

NAACP
WESTERN WAYNE COUNTY

78th Anniversary

Freedom Fund **DINNER**

BRIDGING GENERATIONS
Our Purpose • Our Power • Our People

Sunday, October 19, 2025
5:00 P.M.



The Lincoln Manor
25160 W. Outer Drive
Lincoln Park, MI 48146

Legacy of Literacy,
Incorporated

Congratulates

NAACP
Western
Wayne County

On the occasion of
your 78th Anniversary

October 19, 2025



**"Once you learn to read,
you will be forever free."**

- Frederick Douglass

"BRIDGING GENERATIONS: Our Purpose ...Our Power...Our People"

Our mission is to:

- Promote the love of reading as well as help develop Competent and confident readers prepared to live and succeed in a global society.
- Empower children and families to view reading as an important way to share and access knowledge.
- Partner with schools, businesses, churches, and other community organizations to sponsor literacy programs and services for children and families.



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President - NAACP
Western Wayne County Branch

Gina Wilson Steward

Welcome to the **28th Annual Freedom Fund Dinner** hosted by the NAACP Western Wayne County Branch. We are honored that you have joined us for this extraordinary celebration of unity, resilience, and purpose.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our dedicated Freedom Fund Committee, who have devoted countless hours to planning an evening we trust will be both memorable and inspiring. This year's theme—**Bridging Generations: Our Purpose, Our People, Our Power**—reminds us that when we stand together with shared vision and encourage others to join in the struggle, there is nothing we cannot accomplish.

The Western Wayne County Branch proudly serves **24 cities and townships across Wayne County**, and we hope each community is represented here tonight. One of our goals is to create space for networking and building lasting relationships with fellow advocates who are committed to shaping a stronger city, state, and nation. In these times of division and uncertainty, we must remain steadfast in affirming that our lives matter and that progress will not be reversed.

Tonight also marks the **grand finale of our 1st Annual Unity Week**, during which our branch hosted meaningful events across the region—from our General Membership Meeting in Garden City, to a Candidate Forum in Livonia, a Young Adult Fish Fry in Belleville, and a Gospel Concert in Southwest Detroit—culminating here in Lincoln Park with this Freedom Fund Dinner and After Party.

The Freedom Fund Dinner is more than an event—it is a reaffirmation of our mission and a call to action. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us, freedom fighters whose courage paved the way. Now it is our charge to lift the next generation, to ensure that the torch of justice is carried forward with strength and conviction.

We will consider this evening a success if even half of you leave recharged, ready to **advocate, agitate, and litigate** for the civil rights of Black America and all people of color.

May God bless you and your families as we continue this sacred work together.

With Purpose and Power,

Gina Wilson Steward
President, NAACP Western Wayne County Branch



2025 Freedom Fund Chair

Dakima Jackson

Dear Members, Supporters, and Friends,

Our Purpose, Our People, Our Power

I am grateful for all of you who have continued to advocate for change and justice. We can achieve our purpose, with our power to help our people.

Together we must continue to unite in our efforts to invest in critical areas such as education, economic justice, housing, workforce development, environmental sustainability, business growth, health care, and ending mass incarceration. These investments must reflect conscious policies aimed at eradicating injustices.

The Wayne County Freedom Fund event is important because we are working to help our communities thrive. We continue to support our scholarship recipients by investing in their future.

This evening, we honor **Xaiver Jones** – Rising Star Award, **Jerry Flowers** - Public Safety Award, **Rev. Dr. Duckworth** - Clergy Leadership Award, **Ebony Elmore** -Volunteer Service Award, **Yvonne White** Freedom and Justice Award, **The Telegram News** - Small Business Impact Award.

To our gracious Master of Ceremonies, **Pastor Bernard Jackson**, thank you for giving us your precious time and voice to commemorate this event. To our friend **Donovan McKinney**, we thank you for sharing your advocacy, and wisdom with us.

Furthermore, this event could not have happened without a team, our freedom fund committee members and volunteers who have given themselves unselfishly to coordinate this event. To **Gina Wilson Steward**, President of the Western Wayne County Branch, thank you. You are a gift to us all.

As always, I am grateful to be in the moment with our courageous members, supporters, and sponsors who have given your commitment to making this event happen today.

Together, we continue to make a meaningful difference. Thank you again for your continued support!

In closing, we thank you, and I hope you enjoy our event.

Dakima Jackson
2025 Freedom Fund Chair



Greetings Freedom Fighters, Friends, and Family,

It is an honor and a blessing to welcome you to the 78th Annual NAACP Western Wayne County Freedom Fund Dinner! Tonight, we gather under the theme “Bridging Generations: Our Purpose • Our Power • Our People.” This powerful reminder underscores the vital role each of us, young and seasoned, dreamers and doers, plays in building the bridge toward progress, justice, and equality.

As we celebrate this historic moment, let us remember that our purpose transcends our position, and our power is amplified in unity. The fight for justice is ongoing, and the work of freedom continues through every handshake, every vote, every raised voice, and every act of courage that propels our communities forward.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to our President Gina Wilson Steward, our dedicated Chairwoman Dakima Jackson, each awarded Honoree, every committee member, volunteer, and supporter who contributed to the success of this evening. Your unwavering commitment serves as a testament to the fact that freedom is not free; it is sustained by those willing to serve, sacrifice, and stand.

