



## RUSTIN/LORDE BREAKFAST 2026




25 YEARS OF CONNECTIONS

MONDAY JANUARY 19

2026

The Loudermilk Conference Center



 [WWW.SOUTHERNUNITY.ORG](http://WWW.SOUTHERNUNITY.ORG)





# ALL IN WITH THE COMMUNITY

## WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.

It takes determination, persistence, and passion to create meaningful change in HIV. It takes him and her and them and us. All working together as one. That's why we are standing strong with the community to tackle the challenges that are getting in the way of making progress in HIV. As a community, we are working to combat stigma, educate, and motivate people to get tested, learn about HIV treatment and prevention options, and get connected to care. It takes all of this and all of us working together to end the HIV epidemic for everyone, everywhere.

Gilead is proud to support the **2026 RUSTIN LORDE Breakfast**.



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GileadHIV.com

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**TOGETHER WE IGNITE CHANGE**

 @gileadhivus

 @GileadHIVUS





Courage • Care • Community • Change:  
**25 YEARS OF CONNECTIONS**

The Governing board, staff, and volunteers of the Southern Unity Movement believe that the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast is more than a single event, it is a commitment that we make all year long.

Our team will continue to work and create inclusive events, thought-provoking programs, and long-lasting partnerships that celebrate our collective accomplishments, diversity, and resilience.

## BOARD MEMBERS

**Roshelle “Darlene” Hudson, CEO & Founder**  
**Maurice Robinson-Cook, Co-Chair**  
**Ashe Helm-Hernández, Secretary**  
**Gregory Allen, Finance Management**





# GREETINGS AND WELCOME.

Roshelle Darlene Hudson,  
CEO & Co-Founder

I am so grateful to be here, and that all of you are here, to help us mark 25 years of dedicated community building and leadership development led by Black LGBTQ+ individuals for our Queer interracial, interdenominational, and intergenerational community in Atlanta and beyond. We are also grateful for the support of our straight allies. To God be the Glory for the things she/he has done!

The Rustin/Lorde Breakfast has served as a valuable platform for activists and other concerned individuals, to fellowship together, be inspired, and foster change. Over the past 25 years, this community has shown consistent care and support for individuals affected by HIV/AIDS and other health chal-

lenges, including mental health. We have advocated against institutional racism and hatred, supported victims of violence, formed coalitions, promoted voter registration, and marched in the ML King Day March. We have also been inclusive of the faith community, the arts and culture, which we view as important to our community's well-being.

Although the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast started with only a dozen or so committed individuals in the basement of the old United Methodist building, it's grown to close to 400 participants annually. Along the way, we have seen many of our youth, some who accompanied their parents to the Breakfast as children, become scholars, politicians, teachers, writers, and more—each contributing to our collective progress. We even receive acknowledgement of our community work through letters of support from elected officials.

However, all that we have achieved is under threat by racists and homophobic individuals, especially those in government and other institutions and businesses. They want to turn the clock back by promoting and tolerating acts of intimidation, outright racism,

*continued on page 20*







RUSTIN / LORDE BREAKFAST

2026



# WELCOME

Attendees, Guests, and Colleagues,

On behalf of Southern Unity, it is with great pride and joy that I welcome you to the 25th Anniversary Rustin/Lorde Breakfast. Our theme this year is Courage, Care, Community and Change! As we gather here today, our community shines with the spirit of unity and resilience, reflecting our commitment to celebrating and supporting one another.

This event stands as a testament to the remarkable legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose vision of equality and justice continues to inspire us. Today, we honor his contributions alongside the enduring strengths and triumphs of the LGBTQ+ community. It is a time for reflection, celebration, and renewed dedication to the values we hold dear.

We are thrilled to host such a diverse and vibrant group of individuals who demonstrate every day the power of courage, care community and change. Your presence here today is a powerful reminder of the progress we have made and the importance of continuing to strive for an inclusive future for all.

Let us enjoy this opportunity to connect, share stories, and strengthen the bonds that unite us. Welcome to a day of inspiration and fellowship.

With warm regards,

Maurice Robinson-Cook

Co-Chair

Southern Unity Movement, Rustin/Lorde Breakfast

Co-Chair Maurice Robinson-Cook



RAPHAEL WARNOCK  
GEORGIA



UNITED STATES SENATE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

January 19, 2026

Greetings,

Welcome to the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Rustin/Lorde Breakfast, hosted by the Southern Unity Movement! It is my honor to join you all in celebrating this year's King Holiday Observance by honoring two extraordinary advocates and champions for Black LGBTQ rights: Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde.

Atlanta is the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement; it is a place of progress where voices for justice have time and again risen with courage, conviction, and clarity. As we stand in the shadow of that powerful legacy, the Southern Unity Movement continues the work of building a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-generational coalition committed to equity, representation, and dignity for all. As your U.S. Senator, I will never stop fighting for policies that protect our civil rights and foster a beloved community where all God's children have the opportunity to thrive. And your advocacy will continue to be critical in getting it done.

