



#what
WOMEN
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CHARLESTON

**THANK YOU
FOR JOINING
THE CONVERSATION**

#WHATWOMENBRING

honoring women in  business  community  culture



October 4, 2023

Thank you for joining the conversation today at #WhatWomenBring. We are excited to be with you to celebrate and honor women changing the face of business, culture, and community across South Carolina!

This year, like every year, we were impressed by the caliber of nominations coming from you, our community. We received a record number of nominations from women and men from a gamut of industries throughout the state. Our honorees each have a unique story of challenges, triumphs, and perseverance. I know we will all be inspired by their candor, passion, and authenticity.

This event would not be possible without the support of so many. We thank both our new and returning sponsors and our #WWB committee. We also give heartfelt thanks to #WWB emcees and news anchors Octavia Mitchell and Ann McGill for the many ways they support this annual event.

On behalf of the YWCA.GC board of directors and staff, I thank each of you for your support of our continuing mission to eliminate racism and empower women: today and always.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LaVanda Brown'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

LaVanda Brown, M.Ed
Executive Director

agenda

To give, text
WWB2023
to 44321



10:30 Early networking & photo opps
PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOTS FOR THE FIRST 40

11:00 Networking & photo opps
MULTIPLE PHOTO STATIONS

11:30 Ballroom opens
GUESTS ARE SEATED

11:45 Welcome
LAVANDA BROWN | YWCA.GC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KENYA DUNN | #WHATWOMENBRING CHAIR

Panel #1

OCTAVIA MITCHELL | WCB NEWS 2 ANCHOR & EMCEE
HONOREES | 1-6

Lunch

BUFFET | MAIN, SOUP, SALAD

Music & entertainment

CHRISTIAN SMALLS | BLACK DIAMOND BAND

Panel #2

ANN MCGILL | LIVE 5 NEWS ANCHOR & EMCEE
HONOREES | 7-12

Adjournment at 1 PM

LAVANDA BROWN | YWCA.GC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KENYA DUNN | #WHATWOMENBRING CHAIR



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event emcees

EMCEE



OCTAVIA MITCHELL
NEWS ANCHOR
NBC WCBD NEWS 2

Octavia Mitchell, who has been with the Count on 2 team for 21 years, currently anchors the popular local NBC programs News 2 Today and News 2 Midday. Her Cool School segments highlight positive programs at schools each week. An Emmy award-winning journalist, she has also been named “Most Cheerful News Anchor” by the Charleston City Paper, honored by the MOJA Arts Festival, and inducted into The Citadel’s Zucker Family Wall of Fame.

EMCEE



ANN MCGILL
NEWS ANCHOR
CBS LIVE 5 NEWS

Ann McGill, who lists covering Oprah Winfrey in Charleston after Hurricane Hugo as one of her most interesting assignments, has been with Live 5 News for 22 years and currently anchors its 5 PM and 6 PM news broadcasts. Among a host of professional and community honors, she has been named Anchor of the Year by the South Carolina Broadcasters Association and nominated for an Emmy award for the best morning broadcast.

event host

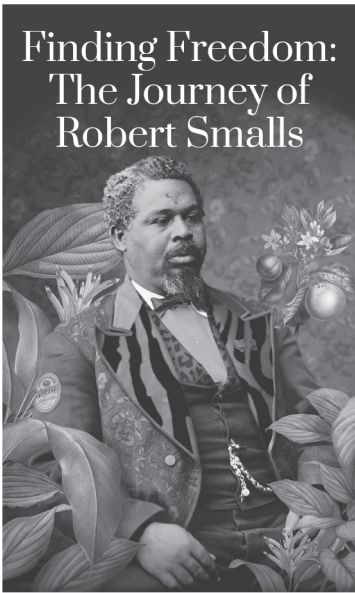


PHOTO: CORENTIN SAUVAGE

Story by Teralyn Reiter
Script developed by
JaMeeka Holloway, Celeste Jennings,
Caroline Randall Williams, and
Teralyn Reiter

Gullah Cultural Consultant
Dr. Jessica Berry

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HOST



LAVANDA BROWN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
YWCA GREATER CHARLESTON

A formidable ally of women, LaVanda works hard each day to empower women and eliminate racism: YWCA.GC's dual mission. While honoring the nonprofit's powerful historic legacy with programs like its annual MLK Celebration, she has also transformed it with a series of highly effective programs, including its Racial Equity & Inclusion workshops, WE 360° for female entrepreneurs of color, Y Girls Code, SheStrong, and #WWB, among others.

