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**19th Annual Black  
New England Conference**

# **STATE OF THE UNION**

*A Critical Perspective on  
Black America 1776 to 2026*

**Saturday  
October 25, 2025  
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM**



**Keynote Conversation with  
LYNAE VANEE  
& Shannon Lanier**



## **FEATURED SPEAKERS:**



**Antonio Saunders**  
@antonioasaunders



**Ronelle Tshiela**  
@ronelle\_



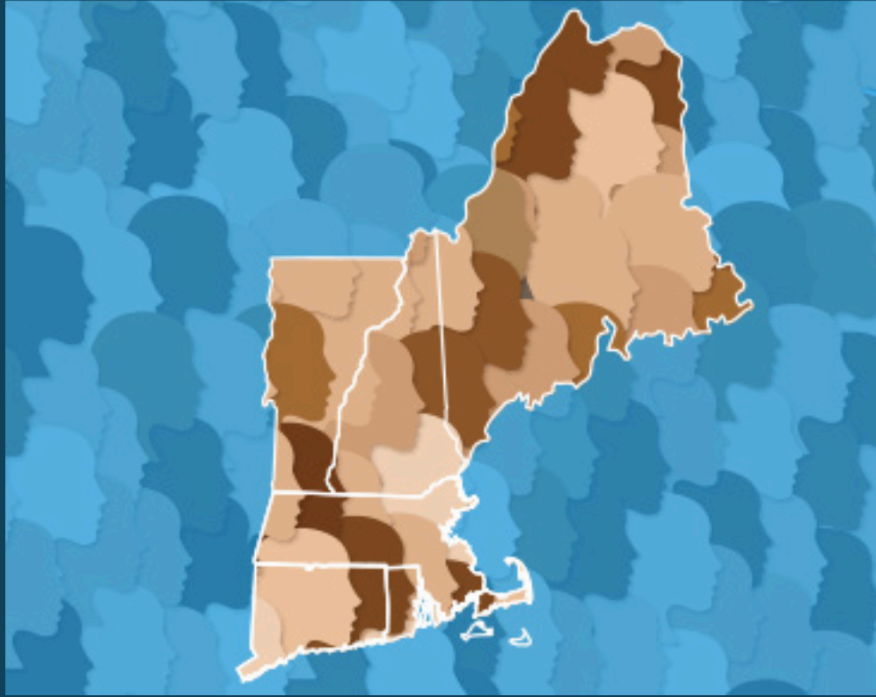
**Ebony JJ Curry**  
@thatssoebony\_



**Cheyney McKnight**  
@notyourmommashistory



**Shay Stewart-Bouley**  
@blackgirlinmaine



We celebrate the resilience of New England's African American community and appreciate the work of social media content creators as they highlight the path forward.

*Proud supporters of the Black Heritage Trail  
of New Hampshire and the  
2025 Black New England Conference.*

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**We're better  
together,  
thanks to you.**

You build bridges, amplify diverse voices  
and support our community. Thank you.

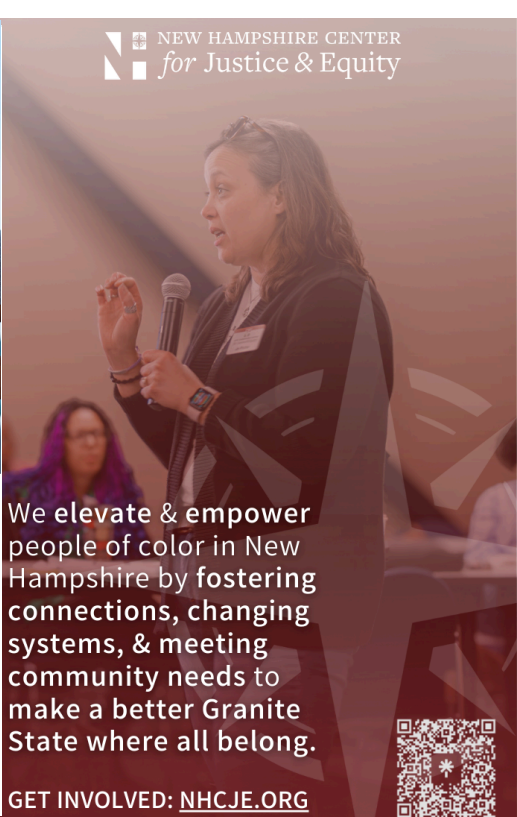
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NEW HAMPSHIRE CENTER  
for Justice & Equity



We **elevate & empower** people of color in New Hampshire by **fostering connections, changing systems, & meeting community needs** to make a better Granite State where all belong.