May tonight invigorate your spirit, reaffirm your commitment, and reignite your passion for advocating, agitating, and activating for justice. Together, we are the bridge that connects hope to healing, promise to progress, and vision to victory.

With Purpose, Power, and Pride,
 Rev. Dr. Kimberly R. Whitsett
 Co-Chair, 78th Annual Freedom Fund Dinner
 NAACP Western Wayne County Branch



State Rep. Donovan McKinney is serving his second term representing the 11th House District, which comprises northeast Detroit and part of Warren. McKinney previously served on the House Appropriations Committee and as majority vice chair of the Subcommittees on the Department of Corrections and the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. In addition, he was a member of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development/Department of Natural Resources, Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs/Department of Insurance and Financial Services, and Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity subcommittees. His priorities while in office are increasing access to health care, ensuring every child in Michigan receives a quality education, improving the criminal justice system, and securing the rights of unions and workers.

Rep. McKinney began his career in public service as a legislative director in the Michigan House of Representatives. He later worked for the nonprofit Community Development Advocates of Detroit and Wayne County Community College District. Soon after, Rep. McKinney did political and coalition work for the largest health care union in the state, Service Employees International Union Healthcare Michigan.

In recent years, combating climate change has been a focus of Rep. McKinney’s professional life. He served as the national political director for Climate Power, an organization that integrates hard-hitting research, polling and media to encourage leaders to take immediate climate action. In January 2020, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer appointed McKinney to serve on the state’s first Environment Justice Council. He was instrumental in Gov. Whitmer’s \$2 million Water Restart Grant Program and her statewide Water Reconnection Executive Order during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the past seven years, Rep. McKinney has organized school tours called Young Minds in Transition, which bring musical artists, entrepreneurs, authors, engineers, elected officials and other guests to over 80 middle and high schools per year across the Metro Detroit area. Guests speak with students about the importance of mentorship, perseverance and following your dreams. Rep. McKinney is also a 2019 graduate of the Front Line Leaders Academy through the Young Elected Officials Network.

Rep. McKinney has also served on the Board of Directors for Bridging Communities Inc., a nonprofit that provides senior services and home foreclosure prevention programs, the Executive Board for Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice, where he fought for workers’ rights to join a union and earn a living wage, and the board of The McKinney Foundation, which hosts educational programs that help promote healthy living, entrepreneurship and environmental responsibility. McKinney also served on the Executive Committee for the Michigan Democratic Party and the Executive Board for the 14th Congressional District Democratic Party.

Rep. McKinney is a lifelong Detroiter. He was raised by his mother and grandmother who taught him the importance of community, leadership and service. He is a proud product of Detroit Public Schools and a graduate of the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. He worships and serves as a trustee at Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ in Detroit.



Pastor Bernard L Jackson is a dedicated pastor, leader, and servant with a passion for ministry and people. Answering the call to ministry in 2006 at the age of 25, he was ordained as an elder and appointed assistant pastor in 2008. In 2010, he was installed as the pastor of Mt. Zion Church of Deliverance in southwest Detroit, where he continues to lead with vision.

Born and raised in Detroit, MI, Pastor Bernard experienced a transformative encounter with Christ at a young age, leading to a lifelong commitment to ministry.

With the gift of helps and a strong foundation in leadership, Bernard holds a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Technology from Central Michigan University (2004) and a Master of Arts in Executive Leadership and Pastoral Ministries from Liberty University. His commitment to faith and leadership extends beyond the pulpit, as he is passionate about mentoring and equipping others for ministry. He also strives to build a church culture that reflects Christ’s love and grace.

Beyond the pulpit, Pastor Bernard has been married to Quanise Y. Jackson (formerly Jones) since 2007, he also prioritizes faith, family, and football. When he’s not leading in ministry, you can find him enjoying time with loved ones—or engaging in his side hustle: fantasy football.

Above all, Pastor Bernard remains committed to seeing lives transformed by the power of the Gospel, living out the words of 1 Peter 5:2—“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.”



Chief Jerry L. Flowers has dedicated over four decades to law enforcement and community service. He began his career with the River Rouge Police department, serving more than 24 years, rising through the ranks to Deputy Chief of Police. In 1982, he made local history by becoming the first black SWAT officer in Wayne County. During his career at River Rouge, he earned merit awards for bravery in the line of duty for saving lives and apprehending many dangerous felons. He retired in February of 2002 at the ripe old age of 45.

After being "retired" for 13 months, he joined the Washtenaw County Sheriff's department as a Court Security Deputy, serving 14 years. Also during that time, he worked simultaneously in healthcare as the Security Manager for Beaumont Health, being responsible for the Wayne, Westland and Canton campuses. Chief Flowers worked to strengthen the security department by implementing various training for the department, which led to the officers being able to carry firearms, tasers and body cameras to keep patients, family and staff safe. He also brought structure and accountability to the department. Chief Flowers implemented Active Shooter response training for the entire system, along with training the medical staff in Human Trafficking Awareness, which was accredited by nursing education, so that nurses could receive continuing education credits to maintain their licenses.

