

CONTINUE...Bernard Johnson: I am truly motivated that CALAACC will provide valuable resources and support; serve as a catalyst and game changer in representing the interests of African American businesses, while driving initiatives and networking efforts. The CALAACC was created out of the need to strengthen the financial infrastructure for California statewide chambers. Further, CALAACC is an organization established to secure partnerships and collaboration with all African American businesses throughout the state and regional chambers. In addition, function as a staunch advocate for small businesses, who are members of those chambers, by helping to create economic and business development opportunities in all African American communities, statewide.

As a board member, describe the role and responsibilities that you shepherd and on what committees do you serve?

Johnson: Originally, my role began as a Board Member. It expanded to becoming Committee Chair of the Audit Committee and eventually led to serving as Secretary of the Board, which then made me an Officer of the Board. I also serve on the By-Laws Committee, the Compensation Committee and was the former Chair of the All-State Chamber Outreach Committee.

African American businesses in California are an essential and vital asset to the state's overall economy. In your own words, how do you describe the significance of CALAACC member businesses?

Johnson: My perspective of CALAACC's members and Business Partners are reflective of the make-up of the existing Board of Directors. Each of our Board Members is a business owner or entrepreneur with an area of expertise. We are all members of other prestigious organizations and serve on other Boards. Most importantly, we all have the same vision--supporting African American businesses, Chambers and our communities-at-large.

Tell us about your career journey.

Johnson: My career journey began very early. As a kid I wanted to become a politician. My perspective changed as I began working on my first government job. I was employed in public administration and politics, with the intent of becoming a City Manager or Mayor of a major city. After graduating from college, my goals changed and I explored entrepreneurship. This led to owning my own small business, working part-time, while being employed in corporate America and expanding my expertise in the real estate consulting industry. Currently, I am President of The Bernard Johnson Group, Inc., a full service real estate consulting firm, specializing in Land and Right of Way Acquisitions/Negotiations and Relocation Services; additionally, as Principal Managing Broker for National Land Realty, a nationwide Land Brokerage firm.

What are your aspirations and goals for CALAACC?

Johnson: My aspirations for CALAACC are to establish the organization as the premier Chamber of Chambers along with creating a strong advocacy for the African American business network and infrastructure. My goal is to assist in the creation of a healthy financially secure comprehensive platform which provides support for financial literacy, funding, and sustainability of African American businesses in a nationwide and global market economy.

What advice do you have for African American businesses operating in California?

Johnson: My advice to African American businesses is to seek the successful avenues to create a healthy business support network, which helps to foster financing and business sustainability. Specifically, remember that the only way to win money in a lottery is to play the lottery. Stay in the game. "Networking leads to *net-worthing*."

Tell us about Bernard Johnson.

I grew up in a small town called Muskegon Heights, Michigan, where my parents migrated from Arkansas. I attended Muskegon Heights High School and graduated third in my High School class. I was recruited by several universities, including the Art Institute of Pittsburgh [on an art scholarship] and Michigan State University (MSU) for academia and music. I eventually chose MSU for a more comprehensive academic educational experience. While at MSU, during my freshman year, I worked as a Senate Page.

Additional college jobs included Policy Analyst for the Michigan Governor's Office and went on to become one of two Presidential Interns from MSU's College of Urban Development to serve at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change, during my senior year, in Atlanta (GA).

Subsequently, during my time in Georgia, I received several outstanding Community Services Awards for outreach to the DeKalb and Decatur County residents in the support and development of the MARTA rail system in Atlanta. I later moved to Houston (TX) to work with Houston's METRO mass transit system; later, in the City's Housing and Community Development Division, creating the first Housing Rehabilitation Program for Minority Contractors. I became a real estate broker and partnered in owning the first African American Century 21 franchise. Following my time in Houston (TX), I moved to San Diego (CA) and worked for Sempra Energy for seven years. After achieving an MBA in Business Administration and Finance, I launched my entrepreneurial pursuits which led to my current business endeavors.

My favorite childhood memories include playing sports (baseball, basketball and football), playing in the marching band, jazz ensembles and orchestra.

One of my most ardent influencers was Elmer R. Cook, a Jewish attorney and President of the Kiwanis Club in Muskegon, who took interest in me (as a kid) and my leadership capabilities. He obtained a \$50K academic scholarship for me to attend MSU.

And by all means, my parents were the ultimate role models who set the foundation for hard work, humility, acts of community, embracing my dreams and aspirations.

For more information:

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