

Lift Every Voice And Sing

LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING,
'TIL EARTH AND HEAVEN RING,
RING WITH THE HARMONIES OF LIBERTY;
LET OUR REJOICING RISE
HIGH AS THE LISTENING 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 'TIL VICTORY IS WON.

STONY THE ROAD WE TROD,
BITTER THE CHASTENING ROD,
FELT IN THE DAYS WHEN HOPE UNBORN HAD DIED;
YET WITH A STEADY BEAT,
HAVE NOT OUR WEARY FEET
COME TO THE PLACE WHERE OUR PARENTS 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,
'TIL 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 HAS BROUGHT US THUS FAR ON THE WAY;
THOU WHO HAS 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.

**Mt. Mariah Missionary Baptist Church
Celebrates
Black History
February 15, 2026**

Theme: Passing the Mic to Mentors who uplift the Youth in our Community

**Mistress of Ceremony/Worship Leader
Sis. Jazzmin Williams**

Praise & Worship.....Sis. Jazzmin Williams
Prayer.....Bro. Conner Moore
Scripture.....Sis. Makayla Bennett
Welcome.....Sis. Arlissa Fleming
Occasion..... Sis. Yolanda Taylor

Congressional Song
“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Offering/Selection..... Mt. Mariah Youth Department

Special Guest
Sis. Josephine Ford- “If I could introduce Jesus”

Passing the Mic Awards (Part I)

Praise Dance.....Franchise Youth Department

Passing the Mic Awards (Part II)

Selection..... Sis. Jazzmin Williams

Remarks.....Chairperson, Sis. Christine Ryles

Final Remarks/Benediction: Pastor, W. G. Perkins

Ms. Alicia P. Cook



Ms. Cook has contributed greatly to the youth in the community by being employed at Central High School-Phenix City for 35 years as a Business/Marketing Education Teacher, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Adviser and Work-Based Learning Coordinator. She has impacted on students preparing for and entering college, military and the workforce through classroom instruction and community service projects as well as through FBLA activities. She has also played a great role in recruiting several students from the Bi-City area to receive scholarships and attend her Alma Mater, Alabama A&M University as well as other great institutions of higher learning.

Ms. Aniya Tate



Aniya Tate is a 2020 graduate of Russell County High School. In 2023, she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology at Alabama State University, Montgomery, AL. In 2024, She began her career as an Intensive Care Coordinator for Integra Community Mental Health System, Phenix City, AL. Aniya manages the everyday lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, mental illnesses, and substance use disorders to improve their quality of life and ability to be positive influences in society. She bridges the gap between doctors and her consumers, and her skills revolve around the capability to both communicate and execute patient care plans. Aniya uses critical thinking and empathy to make consumers feel empowered and at ease. She is flexible and creative when designing intensive care plans. Aniya is considering transitioning to be a Residential Specialists to gain a more personal, direct influence on rehabilitation efforts. Did you know that in faith-based rehab settings, spiritual awakening correlates with up to 75% success rates?

Ms. Ayana Jakes



Ayana Jakes is a dedicated educator, mentor, and community advocate who is deeply committed to uplifting and supporting youth. As a second-grade teacher, she extends her impact beyond the classroom by attending student events, participating in school choir programs, and maintaining a consistent presence in the lives of the children she serves. Drawing from her background in psychology, Ayana is intentional about creating safe, nurturing environments that honor the emotional, social, and developmental needs of all children. In addition, she has been actively involved in planning youth-centered events throughout the area, designed to encourage connection, growth, and positive engagement among young people. Her work is rooted in empathy, encouragement, and empowerment, ensuring that every child feels seen, valued, and capable of success.

Ms. Cynthia Ambrose



Matthew 20:28 inspires me to recognize the gift of servitude that God instilled in me from conception. My nearly four decades as an educator that have been a true source of fulfillment as I've had the privilege of imparting knowledge to individuals across various age groups, from kindergarten to college. Crafting skits and plays that showcase the talents of my students both within the classroom and community has been an incredible experience. I offer my sincerest gratitude to God for entrusting me with this role.

