50 MOST INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS PEOPLE OF COLOR
NEWTON-NEEDHAM METROWEST

NOVEMBER 2020

NEWTON NEEDHAM REGIONAL CHAMBER
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Colette Phillips Communications, Inc.
PRIME Automotive Group

Newton-Needham Regional Chamber
PO Box 30149
Newton Centre, MA 02459
We’re delighted to present the first-ever “Newton-Needham MetroWest 50 Most Influential Business People of Color” list.

Greater Boston’s western suburbs are often dismissed for their homogeneity. But the truth is, this is a region that draws people of all ethnicities from all points of the globe.

And once you’ve had a chance to review our 50 honorees, we think you’ll agree: The talent here is both diverse and impressive!

Still, we know that we have a lot of work to do. This list aims to celebrate, document and showcase the plethora of professionals and executives of color making a positive contribution to the economic and social fabric of the region. But we want this list to spark conversations about where we fall short too, and how we can and must do better.

We also hope this list will serve as a strong statement to our businesses, nonprofits and social institutions to replace the phrase “we can’t find qualified candidates of color” with the names here and the many other exemplary people of color working and seeking opportunities here.

And yes, those honored here are just part of the story. We received just under 200 nominations which were then winnowed down to the 50 deemed “most influential” by a seven-member selection committee.

To qualify, nominees must work and/or sit on a board for a business or nonprofit that is physically located in Newton, Needham, Watertown, Waltham, Wellesley, Natick or Framingham.

Our thanks to everyone who found the time to submit a nomination. We’re also grateful to our selection committee: Michael Benezra, director of economic affairs and innovation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel; Betty Francisco of Amplify Latinx; former State Treasurer Steve Grossman of ICIC; Jay Kim of Foundation for MetroWest; Shirley Leung of the Boston Globe; Darryl Settles of Catalyst Ventures Development and Colette Phillips.

Our deepest appreciation also to Prime Automotive Group, Direct Federal Credit Union and the other sponsors listed in this publication for making this project possible.

And our congratulations and gratitude to the 50 business leaders listed here for your contributions to the economic and social fabric of this region!
Congratulations to Newton-Needham MetroWest’s 50 Most Influential Business People of Color.

We celebrate your achievements, recognize your accomplishments, and share your commitments. We only wish we could give you a standing ovation in person.
Estuardo Aguilar-Cordova, Ph.D, MD
CEO
Candel Therapeutics

A native of Guatemala, Aguilar-Cordova has been a leader in immune-oncology and cancer research for over 20 years in academia and in the biotech field. He has served as principal or co-investigator in more than 25 clinical trials, was the deputy director of the Harvard Gene Therapy Initiative at Harvard Medical School and has served on many oversight committees for the National Institute of Health, the FDA and the World Health Organization. In 2002, Aguilar-Cordova founded Candel Therapeutics, a growing biotechnology firm headquartered in Needham looking for cures for cancer. The firm, which has raised over $50 million in funding in the past few years, develops proprietary immuno-oncology treatments to improve outcomes for cancer patients.

Gilda A. Barabino, Ph. D
President
Olin College of Engineering

In July 2020, Dr. Barabino became the second president of Olin College of Engineering in Needham. While she’s a relative newcomer to Greater Boston, Barabino has been a trailblazer in her field for decades and embodies the spirit of “constant innovation” central to Olin’s philosophy. Her many honors include the American Institute of Chemical Engineers’ Award for Service to Society (2019) and the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (2018). She serves on numerous committees of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine and is the founding and executive director of the National Institute for Faculty Equity, which seeks to institutionalize the professional development and career success of women and minorities in STEM.

Gerald “Jerry” Algere
Executive VP
Century Bank

Algere is an executive vice president and group manager of the Healthcare/Education/Not-For-Profit Group at Century Bank, which has branches in Wellesley and Newton. For nearly two decades, Algere’s leadership has helped build a national reputation for the bank’s not-for-profit group. Through his work, he’s helped provide municipalities, cultural organizations, healthcare institutions and schools of all sizes financial guidance and support by developing solutions so they can prosper and deliver on their mission. His colleagues and clients cite his unwavering compassion and care that extends beyond financial acumen. Algere works particularly hard in fighting for organizations that assist those with disabilities, helping organizations -- such as the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation — finance transitional housing and homes for low-income families and for those with special needs. Algere has served on the boards of numerous organizations including: The Sacred Heart School, Fontbonne Academy, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Youthbuild of Boston. Jackie Robinson Scholarship Committee and DARE Family Services.

Mohamad Ali
CEO
IDG, Inc. (International Data Group)

An immigrant from Guyana, Ali is among the most well-known names in the predominantly white tech industry. As CEO at IDG, Inc, Ali oversees a world-leading technology media, events and research company whose brands include CIO, Computerworld, CSO, PCWorld, and Macworld. Headquartered in Framingham (with a planned move to Needham’s N-Squared Innovation District in 2021), the firm has over 1,100 analysts worldwide and serves over 110 countries. Prior to his appointment to IDG in 2019, Ali was CEO of Carbonite (where he quadrupled the company’s revenue in four years) and chief strategy officer at Hewlett-Packard. Ali’s numerous accolades include CEO of the Year by the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council (2018) and Public Board of the Year by The National Association of Corporate Directors New England (2018). He serves on the board of iRobot and the Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council. Ali holds a B.S. in computer engineering, a B.A. in history, and a master’s degree in electrical engineering, each from Stanford University.

