

NAACP
**THE FIERCE
URGENCY OF
NOW**
116TH NAACP NATIONAL CONVENTION



NIGHT OF EXCELLENCE

JULY 16 | 7PM ET

116TH NAACP NATIONAL CONVENTION | CHARLOTTE, NC

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[NAACP.ORG/CONVENTION](https://naacp.org/convention)



NIGHT OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Welcome & Greetings

- Karen Boykin-Towns, Brooklyn, NY
Vice Chair, National Board of Directors, NAACP
- Georgette “Gigi” Dixon, Charlotte, NC
Member, NAACP National Board of Directors
116th NAACP National Convention Blue Ribbon Committee

Adobe Cinematic Short Film Competition Winner

Professor Deborah Archer

2025 William Robert Ming Advocacy Award

presented by Janette McCarthy-Wallace, General Counsel, NAACP

Remarks

- Derrick Johnson, Jackson, MS
President and CEO, NAACP
- Daphnée Duplaix, New York, NY
“Beyond the Gates” (CBS)

Invocation

Rev. Dr. Kenneth Robinson

The Creek Church and First Baptist Statesville, Statesville, NC

Dinner

Remarks

Leon W. Russell, Tampa FL

Chairman, NAACP National Board of Directors

NIGHT OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

The 2025 Dr. William Montague Cobb Awards

presented by Rev. Shavon Arline-Bradley, Laurel, MD to:

- Dr. Uché Blackstock
- Dr. Mati Hlatshwayo Davis
- Charles County, Maryland NAACP Branch

Call Convention to a Close

Michael T. Turner, Detroit, MI
Chair, Convention Planning, NAACP

Benediction

Rev. Dr. Barrett Berry
Empowered Living Ministries, Charlotte, NC

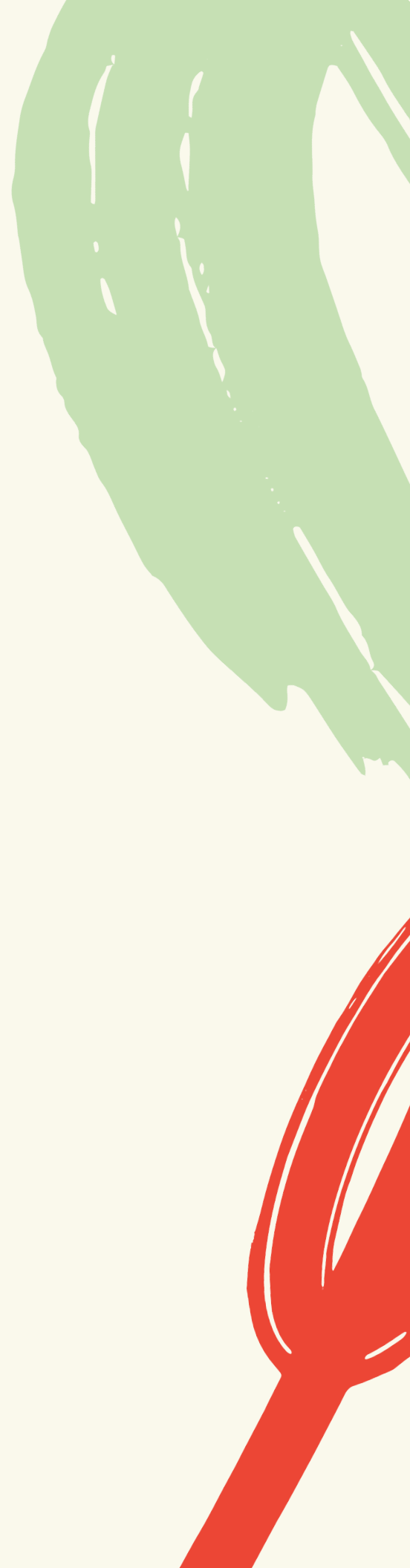
Musical Entertainment

MAJOR.

Sunshine Anderson

Mali Music

Abraham's Descendants



MEET THE FILMMAKERS

DEMI ANAIS

NEW ORLEANS, LA



Demi Anais is a genre-agnostic writer, director, producer with a passion for creating immersive, character-driven films. Aside from her own projects, Demi also works on sets as a SAG-AFTRA stunt performer. Currently, Demi is in the financing stage of development for her 5th short film, 'Memory Walk', and plans to begin pre-production in 2025.

