



Office of the Governor

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor announces Council for Racial Justice

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday announced the membership of the Governor’s Council for Racial Justice, an advisory group tasked with counseling the administration and monitoring state institutions, holding them accountable for taking action to end systemic racism and ensure that all persons receive fair and equal treatment and opportunities.

The governor announced her intent to create the council in the wake of peaceful protests around the globe following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Floyd, a Black man, died while a white police officer pinned him to the ground with a knee to his neck while investigating a non-violent crime. Applications for the council were open to the general public.

“As I said at the outset of this overdue global movement for racial justice, we must not let the passion of this moment fade,” Gov. Lujan Grisham said. “In New Mexico, our multicultural heritage is both an opportunity to move forward and a mandate to reflect on where we’ve come from as a means of shaping an equitable future for all. My commitment is that my administration will listen first. I am grateful to the New Mexicans who have volunteered their time and energy to this work. We have the opportunity to lead as a state. I am confident we will seize the moment.”

The selected members represent a diverse group of New Mexicans from across the state, ranging in age, race and ethnicity, with a wide variety of expertise and focuses. The council’s first gathering is not yet scheduled but will meet virtually in the coming weeks.

Central Committee:

Stephen Archuleta, of Taos, is a community activist and former New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department director for juvenile justice. He also previously served as Taos County Manager.

Charles Becknell, Jr., of Rio Rancho, is the Dean of the African Studies Department at the University of New Mexico and serves as the minister at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Rio Rancho.

Dawn G. Begay, Navajo, is the Native American Affairs Coordinator for the City of Albuquerque Office of Equity and Inclusion and previously worked in homeless outreach at First Nations Community HealthSource.

Johana Bencomo, of Las Cruces, is the executive director of New Mexico Comunidades en Acción y de Fé (NM CAFé) and a Las Cruces City Councilor.

Bishop David Cooper, of Albuquerque, is the senior pastor at New Hope Full Gospel Baptist Church and recently served as the president of the Ministerial Alliance of Albuquerque and Vicinity.

Joseph Cotton, of Hobbs, is the current president of the New Mexico NAACP. He also serves on the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs Advisory Board.

Reverend Donna Marie Davis, of Albuquerque, is the pastor at Grant Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Albuquerque. She has been ordained by the AME Church for over 25 years and has led Black churches across the country.

Rabbi Robert Lennick, of Santa Fe, is the executive director of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico and previously served as the President of the national interfaith organization Religion in American Life.

Jennifer Lim, of Albuquerque, is the co-leader of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, in addition to serving on the board of the Asian American Association of New Mexico and on the Diversity Council of the University of New Mexico Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department.

Senator Linda Lopez, of Albuquerque, is the New Mexico Senate council appointee. She is a small business owner and currently serves as the Chairwoman of the Senate Rules Committee.

Sebastian Margaret, of Santa Fe, is a Soros Justice Fellow launching the Disability Project at the Transgender Law Center.

Darshan Patel, of Albuquerque, is a physician of family and community medicine at University of New Mexico Hospital and an organizer for White Coats for Black and Indigenous Lives.

Alexis Maria Rael, of Santa Fe, is a 2016 graduate of Santa Fe High school currently pursuing a Masters in Business Administration at the University of New Mexico. She is currently an intern at Sandia National Laboratories.

Jaelyn Roessel, Navajo, currently works with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department to deliver cultural equity training for the fulfillment of the State Tribal Collaboration Act.

Arsenio Romero, of Deming, is the Superintendent of Deming Public Schools and serves on the Board of Regents at New Mexico State University.

Allen Sanchez, of Los Lunas, is the president of CHI St. Joseph's Children and the executive director of the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Corrine Sanchez, San Ildefonso Pueblo, is the executive director of Tewa Women United and a member of the first national cohort of Move to End Violence.

Terrance Smith, of Albuquerque, is a community organizer working in youth athletics. He is pursuing a doctorate degree in organizational leadership.

Micelle Ali Surodjawan, of Albuquerque, is a senior at La Cueva High School, where he is Co-President of the Unified Sports Club, a DECA 2020 national qualifier, and a varsity basketball player.

Alexandria Taylor, of Albuquerque, is the deputy director of the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs and serves on the board of the ACLU of New Mexico.

