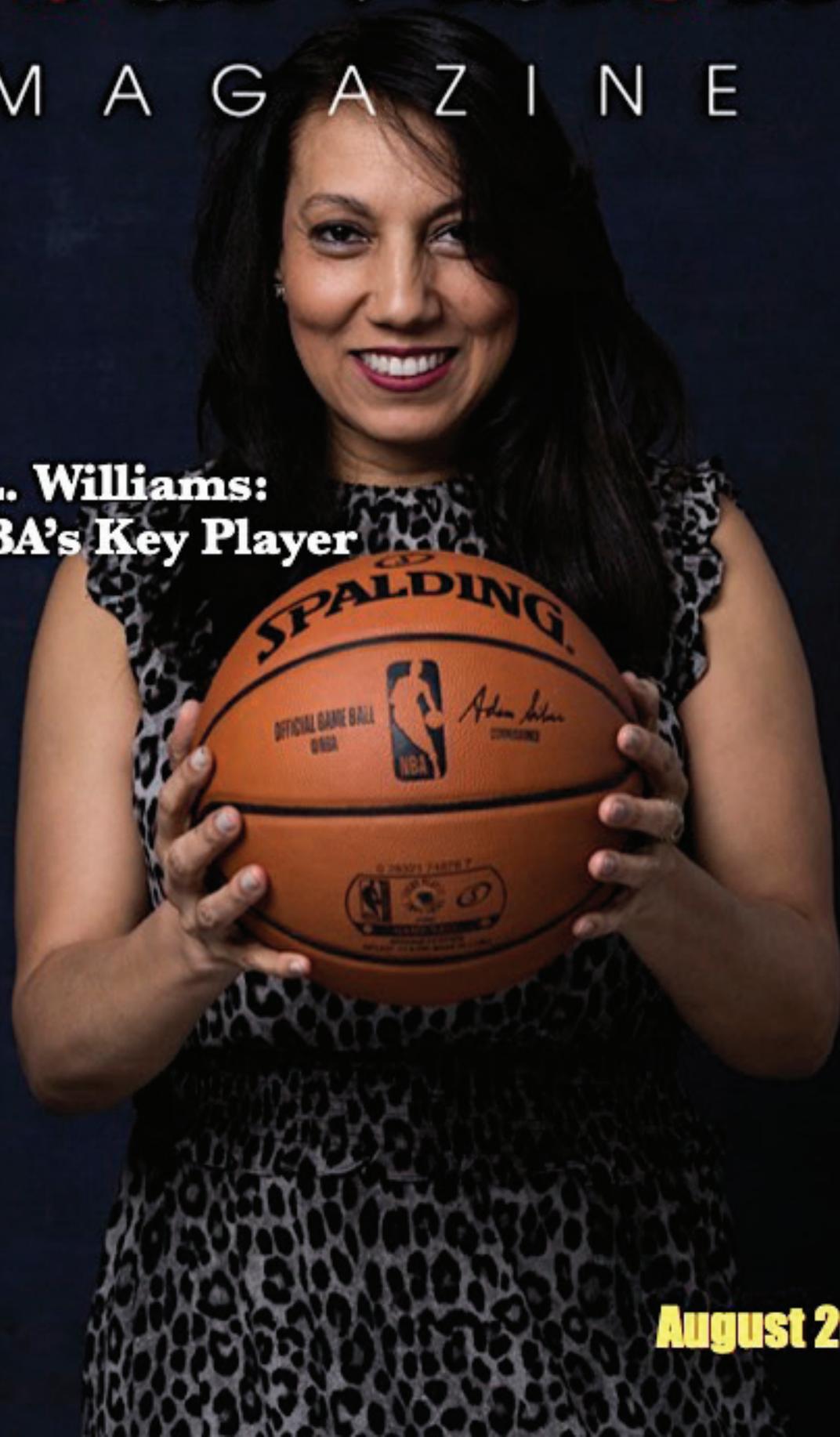


# SoulVision®

M A G A Z I N E

**Tatia L. Williams:  
The NBA's Key Player**



**August 2022**

# BK Fulton



## | “Don’t judge a book by its cover.”

Recently I was reminded of the old adage “. . . don’t judge a book by its cover.” Those words are as true now as they have ever been. I thought of the axiom while watching the 2022 release of *Elvis*. From the beginning to the end I enjoyed the film and was shocked by some of the revelations. I did not appreciate that he grew up in a Black community. I did not appreciate that he learned some of his moves in the Black church, preferred African-American backup singers, loved the blues, and was close with Black music greats like BB King. When I was in college, “Fight The Power,” a song by the rap group Public Enemy set the table for my judging Elvis unfairly. The line from the song that would become a social justice anthem went like this – “*Elvis, was a hero to most, but he never meant s\*#@ to me; straight out racist, the sucker was simple and plain, mother-f\*## him and John Wayne.*” I still remember the lines