Let this gathering be a celebration of how far we have come, and a recommitment to the work that remains. I trust your time together will spark new relationships, new ideas, and new power to bring about lasting change. Thank you for your leadership, and please do not hesitate to let my office know how we may ever be of service to you.

Keep the faith, and keep looking up,

U.S. Senator Reverend Raphael Warnock







JON OSSOFF  
GEORGIA

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WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
(202) 224-3571

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1011

January 19, 2026

2026 Rustin/Lorde Community Breakfast Attendees  
Southern Unity Movement Inc.  
40 Courtland Street NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Friends,

Congratulations on hosting your 25th Annual Rustin/Lorde Community Breakfast.

This event is a testament to your dedication and the bonds of your community, and I am glad you are able to join together in celebration.

While I regret that I could not be there with you to celebrate, know that you are in my thoughts, and I am appreciative of the work you all do to advocate for the people of Georgia.

Please feel free to reach out to my office if we can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

OSSOFF.SENATE.GOV

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS  
AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES



**KIMBERLY S. JACKSON**

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Email: Kim.Jackson@senate.ga.gov

**COMMITTEES:**

Appropriations  
Children and Families  
Ethics (Ex-Officio)  
Public Safety  
Reapportionment & Redistricting  
Rules

## The State Senate

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Good Morning,

As Georgia State Senator for District 41, it is my honor and privilege to welcome you to the 25th Annual Rustin-Lorde Breakfast. While the past year has seen an unparalleled rise of extremism in our state and nation, I am even more convinced that events like this, and communities like ours, are more important than ever before.

Alongside today's celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, we pause to spend our morning connecting with activists in the LGBTQ+ world, uplifting the social justice work of the Black LGBTQ community, and celebrating the extraordinary lives of Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde. I hope this event fills you with the **courage, care, and community** we will all need to keep fighting for real, lasting **change** this year and in the years to come.

Never forget that, though these days and months might be full of hate and attempts to silence us, **YOU** are still the **hope** and **light** of our world. Your commitment to Rustin's and Lorde's calls for unity, justice, and peace does not go unseen. The example you continue to live out is felt around this state, and indeed trickles out to the world beyond Georgia. All of our light, when joined together in shared community, shines brightly as one body- fighting back against oppression and hate.

May your celebration of the Black LGBTQ+ community today and every day be filled with joy and hope, and may we continue to courageously join together to shine brightly in a world trying to consume us with darkness.

In peace and *hope*,

The Reverend Senator Kim Jackson







**NAN GROGAN ORROCK**  
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**COMMITTEES:**

Appropriations  
Finance  
Health and Human Services  
Higher Education  
Retirement

## The State Senate

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

January 19, 2026

Dear Friends:

It is my honor to extend warm greetings to everyone gathered for the Southern Unity Movement's 25th Anniversary Rustin/Lorde Breakfast. This gathering is a powerful celebration of the enduring legacies of Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde—two visionary leaders whose courage, intellect, and unwavering commitment to justice continue to shape our movements for equality and human dignity. Their work reminds us that meaningful change is built through coalition, moral clarity, and the courage to speak truth, even when it is difficult.

For twenty-five years, the Southern Unity Movement has carried these values forward by creating space for dialogue, reflection, and action rooted in inclusion and justice. Your continued dedication to uplifting marginalized voices and advancing equity strengthens our communities and inspires the next generation of advocates and leaders.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to building a more just and inclusive Georgia. I am deeply appreciative of the Southern Unity Movement's work and grateful for the opportunity to support this important event over the years. I wish you a meaningful and successful celebration and continued success in the vital work ahead.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Nan G. Orrock  
Senator, District 36



*House of Representatives*

**SAM PARK**  
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**MINORITY WHIP**  
RULES | ETHICS  
TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION  
INDUSTRY & LABOR  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
INTRAGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

January 19, 2026

Dear Friends and Community Members,

It is my honor to extend warm greetings to everyone gathered for the 25th Annual Bayard Rustin / Audre Lorde Community Breakfast, hosted by the Southern Unity Movement.

For twenty-five years, this breakfast has been more than a commemorative gathering. It has been a sacred space of remembrance, learning, and renewal. Rooted in the legacies of Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde, this event reminds us that justice is never abstract. It is built through courage, sustained by care, strengthened in community, and realized through change.

Bayard Rustin's moral clarity and strategic brilliance helped shape the modern civil rights movement, even when his full humanity was denied. Audre Lorde taught us that our differences are not threats, but sources of strength, and that silence, in the face of injustice, is never an option. Their lives continue to challenge us to live more truthfully, love more expansively, and lead more boldly.

I commend the Southern Unity Movement and its co-founders for stewarding this legacy over a quarter century, creating a space that affirms Black LGBTQ+ lives, cultivates leadership, and grounds activism in connection and mutual care. That this gathering precedes the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day March is no accident. It reflects a shared commitment to action rooted in conscience.

As we reflect on how far we have come, may we also recommit ourselves to the unfinished work ahead. May this anniversary inspire each of us to carry forward the work of justice with humility, courage, and love.

