

BAY AREA

UNCF "A MIND IS..."[®]

GALA

2026



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Greetings,

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I welcome each of you to 2026 UNCF Bay Area “A Mind Is...”[®] Gala. Your presence here reflects a profound commitment to the power of education and the belief that together, we can build a brighter future for our communities.

As we gather in this space, let us take a moment to acknowledge the incredible journeys that have brought us here. Each of you represents the collective hope and aspiration of countless students striving for excellence. Your dedication to supporting their educational endeavors is not just commendable; it is transformative.

To our sponsors I want to extend a heartfelt thank you. Your commitment to this mission not only changes lives but also inspires others to join in this vital work. Together, we are lighting the way to promise and prosperity while fostering a culture of empowerment and achievement.

As we engage in today’s activities, let us remember the impact of our collective efforts. Each conversation, each collaboration and each moment spent together strengthens our mission and enhances the lives of those we serve. The education and opportunities we provide are not just investments in individual futures; they are investments in the future of our communities and our nation.


Let us continue to inspire one another, share our stories, and work together to make a lasting difference. Together, we can break down barriers and open doors for the next generation of leaders, thinkers and innovators.

Thank you for being here and for your belief in the mission of UNCF.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D.

President and Chief Executive Officer, UNCF

 @DrMichaelLomax

CITY OF OAKLAND



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Office of the Mayor



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Welcome from the Mayor

Dear Friends,

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to the 2026 “A Mind Is ...”[®] Gala, hosted by UNCF’s Western Region. This evening, we gather in celebration of possibility, purpose, and the enduring power of education to transform lives. We also gather with intention—to invest in the brilliance, resilience, and boundless potential of students pursuing their dreams through historically Black colleges and universities.

As Mayor of Oakland, I have witnessed firsthand how access to education can change the trajectory of individuals, families, and entire communities. For generations, HBCUs have stood as pillars of excellence, nurturing leaders, cultivating innovation, and advancing opportunity in the face of adversity. Their legacy is not only historic—it is living, evolving, and essential to our collective future.

Although I did not personally attend an HBCU, I am deeply rooted in a proud family legacy of HBCU education. My grandfather and aunts attended Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas, while my mother pursued her studies at Southern University and Prairie View A&M University. Continuing this tradition, my nieces are also graduates of Prairie View. My grandson earned his degree at Howard University, an institution that also honored me with an honorary doctorate. This enduring connection reflects the profound impact of HBCUs on my family across generations.

Your presence here tonight is a powerful affirmation of that legacy. It reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that students—especially those too often overlooked—are seen, supported, and equipped to thrive. The resources raised this evening are more than financial contributions; they are investments in dreams, in leadership, and in a more just and equitable society.

Let us take pride in how far we have come, remain steadfast in our responsibility to uplift the next generation, and move forward together with purpose and resolve.

Thank you for standing with UNCF and for your unwavering belief that when we invest in young minds, we strengthen the future for us all.

With gratitude and purpose,

Barbara Lee
Barbara Lee

Mayor, City of Oakland



Dear friends,,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the UNCF A Mind Is Gala. Each year, this event presents an extraordinary evening of celebration with purpose. Tonight, we gather not only to honor excellence, but to affirm a shared commitment to a powerful and enduring mission: advancing Black higher education through the transformational work of our historically black colleges and universities.

For generations, historically black colleges have stood as pillars of resilience and innovation. Yet their continued success depends on intentional investment—investment that closes opportunity gaps, strengthens academic pathways, and ensures that brilliance is not limited by socio-economic barriers. Contributions to UNCF not only support our institutions; but daily work to expand economic mobility and uplift the next generation of formidable leaders across industries and professions.

Your presence here tonight signals a belief in that future. Our heartfelt congratulations and profound thanks to the Honorable Barbara Lee, Mayor of the city of Oakland for her tireless dedication to community and lifelong support of our historically black colleges, to Aisha Bowe for the energy and focus you bring to your profession and the many ways in which you inspire young people; to the NAACP and to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for demonstrating the power of faith, friendship and collaboration to support students attending HBCUs, and to the Wiggins family for enabling us all to celebrate the life achievements of D'Wayne Wiggins, an extraordinary talent and philanthropist who freely gave of himself to love of music and his love for his city, Oakland. We salute you all.

My sincere thanks to the volunteers, UNCF staff, consultants, musicians, and production team for your contribution of time and talent to ensure the evening's success.

Thank you all for joining us. May this evening inspire you as much as your support inspires the students and communities we serve.