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honorees & panelists

ARTS



ZANDRINA DUNNING
CEO & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
THE ZD EXPERIENCE

Known for her passion, creativity, and commitment to spreading unity through music, Zandrina has produced tributes to Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner, Janet Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Luther Vandross, and more... including a tribute to Pink Floyd, with the City of Charleston, that was the highest attended Piccolo Spoleto finale in years. As a vocalist she has opened for Natalie Cole and sung background for George Benson.

Her show on Ohm Radio 96.3 FM delivers positive programming focused on the community. One of her most memorable interviews was with Bob Marley's son, Stephen.

Zandrina serves as entertainment chair for TEDxCharleston and on the board of the Charleston County School of the Arts Middle School Band. She graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in music merchandising and management from South Carolina State University.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Homelessness in our community
- 2 The causes served by the Florence Crittenton Programs of SC and the Ronald McDonald House

honorees & panelists

BUSINESS



LEE DEAS

FOUNDER & VISIONARY
OBVIOUSLEE

A champion for equity and an advocate for entrepreneurs and women in leadership, Lee is the founder of a multi-million dollar marketing company in a climate where only 4% of women-owned firms grow past 1 million dollars per year. This Charleston Regional Business Journal Forty Under 40 winner also founded the Charleston Cinco de Mayo Festival: the city's first downtown event focused on Latin culture and arts. Lee is also a co-

founder and board member of Citibot, an AI-powered, equity- and accessibility-focused chatbot connecting citizens with local government. She has served as board chair for Palmetto Goodwill, on the board of Lowcountry Local First, and on the founding board of Palmetto Excel, a tuition-free adult charter high school.

Lee holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from the University of South Carolina and is an alum of The Riley Institute's Diversity Leadership Initiative.

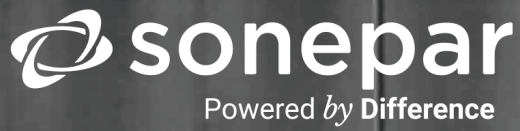
KEY ISSUES

- 1 Growing the number of women in leadership roles
- 2 Building purpose-driven companies



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Jen Owens

VP Associate General Counsel | What Women Bring Award Winner
Executive Sponsor of Sonepar's Women Advocating Today for Tomorrow (WATT)

honorees & panelists

COMMUNITY: ELIMINATING RACISM



AKUA KATELYN PAGE

INDEPENDENT GULLAH GEECHEE
LANGUAGE ACTIVIST & EDUCATOR

A fierce advocate ensuring the voices of her ancestors are heard while fighting for a more equitable future for all Gullah Geechee people, Akua educates locals and visitors on the myriad ways Charleston has been influenced by the Gullah Geechee people. She has been featured on a national level by NBC News, which lauded her work on TikTok to preserve the Gullah Geechee community. After discovering a brick structure at River-

front Park was made by stolen Africans, she successfully petitioned the City of North Charleston to install an educational placard near the “Dead House,” honoring their hidden contributions. Akua, who received the Jenkins Youth & Family Village’s Special Appreciation Award for her work mentoring foster girls, completed her Certified Interpretive Guide training at the Avery Research Center for African American Research at College of Charleston.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Reparations for descendants of stolen Africans
- 2 The erasure of Gullah Geechee history and heritage in Charleston, SC

honorees & panelists

COMMUNITY: EMPOWERING WOMEN



MEGAN MANIGAULT, RP, PM, M.MSC
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
I AM VOICES, INC.

A passionate ally of women on a mission to empower them to believe in themselves, Megan created the first transitional program in the Charleston tri-county area serving female survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking. She is the author of a series of transformative books and literature, including 'Wilted Flowers Still Bloom' for trauma survivors. She is also the co-chair of the Preventative Education subcommittee of the Tri-

County Human Trafficking Task Force, a Shared Hope International ambassador, NOMORE Human Trafficking facilitator, national speaker for the Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN), South Carolina Attorney General Task Force member, and Charleston Metro Chamber Housing Coalition member. Megan, who has a day named after her by the State of South Carolina, has won multiple awards, most recently the 2022 Martin Luther King Jr. Portrait Award. She holds a degree in metaphysics from University of Sedona.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Representation and diversity in the housing industry
- 2 Women's rights re: sexual assault and the human trafficking industry

liz ashley, M.A.