GET INVOLVED: [NHCJE.ORG](http://NHCJE.ORG)

As the leading provider of quality dental coverage for Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, we're helping our communities smile through education, veteran support, giving, volunteering and more.

There's a lot to smile about.



[www.nedelta.com](http://www.nedelta.com)



Announcing our  
*Community  
Resource Hub*

Conveniently located in Dover, NH, our Community Resource Hub will be the home for our monthly events, programming and a central place where families and community members can access resources.

To view our upcoming events and programming, please visit our website at [blmnh.org/events](http://blmnh.org/events) or scan the QR code.



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

We want New Hampshire to be a community where everyone can thrive.

The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation is honored to support the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire and its 19th Annual Black New England Conference so we can all continue to learn about our shared history and build a more inclusive New Hampshire community today.

The Foundation is committed to advancing equity, racial justice and economic security — to help make New Hampshire a community where we can all thrive, together.

37 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH | 603-225-6641 | [www.nhcf.org](http://www.nhcf.org)

BIPOC MONADNOCK  
Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region



The Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region project and website are a collaboration between the Historical Society of Cheshire County and the Monadnock Center for History and Culture. Sponsored by: Putnam Foundation, C&S Wholesale Grocers, NH Humanities, National Endowment for the Humanities



[BIPOCMONADNOCK.ORG](http://BIPOCMONADNOCK.ORG)

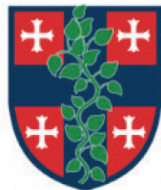




## RECKONINGS

*A local history platform for the community-archivist*

Please check out events and resources in the **Reckonings Community Network Series:**



**EPISCOPAL**  
CHURCH OF NH

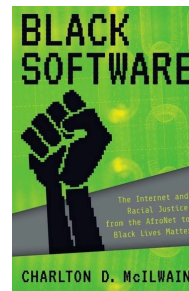
Loving, Living, Life Giving

The Reconciliation Commission  
of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire  
salutes the Black New England Conference  
for the celebration of Black life and truth telling  
*Thank you for helping to create a "Beloved Community"*

[www.nhepiscopal.org](http://www.nhepiscopal.org)

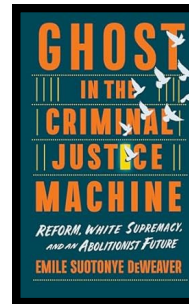
## 2025 Black New England Conference

### Suggested Reading List



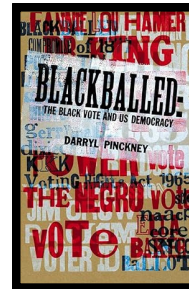
#### **Black Software: The Internet and Racial Justice**

This book traces how Black people have historically used the internet for organizing, social movements, and digital justice, which overlaps significantly with how social media has become a platform for entrepreneurship, activism, and culture.



#### **Ghost in the Criminal Justice Machine: Reform, White Supremacy, and an Abolitionist Future**

The book argues that white supremacy is the underlying cause of mass incarceration and that reform efforts are insufficient to address the problem. DeWeaver combines personal narrative with social commentary to critique the racial logic of the criminal justice system.



#### **Blackballed: The Black Vote and US Democracy**

In this combination of memoir, historical narrative, and contemporary political and social analysis, he investigates the struggle for black voting rights from Reconstruction through the civil rights movement to Barack Obama's two presidential campaigns.



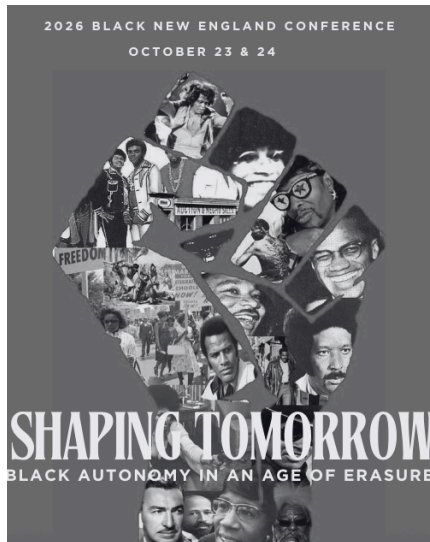
#### **Double Negative**

Gates demonstrates how reality shows such as Basketball Wives, comedians like Katt Williams, and movies like Coming to America play on "negative" images to take up questions of assimilation and upward mobility, provide a respite from the demands of respectability, and explore subversive ideas. By using negativity as a framework to illustrate these texts' social and political work as they reverberate across black culture, Gates opens up new lines of inquiry for black cultural studies.

