

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

It is an honor to address you as the 48th President of the Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc. ("BWL") The remarkable women who have preceded me have contributed to the strength and growth of an organization that means so much to so many. BWL has truly enriched my life, and I am sure that of others as well. For almost one-half of a century, BWL has served the legal profession and the community. I chose the theme "Bonded in Service, Advocacy and Commitment" to highlight the people who make BWL special. The 2021-2022 Board is a perfect example. I am privileged to have the chance to work with these amazing women. Our members and supporters have been with us through all of the twists and turns of recent years. BWL remains a core part of the Los Angeles legal community.

We started preparing for the year with a virtual summer retreat. In addition to reflecting on the past year and preparing for the new year, we were privileged to be joined by life coach Tamara Steele. Ms. Steele gave a thought-provoking talk that left us all inspired. The 2021 Installation and Awards Dinner in October was one like no other. It was BWL's first hybrid in-person and live-streamed event on the rooftop of the Marina del Rey Marriott. Brand Quality Media worked their technological magic to stream the program. Nicole Hancock Husband, BWL Past President and Vice President of Human Resources at Warner Bros. Television entertained as Mistress of Ceremonies. We were joined by four amazing honorees:

Congresswoman Maxine Waters; Karen Rupert Toliver, Executive Vice President, Creative at Sony Pictures Animation; Akuyoe Graham, Founder, Spirit Awakening Foundation; and Shirley A. Henderson, Co-Convener & Third President, Black Women Lawyers Associations of Los Angeles, Inc.

October ended with the Annual General Meeting. The Welcome Back Brunch in Downtown Los Angeles was a wonderful opportunity for new and returning members to get to know each other and look forward to our upcoming programs. Our November General Meeting addressed returning to the office with "The Transition Back: An Employment Law Perspective." We also



**Lisa M. McLean**  
2021-2022 President

saw the return of our annual fundraisers in modified fashion: the Annual Thanksgiving Eve Cocktail Sip "24 Karat Magic" and the Holiday Party and Toy Drive with the Langston Bar Association, "Back for the Holidays." Our Community Action Committee continued its important holiday work with Thanksgiving food donations and holiday toy donations to Prototypes. Our Legislation Committee led the way on voter registration issues.

In January, we were treated to a much-needed talk on wellness from Brenda Smith. February's focus was on finances. Karen A. Clark of City National Bank educated us on building generational wealth. Kevin Cohee of OneUnited Bank and Mark G. Griffin of

CONTINUES ON PG 2 ▶

- 2 **The Value of My BWL Membership**  
Hon. Marguerite D. Downing
- 3 **The Impact of the New ABA Accreditation Standards**  
Chalak Richards
- 4 **The Great Pivot vs The Great Resignation**  
Tiffani Brown
- 5 **How Well Do You Know Yourself?**  
Brenda Comer Robinson, Esq., & Julie Landi
- 6 **Does your Confidence Match Your Wealth Goals?**  
Karen A. Clark
- 7 **Passive Income**  
Rosezetta Upshaw & Romy Frazier
- 8 **2022 At a Glance**
- 10 **Confessions of a Crazy Plant Lady**  
Alisha Burgin
- 12 **Annual Foundation Scholarship Luncheon**  
Alma Howard Graham
- 13 **BWL Press Release**  
Hon. Ketanji Brown Jackson
- 14 **2019-2022 BWL Officers**
- 15 **Past Presidents & Lifetime Members**
- 16 **2022 Sponsors & Supporters**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Continued.

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP taught us about the history and current state of black-owned banks in the U.S. Our Education Committee presented a bar exam preparation seminar with instruction by Legally Fit. The prospective bar takers were also privileged to receive a welcome message from Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor.

We closed February with the exciting news that Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson had been nominated to be the first black woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court. BWL issued a statement celebrating this milestone which meant so much to us as an organization. For our March General Meeting, we were joined by Professor Michele Goodwin of the University of California, Irvine Law School who spoke on reproductive rights in "Policing or Protecting the Womb?" In April, we teamed up with our sisters in medicine, the Association of Black Women Physicians. The evening started with a lively reception before moving to the Mark Taper Forum for a performance of "Blues for an Alabama Sky."

I began this year at the Marina del Rey Marriott speaking on the strength of our bonds. This has never been more evident. This year I saw our commitment to our community, our commitment to the law, our commitment to each other, and our commitment to ourselves. Thank you to the Officers, Committee Chairs, sponsors, members and supporters who make it happen. We see that nothing can stop BWL. I look forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary and to seeing what we have in store for the next fifty.