Mr. Demetrius Strong



Demetrius Strong, a 2010 graduate of Central High School, earned his bachelor's degree from Alabama State University in 2015 and his master's degree from the University of West Alabama in 2025. He serves as a physical education teacher at South Girard School in the Phenix City School District, where he is also the head football coach and assistant track coach. He also led the Lambda Mu Nu Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Talent Hunt. This event provides local high school students with the opportunity to showcase their talents and gain exposure. Demetrius Strong continues to impact the youth in the Phenix City community positively.

Rev. Desi Morgan, Sr.



Men of Valor Excelling (MOVE) is a nonprofit organization founded by Desi Morgan Sr. to mentor and empower at-risk males in Phenix City, Columbus, and surrounding areas to become responsible, confident, and purpose-driven men. MOVE's vision is to break cycles of poor decision-making, incarceration, and hopelessness by meeting young men where they are—whether in juvenile home schools, their homes, or correctional facilities—and guiding them toward positive life choices. Through consistent mentorship, real-life accountability, and hands-on teaching of essential men's skills such as leadership, discipline, work ethic, and character, MOVE seeks to transform lives, strengthen families, and build safer, more resilient communities by showing young men that their past does not define their future.

Mr. Emmett Mitchell



I have always believed that the best things in life are not things. I believe that the best things in life are the things that you can do to better the lives of others. Having God as my guide and having 3 sons gives me the strength and the determination needed to provide guidance and mentoring to the youth and young adults in our community. After spending 35 years in my professional career mentoring and guiding the over 75% of my employees who were youth and young adults to successful outcomes, I continue to serve my community as God sees fit. For the last 30 years, I have served as the Chairman of the Steward Board of my church, Phillips Temple CME. I am currently serving as the President of the United to Save Ourselves (USO) non-profit organization. Throughout the years, as a member and vice-president of the USO, we have placed, on average, 30 youths in our community summer jobs programs, provided mentoring in our community schools, provided our high school youths with yearly field trips to colleges, awarded 2 scholarships per year to outstanding students in our community and participated in yearly Christmas toys giveaways. My joy comes from serving God and others.

Ms. Jacinda Smith



Jacinda Smith is the daughter of Eugene and Georgia Smith. She is a 2023 graduate of Columbus Technical College and is a Paraprofessional at Fox Elementary School in Columbus, GA. She assists with 4th grade special education students. Jacinda plans to further her education to become an elementary teacher for Muscogee County School District. Jacinda decided to go into the educational field was inspired by the encouragement from her career counselor at Columbus Tech during her job search. She loves children! Jacinda is a resilient, driven, and proud Black individual shaped by history and motivated to create a meaningful future.

Mr. Joshua Bowman



Joshua Bowman is a community leader, educator, and arts advocate whose work has created meaningful impact across education, ministry, and civic engagement. Through mentorship, leadership, and the arts, he has been instrumental in developing youth, strengthening community programs, and using music as a vehicle for positive change throughout the Chattahoochee Valley.

Joshua currently serves as the Director of Bands and Orchestra at William H. Spencer High School, where he is committed to building student leadership, discipline, and excellence both inside and outside the classroom. In recognition of his influence and dedication to service, he was selected as the 2025–2026 Teacher of the Year at William H. Spencer High School.

A professionally trained musician, Joshua earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music & Music Education from Mercer University's Townsend School of Music. As a recording artist signed to Urban Galaxy Records (UGR), he is the founder, keyboardist, and vocalist of the gospel group Nu Season, and remains active across multiple musical genres. His artistic work supports his broader mission of mentorship, outreach, and youth development.

Joshua serves as Minister of Music at Rosehill Memorial Baptist Church, is a musician at St. John A.M.E. Church, and previously served as Minister of Music at Bethel A.M.E. Church. He is also a member of the Phenix City Mayor's Charity Ball Committee, reflecting his commitment to civic service and community collaboration.