## *BK Fulton August 2022 (continued)*

and dancing to the song; ostensibly accepting the lyrics of Chuck-D and Public Enemy word for word without any question. After seeing the film, I decided to do a little research. What I found has caused me to change my opinion of Elvis. First, even Chuck-D backed away from the original lyrics. He still said that Elvis appropriated Black music and benefited from it in a way that Black artists could not at the time. I don't have a quarrel with that notion. It was 1950s America and appropriation of our talents was commonplace.

Even so, Elvis was a bridge between Black music and white culture. That too is undeniable. What I also learned was that the reasons people thought Elvis was racist were largely inflated or made up. This came from the chief editor of the then-popular *Jet Magazine*, the backup singers for Elvis, the pastor of the Black church where Elvis learned some of his signature moves, and the likes of BB King. Who am I to refute these contemporaneous accounts of a man that I did not know? In fact, I grew up watching his movies and enjoyed most of them. I did not fall out with Elvis until I heard that one song during my college days. Now I am older and wiser and when I look at the facts, I respect Elvis for the person he was and appreciate that he befriended many people that I respect throughout his career. We have to be the change we seek and if we want people to see our community differently, we have to be active participants in how we interact with and judge others.

In this issue, we continue to share excellence and truth by bringing the best from all communities. Our cover story this month is NBA Vice President and Assistant General Counsel Tatia L. Williams. Also in this month's issue, we share with you the inspirational story of real estate leader Nancy E. Johnson, take a look at the inspirations behind the work of rising singer/songwriter Trae Taylor, rising filmmaker Alyssa Brayboy, and former NFL player and artist Richard Clebert. Finally, we share with you the perfect summertime recipe from chef Kyle Taylor, highlight the Presidential Precinct's Mandela Washington Fellowship program, and celebrate the legacy of Maggie L. Walker.

“We have to be the change we seek and if we want people to see our community differently, we have to be active participants in how we interact with and judge others.”

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CELEBRITY

# Tatia L. Williams: The NBA's Key Player



*Photos by Steven Freeman*

| “You have the tools needed to succeed.”

Tatia L. Williams remembers the larger-than-life figures who visited her home as a child.

She grew up in Washington, DC, and looked up to these figures that she could call family friends. “There were people like Vernon Jordan and Jesse Jackson and other men and women who were very successful doctors, lawyers, politicians, and business people who were very successful,” she says. “I was very blessed to be in a place where I grew up with a variety of professionals and people who were thinkers and doers.” Early on as a child in preschool, Tatia recalls understanding the lesson of whom much is given, much is expected. “It was always about thriving to do your best to succeed,” she says. “You have the tools needed to succeed and so there is no excuse not to do your best.”

Tatia currently resides in New York City and is the vice president and assistant general counsel of the NBA. She is primarily responsible for the legal and business affairs of the league’s social responsibility and player programs department. Tatia never thought she’d be where she is today. “I didn’t set out to be in sports. I was focused on getting into entertainment,” she admits. After graduating from Harvard Law, Tatia worked in the New York City office of Simpson

## Tatia L. Williams: The NBA's Key Player (continued)



Thacher & Bartlett when a door to join politics opened. “The White House was looking for smart lawyers,” Tatia says. “I got in and thought, ‘this is something interesting and fast-paced.’” She loved it. When her political stint was nearing its end, she yearned to be in entertainment. After attending a Janet Jackson concert, something finally clicked, and she decided to take the necessary steps to pursue that passion.

Tatia went on to work as vice president of legal and business affairs for Oxygen Media and as director in the sales planning and strategy/media distribution group at MTV Networks. Tatia sees the NBA as a nice mix between sports and entertainment. “I felt like I had achieved my dream when the NBA came calling. I never really thought about it,” she says. “I always liked sports and interestingly enough, it ended up becoming the job that I’ve been at the longest.”