In August of 2021, Chief Flowers joined the Ecorse Police department as Deputy Police Chief, working with Director Narda Bruno (Retired). During his tenure at Ecorse, Chief Flowers served as Interim Director of Public Safety, and Chief of Police. Beyond his professional service, he is deeply committed to his community, as evidenced by his mentoring youth through sports, having tough conversations with at-risk youths and being a father figure and big brother to many, also supporting seniors, which he really enjoys and building bridges between citizens and law enforcement.



Rev. Dr. John Edward Duckworth was called under, licensed, and ordained by the late Rev. Dr. Robert E. Starghill, Sr. of the Samaritan Missionary Baptist of Detroit, Michigan. He served faithfully and loyally under Pastor Starghill until accepting the Call from Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church of Westland, MI in 2002. Immediately following Pastor Starghill’s retirement, Dr. Duckworth was honored to have the Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins, Pastor Emeritus of the Greater Christ Baptist Church of Detroit, MI, as his current Pastor.

Dr. Duckworth holds dual Bachelor’s Degrees in Business Administration and Marketing & Management from Northwood University in Midland, Michigan. He also earned an Associate of Arts in Advertising while attending Northwood University. Dr. Duckworth then earned a Master of Divinity Degree at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. His education includes an international study of Biblical Geography and Archeology in Israel and Trans-Cultural Ministry in Ghana, West Africa. Dr. Duckworth then earned a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Ecumenical Theological Seminary, Detroit, Michigan.

Dr. Duckworth is an instructor at the Heritage Center for Religious Studies and Kingdom Life Bible Institute. He served as a Faculty Mentor for the Doctor of Ministry Program and serves as an adjunct Professor at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary. Dr. Duckworth served as Co-Chair of the Health & Human Services Committee of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit & Vicinity, Inc. for six years. Dr. Duckworth serves as the Vice President of the Inkster Ministerial Alliance. Dr. Duckworth also serves as 2nd Vice President of the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit & Vicinity, Inc.

Dr. Duckworth has a wholistic view of the ministry and feels that the church should be an integral part of the community. He has implemented relevant ministries at Gethsemane: from the Body & Soul Health and Well-Being to the Sage Ministry (a full-service seniors’ ministry). Dr. Duckworth’s commitment to the community involves annual events, and he serves the community through his leadership on the various boards: Wholistic Living Community Corporation, Henry Ford Health Systems, Interfaith Health & Hope Coalition, and Wayne County Authority Health. Dr. Duckworth was appointed to the Protect Michigan Commission for COVID-19 by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. He is a recipient of the Northwood University Outstanding Alumni Award, Michigan United’s John Lewis Political Healer Award, NAACP Clergy Leadership Award, and he’s a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Pastor Duckworth has challenged GMBC to become an “**Energized** church that will **Empower** families so that we may **Encounter** the community.” The disciples of GMBC are catching a view of this vision of fulfilling the needs of the community and building God’s kingdom here on earth under the leadership of Dr. Duckworth and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Dr. Duckworth is married to the former Nicole Latrice Hopkins of Philadelphia, PA. Nicole is a graduate of Millersville University and LaSalle University. They are proud parents of triplets, affectionately known as D3, Gabrielle, John II, and Nicholas.



For over fifteen years, Ebony Elmore has dedicated her life to the work of justice, service, and love of community. As an organizer, advocate, and servant leader, she has consistently shown up where her people need her most—whether on the frontlines of environmental justice, in the heart of neighborhoods recovering from crisis, or in spaces where voices too often go unheard.

Ebony’s commitment to volunteerism is rooted in her belief that community care is not optional—it is essential. From mentoring youth and leading community transformations, to distributing air quality monitors and championing sustainable resources, she has always carried the vision that change begins with collective action. Her founding of *Sustainable Caring* reflects this belief, creating pathways of support and education for communities navigating both social and climate challenges.

As an Executive Committee Member of Sierra Club–MI Chapter and Chairwoman of Environmental and Climate Justice for the NAACP Western Wayne County, Ebony has built bridges between movements, organizations, and everyday people. Her leadership reflects a simple but powerful truth: real transformation begins when we stand together in service. Even in moments of personal challenge, she has continued to pour into her community, embodying resilience, humility, and a spirit of deep care.

What makes Ebony’s work extraordinary is not only her ability to lead campaigns or manage programs, but the way she uplifts others along the way. She has organized volunteer efforts that educate families, protect health, expand civic engagement, and create space for joy, learning, and dignity. Her vision of “*It Takes a Village*” Fest is a testament to her belief that every hand, every gift, and every act of service contributes to a stronger, more sustainable community.

Receiving the Volunteer Service Award is a reflection of Ebony’s life’s work—grounded not in titles or recognition, but in love, service, and faith in the power of her people. Her journey reminds us that when one person chooses to serve, whole communities are transformed.



Born at Hutzel Hospital in Detroit and raised in River Rouge, Ecorse, and parts of Alabama, Xavier Jones carries a proud legacy of resolve and service. His family’s fight for justice is woven into his DNA. His grandmother, aunts, and uncles were on the frontlines of the Civil Rights Movement, participating in sit-ins and facing police dogs and fire hoses in their struggle for equality.