A native of Phenix City, Alabama, Joshua is a graduate of Central High School, attended Chattahoochee Valley Community College, and became a Mercer University alumnus in 2018. Passionate about mentorship and community impact, he is dedicated to inspiring youth, cultivating talent, and empowering the next generation of leaders through service, education, and the arts.

Ms. Katrina Collier-Long



Mrs. Katrina L. Collier - Long is a dedicated educational leader, community advocate, and lifelong servant to youth and families. A native of Phenix City, Alabama, she is a proud graduate of Central High School and holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Services with a minor in Business from Troy State University, a Master of Science in Special Education from Columbus State University, and a Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Georgia College & State University.

With over 16 years of experience in education, Mrs. Collier-Long currently serves as the Principal of Reese Road Leadership Academy in Columbus, Georgia, where she is committed to fostering academic excellence, leadership development, and a positive, inclusive school culture. In addition to her role as principal, she serves the Phenix City community as Vice Chair of the Phenix City School Board, representing District 3, Place 1, where she is actively engaged in policy development, budget oversight, and advocacy for high-quality education for all students.

Mrs. Collier-Long's leadership extends beyond her school and district through her service with the Georgia PTA, where she currently serves as the Georgia PTA Education Specialist Chair, District 4 Assistant Director, and as a member of the Muscogee County Council PTA Executive Board. Her civic involvement also includes membership in Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, where she currently serves as First Vice President of the Gamma Tau Omega Chapter.

Guided by her faith, Mrs. Collier-Long believes the most important things in life are God, family, and making a positive difference in the lives of young people. She credits her strong foundation to her mother, Mrs. Cathelrene Hood, and is supported by her loving husband, Nathaniel Long, and her two children, Lauren and Zackary. Through education, service, and leadership, Mrs. Collier-Long continues to impact lives and inspire communities.

Mr. Kentrell Porch



Kentrell Porch, a leading provider in behavioral and mental health services, specializing in certified anger management, mental health training, and community engagement. Kentrell is committed to promoting emotional and mental well-being. Kentrell provides expert guidance and support to individuals seeking to their manage anger and effectively improve their mental health. As a community mentor and advocate, Kentrell has organized, chaired, and participated in multiple back to school, Thanksgiving, and Christmas events both home in Phenix City, AL and the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Dr. Lakeita Arrington-Judkins



Dr. Lakeita Arrington-Judkins has demonstrated a sustained commitment to youth development through mentorship, advocacy, and community-based engagement. Through her leadership with the Urban League, she has facilitated pathways for youth empowerment by supporting emerging leaders and contributing to structured initiatives such as the Summer Youth Program. Dr. Arrington-Judkins has also worked extensively with delinquent and at-risk youth, assisting them through court services and connecting them to rehabilitative resources that promote positive outcomes and reduce recidivism. In addition to programmatic involvement, she actively advocates for youth experiencing need within the community, providing targeted assistance and ensuring their access to essential support. For the past eight years, she has also organized the annual Back-to-School Bash in the Hurtsboro community, an initiative designed to enhance academic readiness and promote equitable access to school supplies and supportive services for local students.

Ms. LaWanda Betties, M. Ed.



Mrs. LaWanda Betties has devoted her career to serving and uplifting youth through intentional relationships, strong leadership, and an unwavering commitment to their well-being. During her 10½ years as a classroom teacher, she created an environment rooted in both love and discipline, building deep relationships that inspired students to give their best—not out of fear, but because they knew they were genuinely cared for and held to high expectations. Her passion for mentoring led her to establish the L.A.D.Y.S. mentoring group for middle school girls at Phenix City Intermediate School (PCIS), later expanding her vision to include boys through G.E.N.T.S., forming L.A.D.Y.S. and G.E.N.T.S. As her heart for children grew, Mrs. Betties pursued a leadership degree to broaden her impact. While serving as Dean of Students at PCIS, she partnered with community stakeholders to create a Care Closet providing clothing, shoes, hygiene products, hair care items, and backpacks for students in need. Now, as an Assistant Principal at Central High School, she remains deeply committed to community partnerships, firmly believing that it truly takes a village. Although hairstyling is not her calling, having raised three sons, she recognized the importance of appearance for middle and high school girls and how it directly impacts their confidence. With this understanding, she willingly provided support and resources to students experiencing low self-esteem related to their hair, helping them feel seen, valued, and confident. Above all, Mrs. Betties' greatest hope and prayer is not for titles, recognition, or personal gain, but for the safety, success, and lives of the students she serves. She strives to remain humble, continually asking God to keep her heart aligned with His will, believing that her work is not a reflection of her own goodness, but of the God who lives within her. It is this faith that fuels her compassion and her unwavering desire to do what is right for children.