# 2026 BNEC Call for Papers

## Shaping Tomorrow: Black Autonomy in an Age of Erasure

October 23–24, 2026



The 20th Annual Black New England Conference will bring together scholars, activists, artists, and community leaders to examine how Black communities have historically fought for autonomy - and how they are shaping tomorrow in the face of systemic erasure.

We invite proposals for papers, panels, and presentations that address one or more of the following themes:

- Self-Definition, Cultural Preservation, and Cultural Affirmation**
- Economic Empowerment**
- Building Community & Black Institutions**
- Resistance and Self-Defense**
- Political Engagement & Representation**

We welcome work that provides historical context, highlights contemporary struggles, or envisions future pathways toward autonomy and liberation. Submissions may take the form of scholarly papers, creative works, case studies, or community-based practices that address the conference theme.

### Submission Guidelines:

- Abstract (200–250 words) with title
- Short bio (100 words)
- Indicate whether individual paper, full panel, or alternative format proposal

Deadline for Submissions: June 10, 2026

Notification of Acceptance: July 30, 2026

Please send proposals to: [Quinci@blackheritagetrailnh.org](mailto:Quinci@blackheritagetrailnh.org)

# Welcome



On behalf of the Black Heritage Trail Board of Directors, the conference planning committee, our partners, staff, and volunteers, we welcome you to the 19th Annual Black New England Conference. This year's theme, "*The State of the Union*", invites us to reflect on 250 years of Black history in America and examine the progress, or lack thereof, in the pursuit of equality for African Americans.

As we near the nation's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we gather with a vibrant group of young content creators whose voices are shaping conversations on justice, culture, and identity in unprecedented ways. Their work on social media platforms demonstrates the power of storytelling to mobilize communities, influence perceptions, and drive social change.

Together, we will explore pressing challenges, including economic disparities, educational inequities, systemic racism in the criminal justice system, barriers to political engagement, and the importance of authentic representation in media and culture. These issues are not new, but the perspectives and strategies brought by this new generation of leaders provide fresh possibilities for progress.

This year's conference is not only about acknowledging the struggles and resilience of the past but also about envisioning the future. How can social media be harnessed to amplify voices, build movements, and create meaningful change? What will it take to ensure that the next 250 years bring us closer to the ideals of liberty and justice for all?

We look forward to robust discussions, thought-provoking presentations, and the inspiration that comes when voices across generations come together. Thank you for joining us. Your presence, your perspective, and your participation make this gathering possible.

Sincerely,

*JerriAnne Boggis*

JerriAnne Boggis, Executive Director BHTNH

# 2025 Black Heritage Trail of NH Citizen of the Year Award

A Chicago native born at the crossroads of working-class life, Black identity, and womanhood, **Shay Stewart-Bouley** has spent her career weaving these intersecting experiences into both her personal life and professional work. Initially working directly with marginalized groups, she later stepped into leadership roles in non-profit administration.

In the early 2000s, Shay relocated from Chicago to Maine. Living as a Black woman in one of the nation's least diverse states sharpened her voice and commitment to addressing race, justice, and equity. What began as reflections on daily life evolved into a powerful public platform: **Black Girl in Maine Media (BGIM)**. Through her widely read blog, Shay has challenged readers to confront issues of systemic racism, white supremacy, and privilege while also sharing her lived experiences as a Black middle-aged woman navigating predominantly white communities.



**Shay Stewart-Bouley**

Her writing has been recognized nationally, published in anthologies, and sustained through more than a decade of monthly columns for the *Portland Phoenix* under the title "Diverse-City." Beyond the written word, Shay has become a sought-after public voice. In 2016, she delivered a memorable TEDx talk, "**Inequity, Injustice... Infection,**" which shared her insights into the structural realities of modern struggles.

Since 2014, Shay has served as the Executive Director of Community Change Inc. (CCI), one of the nation's oldest organizations committed to challenging structural racism.

