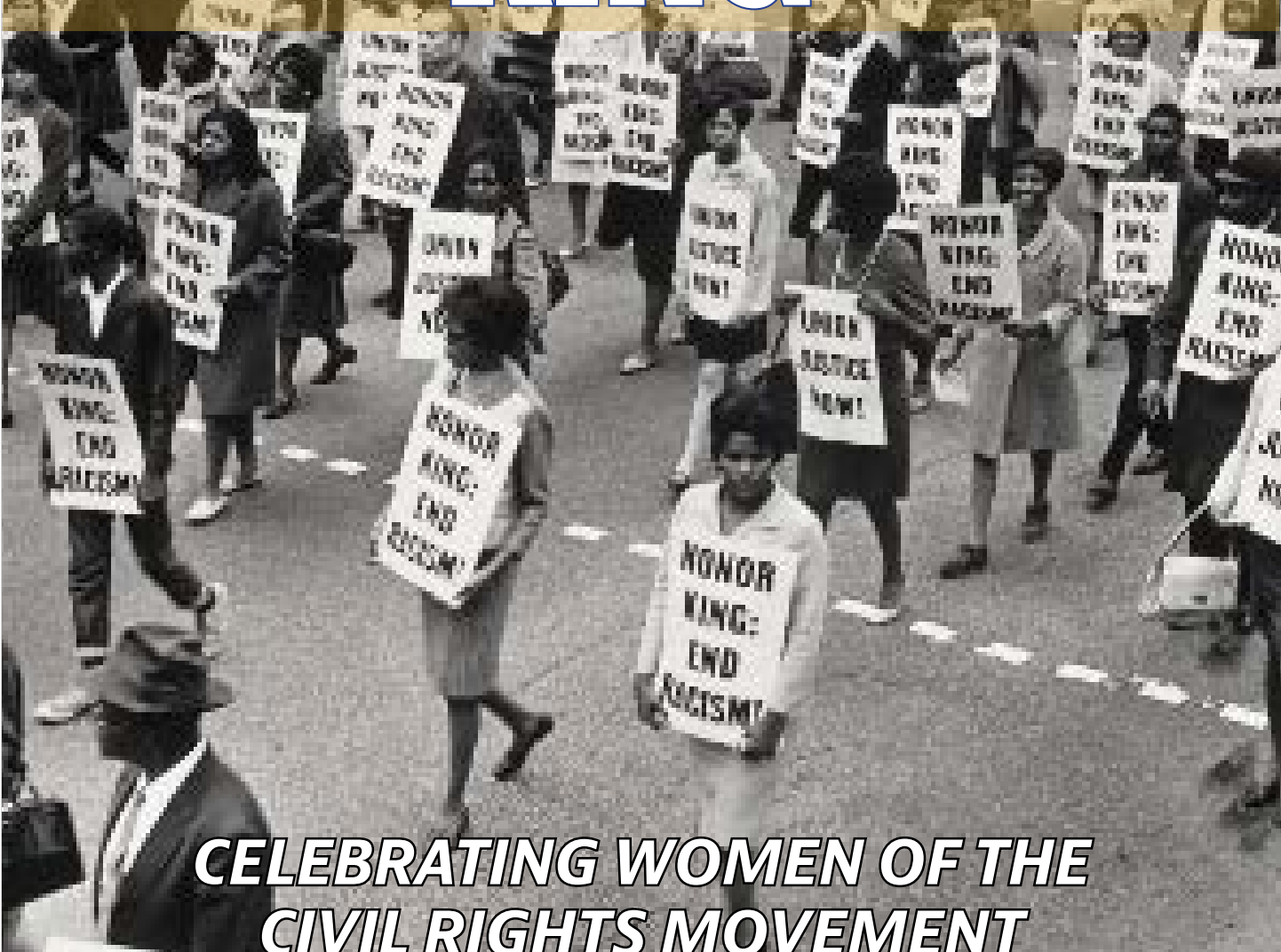


40TH ANNIVERSARY

THE REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER

KING

JR. WESTSIDE COALITION



***CELEBRATING WOMEN OF THE  
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT***

***LET'S MAKE REAL THE PROMISE OF LIBERTY  
AND JUSTICE FOR ALL***

**JANUARY 20, 2025 • 11:00AM**

**John Adams Middle School Performing Arts Center •  
2425 16th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405**