Founder +

Chief Aligner +

Workplace
Strategist +

Mentor +

Volunteer

& Proud

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honorees & panelists

EDUCATION



TASHA V. JOYNER
PROJECT PREVENT PROGRAM OFFICER
CHARLESTON CO. SCHOOL DISTRICT

A leader known for her authenticity, Tasha oversees a grant at seven North Charleston schools that is funded by the US Office of Safe & Supportive Schools, supporting scholars, their families, and their communities. She has served on the district's inaugural cohort of Restorative Practices trainers, as a founding member and lead educator for the Black Educators Affinity Group, the district's first affinity group, and as president and a

lead charter member of the South Carolina Alliance of Black School Educators' Lowcountry chapter. She is the founder of READy to Evolve, LLC, and has served as both a national panelist on staff wellness and equity and a national presenter on restorative practices for communities of color, in addition to serving on a host of boards and initiatives across the state. Tasha holds master's degrees in school administration and curriculum and instruction from The Citadel and Lesley University.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 The scarcity of Black educators
- 2 Access to equitable social-emotional & academic prevention, intervention, and enrichment for students of color

honorees & panelists

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



LIZ ASHLEY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ALIGN

An advocate for professional women and healthy workplace cultures, Liz created her business to develop and align both leaders and teams to achieve results. Prior to that, she led 100+ professionals at Estée Lauder Companies, building its highest-performing team in the nation, and worked in construction, recruiting women to represent more than half her team and founding her employer's first professional women's resource group. Liz, who also took home a 2023 Women

in Business award and mentors several women, chairs the professional women's group Thrive at the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, serves in a variety of board and committee roles for The Harbour Club, and sits on the board of Warrior Surf Foundation for veterans.

Liz holds a master's degree in sociology from the University of Virginia, where she focused on gender, race, and economic class, and a bachelor's degree in international politics from Westminster College.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Professional advancement of women
- 2 Social well-being in the workplace via building healthy relationships and meaningful interactions

honorees & panelists

GOVERNMENT



LORETTA THROWER BOOKARD
VICE PRESIDENT, YOUTH SERVICE
ALSTON WILKES SOCIETY

An advocate who enjoys reaching back to help others achieve their goals, Loretta began her career in corrections as a line officer making \$12,000 per year. Before retiring from the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice 31 years later, she had helped design four facilities and served as warden at its Coastal Evaluation Center. Today she supervises a high-management youth home for the Alston Wilkes Society, a multistate organization

serving veterans and at-risk youth and adults.

Loretta, who has won multiple industry awards, has also served as president of the South Carolina Correction Association and as chair, for ten years, of its Line Officers Appreciation Luncheon. She holds a master's degree in criminal justice from Columbia College and a bachelor's degree from South Carolina State, where she majored in criminal justice and minored in counseling.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Equal effort in work
- 2 Awareness of surroundings



Congratulations

LAURIE LYNN SMITH

A true servant leader who embodies Explore Charleston's commitment to creating a more informed, just and equitable community.



Laurie, on behalf of over 51,000 hospitality employees in the greater Charleston area, your Explore Charleston team extends our sincere appreciation for your leadership and passion for inclusivity across our organization, our industry and the Charleston region.

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!



Explore *Charleston*

honorees & panelists

HEALTHCARE



NILSY RAPALO

WELLNESS DIRECTOR

CIRCULOS DE BIENESTAR, LLC

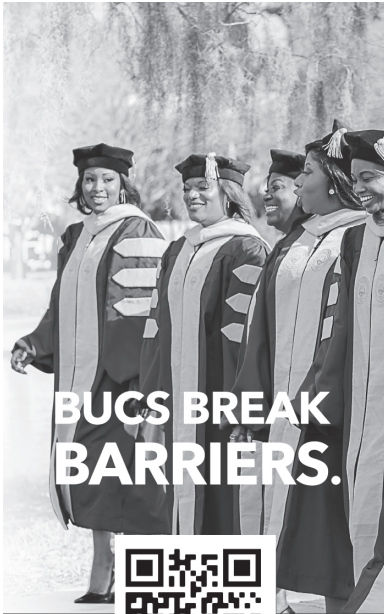
A Hispanic leader who empowers and inspires local and global community, Nilsy is a trainer, coach, and organizer of community wellness events. She also produces a podcast and writes about wellness for newspaper El Informador and serves as a therapist for the Department of Mental Health. She has authored a self-help book for the Spanish-speaking community and research papers on infertility issues and domestic violence.