*For her steadfast dedication, her courage to speak truth in difficult spaces, and her ability to inspire collective action, we are honored to name Shay Stewart-Bouley the 2025 BHTNH Citizen of the Year.*

GIVE BLACK ALLIANCE  
PROUDLY SUPPORTS  
THE 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
BLACK  
NEW ENGLAND  
CONFERENCE

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY WE HELPED SHAPE.  
AS THE NATION TURNS 250, WE SPOTLIGHT BLACK BRILLIANCE,  
RESILIENCE, AND ECONOMIC POWER, OPENING THE POSSIBILITIES  
OF A FUTURE WE BUILD TOGETHER, DRIVING LASTING GENERATIONAL  
CHANGE.



INFORM. REFORM. TRANSFORM.

WE GIVE BLACK

WWW.GIVEBLACKALL.ORG

2026 ELINOR WILLIAMS HOOKER TEA TALK SERIES

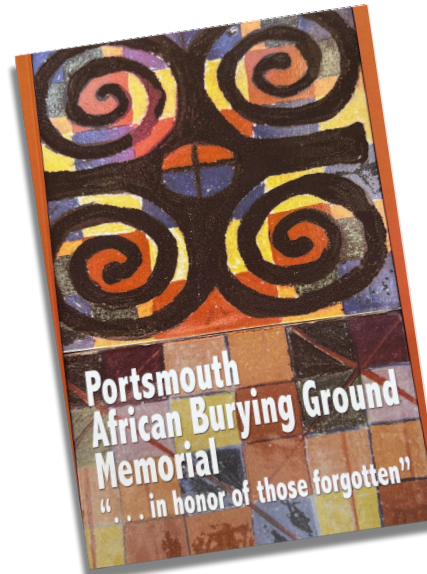


## Echoes of Power THE TRADITION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ORATORY

SUNDAYS, FEBRUARY 1 TO 22



This series of community dialogues illuminates the power, poetry, and persistence of African American oratory that continues to call the nation toward its highest ideals of liberty and democracy.



ORDER ONLINE!  
[blackheritagetrailnh.org/shop](http://blackheritagetrailnh.org/shop)

## Portsmouth African Burying Ground Memorial “...in honor of those forgotten”

The backhoe hit the coffin buried under Chestnut Street the morning of October 7, 2003. Work on the sewer line stopped. And a twelve-year journey began. A journey that led not only to the creation of Portsmouth's African Burying Ground Memorial, but also to an expanding awareness of New Hampshire's history of slavery. This journey brought together white and Black members of the Portsmouth community in a not always easy alliance to “honor those long forgotten.”

**\$25** plus shipping  
published by Black Heritage Trail of NH

# Acknowledgements

## Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire Volunteers

Sonya Arroyo, Ryan Cutting, Linda Cunningham, Jeannine Jacques, Nur Shoop, Valerie Sousa

## BHTNH Staff & Program Planning Committee

Gina Bowker, Janice Hastings, Nora Lewis, Dariya Steele, Barbara Ward, Bonnie Ward, Jake Webb, Quinci Worthey, Shelley Hartz, Rebecca Potter, Anne Romney

## Special Thanks

BHTNH is grateful to the Southern New Hampshire University staff, faculty, and student volunteers for helping to make this event successful. Specifically, we want to acknowledge the hard work of Jen Torres, Deanna Zanella, and Jada Hebra.

# 2026 Schedule of Events

BHTNH 2026 programs explore how African Americans have given voice to history, endured its challenges, and shaped the future despite persistent forces of erasure.

### Elinor Williams Hooker Tea Talks

Sundays, February 1-22

*Echoes of Power: The Tradition of African American Oratory*

### Juneteenth Celebration

June 8-19

*Harboring Hope: The Power of Resilience (The Amistad)*

### Frederick Douglass Community Readings

Saturday, June 27

“What to the Slave is Your Fourth of July?”

### 20th Annual Black New England Conference

October 23-24

*Shaping Tomorrow: Black Autonomy in an Age of Erasure*

### Sankofa Tours and Speakers

Available Throughout the Year

### Historic Marker Unveilings

April through October



**The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire (BHTNH)** promotes awareness and appreciation of African American history to build more inclusive communities across the Granite State. We are committed to telling these stories with accuracy and care, ensuring that the resilience, creativity, and struggles of African Americans are recognized as a vital part of New Hampshire's past and present.

## A LEGACY WITH STATEWIDE IMPACT

Founded by cultural historian and civil rights activist Valerie Cunningham, the Portsmouth Black Heritage Trail has grown over three decades into the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire. Today, with dozens of historic markers across the state—and more being added each year—the Trail uncovers stories that honor the contributions of Black men, women, and families who helped shape New Hampshire's history.

## BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

As we look toward the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, BHTNH is deepening its commitment to innovation and community engagement. Upcoming initiatives include:

- **The Ona Judge Mural** – A striking new mural on the side of our headquarters in Portsmouth honoring Ona Judge Staines, who escaped enslavement from George and Martha Washington and made her life in New Hampshire.
- **The *Amistad* at Portsmouth** – For Juneteenth 2026, we will welcome the historic schooner, the *Amistad*, to Portsmouth, creating an unforgettable opportunity to engage with history at the water's edge.
- **Expanding Historic Markers** – We continue to add new sites throughout New Hampshire, broadening public access to the stories that reveal the state's diverse and complex history.

With these initiatives and the continued development of our innovative outdoor museum, BHTNH is shaping a future where history is not only remembered but experienced in vivid, powerful ways. **The work of the Trail has never been more vital.** By celebrating the past, engaging the present, and imagining the future, we strive to build communities rooted in justice, truth, and resilience.

*For more information, please visit [blackheritagetrailnh.org](http://blackheritagetrailnh.org).*

# 2025 Black New England Conference Schedule

**9:00 AM - 10:00 AM**

**Registration Opens - Continental Breakfast**

**10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

**Round Table Discussion with Social Media Content  
Creators with Moderator Shay Stewart-Bouley**

This year's conference brings together a vibrant group of young content creators for a critical discussion on the progress, or lack thereof, of African Americans on the path toward social and cultural advancement in the United States.

**Presenters:**

- **Ebony JJ Curry**, Award-Winning Journalist
- **Cheyne McKnight**, Historical Interpreter & Educator, "Not Your Momma's History"
- **Antonio Saunders**, Entrepreneur, Influencer, Storyteller
- **Ronelle Tsheila**, Civil Rights Attorney, Litigation Fellow at the Lawyering Project

**Moderator:**

- **Shay Stewart-Bouley**, Executive Director, Community Change, Inc.

**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

**Facilitated Small Group Discussions with Individual  
Presenters and Participants**

**12:30 PM - 1:30 PM**

**Luncheon and Citizen of the year Award Presentation  
Citizen of the Year: Shay Stewart-Bouley**



As the Associate Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity, **Dr. Dottie Morris** is a member of the Keene State College President's Cabinet. Her main foci are providing support and direction to the Executive, Academic Affairs, Enrollment and Student Engagement, Advancement, and

Finance and Administration divisions of the college as the institution works to fulfill its commitment to diversity and multiculturalism. For years, Dottie has worked with undergraduate and graduate students in the capacity of counselor, teacher, academic advisor, and advisor of student groups. She has demonstrated a consistent and persistent dedication and devotion to diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism and social justice over the past two decades.

Prior to her position as Associate Vice President of Institutional Equity and Diversity at KSC, she served as the Associate Dean for Student Learning at the World Learning School for International Training Institute (SIT) in Brattleboro, VT; the Director of Student Affairs for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Antioch University New England in Keene; staff counselor at the Colorado State University Counseling Center; and the Coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program.

Dottie is also a Carsey Fellow for NH Listens. She currently serves as chair of the board of ACLU-NH.



University of  
New Hampshire

We are proud sponsors of the

**19th Annual Black New England Conference**

**CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Center for New England Culture  
Inclusive Excellence



# 2025 Black New England Conference Hosts



**JerriAnne Boggis** is the executive director of the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire, an organization that preserves, celebrates, and honors African-American history in the state. She is a writer, educator, and community activist whose work corrects the historical

record on the racial complexity and richness of New Hampshire's diverse past. Through the development of community programs, exhibits, and tours, Boggis has raised the awareness of New Hampshire's people of color and increased the visibility of Black history in the state. Boggis was named in 2015 by the New Hampshire Humanities Council as one of the 40 most influential New Hampshirites who have vastly enriched human understanding and whose original works and passion for excellence have put New Hampshire on the cultural map.



**Dr. Lowell "Chris" Matthews** is an associate professor of Global Business and Leadership at Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). At SNHU he has developed courses on white privilege, workplace diversity, and gender equity. His areas of expertise include leadership, human

resources, and strategic management. He volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire, City Year, and the Granite YMCA. He has served as chair of the board for DreamCatchers NH.



