

Historic Westside Legacy
Park Honoree Portraits



2023

By Lolita Develay



CITY OF LAS VEGAS
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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SAMMIE "SAM" ARMSTRONG

Sam Armstrong moved to Las Vegas in 1962 and assisted his brother in managing the service station Chief Cutem Price in historic West Las Vegas. He was the first person of color hired at Pepsi-Cola Company as a lineman and was then promoted to water treatment specialist. Later he worked for the Clark County School District, transporting students with disabilities. In 1975, Sam partnered with Douglas Ray McCain and founded Ray & Ross Transport, Inc., a small minority-owned business providing bus transportation services to the Nevada Test Site and throughout the Las Vegas valley. Ray & Ross Transport grew to become the largest black-owned business in Nevada.



JACKIE BRANTLEY

Jackie Brantley, born and raised in Las Vegas, has pioneered the way for professional African American women in Las Vegas. She worked in Publicity and Promotions at the Desert Inn as one of the earliest African American professionals on the Las Vegas Strip.



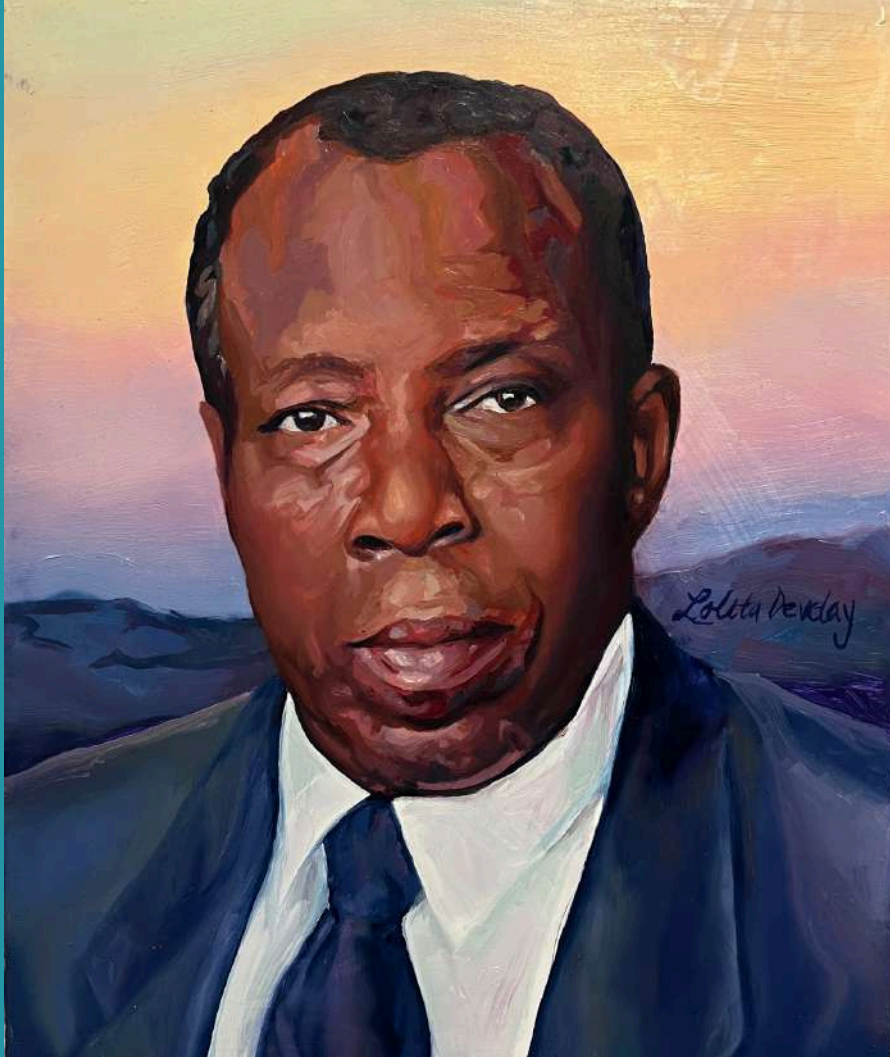
HANNAH M. BROWN

Hannah Brown was the first African American and female station manager for Western and Delta Air Lines. She later became the first female and African American regional manager/director of the Customer Service Division in Delta's corporate office. In 1991, she was featured in Ebony Magazine as 100 of the Most Promising Black Women in Corporate America. In 1999, she was elected president of the Urban Chamber of Commerce (UCC). In 2007, the UCC Board of Directors named Ms. Brown its first president emerita, in recognition of her 10 years of service. In 2009, the UCC created a nonprofit corporation that was named the Hannah Brown Community Development Corporation in her honor. In December of 2020, she was voted namesake of the Hannah Marie Brown Elementary School. In 2021 she received the Distinguished Nevadan Award.



