



The Laney Newsletter

FROM THE LANEY OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

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Tammeil Gilkerson named Laney College President

Ms. Tammeil Gilkerson is Laney College's next new president. The Peralta Community College District Board of Trustees approved her nomination on Feb. 21 after Chancellor Jowel L. Laguerre, Ph.D. submitted her name from a pool of three finalists.



Tammeil Gilkerson

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the presidential search committee for its work in finding Laney its next president," Dr. Laguerre stated in a Feb. 16 email to the campus community announcing Gilkerson's selection. "My appreciation goes to the faculty, staff, students and administrators who participated in the open forums and supporting the process."

A Bay Area native, Gilkerson currently serves as Contra Costa's Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. She'll begin her tenure at Laney on March 30. "I am humbled and honored at the opportunity to join this great District and particularly Laney College," Gilkerson said at the Board of Trustees meeting. "During the interview process, I had an opportunity to meet many of the wonderful people at the college and district, including a number of visionary and articulate students, and am excited to work with and support this talented, resilient and clearly committed group of individuals."

Background

One of seven children, Gilkerson grew up in Hayward where her parents still live. "My siblings and I truly reflect the diversity of the Bay Area – African American, Latino, white and Asian – and from a young age this instilled in me a deep respect and appreciation for diversity, but also a direct view of the social and institutional inequities that plague our society and directly impact the lives of our students," Gilkerson said during her presentation at the Laney President Candidate Forum on Jan. 30.

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Gilkerson *Continued from page 1*

Gilkerson was the first in her family to attend college – obtaining a bachelor's degree in history from the University of California, Berkeley. She also went on to pursue a master's degree in counseling, and she is currently completing her doctorate in educational leadership.

Gilkerson began her community college career as a faculty member in psychology-counseling at Chabot College. She also served at Evergreen Valley College, overseeing all of the counseling, transfer services and key categorical programs, including Disabled Students Programs and Services, EOPS/CARE & CalWorks, and the foster kinship care program. Gilkerson also served at San Jose City College as Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs where she championed the college's accreditation issues.

In addition to her work in community colleges, she served as the Academy and Education Policy Director at The Greenlining Institute and in positions at UC Berkeley in the Office of Student Life and the Early Academic Outreach Program. At the Feb. 21 Board of Trustees meeting, Gilkerson said that her education and previous job experience had prepared her to serve at Laney College. "I am excited to be joining a community so focused on student success and helping nurture and lead Laney in pursuit of its adopted mission and vision," she said.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: La-Kiysha Johnson



Laney Student La-Kiysha Johnson

Though born and raised in Hayward, La-Kiysha Johnson considers herself a true Oaklander. She takes some credit for her part when as a child she helped her grandmother raise funds to purchase the lights that surround Lake Merritt. She is also proud to talk about her strong ties to Laney College. "My grandmother, father, and brother attended Laney," Johnson said. "For that I'm excited to give back to my city in a major way."

Johnson recently returned to Laney after dealing with some health issues, and now she's looking to graduating. She has chosen Cal State East Bay as the four-year university she wants to transfer to after she gets her AA. She wants to be an investigator and earn a degree in criminology. She's quite determined about what she wants to do careerwise and has already earned a certificate in correctional science from San Joaquin Delta College. "I've had deaths in my family and I'm trying to balance school all at the same time," she said. "I keep my eyes on the prize and that helps me succeed on a daily basis – I'm setting goals and breaking through strongholds."

That energy and passion has kept her motivated even through periods when Johnson has faced homelessness. Her experiences have prompted her to seek ways in which she could help fellow students. She's joined the Associated Students of Laney College (ASLC) where she holds the role of publicity commissioner. But that hasn't been enough; Johnson is also a leader in the growing movement to secure affordable housing for students.

"Homeless students don't have a place to lay their head, or simply a quiet and safe space to study," Johnson said. "I want to change that."

Her vision is to have the Peralta Community College District or the State of California grant a piece of land where affordable housing could be built for students.