A graduate of the River Rouge Class of 2011, Xavier began his journey of advocacy early by standing up for student rights, teacher protections, and the safety of his school community, while also volunteering his time across Western Wayne County. His commitment to service has remained steadfast and continues to grow.

Today, Xavier serves as the Young Adult Chair of the NAACP Western Wayne County, where he is dedicated to bridging the gap between generations while amplifying the voices of his peers. Young Black adults in their thirties. He achieves that goal with the assistance of every member of the Western Wayne Branch. Under his leadership, the Young Adult Committee has made a conscious effort to show up across the board, proudly having a representative present at 90% of the branch’s events this year.

In addition to his role as a leader and advocate, Xavier uses his voice as a writer and journalist to document and uplift the Black experience. Preserving stories, amplifying truths, and ensuring that the narratives of his community are both seen and remembered.

Looking ahead, Xavier is determined to use his voice, power, and platform to advocate for causes that matter deeply to him. Maternal health, literacy, food insecurity and agriculture, and supporting survivors of domestic violence and sex trafficking. His journey reflects both the struggles and triumphs of his community, and his rising leadership continues to honor the sacrifices of those who came before him while paving the way for generations to come.



Yvonne White currently serves as the President of the NAACP Michigan State Conference , Assistant Treasurer of the NAACP National Board of Directors and serves as a NAACP Foundation Board Member

She is a member of the NAACP National Board's Executive Committee and serves as Vice-Chair of the Board's Finance and Audit Committees, and Chair of the Finance Governance Subcommittee.

In addition to her NAACP activities, Yvonne also serves on the advisory board of the Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) and was recently appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to serve on the Nursing Home Workforce Stabilization Council, which was created by Executive Order 2021-15. The Council will identify, review, develop, and recommend policies, administrative actions, legislative changes, and other approaches to support high-quality nursing home care.

Prior to her retirement in March 2020, Yvonne was employed as a project manager for over 35 years by the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, a leader in developing education, training, personal development, and work/family programs to assist UAW-represented General Motors employees in meeting the challenges of the fast-changing, worldwide automotive industry.

She is a Golden Heritage Life member of the NAACP and a member of; the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Detroit Alumnae Chapter, and Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society.

Yvonne earned a Master of Public Administration degree from Bellevue University, where her MPA curriculum focused on the dynamic nature of organizational communication, in addition to leading the analysis on which to base organizational improvement. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Project Management and Accounting.

Having served at the forefront of the civil rights movement with her heroine and childhood mentor, Rosa L. Parks, Yvonne is a strong advocate for civil and human rights, and youth empowerment. She believes that education is the bedrock of social and economic development.



Take Time 2 Read

The Telegram News—Providing Positive News to the People.

For more than eight decades, *Telegram News* has served as a trusted messenger and positive voice for Wayne County and surrounding communities. Founded in 1944, the publication continues to uplift stories that inspire, inform, and empower African Americans—and all residents—with reliable, community-centered news.

Under the leadership of Publisher **Gina Wilson Steward**, *Telegram News* remains committed to strengthening local businesses, promoting civic engagement, and preserving the collective power of the Black Press. At a time when many are working to erase the history of Black America, the *Telegram News*—along with other Black-owned media outlets—remains steadfast in recording and sharing our history for generations to come.

The work of the *Telegram News* is made possible through a dedicated circulation team of delivery men and women, alongside skilled journalists and columnists, who ensure that the paper reaches readers across Wayne County and beyond each week. Together, they play a vital role in ensuring that small businesses continue to make a meaningful impact in the community.

The *Telegram News* proudly supports initiatives with local school districts, community colleges, and nonprofits. While many newspapers have closed their doors or moved entirely online, the *Telegram* continues to prosper—both in print and digitally. Its leadership extends beyond the newsroom, with active service on the boards of the **Michigan Press Association** and **National Newspaper Publishers Association Fund** as well as ongoing involvement with Chambers of Commerce and city governments across the region.

Through this enduring dedication, the *Telegram News* continues to foster growth, build connections, and make a lasting difference in the lives of community members. Above all, the mission remains clear and strong:



Mrs. Alma Greer has dedicated her professional career to the students, families and educators of Southeastern Michigan. She served as a classroom teacher, Area E administrator, and in 1998 retired as a middle school principal with the Detroit Public Schools. She continued to work as a champion of education as a school board member and later president of the board for the School District of the City of Highland Park. Under her leadership the board focused on a range of community literacy activities including her beloved *Real Men Read Day* initiative, Real Women Read, and Read Kids Read events. At the recent National Black Child Development Institute annual conference in New Orleans she co-presented the session *Legacy of Literacy: Real Men Read Continues*.

Mrs. Greer’s progressive spirit and compassion for literacy learning is evident in her work as an accomplished storyteller and volunteer for the YES Foundation Story Reader Program and service on their Board of Directors. She welcomes opportunities to travel the world and has served as chaperone for Highland Park high school students on trips to China and Ghana. In 2013, Mr. and Mrs. Greer sponsored a trip to Washington, D.C. for several community students to visit the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and to attend the Inauguration Ceremony of President Barack Obama.