LUCILLE BRYANT

Lucille Bryant received her Associate of Arts degree in Social Sciences and certificates for Hotel Security and Front Office Cashier from Clark County Community College. Her work at Zion Methodist Church included program director and teacher, coordinator of Children Ministries, member of the Parsonage Committee, Administrative Board, Department of Education, Pastor Parish Relations, and United Methodist Women. Bryant served as president of the Senior Usher Board for 41 years, and instructor and director of the children's choir for 20 years.



ROBERT FORTSON

Robert Louis Fortson was the first black high school student in the Carpentry Pre-Apprentice Program where he graduated with honors. As a master carpenter, he was an instructor at the Clark County Community College. He also taught carpentry and architecture at Vo-Tech High School and mathematics at Clark County Community College. In 1967, Robert started his own company, R. L. Fortson Construction, and was responsible for constructing many homes, buildings, and churches in the Historic Westside, such as Ruben Bullock's Westside Story, Second Baptist, Zion Methodist, Pentecostal Temple, and Victory Missionary Baptist. He served on the Las Vegas Redevelopment Committee, acted as director of Nev-Cal Builder's Inc., and as a member of the National Association of Minority Contractors.



OMIYALE JUBE/ANIKA JOHNSON CUNNINGHAM

Omiyale Jube has been an educator and administrator in the Clark County School District for more than 30 years, and retired as principal of Jo Mackey Magnet School. Omiyale is committed and dedicated to serving the Las Vegas community as an educator and community activist by bringing awareness to and infusing Afro-Centric culture throughout the State of Nevada.