“I was very blessed to be in a place where I grew up with a variety of professionals and people who were thinkers and doers.”

In recent years, the NBA has doubled down on its support for Black youth and young people with the establishment of the NBA Foundation and other efforts. The NBA has continued its decades-long support of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), a nonprofit organization that supports and represents students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The late NBA Commissioner David Stern was a huge supporter of TMCF and an inaugural board member. Tatia is currently a member of TMCF’s board of directors. In an extended effort to support HBCUs that goes beyond TMCF, the NBA created the HBCU Fellowship Program where 60 fellows from HBCUs are granted internships at the teams and league offices. “It is a paid internship and we also pay for students’ housing and relocation. The program aims to give them real-life experiences,” Tatia says. “We are elevating these students at the start of their careers.”

The NBA recently completed its 3rd annual NBA *Innovate the Future Competition* with TMCF. Students solve one of three case studies presented by the NBA and the winning team receives a \$10,000 scholarship and other prizes. “I’m a judge in this competition every year and this helps our mission to elevate and create opportunities for Black youth and HBCUs,” Tatia says. “These efforts were highlighted this year with our first annual NBA HBCU Classic between Howard and Morgan State ahead of the NBA All-Star Game.”

For those who are interested in studying law, Tatia acknowledges that it is a competitive environment. “I think you clearly have to be willing to work hard,” she explains. “You may have to work hard for a little less pay than you’d make in other industries, but if it is something you really want to do then you will find a way.” She explains that competition will always be there, especially in major cities like New York and Los Angeles, so don’t give up because

## Tatia L. Williams: The NBA's Key Player (continued)



things are challenging. This advice is extended to anyone who is a recent graduate in a competitive industry. The NBA received thousands of applicants for the 60 spots in its HBCU Fellowship Program. “There are a lot of people who are going to be disappointed,” Tatia says. “If you are young and have the ability to move around, why not live someplace else for a summer or a couple of years in another market? Some markets may not be as appealing as one might like, but you will have a greater chance of learning the ropes and those skills are transferable. Once you are in you can always parlay that. Getting in is the hardest part.”

“I didn’t set out to be in sports. I was focused on getting into entertainment.”

Recently, Tatia became a mother. This has been a blessing for her. “Better late than never,” she says jokingly. “My son’s name is Decker Robert Julian and he’s my little pandemic wonder.” She takes Decker on walks every night as a way to bond. It calms and relaxes her. If she really needs to, she will catch up with a friend on these walks and have a laugh. With such a busy and demanding job as hers, she needs that time for herself. When we asked Tatia what she will do next, she didn’t give us a specific answer. Years ago she was interviewed while at MTV and the interviewer asked her a similar question. “I said something big and fun and it turned out to be the NBA, so here I am putting that out there again,” she says.



Tatia Williams with her son Decker Robert Julian.

Photos by Alison Sheehy.

BOOKS

## Nancy E. Johnson's Mighty Triumph



*Photos by Micah Michelle*

| “I am excited about the doors God is opening for me.”

Nancy E. Johnson had a career in the health insurance industry before quitting and becoming a full-time real estate entrepreneur. After a 19-year career and 15 promotions, Nancy found herself hitting a glass ceiling. She was deterred from becoming a director because she lacked a college degree.

## *Love McPherson's Relationship Wisdom (continued)*



*The Million Dollar Producer: My Journey from the Cotton Field to the Capital City (Self-published)*

So in 1986, Nancy quit and became the first African American realtor hired by Gallop and Associates and Coldwell Banker Tom Jenkins Realty. Because of her experience in health insurance, Nancy was naturally good at customer service and relationship development. She worked 10 years in the business and was the only African American in the history of the Columbia Board of Realtors to reach the Four Million Dollar Club in a single year. After continuing to successfully open doors, in 1992, Nancy built a team called the Results Partners, which included her daughter as a licensed agent. Nancy has maintained at least a six-figure income over her 36 years in the industry. In one year, Nancy would eventually produce a sales volume of more than \$12 million.



Nancy's extraordinary life and career are documented in her book *The Million Dollar Producer: My Journey from the Cotton Field to the Capital City*. "I wrote my story because the odds were stacked double, even triple against me. I wasn't supposed to be in this place," Nancy says. "The book tells of the economic hardships, the hurdles, the perseverance, self-confidence, and hard work that the Lord carried me through. He brought me from the bottom to the top as a million-dollar producer in the real estate industry. I am forever grateful." After reading her story, Nancy wants readers to feel empowered and have faith in their hard work and ability.