Other community service include:

Legacy of Literacy, Inc:

- Founder, President and Literacy Activist
- Continues to promote Real Men Read initiative nationwide
- Literacy in the Park activities in collaboration with Highland Park Business Association
- Distribute new books to children in collaboration with schools, churches and community groups
- Provide scholarships to college students from Highland Park High School and Detroit Unity Temple
- Host Parent/Child Literacy Breakfast and Celebration

Detroit Unity Temple:

- Has worked in the Bookstore
- Spearheaded trips for young people to Washington D.C. and Africa
- Sponsored essay contest and trip for students to attend the inauguration of President Barak Obama
- Chairperson of annual Kwanzaa Celebration
- Sponsor scholarships for Youth of Unity
- African American Detroit Unity 2014 Committee Member
- Support a range of literacy initiatives



Lift Every Voice and Sing
J. Rosamond Johnson & James Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound Loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast'ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at Last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the Light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native Land.



28th Annual NAACP Western Wayne County Freedom Fund Dinner

Sunday, October 19, 2025 ~ Program 5:00 pm

BRIDGING GENERATIONS: OUR PURPOSE – OUR PEOPLE – OUR POWER

WelcomePresident Gina Wilson Steward
Invocation and Introduction of Master of CeremoniesRoderick Simmons
“Lift Every Voice and Sing”
Performance.....Ecorse Mighty Marching Raiders
Master of Ceremonies.....Pastor Bernard Jackson
Introduction of Lincoln Park MayorKelly Maxwell
Greetings from City of Lincoln Park.....Mayor Maureen Tobin
Spoken Word.....Laniece Cole

