



38th Annual City of Tampa
Black History Celebration

Honoring

— ★ Our Veterans:

Celebrating 250 Years of Service and Strength

February 6, 2026

11:00 a.m.

Tampa Convention Center

333 South Franklin Street Tampa, FL



Your Impact
IS POWERFUL

• CITY OF TAMPA BLACK HISTORY COMMITTEE •

We are proud to support your work to elevate
our city's rich history and provide a legacy of education
through youth scholarships.





CITY OF TAMPA

— OFFICE OF THE MAYOR —

Jane Castor, Mayor

Greetings:

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the **38th Annual City of Tampa Black History Celebration** with the theme “*Honoring Our Military Veterans: Celebrating 250 Years of Service and Strength*” on Friday, February 6, 2026, at the Tampa Convention Center, and hosted by the City of Tampa Black History Committee, Inc. (COTBHC). This free event pays tribute to the extraordinary contributions of the men and women who have served the United States Military with honor and courage as we commemorate the nation’s founding in 1776. As America celebrates Black History Month this February, we are reminded of the important contributions African Americans have made to the national, regional, and local cultural landscape, and those who helped to pave the way, and those who have served to protect and defend our democracy and way of life.



From early explorers to today, African Americans have played significant roles in Florida’s and Tampa’s history. Since slavery was abolished in the state of Florida on May 20, 1865, African Americans in Tampa have continued to stand up and work for equality in all its forms, including better educational opportunities, fair housing, and employment. Many African American trailblazers can be counted among Tampa’s bravest and most dedicated citizens, and their endeavors and determination continue to benefit people from all walks of life, and they have contributed substantially to our community’s growth and success as a model city.

Tampa is an exciting city, rich in history and unlimited possibilities for the future. From our vibrant downtown and diverse neighborhoods to our universities and businesses, Tampa is proud to be home to a blend of unique cultures and traditions.

Again, welcome and enjoy the celebrations in honor of Black History Month, and the 250th Anniversary of our nation’s founding.

Sincerely,

Jane Castor

Message from the President



Welcome to the 38th Annual City of Tampa Black History Celebration—an enduring tradition that uplifts our history, honors excellence, and strengthens the legacy we share. It is a privilege to gather at the Tampa Convention Center, a venue that reflects the caliber of this moment. We proudly partner with the City of Tampa's award-winning Parking Division, whose innovation and service enhance every guest's experience.

Our 2026 theme, Honoring Our Veterans: Celebrating 250 Years of Service and Strength, is both a tribute and a reminder. It recognizes the courage and sacrifice of those who served our nation and honors everyday veterans in our community—leaders, protectors, builders, and educators who exemplify strength across generations.

We are honored to welcome Tampa Fire Chief Barbara Tripp, U.S. Navy, Retired, whose life reflects service and trailblazing leadership. Her journey reminds us that service extends beyond the uniform—through mentorship, outreach, and impact. We also welcome back our dynamic emcee, Ms. Deanne King of WFLA News Channel 8, whose professionalism and vibrant presence bring energy and authenticity to this celebration.

This year, we proudly present our first Community Hero Award to State Representative Dianne Hart for her unwavering commitment to veterans and the Tampa Bay community. Special thanks to Mayor Jane Castor, Chief of Staff John Bennett, and Tampa City Council for their steadfast support.

Every dollar raised funds scholarships for graduating seniors, opening doors to college, vocational training, and career pathways. Our scholarship portal is open until February 13, 2026. Visit www.cotbhc.org or email cotbhc@gmail.com for details.

On behalf of the City of Tampa Black History Committee, Inc., thank you to our founders, leaders, volunteers, sponsors, and partners. Together, we honor the past, celebrate the present, and strengthen the future—pressing forward in faith, knowing that with God, all things are possible.

Mrs. Katrina House

President - City of Tampa Black History Committee, Inc.

TAMPA CITY COUNCIL

Commitment to Service



Alan Clendenin
District 1 - AT LARGE
City Council Chair



Guido Maniscalco
District 2 - AT LARGE
City Council Member



Lynn Hurtak
District 3 - AT LARGE
City Council Pro-Tempore



Bill Carlson
District 4
City Council Member



Naya Young
District 5
City Council Member



Charlie Miranda
District 6
City Council Member



Luis Viera
District 7
CRA Board Chair

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Barbara Tripp



Chief Barbara Tripp was born and raised in Tampa, Florida. Chief Tripp graduated in 1984 from Hillsborough High School. After graduating from high school, Chief Tripp enrolled at the University of South Florida to pursue a degree in Computer Engineering. Later she enlisted into the United States Navy where she completed a honorable Department of Defense tour in Hawaii.

Upon returning home to Tampa, Chief Tripp enrolled in Hillsborough Community College where she completed the Fire Academy and became a certified firefighter. She received her EMT certification, Paramedic certification, Associate of Arts, Associate of Science in Emergency Management, and Associate of Science in Nursing from Hillsborough Community College. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from St. Petersburg College.