**Linda Harriott-Gathright** has served as NH State Representative for Hillsborough County District 10 since 2018, as well as a previous term from 2012-2014. She has 34 years of experience at Verizon, writing contracts for third-party vendors as well as procedures for technological

advancements. From West Philadelphia, Harriott-Gathright moved to New Hampshire to attend Daniel Webster College and has resided in Nashua for 44 years. With broad experience in local government and organizations such as the Greater Nashua Area NAACP, Harriott-Gathright's career is characterized by building positive communication in the community where everyone will be heard and taken seriously.

## Keynote Conversation

**1:30 PM - 2:30 PM**

### Keynote Conversation featuring Lynae Vane and Shannon LaNier

Join in the conversation as this powerhouse panel of today's leading social media influencers brings fresh perspectives and sharp insights to this timely discussion. Shannon LaNier and Lynae Vane will address questions about media role in Black storytelling, forging opportunities through creativity, and what it means to be Black in America on the eve of its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



**2:30 PM - 3:00 PM**

### Closing Remarks & Networking Opportunity

Thank you for joining us for the **19th Annual Black New England Conference**. The voices, stories, and ideas shared here remind us that the work of justice and inclusion is ongoing. As we approach the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, may the conversations begun in these sessions continue to inspire action and resilience in the days ahead. We look forward to gathering with you again next year for the **20th Annual Black New England Conference, Shaping Tomorrow: Black Autonomy in an Age of Erasure**.

# 2025 Black New England Conference

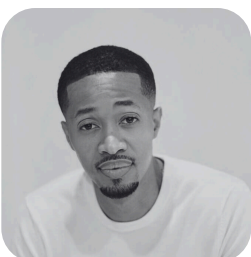
## Presenter Biographies



Award-winning writer **Ebony JJ Curry's** extensive background in journalism is underscored by her dedication to telling impactful stories that spotlight the advancement of the Black community through politics, economic development, community engagement, and social justice.



**Cheyney McKnight** is an African American historical interpreter and educator, known for her interpretation company and online handle **Not Your Momma's History**. She uses her clothing and primary sources to make connections between past and present events through performance art pieces.



**Antonio Saunders** is an entrepreneur and storyteller who created the **HFD Model (Humanity, Freedom, and Dreams)**, a framework that shifts the paradigm from simply fighting injustice to proactively building social progress. He is also the founder of **Kriseles**, a company that partners with CEOs and executives to cultivate future-ready organizations.



**Ronelle Tshiela** is a litigation fellow with the **Lawyering Project**, where she works to challenge laws nationwide that restrict or undermine reproductive health, rights, and justice. While still in high school, she co-founded Black Lives Matter New Hampshire, becoming one of the youngest voices for racial justice in the state.



**Shay Stewart-Bouley** is the executive director of Community Change Inc., a Boston-based anti-racism organization. She is the creator of the award-winning site, **Black Girl in Maine**, where she blogs on matters of race and aging. Her work has been featured in a number of national publications and anthologies, including **Yes Magazine** and **The Huffington Post**.



Three-time NAACP Image Award Nominee **Lynae Vanee** is a profoundly multifaceted talent, shining as a poet, producer, director, and starring personality. Hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, Lynae's academic journey is as impressive as her digital presence. Holding a degree from Spelman College and a Master's Degree in African

American Studies from Boston University, Lynae's influence extends to traditional media as well, notably as the host of *Revolt's* "The People's Brief." In this role, she brings her signature insightful commentary and sharp analysis to a broader audience, breaking down complex issues into understandable and engaging segments, further cementing her reputation as a vital voice in contemporary discourse.

For the past five years, Lynae has meticulously crafted her brand around the powerful mantra, "keeping it Black but keeping it brief." This philosophy guides her in delivering critical context on today's most pressing issues in a manner that is both succinct and highly stylized.

As a creator, Lynae has also partnered with numerous brands, leveraging her authentic voice to connect with diverse audiences.



A veteran television host, social media influencer, and author, **Shannon LaNier** is currently a television news anchor/host with News 12. He hosts two shows, "Road Trip" and "Be Well." Previously, you may have seen Shannon anchoring on the nationally syndicated network BNC (Black News Channel), or CW39's morning show in

Houston, TX. Before that, he was in NYC hosting the star-studded global culture and entertainment series "Arise Entertainment 360," for BET, and was a correspondent/Sr. Producer on *Black Enterprise Magazine's* nationally-syndicated shows: "Black Enterprise Business Report" and "Our World With Black Enterprise."



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