## **PROGRAM OF CELEBRATION**

MC	Opening Words - Maleeyah Frazier
INVOCATION	Kathleen Benjamin, Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council
WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	Dr. Bernice Brown, Chair, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition
GUEST SPEAKERS	Los Angeles County The City of Santa Monica
PRESENTATION	Beth Guynn, board member, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Westside Coalition
EDUCATION AWARDS PRESENTATION and ACCEPTANCE	Presented by Katherine Quinn, Chair, Education Award Committee, to Awardees
PERFORMANCE	SIRE
COMMUNITY LIGHT AWARD PRESENTATION and ACCEPTANCE	Presented by Erika Lesley, Chair, Community Light Award Committee, to SGI-USA, Ian McIlraith, SGI-USA Director of Community Relations
PERFORMANCE	Alexander Hamilton High School Dance Team
INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER	Michele Prince, board member, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition
KEYNOTE SPEAKER	Sonya Young Adam, CEO, California Black Women's Health Project
PRESENTATION	In Memoriam and Appreciation
PERFORMANCE	"WE SHALL OVERCOME" - by everyone
BENEDICTION	
CLOSING REMARKS	Dr. Bernice Brown, Chair, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition

# PERFORMANCE

## HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL DANCE

Performing "Freedom"  
Music by: Pharrell Williams

Hamilton High School Dance: A Legacy of Movement and Expression Hamilton High School's dance program is a vibrant and dynamic hub for aspiring dancers, offering a diverse range of styles and opportunities for students of all levels. From beginners discovering their passion for movement to seasoned performers honing their technique, Hamilton Dance provides a supportive and challenging environment for artistic growth.

Under the direction of Latrece Douglas, students in the Academy of Music and Performing Arts (AMPA) explore their creativity, expression, and individuality as performers. Students study the foundational art of dance through ballet, modern, and jazz techniques, providing a strong base for further exploration in other styles. This emphasis on personal growth within a structured artistic framework allows students to develop not only their technical skills but also their unique artistic voices. More importantly, students are motivated, driven, and inspired towards their futures, both within and beyond the world of dance. They actively seek to gain experience as artists and performers, building a strong portfolio and foundation in preparation for future studies in dance and related fields.

The program boasts a rich history of excellence, with a strong emphasis on both technical proficiency and artistic expression. Students are encouraged to explore their own unique voices through dance, developing not only their physical skills but also their creativity and confidence. Hamilton Dance is more than just a program; it's a family. It's a place where students can discover their passion, develop their skills, and build lifelong memories. The program instills valuable life lessons such as discipline, teamwork, and perseverance, preparing students for success both on and off the stage.

# PERFORMANCE



This multi-talented artist's domain knows no bounds. He is equally at home in an intimate cabaret setting or a large concert stage which he has shared with many seasoned performers such as Alicia Keys, Erykah Badu, Deborah Harry, Billy Ocean, Dave Coz, and Stevie Wonder just to name a few.

Since 2004 Sire has received an endless demand for his Barry White Tributes. When he joined the Pleasure Unlimited Orchestra in Germany, he felt honored enough to be a temporary replacement but has continued performing as the frontman to date for sold-out concert halls in Europe and throughout since 2009. His flawless simulation has received rave reviews and earned him the title of The First International Barry White Tribute artist from the USA. He is now the proprietor of the Barry White Experience managed by Europolis Entertainment Productions.

Sire released a worldwide CD titled "Strong Enough" that contains his Royal Compilation of original Neo-Soul love songs and Electrifying Dance Mixes. Also, currently released special singles titled, "At Christmas," "That Kind of Love" and "Just Stay" which reached No. 11 on the UK Soul Chart Breakers.