### Ronni Whitehead Otieno

Senior Trial Attorney  
The Barnes Firm, PC  
2022 Newsletter Editor



## The Value of My BWL Membership

Hon. Marguerite D. Downing

**Stockings (or pantyhose) and our hair styles are the biggest differences noticed when I look at old photographs of us as bright, energetic young women attorneys in the early 90's when I first joined BWL. Laughingly, I first told BWL members that I joined BWL despite the fact that the organization did not give me a law school scholarship and that the women interviewing me were a little terrifying to my law school self. Three decades later, my membership in this organization is one of things closest to my heart.**

My friends in BWL have been my repeated sources of comfort following bad court days, bad dates, bad hairstyles and bad decisions. In the good times, my BWL buddies have been there to cheer me on, support me with my various professional activities, celebrate the special moments in my life, let me "voluntold" them for more jobs that anyone cares to remember and just be there to share any ordinary day.

Please understand that we did not bond overnight or at one single meeting. Working on the various committees together is what solidified so many relationships. Technology was not as advanced as it is now, so we had to meet at someone's home rather than Zoom to work out the details of a project. An email or text couldn't be sent asking a question. You had to pick up the phone and speak with someone to make a plan work. Thus, we spent time together and got to know each other. We had the opportunity to bond over our shared community service.

Doing the calculations, a lifetime membership at \$1000 when BWL introduced this membership level, seemed a good way to save money in the long run if I remained in the organization for at least 20 years. It has been over 20 years so I feel confident that it was a good investment. Of more importance is that I view that membership as one of my best investments in myself and in the future of the Black women lawyers and judges.

My membership in BWL and my development as a bar leader within the organization was a stepping stone to all the other offices and positions I have held since then. In fact, some of the male judges in CABL used to tease that if we could lead BWL we could lead anywhere as they thought leading a group of intelligent women took special skills. It did and it still does! However, being an active member of this organization taught me to take a "no" with grace, to learn that disagreement on a subject should not be taken personally, that we can

agree to disagree and remain friends. My BWL membership helped me attain my work goal of being a judge. If I had not been working my way to President of this organization, those paths for me with the California Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) and California Women Lawyers (CWL) probably would not have happened. So much of my professional success is attributed to BWL in my mind. I believe that in spite of my qualifications, I would not be a Los Angeles Superior Court judge if I had not been active in and a President of BWL.

With BWL, I learned to turn a disaster into an opportunity. At one of our scholarship fundraisers, the caterer failed to deliver on the food preparation. Fortunately, his assistant called someone on the planning committee explaining that the caterer had not shown up to prepare the food on Saturday afternoon as pre-arranged. So, he called us to warn us that there might not be food at our event. We, BWL leaders went into overdrive. Picking up the needed liquor was my task on my way to the location. Barbara (Judge Johnson) had a friend who worked at a restaurant who was willing to help prepare an alternative menu. Other members picked up paper goods and desserts. Shirley (Henderson), Carol (Justice Codrington) and many other members put on aprons over our fancy clothes and straw bonnets to serve our guests. At the end of the event when our guests discovered that the menu had not gone as originally scripted, they were surprised to learn that our meal service had been improvised. Folks complimented us on how well we had worked together to prevent a catastrophe. When it was all over, we could laugh but it's times like these that really forge relationships.

Another of the benefits of membership was the access to so many mentors and role models. For us new lawyers there were so many skilled women attorneys and judges that we could call on or ask a question at a meeting about case prep, career decisions, recommendations to become a judge or the family work life balance that women always struggle with and much, much more. At any courthouse where you ran into a BWL member, you knew you had someone to reach out to.

So, in answer to the question of the value of my BWL membership? Remember that credit card commercial of a few seasons ago where the tagline was memories versus the cost were priceless. That would also be my response, the value of my BWL membership ... priceless.



## The Impact of the New ABA Accreditation Standards

Chalak Richards

Associate Dean  
Pepperdine Caruso Law School

**The murder of George Floyd led to change that is still unfolding across the justice system. Protests quickly moved from the public square to a myriad of industries; fashion brands, beverage companies, media outlets, and more pledged examination of racism within their ranks in June 2020. The legal academy was no different. Many accredited law schools released statements standing against racism in June 2020. The result was an unprecedented increase in law school diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging offices. While several Black law school deans came together and created the antiracist clearinghouse, 150 law school deans urged the ABA to include anti-racist and anti-bias considerations in accreditation standards.**

Just under two years later, the ABA did just that. In February 2022, the ABA House of Delegates passed amendments to Standard 303, which governs curriculum taught in ABA accredited law schools. The amendment reads, in relevant part, that "a law school shall provide education to law students on bias, cross-cultural competency, and racism: at the start of the program of legal education, and at least at once again before graduation." The interpretations related to this section explain that it is the responsibility of lawyers to "promote a justice system that provides equal access and eliminates bias, discrimination, and racism in the law," and as such, law schools should ensure that all law students are introduced to these as values and responsibilities of the legal profession.