Alexis Avila
Founder/CEO
Prepped and Polished

Avila founded Prepped and Polished tutoring and test preparation in 1999. Headquartered in South Natick, the company helps elementary, secondary, college-level and adult students improve their grades and test scores and has served thousands of students across the globe. Through his 20+ years in business, Avila has been an innovator within the tutoring industry, creating over 300 free math, English and test prep resources through his YouTube channel and podcast. The podcast is also a resource to help families deal with stress, make the most of time during quarantine, and demystify the college admissions process. Avila’s commitment to community extends beyond his company. He’s a member of the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce board of directors, was one of five finalists for Big Brother of the Year through Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America and is involved with Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Mass Mentoring and Community Servings.

Gaelle Cordova
President
Cordova and Company

Aguilar-Cordova, Cordova is the second-generation member of the Aguilar-Cordova family who has helped support and raise funds for numerous organizations that assist those with special needs. Algere has served on the boards of numerous organizations including: The Sacred Heart School, Fontbonne Academy, Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, Youthbuild of Boston. Jackie Robinson Scholarship Committee and DARE Family Services.

Bobbitt came to Water-town’s New Repertory Theatre in 2019 after serving as the artistic director for Adventure Theatre in Maryland since 2007. He is an arts leader, director, choreographer and playwright whose work has been featured on the national and international level. Since joining New Rep, Bobbitt has transformed the nonprofit’s culture, implemented strategies to secure financial sustainability and positioned the organization as a model of successful anti-racist and multicultural theater. His innovation focuses on eradicating oppressive financial structures (subscriptions, season planning, and inaccessible physical spaces), attracting patrons and artists of color, and building community in partnership with other organizations. Since the theater went dark due to the pandemic, Bobbitt has led online conversations for patrons and rallied peers within the arts community, continuing to innovate and be a voice for change.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Artistic Director
New Repertory Theatre

Walter Bishop-Jones
CEO
Barber Walter’s

Bishop-Jones got his first pair of clippers at 11 years old and promptly started cutting the hair of everyone in his California neighborhood. Fast forward to today -- he owns and operates the full service Barber Walter’s shop in Wellesley, where he relocated with his wife Kat. Bishop-Jones specializes in cuts and hot towel shaves, and carries an extensive line of locally sourced products in the shop’s apothecary. Everything in the shop is expertly curated – with vintage chairs, beverage selections, a library of books and other amenities. His attention to detail is lauded by customers. But what really sets Bishop-Jones apart is his commitment to creating community — both within his four walls and beyond. As he states on his website, “before Facebook, the real-life social network met at the barbershop.” Bishop-Jones converses on just about any topic, and goes on to discuss the importance of personal responsibility.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Artistic Director
New Repertory Theatre

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Lennox Chase
Director
Needham Bank
As a member of Needham Bank’s board of directors, Chase manages and supervises the bank’s policies and assets and has been instrumental in advancing the organization’s community outreach. A graduate of Northeastern University Law School and founder of Chase Legal Services, Chase’s true passion lies in giving back to the community as a nonprofit board member and mentor to students and emerging leaders. A former Head Start student, METCO student and first generation college student, he believes deeply in “paying it forward.” He has chaired numerous committees for nonprofits that address urban education, expanding access to legal services, and domestic violence issues.

Gretchen Cook-Anderson
Asst. VP of Diversity Recruiting & Advising
IES Abroad
A former public affairs officer at NASA, Cook-Anderson currently leads diversity and inclusion-related marketing outreach for a large global nonprofit, IES Abroad. Locally, she has been instrumental in bringing together coalitions of people and organizations to address issues ranging from educational diversity to police accountability. When Cook-Anderson speaks, people listen. She was a moving force behind the Needham Schools Equity Report and sits on the boards of the Needham Diversity Initiative, Dana Hall School in Wellesley and the North Hill Senior Residential Community in Needham. She makes connections, leans in to difficult conversations, leads workshops and facilitates training conferences on inclusivity.

Lino Covarrubias
CEO
Jewish Family Service of Metrowest
Covarrubias is the chief executive officer of Jewish Family Service of Metrowest, an organization that provides vital social, health and human services to over 5,000 people in need every year throughout Greater Boston and MetroWest. During the covid pandemic, the organization has stepped up to provide food deliveries, wellness checks and help ensure access to benefits. The Framingham resident’s entire career has been dedicated to service. Following graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Covarrubias served for 20 years in the United States Navy before retiring in 2008. He then joined the JFS staff as the chief operating officer before transitioning to the role of CEO in 2020. He also holds an M.S. in civil engineering from the University of Massachusetts in Lowell and an M.B.A. from Babson College.