Sire has received mass acclaim after solo spot in national commercials for Little Caesars Pizza, Salesforce, TILE, and Discover Card featuring superstars like Jennifer Coolidge, Cardi B, and the hit music video, "2 Dollar Bill" with 2chainz, Lil Wayne and E40. Sire was sought out to guest star on TV shows such as the Tim and Eric Awesome Show "Great Job!" "To Tell The Truth", Jupiter Jones and his break-out role as SWAN on a new Disney series titled SATURDAYS with an amazing cast, such as rap legends, YoYo and the Dabrat, Golden Brooks, Omar Gooding, and more.

Whether on stage, on the screen, in the clubs, or on the radio, Sire continues to entice his audience with charm, charisma, spontaneous wit, and song.

# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



## JOSEPH BURNEY

### ALEXANDER HAMILTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

**Joseph Burney** is a senior at Alexander Hamilton Senior High School in Los Angeles, California. His principal interests are politics and philosophy, which he has read, researched, argued and written about most. Joseph also finds joy in various genres of music. He plays the violin, since the 6th grade, and is a member of his school's orchestra. At school, he's taken on leadership roles in the orchestra as 1st violin, concertmaster, etc., as well as served as President of the Black Student Union and Student Deserves Advocacy group.

Joseph plans to major in Philosophy at a 4-year college/university and eventually matriculate to law school for a career as an attorney, a professor, or a legal scholar, to pursue his fight for advocacy and activism.

# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



## GRACE FARRIS

### EL SEGUNDO HIGH SCHOOL

**Grace Farris** is a 17-year-old senior at El Segundo High School. She has a passion for helping people and creating a sense of community and inclusivity. She has taken on leadership roles as Spirit Commissioner, Choir Officer, Student Body Treasurer, and Varsity Cheer Captain. Grace is also Friendship Circle President for a club that combines the school's special education students with typical students to allow everyone to feel included, valued, and part of an open, safe space.

These roles have allowed Grace to realize her passion for helping others, fostering community, and understanding problems, leading her to the decision to pursue politics in the future to make a difference on a larger scale.



# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



**JOSHUA LESLEY**

## **SANTA MONICA HIGH SCHOOL**

**Joshua Lesley** is a 17-year-old senior at Santa Monica High School and values family and community. He is involved in various school activities. He is Parliamentarian for the Black Student Union, which is also a community he is grateful to turn to during stressful times or just when he needs help. Joshua plays football and runs track as outlets for managing his stress. He has also been the Captain for the track team. Outside of school, he is the Vice President of the Youth Leadership Council at the Police Activities League.

Joshua plans to attend Santa Monica College, and major in Finance. He then plans to transfer to UCLA or USC to pursue entrepreneurship.



# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



## **MINA LOY-CHECEL**

### **NEW WEST CHARTER PLUS SCHOOL**

**Mina Loy Checel** is a senior at New West Charter Plus School, where she is a part of the Cross Country running team. She is also a teaching assistant for her sophomore World Literature English class. She finds joy in writing and her favorite subject is Math. Mina is co-president of the Youth Buddhist Association at her temple and has been a Girl Scout since kindergarten.

She works at Starbucks, as a Barista and her favorite drink is a Matcha Latte. Mina also does CrossFit and Junior Lifeguards. In her free time, she enjoys going on hikes, swimming at the beach, and spending time with friends.

Mina plans to continue all of these activities and hopes to attend UC Santa Barbara or UC Berkeley.

# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



**IJEOMO TYLER OKO**

**ALEXANDER HAMILTON HIGH SCHOOL**

**Ijeomo Oko**, better known as Tyler, is a 17-year-old senior at Alexander Hamilton High School. She is involved in the Black Student Union (BSU) serving as Secretary, United Black Student Unions of California (UBSUC) serving on the board as Sergeant at Arms, Dance Team as Captain, Dance, and Senior Class. BSU helps to promote black excellence and UBSUC's goal is to improve and bring the system of BSU to every school in California.

With dance being a huge part of her entire life, Tyler intends on going to a 4-year college, ideally either Grambling State University or UC Irvine, to double major in Dance and Psychology.