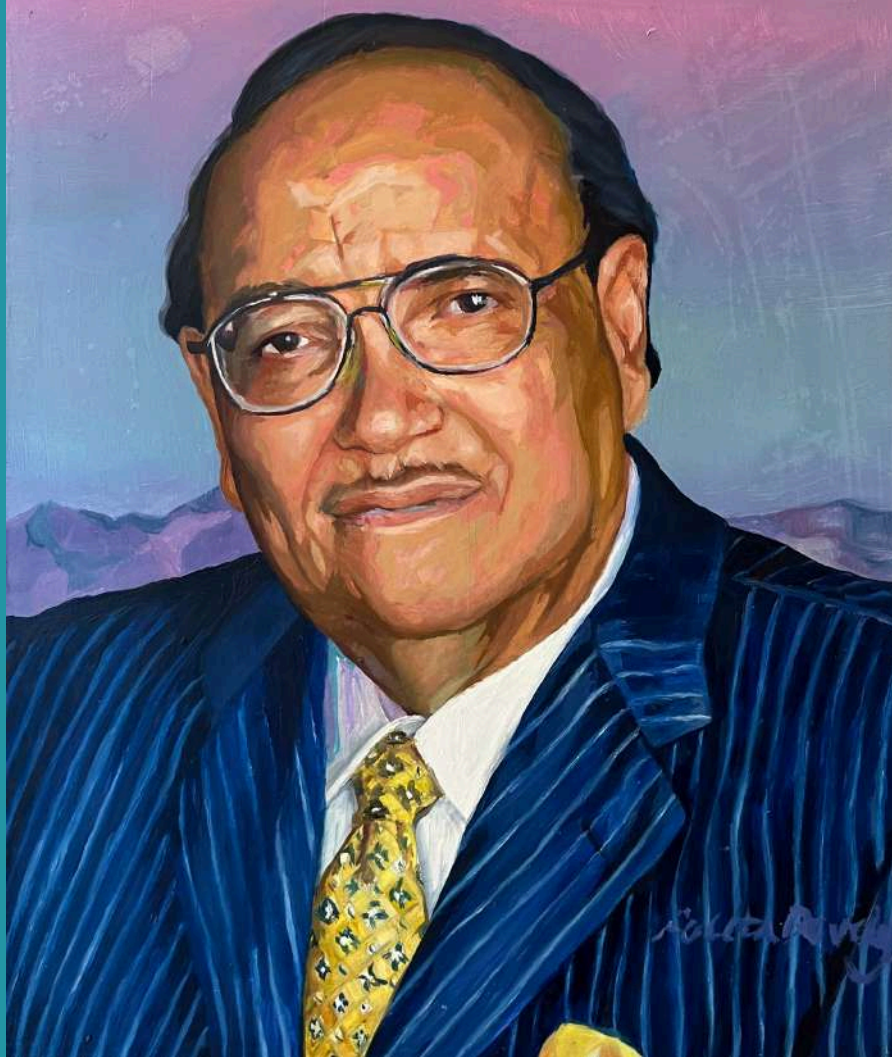
ALICE KEY

Alice Key was a dancer, journalist, community activist and political leader. She spent years as executive director of the local NAACP, as well as with the Clark County Economic Opportunity Board. She also worked with the Nevada Committee for the Rights of Women, which educated women about birth control and fought for abortion law reform in Nevada. Alice spent a decade as Deputy Labor Commissioner for the State of Nevada.



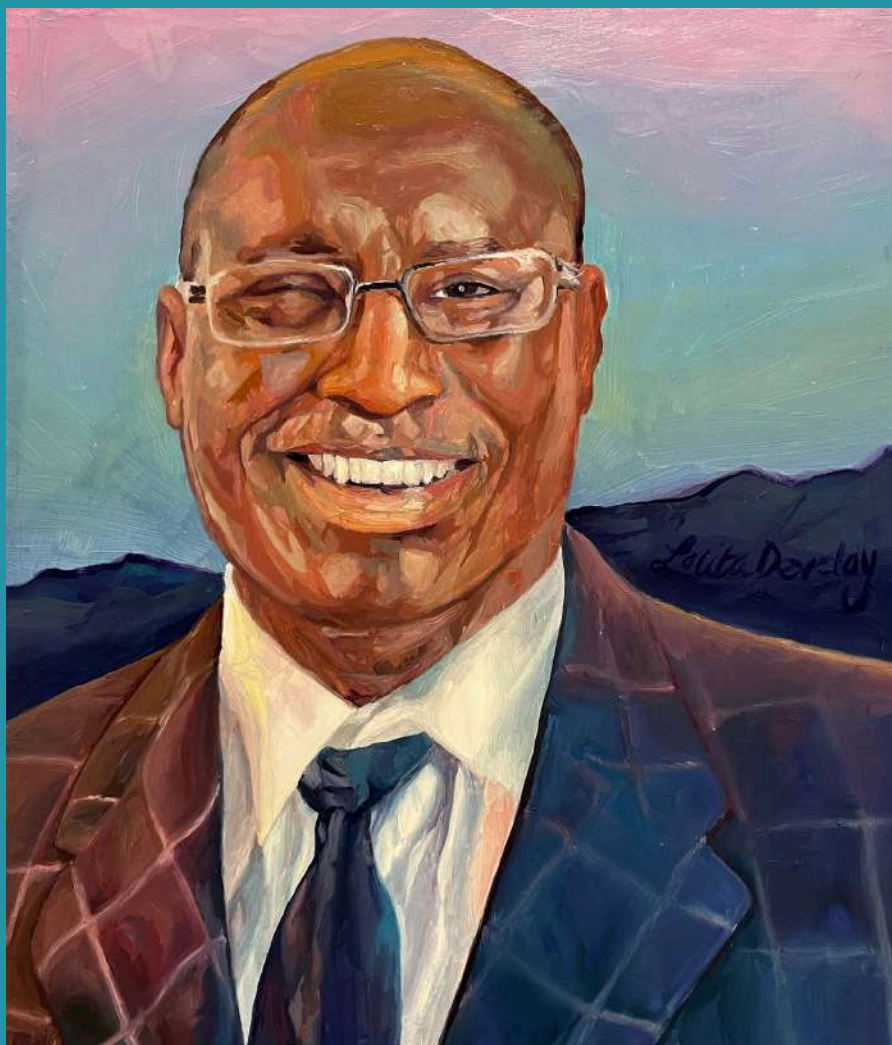
E. LAVONNE LEWIS

Elsie Lavonne Lewis, a 50-year resident of Las Vegas, is the director of Business for The Salvation Army Clark County. She worked for EG&G, Inc. as corporate vice president of Human Resources. Ms. Lewis serves on several boards, including the Las Vegas Clark County Urban League and Silver State Health Exchange. She served in numerous leadership roles, including chair of the Nevada Cosmetology Board, chair of the city of Las Vegas Civil Service Board, treasurer of the Economic Opportunity Board, vice chair of the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy, and board member of the Silver State Health Exchange.