Thank you for the invitation to be part of this meaningful milestone. I wish you a powerful and uplifting celebration.

With respect and gratitude,

Rep. Sam Park  
Minority Whip, Georgia General Assembly  
Georgia State Representative, HD 107







RUSTIN / LORDE BREAKFAST

2026



**PARK CANNON  
REPRESENTATIVE**

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**STANDING COMMITTEES:**

PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY HEALTH  
INSURANCE  
CREATIVE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT  
ETHICS  
HUMAN RELATIONS & AGING  
URBAN AFFAIRS



January 1, 2026

Highest vibrations to all who organize with The Southern Unity Movement  
at the 2026 Rustin Lorde Breakfast,

**Here in Atlanta, our collective assignment is to create a more just society!  
Thank you for being an integral comrade in the 25th year of this community breakfast  
which persists as a beacon of celebration, courage and change!**

This year, let us view challenges as **calls to action**. May we muster up to the courage to resist while caring for each other and draw on the power of our community's multiplicative identities. Be reinforced by group determination to protect what we have gained! Bring forth creative forces to respond to any regressive efforts.

Today, right here, right now, **in this room**, we create a dynamic space to enjoy warm embraces on the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We have joy because federal calendars of oppressive regimes could never tear down the contributions of beautiful leaders like Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde. Our campaign to get a stamp for Bayard Rustin continues! Our support of Audre Lorde's books in classrooms endures!

We have new enthusiasm and we mobilize to build the next generation of our believed community. Our belief is that all humans have rights to live in a society that cherishes justice, love and peace through collective action.

March forward with colors on display and comrades on call. Build visibility with our transgender, intersex and gender non-confirming and nonbinary siblings. Speak up in quiet moments with queerness by voicing our full support of approaches that affirm everyone's internal and external journey towards liberation.

Many other initiatives work to dismantle bigotry in any form. However, our office is proud of how upon this 25th celebration, **this event** has evolved to be a non-negotiable, unforgettable and engaging get together for changemakers & creatives who plan to elevate the community! This is the gathering place for social revolution! So let's continue the activism, resilience and if our office may support you in the process, please let us know!

Until justice,

Representative Park Cannon





## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEWEY MCCLAIN  
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STANDING COMMITTEES  
GAME, FISH, & PARKS  
INDUSTRY & LABOR  
MOTOR VEHICLES  
STATE PLANNING & COMMUNITY  
AFFAIRS

It is my honor to welcome all the visitors and attendees to the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde Breakfast on January 19, 2026 at the Loudermilk Center in Atlanta, Georgia, the home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

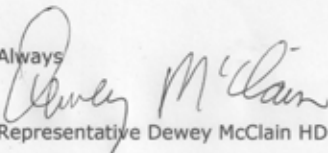
I would like to congratulate and commend the breakfast host and organizers, the Southern Unity Movement, an Atlanta-based social justice organization committed to building a more unified Black LGBTQ+ community through advocacy, education, and recreation. This signature event is one of the highlights of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Celebration. It brings out civil rights activists, social and human rights activists, labor advocates, elected officials, and community leaders, while honoring the legacy of two great pioneers of the civil rights movement, Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde.

The Rustin/Lorde Breakfast is truly what Dr. King envisioned a beloved community to be... This year's theme fits the time we are in... and the 4 C's are right on the mark... Courage, Care, Community, and Change...

I look forward to attending the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast and have since its inception in 2002, a great meal and fellowship before the start of the Martin Luther King Jr. March and Rally, which starts on Peachtree & Baker.

A Big Welcome to all who will be visiting Atlanta and attending the Bayard Rustin/ Audre Lorde 25th Annual Breakfast and participating in the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on January 19, 2026.

"Happy King Day"

Always  
  
Representative Dewey McClain HD 109







## ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL

ALEX WAN  
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 6

awan@atlantaga.gov

January 2, 2026

55 TRINITY AVENUE, S.W.  
SUITE 2900  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

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FAX (404) 670-9677

Dear Friends:

The Atlanta City Council is delighted to extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you attending the Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde Breakfast. Your presence at this celebration is a testament to the strength, resilience, and beauty that defines our Black LGBTQ community.

As we gather for the 25th Anniversary of the breakfast on January 19, 2026, we come together not just to honor the legacies of Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde, but to illuminate the stories and experiences that shape the rich tapestry of our shared humanity. These two extraordinary individuals have left an indelible mark on the path towards equality and justice, embodying the courage and conviction needed to challenge the status quo.

This breakfast is more than a mere event; it is a space for connection, understanding, and empowerment. It is a platform where voices, often unheard, can rise and resonate, weaving a narrative of love, acceptance, and inclusion. In these moments, we find strength in our diversity and unity in our shared commitment to building a more compassionate society.

As we reflect on the challenges and triumphs of those who have come before us, let us be inspired to continue the work that lies ahead. Through dialogue and engagement, we foster a community that embraces differences, celebrates individuality, and uplifts one another in the face of adversity.