Nilsy is a founding board member of the Hispanic Business Association and a member of both the City of Charleston's Latinx Advisory Board and M&WBE Advisory Committee, the Congreso Hispanopanoamericano de Negocios, South Carolina Community Loan Fund, New Visionary Women Exchange Club, and Commission for Minority Affairs. She has received multiple honors, most recently the Founders Trident Literacy Award. She holds a master's degree in psychology from Colombia's Universidad del Norte.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Equitable, eco-friendly wellness and self-care activities
- 2 Community activities to support minority women's firms & families

honorees & panelists



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Lavanda Brown, M.Ed.

Founder & Principal
Consultant

Corporate Compliance
Program Development
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honorees & panelists

HOSPITALITY



LAURIE ALDERSON SMITH

CHIEF OF STAFF

EXPLORE CHARLESTON

Known as someone who “sees” others and seeks to lift them up, Laurie lists her most fulfilling contribution to Explore Charleston as her involvement in building its Intern Cultural Enrichment Program, designed to grow minority leaders in tourism. Minority students, many from HBCUs, participate each summer. “The intent is to impact young people who can then influence our industry’s diversity. I find, however, that these outstanding

young people impact *me*,” she says.

Laurie was named “Ally for the Future Workforce” at the 2023 Lowcountry Diversity Leadership Awards and co-wrote the post-9/11 article ‘How Charleston Got Her Groove Back,’ published in the Journal of Vacation Marketing. A Leadership Charleston graduate, she serves on the board of the MUSC Children’s Hospital Foundation and holds both an MBA from The Citadel and a bachelor’s degree in business from the College of Charleston.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Protecting Charleston’s high quality of life & economy for future generations
- 2 Protecting our most vulnerable citizens: children, elderly, disadvantaged

honorees & panelists

LAW



JENNIFER OWENS

VP, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
SONEPAR USA

A leader determined to help women build their confidence, find their voice, and ask for what they want, Jennifer oversees litigation and compliance for Sonepar USA. In a previous role, she handled compliance for international firm Greystar, and specialized in government investigations at the Washington, DC office of Baker Botts. A fierce advocate, she has represented clients at trial, in government investigations, and before Congress, but

her favorite personal accomplishment was having her mother's recipe for baked ham buns, a Southern staple, featured in the New York Times: a tribute to her mother's memory.

Named a "Woman Worth Watching in Leadership" by Profiles in Diversity Journal and a "Rising Star" by Super Lawyers DC, she is a Riley Fellow, has served on the board of PURE Theatre, and earned her juris doctorate degree from George Washington University Law School.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Promoting women's confidence in the workplace
- 2 Ensuring financial security and pay equity for women

honorees & panelists



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honorees & panelists

MEDIA



MARCELA RABENS

DIRECTOR

UNIVERSAL LATIN NEWS CHARLESTON

A defender of the rights of women and immigrants, Marcela created the first local Hispanic newspaper in Charleston in 2005... and followed it up in 2015 by creating the first local Hispanic directory, GuiaLatinaCharleston.com: each one connecting the Hispanic community to others. She also hosts Ritmo Latino, a show featuring Hispanic music, culture, and interviews with Latino singers and songwriters on Ohm Radio 96.3 FM.

Early in her career, she became the first young woman in Peru to produce a radio news program and serve as a national reporter at Channel 5 Panamericana TV. A member of the Federation of Journalists of Peru, Marcela has served on the College of Charleston's Diversity Board and Hispanic Studies Advisory Board, as well as the boards of the Trident Literacy Association and Trident United Way. She sits now on the latter's Palmetto Steering Committee. Marcela holds a bachelor's degree earned in Peru.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Solutions to health disparities for immigrants
- 2 Representation and diversity at local and national political levels

honorees & panelists

TECHNOLOGY



CANDICE COHEN

CEO & FOUNDER, GIRL GO HUSTLE
AND CĒSUITE DIGITAL AGENCY

An unstoppable force and entrepreneur in the world of digital marketing who fearlessly forges her own path and empowers women to do the same, Candice founded Girl Go Hustle in 2021 with the vision of creating digital tools and resources that allow women to launch businesses without tech overwhelm.

