working hard to organize an exciting and engaging event Oct. 14-16 on Zoom. Please see the reunion schedule of activities on page 3 and event registration link below.

On behalf of the KUBAN Leadership Team, President Tamara Huff-Johnson and the Reunion Weekend and Leaders and Innovators committees, we look forward to you joining us for a fun-filled weekend. We appreciate the dedication of all Jayhawks who have worked and continue to work to increase the involvement of Black alumni in the affairs of the University and the KU Alumni Association, as well as mentor students.

Be safe and well!

Michelle D. Wilson  
KUBAN President-elect



Tammy Huff-Johnson, President



Michelle D. Wilson, President-elect

**2021-'22 Leadership Team**

- Tammy Huff-Johnson**, President
- Michelle Wilson**, President-elect
- Caleb Bobo**, Secretary
- Mykala Sandifer**, KUAA Staff Liaison
- Brenda Vann**, Chair - Advocacy Committee
- Angela Nelson**, Co-Chair - Advocacy Committee
- Darryll Fortune**, Chair - Communications Committee
- Caleb Bobo**, Chair - Leaders and Innovators Awards Committee
- Tonya Waller**, Co-Chair - Leaders and Innovators Awards Committee
- Idalene Williams**, Chair - Reunion Weekend Committee
- Jill M. Hall**, Co-Chair - Reunion Weekend Committee
- Michelle D. Wilson**, Chair - Young Alumni/ Student Programs Committee



Register for Reunion Weekend activities:  
[kualumni.org/ban-reunion](http://kualumni.org/ban-reunion)

## KUBAN celebrates 45th Anniversary

Reunion Weekend marks the 45th anniversary of KUBAN's founding. On Oct. 2, 1976, 29 alumni gathered in Lawrence for the first general meeting of KU Black alumni and established the Black Alumni Committee of the KU Alumni Association, which was later renamed the KU Black Alumni Network.

The first event sponsored by the Black Alumni Committee was a Career Day during the 1977 Kansas Relays. Seventy-five Black alumni representing the legal, business, medical, engineering, education and human resources professions participated in the event, along with 250 KU students.

Former KU administrator Marshall Jackson, '70, g'89, who served on the organizing committee for the first general meeting and helped plan many of the events throughout KUBAN's history, reflected on the celebration of KUBAN's founding. "Forty-five years is a long time for an organization to survive when its survival is primarily dependent on dedication and commitment to an idea whose foundation is based on the belief that this world belongs to all of us. May God continue to bless the KU Black Alumni Network."



## 2021 KUBAN Reunion Weekend

We are extremely disappointed that we are unable to hold in-person activities this year, but we recognize the need to exercise caution in the midst of the pandemic. Consequently, the Reunion Weekend committee has planned a fun-filled weekend of virtual activities Oct. 14-16 for students, alumni, KU faculty and staff, and friends of KU.

The biennial Reunion Weekend activities begin Thursday, Oct. 14, with the release of a video honoring the recipients of the 2021 Leaders and Innovators Award and the inaugural Emerging Leaders Award (biographies of the recipients are on the following pages).

On Friday, Oct. 15, activities include a panel discussion on effective networking and career development strategies and the benefits derived from a mentoring relationship; a virtual yard show (step show) on Instagram; and a live band performance, featuring jazz, R&B and other musical selections.

On Saturday, Oct 16, the KUBAN Leadership Team will guide our biennial business meeting and report on objectives achieved since the 2019 meeting. Please come with your questions and suggestions and find out how you can assist in planning upcoming activities.

The 2021 Reunion Weekend will conclude that evening with a virtual game night, featuring Black Card Revoked, Culture Tag, Kahoot and other games.

Visit [kualumni.org/ban-reunion](http://kualumni.org/ban-reunion) to register for Reunion Weekend activities. There is no cost to register or participate.



## Virtual Reunion Weekend Schedule

Zoom links for the activities will be provided after registration is received.  
All activities will take place on Zoom unless otherwise noted.

### • Thursday, October 14 •

**Video honoring recipients of the Leaders and Innovators and Emerging Leaders Awards**

*(available on KUBAN Facebook group page)*

### • Friday, October 15 •

**Panel discussion on networking/careers/mentoring: 2-3:30 p.m.**

**Moderator:** Jill M. Hall

**Panelists:**

- Darryll Fortune – Public Relations/Marketing
- Idalene Williams, PhD, MBA, CPA – Business/Accounting
- James Banks – Law/Business
- Michelle D. Wilson – Student Organizations/Community Involvement
- Bonita Gooch – Entrepreneur

**Yard Show**

*(livestreamed on KU NPHC's Instagram: @kunphc\_30): Time TBD*

**R Style Band performance: 8-10 p.m.**

### • Saturday, October 16 •

**KUBAN business meeting: 9-10:30 a.m.**

**Game night: Time TBD** (depending on KU vs. Texas Tech kickoff time)

Visit [kualumni.org/ban-reunion](http://kualumni.org/ban-reunion) to register for Reunion Weekend activities!