Much remains to be seen on the impact of these new ABA standards. Recognizing that for many law schools meeting these standards will require substantial interrogation of their courses, orientation, and other educational experiences, the ABA has required that all law schools have a plan in place by fall 2022, with implementation to begin in fall 2023. I am encouraged that many law schools are taking this as an opportunity to take a critical look at their curriculums and hope that the majority of law schools will meaningfully comply with this requirement. Some law schools have already announced their plans, to equal parts applause and disapproval.

Even with all that hope, I frankly remain concerned about the experiences of Black and other law students of color. Belonging – the ideal that all students experience the law school as a place designed with them in mind – is impacted by much more than classroom readings and discussions; and while the ABA standards regulate the classroom experience (to a point), they do not and cannot speak

to the experience of students outside of the classroom. Law schools must therefore look critically to the range of law student experiences, such as extracurricular offerings which organizations are funded and supported by the administration? Or, the role of systemic injustice in co-curriculars who makes law review and journals? Who is elected to the editorial boards? They must consider the unspoken messages sent to students who does the law school bring and support as speakers? Who does the school celebrate? Finally, law schools must look at the role of faculty who is teaching these classes and leading these orientation sessions? Are these ideals reflected in course evaluations?

**What can we do as we wait for the implementation of these standards?**

Each of us should ensure our schools are implementing these changes in real ways. Ask that those teaching these classes are appropriately trained to handle fraught topics with nuance and care for their historically underrepresented students. Importantly, see what they are doing to ensure the emotional, psychological, and even physical, safety of all their students. Encourage your law school when you see positive changes and seek accountability when you don't see real, measurable progress. The transformation of the legal profession to one where the elimination of discrimination, bias, and racism are actualized values is possible with commitment and vision.





# The Great Pivot vs The Great Resignation

**Tiffani Brown**  
COO  
Moonshot Thinkers and Doers  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tiffanib/>

As I walk out of my apartment for a late-night grocery run, I can hear the pulsating sound of drums. It's 8:30pm and I am home relatively early for a third-year associate in New York. I've heard these drums before, but never knew the source. Tonight, I am going to follow the direction of the sound and see where it leads. I follow it two blocks to Second Avenue and 122nd Street in Spanish Harlem. I look up and see the sign "Santo Rico Dance School" emblazoned in blue and red. Now that I'm here, I must get a closer look. As I walk up the stairs, the music gets louder and I hear the unmistakable sound of a cow bell, played in between the calls of "ONE!" and "FIVE, SIX, SEVEN!". I open the door and see over thirty people moving in sync to the rhythm. Individuals of different ages, gender, race, and ethnicity – all brought together to do something I had not known for a long time – personal enjoyment.

Signing up for salsa classes was the first time I enrolled in a school with only my desires in mind. Although I was only three years into my law career, I was feeling the weight of a life spent in constant pursuit of perfection. I had gone to all the summer programs, music lessons, and achieved everything I had set out for myself academically. And now I was expected to give everything professionally. I remember asking my mother during my first year as a lawyer: Is this it? Is this going to be my life for the next 30 years until retirement?

The moment I walked into the Santo Rico studio, my life changed. I took one glorious 8-week term of Beginner Salsa. It was the safest investment I could make in myself as it was three blocks away from my apartment, two nights a week at 7:30pm. After successfully completing Beginner Salsa, I was passed to Advanced Beginner Salsa. The course required the same 8-week commitment, but this term I was working on a deal closing, and two nights a week was hard to make. I missed a handful of classes and during my end of term assessment, was informed that I did not pass to the next level and would have to repeat Advanced Beginner Salsa. I was devastated and could barely hide

my disappointment. Crestfallen, I walked out of the studio and cried big crocodile tears that night in my apartment.

I never returned to Santo Rico, but the upset from failing to show up for myself at something as simple as a dance class, forced me to prioritize my life differently.

It took me ten years to get to a point of reaching the Great Resignation. Taking one big leap and leaving behind the investment that went into law school was not something that I could consider – no matter how many times I read the 4-Hour Workweek. I continued to read more books for inspiration: The Start-up of You, This Time I Dance, What to Do with a Law Degree, Wishcraft, Refuse to Choose, Do Something that Matters, The Artist Way. I found authors who wrote about maintaining a work life, but on their terms. And instead of taking a leap, I learned to master the art of the pivot.