Chief Barbara Tripp is a 27-year veteran of the City of Tampa and has over 30 years of experience in the fire service.

She has held positions as a Firefighter, Paramedic, Paramedic Field Training Officer, Lieutenant, Captain, Acting District Chief, Quality Assurance Officer, Rescue Division Supervisor, and Rescue Division Chief. In November 2020, she was appointed as Interim Fire Chief for Tampa Fire Rescue and sworn in as the first female Fire Chief of Tampa Fire Rescue on June 25, 2021.

Chief Tripp has compassion and aspire to make a difference in people's lives. Her favorite quote is from the famous American poet and writer, Maya Angelo: People may forget what you said, people may forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. With that being a mission in her life, she is dedicated and committed to making a positive difference in her community. Chief Tripp is a proud mother and grandmother.



38th Annual CITY OF TAMPA BLACK HISTORY CELEBRATION



Friday, February 6, 2026

Program of Events

Mistress of Ceremonies - Ms. Deanne King, WFLA News Channel 8

WELCOME	Mrs. Katrina House President - COTBHC, Inc.
INVOCATION	Ms. Jaida Clark Hillsborough County
PRESENTATION OF COLORS	Blake High School JROTC
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Mr. Carter Hamilton Mayor's Youth Corps
NATIONAL ANTHEM	Ms. Phyllis Wong Gospel Recording Artist
GREETINGS	Honorable Kathy Castor U.S. Rep. 14th Congressional District of FL
GREETINGS & PROCLAMATION	Honorable Jane Castor Mayor, City of Tampa
GREETINGS	Honorable Naya Young District 5, Tampa City Council
U.S. ARMED FORCES ROLL-CALL	Mr. Wendell Carson U.S. Air Force (Retired)
ENTERTAINMENT	Ms. Phyllis Wong Gospel Recording Artist
INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER	Mrs. Erica Clarke Daughter of Barbara Tripp
KEYNOTE ADDRESS	Fire Chief Barbara Tripp Tampa Fire Rescue
HONOREE RECOGNITION	Ms. Candice Cowen COTBHC, Inc.
COMMUNITY HERO AWARD	Mrs. Katrina House President - COTBHC, Inc.
RECOGNITION OF SPONSORS	Mr. Frank Woodard COTBHC, Inc.
CLOSING REMARKS	Mrs. Katrina House President - COTBHC, Inc.
BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM	Ms. Phyllis Wong Gospel Recording Artist

2026 Honorees

Nicolas Bennett - U.S. Airforce



- ★ Project Coordinator
Community Redevelopment - City of Tampa



Julius Bolds - U.S. Airforce



- ★ Motto: Integrity First, Service Before Self,
and Excellence in All We Do



Dr. Tonja Brickhouse - U.S. Airforce



- ★ Colonel USAF (Retired)
- ★ Creative Arts Advocate
- ★ Former Director of the City of Tampa
Solid Waste Department



Eddie A. Brown - U.S. Army



- ★ Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division



2026 Honorees

Mike Brown - U.S. Army



★ Maintenance Electrician I
Tampa Convention Center
City of Tampa



Eunice Butts - U.S. Air Force | National Guard



★ Vietnam War Veteran ★ First African
American female to serve as the
Department Commander of the American
Legion, Department of Florida



Cedric Carrington – U.S. Army



★ Colonel U.S. Army (Retired)
★ Distinguished Alumnus - Florida A&M
University ★ Mentor



Wendell Carson – U.S. Air Force



★ USAF Security Forces (Retired)
★ Criminal Investigator and NCOIC Town
Patrol



2026 Honorees

Robert Collins – U.S. Air Force



★ Gulf War Veteran ★ Special Operations
Division Chief - Tampa Fire Rescue



Arian Cora – U.S. Army



★ Procurement Analyst
Purchasing Department - City of Tampa



Elizabeth Cowen – U.S. Navy



★ 5 years as a Storekeeper (SK) for U.S. Navy
★ Portfolio Manager - Centene



James Cowen – U.S. Air Force



★ USAF Ground Radio Repairman (10 Years)
★ Retired from Verizon after 20 years of
service



Chase Finch - U.S. Navy



- ★ Facility Security Manager
Tampa Convention Center



Christine Glover - Army National Guard



- ★ Colonel South Carolina Army National Guard
(Retired)
- ★ Director - City of Tampa Internal Audit



Dr. Torrez Grace, Sr. – U.S. Air Force



- ★ Major USAF (Retired)
- ★ Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training
Corps
- ★ Mentor



John Gray - U.S. Army



- ★ Motto: "This We'll Defend"



Stanley Gray - U.S. Marine Corps



- ★ Community Advocate
- ★ Advisor - Urban League of Hillsborough County (posthumously awarded)



Doris Hull – U.S. Coast Guard



- ★ Chief Warrant Officer U.S. Coast Guard (Retired)
- ★ Active in Ministry



Jaron Howell – Air National Guard



- ★ Master Sergeant Air National Guard (Retired)
- ★ Sergeant – Tampa Police Department