Public Safety Award – JERRY FLOWERS

Clergy Leadership Award - REV. DR. JOHN DUCKWORTH

Volunteer Service Award – EBONY ELMORE

Blessing of FoodRev. Arthur Willis, Sr.

~~~~~ Dinner is Served ~~~~~

*Video Presentation provided by DTE*

Acknowledgement of Elected Officials/Clergy/Veterans/ Educators.....Dr. Kimberly Whitsett  
Scholarship Recipients.....Dr. Fleda Fleming

**Rising Star Award - XAVIER JONES**

**Freedom and Justice Award – YVONNE WHITE**

**Small Business Impact – TELEGRAM NEWS**

**Educator Excellence Award – LEGACY OF LITERACY**

Introduction of Keynote Speaker .....Darwin Griffin  
Keynote Speaker .....State Representative Donavan McKinney  
President’s Award .....Gina Wilson Steward  
Acknowledgments .....Dakima Jackson  
Closing Remarks .....Gina Wilson Steward  
Benediction.....Pastor John Hearn

**Freedom Power Mixer Immediately Following with DJ Ink**

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**NAACP Western Wayne County Branch  
Annual Freedom Fund Dinner**

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LADY JOYCE D. WILLIAMS  
CEO

## 2025 Executive Committee Branch Officers

President, Gina Wilson Steward

1st Vice President, Pastor Velma Overman

2nd Vice President, Pastor John Hearn Jr.

3rd Vice President, Roderick Simmons

Secretary, Ruby D. Richards

Asst. Secretary, Darwin Griffin

Treasurer, Lisa Hicks-Clayton

Asst. Treasurer, Te'Anne Townsend

## Standing Committee Chairs

Community Coordination, Pastor Velma Overman

Communications, Cassy Jones-McBryde

Criminal Justice, Pastor John Hearn Jr.

Economic Development, Lekisha Maxwell

Education, Khadijah McCloud

Environmental & Climate Justice, Ebony Elmore

Freedom Fund, Dakima Jackson

Health, Gary Ringer

Labor & Industry, Darwin Griffin

Membership & Membership Life, Siwatu Wilson

Political Action, Larry Biggs

Press and Publicity, Kimberly Fisher-Alexander

Religious Affairs, Pastor Bernard Jackson

Scholarship, Dr. Fleda Fleming

We Care, Gerilyn Biggs & Laura Dudgeon

WIN (Women in NAACP), Cassy Jones-McBryde

Young Adult, Xavier Jones

Youth Works, Gabrielle Worthy

NAACP WESTERN WAYNE COUNTY LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

BRONZE LIFE

Chon Taylor                      Somtochukwu Opara  
Tammy Garrison              Timothy Dennis

BRONZE LIFE SUBSCRIBING

Broderick Johnson

GOLDEN HERITAGE

Minnie F. Anderson

GOLDEN HERITAGE ORGANIZATION

Top Ladies Of Distinction

GOLDEN LIFE

Vivian B. Holifield Edna M. Parker

JUNIOR LIFE

Robert Mickens III    Ana Flemming    Parker Johnson    Gabriella A. Ove

LIFE MEMBER

|                    |                 |                |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Pauline H. Hampton | Mary Ruth Ross  | Joseph Flint   |
| Matthew A. Lowe    | John L. Jackson | Sedalia Dennis |
| Cara Woods         | Hattie T. Price | Henry Ballard  |
| Steven Flint       |                 |                |

ORGANIZATION LIFE

Ladies Mich Metro Chap Top  
Smith Chapel Ame Church

SILVER LIFE

|                             |                     |                    |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Joseph Gause Jr.            | Ruby D. Richards    | Rashida Tlaib      |
| Patricia R. Williams        | Daicia Price        | Rhoda Littles      |
| Juanita Singleton           | Keith Steward*      | Danny Van Schoiack |
| Natie Mosher                | C. Paschal Eze      | Carmen Mitchell    |
| Telegram Newspaper          | Tonya Melton        | Leslie Carpenter   |
| Velma Overman               | Gina Wilson-Steward | Miriam Poe         |
| Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc. |                     |                    |

SILVER LIFE SUBSCRIBING

|                 |                         |                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Donna Wilson    | Solomon Adu-Beniako     | Tyler Davis         |
| Frank Jordan    | Jessica Bryson          | Te'Anne Townsend    |
| Ryan Carthage   | William Anderson        | Solomon Adu-Beniako |
| Suzanne Fanning | Earl Truss              | Albert A. Ward      |
| Robert Wilson   | Rhonda Cenance          | John Hearn Jr.      |
| Ebony Elmore    | Ashanti Bell- Patterson |                     |

\* Denotes deceased member



History of NAACP of Western Wayne County

The branch was chartered as the Inkster Branch of the NAACP on June 28, 1947.

Joseph Davis, who served as Mayor of the city of Inkster served as President.

Mr. William Clark served as branch President in the 1950s. Mr. Clark was well loved in all the branches throughout the state, often attending events hosted by other branches. He always wanted people to know that the Inkster Branch was “in the house.”

On June 11, 1959, the branch’s name was changed to Inkster – Wayne Branch.

From 1961 – 1970; Mr. Roy Wilson served as President. During his tenure the branch negotiated with NBD bank to hire black employees. The bank, which served a primarily black population, did not have any black employees at that time.

In 1993, Karen Williams was elected President. At this time, she was the youngest person, and only female to be elected branch president. During Ms. Williams presidency, efforts were made to reestablish the youth council. Daisy Truss served as the youth council president.

From 1995 – 1996, Reverend George Williams who was a member of the Inkster School Board of Education was President.

In 1997, Attorney Leonard Mongo served as President. During his presidency, the name of the branch was officially changed to Western Wayne County. This was part of an effort to grow the branch outside of the city of Inkster and stimulate membership throughout the other cities the branch served.