Ronald Dixon, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Remedy
A healthcare leader for 20+ years, Dr. Dixon is an innovator for chronic disease care and management. In 2011, he founded Healthcare 360 Inc., a logistics-driven virtual care platform for chronic disease management. The platform is used by Massachusetts General Hospital to manage over 60 chronic conditions across 20 specialties. In July 2020, Dixon became chief medical officer of Remedy, a platform that seeks to improve patient access and care through a hybrid model of virtual care, in-home house calls and traditional clinic-based care. In his new role, Dixon will be at the forefront in supporting expansion of Remedy’s 24/7 medical services nationally.

Beverly Edgehill, Ph.D.
Senior VP,
Global Head of Organizational Development
The TJX Companies, Inc.
For 30 years, Dr. Edgehill has been a transformational leader, integrator of large-scale change strategies and a stabilizer for the next stage of organizational change and growth. Edgehill’s work has comprised both internal-facing and community-facing roles in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. She is former CEO and president of The Partnership, Inc. and currently is the senior vice president and global head of organizational development at The TJX Companies, headquartered in Natick. Committed to training and developing industry leaders, Edgehill has been a mentor, guest speaker, author and educator leading workshops, teaching graduate courses and collaborating with Harvard Business School on leadership development programs. Her numerous accolades include recognition by Women of the Harvard Club as one of Boston’s Influential Women and an Unstoppable Woman by the BostonYW, the first YWCA in the country.

Latoyia Edwards
News Anchor
NBC10 Boston
Edwards speaks to hundreds of thousands of people every morning from the Needham studios of NBC10 Boston and NECN. The Emmy Award-winning anchor also hosts “This is New England,” a Sunday morning community program on NBC10 Boston. A native of Dorchester, Edwards holds a degree in broadcast journalism from Emerson College and is a former Miss Massachusetts. She began her career as a news writer for WBZ 1030-AM radio, before moving to broadcast television. She joined NBC10 Boston/NECN in 2005. A trusted voice and leader, Edwards has a gift for connecting with her audiences and the community by listening and speaking from her heart to bring into focus important issues and topics.

Ghania Y. El Akiki, MD
Chief of Hospitalist Service
Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital - Needham
El Akiki is the chief of hospitalist service at Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Needham. She received her medical degree from Lebanon University, School of Medical Sciences and completed her residency at Staten Island University Hospital. Originally from Lebanon, Dr. El Akiki says that she emigrated to the U.S. because, here, opportunity should exist for all, regardless of the color of their skin, their gender or their religious beliefs. Serving as the hospital’s representative on the Beth Israel Lahey Health Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Taskforce, she spoke eloquently at a Black Lives Matter protest about racism as a public health issue. El Akiki worked as a physician lead at the beginning of the hospital’s pandemic response to add additional ICU beds and ventilators. She rose above and beyond to care for patients during the pandemic, and at the same time, facilitated a White Coats for Black Lives event at the hospital to show her solidarity and support.
“I have discovered in life that there are ways of getting almost anywhere you want to go, if you really want to go.”

—Langston Hughes

The Village Bank is proud to support the Newton-Needham MetroWest 50 Most Influential Business People of Color.
**Newton-Needham MetroWest 50 Most Influential Business People of Color**

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<tr>
<th>Natasha Espada</th>
<th>Rick Fredkin</th>
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<td><strong>Founder &amp; Principal</strong></td>
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<td>Studio ENEE Architect</td>
<td>Eduporium</td>
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<td><em>An accomplished architect with over 25 years of design and construction expertise, Espada is the founder and principal of Studio ENEE architects in Needham. Her work spans both renovation and new construction for institutional, civic, and commercial clients. She is currently president of the Boston Society of Architects/AIA. As an industry leader and outspoken advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion within her field, she has presented at numerous local and national conferences including the 2019 AIA Women’s Leadership Summit. The curator of the Women in Design exhibit, Urban Interventions: Women Designing in Boston, she serves on the Committee for Green Communities and the board of the Perkins Eastman Public Building Committee.</em></td>
<td><em>Fredkin is a life-long entrepreneur, leader in STEM, and successful tech executive with over 20 years of experience. In 2012, he launched Eduporium, an educational technology company that helps schools select and implement modern STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) solutions that enhance experiential learning and help students develop crucial 21st century digital economy skills. With a passion for ensuring access, equity, and innovation in the educational experience, he is dedicated to helping schools and educational organizations empower the future with productive technology (programmable robots, 3-D printers, coding kits and engineering tools) offered at a discount. The Watertown company is partnering with schools from Maine to Pennsylvania and has plans for expansion to other parts of the US. He has been honored by various organizations including Boston Magazine as a “Rising Young Star of Boston Tech,” and by the Boston Business Journal as an emerging leader.</em></td>
<td><em>In addition to serving as a force for inclusionary social change, equity and stronger team productivity through her coaching and leadership advising business, Shades of Success, Inc., Giraldo-Kerr is the co-founder of The Lived Experiences Project, which documents and amplifies stories of persons of color in Needham with the goal of influencing systemic change. She is also an elected trustee at the Needham Free Public Library, where she spearheads the ‘Diversity and Discussion’ book club. She has led numerous workshops, published articles and is the author of the forthcoming “Managing Micro Inequities: Small Actions, Big Impact.” Giraldo-Kerr holds a master’s degree from Harvard Graduate School of Education and an MBA from F.W. Olin School of Business at Babson College.</em></td>
<td><em>Gittens left a successful broadcasting career at WCVB-TV to pursue her long-time passion for launching a boutique media and marketing firm to promote critical social issues and support mission-driven public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Her firm MORE Advertising, located in Watertown, is known as “The Agency of Change” and focuses on social marketing campaigns to promote changes in behavior and attitude. Target audiences include the underserved, low-income populations, immigrants, homeless youth, minority audiences, and people suffering from substance abuse disorders, mental or physical health issues. She is skilled at helping minority businesses rebrand and an expert in the recruitment of minority workers and vendors. She has served on multiple boards including the Greater Boston Chamber and Associated Industries of Massachusetts, where she co-chairs the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. She mentors students and female entrepreneurs and has received numerous awards including one from the Red Sox who presented her with championship rings in 2004 and 2007.</em></td>
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**Kent Gonzales**

