



SEPTEMBER 2021 | ISSUE

# THE DEEP BENCH

A Monthly Newsletter by The Office of African American Affairs

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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 has poised them 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](mailto:AndreaT.Watson@state.nm.us).

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## Michelle Bean

Director of Health Information Management  
Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center

**Dr. Michelle P. Bean** is the Director of Health Information Management at Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And the Founder and President of PINK "ME"® nonprofit breast organization in Rio Rancho, New Mexico.

She believes that one of the key management traits of leadership is consistency. Thereby, cultivating a positive trusting environment and accountability behaviors of success. As a breast cancer survivor, one of her goals is to provide additional resource options, financial assistance/support and share the importance of breast cancer awareness to other women and families that experience the many facets of breast cancer. Dr. Bean is a proud graduate of Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Health Information Management. She obtained her Master of Science degree in Human Services with a specialization in Health Care Administration from Capella University. In constant pursuit of education, she completed her Ph.D. in Human Services. Dr. Bean enjoys volunteering and mentoring others. She is a member of the American Health Information Management Association. She also served as Secretary/Treasurer and President of the New Mexico Health Information Management Association.

She was awarded and recognized for her leadership, ongoing commitment, and dedicated service by the NMHIMA Board of Directors. And she is a proud member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated.

She enjoys running, 5,000 pieces jigsaw puzzles, volunteering in the community, and spending quality time with her family.

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

The statistical information currently reflects that the population of African-Americans in New Mexico is 2-3%, therefore challenging the potential influences of younger generations to see those that are reflected as they are, to provide the sense of seeing others in leadership roles, throughout the spectrum of professional settings, and community-service involvement. The strengths of the NM Black Community can be leveraged because of its smaller size, the quality of awareness and the sense of community to provide various services, programs, resources, and community building can be accomplished.

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

I would like my influence in the NM Black Community to be remembered as someone who is well-rounded, professional, and compassionate to give back to those who seek help, guidance, mentoring, and using my platform in the best way possible to reach those in our state with a sense of hope. Although challenged with my health journey, I preserved and built an organization to help others.

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

To attract more Blacks to New Mexico, I think we need to create and embrace the need for more professional job opportunities, thereby increasing the engagement of our community to consider moving their families and telling their friends. New Mexico has amazing weather, seasons, and views. Increasing the recruitment options with professional associations and organizations is another option as well to attract more Blacks in our state.



## **Torri A. Jacobus**

Director/Managing  
Assistant  
City Attorney  
City of Albuquerque  
Office of Civil Rights

**Torri Jacobus** is the director of the City of Albuquerque's Office of Civil Rights and Managing Assistant City Attorney in the Office of the City Attorney. She is expanding the City's initiatives related to documenting and addressing civil rights. Additionally, she provides legal guidance to the City of Albuquerque in an effort to develop, promote, and implement policies reflecting the City's commitment to equity and inclusion. Before joining the Office of Civil Rights, Torri served as the Director of the Center for Self Help and Dispute Resolution for the Second Judicial District Court. She worked to further develop and managed the settlement facilitation and arbitration programs, and she managed services to self-represented litigants in the largest court in New Mexico. Torri serves on several Boards and Commissions which focus on increasing equity in the legal profession and larger community. She is Chair of the New Mexico Supreme Court Commission on Equity and Justice, which is charged to study inequity and bias in the state's justice system, and to promote diversity among judges and judicial employees. Additionally, she serves on the New Mexico Board of Bar Examiners and the Board of Directors of the University of Arkansas Law Alumni Society.

Torri is Chair of the City of Albuquerque Domestic Violence Task Force and Vice-President of the New Mexico Black Lawyers Association. She is also a past president of the Junior League of Albuquerque.

Originally from Louisiana, Torri earned her bachelor's degree from Xavier University of Louisiana, her master's degree from the University of Tulsa, and graduated from the University of Arkansas School Of Law. When not working, Torri can be found with her husband and three children or enjoying a novel.

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

First, the New Mexico Black Community has a keen ability to come together to make a purposeful change. Although the community is small compared to many other states, we are tight-knit and well-connected, and we look out for each other. In the last 18 months, we have supported many of our own community members, helping them to become City and State leaders. These leaders are serving as role models and being key decision-makers when it comes to legislation and allocation of resources. With their leadership, our community will grow and strengthen. Additionally, Black youth in New Mexico are recognizing the power in their voices. They are leading efforts toward social change by educating their elders. For example, youth leadership pushed the Black City and State leaders to embrace legislation that prohibits race discrimination based on a hairstyle. Because of the initiative of these Black youth, Albuquerque became the 9th city to pass the CROWN (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act. Soon after, the State of New Mexico also passed the most inclusive hair discrimination law in the country that is based on the CROWN Act.

