



THE DEEP BENCH

The Office of African American Affairs is proud to recognize the many Black professionals throughout New Mexico who are committed to impacting the lives of Black New Mexicans. Their education, expertise, and experience have provided them the poise to be leaders in their careers, in the public and private sectors.

Each month we are recognizing three individuals, spotlighting their accomplishments and their impact on New Mexico. If you would like to nominate a Black professional (or yourself) to be included, please send your name and contact information to AndreaT.Watson@state.nm.us.



Dr. Henrietta Williams Pichon

Interim Dean College of Education
New Mexico State University

Dr. Henrietta Williams Pichon is currently serving as the Interim Dean in the College of Education at New Mexico State University. Dr. Pichon is a native of New Orleans, LA. She earned her Bachelor's of Arts in English and Master's of Education in Secondary English Education from Louisiana Tech University. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education Administration (Higher Education) from the University of New Orleans. She has over 25 years of experience in higher education.

She has been at New Mexico State University (NMSU) since Fall 2013. Prior to joining the faculty at NMSU, Dr. Pichon held several professional staff administrative positions at the University of New Orleans, that focused on student retention initiatives of historically underserved students. She has held several faculty positions at Rowan University (New Jersey) and Northwestern State University (Louisiana). Dr. Pichon's current research, teaching, and service interest focus on access, persistence, and development of historically underserved populations in higher education. This includes teaching courses such as elements of research, student services, multicultural leadership, the college student, etc.... She has published articles in peer-reviewed journals and books on using social justice in the classroom, the Black student experience at Hispanic Serving Institutions, community ecology model of socio-academic integration of minoritized students, sense of belonging and community, etc... Also, she serves on committees and outreach to communities that allow her to focus on access, persistence, and development of these underserved groups in higher education. Dr. Pichon is a proud proud resident of New Mexico,

What do you believe are the strengths of the NM Black Community?

We have a small yet mighty Black community in New Mexico. We have a rich oral history of our experiences in the region. I am excited about the work of the African American Office in that it seeks to inform the community of local, state, and regional initiatives. We have opportunities to come together as a community and work toward our needs. I like that we have continued to be impactful in industries in New Mexico. Although small in numbers, we have touched all of New Mexico.

What can NM do to attract more Blacks to our state?

I think New Mexico can continue to be its authentic self in showing a rich culture that focuses all—Native American, Mexican-American/Latino, Black, White, etc.... contributions to present-day New Mexico. We need to create ways to inform people who are interested in the rich history of Blacks in the Southwest as well as current initiatives (community-based, social, and entertainment).

What do you want your influence on the NM Black Community to Be?

As a New Mexican, I see myself as an educational leader and mentor. As an educational leader, I would like to use my influence and impact to help others achieve their educational and professional goals, rather than through my teaching, research, and service, and/or outreach. I enjoy my work as a faculty member and welcome the multiple opportunities I have been given to grow. Additionally, I am open to working with individuals seeking mentors. Over the years, I have had the great opportunity to grow and learn with many students, faculty, staff, and community members. I feel as though I have learned as much from them as they have learned from me. I have engaged in different types of mentoring: one-on-one, group, intergenerational, multiracial, and multigender. When recently asked my legacy or what I would like individuals to learn about me is "living and learning through adversity." We all live the best life we can within the circumstances that we find ourselves. Some are good and some are not. When things are not good, you still have to continue living and learning because it is through overcoming that adversity that you become stronger. And as an educational leader and mentor, I can only be my authentic self and hope that others can learn a little something from me.





Charles Ashley III

CEO & Founder
Cultivating Coders

Charles Ashley III is CEO & Founder of Cultivating Coders, a New Mexico-based company that provides technical training and curriculum in web and mobile application development to K-12 schools in tribal, rural, and overlooked urban areas that lack resources in coding and computer science education. Prior to his current role, Charles was a Marketing & Strategy Consultant for several clients including Harmonix Technologies, VARA Wines, and DeVry University. He previously served as Film Liaison & Marketing Manager for Bernalillo County's Economic Development Department in New Mexico and was Manager of Marketing for CNM's STEMulus Center. Charles is an equal part, a successful businessman, and a passionate community advocate. Charles is the type of person who can identify an efficient and effective way to do something and then execute on it. For this reason, he's hopeful that his compassion for educational opportunities, combined with his business acumen, can contribute to the positive growth in overlooked communities.