**VP of Development**

**Northland Investment Corporation**

*Gonzales’ leadership and consensus building has brought transformative housing and economic development to our region. For over four decades, he has managed, directed and coordinated all aspects of project development including acquisition, planning, design, permitting/approvals, marketing, leasing, financing, and construction for companies including T3 Advisors, Pilot Development Partners and National Development. He was one of two leads on public approval for the 23-acre Northland Newton Development that broke ground this fall and will bring 800 housing units, offices, green space and innovation transit solutions to Needham Street and Newton Upper Falls. He is a member of numerous professional organizations including NAIOp and is on the board of directors for the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber.*

**Cristina Gonzalez**

**Chief Legal Officer**

**Staples**

*In her role as Staples’ chief legal officer, Gonzalez oversees all facets of the Framingham-headquartered office supply company’s legal department including corporate, operations, employment, litigation and compliance support. She’s also responsible for advising senior leadership, developing talent, and managing a significant budget. At Staples, she founded and co-chairs HOLA, an employee affinity group for Hispanics and Latinos that also participates in a number of community service projects. Gonzalez holds an M.B.A from George Washington University and a law degree from Georgetown University. She’s involved in numerous boards and professional associations including the Association for Latino Professionals.*

**Keon Holmes**

**Chair, Board of Trustees**

**Lasell University**

*A Needham resident and managing director of the global investing firm Cambridge Associates, Holmes has been an effective long-time community leader. As chair of Lasell University’s board of trustees he has brought experience in board development and financial management to a period of transformation and growth for the Newton institution, where a significant portion of the student body is first-generation college students. During his time serving as chair, the organization has made significant campus renovations, grown the endowment, executed a successful capital campaign, and moved to university status. Holmes works tirelessly to support and promote higher education and the expansion of higher education access to minority communities. He has served on numerous boards including MassDevelopment and the CFA Society Boston. He also co-chairs the United Negro College Fund New England Leadership Council which awards student scholarships to historically Black colleges and universities.*

**Karen Holmes Ward**

**Director of Public Affairs & Community Services**

**WCVB Channel 5**

*Holmes Ward is an award-winning broadcaster and executive producer whose career has spanned four decades. At WCVB, she is the host and executive producer of “CityLine,” an award-winning weekly magazine program that addresses the accomplishments, concerns and issues facing people of color living in Boston and its suburbs. She also oversees the channel’s public service and community outreach from its Needham headquarters. Her efforts include “Five Fixer Upper,” which renews and refurbishes common spaces for area nonprofits; and “Extreme Makeover: My Hometown,” which raises awareness about the need for affordable housing in the Greater Boston area. She was instrumental to launching Commonwealth 5, WCVB’s first-of-its-kind web-based initiative that promoted philanthropy by matching viewer-donors with nonprofits via the Internet. She has received numerous accolades, Emmy nominations, national awards and honorary doctorates in recognition of her work and community service and was inducted into the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 2018.*
Needham Bank is proud to celebrate the
NEWTON-NEEDHAM METROWEST
MOST INFLUENTIAL
BUSINESS PEOPLE
OF COLOR

Congratulations to the honorees and thank you for your important contributions to the MetroWest business community.
Congratulations to Mohamad Ali and the rest of the 2020 Newton-Needham MetroWest Most Influential Business People of Color Award Recipients!

We look forward to being your new neighbor in 2021.