Johnson is also organizing an event for students in April called "A Night To Remember Underneath The Stars." She wants musicians to perform, artists to display their work, and has invited Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. "She's said she'll attend," said Johnson excitedly.

There are a couple of the things that Johnson said she'd like from the college administration – extended library hours and daycare for students who take night classes. "That would be so helpful for so many students," she said. |

Laney Alumni

Milton 510 talks music, “Hidden Figures,” and the Oscars

Milton 510 Bowens’ latest collection, *The Discovery of Urban Cotton Fields*, now on display in the June Steingart Gallery at the Tower Building, comes just at the knick of time – after the two terms of America’s first African American president.

Milton, a Laney alumni and one of the most sought after black artists today, said that the collection speaks to the mental conditioning that many African Americans endured during slavery – a state of mind that he said it’s still perpetuated today.

“*The Discovery of Urban Cotton Fields* is actually dealing with how African Americans are, in some cases, quickly to dismiss our own struggle and accept a narrative that is derogatory towards us. And, it’s almost as if we’re returned back to a slave mentality and we’re basically operating in urban cotton fields,” Milton said.

Milton’s exhibit has a lot of history behind, all with the aim to shed light at the systematic reinstatement of slavery today through the prison industrial complex, entertainment, and media.

“We have to think about how do we go from a period of jazz, gospel, blues, the advent of rock & roll, R&B, to the creation of hip-hop, only to get to today and have all of the musical art forms that we created be used against us,” Milton said. “The music that you listen to today, those messages are not about us empowering ourselves, it’s the adverse. It’s about materialism or misogyny, or promoting gang violence and destruction. It’s nothing about positivity and advancement.”

Even one has to wonder, said Milton, about what happens to those musicians who try to empower their communities. A good example is Arrested Development, a black music group that gained mainstream exposure in the late 80s and 90s. “And they even won a Grammy! So here is the thing, how do you go from being able to produce mainstream positive material then have it completely disappear from the airwaves? That’s not an accident,” he said. “That’s the industry and that’s its design.”

Movies lacking a positive, empowering narrative about black people are also no accident. The movies that you do see are about promoting gang culture, Milton explains.

“But wonderful movies like 'Hidden Figures' will be forgotten. Hollywood doesn’t care about a black film having success, that’s not my opinion, that’s a fact. That’s how Hollywood works.”

Milton said an example of that is the 90s movie “Boomerang” which had an all-black cast and was one of the top grossing films of its time. “But you didn’t see a flood of black movies after that,” he said. “Another one is ‘House Party,’ but you didn’t see a bunch of House Party movies made after that. And if you look at how long it took them to make House Party 2, you have to question that.”

There may be some hope that perhaps things will change in Hollywood after last year’s #OscarsSoWhite topic on social media. Still, Milton doubts Hollywood is really that liberal.

Even if there are more movies featuring black actors, what roles will they be playing? Milton thinks that usually Hollywood gives the Oscar to actors who’ve played flawed black characters. An example, it’s Whoopy Goldberg who won an Oscar for playing a charlatan in “Ghost,” but lost for her role in “The Color Purple.” The solution to changing how black people are seen and portrayed in the mainstream, Milton said, is for African Americans to re-think how they see themselves.

“Until then, everyone in the planet can re-package our image to us and we’ll continue to buy it,” he said. “We’re continuing to allow people to define our legacy for us and that’s the reason that I paint what I paint. *The Discovery of Urban Cotton Fields* is simple – it’s that you don’t have to be in the South and we don’t have to be in the early 1900s for you to still have a plantation mentality.” |



Laney Alumni Milton 510 Bowens

*Awards***"Tiny House" a big deal to campus, visitors**

From left: Cynthia Correia and Interim President Audre Levy

Laney's tiny house, called "The Wedge" has been turning a lot of heads.

Sitting on wheels at the Construction Canopy near Building G, The Wedge is quite the attraction for those who've been hearing about tiny houses, but had never actually seen one in person.

Built by students from the different CTE programs – carpentry, welding, the FabLab, and others, the tiny house embodies net-zero design philosophies, meaning it generates all the energy it needs on site.