Likitca Ligon, M.A.

Likitca Ligon serves as the State of Alabama Coordinator for the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) and has been with the organization for eight (8) years. She is deeply committed to outreach, advocacy, and relationship-building in support of military-connected students and their families. Likitca is focused and steadfast in partnering with individuals, organizations, and communities to develop practical, timely solutions that address the unique challenges students face when transitioning in and out of schools and communities.

In her role, Likitca assists in creating and strengthening partnerships across the state of Alabama to foster collaboration among educational stakeholders, military installation leadership, and community partners. She brings more than 19 years of experience as a teacher, systems coordinator, business owner, accounting consultant, financial advisor, and community leader serving Russell County, Alabama, and the Bi-City (Columbus–Phenix City) area.

A passionate advocate for student success, Likitca and her team work directly with students, families, educators, and military installations to reduce school transition confusion and increase stability, confidence, and assurance in students' lives. She is dedicated to helping students overcome barriers and empowering them to meet—and exceed—their academic and personal goals.

Born in Phenix City, Alabama, Likitca is a graduate of Central High School (Phenix City, AL). She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from Tuskegee University in 2003 and later received a Master's degree in Teaching & Learning with a concentration in Literacy and Language from Kaplan University in 2008.

Likitca is married to Leon Ligon, Jr., and together they are the proud parents of five children: MyKala, Christian, Jayden, and two (2) Bonus big boys, Nehemiah, and Jeremiah.

In addition to her professional work, Likitca is a Phenix City School Board of Education Member-at-Large, where she advocates for student-centered policies, educational equity, and community engagement. She is also the Owner of Thomas Consultants, providing consulting and financial support services to organizations and community-based initiatives.

Her community leadership and service include involvement on numerous boards and committees, including:

- Phenix City Board of Education, Member-at-Large
- Owner, Thomas Consultants
- SEASHA (South-East Alabama Self Help Association), Accounting Consultant
- Phenix City Mayor's Executive Board
- Phenix City Mayor's Golf Tournament Chair
- President, Columbus–Phenix City Tuskegee Alumni Club
- Alabama State K-12 Working Group
- Southeastern Region 1st Regional Assistant Director, Tuskegee University National Alumni Association
- Music Director, St. John AME Church, and Community Choir Director
- Executive Board Member, E3 Enrichment
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Mt. Olive Volunteer Fire Department Executive Board (Finance Team)
- Russell County Schools Education Foundation Executive Board
- Russell County Schools Superintendent Advisory Committee



Mr. Luther Smalls III



Luther Smalls III is a musician, educator, and visionary leader committed to shaping the next generation through music and mentorship. As the founder and president of the Tri-City Youth Jazz Ensemble, he established a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing youth with access to jazz education, performance opportunities, and positive mentorship. Through structured rehearsals, community performances, and educational clinics, Luther equips young musicians with technical skill, confidence, and purpose. His work honors the rich legacy of jazz while creating pathways for young people to discover their voices and potential. Through Tri-City Youth Jazz Ensemble and his continued service to the community, Luther Smalls III exemplifies the spirit of “Passing the Mic to Mentors, Uplifting Youth.”