What do you believe are the strengths of the NM Black Community?

Our strength in the Black Community is in our limited number because it allows us to collaborate with one another at a quicker pace. The small Black population in this state is not a weakness. I have learned to look at it in the sense of how we can utilize our small numbers and maximize our potential and resources.

What do you want your influence on the NM Black Community to Be?

One can influence people in so many ways. Speaking to my influence as a company owner, I aim to get as many Black kids as possible into Computer Science and prepare them for high-level tech jobs. My influence lies also in the investment in people, to pay it forward. I want to invest in people the way I wanted people to invest in me when I was young. I told myself if I was ever in a position to do it, I would help in that way because there were a lot of business people who could've invested in me but didn't. Finally, on a personal level, I believe we are here to serve others, something that often gets lost in the day-to-day routine.

What can NM do to attract more Blacks to our state?

As I said, the small population of Blacks in this state is a strength, not a weakness. However, New Mexico needs to take an honest look at how we treat the Black Community. Does the Black Community feel welcome here? In a poll, you might see that only half would say they feel included. Inclusion goes a long way, and it would lead to more Black people staying here. Furthermore, it's not just about attracting more Black people; it's really about preventing Black kids from leaving. So the question should be: what can New Mexico do to keep its Black kids in the state as they become adults.



Dr. Aisha Jones DNP, FNP-BC

Director of Inpatient Advanced
Practice Providers
UNM Hospital

Dr. Aisha Jones is a compassionate, dedicated provider serving the community. She knew at a young age that nursing was her calling and over the past 22 years she has touched many lives and has accomplished a great deal in her nursing career. Dr. Jones is a native of New Mexico. She began her healthcare career in high school. She graduated as a Licensed Practical Nurse from the Career Enrichment Center in Albuquerque, NM, and then went on to get her bachelor's degree in Nursing from New Mexico State University. Doctor Jones received her master's degree as a Nurse Practitioner from the University of New Mexico, and her Doctor of Nursing Practice from the University of Alabama. Her motto is "work smarter not harder." She is a devoted practitioner, a mother, and considered a friend by many people. Her passion for people is evident in her unwavering quest to connect individuals to healthcare resources and services and empower her patients to understand and to actively participate in the improvement and maintenance of their health.

Dr. Jones is currently a member of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, the Albuquerque Chapter of the Links Member, W.I.N (What's important now), and a member of the UNMH Adult Hospital WIDE PFAC.

She is a devoted practitioner, a mother, and considered a friend by many people.

What do you believe are the strengths of the NM Black Community?

I feel the strength of the NM Black Community is the variety of talent. I am amazing the vast number of skills we have amongst us. The sad part is we're not very good at collaboration or celebration of successes. This year has I feel brought us together, the virtual platforms allowed others to be more involved and engaged. I hope this newfound unity grows beyond the virtual.

What do you want your influence on the NM Black Community to Be?

I want my influence on the community is one of support and connection. They say it about whom you know and not what you know. Being in healthcare I want to be able to empower us to navigate the resources and services we need. We have comorbidities and risks that we don't address. One is mental health, we as a people have been through so much and the comment of stay strong is not always the best. It's okay not to be okay and we need to seek out the right support and not be ashamed. We are human and divinely made by God's creation.

What can NM do to attract more Blacks to our state?

We could do more by highlighting us nationally so others can see and maybe spark interest on wow look at New Mexico Black community that is somewhere I would like to be. We need more collaborative events. Big events. We need to get our small business known so we can support and promote.

Office of African American Affairs
310 San Pedro NE Suite 230
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108

Due to the temporary closing of OAAA, we are sending out content concerning COVID-19 and information that affects the African American Community.

If you have any questions, please call
505-383-6222.

Andrea Tammy Watson: andreat.watson@state.nm.us