SharkNinja proudly supports the Newton-Needham MetroWest Most Influential Business People of Color List!
Jason Hurd
Managing Partner
Bunker Hill Capital

Hurd is a co-founder and managing partner of Wellesley-based Bunker Hill Capital with over 23 years of experience working as a principal with middle market companies. He is active working with portfolio companies in the role of lead investor and has extensive board-level experience. Hurd currently sits on the boards of directors of Bunker Hill Capital portfolio companies Dyno Holdings and Hubbardton Forge. Prior to founding Bunker Hill Capital, Hurd was a director at BancBoston Capital. He holds a B.A. from Harvard.

Sachiko Ishihara
Executive Director
Suzuki School of Newton

A leader in the arts who has had a substantial impact on music education, Ishihara has served for over 20 years as the director of the Suzuki School, a community arts nonprofit with a music program and a full-day integrated arts preschool where students gain both a love of learning and a love of music. She led the capital campaign to purchase and rehabilitate the historic Staples-Craft-Wiswall farmstead as the school’s permanent home in the Waban village of Newton. Having trained in Japan and France, Ishihara is a Suzuki-certified piano teacher and teacher trainer. Concerned about the future of music education, she recruits and nurtures new faculty to become teacher trainers. She was honored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and received the Steinway Top Teacher award and the Milestone Award from the National Guild for Community Arts Education. She is a founding member of the Newton Cultural Alliance, was appointed by Mayor Ruthanne Fuller to the Community Design for Arts and Culture Committee that developed the Create Newton Cultural Plan, and is on the board of the Waban Improvement Society.

Charmain Jackman, Ph.D.
Founder & CEO
InnoPsych

A Harvard-trained psychologist with 20+ years of experience, Dr. Jackman is dedicated to breaking down stigma and increasing access to mental health services for persons of color. She founded Watertown-based InnoPsych, Inc. to disrupt the racial disparities in mental health by making it easier for people of color to find therapists of color and by empowering therapists of color to start their own therapy practices. She is accomplishing these goals through her online directory, conferences, social media campaigns, radio shows, wellness merchandise, and more. Jackman is a board member of the Massachusetts Psychological Association where she serves as co-chair of the Presidential Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and co-founder of Boston Women of Color in Psychology.

Elena M. Lau
Realtor & CEO
UNION Real Estate

A Venezuelan immigrant of Chinese descent, Lau is the owner of a boutique real estate firm headquartered in Newton that focuses on residential and investment properties. She is also the host of “Let’s Talk,” a series of digital conversations with experts in real estate and other related fields. She serves as the Boston Chapter president of the Asian Real Estate Association of America (AREAA) and has used her leadership and energy to reinvigorate the chapter. Under her management, the Boston Chapter recently hosted the AREAA national convention for the first time. She sits on the National Board of AREAA whose mission is to promote sustainable housing and home ownership opportunities for Asian Americans. As a champion of the empowerment of women, she mentors students through the Women Who Empower Mentorship Program at Northeastern University. She is the recipient of numerous awards recognizing her leadership and accomplishments in the real estate, entrepreneurial, and small business areas.

Eric Liriano
Owner
Liriano Wealth Advisory

Liriano is a certified financial planner and Newton business owner with more than 25 years of experience using a unique macro-economic approach for helping individual clients and companies preserve and grow their wealth. He is a sought-after speaker and conducts financial planning seminars for employees of corporations, health care companies and educational institutions. He founded one of the first Business Network International (BNI) groups in Massachusetts over 20 years ago. BNI is the largest business referral organization in the world that supports members with the training, structure, and technology necessary for success. Liriano is a member of the Boston Estate Planning Council, the National Association of Life Underwriters, as well as a qualifying member of the distinguished Million Dollar Round Table. In addition, he serves on the boards of many nonprofit organizations throughout the Metro Boston area. He also was appointed and served on the city of Boston Post Audit Committee.

Rev. Dr. J. Anthony Lloyd
Pastor
Greater Framingham Community Church

For three decades Rev. Dr. Lloyd has been pastor of the Greater Framingham Community Church, an interdominational Christian church that is the largest predominantly African American church in MetroWest. His congregation of 400+ families comes from throughout MetroWest, Greater Boston and Rhode Island. Lloyd is a dedicated community servant and an agent of change. An outspoken, compassionate advocate for social justice, he serves on numerous boards including the Boys & Girls Clubs of MetroWest, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, and the United Way of Tri-County. Recently he was named to the Jewish Family Service Committee on Anti-Racism and Fighting Antisemitism.

Juan Lopera
VP of Marketing & Corporate Business Diversity Officer
Tufts Health Plan

A native of Medellín, Colombia, Waltham resident Lopera leads business development, marketing and community relations for Tufts Health Plan’s public plans division across Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and heads the Rhode Island Medicaid Division. He is also the Watertown-based company’s first corporate business diversity officer. In this role, he spearheads company-wide diversity efforts around health equity, multicultural customer offerings, supplier inclusion and workforce equity and inclusion. He has deepened and expanded Tufts Health Plan’s business diversity at all levels (membership, workforce, director level and board, supplier spend), setting a blueprint for the health care industry in Massachusetts. A graduate of Boston College, Lopera has served on numerous boards including the Dimock Center Board (vice-chair), The Boston Foundation’s Latino Legacy Fund (co-chair), the Massachusetts COVID-19 Health Equity Advisory Group, the state’s Latino Advisory Commission, Eastern Bank’s board of corporators, Greater Boston Chamber Economic Opportunity board and ConsejoSano’s advisory board.
NORTHLAND
is proud to support the
Newton-Needham
MetroWest Most Influential
Business People of Color

Congratulations to the
2020 award recipients!

www.northland.com

If you value the differences
in people, the differences
will create value.