The concept of pivoting was introduced to me in the book The Start-up of You. Instead of going from A to Z within my career and assuming all the risks that come with such a large transition, the suggestion was to move incrementally from A to B and B to C. As the only attorney in my immediate and extended family, this move resonated with me, as I did not have to abandon a career and identity that I worked so hard to achieve. It also gave me an opportunity to "try on" the next pivot before completely taking my foot off the last place that I had been.

Although the terminology was new to me, the act of pivoting was something I had done previously. My studying corporate law came from my exposure to finance early in my career. I was certain investment banking was not for me (particularly after graduating during the fall of Enron and the dotcom bubble), but corporate law offered more stability and was closely related. Similarly, after five years in corporate law, I decided I wanted to work for a foundation and found that the move from law to philanthropy was much further away than I anticipated. So, I pivoted to working with nonprofits, first as a pro-bono legal volunteer, then a board member. The exposure led to an opportunity to work in legal and operations at a foundation. After serving as an interim Deputy General Counsel at a foundation, I knew it was time for me to run my own company building out legacy and social impact projects. My next pivot was then to being a consultant. And after four years as a consultant working on projects with over six major foundations, I'm now bringing on my first employee.

So instead of abandoning the ship through the Great Resignation, I encourage you to consider the Great Pivot as both roads can take you to where you want to go.

For a longer discussion re the Great Pivot:  
<https://youtu.be/b6JwdUE2MbK>



# How Well Do You Know Yourself? How To Recognize and Develop Your Strengths to Serve More Sustainable and Effectively

**Brenda Comer Robinson, Esq.**  
Senior Attorney,  
Children's Law Center of Los Angeles

**Julie Landi**  
Executive Coach with The Performance Group,  
Creator of Live Your Vision

**Do you know who you are? This is one of those deep existential questions that in our quiet moments we all ponder at some point in our lives. The voices whisper or sometimes shout aloud that "we are not enough." We may feel the need to prove ourselves as black women, daughters, mothers, judges, attorneys, students, leaders etc. But do you have the confidence to not fall prey to the voices that say you are not enough?**

One woman who exemplifies this confidence is Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. At times Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's confirmation hearings were difficult to watch as some tried to besmirch her record and derail her nomination. But after one incredibly absurd question from one senator, she paused for 7 seconds. In that moment she was unapologetic and displayed her intellect, integrity, and incredible strength of character. She knew who she was and, in that moment, if the world did not know who she was before, it knew it then.

We want all women to share that same strength and confidence, which is why we want to share with you our journey in our roles as mentor and mentee that has helped us learn to live in our strengths, to visualize the good in our lives and use our personal stories to live authentic lives that impact others.

When women become conscious of who they are, they also become conscious of what they need to do and why it needs to be done. This leads to clarity, unshakeable confidence, and unstoppable motivation. But where do we start?

**Julie:** So many come to me and say, "Julie, I feel lost," when they think of their next steps personally or professionally. They are not

sure of who they are and what they see for their future. When I ask the question, who are you, most answer with a role they are filling like a judge, lawyer, business or political leader, mother, wife, daughter, or caretaker rather than who they were created to be. Then, when those roles shift, end, or do not seem to fit any longer, it creates a feeling of "lostness."

For many, they say they feel a level of discontent that is recurring. They are headed into a major life transition and the future is murky to them. They value their own time and recognize their past successes count, but are not sure how to put it all together in a deep, meaningful, and efficient way so that their near future is what they hope. After accomplishing so much they often ask themselves, "Is this it? I know there must be more for me."

Many have asked, "Julie, how did you figure it out? It is clear you are living your calling." I do agree with their observation and as a wonderful result, I enjoy the certainty, clarity and confidence that comes with it. I am intentionally and constantly developing my own unique strengths, values, passions, and life experiences for the greatest good. This awareness and pursuit are so personally fulfilling, hence why many refer to it as "my calling." And I enjoy a clarity and confidence that lights me up daily and a reassurance that I know I am in my lane, for such a time as this and am right where I am supposed to be.

So how does that happen? It takes an investment of time, energy, intention, and money. You will get clear on what you need to do, when you get clear who you are. This is not a journey that is done alone. Most need help because it is impossible to be objective with yourself.

And this is where Brenda and I started. WHO ARE YOU?

**Brenda:** Before meeting Julie, I would've said that I was a Black woman, attorney, wife, mother, daughter, orphan, sister, and friend who had experienced a lot of loss. But during COVID, I was invited to a program called "Live Your Vision", where I saw amazing women talking about living in their strengths, and I knew I had to set up a call with Julie. Over time working with her, I realized these are just roles, but not who I truly am. I began to embark on a journey to discover ME, through identifying my unique gifts and strengths that have led me to my calling: helping children and families as an attorney, and now, working to become a judge. And personally, this has helped me develop self-care strategies that allow me to prioritize my self-worth and emotional wellbeing, so I can continue doing the work I love.