The Atlanta City Council commends your dedication to creating a world where every person, regardless of their background or identity, can thrive and contribute to the vibrant mosaic of our city. May this breakfast serve as a catalyst for meaningful conversations,

the voices of the Black LGBTQ community and stand united in our commitment to a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Alex Wan  
Councilmember District 6





ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL

MATT WESTMORELAND  
COUNCILMEMBER  
POST 2 CITYWIDE

ATLANTA CITY HALL  
55 TRINITY AVE SW, SUITE 2900  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

January 19, 2026

Dear Friends,

On behalf of all my colleagues on the Atlanta City Council, a warm welcome to the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Baynard Rustin/Audre Lorde Community Breakfast!

It is wonderful to be together this morning to celebrate the remarkable legacies of civil rights architect and activist Baynard Rustin and equal rights activist, feminist, warrior, and poet Audre Lorde.

As a lifelong Atlantan and proud member of our City's LGBTQ+ community, I am so grateful to Co-Founder Roshelle Darlene Hudson, Co-Chair Maurice Robinson-Cook, and all those at the Southern Unity Movement for their efforts to build a unified Black LGBTQ+ community through advocacy, cultural education, and fostering multi-gender, intergenerational participation.

These last several months are a vivid reminder of our collective responsibility to build a society where our young people can love themselves for who they are— without denying their identities or questioning their self-worth.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to each of you who work every day to help build an equitable, inclusive, and diverse Atlanta for all who call this incredible city home.

Please reach out if I can ever help from City Hall.

Sincerely,

Matt Westmoreland  
Atlanta City Council Post 2 Citywide  
404.408.0980 (cell)





City of Atlanta  
Councilmember Liliana Bakhtiari  
District 5

19 January 2026

**Southern Unity Movement**

P.O. Box 115579

Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Dear Friends,

It is a profound honor to welcome you to the 25th Annual Bayard Rustin / Audre Lorde Breakfast. For a quarter century, this gathering has offered more than a meal, it has created a sacred space for reflection, connection, and recommitment to justice within Atlanta's Black LGBTQIA+ community.

This year's theme of *Courage, Care, Community, and Change* could not be more fitting. As we mark this milestone anniversary, we do so at a moment that calls on all of us to lead with clarity and compassion. The voices gathered here today carry forward a tradition of truth-telling and collective responsibility that continues to shape Atlanta and the South.

I am deeply grateful to the Southern Unity Movement for stewarding this space for twenty-five years, and for ensuring that Black LGBTQ+ voices are centered, celebrated, and amplified. The Atlanta City Council sees this work, values it, and stands alongside you in the ongoing pursuit of dignity and equity for all.

May this anniversary breakfast serve not only as a celebration of how far we have come, but as a renewed call to action.

With gratitude and solidarity,

Councilmember Liliana Bakhtiari





SAVE  
THE  
DATE

7TH ANNUAL

# WELLNESS SUMMIT:

BUILDING OUR COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE

Featured Presenters

Saturday,  
March 28 2026  
9:00 am - 4:00 pm



DR. NII QUARTELA  
QUARTEY



YOLO AKILI ROBINSON



KEITH BOYKIN



HAROLD PHILLIPS



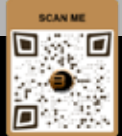
DR. LEO MOORE



Empowering Black Gay Men and Allies in the Coachella Valley



[wellnesssummit2026.eventbrite.com](https://wellnesssummit2026.eventbrite.com)



**FIGHTING  
FOR LGBTQ  
EQUALITY  
IN GEORGIA  
SINCE 1995**



**Georgia  
Equality**  
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

For 30 years, Georgia Equality has worked to advance fairness, safety, and opportunity for LGBTQ+ people and all people living with HIV in Georgia.

**Sign up for Georgia Equality's  
Action Alert Network**

To stay informed on breaking news, and receive notices on when your elected officials need to hear from you, go to:

[www.GeorgiaEquality.org/Join](https://www.GeorgiaEquality.org/Join)





# LISA CUNNINGHAM



Lisa Cunningham is an Atlanta-based filmmaker and health equity strategist whose work blends cultural storytelling with community impact. She began her career in the entertainment industry, directing and producing more than a thousand music videos and visual projects. Over time, she felt called to use her creative skillset in service of health advocacy, shifting her work toward narratives that uplift and protect underrepresented communities.

Lisa has created LGBTQ health content for organizations including ViiV Healthcare and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Her transition

into public health storytelling deepened her commitment to advancing equity through media, strategy, and lived experience.

Today, Lisa serves as Executive Vice President of Marketing and Communications at the Black Women's Health Imperative, where she leads innovative campaigns and national initiatives that center the voices and needs of Black women and girls. She directed content for the award-winning "I Am HIV Possible" campaign with Gilead Sciences and has partnered with cultural icons like Ciara and Mary J. Blige to elevate issues spanning breast and cervical cancer, diabetes prevention, and menopause awareness.