Attorney Mongo resigned from his position early and the branch’s 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Minister Earl Truss became President. Minister Truss was later elected President in 1999. During Mr. Truss’s presidency Western Wayne County was the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest branch within the state.

Reestablishing the youth council was again seen as a high priority. The youth branch finally became its own entity with its own unit number of 3911.

From 2003 to 2009 former branch treasurer Lucille Flint was elected President. Highlights of Ms. Flint’s presidency include hosting civil rights activist Dick Gregory for a Freedom Fund Dinner and starting a Women in the NAACP (WIN) committee.

Aaron Sims, former 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and youth adviser was elected President in 2009. In 2010, the branch won 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the Lucille Black Award in the Class 1-C Division at the 101<sup>st</sup> Annual NAACP National Convention. The award was presented to the branch that had the highest total membership production from January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009.

New officers were elected in April 2013 with the assistance of Michigan State Conference President Yvonne White and officially sworn into office by the Honorable Hilliard Hampton, mayor of the city of Inkster. The new

officers were Bishop Walter Stargill, Jr. - President; Lucille Flint 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President; Daisy Truss 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President; Gina Wilson Steward – Secretary, Rev. John Hearn – Treasurer.

The branch’s goals were to have a presence throughout all the 18 cities that the branch serves. The branch designated that once a quarter, the General Membership meetings will be held offsite in one of the four quadrants to help increase the awareness of the branch in other communities.

President Starghill and the branch hosted a Town Hall in Westland that consisted of the Police Chiefs from twelve of the cities that we serve. The branch also hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter State meeting at Wayne County Community College in Van Buren Township.

In 2017, the new officers elected were Gina Wilson Steward - President, Daisy Truss – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Lisa Robinson Martin – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, LaDarla Morris – Secretary, Shirley Hankerson – Assistant Secretary and Evelyn Clark Treasurer and Judy Neal- Assistant Treasurer. The branch won the LayDown from the State of Michigan for the most new members in 2017. The youth branch was reestablished.

In 2018 the branch hosted a Candidate Forum for the 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Candidates in the City of Inkster. The seat was vacant after the resignation of Congressman John Conyers, Jr. The GOTV efforts of the branch resulted in a 100% increase in voter turnout in the targeted areas. Michigan State Conference President named the Western Wayne County NAACP as the Branch of the Year. The Branch partnered with the Delta Sigma Theta Inkster Chapter and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sororities on the GOTV efforts.

In 2019 the officers elected were; Gina Wilson Steward – President, Pastor Velma Overman – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Vicki Dobbins – Secretary, Shirley Hankerson – Assistant Secretary, Evelyn Clark Treasurer and Judy Neal- Assistant Treasurer. They fulfilled the National MOUs with Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta and the NNPA. The membership doubled in size from 2018. The attendance at the monthly meetings reached a milestone of 72 members at the December meeting. It was also the Census Kick Off meeting- I Matter. Count Me In.

Other projects they worked on were an Expungement Fair with the Delta Sigma Theta Alumni Chapter and Voter Registration Drives with various school districts.

The Freedom Fund Dinner was held at the Prestige Banquet Hall in Allen Park. Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist was the keynote speaker. There were a record 30% of attendees were Millennials

The Religious Affairs Committee created the first Champion of Faith competition. The winner was Christian Faith Ministries whose church had the most members in 2019. They received the trophy during the sold out crowd at the Freedom Fund Dinner.

The branch hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter State meeting at Wayne County Community College at the Downriver location in Taylor. It was the most attended State meeting in 2019.

The branch kicked off their Street By Street Campaign to connect with more people for the election and the 2020 Census. They partnered with the State of Michigan to reach more people in the region.

Then comes the COVID-19 Pandemic in early 2020 and life as we knew it has changed. As we followed the guidelines of the National office of the NAACP and the Michigan department of health, we learned how to use ZOOM. Our general membership meetings, Executive Committee meeting and events were all held on ZOOM. We learned to always have a mask handy.

The Health Committee and the Religious Affairs Committee held numerous events on living with Covid and dealing with Mental Illness

The partnership with Conference of Western Wayne for the Partnership for Progress Listening Tour started in person, but had to move to virtual meetings. The relationships with the Police Chiefs and Mayors in 13 of the cities in our region helped to create more of a proactive approach to building community policing relationships.

The Freedom Fund Event in 2020 was a virtual event with actress Lonnie Love as our keynote speaker. This was exciting as the branch experienced a different way of still having an impactful evening and honoring people from our communities.

The Youth Branch held their annual Founder’s Day Trivia Competition with local youth church groups.