"I had been watching on HGTV shows about tiny houses – 'Tiny House Nation' and others. I was thrilled that the college had one," said tiny house fan and Laney Interim President Dr. Audre Levy who toured The Wedge earlier this month along with Carpentry Chair Cynthia Correia.

"I wanted to have that experience," Levy said. "I was impressed with all the aspects – the design, the space, and the pride from the instructors."

Back in July the City of Oakland allocated \$80,000 for Laney to create a tiny house prototype. Other colleges have also received similar funding. The hope from city officials is that this tiny house movement could bring relief to folks looking for housing alternatives, and for those facing homelessness.

The Wedge had its debut in October when it entered the SMUD Net Zero Tiny House Competition. The project received \$4,000 as the winner of the Architecture category for their entry. Laney Carpentry students also won in four other categories, Best Design, Best Furnishings, Best Landscaping, and Best Video.

Laney's tiny house and success has sparked more interest in the college's CTE programs.

"I want to build one," said Jose Torres, an Oakland-area high school student who toured the campus this month. "It's so cool. It really makes me want to come to Laney."

Watch a video about The Wedge on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/2IS3esg>. |

Q&A

Dean Jackie Graves on the Umoja-UBAKA program



Dean Jackie Graves

Q Dean Graves, tell us a little bit about yourself and the different roles you've had at Laney.

A I started out at Laney in the English department in 2004. I felt a calling to teach way back in 1990 when I became part of the charter corps of Teach for America and taught elementary school in the South Bronx. After studying Creative Writing in graduate school at Mills College, I spent years working in community literary arts--with Youth Speaks, Poetry for the People, and the Mills Upward Bound program. I believe in the transformative power of the written and spoken word, and I always try to instill that belief and power in my students. I received tenure in 2008 and became co-chair of the English department in 2012. This past October, I stepped into a new role as Associate Dean of Educational Success.

I oversee the Adult Ed Block Grant (AEBG) which includes Laney's Adult Transitions Program (ATP), and I support faculty in the development of noncredit courses. I also work with several Equity funded programs including Umoja-UBAKA, Asi Se Puede, the Community Engagement Center, and Restoring our Communities Initiative (ROCI) for formerly incarcerated students.

Q What is your vision for this new program?

A Umoja-UBAKA is geared towards closing the achievement gap and promoting success for African American students at Laney. Umoja-UBAKA is a learning community that serves African and African American students. We are open to all students, but our programming focuses on African/African American culture. We have recently joined the statewide Umoja consortium. Umoja means "unity" in Swahili. UBAKA means "supreme wealth and wisdom" in Igbo, and was a name chosen by a former Laney student. Umoja incorporates student success practices including: the ethic of love, raising intentional and deliberate choices, and language as power.

Umoja-UBAKA is co-coordinated by Laney faculty members, Adrienne Oliver and Kimberly King. Our staff assistant, Chris Brown, is a former Laney student and tutor, and we recently hired a new part-time counselor for the program, Jerel McGiffert.

Our cohort courses are taught by some of Laney's most empowering and inspiring educators including long-time Math faculty Tracy Camp, Antonio Watkins in English, Doug Cobb in Counseling, and Jimmy Crutison in African American Studies.

Q Are there any upcoming events that the Laney community should know about?

A We have several upcoming workshops (see attached). On Thursday, March 9 for Women's History Month, we have an exciting panel including Judy Juanita, former Black Panther and author of *Virgin Soul*.

On May 19, right before finals week, we plan to have a Malcolm X birthday celebration and end-of-semester party to celebrate Umoja students and achievements.

Q How can interested folks get involved?

A Visit the Umoja-UBAKA website: www.laney.edu/wp/ubaka to find a program application or contact Chris Brown, staff assistant at, 510-464-3412 or at christopherbrown@peralta.edu. You can also visit the Umoja-UBAKA Village at Eagle Village 2. |

Staff Corner

Laney's new Public Information Officer

Laney's new public information officer or "PIO," Dolores M. Bernal joined Laney College in late December.

