

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (6/16)- Hundreds of people from all over the Bay Area gathered at the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco in an effort to celebrate Juneteenth, a holiday commemorating the anniversary when African-Americans were made aware of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas, officially freeing slaves throughout the entire country. Kimberly Ellis, Executive Director of Emerge California, proudly stated, "I think this is a wonderful way for the African-American community to celebrate the achievements that it is making in terms of progress as a people and a community..."

Brigette R. LeBlanc, Co-Chair of the SFAACC Juneteenth Committee, told attendees, "We are honored that you are here today to help celebrate Juneteenth! We love this event as we take the time to recognize those individuals who are working hard in business and those who are working to change lives in the communities they serve. This event acknowledges African-Americans official notification of freedom from bondage and slavery. This celebration allows us a moment to reflect on our past and stand proud as a people who continue to achieve what was once thought to be impossible..."

Frederick E. Jordan, President and Board Chairman of the SFAACC stated, "Please accept this warm welcome to the 27th Juneteenth Luncheon Celebration of the San Francisco African-American Chamber of Commerce (SFAACC). This years theme, "Determining Our Future, Beyond Business Survival, " highlights our focus of not dwelling on the past, but moving beyond the "sustaining and maintaining" to the next level. The way we do this is to concentrate our efforts on "leveling the playing field" through advocacy for business opportunities, education, training, workshops, public relations, networking and also as required, protesting , filing legal complaints and putting new laws and ordinances in place..."

Ruth M. Bolden-Mays, Executive Director of the SFAACC, said, "We have so much in store for you, we hope you will enjoy meeting all our sponsors and our great awardees in addition to celebrating their achievements. The honorees, today, are examples of African-American excellence in San Francisco. They are trailblazers in their own rights. Their leadership in developing community and corporate partnerships will ensure that they will not be the last. They are leaders who have stepped forward to achieve difficult goals, while envisioning what needs to happen and motivating others..."

According to its charter, "The San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce (SFAACC) is one of California's most influential minority business organizations, representing and promoting African American business owners in San Francisco. Through advocacy and economic development, SFAACC is creating a firm economic base that supports the self-determination and survival of African American businesses..."

For the most part, luncheon guests expressed pride and satisfaction over the event. Ruby LeBlanc stated, "Today's event was amazing! The event ran smoothly from the speakers to the honorees. I thoroughly enjoyed my daughter Brigette LeBlanc winning the "Beyond the Call of Duty" award, an award that she absolutely deserves. Rayneeka Jones echoed those sentiments saying, "I enjoyed the event. I was really proud of my cousin Bridget along with all of the people who won awards today..." Doris White, also echoed many of those sentiments saying, "I thought it was a beautiful and well-attended event, from the speakers to the awardees. It was a wonderful venue. The Hyatt-Regency Hotel went so far as to have African-American employees work and intermingle with attendees. It is often these little details that we often forget to negotiate for. I am certainly proud of the achievements that were made..."

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