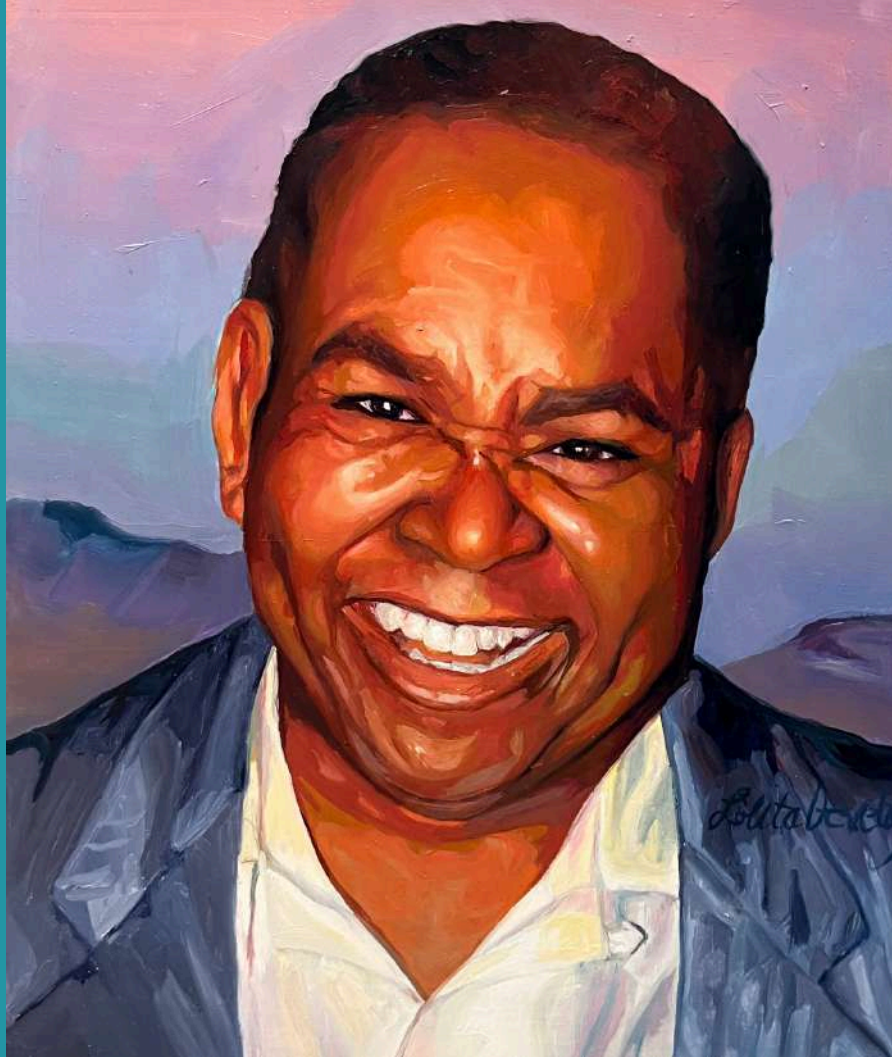
CLAUDE PERKINS, PH.D.

President Emeritus of Virginia Union University
Claude Grandford Perkins earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi Valley State University, a Master of Arts degree from Purdue University in Economics, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University. He became the first African American school superintendent in the state, where he oversaw the desegregation program of the Clark County School District. He served as the State of Nevada Secretary of Commerce, assistant superintendent of secondary education, and Deputy Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools. Dr. Perkins was a tenured professor and founding director of Educational Leadership at Clarion University. He later sat as dean and associate vice president of Academic Affairs at Albany State University in Georgia.