Lisa also directed Me Period, a BWHI documentary featuring Sheryl Lee Ralph and Tabitha Brown, which won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 2024 Essence Film Festival. Her work on the film earned her Best Director of a Documentary at the 2025 Urbanworld Film Festival, and the project continues to inspire intergenerational conversations about health, identity, and empowerment.

A passionate LGBTQ+ advocate, Lisa also serves on Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens' LGBTQ Advisory Board, championing equity, visibility, and community-driven change.



## SISTA DOCTA: ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS



Alexis Pauline Gumbs is a Queer Black Feminist Love Evangelist and an aspirational favorite cousin to all life. Her most recent book *Survival is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde* revolutionizes the scale of life writing. Her award-winning meditation *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* offers the critical interspecies love song. She is the founder of *Brilliance Remastered*, an online network and series of retreats and online intensives serving community accountable intellectuals and artists in the legacies of Audre Lorde's profound statement in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House."

Alexis is currently a Monument Lab Fellow and a Loss and Damage Collaborative Commissioned Author creating ceremony in honor

of the wisdom of climate catastrophe survivors in the legacy of Audre Lorde.

Over the past 16 years, Alexis and her primary collaborator, Sangodare, have nurtured the Mobile Homecoming Project, an experiential archive amplifying generations of Black LGBTQ Brilliance. Sangodare and Alexis are also the co-founders of Black Feminist Film School, an initiative to screen, study and produce films with a Black feminist ethic.

Alexis was honored by the Anguilla Literary Festival as "The Pride of Anguilla," a small country where her grandparents Jeremiah and Lydia Gumbs played key roles in the 1967 revolution. She identifies proudly as a queer Caribbean author and scholar in the tradition of Audre Lorde, June Jordan, M. Jacqui Alexander, Dionne Brand and

*continued on page 20*





## MARCUS LEE

Marcus Lee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University. He earned a BA in Sociology at Morehouse College and a PhD in Political Science at the University of Chicago. Broadly construed, his research concerns histories and historical representations of black gay/lesbian politics. His work has either been published or is forthcoming in the Du Bois Review, Studies in American Political Development, The Atlantic, Los Angeles Review of Books, and History of the Present. Most recently, he authored an essay trilogy on competing biographical portrayals of Bayard Rustin; the lead article is titled "The Search for Our Bayard: 1987 – 2013."



Marcus grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina. He cut his political teeth organizing events through Morehouse Safe Space (now Morehouse Adodi), taking classes at Spelman's Women's Center, volunteering with Lambda Legal, interning with AID Atlanta and the Evolution Project, participating in the Counter Narrative Project's "Blueprint Dialogues," and attending the Bayard Rustin/Audre Lorde Breakfast.

## MODERATOR: DERRICK TENNIAL

DERRICK TENNIAL (Ed.D) of Atlanta, Georgia, is an educator, entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker. A former charter school director and English teacher, he currently serves as assistant professor. A workshop clinician, Derrick has presented on topics that include, cultural diversity in education, HIV/AIDS prevention, and issues of identity and sexuality. He is an author of several books, and has contributed to magazines, blogs, and collegiate textbooks. Dr. Tennial is the founder and CEO of RETHink the Narrative, a media company that seeks to contribute to, challenge, and counteract existing societal narratives.



## ROSHELLE DARLENE HUDSON, CEO & CO-FOUNDER

*continued from page 4*



violence against trans and LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, women and girls, and engaging in voter suppression. The list is too long and ugly about all of the ways our freedoms are being trampled.

The 2026 theme for the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast encapsulates our core values and acts as a guide to fight back: Caring, Community, Courage, Change, and Commitment. I hope you will leave here today inspired to courageously stand against injustice, to commit to caring for our community and all humanity, and create the change that we want to see. I leave you with the words of another Black lesbian poet, activist and friend to Audre Lorde, Pat Parker, which seems fitting for the historical moment we are in: Take the strength that you may, Wage a long battle. Take the pride that you can Never stand small. Take the rage that you can Never settle for less.

## SISTA DOCTA: ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

*continued from page 18*

many more. She was the first scholar to research in the papers of Audre Lorde at Spelman College, June Jordan at Harvard University and Lucille Clifton at Emory University during her research for her PhD in English, African and African American Studies and Women and Gender Studies from Duke University.

Alexis is published in dozens of edited collections and academic journals on topics ranging from black coding practices to queer Caribbean poetics, to mothering in hip hop culture. Her poetry and fiction appear in many creative journals, and she has been honored with inclusion in Best American Experimental Writing, a Pushcart Prize nomination, and honors from the Lucille Clifton Poetry Prize and the Firefly Ridge Women



J|D IS HONORED TO SPONSOR A PLATFORM  
— FOR LEARNING, SOLIDARITY, AND ACTION THAT —  
UPLIFTS BLACK LGBTQ+ PRIDE.