Clementa Brown Jackson



- ★ Chief Master Sgt.
- ★ U.S. Air Force Reserve Dept. of Intelligence (posthumously awarded)



Milton Jenkins – U.S. Navy



- ★ Petty Officer 3rd Class (E4)
- ★ Assistant Chief of Administration
Tampa Fire Rescue



Dr. Jeffery Johnson – U.S. Navy



- ★ Active-Duty Reserve Officer



Edward Jones - U.S. Coast Guard



- ★ Maintenance Repairer III
Tampa Convention Center



Laurell Jones – U.S. Air Force



- ★ Lieutenant Colonel USAF (Retired)
- ★ Dress for Success Tampa Bay



Marvin Martin - U.S Marine Corps



- ★ Vietnam War Veteran
- ★ Retired Educator



Tony McGee – U.S. Army



- ★ Inventory Field Supervisor
City of Tampa Purchasing Department



Timothy McKeithen - U.S. Army



- ★ Major General U.S. Army (Retired)
- ★ Former Deputy Commanding General-National Guard for U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC)
- ★ Mentor



Deveka McKinney – U.S. Marine Corps



- ★ Corporal – Tampa Police Department



Francisco Milian – U.S. Army



- ★ Building Maintenance Supervisor I
Tampa Convention Center



Willie Pickens - U.S. Marine Corps



- ★ E-7 (Gunnery Sergeant/GySgt)
- ★ Logistics for U.S. Marines Corps



Jodan Rhynes – U.S. Army



- ★ E5 Sergeant
- ★ Motto: "This We'll Defend"



Daniel Smith - U.S. Navy



- ★ E5 Sergeant
- ★ Motto: Semper Fortis (Always Courageous)



Melvin Tearrt – U.S. Air Force



- ★ Sr. Master Sergeant (Retired)
- ★ Facility Public Safety Manager
Tampa Convention Center



Ellsworth "Tony" Williams - U.S. Army



- ★ Major U.S. Army (Retired)
- ★ Gulf War Veteran
- ★ Veterans Counseling Veterans



Teniya Williams - U.S. Air Force



- ★ A1C – Security Forces



COMMUNITY HERO AWARD

Dianne “Ms. Dee” Hart-Lowman



Florida State Representative Dianne Hart-Lowman, born June 26, 1955, and raised in East Tampa by godparents, has dedicated her life to community service. From managing household finances as a child to serving as a union worker at GTE, her early experiences shaped her resilience. For 37 years, she successfully operated beauty salons in Tampa and Fort Myers, fostering local entrepreneurship.

In the early 1990s, Dianne joined the East Tampa Business and Civic Association (ETBCA), eventually becoming CEO. Under her leadership, the organization developed over 200 affordable housing units and addressed critical community issues, including hunger, violence, and economic development.

In 2018, Dianne was elected to the Florida House of Representatives for District 63. Her background as a salon owner, where she listened to clients' experiences, inspired her to focus on criminal justice reform. Her legislative work—including visiting 64 Florida prisons and challenging the Department of Corrections—earned her the nickname “Criminal Justice Queen.”

During her tenure, she has served as Black Caucus Chairwoman and as a ranking member on various committees, including Transportation and Economic Development.

Representative Hart-Lowman remains a dedicated advocate for the voiceless, ensuring inmates are treated with humanity. She is a mother of three and married Thomas Lowman last December.



MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES

Deanne King



Deanne is the morning Traffic Anchor and For the Culture reporter on WFLA's morning show. She also anchors the 8 a.m. newscast on The CW Tampa Bay. Deanne's For the Culture segment highlights the great work minorities are doing across the Tampa Bay area. These stories also tackle issues of racial discrimination and racial injustices happening throughout Tampa Bay. Deanne also hosts her Rooted in Progress podcast. The weekly digital show discusses issues plaguing Tampa Bay's Black and Brown communities. She brings on and questions leaders to ensure there's progression within our Black and Brown communities.

Deanne is very involved in the Tampa community. She serves on the Board of Directors for the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Tampa Bay Fashion Experience. She volunteers with dozens of organizations including Gentlemen's Quest of Tampa, the Juneteenth Coalition and more. She also serves as a host, emcee, panelist and keynote speaker for several unique and large-scale events.

Before returning to Tampa, Deanne served as the weekend anchor/reporter for WCBD News 2 in Charleston, S.C. for nearly two years. Prior to starting her broadcast career at WCBD, Deanne interned in the Tampa market, back home in Tallahassee and in the North Carolina and Georgia markets. Deanne has had a passion for journalism and telling stories since she was in fifth grade. Her goal is to impact her community and leave it better than how she found it.

Deanne is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She was initiated into the Zeta Upsilon Chapter at USF. While not at work, Deanne enjoys traveling, concerts, cooking, grocery shopping, trying new adventures, spending time with her nieces and being a dog mom to her little Yorkie, King.



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38th Annual

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CITY OF TAMPA BLACK HISTORY
CELEBRATION

Honoring ★ —
— ★ *Our Veterans:*
Celebrating 250 Years of Service and Strength



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