We put this on the wall of our board room in 2008.
It’s been inspiring us every day since.

We salute the Newton-Needham Metrowest
50 Most Influential Business People of Color.

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MetroWest 50 Most
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People of Color

Technology  Finance  HR  Training
Fred Lowery  
Senior VP & President, Life Sciences Solutions & Laboratory Products  
Thermo Fisher Scientific  

A dynamic corporate leader, Lowery has spent over 20 years launching innovative products, developing operating teams, overseeing acquisitions and leading Fortune 500 companies to profitable growth. He currently heads the Life Science and Laboratory Products businesses for Waltham-based Thermo Fisher Scientific, a $25 billion company with over 75,000 employees across the globe. These businesses provide a portfolio of reagents, instruments, equipment, consumables and chemicals used in biological and medical research, discovery and production of new drugs and vaccines as well as diagnosis of disease. Lowery joined Thermo Fisher in 2005 and has held numerous leadership positions in his tenure at the company. He currently serves on the board of directors at DuPont, the Boston Renaissance Charter Public School board of trustees, and is a member of the Tennessee Tech University board of trustees.

Angela Pitter  
Founder & CEO  
LiveWire Collaborative

A Newton resident and entrepreneur, Pitter is a digital marketing guru, mentor, speaker, master networker/connector and tireless champion for small businesses. She is founder and CEO at LiveWire Collaborative, a digital marketing consultancy that helps business owners and executives develop and implement online strategy. She also specializes in social media training, and more recently Zoom training. Hundreds of CEOs, business owners and consultants have attended her signature LinkedIn classes. An accomplished keynote speaker, Pitter has been featured on Chronicle and at the Massachusetts Conference for Women. Generous with both her time and strategic marketing expertise, she is committed to helping the local community. She is a founding member of the Newton Coalition for Black Residents, is a member of the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber’s board of directors and is a past three-term member of the Newton School Committee.

Kristen L. Pope  
CEO  
Pope Productions, Inc.

An award-winning TV journalist and entrepreneur, Pope founded her Natick-based digital content media firm to tell stories that often go under the radar, especially those featuring people of color. She creates marketing, advertising, and thought-leadership campaigns to captivate target audiences via traditional and social media. In 2019, to increase the number of people of color on television, she launched the On-Air Academy - a master course in the training, understanding of unwritten rules, and mentoring needed to secure a job in broadcasting. A pioneering initiative, the course is being considered as a pilot at institutions of higher learning. In its first year, the Academy successfully aided close to two dozen journalists of color in getting jobs in television and print news. She also created a web talk show called, “The Positive Controversy with Kristen Pope,” to give visibility to stories of people of color doing innovative and game-changing work. A sought-after speaker and host of community events, Pope is the recipient of numerous honors in the field of broadcasting and journalism.

Michael Price  
Owner  
SpeedPro Imaging

Price, owner of the SpeedPro franchise at the border of Needham and Newton for over 10 years and a Wellesley resident, is an engaged and active member of the local business community. Price also holds a seat on the board of North Hill Senior Living in Needham. Price is responsible for many of the Black Lives Matter signs that have popped up throughout our towns, donating at least 500 to the nonprofit World of Wellesley, an organization dedicated to making Wellesley a welcoming community where diversity is celebrated.

Charudutt N. Paranjape, MD  
Associate Chair, Department of Surgery  
Newton-Wellesley Hospital

Pacesetter. Change agent. Thought leader. All are well deserved descriptors for Paranjape, who also serves as Chief, General and Acute Care Surgery; Surgical Director, Heartburn and Reflux Program at Newton-Wellesley Hospital. He is impacting care by breaking down silos, then collaborating and innovating to find a better way, and leading the charge in ground-breaking models of surgical care that influence current and future care models in the best possible ways. Paranjape leads by example, with integrity and grace, while always putting his patients first and making our MetroWest community a better place for patients, colleagues and families to live and work.

Melissa Patrick  
Founder & Principal  
Equity & Expectations, LLC.

Patrick is the owner of Equity & Expections, a consulting firm that does anti-racism training and awareness building; the founder of Natick Families of Color; and a founding board member of Natick United, three organizations focused on building an anti-racist community. For over 15 years, Patrick has kept issues of diversity, equity and inclusion forefront in the organizations with whom she consults, leads, teaches, inspires, and plans in order to create and sustain communities with diverse experiences, boards, leadership roles and professional work. She trains all new teachers in the Natick Public Schools on matters of diversity, equity and teaching. This summer, she has co-led and co-moderated a conversation with the Natick’s police department, public schools, and select board to respond to the murder of George Floyd. In August, she led a community-wide dialogue “Kids, Race and Racism, Where to Start?” with over 1,200 people registered. Through her volunteer work throughout MetroWest, Patrick brings essential new vocabulary, perspectives, and methods to the work of creating a more inclusive, fair, and diverse community.