Bobo



Chase



Gaston



Gilmore



James



McCormick



McCurdy



Thomas

## Recipients of the 2021 Leaders and Innovators and the Emerging Leaders Awards

Since 2007, the Mike and Joyce Shinn Leaders and Innovators Award has been given to outstanding alumni who have made significant contributions to the University, their professions and their communities. Past recipients include esteemed Jayhawks John McLendon, Lucile H. Bluford, Delano E. Lewis, Wilt Chamberlain, C. Kermit Phelps, Etta Moten, Elmer C. Jackson, Jr., Cordell Meeks, Dorothy Hodge (Davis) Johnson, Nicholas L. Gerren, Walt Wesley and Gale Sayers.

This year the Leaders and Innovators Award Committee has selected the following alumni to receive the award: Luke Bobo, Phyllis Chase, Patricia Weems Gaston, Denise Gilmore, Darren James, Mark McCormick, Clantha Carrigan McCurdy, Aaron Thomas and Irvetta Williams.

The committee also selected Michael Austin, Marcus Hollinger, Nicole Humphrey, Craig Jackson Jr., Paul Pierce II, Margaret Pruitt and Joshua Robinson to receive the Emerging Leaders Award, which honors recent KU graduates who have demonstrated outstanding leadership.

### Leaders and Innovators

#### Luke Bobo, Shawnee

Bobo, e'82, is a nationally recognized speaker and writer on apologetics and public theology. He serves as vice president of strategic partnerships for Made to Flourish, an organization that provides resources and engagement opportunities to a national network of pastors. He is also a visiting professor at the Institute of Biblical Studies and a visiting instructor at Covenant Theological Seminary.

For his community, he serves on the boards for Carver Baptist Bible College, the Center for Public Justice and HustleUSA. For KU, he has served on the School of Engineering's Diversity & Women's Advisory Board and is a trustee for the Department of Religious Studies. He also served on the Alumni Association's national Board of Directors, and he led the KU Black Alumni Network as president.

In addition to his KU electrical engineering degree, he earned a master's degree in engineering, a master's of divinity and a doctorate in education leadership.

#### Phyllis Stevens Chase, Kansas City, Missouri

Chase, d'71, EdD'87, is a professor and the PK-12 EdD Program coordinator for Baker University. During her career she has served in numerous leadership roles, including superintendent for the public-school districts in Topeka and the cities of Kansas City, Springfield, Columbia and North Kansas City, Missouri.

She also has volunteered as a board member for many organizations, including Mercantile Bank, the United Way of the Ozarks and the Topeka Symphony.

#### Patricia Weems Gaston, Lawrence

Gaston, j'81, returned to KU in 2018 to become the Lacy C. Haynes Professor of Journalism after her career as an award-winning journalist. She served in many editorial roles for The Washington Post, where she helped produce the national, foreign, features, editorial and opinion sections. Before the Post, she was assistant international editor for the Dallas Morning News and part of a Pulitzer Prize-winning team that reported on violence against women.

Gaston advises the staff of the University Daily Kansan, mentors students through the Rising Scholars Program and serves on the KU Faculty Senate executive committee.

#### Denise White Gilmore, Hoover, Alabama

Gilmore, b'77, is an advocate and leader on issues of social and racial justice and equitable community development. She is the senior director for the Division of Social Justice & Racial Equity in the Office of Mayor Randall L. Woodfin of Birmingham. She leads multidisciplinary efforts to serve marginalized communities, and helps preserve, rehabilitate and share areas of cultural significance. Currently, she leads the city's efforts to continue the development of the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, which was created by former President Barack Obama in 2017.

She also serves on the strategic planning committee for the Alabama African American Civil Rights Sites Heritage Consortium and has served on the board for the Kansas City Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Gilmore is also an active and proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

#### Darren James, Lewisville, Texas

James, a'92, is president of KAI Enterprises, a design and construction services firm with eight offices across six states. Prior to KAI, James served as the architect and assistant director for construction at Texas Woman's University.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, he serves as the president of Fair Park First, a nonprofit group that oversees equitable growth and development of a historic neighborhood in South Dallas. He also chairs the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, one of the oldest Black chambers in the United States. He has served on the boards of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dallas and the Dallas Citizen's Council and the advisory board of the KU School of Architecture & Design. He was recently named to D CEO Magazine's "500 Most Influential Business Leaders in North Texas."