In December 2021, the now former mayor of Columbia, South Carolina, Steve Benjamin, presented Nancy the key to the city during her weekly live Facebook session. This was an important moment for Nancy due to Benjamin being the first Black mayor of the city. Nancy was

## *Love McPherson's Relationship Wisdom (continued)*



recently named A Hometown Hero in February 2022 for her community service in the real estate industry. She was appointed to South Carolina's Diversity and Equity Committee and *The Million Dollar Producer* was selected to be displayed in the public library beside a collection of books by local authors. She was the keynote speaker at Voorhees University in Denmark, South Carolina, for Black History Month, and the college purchased 100 copies of her book for their students. Nancy will continue to mentor, coach, and speak publically. "I am excited about the doors God has opened for me and I'm ready to roll up in there like I belong," Nancy says.

*To learn more about Nancy Johnson, visit her [website](#) and follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).*

# Alyssa Brayboy Is No Longer Waiting For Permission



*Photo by Russell Baer*

“I was inspired to be the change I want to see in the industry.”

Alyssa Brayboy is the CEO and founder of Buttons, a Black and Latina female-owned production company. “I created Buttons because I was inspired to be the change I want to see in the industry,” Alyssa says. “I no longer wanted to wait for permission to tell the stories of the voices who have been disregarded, overlooked, and misrepresented.”

Originally from Newport News, Virginia, Alyssa journeyed to Los Angeles to pursue a career in acting. As a child, Alyssa would act out movies like *Spice World* and *Legally Blonde* in her parent’s living room with her siblings and cousins. “I quickly found my way to the stage and fell head over heels,” she says. “Since finding the stage I’ve had the opportunity to sharpen my skills with notable coaches such as Larry Moss, Howard Fine, and Margie Haber.”

In 2020, Alyssa decided to delve into filmmaking and launched Buttons with her co-founder Elisa Vazquez. According to Alyssa, Buttons has generated over 200 pieces of digital content. Recently, Buttons entered the film festival circuit with their latest short film *Shadow Self*. *Shadow Self* is an existential comedy about a self-destructive party girl who finds herself trapped in her apartment with her greatest enemy, herself. Alyssa serves as executive producer, lead actor, and co-writer.

## *Alyssa Brayboy Is No Longer Waiting For Permission (continued)*



*Alyssa Brayboy on the set of the short film Coyote, in which she won Best Supporting Actress at the Silicon Beach Film Festival for her role as Kathrine. Photo by Patricia Beauchamp.*



*Alyssa on the set of Button's latest short film, Shadow Self. Alyssa serves as executive producer, lead actor, and co-writer. Photo by Amari Dixon.*



*Photo by Russell Baer*

Buttons currently has three projects at the forefront of development. “We have a series that is centered around the historic rise and fall of the divine feminine,” Alyssa explains. “A dark dramedy series that revolves around the world of sex work. And finally, a feature film focused on a collegiate community battling the frontlines of addiction, sexual harassment, and power dynamics on their campus through a Title IX case. Everything that I am working on possesses soul. I give and take a piece of myself in everything that I do,” Alyssa says.

*To learn more about Alyssa Brayboy, follow her on [Instagram](#).*

## Trae Taylor Embraces His Roots



*Photo by Sean Rogers*

| “I want to make music that makes people feel something.”

Singer/songwriter Trae Taylor was always writing as a kid. His father would make Trae write papers on presidents and other historical figures. But it was when Trae began to write about what he cared about, that he realized he had a gift for writing lyrics to music. “The first lyric I ever wrote was: ‘She broke my heart like a silver chain,’” he says, “Which was about a girl I had a crush on in the fourth or fifth grade.”

It was during this time Trae began to record himself and simply kept on going. In high school, he started taking music more seriously when his cousin, who took an audio production class, taught Trae everything he learned. “Like many kids in my generation, I started out rapping and freestyling on bus rides home,” Trae explains. “I really enjoyed hip hop but the lyrical challenge of creating songs wasn’t enough. I wanted to learn how to stretch and control my voice, which led me to sing.”