With gratitude,

Monica L. Sudduth

Monica L. Sudduth

Vice President, Western Region
UNCF

UNCF "A MIND IS..."[®]

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UNCF "A MIND IS..."[®] GALA AWARD HONOREES

UNCF Community Partnership Award



THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**NAACP & The Church of
Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**

UNCF Torch and Flame Trailblazer Award



Aisha Bowe

Aerospace Engineer, Entrepreneur

UNCF Legacy Award



D'Wayne Wiggins

R & B Recording Artist, Philanthropist

The President's Award



The Honorable Barbara Lee

Mayor, City of Oakland

UNCF "A MIND IS..."[®] GALA CO-CHAIRS



Raymond C. Marshall, Esq.

Gala Co-chairman,
UNCF Leadership Council



Will Jackson

Gala Co-chairman,
UNCF Leadership Council

THE EVENING'S PROGRAM

EVENING HOST

J-Red

Comedian

WELCOME REMARKS

Raymond C. Marshall, Esq.

Gala Co-chairman, UNCF Leadership Council

Will Jackson

Gala Co-chairman, UNCF Leadership Council

INVOCATION

Rev. Dr. Reginald D. Walton

Presiding Elder, San Francisco District

9th Episcopal District, Christian Methodist

Episcopal Church

UNCF Leadership Council

DINNER IS SERVED

REMARKS

Maurice E. Jenkins Jr.

Executive Vice President and

Chief Development Officer, UNCF

LIVE AUCTION

Gee Scott

Auctioneer

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

Deborah Colimon

B.S. Psychology (Summa Cum Laude), Utah Valley

Recipient of the NAACP/The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints Scholarship

FUND THE MISSION

Gee Scott

Auctioneer

CHECK PRESENTATION NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

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and Jacalyn Ellison

Scholarship Co-chairpersons

UNCF Leadership Council

Robert Mitchell, M.D.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated

UNCF Leadership Council

PRESENTATION OF HONOREES

UNCF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

**NAACP & The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints**

UNCF TORCH AND FLAME TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Aisha Bowe

Aerospace Engineer, Entrepreneur

UNCF LEGACY AWARD

D'Wayne Wiggins

R&B Recording Artist, Philanthropist

MUSICAL TRIBUTE

Performed by Oakland School of the Arts

THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Introduction of Honoree

Michael L. Lomax, Ph.D.

President and Chief Executive Officer, UNCF

The Honorable Barbara Lee

Mayor, City of Oakland

CLOSING REMARKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Monica Sudduth

Vice President, Western Region, UNCF

ENTERTAINMENT

The Original Lakeside

R&B Recording Artist

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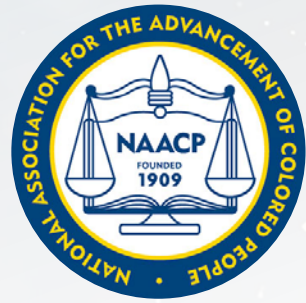
Raymond C. Marshall, Esq.

Ismail Ramsey, Esq.

*At time of publishing

UNCF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

HONOREE



The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Rooted in the civil rights philosophy of W. E. B. Du Bois's Niagara Movement, established in 1905, the mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to eliminate racial prejudice and promote the political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority populations within the United States through democratic means. The organization seeks to dismantle systemic barriers to equity by advancing legal advocacy, policy reform, and civic engagement.

Mission Priorities

Racial Justice

Advancing racial equity by strengthening Black political, social, and economic power.

Education Innovation

Promoting equitable access to high-quality, world-class education for all students.

Environmental and Climate Justice

Addressing environmental inequities through comprehensive social, economic, and ecological reforms.

Inclusive Economy

Supporting economic mobility and fostering sustainable growth within Black communities.

Health and Well-Being

Advancing an inclusive public health framework and promoting equitable healthcare systems.

Next Generation Leadership

Developing and supporting emerging leaders and youth-driven change initiatives.

Advocacy and Litigation

Pursuing fair and just representation through strategic litigation and legislative advocacy at the state and federal levels. Policy and legislation that translates the priorities of the Black community into actionable public policy through sustained legislative engagement.

UNCF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AWARD

HONOREE

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a global Christian denomination, comprised of over 17 million members, which centers its theology on Jesus Christ. The Church is well known for its comprehensive engagement in humanitarian causes throughout the world.

Clean Water and Sanitation

Improved access to water, sanitation, and hygiene are essential for human health and well-being.

Education

The Church helps others to have access to quality education and essential learning resources.

Emergency Relief

As individuals receive aid and learn principles of self-reliance, they are better able to feel the love of God and provide for their families.

Employment

The Church helps individuals to become self-reliant through employment support.

Environmental Stewardship

All humankind are stewards over the earth and should gratefully use what God has given, avoid wasting life and resources, and use the bounty of the earth to care for those in need.

Feeding the Hungry

Central to the work of The Church aligned with Christ's teachings is to feed the hungry by addressing hunger throughout the world.

Healthcare and Disability

Members care for people with health challenges through healthcare and disability efforts.

