INSTITUTE ON BLACK LIFE AND CENTER FOR AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Education, Entrepreneurship, and Empowerment of African American Communities

Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora

Special thanks to our sponsors:

- School of Geosciences
- School of Interdisciplinary and Global Studies
- Institute for the Advanced Study of Culture and the Environment
- Department of Anthropology
- USF Libraries Digital Heritage and Humanities Center

TUESDAY
FEB. 4

MSC 3707
9:30 A.M.

4:15 P.M.
Greetings Everyone,

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by and it is once again time to host our annual conference. Now in our 34th year, the Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora has organized an annual conference on a theme relevant to its mission and goals.

Our conferences promote the goals of facilitating and supporting knowledge production through research and scholarly exchange on issues of Black life, facilitating local and global community engagement through interdisciplinary research and service projects, and supporting USF student academic success through cultural heritage enrichment and outreach programs.

As a research university with a global perspective, the USF strategic plan underscores the importance of partnerships to build significant locally- and globally-integrated university-community collaborations through sound scholarly and artistic activities.

The conference theme “Education, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment of African American Communities” will focus on university-community partnerships in the Tampa Bay region. We will celebrate individual and community efforts in providing educational and leadership opportunities for African American students through scholarships, mentoring programs, research opportunities, and internships. Discussions will also include the work of USF faculty and students collaborating with community partners in cultural heritage, historic preservation, entrepreneurship, and environmental education projects. We welcome you today and look forward to your continued support and participation in future events.

Sincerely,
Fenda A. Akiwumi, Ph.D.
Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora
ABSTRACT

African American communities have historically recognized the transformative power of education and entrepreneurship towards sustainable growth and development. Individual and group resourcefulness, advocacy, and initiatives have found innovative and creative ways to overcome structural inequalities around economic marginalization, access to education, and entrepreneurial opportunities. While reflecting on the historical foundations of resistance, resilience, and initiative in business and education among African Americans, the conference will celebrate individual and community efforts in the local Tampa Bay area.

Panelists will discuss their roles in providing educational and leadership opportunities for African American students through scholarships, mentoring programs, and internships. Discussions will also include the work of USF faculty and students collaborating with community partners in cultural heritage projects, historic preservation, and environmental education related to cleaning up brownfield sites and retention ponds for sustainable healthy communities.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

“Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship within the African America Community”

Jerry Bell is an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and highly respected leader in the Tampa Bay African American community. He is founder and CEO of Bell IT Company based in Tampa Florida, and an Oracle licensing expert. Mr. Bell holds a B.S. in Computer Information Systems from Arizona State University and an MBA from the John H. Sykes College of Business at University of Tampa. He has over 20 years of experience in the Information Technology industry working for companies such as IBM. He is also a former tight end for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

A longtime champion of supporting African American student education, he and his wife Ruth Duncan Bell, a USF alumna, established the Bell Family Endowed Scholarship through the Institute of Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora at USF. In 2016, Mr. Bell was a founding member of the Black Leadership Network (BLN) at USF. Through scholarships and mentoring programs, the BLN enhances educational, mentoring, professional development, and leadership opportunities for African American students at USF. In relation to his interest in supporting education he has served as a member of the Board of Trustees at institutions such as the University of South Florida, Hillsborough Community College, and Tampa Preparatory High School.

He also served on the Corporate Board of the Greater Tampa Boys and Girls Club. A staunch community activist, he advocates for civil rights, social action, and human rights.
"Philanthropy & Entrepreneurship within the African American Community"

Ashley Butler is an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and dynamic leader in the Tampa Bay African American community. She holds a BA in Communication with a concentration in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication, class of 2012, from the University of South Florida. Ashley is the proprietor of Ice Cold Air in South Dale Mabry. In 2017, Ashley, her partner Adrien, and friend Keenan founded Unique Otto a vehicle management company. In 2019, Adrien and Ashley added Beaches and Books, a short-term rental property to their portfolio becoming Airbnb super hosts twice in less than 10 months.

Ashley describes herself as a serial entrepreneur with a passion to build successful businesses from the ground up. She began her entrepreneurial ventures in the telecom, vending, and dry cleaning industries while an undergraduate student at USF. Utilizing the operations and leadership skills and financial gains from her position as COO of Mango Cleaners in Seffner FL, she bought into the Ice Cold Air Franchise in 2006. She credits her success to thinking outside the box, fundraising, growing business while operating on meager budgets, effective organization, and developing meaningful business relationships. Creating outstanding experiences for customers and employees are Ashley’s top priorities in business.