Austin Weahkee, Cochiti, Zuni and Navajo, is a grassroots Native organizer who works for the Native American Voters Alliance. He previously worked to create the Albuquerque Commission on Indian Affairs.

Representative Sheryl Williams Stapleton, of Albuquerque, is the New Mexico House council appointee. She is the first African American woman to be elected to the New Mexico Legislature, where she currently serves as the Majority Leader of the House, and is an educator with Albuquerque Public Schools.

Janene Yazzie, Navajo, is the New Mexico Indian Affairs council appointee. She is a community organizer and human rights advocate currently serving as a consultant for both the International Indigenous Treaty Council and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

Kimberly York, of Las Cruces, is the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs council appointee. She previously worked as a clinical social worker for the Las Cruces Public Schools. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in organizational and industrial psychology and serves on the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs executive advisory board.

Health Subcommittee:

Hope Alvarado, of Albuquerque, is a youth leader with the New Mexico Child Advocacy Network (NMCAN), partnering with young people to build community, promote equity and lead change.

Husayn Bin-Bilal, of Belen, is a hospitalist in the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of New Mexico Hospital and serves as the Assistant Director of Simulation and Communication for the Department of Hospital Medicine.

Margaret E. Montoya, of Albuquerque, previously served as the senior adviser to the University of New Mexico Health Science Center Chancellor and was a member of the UNM Law School faculty for twenty years.

Brian Serna, of Santa Fe, is the founder and CEO of Serna Solutions, specializing in behavioral health counseling. He is also the director of the Addictions, Abuse and Recovery Certificate at Southwestern College.

Anjali Taneja, of Albuquerque, is a physician and the executive director of Casa de Salud in Albuquerque's South Valley, where she leads an anti-racist health care workforce development pipeline program. She is also a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholar.

Public Safety and Law Enforcement Subcommittee

Ibukun Adepoju, of Clovis, is a public defender and board member of the New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association.

Benjamin Bencomo, of Las Vegas, is currently a member of the faculty at the New Mexico Highlands University School of Social Work, in addition to serving on the Diversity Committee for the national Council on Social Work Education.

Ken Carson, of Albuquerque, is a small business owner with a past career in banking. He previously served as Bank Examiner for the federal government and as Director of the Financial Institutions Division of the New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department.

Barbara Lynn, of Los Alamos, is the lead human resources generalist for Los Alamos National Laboratories and the former director of the Office of Equal Opportunity Services at LANL.

Azadeh Osanloo, of Las Cruces, is a professor of educational leadership and administration at New Mexico State University. He has worked in the areas of social justice, diversity, educational equity and educational leadership for over twenty years.

Aaliyah Quintana, of Valdez, is a junior at the University of New Mexico studying political science and pre-law.

Christopher Ramirez, of Albuquerque, is co-founder and executive director of Together for Brothers, a community organization led by young men of color that stewards leadership and community change. He is also a co-founder of the UNM Dream Team, New Mexico Dreamers in Action, Men of Color Initiative, and Men of Color Alliance.

Education Subcommittee

Joseph Garcia, of Albuquerque, is the president of Leaders Uniting Voices Youth Advocates of New Mexico (LUVYA), a CYFD foster youth-led initiative.

Kiran Katira, of Albuquerque, is a scholar of racial ideology in educational thought and socio-cultural studies and a co-founder of the University of New Mexico Community Engagement Center. She is a national trainer with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and an organizer for Families United for Education.

Nancy Lopez, of Albuquerque, is a sociologist and co-founder of the Institute for the Study of "Race" and Social Justice. She is a founding coordinator of the New Mexico Statewide Race, Gender, Class Data Policy Consortium.

Mark Ramirez, of Albuquerque, is a social worker at the New Mexico School for the Deaf and the director of the Youth Leadership Camp for Deaf youth.

Evelyn Rising, of Hobbs, is a board member of the University of the Southwest and a University of New Mexico Health Sciences Community Health HERO. She is the public relations director for the New Mexico NAACP and previously served as the president of the national Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc.

Elisa Sanchez, of Las Cruces, is the creator and former director of the Southern New Mexico ENLACE Collaborative at New Mexico State University and the former president of MANA.

Alvino Sandoval, Navajo, is an advocate for students with disabilities and the founder of the Tribal and Indigenous Early Childhood Network.

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