#### Mark E. McCormick, Leawood

McCormick, j'90, serves as the director of strategic communications for the ACLU of Kansas. He also serves on Gov. Laura Kelly's Racial Equity & Justice Commission, on the board for the Association of African American Museums and as a trustee of the William Allen White Foundation at the KU journalism school. He has worked as a reporter for The Wichita Eagle, The Louisville Courier-Journal and the Springfield News-Leader. He is the author of *Barry Sanders: Now You See Him ... His Story in His Own Words*. McCormick holds five gold medals from the Kansas City Press Club and was recognized as the club's "Best Columnist" in 2009. He also served as the executive director of the Kansas African American History Museum.

#### Clantha Carrigan McCurdy, Natick, Massachusetts

McCurdy, EdD'95, is the senior deputy commissioner for access and student financial assistance with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, where she manages the legislative budget for scholarships, grants, tuition waivers and student loans for current and prospective students.

She also serves as president of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs and on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Advisory Committee of the KU School of Education and Human Sciences. Her honors include the Massachusetts Performance Recognition Award and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Service Award. The Eos Foundation recently named her one of the "50 Most Influential People of Color in Higher Education."

#### Aaron Thomas, Overland Park

Thomas, c'00, is executive producer and CEO of Wyandotte Entertainment Inc. and an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts. He is also the executive producer of the popular TV show "S.W.A.T.," airing on CBS. He has written for numerous other shows including "Soul Food: The Series," "Friday Night Lights" and "CSI: New York."

He mentors the next generation of writers and is a frequent guest speaker for the CBS Writers' Program. He also helped create a mentoring program for television writers of color in the Los Angeles area.

—Continued



Williams

**Irvetta J. Williams,  
St. Louis, Missouri**

Williams, a'87, is the founder and lead consultant for iJay Enterprises, a firm that helps developers and municipalities navigate pre-construction and building code processes. She also is an expert in leveraging Tax Increment Financing and Community Development Block Grants to develop residential and commercial projects across the Greater St. Louis area.

She has been involved with several professional organizations, including the Missouri Workforce Housing Association, the National Association of Minority Architects, the Missouri Association of Code Enforcement and the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials.

She is an adviser to the KU School of Architecture & Design, and she served on the board of the St. Louis Community Builders Network and the Foreclosure Intervention Taskforce of the Urban League of Metro St. Louis.

**Emerging Leaders**

**Michael Austin, Lawrence**

Austin, g'16, is a public-sector economist and policy researcher and president of Knowledge & Decisions Economic Consulting LLC. He previously directed fiscal policy for the Kansas Policy Institute and as the chief economist for two governors. He volunteers as a high school tutor and debate coach.



Austin

**Marcus Hollinger,  
Atlanta, Georgia**

Hollinger, j'14, is senior vice president for marketing of Reach Records and co-founder of Portrait Coffee Roasters, an award-winning company that seeks to use coffee as a mechanism for doing good across Atlanta.

**Nicole Humphrey,  
Coral Gables, Florida**

Humphrey, c'16, PhD '20, is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Miami who researches the impact of organizational structures and processes on gender and racial inequities. She also chairs the Student & New Professionals Section of the American Society of Public Administration.



Hollinger



Humphrey

**Craig Jackson Jr.,  
Sacramento, California**

Jackson, g'14, is senior director of development for the University of California-Davis School of Engineering. He also co-chairs the diversity, equity and inclusion committee for development and alumni relations at UC Davis. For the KU School of Education and Human Sciences, he serves on the dean's advisory board.

**Paul Pierce II, Lawrence**

Pierce, j'15, former assistant athletics director for compliance with Kansas Athletics, in July was promoted to associate athletics director for inclusive excellence to lead all diversity and inclusion efforts for staff, coaches and athletes. He participates in the Multicultural Excellence in College Athletics and Minority Opportunities Athletic Association.



Jackson

**Dr. Margaret Pruitt,  
Silver Spring, Maryland**

Pruitt, PhD'17, m'19, completed a fellowship at the Milken Institute's School of Public Health and now serves as a resident physician at the George Washington University Hospital in Washington, D.C., and a member of the departmental council for diversity, equity and inclusion at the GW School of Medicine. She also guides high school students as a mentor and tutor.

**Joshua Robinson,  
Cedar Park, Texas**

Robinson, j'16, g'18, is a senior associate and network manager at Living Cities, an organization focused on building economically and racially inclusive cities. He also is an active member of the Austin Area Urban League and the Sigma Kappa Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.



Pierce



Robinson



Pruitt

As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, the KU Alumni Association and its networks remain strictly nonpartisan and are not affiliated with any political party, nor do they endorse any candidates for elected or appointed offices in local, state or national government.