Mr. Matthew Kelly



Matthew Kelly serves as a Special Education Teacher at Hardaway High School, where he also holds the role of Defensive Coordinator for Hardaway Football and Head Coach of the Hardaway Boys Soccer Program. A graduate of Central High School and Auburn University, he is currently advancing his academic pursuits through an MBA and an Education Specialist Degree in Sports Administration.

Throughout his career, Mr. Kelly has distinguished himself as a dedicated mentor, providing guidance and support not only to his student-athletes but to any student seeking leadership, encouragement, or direction. His commitment to excellence in coaching was recognized when he was named the 2025 GHSA 1A-Region 6 Boys Soccer Coach of the Year.

Mr. Kelly is an active member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., where he has contributed to the Collegiate Affairs Committee, Education Committee, and Bigger & Better Business Committee. His service reflects a deep commitment to education, leadership, and community advancement.

He is the proud father of Ethan Kelly and Makayla Kelly, and the son of Elaine and Gregory Kelly.

Ms. Maurice Battle Taylor



Maurice Battle Taylor was born on January 17, 1960, in Columbus, Georgia, and was raised in Pittsview, Alabama. She is the beloved daughter of the late Deacon Johnnie Lee Battle and Missionary Lillie Mae Gaines Battle, whose legacy of faith, service, and dedication to God profoundly shaped her life and values. She is the eighth of eleven children.

Maurice accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior at an early age and has faithfully committed her life to serving in the house of the Lord. She cultivated her gifts as a worship leader and choir member and is widely known for her genuine love for God, her family, her friends, and the community. Her heart for people and devotion to ministry have remained consistent throughout every season of her life.

She is happily married to James Henry Taylor and is the proud mother of two beautiful daughters, Shakeitha and Brandi Hollingsworth. Maurice is also a devoted grandmother to her cherished granddaughter, Choyce, whom she treasures deeply.

Academically accomplished, Maurice is a graduate of Alabama State University—home of the ASU Stinging Hornets—where she earned degrees in Social Work and Computer Science. Following her graduation, she gained professional experience working with the Phenix City Police Department, Midtown Pharmacy, and Medical Center Pharmacy in Columbus, Georgia. She later worked with Chamberlin Edmonds, where she served individuals and families in the areas of disability services, homelessness, and Medicaid advocacy.

Answering a call to education and service, Maurice relocated to Houston, Texas, where she taught preschool, kindergarten, and first grade at Energize for Excellence Charter School for over six years. During her tenure, she was highly celebrated, honored, and well-acclaimed for her dedication, excellence, and positive impact on students and families.

In 2021, Maurice transitioned back to the Georgia and Alabama area, where her passion for service continued to unfold. She currently serves as a Case Manager and Advocate with Integra Mental Health, providing compassionate support and advocacy for those in need.

Maurice remains actively involved in ministry, faithfully serving under the leadership of her brother, Pastor Robert Battle, and Lady Molly Battle at Morning Glory Ministries Church in Phenix City, Alabama. Her life stands as a testimony of faith, service, and unwavering commitment to God and His people.

Ms. Nicci Johnson



Ms. Nicci Johnson, born on November 30, 1997, is a devoted educator, mentor, and servant leader whose life reflects faith, perseverance, and a deep commitment to her community. A proud graduate of Columbus High School's Class of 2016, she continued her educational journey at Columbus State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in 2020. She is currently furthering her calling by pursuing her master's degree, along with endorsements in math and teacher support coaching.

As a first-grade teacher, Ms. Johnson is passionate about shaping young minds academically and spiritually, always reminding her students that they are created with purpose and limitless potential. Her service extends beyond the classroom through her faithful involvement in Bible school, where she teaches God's Word, mentors youth, and helps nurture strong foundations of faith in the next generation.

Ms. Johnson leads by example, serving her community with compassion, humility, and a heart for God's work. During Black History Month, we honor her for making a meaningful difference, for answering the call to serve, and for continuing the legacy of faith, excellence, and leadership in our community.