Is it time for your big reveal? Like us, you will be encouraged by what you discover. And not only that, you will also know what you are "called" to do next with such clarity and confidence that your 7, second pause can be just as illuminating.

**Brenda Comer Robinson, Esq.**  
Senior Attorney  
Children's Law Center of Los Angeles  
Co-chair of BWL Education Committee  
[robinsonb@clcla.org](mailto:robinsonb@clcla.org)  
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/brenda-robinson-70408187>

**Julie Landi**  
Executive Coach with The Performance Group  
Creator of Live Your Vision  
Professional and personal coaching for women difference makers.  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/julie-landi-97931234/>



## Does Your Confidence Match Your Wealth Goals?

**Karen A Clark**  
City National Bank

**CONFIDENCE...an essential ingredient for turning thought into action and wishes into reality. The absence of confidence inhibits the sorts of behaviors – risk taking, failure, and perseverance needed to build and maintain confidence. This is troubling because of the long-term implications in our lives.**

For newborns, the world is limitless, there are no boundaries. However, the word “NO” begins to show up early. No, don’t touch. No, you can’t. No, you shouldn’t. As children age, we begin to respond.

Girls respond - “Sorry...” “Okay...” “Sorry. Excuse me...Okay”. Boys respond - “Why not?...” “Hold on a minute...” “Only take a minute...” “Why not?” Volumes of research document that a confidence gap exists between men and women and it begins to show up strongly in middle school. Girls begin to shrink despite better performances academically.

We shrink back from the experiences we need to have in order to grow and maintain confidence. This lack of confidence carries into adulthood and spills over into various aspects of our lives. Men are more confident in applying for jobs, even when they are not qualified. Men are more confident negotiating for more, even when it is not justified. And, men are more financially confident than women. A survey published by CNBC reported that 90% of men feel confident to manage their money. Women are far less sure. When it comes to Black people in general; even at the most educated levels, we are less financially confident than the general population, men included. That is because we traditionally lack the history, the access and the experience with money, that is needed to grow financial confidence.

It is imperative that the Black professional community; male and female, learn the skills and grow the confidence to manage personal finances; learn to ask the right questions; and seek the professional help that is available

to help build, maintain and grow wealth. Otherwise, we will not be able to lead the way, and the wealth gap will continue to grow.

### HOW DOES ONE BECOME FINANCIALLY CONFIDENT?

Since confidence is grown and maintained by having experiences, taking risks, winning and failing; it is important to be proactive and create the experiences you need to become savvy, and thus more confident. Most financial experts agree that these seven principles will help you to become financially confident.

- 1. Track Your Spending Daily.** ... via journal, ledger, notebook. Do this for a month.
- 2. Adopt the 72-Hour Rule.** ... no impulsive spending.
- 3. Automate Your Savings.** ... it’s easy. Designate an amount to be automatically deducted bi-weekly or monthly.
- 4. Learn One New Thing Each Week.** ...Google or read the financial section of a paper.
- 5. Boost Your Credit Score.** ...There is no reason for less than 700 with discipline. Need help? Email [karen.a.clark@cnb.com](mailto:karen.a.clark@cnb.com); [eric.clay@operationhope.org](mailto:eric.clay@operationhope.org).
- 6. Pay Down Debt.** ...Start with the smallest. You will feel great! Confident!
- 7. Build an Emergency Fund.** There is nothing like knowing you got your own back

Call me, The Confidence Queen  
Karen A Clark,  
SVP City National Bank  
213-673-9124  
[karen.a.clark@cnb.com](mailto:karen.a.clark@cnb.com)



## Passive Income: Make the Most of Your Money and Reclaim Your Time!

**Rosezetta Upshaw & Romy Frazier**

**We’ve all heard of Passive Income or “Mailbox Money”. Passive income can be earned from stock dividends, a high-yield savings account, Airbnb-ing your second home, selling digital content, and countless other ways. The money you make in your sleep is a crucial part of wealth building.**

While you’re not necessarily “doing nothing” for it, passive income is made with little or no daily effort, as opposed to the paycheck you earn from your day job. While practicing law makes you money, where you put that money can make you even richer.

Everyone should have multiple passive income streams. It is the way to accelerate your financial independence.

Are your dollars being great employees? As the author of Rich Dad Poor Dad says, “Each dollar in my asset column is a great employee, working hard.” Take note of how much your dollars bring home. Are they sitting in a “high-yield” savings account, earning a measly 0.60% APY? Are they generating stock dividends that are taxed at a 35% rate? Are they sitting in a checking account, losing value every moment with inflation?