Randolph Randolph  
CEO & Founder  
1854 Cycling Company

Randolph is the co-founder and former executive director of Project: Poverty, a nonprofit that aims to design, create and implement innovative strategies to reduce poverty. His work in understanding poverty and rebuilding underserved communities is a cornerstone of all he does, fueling his passion for self-empowerment. His high-end bicycle assembly company, the 1854 Cycling Company, was launched in 2016 with the goal of supporting formerly incarcerated people by engaging them in the building of innovative cycles. A portion of every bicycle and bag sold goes toward programs that combat juvenile recidivism. He is the author of “Me & My Broke Neighbor: The 7 Things I Learned About Success Just By Living Next To Him...”, a 2010 book that has been added to financial literacy curriculums across the country. His YouTube TedX Talk, “Stop throwing breakfast sandwiches at the poor” addresses his experiences with the impoverished and his concept that the failure to understand the different forms of poverty and the attempt by social advocates to find new blanket definitions of the issue are the primary reason poverty continues to grow to the detriment of our society.
Román is a Latina break-through champion and connector at a local and national level. For over a decade, she has been a risk-taking entrepreneur, providing a breadth of legal services for her clients through the boutique legal practice she founded. Román is also the co-founder of the Latina Circle, Inc. (dba Amplify Latinx), a nonprofit social venture that is building economic and political power for Latinos in Massachusetts. Román is an award-winning multi-faceted professional whose experience and background include executive work around advising individuals and small businesses in legal compliance, negotiation, diversity & inclusion, organizational behavior, nonprofit interest work, as well as teaching at college level and psychological assessments. She has served in leadership positions for the American Bar Association, Hispanic National Bar Association, and Massachusetts Bar Association.

Spicer was sworn into office on January 1, 2018, becoming not only the first mayor of Framingham but also the first African American female to be elected mayor in Massachusetts. A 32-year Framingham resident, and long-time educator, Mayor Spicer was previously the vice president for advocacy and educational partnerships at Boston’s Museum of Science. While there, Spicer was known for building partnerships in STEM education with policymakers, school districts, municipalities, business and other nonprofit organizations. Appointed by Governor Deval Patrick in 2010 to the Massachusetts Governor’s STEM Advisory Council as co-chair of the council’s teacher development committee, she was re-appointed in 2017 by Governor Charlie Baker and served on the Computer Science and Engineering and Career Pathways committees. Spicer has also been a consultant to numerous states on technology and engineering standards, strategic leadership development and business engagement.

Tibbits-Nutt is the executive director of the Waltham-based 128 Business Council and has provided strong and responsible leadership in solving the 128 corridor’s transportation problems. Her hallmark is her commitment to the sustainability and economic vitality of the MetroWest area she serves. She advises communities in the 128 Corridor on transit planning, oversees the operation of 12 shuttle routes with nearly half a million annual riders, and created a leading model for suburban transportation. She redesigned the shuttle buses to make them user-friendly environments for commuting employees, instituted widely profiled health and safety protocols to help combat the coronavirus, and added important technological innovations including real-time operations information, online and phone app payments, reservations and other customer-focused solutions. In 2015, she was appointed to the MassDOT board of directors and she serves as the vice chair of the MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board where she has guided the creation of the customer experience department. She is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions including Mass Transit Magazine’s 40 under 40, is a frequent speaker at national transportation conferences, and serves as a mentor at Harvard and TransitCenter’s Women Changing Transportation Program.

Turner brings his unique background as head of the Mass State Lottery, senior executive of State Street Bank, and managing director of the New England CEO Network to his position at Newton-based Lasell University where he serves as provost and chief academic officer. His 30-year affiliation with Lasell includes his having served as trustee, board chair, and vice president for graduate and professional studies where he started six new degree programs. As a trustee, he was involved in the transition to a co-ed institution and the creation of Lasell Village, a premier retirement community that links senior living and life-long learning. In 2013, Lasell conferred upon him the honorary title of Doctor of Humane Letters and, in recognition of his leadership of the faculty as provost, he was granted the honorary title of Professor of Business in 2020. He is described as the consummate diplomat who is skilled at getting people to move together in pursuit of a common goal. He has served on the boards of numerous nonprofit organizations and is also a director of a Memphis, TN bank.

Vargas-Irwin is the founder and director of ABLS, a company serving children diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) that employs over 50 people and serves over 2,000 families. She is particularly interested in ensuring that families have access to bilingual/multicultural services for their children with autism. Vargas-Irwin has demonstrated a continuing impact in her industry through research and graduate teaching, innovative family/parent training programs, and being on the forefront of new techniques in autism behavior therapy, both in-home and in-clinic. Vargas-Irwin has presented at numerous national and international conferences on topics related to ASD and the training of therapists to work with children on the autism spectrum.
Babson College

VP for Learner Success

Ward, Lawrence P.