Ms. Nikita Sellers



Growing up in low-income housing being raised by a single parent gave me a deep understanding of struggle, perseverance and the importance of hope, which drives my desire to contribute positively to the youths and the community. By sharing my life experiences and my understanding of PRAYER and my relationship with GOD. I aim to show them that their circumstances do not define their potential and that perseverance, education and self-belief can open doors to new opportunities. I also strive to support younger parents by offering encouragement, guidance and practical insight drawn from firsthand experience, helping them navigate challenges while building stable, hopeful futures for their families. Through advocacy and leading by example, I remind them that it's not how you start, it's how you finish.

Min. Rodregus Hood



I am a member of the Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church. I am currently the Youth Pastor at Franchise Missionary Church where I have been the last 6 years. I have been a youth minister for a total of 10 years. Since coming to Franchise, we have led roughly 40 youth souls to Christ. I have created multiple initiatives for the youth while being at Franchise such as, The 66 Award (for those that memorize the books of the Bible), The Academic Achievement Award (for those that do good on report cards), and The Outreach Award (for those that bring the most family and friends to church) just to name a few. Since being there we have also taken the youth on multiple educational field trips, The Legacy Museum and the Civil Rights Memorial Center, both in Montgomery, AL. as well as the MLK Jr's National Historical Park and The King Center in Atlanta, GA. In February, I will be taking over 20 of our youth to the Atlanta Hawks basketball game as a reward for their commitment and dedication to serving the Lord. Those that attend Sunday school and Worship regularly, participate in the youth department, serve in a ministry within the church and behave appropriately at home, school and church.

I am the Founder and CEO of Building A Brighter Future, Inc. This organization is focused on helping change the mindset of our youth in the Tri-City area. We are currently partners with the Wilson Apartments in Columbus, GA, where we have helped with different initiatives, such as their Christmas Toy Drive, Winter Coat and Blanket Drive, Back to School events, and Fall Festival. We were partners of the Columbus Housing Authority 2025 Summer Leadership & Basketball Camp and Block party, where kids from 2nd grade - 12th grade were afforded the opportunity to learn basketball skills and as well as life skills. This past year partnered with the Phenix City Back to School Drive, where they donated supplies to over 300 youths and we also partnered with the Phenix City Toy and Bike Drive for the last 2 years. BBF, short for Building A Brighter Future, had our First Annual Scholarship Luncheon where we were able to bless 10 students with scholarships to help further their education. Not only does BBF have their own programs and initiatives, but we are dedicated to work and partnering with other organizations to help accomplish the overall goal, help our youth and build back our communities. Our upcoming major events in 2026 are our 2nd Annual Scholarship Luncheon, BBF Community Day Event, and our 1st Annual Empowerment Luncheon as we continue to set the foundation of dream building by providing education, resources, and opportunities.

I am also on the Board of Directors at Mother Mary Mission. We are working to revive the Mission to be the cornerstone of the South Phenix City community providing resources, education, youth sports and business opportunities for all generations. I am a member of the Phenix City MLK Committee. We celebrated our 4th Annual MLK Jr. Day program, held at Franchise Missionary Baptist Church, where proceeds are used to grant scholarships to youth in the Phenix City and Russell County area. My desire is to help change the life of every youth that I encounter, spiritually, emotionally, mentally and even financially through a facet of events and programs.

Ms. Shaunlonnicka Upshaw



My life's work in education and community service is deeply rooted in the legacy of Black excellence, resilience, and collective responsibility. Teaching is not simply my profession—it is my calling and my contribution to the ongoing story of Black history, progress, and empowerment.

My journey began in community-based education through the Housing Authority's Summer Enrichment Program, *Each One Reach One*. This work placed me at the heart of the community, serving children and families and reinforcing the belief that when we reach back to uplift others, we strengthen the future. I continued this commitment in early childhood education at Eagles Mount Academy and later with the Phenix City School District, where I began serving as a Lead Teacher in the Head Start program in 2001.