AURIYANA ARMOUR

LOS ANGELES, CA



Auriyana Armour is a rising filmmaker and storyteller dedicated to crafting raw, poetic narratives that center the Black experience. A recent graduate of Spelman College and an MFA candidate in Film & Television Production at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, Auriyana's work blends documentary sensibilities with lyrical visual language. Through her films and digital platform, Channel Auri, she explores themes of identity, vulnerability, and cultural memory.

KYVON EDWIN

QUEENS, NY



Kyvon Edwin is a native Saint Lucian award winning director, producer, writer, and actor currently based in New York. He is an alumnus of the Lee Strasberg Theater and Film Institute as an Eleanor Duse Scholar. His work has been featured at Academy Award qualifying festivals including American Black Film Festival, Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival, Hip Hop Film Festival, Essence Film Festival, Bronzelens Film Festival and the Festival de Cannes, among others.



KERRI GARRETT

ATLANTA, GA

Kerri Garrett is a multidisciplinary artist and creative force with Midwest roots from Columbus, Ohio, and southern soul grounded in Atlanta, Georgia. A proud Clark Atlanta alum, her foundation in dance and acting inspires her filmmaking where she centers the Black Diaspora experience with a joyful and impactful focus on Black queer lives. She has worked with artists like Teyana Taylor, Ari Lennox, and Kanye West, and brands including Google, FENTY, and Tefar.



MEKHAI LEE

BROOKLYN, NY

Hailing from Charlotte, North Carolina, Mekhai Lee is a proud graduate of the Drama program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where he performed in/directed many productions including "The Brothers Size" and "Angels in America." Before graduating in 2018, Mekhai joined the First National Touring Production of the acclaimed "The Color Purple Revival" featuring Cynthia Erivo (as Grady/ Harpo u/s) and subsequently moved to New York City, having since performed in multiple professional productions.



RALPH PARKER III

NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

Ralph Parker III is an LA-based director, writer, editor and musician born in Wilmington, North Carolina. As a filmmaker, he uses his voice to depict evocative characters in surreal and distinct settings to comment on the world around us. His thesis film, "Sammy, Without Strings", won awards at the Austin Film Festival, Wrap Shortlist Film Festival, Morehouse College Student Film Festival and DGA Student Film Awards.

DEBORAH ARCHER

WILLIAM ROBERT MING ADVOCACY AWARD



Deborah N. Archer is President of the ACLU, where she serves as Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, the two governing bodies responsible for policy development, financial oversight, and mission-alignment functions for the national organization. Deborah is a tenured professor and associate dean at New York University School of Law, and the faculty director of the Community Equity Lab at NYU Law. She is a leading expert in civil rights, civil liberties, and racial justice, and an award-winning teacher and legal scholar whose articles have appeared in leading law reviews. Deborah has also offered commentary for numerous media outlets, including MSNBC, National Public Radio, CBS, Monocle, *The Atlantic*, and *The New York Times*.

Deborah is a graduate of Yale Law School, where she was awarded the Charles G. Albom Prize, and Smith College. She previously worked as an attorney with the ACLU and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., where she litigated in the areas of voting rights, employment discrimination, and school desegregation. Deborah is also a former chair of the American Association of Law School's Section on Civil Rights and the Section on Minority Groups. She previously served as Chair of the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board, the nation's oldest and largest police oversight agency.

Deborah has been honored by numerous community organizations and legal institutions, including Yale Law School, Columbia Law School, Boston University School of Law, New York University, Smith College, New York Law School, the American Association of Law Schools, and the Law and Society Association. In 2021, the Law and Society Association awarded her the John Hope Franklin Prize, Honorable Mention for her article "'White Men's Roads Through Black Men's Homes': Advancing Racial Equity Through Highway Reconstruction" which appeared in the *Vanderbilt Law Review*. Deborah also received a 2021 Podell Distinguished Teaching Award, the 2020–2021 Jacob K. Javits Professorship from New York University, the 2021 Stephen Ellmann Memorial Clinical Scholarship Award from the American Association of Law Schools, the Otto L. Walter Distinguished Writing Award from New York Law School, and the Haywood Burns/Shanara Guilbert Award from the Northeast People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference.