School of Education.

dissertation journey at the UPenn Graduate and mentoring enrolled students during their management in the higher education division of the college. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response. Ward is currently teaching courses on leadership and crisis response.

role, he served as vice president for student in the learner experience. Prior to this new role, he served as vice president for student affairs & dean of students, and supported and championed intercollegiate athletics, BabsonArts, community standards, health and wellness, multicultural and identity programs, public safety, religious and spiritual life, residence life, student affairs administration, student engagement, and crisis and emergency response. Ward is currently teaching doctoral-level courses on leadership and crisis management in the higher education division and mentoring enrolled students during their dissertation journey at the UPenn Graduate School of Education.

Wu has been with the Newton Food Pantry as a volunteer and board member for the past eight years, assuming the role of president of the board in 2020. As a Chinese speaker, Wu has brought her linguistic and cultural competency to the food pantry, greatly enhancing what it can offer to the large proportion of immigrants it serves, including a better selection of culturally appropriate food items, linguistically appropriate signage and translation, etc. With her background as a physician, she was the right person to lead in establishing new safety COVID guidelines. Wu also introduced new initiatives to the pantry: the launching of an advisory council, new fundraising initiatives to improve financial sustainability, and a youth ambassador program. Under her leadership, the pantry has been able to weather the effects of COVID while increasing much-needed services to pantry clients. In addition to her leadership skills, Wu has contributed hands-on work, leading volunteers and operations at the pantry for at least 12 hours a week, all in addition to her work as a physician at Partners HealthCare.

DISTINGUISHED RESIDENTS

The following are just some of the many who live in our communities whose civic involvement and/or professional accomplishments merit distinction beyond the parameters of our list.

Charles Anderson
Justice Kimberly Budd
Debora Jackson
Hubie Jones
Kathy Jones
Malika Marshall-Hurd, MD
Donna Levin
Damon Martin
Josephine McNeil
Lisa Michelle Owens, MD

Bridget Ray Canada
Jody Rose
Tj Rose
Sharon Stout
Richard Taylor
Corey Thomas
Mayor Setti Warren
Oneeka Williams, MD
Wanda Withmore

Regina Wu, MD

President
Newton Food Pantry

Wu has been with the Newton Food Pantry as a volunteer and board member for the past eight years, assuming the role of president of the board in 2020. As a Chinese speaker, Wu has brought her linguistic and cultural competency to the food pantry, greatly enhancing what it can offer to the large proportion of immigrants it serves, including a better selection of culturally appropriate food items, linguistically appropriate signage and translation, etc. With her background as a physician, she was the right person to lead in establishing new safety COVID guidelines. Wu also introduced new initiatives to the pantry: the launching of an advisory council, new fundraising initiatives to improve financial sustainability, and a youth ambassador program. Under her leadership, the pantry has been able to weather the effects of COVID while increasing much-needed services to pantry clients. In addition to her leadership skills, Wu has contributed hands-on work, leading volunteers and operations at the pantry for at least 12 hours a week, all in addition to her work as a physician at Partners HealthCare.

The mission of the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, Inc. is to champion our communities’ economic and cultural vitality through advocacy, education and networking. We are a 501(c) 6 not-for-profit membership organization and are not affiliated with any other Chamber of Commerce locally or nationally.

Get Konnected! Newton-Needham MetroWest
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Get Konnected! & CPC Global is proud to partner with the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber to present the Newton-Needham MetroWest 50 Most Influential Business Leaders of Color.

Congratulations to all the honorees!

Colette Phillips Communications has been recognized for its commitment to excellence and dedication to inclusion and diversity and has been named one of Boston’s top PR firms by Boston Business Journal 2020.

Get Konnected! is Boston’s premier inclusive business networking event that brings together urban and non-urban business professionals. Nominated by Avenue Magazine as Boston's Best Networking Group, 2020, Get Konnected! is the creator of the GKNBB: Boston's 50 Most Influential People of Color; you can read about it in the Boston Globe.
Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation is honored to recognize the Newton-Needham MetroWest Top 50 Most Influential Business People of Color.

LabShares is honored to celebrate these outstanding leaders in our community.

Catalyst Ventures

Darryl Settles · CVDBoston.com

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LabShares is honored to celebrate these outstanding leaders in our community.
So now what?

We’re proud to have partnered with Colette Phillips on the 50 Most Influential Business People of Color. But our work promoting diversity, equity and inclusivity in Greater Boston’s western suburbs is just beginning.

Attracting and building a diverse workforce and making our workplaces welcoming to all can’t just be the responsibility of diversity officers, hiring managers, or even the 50 leaders on our list. We are all responsible.

Creating a more inclusive business climate isn’t just the right thing to do. It drives innovation, competitiveness and economic and cultural vitality. It makes our communities better. It makes us better.
CONGRATULATIONS!

LATOYIA EDWARDS

AND ALL RECIPIENTS OF THE
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