Get those dollars back on track, working hard for you.

What are ways to generate passive income? Most active attorneys have a full schedule and need income opportunities that don’t require significant time commitments.

Digital products are a great way to leverage legal knowledge.

For example, Rosezetta created a digital course to help entrepreneurs file their own federal trademark applications. She collaborated with a popular online influencer to help market the course in exchange for

a profit split. The course has generated thousands in passive cash flow with virtually \$0 in upfront costs.

Real estate investments should be part of every portfolio, especially in times of inflation. For example, Romy invested in an apartment building in Texas. The incoming rent exceeded the mortgage and expenses, so the property cash-flowed immediately. Her portion of the cash flow is direct deposited into her bank account, and it is tax advantaged. As a passive investor, she never has to visit property and never deals with the dreaded three T’s of rental properties (tenants, toilets, or trash). You can do the same.

Get richer faster and retire early. As lawyers, we are known for being high income earners, who are usually in the highest tax brackets. Now is the time to start keeping more of your money. Add passive income streams. Take advantage of tax strategies, like getting “passive losses” to offset your passive income. Make that money work for you!

Contact [info@LegendsAtLaw.com](mailto:info@LegendsAtLaw.com) and [Romy@FeeSimpleInvest.com](mailto:Romy@FeeSimpleInvest.com) to learn more about passive income opportunities.



# 2021-2022 At a Glance





# Confessions of a Crazy Plant Lady: A Lighthearted Take on Houseplants, Black Planters, and Mental Health

**Alisha Burgin, Esq.**  
Partner  
Perkins Coie LLP

Unless you've been living in a cave (haven't we all?), you've probably noticed plants have become de rigueur since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps you have seen the influx of plant influencers on social media, or the insatiable demand (and meteoric rise in prices) for uncommon houseplants. Maybe you've fully leaned into the hobby, growing your collection from a Fiddle-Leaf Fig (*Ficus Lyrata*) and a *Monstera* to more than 600 tropical plants, including critically endangered species (guilty!).

But are houseplants worth all the hype? And are we represented in this (historically white) hobby? Join me on a brief exploration of the benefits of houseplants, representation in the hobby, and spaces in the Black plant community. Or just enjoy the photos. Your choice.



Why plants? That's easy. They're pretty. See Ex. A (my *Philodendron Ilsemanii*). But plants are more than aesthetically pleasing, they're good for you. There is plenty of research and anecdotal evidence showing that gardening and exposure to green spaces can improve a person's mental, emotional, and physical health. Having plants has reduced my stress levels and increased my patience and creativity. And there's the healing power of watching something grow. Some believe that caring for plants connects us to our ancestors and spirituality. Other benefits include stronger memory retention, improved symptoms of ADHD, reduced symptoms of depression, and improved concentration.

Where are the Black plant lovers? Plants are for everyone. Although the hobby has been traditionally deprived of melanin, there are thriving communities of Black plant lovers, and even, Black plant influencers. If you're on Facebook, check out the groups Black Planters, Black Planters: Rare Edition (for serious collectors of rare plants). More into growing food? Check out Black Girls with Gardens. And if you want to peruse some amazing plant content on Instagram, I recommend Hilton Carter, Black Girls Gardening, Plant Kween, TopNotchPott (an elite-level hobbyist, he has a ton of unicorns), Tropical Seductions, *Monstera* Maven, and a personal favorite, Melanin Planter.

Support Black Businesses: Plant Edition. Ready to leap into the hobby? Here's a few Black-owned nurseries and plant shops to support:

- Tennessee Tropicals  
<https://www.tennesseetropicals.com/>
- My Crazy Plant Life  
<https://mycrazyplantlife.com/>
- Natty Garden  
<https://www.nattygarden.com/>
- Grounded Plants  
<https://feelgrounded.com/>



- Good Neighbor  
<https://goodneighborshop.com/collections/plants>
- Locally, check out Black-woman-owned shops Tansy (Burbank) or Queen (mid-Wilshire).

And of course, my passion for plants extends to propagation, so I may have what you're looking for. You can find me on Instagram as Leafy Lady Lawyer. Message me if you're looking for something special. Happy planting!



# Annual Foundation Scholarship Luncheon Amplifying Black Voices: Representation Matters

**Alma Howard Graham**  
President  
BWL Foundation

On Saturday, June 4th, the Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles Foundation ("Foundation") held its 46th Annual Scholarship Fundraiser & Awards Luncheon in the beautiful garden area of the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. The Co-Chairs of the Luncheon, Alisha Burgin and Ronnivashti Whitehead Otieno, chose the Luncheon theme "Amplifying Black Voices: Representation Matters." The theme highlights the importance of the participation of Black people in the social and cultural fabric of American society at all levels. Not only does representation set the stage for Black Americans to participate on an even playing field, but it also fosters the just treatment of all Americans.