DR. NICHE BLACKSTOCK

Dr. William Montague Cobb Award Recipient



For too long, our healthcare system has failed Black Americans and other historically-marginalized communities. Despite medical advancements, health disparities persist, and are sustained by access to care, treatment quality, and the social determinants of health. Dr. Blackstock, physician, speaker, and advocate, has witnessed these injustices firsthand—both in her own experiences as a Black woman in medicine and through the legacy of her mother, Dr. Dale Blackstock, a pioneering Black physician.

In 2019, she founded Advancing Health Equity to help organizations take meaningful action in addressing bias, improving workplace culture, and ensuring equitable care. Now serving as Chief Advisor, she continues to guide AHE's vision and impact.

In 2024, Dr. Blackstock published her *New York Times* bestselling memoir, "Legacy: A Black Physician Reckons with Racism in Medicine," a powerful exploration of systemic racism in healthcare. Her work continues to drive urgent conversations, critical policy change, and meaningful progress toward a more just and equitable healthcare system.

Dr. Mati Hlatshwayo Davis is an internationally recognized infectious diseases physician, public health leader, and health equity advocate. As the former Director of Health for the City of St. Louis, in May of 2025, she led transformative initiatives to expand public health infrastructure, advance health equity, and strengthen community partnerships. During her four year tenure, Dr. Hlatshwayo Davis oversaw a 36 percent growth in departmental staffing, secured over 15 million dollars in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and established the city's first Behavioral Health Bureau and City Justice Center Health Bureau, resulting in measurable improvements in mental health support and a reduction in jail deaths to historic lows.



Her leadership was central to launching innovative mobile health services that reached over 13,000 residents in underserved neighborhoods, achieving successful national reaccreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, and collaborating with more than 150 organizations on the city's Regional Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Her policy advocacy contributed to the passage of local and state-level legislation improving health infrastructure and services across the region.

Nationally, Dr. Hlatshwayo Davis serves as a Board Director of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and is the Executive Producer and Co-host of the IDSA, "Let's Talk", podcast. A sought-after speaker and contributor, her expertise on COVID-19 and health equity has been featured by CNN, BBC, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, and Newsweek, among others. She has also been invited to the White House in recognition of her national leadership and advocacy.

Dr. Hlatshwayo Davis earned her medical degree from the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine and a Master of Public Health from Case Western Reserve University. She completed her residency in internal medicine at University Hospitals Case Medical Center, followed by fellowships in Infectious Diseases, HIV Medicine, and Sexually Transmitted Infections at Washington University School of Medicine, where she later joined the faculty and held leadership roles in medical education and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Named a Fellow of IDSA, Dr. Hlatshwayo Davis has received more than 20 national and regional awards over the past four years, including the IDSA Society Citation Award and the NAACP Dr. William Montague Cobb Award. Her career continues to focus on bridging gaps between academic medicine, government, and community, driven by an unwavering commitment to advancing health equity and improving health outcomes for marginalized and underserved populations.

MATI HLATSHWAYO DAVIS MD, MPH, FIDSA

Dr. William Montague Cobb Award Recipient



The NAACP logo, featuring the letters "NAACP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the upper right of the "P".

NAACP®

Charles County Branch

Since its inception, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was poised for a long, tumultuous and rewarding history. Although it may be possible to chronicle the challenging and harrowing legacy of the NAACP, the real story of the nation's most significant civil rights organization lies in the hearts and minds of the people who would not stand still while the rights of some of America's darker citizens were denied.

From the ballot box to the classroom, the dedicated workers, organizers, and leaders who forged this great organization and maintain its status as a champion of social justice, fought long and hard to ensure that the voices of African Americans would be heard. The legacy of those pioneers, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, Roy Wilkins and the hundreds of thousands of nameless faces who worked so tirelessly, can not and must not be forgotten.

The history of the NAACP is one of blood, sweat and tears. From bold investigations of mob brutality and protests against mass murders, segregation and discrimination, to testimony before congressional committees on the vicious tactics used to bar African Americans from the ballot box, it was the talent and tenacity of NAACP members that saved lives and changed many negative aspects of American society. While much of its history is chronicled in books, articles, pamphlets and magazines, the true movement lies in the faces—Black, white, yellow, red and brown—united to awaken the consciousness of a people and a nation. This is the legacy of the NAACP!

NAACP CHARLES COUNTY BRANCH

Dr. William Montague Cobb Award Recipient

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