## Trae Taylor Embraces His Roots (continued)



While stationed in Missouri with the U.S. Army, he found his love for country music. “I fell in love with the genre and became more familiar with my roots, being that both sides of my family come from the rural counties of Albemarle and Hanover, Virginia,” he says. Trae didn’t like the notion of being “country,” something he admits he distanced himself from as a child, but seeing a guy like Jimmie Allen make it successfully as a country act inspired him to embrace who he is.

Trae’s music is inspired by Michael Jackson and Elvis. He appreciated their love for western music, gospel, and R&B. “I have a soulful, smooth voice and I put all of my influences in my music.” Trae recently released his first single “Sippin’” and is working hard in the studio with his producer Sean Rogers to finish an EP. This month, he will be releasing his next single “I Got You.”

Trae hopes that with his music he will be able to give back to at-risk youth and wounded veterans. “I want to make music that makes people feel something,” Trae explains. “If I can accomplish that for one person or one billion it would mean the world to me. Through my artistry and my story, I want to show that the American Dream isn’t dead and there is still so much positivity and love in this country. People have a lot to offer and give to this world every day.”

To learn more about Trae Taylor, follow him on [TikTok](#) and [Instagram](#).



Photos by Bethany Rogers

ART

## Richard Clebert Has the Last Word



*Photo by Thomas McClain*

! “Our truths are what we create regardless of what the world thinks of it.”

Artist Richard Clebert points to the moment his history professor at the University of South Florida showed the class the racist and controversial 1916 film *Birth of a Nation* as an important one. “A seed was planted in me that day that I realized that in art—in all its mediums—you cannot let someone else tell your story,” Richard says. Born from parents of Haitian descent, Richard’s ability to paint is a gift that his father passed down to him. “I could always paint, but I wasn’t always the best storyteller,” he admits. “As an adult and father, my only goal is to make my children proud and feel prideful in the images that they see.”

## *Richard Clebert Has the Last Word (continued)*



*Messiah (unfinished/1 of 4 paintings)*

Richard's paintings are about honesty and pride. His latest work, *The Messiah Collection*, captures these values perfectly. "I hope artists are inspired to create their own truths, through different mediums such as art, music, or TV," he says. "Our truths are what we create regardless of what the world thinks of it." Richard is bringing his art to Art Basil in Miami, Florida this December.

A former NFL player, Richard says that chapter is closed. With one chapter closed and another opening, Richard is not limiting his artistic output to just the canvas. Whether it is his businesses—*Handsome Factory Barber Cigar Lounge* and *The Elite Factory Gym*, Richard is a creator. His vision is infinite. "I have aspirations of one day designing my own hotel," he comments. As a man of his community, Richard creates and builds to improve people's lives. Richard's story isn't done. "I paint because I am not done with my script yet," he proclaims.

*To learn more about Richard Clebert, follow him on [Instagram](#).*



*Morocco*

CHEF'S CORNER

# Chef Kyle Taylor



*Photos by chef Kyle Taylor*



To learn more about chef Kyle Taylor, follow him on [Instagram](#). To learn more about chef Kyle Taylor's upcoming sushi bar and lounge, CSALT Sushi Club, follow them on [Instagram](#).

“This dish is simple and perfect for summertime, light, refreshing and versatile with a burst of flavor.”

## Watermelon and Ahi Tuna Poke

**Course:** Dinner

**Cuisine:** Lunch/ Dinner/Appetizer

**Cuisine:** American/Asian Fusion

**Prep Time:** 20 min

**Cook Time:** 0

**Total Time:** 20 min

**Serving Size:** 4

## Ingredients

- 4 cups cubed watermelon
- 16 oz sushi-grade ahi tuna
- 2 tbsp fresh mint (chopped)
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 cup chopped green onion
- ½ cup ponzu sauce
- 2 tbsp minced ginger (pickled or fresh)
- 1 lime
- For dipping, add crostini/tortilla chips

## Preparation

1. Cut tuna and watermelon into cubes, and combine in a medium size mixing bowl.
2. Add your chopped green onion, and fresh mint.
3. In a separate bowl mix together ponzu, honey, minced garlic, and ginger.
4. Add in the ponzu mixture.
5. Mix well and serve as desired with a zest of lime on top. Add in jalapeño or crushed red pepper if you're feeling spicy.
6. Serve over rice or lettuce to make it a poke bowl or salad. For a great appetizer, you can serve it with crostini or my personal favorite, scooping it up with tortilla chips.