In 2022, twelve members of the branch stepped out and ran for political office in one form or another.

The branch continued to participate in National Voter Registration Day to increase the number of people participating in the Democratic process.

In 2022 the branch officers elected were; Gina Wilson Steward – President, Pastor Velma Overman – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Pastor John Hearn, Jr. - 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Ruby Richards – Secretary, Gwendolyn Patrick - Treasurer and TeeAnn Townsend- Assistant Treasurer.

In March 2023, the branch held their first in-person meeting since the pandemic at Christian Faith Ministries in Garden City. They also resumed their quarterly off-site meetings with one held in the City of Taylor and City of Inkster.

The branch focused on building relationships with, community leaders, elected officials and clergy in the area and increasing youth involvement. They began to hold community mixers and meet at local businesses. This helped to increase the membership and partnerships.

In 2023, Derrick Johnson, NAACP President/CEO, was the keynote speaker for our Annual Freedom Fund Dinner. Over 600 people were in attendance at the SOHO Banquet Center in Westland.

As the branch worked to be intentional about training the next generation of Freedom Fighters, they reactivated the Youth branch. The Young Adult, Education and Youth Committees worked together to charter High School chapters at Ecorse High School and Romulus High School.

Two students attended a Black College Tour as a result of the successful Golf Outing held by the Education Committee in 2023. Chairperson Marvin Franklin and



many volunteers held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golf Outing this year and plan on sending two students on a Black College Tour next year.

In June 2024 at the National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, six Delegates were in attendance. During the Annual Membership Luncheon, Western Wayne County NAACP won 1<sup>st</sup> Place in the Ella Jo Baker Category with 53% increase in Membership from 2023 to 2024.

The resolution to increase the number of Health Workers submitted by our Health Chairperson, Gary Ringer, was voted on and accepted by the full delegation during the National Convention.

The Scholarship Committee awarded four students with scholarships this year and continued helping to fund the scholarship recipients from the past four years. During the recognition celebration, two of the scholarship recipients from 2021 announced that they will be graduating in 2025.

Throughout the year, the relationships with numerous Devine 9 Fraternities and Sororities by partnering with them on several projects and having them as speakers during our general membership meetings.

The Political Action Committee under the direction of Lawrence Biggs geared the community up for the 2024 Election. He and Geri Biggs held several educational forums throughout Wayne County on changes within the Voting Process. Throughout the year, the Committee partnered with several organizations and held numerous Candidate Forums and other GOTV activities.

In 2024 the branch officers elected were; Gina Wilson Steward – President, Pastor Velma Overman – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Pastor John Hearn, Jr. - 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Roderick Simmons – 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President, Ruby Richards – Secretary, Lisa Hicks Clayton - Treasurer-Treasurer. During an Executive Committee meeting, Darwin Griffin was elected Assistant Secretary and TeAnne Townsend was elected Assistant Treasurer.

In February, the branch held a Leadership Retreat where they learned how the branch can benefit from using Social Media and how to enforce the strategy for 2025. The emphasis continues on increasing the membership and participation throughout the 24 cities.

The Young Adult, Political Action Committee along with the Environmental Justice and Religious Affairs Committees has held numerous events to increase awareness of the branch and to get more people involved with the fight for equity and justice.





We support the NAACP Western Wayne County in their efforts for justice, equity, and opportunity. Progress happens when every voice is heard, every vote is valued, and every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

Kevin McNamara, Supervisor  
Van Buren Township



Sharry Budd, Treasurer



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Donald Boynton Jr, Trustee



Bryon Kelley, Trustee



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# NAACP

## Western Wayne County

### 2025 Freedom Fund Dinner Committee

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The Board of Directors and CEO, **Velma Overman**, of *Operation Refuge, Inc.* proudly celebrate the **NAACP Western Wayne County Freedom Fund Dinner Awardees**. Your leadership, courage, and unwavering commitment to justice uplift our community and inspire future generations.

*With deep respect and admiration,*




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NAACP**

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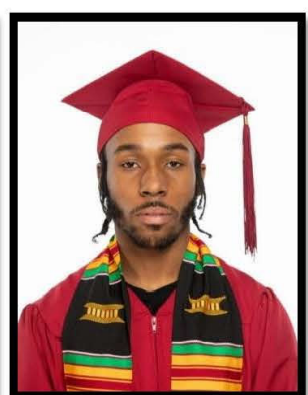
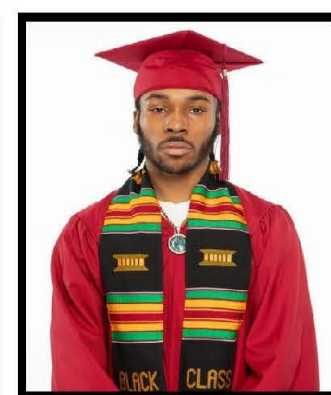


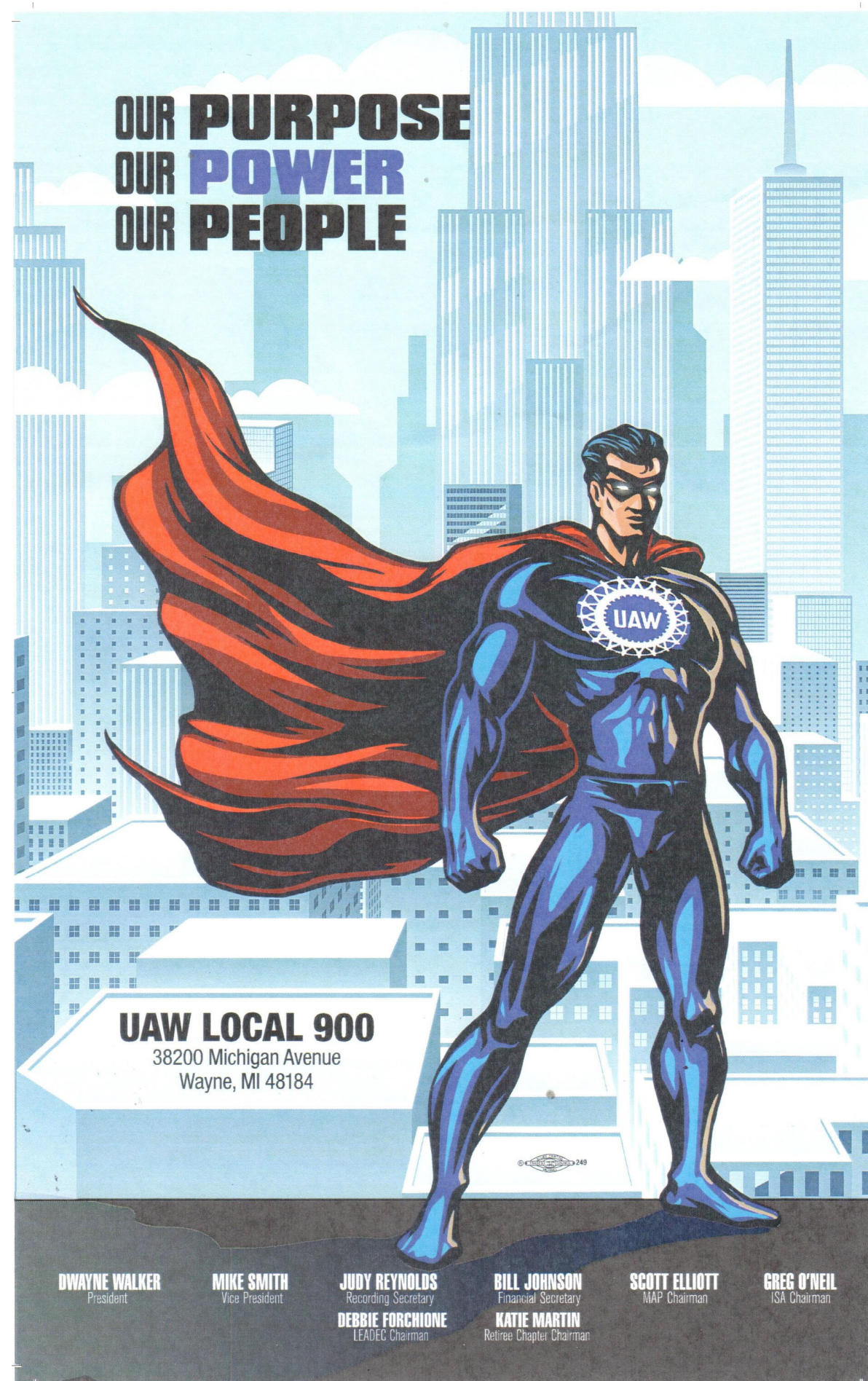
Dr. Fleda Fleming  
Scholarship Chair

Greetings from the Scholarship Committee,  
We are honored to have the privilege to award financial assistance to numerous graduates from our representative cities. We are grateful for your support that allows us to provide scholarship renewals throughout their college matriculation. Please accept our sincere appreciation for your continual generosity to our deserving students!



Thank you from the Class of 2025





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