The program began with a reception where Luncheon attendees were treated to the smooth sounds of the national recording and performing artist and vocalist Elisa Gomez-Taylor and her band. Immediately afterwards, Ms. Otieno introduced the Mistress of Ceremonies, Chrystee Pharris, who currently plays Simone Russell on the NBC-TV hit daytime soap opera "Passions." Singer Andrea Jones treated the audience to the Negro National Anthem "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" by James Weldon Johnson. As President of the Foundation Board, I provided a greeting to the Luncheon guests followed by Ms. Burgin's acknowledgment of the Luncheon sponsors. Lisa L. Mclean, President of the Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc ("BWL") graciously acknowledged the dignitaries attending the Luncheon.

The founders of BWL set a mission of serving the community and supporting black law students in their dreams to become lawyers and practice in Southern California. Consistent with this tradition, the Luncheon Scholarship Committee Co-Chairs, Sharon Brown and Jennifer Fisher, presented five law students with scholarships underwritten by BWL, AT&T, Morgan & Leahy, LLP, Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton, Reed Smith, LLP, and the California Change Lawyers.

During the Luncheon program and in keeping with the theme of "Amplifying Black Voices: Representation Matters," the Foundation presented awards to two individuals and an organization who exemplify the unique and creative contribution of black voices in the fields of the arts, corporate visibility, and community service. Karen S. Grant-Selma, Senior Vice President, Business and Legal Affairs, OWN: The Oprah Winfrey Network was honored with the Corporate Excellence Award. Prentice Penny, writer, director, and producer of HBO's "Insecure" and Netflix's "Uncorked" received the Excellence in the Arts Award. Mr. Penny was introduced by his mother, past BWL President and Los Angeles Superior Court Judge the Honorable Brenda Penny. Finally, the Black Women's Health Project received the Foundation's Excellence in Community Service Award. The Project is a nonprofit organization

dedicated is to improving the health and wellness of California's 1.2 million Black women through advocacy, education, policy, and outreach.

As a special highlight, the Foundation raised additional funds for scholarships based on donations made through a 'Text to Give' opportunity during the program. To wrap up, Foundation's Treasurer, Crystal D. Crawford gave a benediction and as attendees exited accolades were freely given regarding the success of the program and the beauty of the venue chosen. The Foundation looks forward to making next year's Luncheon even more successful with the help of its community of donors and supporters. If you wish to make a donation to the BWL Foundation please visit <https://www.bwlfoundation.org/donate/>.



# BWL Press Release on the Hon. Ketanji Brown Jackson

The Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc. is pleased that President Joseph R. Biden has honored his pledge to nominate an African American woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court. The nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is monumental in enhancing the diversity of thought and perspective to the highest court in the federal judiciary of the United States of America. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is one of several African American female candidates who possess the knowledge, experience, intellect, integrity, sense of community, and appropriate judicial temperament to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. Now, the composition of the United States Supreme Court will further reflect the racial diversity of the country and include an African American woman among the justices who shape the tenets of American democracy and justice. Our judicial system depends on the public's trust in it and the adherence to the laws of our nation. We strongly support President Biden's nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson and congratulate her on her historic confirmation.



## 2021-2022 BWL Officers



**Lisa M. McLean**  
President



**Jasmine S. Horton**  
President-Elect



**Shardé T. Skahan**  
Vice President



**Sherry Patterson**  
Treasurer



**Heather Horn**  
Financial Secretary



**Barbra Diallo**  
Recording Secretary



**Tiffany Spivey**  
Corresponding Secretary



**Devon L. Hein**  
Parliamentarian



**Crystal Hill**  
Historian



**Ronni Whitehead Otieno**  
Newsletter Editor



**Hon. Antoinette D. Morris**  
Member-at-Large



**Alisha C. Burgin**  
Member-at-Large

## Past Presidents

Sandra L. Carter  
 Hon. Irma J. Brown  
 Shirley A. Henderson  
 Hon. Veronica S. McBeth  
 Katherine L. Vaughns\*  
 Hon. Beverly E. Mosely  
 Mablean Ephriam  
 Joan Whiteside Green  
 Diane Spencer Shaw  
 Hermia Shegog-Whitlock  
 Carla Durham Pittman  
 Hon. Glenda Veasey  
 Belinda D. Stith  
 Vera Brown-Curtis\*  
 E. Jean Gary  
 Hon. Brenda Johns Penny