Housing

Whether homelessness is due to an emergency, a sudden change in circumstances, or a more long-term challenge, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints strives to help.

Mental Health

Providing effective care and resources to people in need is essential in helping those in need become more resilient and more self-reliant.

Offering Refuge

The Church supports those who have been displaced through humanitarian projects and through the service and compassion of members.

UNCF TORCH AND FLAME TRAILBLAZER AWARD

HONOREE



Aisha Bowe

Aerospace Engineer, Entrepreneur

Aisha Bowe is a former NASA rocket scientist, 2X Founder, and citizen astronaut. Her Blue Origin New Shepard flight marks the latest milestone in a career defined by innovation, leadership, and global advocacy in STEM and entrepreneurship.

Among the less than 2% of women founders to raise over \$2 million in venture capital, Aisha founded LINGO, an edtech company that already serves 10,000 students and is on a mission to equip one million learners with STEM skills over the next decade.

Aisha's journey, from discovering her passion for math in a community college pre-algebra class to preparing for space, has inspired audiences worldwide. Her story has been featured on national television, online platforms, and in print by outlets including Entrepreneur, Fast Company, Wired, and The Kelly Clarkson Show. She was also the subject of the documentary *In Her Element*, available on Amazon Prime, Google Play, and Apple TV.

As a U.S. State Department Global Speaker, Aisha has advocated for STEM, space, and entrepreneurship in several countries including Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Egypt, Croatia, and South Africa.

A member of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), Aisha has earned numerous awards for her dedication to technical excellence including NASA's Engineering Honor Award, STEM for Her Woman of the Year, and Black Enterprises Luminary Award.

She holds a B.S.E in Aerospace Engineering and an M. Eng. in Space Systems Engineering from the University of Michigan.

UNCF LEGACY AWARD

HONOREE



D'Wayne Wiggins

R&B Recording Artist, Philanthropist

When Wiggins would jam with his half-brother Raphael and cousin Timothy Christian Riley, Tony! Toni! Toné! did not yet exist, at least not in name. But as they started to have success in the Bay Area of California, both individually and as a group, they released an independent single ("One Night Stand"). The track was successful enough to land them a record deal. When their debut album, "Who?," came out in 1988, it spawned four R&B Top 10 hits, including "Little Walter."

Wiggins and the band took a strong hand in writing their follow-up, mixing elements of jazz and vintage soul with modern R&B. "The Reunion" was the result, and it became a mainstay album of the era. The record boasted four No. 1 hits on the Billboard R&B charts, including the smash hit "Feels Good," co-written by Wiggins. Their equally big follow-up, "Sons of Soul," included "Anniversary" and "If I Had No Loot." All told, nine of their first 12 charting singles made the R&B Top 10.

When Wiggins wasn't making hits with Tony! Toni! Toné!, he was helping create other stars. He was responsible for helping develop and sign Destiny's Child, who went on to become one of the biggest female singing groups of all time and launched the career of Beyoncé Knowles, one of the most successful music artists in history.

THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD

HONOREE



The Honorable Barbara Lee

Mayor, City of Oakland

Barbara Lee made history in 2025 as the first Black woman elected Mayor of Oakland, bringing over three decades of public service from the U.S. Congress and California State Legislature to City Hall. Throughout her career, Mayor Lee has fought tirelessly for justice, opportunity, and the communities who need it most.

Oakland is her home, and she understands firsthand the challenges residents face. Since taking office, Mayor Lee has been advancing her vision to make Oakland the safest, cleanest, and greenest city in America. She leverages her extensive federal, state, and local relationships to secure real resources and deliver solutions to the city's most pressing issues - from homelessness to public safety.

Mayor Lee believes that building a stronger Oakland requires all of us working together. She is committed to collaborating with community leaders, neighborhood organizations, businesses, and residents from every corner of the city to create opportunity and improve quality of life for all Oaklanders.



John M. Murell and Lois A. Parish Murell Endowed Scholarship

The Estate of John M. and Lois A. Murell generously donated \$1M to UNCF to establish the John M. Murell and Lois A. Parish Murell Endowed Scholarship. This scholarship fund will provide need-based scholarships to students from Northern California attending an HBCU or a four-year institution.

Meet THE MURELLS



John Melvyn Murell was born and raised in Greenville, TX. Lois A. Parish Murell was born and raised in El Paso, TX. After graduating from Huston-Tillotson University with a bachelor's degree in Home Economics, Lois began teaching school in Greenville, where she met the love of her life, "Melvyn". The couple eventually moved to Oakland, CA where they lived until they built their "dream" home in Windsor, CA in 1975.



Lois and Melvyn were highly respected trailblazers and prominent business owners who dreamed big. They founded Oakland Federal Savings and Loan, the first black owned savings and loan establishment in Oakland.