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2026

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SOUTHERN UNITY MOVEMENT



23





RUSTIN / LORDE BREAKFAST

2026

The Southern Unity Movement announces the recipients of the 2026 Rustin/Lorde Breakfast 25th Anniversary



# Rustin / Lorde Breakfast Legacy Awardees



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SOUTHERN UNITY MOVEMENT



## Rustin/Lorde Breakfast 25th Anniversary/Commemoration

# Program

Blessing of the House/Libations: Ministers Present & Libation offering  
**Rev. Sharon Hardnett & Rev Duncan Teague**

Musical Procession

**Lift Every Voice and Sing: Tim'm West & Kipper Jones**

Introduction of Lisa Cunningham as Emcee:  
**Ashe Helm-Hernández, SUM Board Member**

Welcome & Acknowledgements:  
**Maurice Robinson Cook & Darlene Hudson**

Reflections & Remembering:  
**Dr. Jullian Carter Ford**  
**Bishop Lavor Troy Sanders**

Mental Health Awareness: We Need to Talk  
Special Presentation  
**Gilead Sciences**  
**Dr David Malebranche**

Children's Presentation

**Keynotes: Dr. Alexis Gumbs and Dr. Marcus Lee** in Conversation:  
The Lives and Contributions of Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde  
**Moderator: Dr. Derrick Tennial**

Recognition of Vendors:  
**Aigner Anye Ellis**

Reflections of "The Breakfast": How It  
All Began  
**Craig Washington**

Legacy Awards  
**Poem: Ryan Jones**

Call to Action:  
**Darlene Hudson & Maurice Robinson**  
**Cook**

Songs of Freedom  
**Kipper Jones and Tim'm West**







Welcome to the 25<sup>th</sup> Bayard Rustin Audre Lorde Breakfast. This occasion is a testament to the loyalty of those who show up year after year. It was Southerners On New Ground co-chair Paulina Helm-Hernandez who assessed the Breakfast as the Black LGBTQ community's gift to Atlanta. Like any living thing, the Breakfast has evolved through change which is as necessary as it is inevitable. One thing that has not changed is the steadfast presence of the beloved community for which the Breakfast was created.

We have made a tradition of honoring two extraordinary human beings who dedicated their lives to the struggle for human rights across intersections of race, gender, sexual identity, creed and nationality. Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde. These immortals personify the indispensable place that Black queer folk have always held throughout Black community formation and liberation movements. In lifting up our fellow Sister and Brother Outsider, we present our full selves in observance of another anointed dreamer Martin Luther King Jr.





# The 25th BREAKFAST

By Craig Washington

When Darlene and I organized the first event in 2002, I had no way of imagining that this would become a local ritual that meant so much to so many. I have come to understand that it is the relationships we have built which has kept this ceremony afloat over the years. The relationship between the Breakfast and the community it serves, and the relationships among the guests, volunteers, community partners and staff who lead without pay are what sustains. In 2025, we endured sudden and painful losses of angelic troublemakers within our circle. Alvin Agarrat. Jillian Ford. We thank you both for coming by here and giving us your all.

Longevity is rare among LGBTQIA institutions, especially those that are Black LGBTQIA. Many of the local brick-and-mortar spaces that were here in 2002 (Loretta's, TRAXX, Outwrite Bookstore) may now only be visited in our memories. We are compelled then to celebrate this hidden high trump win, the survival of a communion which nurtures Black queer advocacy and connection. We thank the Southern Unity Movement co-chairs Darlene Hudson and Maurice Robinson-Cook for keeping this ritual relevant. On that great-great morning, when I walk through the doors of the Loudermilk Center to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> Rustin Lorde Breakfast, my head will be held up high. For I will be wholly welcomed as I break fast at a table divined by my ancestors, one that was built sturdily to last.



## REMEMBERING: SERVANT OF GOD



### BISHOP LAJOR KENTE TROY SANDERS

Bishop Troy Sanders was a visionary pastor, professor, and spiritual leader whose life embodied radical inclusion, courageous love, and unwavering faith. Raised in Denmark, South Carolina, and nurtured at Honey Ford Baptist Church, he answered the call to ministry at a young age and grew into a powerful preacher and shepherd committed to making room for all.

He was the Founder and Senior Pastor of Rehoboth Fellowship Atlanta (United Church of Christ) and served as Episcopal Assistant to Presiding Prelate Bishop Yvette A. Flunder of The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM). Consecrated as Bishop in July 2023, he was inducted in May 2024 into Morehouse College's Perpetual Love, Light & Power: 13 Board of Preachers, one of the few openly gay clergy to receive this honor.

Bishop Sanders' ministry affirmed the divine worth of the marginalized and inspired generations to choose love, justice, and spiritual integrity. As Bishop Flunder reflected, his was a ministry that "made room for all."

Bishop Troy transitioned to eternal life on April 19, 2025. His legacy lives on through Rehoboth Fellowship Atlanta, which celebrated its 10-year anniversary in November 2025, and through all who continue to walk in love, light, and truth.

A life well lived. A job well done. Rest in peace and power.