Born in San Francisco's Mission District, Bernal spent part of her childhood in Mexico and El Salvador where she learned about her parents' culture and also to speak and write Spanish.

Bernal attended school in Washington, D.C. and graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park. Soon after, she began her career as a radio journalist with Free Speech Radio News (FSRN).

"I had the chance to work at the U.S. Capitol during my first year as a journalist," she said. "It was an amazing opportunity because I got to interview Barack Obama on his first week in D.C. as the U.S. Senator from Illinois. I also interacted a few times with New York U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, and others. I felt so fortunate."



*Laney Public Information Officer
Dolores M. Bernal*

After D.C., Bernal went on to work as a newspaper reporter in various states for Gannett and for GateHouse Media. Her beats included higher education, covering New Mexico State University and Dona Ana Community College in Las Cruces, New Mexico. But she found her niche as a disasters reporter covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Rita, Hurricane Gustav, the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and others.

"Being in those environments, where you're surrounded by the debris of destruction everywhere has quite an impact on your psyche," Bernal explained. "I'll never forget the survivors I interviewed and the stories they shared with me. Even now, years later, I'm still moved and humbled by Mother Nature's power."

Bernal is still working on her master's degree in Threat & Response Management at the University of Chicago. She doesn't see herself returning to any disasters any time soon, but enjoys learning about the logistics of the government's response to those, often tragic events.

At Laney College, Bernal is serving the campus in various ways – sending out event information and other important announcements; leading the launch of the college's new website; creating newsletters, and reaching out to the media.

"Oakland and Laney College remind me a lot of my years in D.C. – I identify with our students and their struggles," she said. "As a young person I started out at a community college myself. Now, I want to give back and use my skills to help this institution and community thrive."

You can reach Dolores at, dbernal@peralta.edu. Her office is located at the Tower Building, Room T-807.

Tesla Motors representative meets with students

Laney College, in partnership with Tesla Motors, invited approximately 90 Oakland Unified high school students to attend a presentation about the company, electric batteries, and careers in the green energy sector. The students were engaged and asking questions pertaining to Tesla's technology and the future of green energy.

Additionally, the students heard a presentation regarding Laney's high school summer program, as well as a talk by Laney's Electrical Department Head and Laney's Career Pathway's Grant's Employment Services Manager.

Below are the names of the visiting OUSD schools:

Visual Arts & Academics Magnet Program at Oakland High School
 Project Lead the Way – Engineering at Oakland High School
 Health and Fitness Pathway at Dewey Academy
 Environmental Science Academy at Oakland High School |

SAY 'CHEESE!'

Photos from events on campus

CAMPUS-WIDE TOWN HALL, FEB. 22



A campus-wide town hall was held on Feb. 22 to give Laney and Peralta leaders a chance to provide updates to the campus community on the different ongoing and pending facilities maintenance projects. Top photo: Chancellor Jowel L. Laguerre and Vice Chancellor of District General Services Sadiq Ikharo. Bottom photo: Tammeil Gilkerson, future Laney President.

IMMIGRATION TEACH-IN, FEB. 15



Laney faculty organized an emergency immigration teach-in on Feb. 15 at the Forum to educate and inform immigrant students about their rights in light of the Trump Administration Muslim ban. Several guests spoke to students, encouraging them to not be afraid, but to organize and form a movement.

Submit your photos from events on campus for publication by the 15th of every month. Email them to Dolores M. Bernal, Public Information Officer at LaneyPIO@peralta.edu.

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SAY 'CHEESE!'

Continued... Photos from events on campus

BLACK COLLEGE EXPO, FEB. 18



Hundreds of college-bound students visited the campus on Saturday, Feb. 18 to meet with representatives from historically black colleges to learn more about their programs and get other important information. Left photo: Students visiting the different college tables at the Student Center. Right: Adult students hearing from college reps at Eagle Village.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TOURS, FEB. 8



Students from various area high schools toured the Laney campus on Feb. 8 to learn more about the different programs, specially Laney's CTE programs. Pictured: Students from the Oakland International High School in Temescal along with Laney Director of Business & Administrative Services Phyllis Carter.