Candice's journey began at the age of 14 during high school, when she embraced

leadership roles in pageantry and community service. Today she regards herself as a change agent and volunteers her time widely, including for Dorchester School District Two. From participating in a field day to teaching students about the economy via Junior Achievement, she is determined to spread her message far and wide. A member of ForbesBLK, Candice holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Claflin University and is studying for a Master of Arts degree in new media journalism at Full Sail University.

KEY ISSUES

- 1 Representation in tech and the digital marketing industry for Black women
- 2 Self-care and boundaries in business, from a personal bout with cancer

#wwb leaders

THANK YOU!

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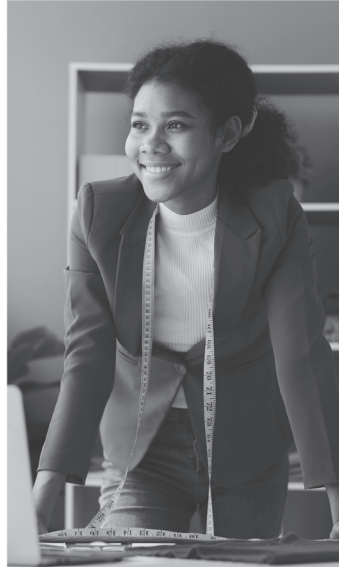
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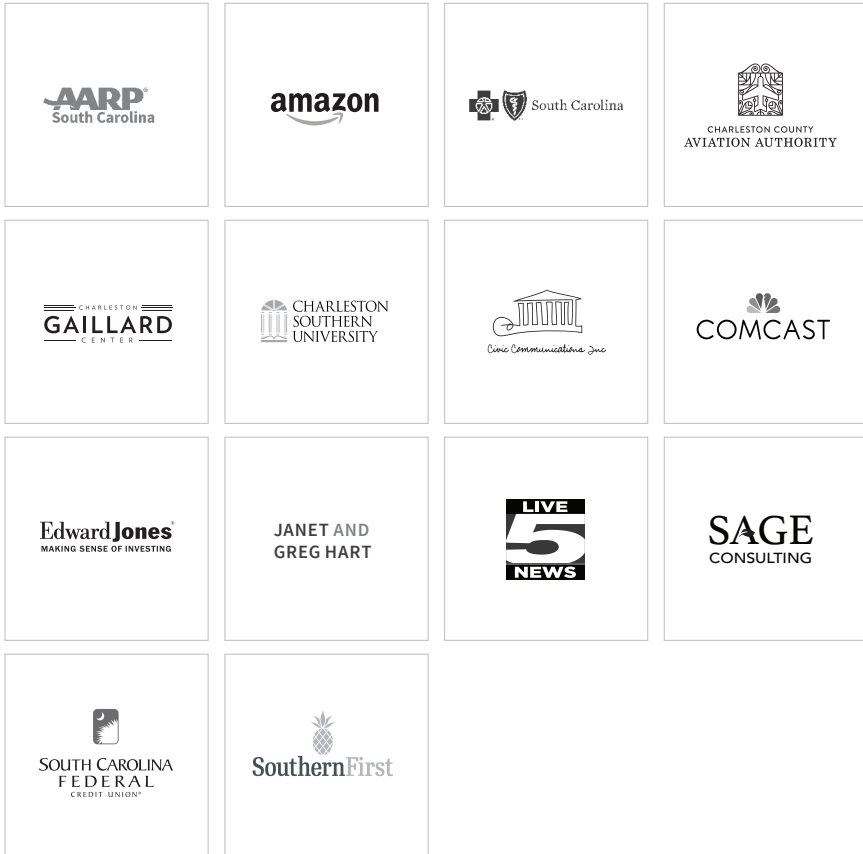
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**-ANN MCGILL
LIVE 5 NEWS
ANCHOR**





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WHO WE ARE

#WHATWOMENBRING PARTICIPANTS, supporters, and sponsors are individuals committed to using their voices and positions, strength, courage, past experiences, and future opportunities to promote the full engagement of women in our society and support what women bring to our workplaces, conversations, industries, and communities.

#WHATWOMENBRING AWARDS recognize women who have made significant contributions to their professions and industries. They have demonstrated exemplary professional expertise, and their work or activities have contributed to community sustainability. They also exhibit a commitment to YWCA's mission to empower women.

#WHATWOMENBRING HONOREES serve as catalysts to advance their professions, contribute powerfully to their organizations, serve as role models and mentors to others (especially women), demonstrate a commitment to their communities through work and/or volunteerism, remain true to their values, and lead authentically.

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