*By Macia S. McNeil*



## REMEMBERING: TRAILBLAZER SISTER

The Southern Unity Movement (SUM), organizers of the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast, joins countless others in acknowledging the passing of Dr. Jillian Carter Ford. She transitioned from this life to one of eternal peace on October 3, 2025. Her departure was both shocking and deeply felt as, in the words of her friend, author Alexis Gumbs, "she chose her final day with intention." We pass no judgement on how she left this world, while acknowledging it irrevocably changed our world because she was such an uplifting presence.



For over fifteen years, SUM was blessed to have Jillian as a dedicated volunteer for the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast. She later became our coordinator of volunteers with the immense job of overseeing 20 to 30 volunteers throughout the event. Her presence was marked by a warm smile and genuine appreciation for every volunteer and attendee she encountered. She cultivated an environment of welcome and gratitude, leaving a lasting impression on everyone who met her.

Jillian earned her PhD from Emory University in educational studies and was an associate professor of social studies education at Kennesaw State University. She taught concepts for educators and their students about the decolonization of the mind, humanity's interconnectedness, Black history and feminist/womanist (her) stories, and the power of energy transmutation. She proudly lived every day of her life as a queer Black woman.

Jillian's life was extraordinary and full of grace. She embodied both intellect and spirituality, and embraced people from all walks of life, including children and youth, and even trees. Her life and her legacy will long be remembered, and we will always reserve an honorary seat for her at the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast table.

May the ancestors welcome Dr. Jillian Carter Ford with jubilation and open arms.



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## INTERVIEW WITH LORRAINE FONTANA: LONG TIME SUPPORTER OF THE RUSTIN/LORDE BREAKFAST

*By Stefanie Steele*



**SS** Lorraine, thank you so much for taking the time for this interview, and congratulations on being the recipient of the 2026 Rustin/Lorde Legacy Award! You are so deserving. You've been at practically every Breakfast, and were the first person to take photographs to document the event.

**LF** I enjoy helping to share the event and ongoing history with my photos and posts.

**SS** Anything else motivates you to attend?

**LF** The importance of this happening on MLK Day since 2005 for the Black queer community to say (in part), "We were there during the Civil Rights Movement, and we need to be recog-

nized as part of our community too...all parts of us!" Also, seeing so many friends I don't get to see too often and hearing from, and giving thanks, to old and new activists in our POC communities.

**SS** Have there been any particular speakers/experiences at the Breakfast that stand out for you?

**LF** Way too many great speakers to pick one, or even a few. I DO love seeing the children come up and show us their work and speak! Hearing music and songs always lifts me.

**SS** You've had a long history of activism going back to the 60s. What were your motivations for getting involved back then?

**LF** Mostly the Civil Rights Movement on the evening news as I grew up. Also, the reading I started doing because of it, and the Black Empowerment movement, and anti-colonial/anti-imperialist info from people and books. A lot was because of the Vietnam war, but also anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

**SS** And you're not slowing down. Are there any particular organizations you are a part of today?

**LF** Yes, I am a member of First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta's Social Justice Guild (SJG) and Atlanta Grandmother's for Peace. I had also, until recently, been active with Southerners on New Ground (SONG) and Democratic Socialists of America here in Atlanta, and am currently helping to form a new CodePink chapter here in ATL."





## INTERVIEW WITH LORRAINE FONTANA: LONG TIME SUPPORTER OF THE RUSTIN/LORDE BREAKFAST

*continued from page 31*

**SS** As we know, activism can be exhausting, and many activists burn out. Do you have a space of comfort for when events seem overwhelming? This could be a person, place or activity.

**LF** The Activities that I enjoy include shooting pool (am in a couple of leagues), water volleyball, working 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles, taking photos and sharing them, drawing and poster making. The Persons include, being with chosen-family members, and joining comrades in an action that is hopeful (and hopefully fun), like the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast!

My Place of comfort and rest is my apt where I can relax and stay in pjs all day if I want to...place to watch tv both for fun and learning something new...spending time on Facebook and responding to emails.

**SS** Wow, that sounds like a great balance and fun. Finally, do you have any suggestions or words of encouragement for young queer activists today?

**LF** Keep remembering that it's ALL related...it's not just being queer...or just being a woman...or just being poor or working class...or just being Black...or just being disabled. All the isms come from the same place and mindset—"we are better than them." Focus on community and cooperation, rather than competition and one-upsmanship. And have fun together as well as do serious/difficult actions!





# THE ONLY FLOWER IN THE FIELD

Growing Up Trans In A Small Southern Rural Town

By Marcia S. McNeill



50-year-old DonnieRae Spears, is a married, African American transwoman and teacher of Fordyce, Arkansas. Fordyce is a small rural city where people know who you are by name. DonnieRae says that she is the only transgender person in Fordyce. As a matter of fact, she states she doesn't know of any other people who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community. DonnieRae desired to leave Fordyce when she was younger, to live where it was more accepted to be a transgender person. A place where no one knew who she was in order for her to feel more comfortable in her skin. The special connection with her grandmother is what tied DonnieRae to Fordyce, keeping her from leaving. She didn't

want her grandmother to go into a nursing home. DonnieRae stayed to take care of her.