They also owned several apartment buildings in Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond, as well as a nightclub in Richmond.



While a very astute businessman and investor, Melvyn was also a great cook, a farmer, carpenter, and builder - he built most of their home in Windsor! Lois was one of the first African Americans in Oakland to own a business on Lakeshore Ave. She loved to travel and cruised often with the "day tripping" group at her assisted living complex.

Lois and Melvyn loved to dance. They danced through life together until Melvyn passed away in February 1990. Lois continued to live, love, and, laugh until she passed away in April 2024. She was 103 years old.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES



J-Red Comedian

J-Red is largely recognized for his witty comedic stylings being dubbed the “King of Clean Comedy”. Sharing his impressive and unique entertaining skills, he is humbled and honored to share the stage with the likes of many great legends.

J-Red has been blessed as one of the reoccurring “L.A.’s Taste of Soul” stage MC’s that brings laughter and builds community.

He made history in 2023 and 2024 having produced and headlined in his hometown, Oakland, CA, at the Historic Paramount Theatre with his clean comedy tour “Hood’ish & Holy”!

You can catch J-Red touring his own National Hood’ish & Holy Comedy Tour or tune in and hear him LIVE on-air Sundays on Los Angeles #1 Radio Station 102.3 KJLH!





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For generations, education has been a cornerstone of opportunity, leadership, and lasting change. At **Blaylock Van, LLC**, we are honored to stand alongside the **United Negro College Fund** in advancing access to higher education and investing in the next generation of leaders. Your mission aligns with our belief that **education is one of the most powerful investments we can make in the future.**

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That same belief in people drives our support of UNCF. When we invest in a student's education, we invest in a future where justice reaches further and opportunity belongs to everyone.

We are honored to stand alongside UNCF in building a brighter, more equitable tomorrow.



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HBCUs serving more than 50,000 students

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“A Mind Is...”[®] National Gift Recognition Societies honor individuals who have generously invested in the future of UNCF and our students.

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or make your gift online at [UNCF.org/MajorGifts](https://www.uncf.org/MajorGifts).



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Since 1944, UNCF and the faith community have partnered together. UNCF has always been there for the community, and the faith community has always been there for UNCF, its member institutions and its students. Please Invest in Better Futures® by investing in our students. They will be the teachers who will educate our children, the doctors who will care for us and the Faith leaders who will lead our congregations. Our member institutions and students need you. And now, more than ever, UNCF needs you!

For more information on how you can support UNCF, please contact your local UNCF office and visit us at [UNCF.org/FaithCampaign](https://www.uncf.org/FaithCampaign).

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY SUPPORTING OUR HBCUs AND STUDENTS BY DONATING TO UNCF TODAY.



@UNCF | #UNCFfaith



UNCF[®]
Northern California **Community**
SCHOLARSHIP

UNCF Northern California Community Scholarship Endowment Fund

The UNCF/San Francisco Area Office established the UNCF Northern California Community Scholarship Endowment Fund to provide financial support for college students from Northern California. Your generous, tax-deductible contribution to this fund empowers students to pursue their academic goals and helps ease the financial challenges that can hinder degree completion.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR THIS SCHOLARSHIP WILL:

- Have a minimum GPA of 2.7 on a scale of 4.0
- Be a resident of Northern California (see eligible zip codes below)
- Be a full-time enrolled undergraduate student at any accredited UNCF member institution or other HBCU; or
- Be a high school senior enrolling in an HBCU in Fall 2026; or
- Be a student from Northern California attending any college or university

APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2026!

For more information and questions about this scholarship, please contact Dr. Eletha Thompson at eletha.thompson@uncf.org.



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UNCF'S MISSION

UNCF's mission is to build a robust and nationally-recognized pipeline of underrepresented students who, because of UNCF support, become highly-qualified college graduates and to ensure that our network of member institutions is a respected model of best practice in moving students to and through college.



UNCF's mission is to build a robust and nationally recognized pipeline of under-represented students who, because of UNCF support, become highly qualified college graduates and to ensure that our network of 37 member HBCUs is a respected model of best practices in moving students to and through college. UNCF administers more than 400 programs, including scholarship, internship and fellowship, mentoring, summer enrichment and curriculum, and faculty development programs. UNCF envisions a nation where all Americans have equal access to a college education that prepares them for rich intellectual lives, competitive and fulfilling careers, engaged citizenship and service to our nation. Today, UNCF supports more than 50,000 students at over 1,100 colleges and universities across the country. For more information, go to [UNCF.org](https://www.uncf.org).

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Allen University Columbia, SC

Benedict College Columbia, SC

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Bethune-Cookman University Daytona Beach, FL

Claflin University Orangeburg, SC

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Xavier University New Orleans, LA



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When you contribute to UNCF,
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United Negro College Fund, Inc.

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Monica L. Sudduth

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