

# NEWSLETTER

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINORITY CONTRACTORS WASHINGTON CHAPTER



The National Association of Minority Contractors of Washington (NAMC of WA.) is a nonprofit trade association that was established in 2010 to address the needs and concerns of minority contractors.

While membership is open to people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, the organization's mandate, "Building Bridges - Crossing Barriers," focuses on construction industry concerns common to African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans.

visit us at [www.namcwa.com](http://www.namcwa.com)

# 50th

## ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



### Devoted to telling NAMC's past and future story...

See the inside story next page!

#### MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS:

First Thursday of each month. 6:00pm—8:00pm

**JULY MEETING IS ON JULY 11TH!!**

DATE CHANGE BECAUSE OF 4TH OF JULY HOLIDAY

Tukwila Community Center

12424 42nd Ave S. Tukwila, WA 98168

## 1) NAMC's history—a story that needs to be told.

NAMC celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2019. Many people don't know NAMC's was born out of frustration with racial discrimination and abuse. It's a story that's worth telling...

NAMC was founded in Oakland, California in 1969, by two African American construction contractors, Raymon P. Dones Sr and Joseph Debro. NAMC's story began much earlier. Since its earliest days, the Oakland region has experienced extensive diversity. Huchiun Indians were among the first inhabitants. Later, Spanish settlers arrived, followed by Chinese immigrants. After the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, scores of refugees with many different ethnic backgrounds fled to Oakland, looking for a safer place. During World War II, millions of people were recruited to Oakland to support the war effort by working in the shipyards and factories. These people included many poor white and black sharecroppers and tenant farmers from the Deep South. The white migrants brought their Jim Crow attitudes with them causing tensions between black and white workers as they competed for the better paying jobs. Mexican American workers arrived from the Southwestern states, creating more tension. Riots broke out. As the war ended in 1945, jobs ended too, causing racial tensions and labor unrest to increase. In 1946, Oakland was one of six cities around the U.S. that was part of a general labor strike affecting the whole country.

After World War II, the number of African Americans in the city increased and became a plurality. (In 1980, the percentage of African Americans in Oakland reached a peak at 47%. Even today, at 28%, it is higher than many cities on the west coast.) Tensions between the black community and the largely white police force were high. Police abuse of blacks was common. It's no coincidence the Black Panther Party started in Oakland, fighting against police brutality. With the advent of the civil rights era, the African American community's expectations of social justice and equal opportunity grew and sometimes met resistance from the white business community. Violence often broke out.

This is the backstory to the formation of NAMC whose mission was to protect the rights of African Americans to work in the Oakland-area construction industry. Among other things, NAMC fought to integrate the unions, to fight back against jobs that were labeled, "for white males only". This was risky work. NAMC faced government-sponsored opposition, including harassment by the FBI. Phones were bugged. People were beaten, jailed and, as NAMC National President, Wendell Stemley, said, "This was a fight that people died for."

So, what's next, after 50 years? Alan Dones, the son of Ray Dones, followed his father's footsteps into the construction industry and addressed the NAMC-National Conference. When asked, "What's next?", Dones, CEO of the Strategic Urban Development Alliance LLC, said, "We need to participate on



President James and Secretary Jan attended NAMC National Conference in Redwood City, CA

*projects at levels where we can come up with our own options – be the developers, not just the subcontractors. We, as African Americans, are at the top of the chain in making contributions to pension funds, a large source of project financing, but at the bottom of the chain in controlling the money. This needs to change. We need to stick together and think positively. The strength of the wolf is in the pack.”*



Alan Dones

## 2) Who were Ray Dones and Joseph Debro, Co-Founders of NAMC? (Article adapted from a story in the Bay View National Black Newspaper, April 3, 2011.)

Raymon P. Dones, Sr. has been called the Martin Luther King Jr. of the construction industry. He was a Pullman car porter where he learned about the electrical and plumbing trades. One of his construction firms was consistently named among the top 100 Black-Owned Businesses in Black Enterprise Magazine. In 1999, ENR magazine recognized Dones as one of the 125 most influential people in the construction industry in the magazine’s 125-year history.

Joseph Debro was the executive director of the Oakland Small Business Development Center, a non-profit created to help the SBA become a good citizen and create jobs in the Black Community. Dones came to Debro’s office to get a small loan for Dones’ company. At that point, the SBA had not made any loans to Black or Brown-owned business since it was started. Dones persuaded Debro to concentrate his efforts on the construction industry. This was the beginning of a lifelong partnership in search of economic parity.

Ray Dones



Joseph Debro



Dones formed the General and Specialty Contractors Association, aka GSCA, the members of which represented an array of ethnicities. The White members were highly successful subcontractors who wanted to be helpful. The non-White members all worked below their skill levels and most were denied union membership based on race. The mission of the GSCA was to educate and train contractors and workers – to help workers get their union cards and the contractors to grow their businesses. Dones and Debro founded the National Association of Minority Contractors on this model. NAMC led the fight to integrate the building industry and to get helpful legislation enacted, such as the surety bond guarantee program now run by the SBA.

Joseph Debro wrote, in his eulogy for Ray Dones, “The job that Ray started is yet unfinished.” He shared his vision that minorities would work together to provide the leadership and strength in numbers necessary for continued progress. Debro continued the fight up until his death in 2013. As Debro said, “This work is important because the best way to fight violent crime is with a well-paying job. Black construction workers making \$50 per hour do not sell dope or jack cars.”

### 3) What does the future bring for Minority Contractors?

NAMC celebrated its 50th Anniversary by holding its annual national conference in Redwood City, California, not far from Oakland, the birthplace of NAMC. An impressive array of guests and speakers talked about the future – trending best practices, new policies, pending legislation and fresh technology that would affect the construction industry. Their combined message to all minority contractors is that they must stay abreast of these trends to protect their livelihoods, grow their businesses and thrive. Highlights include:

- a. Small contractors can take on bigger projects by using “associations” and “joint ventures”.
- b. The Black Caucus of Mayors and the Federal Highway Association both have compiled a set of best and promising practices for increasing diverse business inclusion.
- c. Emotional intelligence, the ability to communicate effectively, manage your attitude, and emphasize with people around you, is more important now than ever.
- d. Workplace harassment is still alive and considered an issue of workplace safety.
- e. The vertical construction industry is trending to modular, pre-fabricated construction.
- f. Sustainability is a growing concern for both public and private projects.
- g. The most effective path to wealth generation is to participate in projects as the developer, not just the subcontractor. As National NAMC President Wendell Stemley said, “We need to be part of the deal-making business. ”
- h. Minority contractors need to stay close to the politics.
- i. We need to make sure we get our young people involved in construction.
- j. We must embrace technology and integrate the tech industry.

NAMC WA is committed to helping its members stay abreast of these trends. The Board will be developing news and curriculum to address these issues in the future.



Wendell Semley  
President, NAMC