In her adolescence, DonnieRae met two teachers that practically raised her into who she is today. She started her transition into a woman in high school, where she found support from the two teachers who loved and accepted DonnieRae. Her mother had a very hard time accepting who DonnieRae is. Their relationship was strained from childhood. She says that she didn't have a father. DonnieRae recalls her mother saying, "can't you be who you are without wearing makeup, eyeliner, and carrying a purse"? She realized in her thirties that her mother didn't understand how to raise her, and didn't know how to deal with the things people were saying about DonnieRae in the streets. Taking into consideration what she now understood about her mother, DonnieRae chose to reconcile with her mother. They have since rebuilt their relationship. Her mother now accepts and loves DonnieRae for the woman she is.

DonnieRae talks about how she's been in Fordyce so long, that she doesn't feel there is a place where she doesn't feel unsafe. She stated that she's shunned at times by the black community; however, she's accepted by the white community. She is okay with it because she is comfortable in who she is and she isn't going to change for anybody. DonnieRae mentioned that she had one LGBTQ+ friend who passed a few years ago. All her friends are heterosexual. She expresses that Fordyce is a slow town in which anyone who is in the LGBTQ+ community usually leaves to go elsewhere to be accepted, avoid the ridicule, and criticism. That is why she feels she is the only person in the LGBTQ+ community that lives in her home town. She doesn't get any type of mental support from an LGBTQ+ space to vent because there simply isn't a community.

The closest church that provides acceptance of her identity is located in Little Rock, Arkansas. However, DonnieRae doesn't attend. DonnieRae says that the churches in Fordyce try to convert her from identifying as a woman. Once DonnieRae finishes her bachelor's degree in special education, she plans to move to a place that is more accepting of the woman she is.





## JEFF GRAHAM: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GEORGIA EQUALITY



*By Marcia S. McNeill*

Humble Beginnings. Jeff Graham, executive director of Georgia Equality, reflects on his 25-year participation with the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast. As one who has been with the Breakfast from day one, Jeff is honored with joy to watch it grow and become the powerhouse it is. He is amazed to see how it started, how it has developed, how it has resonated throughout the community, and how it got so big so fast. Now it is one of the most important traditions that exists in the Atlanta LGBTQ+ community today. What's exciting to Jeff is that there are new people who find out about the Breakfast every year. He shares that the Breakfast is a living thing that changes with the times, grows with the community need, is important, and fun. Jeff appreciates that the Breakfast makes sure communities and people could come together across the division of race, gender, and economics to really focus on creating the reality of what Dr. King talked about, the beloved community. People coming together on King Day and doing it through a queer lens is amazing!

One of Jeff's fond memories of the Rustin/Lorde Breakfast is the first year there was programming to include the children. It was recognition of how our community was evolving and adapting to the changes of our lives with growing families. It showed a need to create a safe space for families to participate together, providing volunteers to focus on the youth during the Breakfast.

Jeff remembers that in the beginning with the partnership between AIDS Survival Project, Positive Impact, and AIDS Treatment Initiative, they leased the building where the first Breakfast was held. Jeff said they were asked to host and they gave their yes. They had the community gathering space that could hold 50-60 people. The three organizations created the space for the first two to three years of the Breakfast. The basement was renovated into a community space which restrooms were added. The Breakfast was the first big event that was held in the space. Right as people were leaving and going to the King Day march, the toilets in both bathrooms overflowed. Jeff and another person stayed behind and were mopping and keeping the water from flooding out of the bathrooms. They tried to find an emergency plumber on a federal holiday. Doing all this in such a way, that no one would know all this was going on. Jeff recalls not wanting to ruin anybody's day because it had been such a great and perfect day.

Jeff is looking forward to the emotional boost that he will get by attending the Breakfast and being with such a beautiful and diverse community to start the year off. It will be good seeing people and a community come together that he cares so much about. Jeff says the Breakfast is always an expression of joyfulness. With all the difficulties predicted for this year, the Breakfast will provide fuel and grounding needed to do this work another year.



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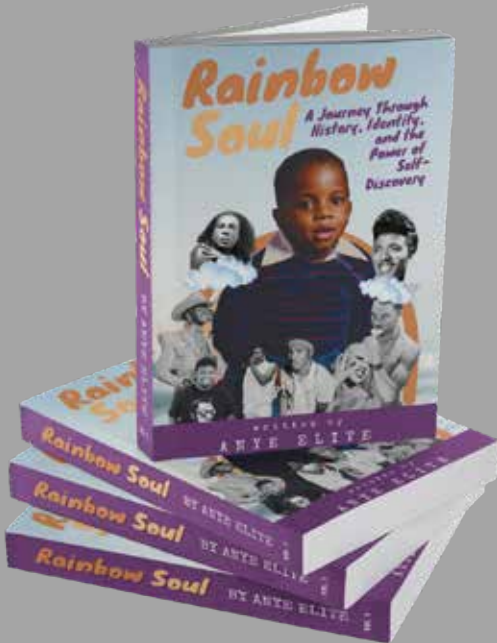
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**Marcia S. McNeill**







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