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

I want to demonstrate that Black female professionals can rise to lead City and state departments. I hope that my work and my presence in our community shows Black youth that it is more than okay to take up space in

the world. We can create the paths that we want to walk and forge tangible changes to help our community and the world. I also want to serve as a strong advocate for the Black community and other communities of People of Color. I hope that, through my work and through my service, I will be remembered as one who stood strong for the Black community in New Mexico and fought for Black New Mexicans to be respected at every turn.

### **What can NM do to attract more Black people to our state?**

First, we need to work on reducing the inequities that Black people face in New Mexico. For example, we must focus on reducing the pay gap. NM and the City of Albuquerque have made progress on this issue, but there is more to do. We need to advocate for laws and policies that directly uplift our communities.

Second, we need to make our strong Black leadership more visible nationally and show that they have already taken on these charges and will continue to work hard for our communities. Although the Black community is smaller here than in many places, we are very active and dedicated to all of these initiatives. We should inform Black people around the country about our community's activism and commitment to our own upliftment.



## Harold Yeldell

Associate Labs Director and Chief Security Officer, Infrastructure Operations  
Sandia National Laboratories

**Harold Yeldell** is the Infrastructure Operations Associate Labs Director and Chief Security Officer for Sandia National Laboratories. Harold S. Yeldell provides leadership to effectively and efficiently manage infrastructure operations, including safeguards and security, environmental protection and waste management, and Sandia's facilities and construction. Harold joined Sandia, moving from North Carolina to New Mexico, in September of 2020. In this role, Harold leads his division's four centers: Facilities Program Integration, Strategic Planning, and Capital Acquisition; Safeguards and Security; Infrastructure Services; and Facilities Management and Engineering. Harold has deep experience in operations, maintenance, engineering, work management, and construction.

Prior to his most recent role as a consultant for Duke Energy, Harold served as the director of project management and construction services for Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), where he led a staff of more than 620 people, managed multiple projects simultaneously, met all DOE milestones and improved safety metrics.

Prior to joining SRNS, Harold served in a variety of leadership roles for several energy companies in the areas of nuclear power, construction, and operations and maintenance.

After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy with a bachelor's degree in marine engineering, Harold served as a naval officer on two nuclear-powered submarines for six years. He earned his MBA from Tulane University.

### **What might people be surprised to learn about you?**

"I'm actually shy, and it's hard for me to get to know people. I'm trying to get involved because I don't know anybody here. I relocated to an area that I'm totally unfamiliar with. The openness of the land, the mountains that look like you could reach out and touch them – everything about this place is new to me, and I'm determined to make this work. This is the last job of my career, and I want to do well here and finish out my career at Sandia."

### **What is your favorite thing about New Mexico?**

"The people and the climate. Fortunately, I've only run into people who have been willing to help. You can imagine coming to a new city, even with GPS, I can get lost and get turned around, so people have been very helpful in steering me in the right direction. The people in the city have been helpful, the people on base have been very good with me, and the people in my division have been very supportive."

Red, green, both, or neither?

"I am not a Chile person, but I was given some green and red Chile my first day on the job. That came from Security. My Security group let me know that if you're going to be here, you better learn to like green and red Chile. It's an acquired taste, but I'm working on it."

### **What sports do you follow, and do you have a favorite team?**

"My sons and I, love to attend football and basketball games. Basketball is their favorite. We follow the Eagles and the 76ers because my sons still live in Pennsylvania. We love the local teams – we read about them, we keep up with them and we support them. So, whenever the University of New Mexico gets back to it, I'll be cheering for them and going to football and basketball games."

### **What's your favorite food?**

"I'm a picky eater. I generally don't like things mixed together, so my favorite food, if I had to pick one, would be a pizza. I like pepperoni pizza. And I've noticed that when I order pizzas for a party, I order a bunch of different kinds, but it seems like the pepperoni always disappears first."

Since pizza is your favorite, you must have an opinion on the pineapple question. Where do you stand?

"No fruit on pizza!"



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