Like many before me whose stories shape Black history, my path has been marked by perseverance in the face of adversity. In 2005, while pursuing further education, I was diagnosed with cancer. Through faith, determination, and the support of my community, I continued working and serving students. This experience strengthened my resolve and deepened my commitment to ensuring that children—especially those from underserved communities—receive the support and encouragement they need to succeed.

In 2012, I transitioned to South Girard Elementary as a C.A.R.E. teacher, providing individualized support to students requiring intensive academic and behavioral intervention. During this time, I expanded my service into social services, working in domestic violence shelters for women and children and serving as a counselor at the Youth Development Center in Opelika. These experiences allowed me to advocate for vulnerable populations and to address the systemic challenges that often impact Black families and youth.

In 2015, I earned a Master's degree in Elementary Education and returned to the classroom with renewed purpose. Before becoming a Westview Tiger, I served a short time as a Special Education teacher at Phenix City Elementary, continuing a tradition of educators who serve not only as instructors but as mentors, advocates, and community leaders.

At Westview Elementary School, my impact has extended beyond the classroom. As a Fourth Grade teacher, I taught all core subjects and supported students through after-school programs, summer initiatives, and enrichment opportunities. I assisted with choir, BETA Club, and the Math Team, and I started the school's Hygiene Closet—an initiative rooted in dignity, care, and equity—to ensure that students' basic needs were met so they could focus on learning.

Currently, I serve as the SmartLab Facilitator at Westview Elementary School, where I lead innovative, technology-rich learning experiences that prepare students for the future while honoring the values of collaboration, resilience, and excellence. In this role, I strive to model leadership, service, and commitment for the next generation.

My story reflects the enduring spirit of Black history: perseverance through adversity, service to community, and a commitment to lifting as we climb. Through education, outreach, and advocacy, I seek to honor the legacy of those who came before me while helping to create pathways of opportunity for those who will follow.

Mr. Tyler Moore



I am a graduate of Central High School and a former student-athlete who earned my bachelor's degree from Kennesaw State University while completing my collegiate football career at Sam Houston State University. I currently serve as a History teacher and Varsity Football coach at Russell County High School. Daily, I motivate and encourage youth and emerging young adults both on the football field and in the classroom by drawing from my life experiences and collegiate background to create a safe, professional, motivating, and open environment. I also host free training sessions for aspiring defensive linemen who are pursuing their football dreams. Since beginning my coaching career in 2023, I have helped mentor and coach over 20 student-athletes who have gone on to play collegiate football. In addition to my school responsibilities, I have contributed to the community by assisting with the Sheldrick Dixon Football Camp from 2022–2023 and supporting the nonprofit organization *Women and Men of Purpose* through annual food and clothing drives for the homeless during Christmas week at the Mercy House Homeless Shelter in Columbus, GA, and Gaines Chapel AME Baptist Church in Phenix City, AL.

Ms. Vivian J. Dozier



King David's Musician and Prophet, Asaph - gave a clear definition in (Psalm 78:1-7) on how we as a people can use our past to teach the generations of the young folks and not only the young but even the eldest among us, on how we can set our hopes on a powerful God.

In my 16 years of methodical research into the history and origins of a school in Russell County, Alabama, Mt Olive High School, my eyes were opened to the the unique makings and keeping of a rich legacy and most important, the many individuals, including Admins, Teachers, students, and a determined community, designed, fashioned and wovened into a fabric saturated with trust, faith and hope by the same love-filled God who made the whole world.

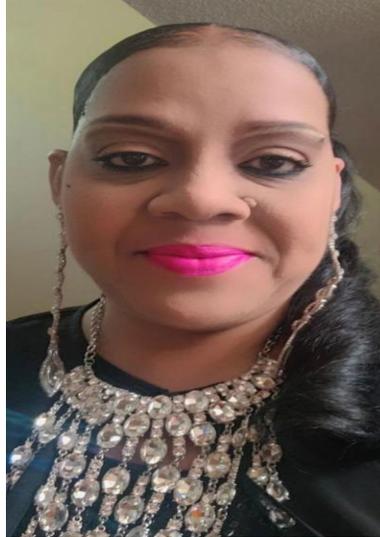
Each revelation from our past unearthed the mighty good works and yes, the Lord's glorious deeds, the hands of a powerful Savior, guiding us so that our children can learn from our past to have hope for a brighter future.