Hon. Patricia J. Titus  
 Hon. Barbara R. Johnson  
 Patricia Shade  
 Hon. Carol D. Codrington  
 Hon. Marguerite D. Downing  
 Patsy J. Cobb  
 Eulanda Lynn Matthews  
 Katessa Charles Davis  
 Adrienne M. Byers  
 Nedra E. Austin  
 Brenda J. Logan  
 Adrienne Konigar-Macklin  
 Nedra Jenkins  
 Sharon K. Brown  
 Linda R. Rosborough  
 Syna N. Dennis

Andrea J. Golding  
 Hon. Yvette D. Roland  
 Tangela D. Terry  
 Sherri L. Cunningham  
 Samantha C. Grant  
 Camille Y. Townsend  
 Tami Warren  
 Shannon Y. Humphrey  
 Nicole Hancock Husband  
 Amber S. Finch  
 Demetria L. Graves  
 Hon. Tara C. Doss  
 Rosezetta Upshaw  
 Hon. Michelle Kazadi

\*Deceased

## Lifetime Members

Ugochi Anaebere-Nicholson  
 Heather Anderson  
 Michele Anderson  
 Nedra Austin  
 Hon. Althea Baker  
 Renee Becker  
 Wanda Belle  
 Tamara Benefield  
 Janis Bucknor  
 Alisha Burgin  
 Adrienne Byers  
 Kristen Byrdsong  
 Latrice Byrdsong  
 Renee Campbell  
 Sandra Carter  
 Katessa Charles  
 Luci-Ellen Chun  
 Hon. Carol Codrington  
 Hon. Audrey Collins  
 Dawn Collins  
 Brenda Comer Robinson  
 Michelle Cooke  
 Marlene Cooper  
 Alexis Crump  
 Tala Davis  
 Anita DeFrantz  
 Barbra Diallo  
 Hon. Tara Doss  
 Hon. Marguerite Downing  
 Carla Durham Pittman  
 Ndenyi Egbunike  
 Mablean Ephriam  
 Gary Eto

Hon. Kelvin Filer  
 Amber Finch  
 Jennifer Fisher Golden  
 Carla Ford  
 Ernestine Forrest  
 Avis Frazier-Thomas  
 Alan Friedenthal  
 Maryann Gallagher  
 Lisa Gilford  
 Audrea Golding  
 Samantha Grant  
 Demetria Graves  
 Nicole Hancock Husband  
 Jacqueline Harding  
 Shirley Henderson  
 Angel James Horacek  
 Hon. Barbara Johnson  
 Sandra Jones Anderson  
 Lynette Jones  
 Hon. Michelle Kazadi  
 Victoria King  
 Adrienne Konigar-Macklin  
 Lauren Lofton  
 Brenda Logan  
 Eulanda Matthews  
 Veronica McBeth  
 Deborah McClain  
 Byron McLain  
 Lisa McLean  
 Nicole Meyers  
 Jean Murrell-Adams  
 Betty Nordwind  
 Gail Peterson

Wilma Pinder  
 Carla Pittman  
 Karen E. Pointer  
 Rhonda Reeves  
 Karlene Rogers-Aberman  
 Hon. Yvette Roland  
 Jacquelyn Ruffin  
 Trina Saunders  
 Ibiere Seck  
 Patricia Shade  
 Nyanza Shaw  
 Dominique Shelton Leipzig  
 Hon. Erithe Smith  
 Diane Spencer Shaw  
 Elizabeth Stewart  
 Belinda Stith  
 Tangela Terry  
 Hon. Sandra Thompson  
 Hon. Bobbi Tillmon  
 Hon. Patricia J. Titus  
 Camille Townsend Granville  
 Charlene Usher  
 Andrea Van Leesten  
 Yuri Walker  
 Hon. Gloria White-Brown  
 Ronnivashti Whitehead Otieno  
 Nana Wilberforce  
 Sandra Williams  
 Christine Wood  
 Sherri Woods  
 Rosalyn Zakheim  
 Zeke Zeidler

BLACK WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES, INC.

# Sponsors & Supporters

Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc.  
 is grateful for the many generous sponsors and supporters.

### UNITY SPONSOR



### ADVOCATE SPONSORS



### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPONSORS



### SOCIAL JUSTICE SPONSORS



### FRIEND SPONSORS







P.O. Box 8179  
Los Angeles, CA 90008

---

[contact@blackwomenlawyersla.org](mailto:contact@blackwomenlawyersla.org)  
[www.BlackWomenLawyersLA.org](http://www.BlackWomenLawyersLA.org)  
[@BlackWomenLawyersLA](https://www.instagram.com/BlackWomenLawyersLA)