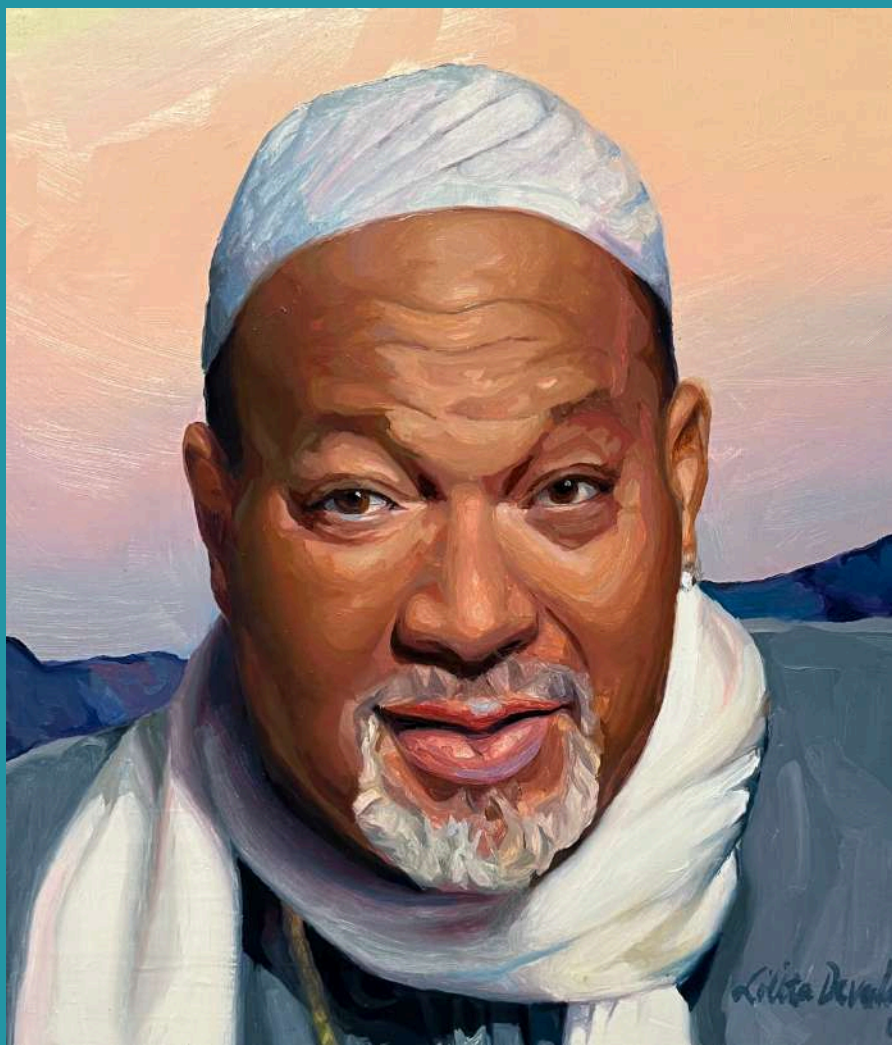
REVEREND DR. SYLVESTER S. ROGER

Reverend Dr. Sylvester S. Roger attended the Clark County Community College of Southern Nevada, the University of Nevada Las Vegas, the American Baptist Theological Seminary, Bethany College of Nevada, and The Sacramento Theological Seminary and Bible College. He was seminar leader of the National Congress for Christian Education for 24 years and holds a doctorate in Theology and Counseling. He worked for the Clark County School District as a Human Relations counselor for 16 years, as well as a pastor with the Metropolitan Police Gang Force and Safe Village/OLP for gang victims.



SAM SMITH

Sam Smith, high school class valedictorian, served in the Vietnam War 1965-1967. He later joined the New York Police Department until retirement in 1974, the same year he graduated from Richmond College. Following his career in law enforcement, he worked for 22 years with the Clark County Fire Department as a fire inspector. Sam was instrumental in the recruitment of many Westside blacks to the Las Vegas Fire Department. He also owned a bookstore where he taught aspects of the U.S. black experience to many young people in the Westside neighborhood. He retired as the deputy fire marshal.



FRANKLYN G. VERLEY III

Franklyn G. Verley III served as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, worked at the New York Times and city of Las Vegas Department of Parks and Recreation. Franklyn developed Like It Is Radio, which provided him an opportunity to speak truth to power and create community events, such as Kemet In The Desert, Men Who Cook , and Emancipation Circle. Part of the renowned Breakdown Crew, Franklyn is the recipient of several honors, including membership in the Nevada Broadcasters Hall of Fame, Fountain of Hope Community Activism Award and the NAACP Legacy Builder Award.



MARY WESLEY

Mary Wesley was part of the Welfare Rights movement locally and engaged in the statewide lobbying effort for increased benefits for women and children. She was instrumental in establishing Operation Life, designed to create housing, jobs, WIC benefits, medical services, nutritious food, and educational opportunities for low-income families.



AARON WILLIAMS

Aaron Williams became the first African American to be elected to the Clark County Commission in 1972. Prior to that position, he served as North Las Vegas city councilman in 1969. Throughout his political career, he was a champion for fair housing and equal opportunity rights. As a county commissioner, he served on the Board of Health, Gaming Control Board, Airport Authority and the Library Board.