

## 2024 BUILD BHM Speakers and Performers Bios



(Guest Musician)

**Maureese Itson** is a very talented Saxophonist/Singer. He is an Air Force Veteran, who proudly served his country. Maureese travels from Seattle, to Tacoma, to Portland and the surrounding areas, delighting the ears and souls of all those who encounter him and his music.



(Co-Emcee)

**TRUTH ALLAH** IS A LIFETIME RESIDENT OF SEATTLE, WA, AND GRADUATE OF GARFIELD HIGH SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE LIVES.

HE HOLDS A CERTIFICATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT. BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION. PRIOR BOARD MEMBER FOR THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM AND CULTURAL CENTER OF SEATTLE. VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY AND MEMBER OF THE PRICE HALL MASONIC FAMILY. TRUTH'S OVERALL BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IS HIS FIVE CHILDREN AND FIVE GRANDCHILDREN.

COMMUNITY, INSTITUTION BUILDING AND SPENDING TIME WITH FAMILY IS HOW TRUTH LOVES TO SPEND HIS TIME. HE STRIVES TO BUILD A LEGACY FOR HIS FAMILY and community, BY ADVANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY. CULTURALLY, ETHICALLY, AND POLITICALLY WITH THE EMPHASIS ON AWARENESS AND ACTION.



(Co-Emcee)

**L. Denice Randle** is a recipient of the Act Six Leadership and Scholarship Initiative where she attended Whitworth University on a full-ride scholarship as a leader of promise to be a change agent in her home community. Since graduating from Whitworth with a BA in English Language Arts, she has earned a Masters in Education with a teaching certification from Pacific Lutheran University. Throughout her professional career, she has been a champion for educational equity and workforce recruitment for youth and adults from underrepresented communities. She has served in a variety of leadership roles from teaching at Stadium and Henry Foss High Schools; to directing the Education and Employment divisions at the Metropolitan Development Council (MDC); serving as an Assistant Principal and leading as the Executive Director of Peace Community Center in the Hilltop of Tacoma, WA. She is currently working as a workforce recruitment strategic advisor for the Department of Social Health Services. In 2015, Whitworth University appointed her as a Board Trustee. This is a title she holds to present day. In addition, Pierce College named her a Distinguished alumni for her leadership and community impact. She is a committed member of Transformation Ministries International (St. John) Church in the Hilltop of Tacoma and enjoys serving her community through various organizations and events.



(Guest Vocalist)

**Samara Reign** is a vocal performer from Seattle. She has been singing since the young age of 4. She began singing in public with her church choir at 11. Starting at 13, she began working with Teen Summer Musical. Samara continues to sing with her church and sings regularly at events around the area, such as the Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally at Garfield High School, performing for the Northwest African American Museum, and many others. Samara also had the opportunity work with Grammy-nominated music producer Mike Elizondo and sing with The Temptations at the DOORS fundraiser. She is currently working on making her own music and aims to continue sharing her art with the local community and beyond!



(Land Acknowledgement / Libation Ceremony Facilitator)

**Marcia Tate Arunga** is the Academic Dean at Evergreen State College (Tacoma Campus). Dr. Arunga was born and raised in Seattle, Washington USA. She is the author of the book entitled, *The Stolen Ones and How They Were Missed*, an allegorical tale about a girl who was stolen from her African home and was missed by her family and village. Marcia's book is a tool to explore the essence of the culture in the context of stories. After living in Kenya East Africa for more than a decade and after returning to the USA, she established experiential learning communities who engaged in global joint ventures. As the cofounder of Cultural Reconnection Delegations and AAKEWO, she led 75 African American women on delegations to Kenya to practice relationships of mutual empowerment. On the faculty at Seattle Central College, Marcia teaches in sociology and leadership. Marcia holds a BA in Sociology, Masters in Human Development, and PhD in Leadership and Change. Her doctoral thesis entitled, *Back to Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Narrative Analysis of African American Women*, contributes to the fields of Diaspora Studies, Women's Studies and Africana Studies. Diasporas and cultural reconnections influence the rapport people in their ancestral homelands. Marcia continues to reside in the Pacific Northwest with her family.

Cultural Reconnection Delegations are intensive interactions that deepen our understanding of cultural heritage through experiential travel groups for self and collective discovery. As the convener of a vision and planning team established in 2002 that subsequently formed a 501c3 nonprofit organization called the African American Kenyan Women's Interconnect (AAKEWO), ongoing high stakes joint ventures have been achieved.



(Guest Speaker)

**Karen Wilkins-Mickey** is the VP, of Diversity Equity & Inclusion and is finishing up her third season with the Seahawks. Prior to joining the Seattle Seahawks, Karen worked for several Pacific NW companies including Alaska Air Group, Microsoft and Expedia in Senior Global Diversity and Inclusion Strategy roles.

Karen earned a bachelor's degree in communications from California State University, Chico and is an alumnus of McKinsey's Black Executive Leadership Program where she represented a cohort of Black leaders at Alaska Air Group with peers across various industries around the world. Karen serves on several external Diversity Equity & Inclusion committees helping to drive this work across a variety of industries across the U.S. Karen is committed to helping people and organizations reach their full potential.

Karen was born and raised in NYC. She moved to Bothell, WA in 2007 with her husband and two children. Kyra, a senior at Arizona State University and Kaden, a freshman at Bellevue College. Her family is her pride and joy, she works hard to make them proud and to show them that all things are possible through hard work, integrity and passion.



(Keynote Speaker)

**James Miles** worked as an educator in the New York City public schools for almost 20 years prior to moving to Seattle in 2016. Originally from Chicago, Miles has worked internationally as an artist and educator, and his work has been featured in magazines, books, podcasts, and newspapers. Miles is the Creative Economy Manager at Seattle's Office of Economic Development, an assistant professor at Seattle University, and on the advisory board of SXSW EDU. His acclaimed Tedx Talk focuses on his mission to narrow achievement gaps using the arts as a tool to navigate systems of educational inequality. He is the author of [Gotta Stay Fresh](#) and you can learn more about James at [FreshProfessor.com](#).