# 2025 EDUCATION AWARDS



## ANANDA SEARCY

### SANTA MONICA HIGH SCHOOL

**Ananda Searcy** is a senior student-athlete at Santa Monica High School where she is all about empowerment and making a difference. She is the Treasurer of the Black Student Union and also, serves as the Treasurer for her city's Our Girls Rock Young Women Empowerment Program. It's important to Ananda to uplift her peers and create spaces where they can all thrive. She is also heavily involved in sports, having managed her football team and will be managing her basketball team.

Ananda is really interested in Sports Psychology and Clinical Psychology and dreams of playing professional flag football in college and beyond, and is aiming for the 2028 Olympics. She's been accepted to Cottey College in Nevada, Missouri, where she plans to blend her love for sports with her academic interests.

# **SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL - USA**

Recipient of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Westside Coalition  
Community Light Award 2025



CREDIT: SOKAGLOBAL.ORG

The Soka Gakkai is a global community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. Its members in 192 countries and territories around the world study and put into practice the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism.

The conviction that individual happiness and the realization of peace are inextricably linked is central to the Soka Gakkai, as is a commitment to dialogue and nonviolence. In times of increasing polarization where people are unsure of whom to trust or how to best move forward, the SGI Buddhist community and individual members take inspiration from their dynamic and positive religious practice and strive to be an ongoing source of hope and courage in their families, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

Reaching across age, ethnic, geographic, and other “traditional” dividing lines, they work to create a new era of respect for the dignity of all life. Additional areas of community activism include peace, culture, disaster relief, sustainability, and education.

For more information, please visit [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org) and [buddhability.org](http://buddhability.org)

Soka Gakkai International – USA (SGI-USA) is the American branch of the Soka Gakkai’s international network with its national headquarters here in Santa Monica since 1968. SGI-USA is proud to have been an active member of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition for more than 30 years and honored to have hosted this annual celebration for some 15 years.

# **KEYNOTE SPEAKER SONYA YOUNG AADAM**



During the 54th Annual NAACP Image Awards, Sonya Young Adam, CEO of California Black Women's Health Project, was honored with this year's "Unsung Heroes" award. The NAACP and Metamucil presented the "Unsung Heroes" honors to individuals who, like Sonya, make exceptional contributions to society and the success of missions or projects, but who do not receive widespread recognition for their efforts. The sunset on 'Women's History Month' and the sunrise on 'National Minority Health Month,' presents an opportunity to celebrate Sonya's nearly 9 years of leadership and dedication to Black women's health advocacy, health disparities reduction, and better health and wellness for Black communities.

# DONORS

## NAME

## DESIGNATION

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Community Involvement Fair

California Black Women's Health Project

Community Involvement Fair

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L.A. County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath

Community Involvement Fair

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SGI-USA Santa Monica Pacific Peace Center

Community Involvement Fair

Santa Monica Sister City Association

Community Involvement Fair

Untitled No. 1 School

Community Involvement Fair

Santa Monica Conservancy

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Santa Monica Bay Women's Club

Community Involvement Fair

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Community Involvement Fair

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Community Involvement Fair

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Temple Mishkon Tephilo

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RAND Corporation	Founders' Circle
Santa Monica City Council, City of Santa Monica	Founders' Circle Program Grant
Santa Monica Westside Legacy Fund for Women and Girls	Founders' Circle Major Grant Endowment
Norma A. Harris	Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award Endowment
Michele Wittig, Board Member and Curt Wittig	Sue Schuerman & Sally Mendelsohn Award Endowment
Sue Schuerman	Sue Schuerman & Sally Mendelsohn Award Endowment
Nathaniel Trives, Co-Founder & Board Member	Lillie Bell Blakley Award Endowment





**THE  
REV. DR. MARTIN  
LUTHER KING JR.  
WESTSIDE COALITION**

<https://mlkjrwestside.org>

*Please continue to spread the joy of our celebration by attending the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Community Involvement Fair immediately following the program in the Performance Studio next door. Refreshments will be provided.*