# The Presidential Precinct's Mandela Washington Fellowship Program: Fostering Global Leaders



*Neal Piper is the executive director of the Presidential Precinct. Photo by Drew Precious.*

“The pillars of our democracy are strongest when they are discussed and influenced by the unique perspectives of global community leaders.”

The Presidential Precinct is a nonprofit organization based in Charlottesville, Virginia. The mission of the Presidential Precinct is to bring visionary leaders to Virginia with the intent of exchanging ideas, challenges, and solutions from all over the world. “We believe that the pillars of our democracy are strongest when they are discussed and influenced by the unique perspectives of global community leaders,” says Neal Piper, executive director of the Presidential Precinct. The organization works with young men and women between the ages of 25-35 from all over the world. Its alumni network bolsters more than 1,200 leaders from over 162 countries.

“Our work is made possible by the world-class expertise of our four-member consortium, consisting of two premier universities—The University of Virginia and William & Mary—and two historic sites—James Madison’s Montpelier and James Monroe’s Highland,” Neal says. Close relationships with Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, the U.S. Department of State, and communities around Virginia help to complete the Precinct’s strategic network.

## *The Presidential Precinct's Mandela Washington Fellowship Program: Fostering Global Leaders (continued)*



*The best-known program hosted at the Presidential Precinct is the Mandela Washington Fellowship – a component of the U.S. Department of State's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). Through this Fellowship, the Presidential Precinct hosts 25 young African leaders each summer for a six-week Leadership in Civic Engagement Institute. Photos courtesy of the Presidential Precinct.*

Perhaps the best-known program hosted at the Presidential Precinct is the Mandela Washington Fellowship – a component of the U.S. Department of State's Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). Through this Fellowship, the Presidential Precinct hosts 25 young African leaders each summer for a six-week Leadership in Civic Engagement Institute. Fellows are encouraged to grow professionally and personally and engage in rigorous academic coursework. The Fellowship curriculum covers each of the Precinct's core focus areas: good governance, human rights and justice, women's empowerment, civic engagement, economic opportunity, and cultural heritage. "Our job at the Presidential Precinct is to support these incredible leaders and provide the tools for lifelong collaborations as they return to their respective countries," Neal says.

The Presidential Precinct will soon celebrate its 10th anniversary by reflecting on past accomplishments and looking ahead to future growth. "Through partnerships with academic and community-based partners in Virginia and around the globe, we will launch new signature programs, engaging regions of Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa around the issues of economic empowerment and job creation, and democracy and governance," Neal says.



*Learn more about Presidential Precinct's work, connect with alumni, and join their monthly newsletter list by visiting the Precinct's [website](#).*

## LEGENDS

# Maggie L. Walker



*Photo courtesy of the Maggie L. Walker  
National Historic Site*

Born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1864, Maggie L. Walker became the first woman to charter a bank in the United States. When Walker was fourteen, she joined the Independent Order of St. Luke. The fraternal organization, under Walker's eventual leadership, was the vehicle for African Americans' economic independence in the Richmond, Virginia, neighborhood of Jackson Ward. The

neighborhood would be coined "Black Wall Street." With incredible leadership skills and vision, Walker established the newspaper *St. Luke Herald* in 1902, St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in 1903, and St. Luke Emporium in 1905.

Established in 1903, St. Luke Penny Savings Bank offered mortgages, savings accounts, small business loans, and other services to Black people who were unfairly discriminated against in the Jim Crow South. Walker understood her community and what her people needed. The bank was responsible for 40% of Black-owned homes in Richmond. St. Luke Penny Savings Bank survived the Great Depression by merging with two other Richmond banks to form the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company in 1930. It would be Black-owned until the early 21st century.

In 2017, on the 153rd birthday of Walker's birthday, the city of Richmond honored her legacy with the unveiling of the Walker Memorial Plaza, which includes a 10-foot bronze statue. The memorial is located at Broad and Adams streets, the entrance to Jackson Ward. Maggie L. Walker's dedication to her community and work to dismantle racial inequality through financial empowerment is a testament to the power of the strength of Black unity.

**"We have the money, the brains, the capability. Let us arise and show the men and women of our race, nay, to the whole world... that we are watching, under God's guidance, toward Race Unity." – Maggie L. Walker**