Mr. Walter Pritchett II



Walter Pritchett serves as a high school football coach at Russell County High School and an elementary physical education teacher at Ladonia and Dixie Elementary Schools. Through coaching and teaching, he is committed to developing the whole child physically, mentally, and emotionally. He emphasizes discipline, teamwork, accountability, and confidence, using sports and physical education as tools to teach life skills that extend far beyond the classroom and the field. His dedication to mentoring students at multiple stages of development reflects a deep passion for helping prepare the next generation to become strong, responsible leaders within the community.

Dr. Zandra Holloway Davis



I am Dr. Zandra Holloway Davis. I have been in education for the last 30 years. I served in Phenix City Public Schools for 25 years and retired. I am now employed in the Muscogee County School District. I count it a blessing and an honor to work with awesome educators, children, and families. It is truly a blessing and a ministry for me. God placed it on my heart about 12 years ago to start 2 servant leadership groups on the elementary level. These awesome students serve as peer mediators, tutors, and leaders in and out of the classroom. The two groups are school ambassadors with the current names G.E.M.S. (Growing Excelling and Maturing Socially) and G.E.N.T.S. (Growing, Excelling, and Nurturing through Talents and Service). They are the very heart of who I am. Their outreach and community service projects extend out to John B. Amos Cancer Center with a countless number of blankets and throws donated to cancer patients going through chemotherapy and radiation. Blankets are also donated to children that are in the Bill and Olivia Amos children's hospital. Finally, they donated toys, jackets, and blankets to homeless people and people that are in shelters. Our Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Alpha Beta Omicron Omega Chapter here in Positively Phenix City's youth leadership group (Bowties and Ivies) were responsible for outreach to the homeless and the shelter. It is such an amazing honor to serve each day of my life. Scripture says in Hebrews 13:16, "And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Only what we do unselfishly for others will last.

Ms. Josephine Ford

Special Recognition



Josephine Ford has served the Bi-city area in multiple roles and continues to contribute to the community.

She retired from the State of Georgia in 2019 after more than 33 years in law enforcement. In 2022, she received the WTVM Hometown Hero Award, following a testimonial from a former probationer who credited Ms. Ford's caring yet firm supervision for her recovery.

Over the years, Josephine has ministered at Women's meetings, spearheaded teams where they ministered in nursing homes, local jails, West Central Regional Hospital, Columbus Transitional Center, Civic organizations, and street ministry (tent revivals, witnessing door-to-door, giveaways, etc). Before the pandemic, she served as a volunteer for over 25 years at Rutledge State Prison.

Josephine is a volunteer teacher at the Valley Rescue Mission Treatment program, formerly Damascus Way, where she has served for over 30 years.

Josephine has a heart for building the kingdom. She ministers in song at various events. She is known for spearheading community events, and she continues to inspire those around her through her leadership and service.

She is a respected gospel play writer, producer, and director with over twenty years in the performing arts. She has earned a reputation for captivating audiences with compelling stories that inspire transformation.

She is a 2009 recipient of the USO Hometown High Achievement Award, and over the years, she has received numerous awards and certifications.

2026 Black History Honorees

Alicia Cook

Aniya Tate

Ayana Jakes

Cynthia Ambrose

Demetrius Strong

Desi Morgan, Sr.

Emmett Mitchell

Jacinda Smith

Joshua Bowman

Katrina Long

Kentrell Porch

Lakeita Arrington-Judkins

LaWanda Betties

Likita Ligon

Luther Smalls, III

Matthew Kelly

Maurice Taylor

Nicci Johnson

Nikita Sellers

Rodregus Hood

Shaunlonnicka Upshaw

Tyler Moore

Vivian Dozier

Walter Pritchett, II

Zandra Holloway Davis

2026 Black History Honorees