Born and raised in Tampa, FL, she accredits her local community and her love of continuous self-education to her success. As such, she utilizes the resources she has been blessed with to give back to others. Ashley is a founding member of the Black Leadership Network (BLN) at USF committed to giving financial and other support to African American students. A highly respected leader in the Tampa community, she is a Past President of the BNI Dealmakers chapter where she continues to serve on the leadership team. Every year she hosts Car Care Clinics at her automotive repair shop to empower, educate, and inspire her community. Since 2007, she has donated over 1000 backpacks to local schools in need through her annual Back 2 School Drive.

Ashley is a lover of non-fiction books, especially books on mindset and business. One of her favorite books is The Four Agreements by Miguel Ruiz. She sits on the board of Kitchen Table Literary Arts Inc. Ashley is mother to Darian, a junior at Middleton High School and very active in the lives of her nieces and nephews. When she is not serving her community, she can be found in the audience at various football and wrestling matches, and at choral performances.

9:30 a.m. COFFEE

10:15 a.m. Opening Remarks
Dr. Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora, USF

10:20 a.m. Welcome Remarks on Behalf of USF Foundation
Ms. Sharon Hamisak, Director of Development, College of Arts and Sciences, USF

10:25 a.m. Introductory/Overview Presentation on Conference Theme
Dr. Haywood Brown, Vice-President, Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity Office, USF

10:45 a.m. BREAK

11:00 a.m. Welcome from the College of Arts and Sciences and Thank You to Sponsors
Dean Eric Eisenberg, College of Arts and Sciences, USF

11:10 a.m. USF Welcome Remarks and Introduction of Keynote Speaker
USF Provost Ralph Wilcox

11:20 a.m. Keynote—“Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship within the African American Community”
Ms. Ashley Butler, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist and Founding Member of the USF Black Leadership Network (BLN)

11:35 a.m. Celebrating University-Community Partnerships
Dr. Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora, USF

11:50 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Student Poster Display
9:30 a.m.  COFFEE

10:15 a.m.  Opening Remarks
Dr. Fenda A. Akiwumi, Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora, USF

10:20 a.m.  Welcome Remarks on Behalf of USF
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10:50 a.m.  BREAK

11:00 a.m.  Thanks to Sponsors
Ms. Sharon Hamisak, Director of Development, College of Arts and Sciences, USF

11:10 a.m.  Welcome Remarks and Introduction of Keynote Speaker
USF Provost Ralph Wilcox

11:20 a.m.  Keynote - “Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship within the African American Community”
Mr. Jerry Bell, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist and Founding Member
USF Black Leadership Network (BLN)

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  LUNCH and Student Poster Displays

1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.  PANEL 1
Conversation with Community Champions for Education and Entrepreneurship

PANELISTS
Dr. Dexter Frederick, Executive Director, Brain Expansion Scholastic Training (B.E.S.T.), Inc.
Ms. Sheree Greer, Director, The Kitchen Table Literary Arts Center
Ms. Ashley Butler, USF Black Leadership Network
Sarah Combs, Chief Executive Officer, University Area Corporation to Develop Communities (UACDC) of Tampa, Inc.

Student Moderator:
Tiana Hill, USF Black Leadership Network Scholarship Recipient

2:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  BREAK
AFTERNOON SESSION

2:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.  PANEL 2
USF Faculty-Community Partnerships for Education and Empowerment

PANELISTS
Professor Cheryl Rodriguez - Africana Studies Program, School of Interdisciplinary and Global Studies, USF
Ms. Gloria Jean Royster, Author
Professor E. Christian Wells - Director, Center for Brownfields Research and Redevelopment, USF
Mr. David Jones - Director of Development Workforce Center, Corporation to Develop Communities (CDC) of Tampa

Student Moderator:
Kris-An Hinds – Ph.D. Student, Department of Applied Anthropology, USF

3:45 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.  Discussant: Prof Deirdre Cobb-Roberts, Department of Educational and Psychological Studies, College of Education, USF

4:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  RECEPTION
THANK YOU!

I want to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to all of our sponsors for this event. Furthermore, I would like to give a very special thanks to Helios Education Foundation, which has graciously been in support of the Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora’s mission and growing our message within and beyond the community.

To all of our sponsors, your support of this institute, its goals, and USF students means the world to me, and I am grateful for your continued generosity.

- Fenda A. Akiwumi, Ph.D.
  Director, Institute on Black Life and Center for Africa and the Diaspora

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Winner of IBL Conference Poster Competition - Medjine Abellard