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50 MOST INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS PEOPLE OF COLOR

NEWTON-NEEDHAM METROWEST

NOVEMBER 2020



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50 NEWTON-NEEDHAM METROWEST MOST INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS PEOPLE OF COLOR

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!



Colette Phillips
CEO, Colette Phillips Communications
Founder, Get Connected!



Greg Reibman
President, Newton-Needham
Regional Chamber



 **Colette Phillips**
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Betty Francisco, Amplify Latinx

Steve Grossman, ICIC

Jay Kim, Foundation for MetroWest

Shirley Leung, Boston Globe

Colette Phillips, CP Communications

Darryl Settles, Catalyst Ventures
Development

Celebrating your leadership. Following your lead.

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.

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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.

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 local 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.

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.

Miguel Beltran
Owner
New Season Cleaners



A trained oncologist and surgeon, Beltran moved to the U.S. from Ecuador with his wife Marina and young family following a period of political unrest/ violence. Unable to transfer his medical license, Beltran instead built a dry cleaning business from scratch and has operated New Season Cleaners on Chestnut Street in Needham since 2008. His commitment to helping others extends much further than his loyal customer base. Working with Shriner's Hospital, Miguel has connected over 20 young burn victims in need of medical care -- including an 11 year old boy from his native Ecuador who had been a victim of a violent crime and was in a coma. Beltran helps connect the children and their families with specialists and raises money for transportation (once he even convinced the President of Ecuador to offer up his private plane.) He doesn't just stop there, he'll often personally accompany families from home countries and remains a resource and shoulder to lean on throughout treatment. Beltran's generosity and kindheartedness is notorious among his customers at New Season -- who have helped support and raise funds for his efforts.

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 out of his way to get to know his patrons on a deeper level. He seeks out relationships with fellow business owners and non-profit organizations in town, and is a member of the Wellesley Merchants' Association and the Dalhousie Masonic Lodge.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Artistic Director
New Repertory Theatre



Bobbitt came to Watertown'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.

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.

Guimel DeCarvalho
VP of People & Culture,
Chief Diversity Officer
Wayside Youth &
Family
Support Network



A steadfast and transformative leader, DeCarvalho has been an agent of change at Framingham's Wayside Youth & Family Support Network, a 500+ employee organization that provides mental health counseling and family support services to children, young adults and families in Massachusetts. DeCarvalho has drawn on her experience as a licensed social worker as well as her organizational and analytical strengths to execute a series of initiatives to improve recruitment and communication, foster career development and prioritize diversity, equity and inclusivity. Her success in implementing diversity, equity and inclusion at Wayside has led her to be a sought-after speaker and consultant for other nonprofit organizations. In 2019, she was awarded the Elizabeth Funk Emerging Leaders Award from the Association of Behavioral Health. DeCarvalho lives in Natick where she is active in the community, and co-chair of Natick is United.

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 as an Unstoppable Woman by the Boston YW, the first YWCA in the country.

Latoya 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 Lebanese 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

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Natasha Espada

Founder & Principal
STUDIO ENÉE
architects



An accomplished architect with over 25 years of design and construction expertise, Espada is the founder and principal of STUDIO ENÉE architects in Needham. Her works 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 is actively working to make Boston a Design City by bringing design and art to all neighborhoods in Boston. She is an adjunct professor at Northeastern University and has been a design critic and lecturer at numerous colleges and universities. In her hometown of Needham, she serves on the Committee for Green Communities and the board of the Permanent Public Building Committee.

Rick Fredkin

Founder & CEO
Eduporium



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.

Anna Giraldo-Kerr

President & CEO
Shades of Success



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.

Donna Gittens

Founder & CEO
MORE Advertising



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.

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 Mass-Development 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.

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MOHAMAD ALI
CEO, IDG, Inc.

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greater good of our community.**



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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 Isihara

*Executive Director
Suzuki School of
Newton*



A leader in the arts who has had a substantial impact on music education, Isihara 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, Isihara 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.

Jay Kim

*COO
Foundation for
MetroWest*



Kim serves as the COO at the Foundation for MetroWest, leading the day-to-day operations for the nonprofit organization that connects philanthropic opportunity with demonstrated need at a hyper-local level. He was instrumental in developing Impact MetroWest, which provides clear and accessible data to nonprofits, businesses, and community members in order to identify the greatest opportunities for change to ensure MetroWest is a great place to live and work for all residents. In response to COVID, Kim and his team have raised and distributed over \$3 million in emergency funding to help nonprofits in MetroWest provide essential support to the most vulnerable people in our community. Prior to joining the Foundation for MetroWest, Kim spent time in fundraising and philanthropy for The Boston Foundation, Target, Fannie Mae Foundation, and AmeriCorps. He began his career as a corps member at City Year Boston. He also serves on the board of the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber.

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 interdenominational 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 Medellin, 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.

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will create value.**

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It's been inspiring us every day since.

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Barry R. Sloane, Chairman, President & CEO
Linda Sloane Kay, Vice Chair

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Fred Lowery

Senior VP & President, Life Sciences Solutions & Laboratory Products
Thermo Fisher



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 on-line 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.

Ritah Nakandi

Founder
Afri-root Collective



Before moving from Uganda to Newton for graduate school in 2006, Nakandi was a member of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Association where she traveled in both urban and rural settings to train, mentor and counsel women to start, sustain and grow their businesses. One of the biggest challenges facing many craftswomen was the limited market available for products. So, Nakandi founded the Afri-root Collective in Watertown in 2013, seizing the opportunity to connect East African craftswomen to international markets for their exquisite and unique items through an online marketplace and presence at tradeshows. A portion of every sale is reinvested in training programs to promote leadership development and skills training. In addition to making a considerable impact on the lives of many Ugandan women, Nakandi is deeply involved in the local community. She holds a degree in pastoral ministry from Boston College and an MBA from Cambridge College. She is also founder and recruiting director of Meetcaregivers and serves on the board of Women Thriving, Inc.

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.

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. Paranjape was at the forefront of changing care models at Cleveland Clinic and was recruited to launch and nurture innovative programs 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 is making our MetroWest community a better place for patients, colleagues and families to live and work.

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 through 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.

Melissa Patrick

Founder & Principal Consultant
Equity & Expectations, LLC.



Patrick is the owner of Equity & Expectations, 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 is 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 interconnected ways through community 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 organized 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.

Brandale 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 attempts 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.

Eneida M. Román

Co-Founder
Amplify Latinx



Román is a Latina breakthrough 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.

Rev. Devlin Scott

Lead Pastor
NewCity Church



Founder of a new church in Newton that seeks to draw in people who are unhappy in their faith journeys, Rev. Scott is known for his energy, leadership, community building, and commitment to social and racial justice. A relative newcomer to the Boston area, he has conveyed his interest in faith, music, and youth activism through an inspirational event he organized in July 2020 known as “Hope is Rising,” a free drive-in concert and discussion with an emphasis on anti-racism and a celebration of Black culture. With his unique experience as a diversity trainer, bioethicist, and pastor, he is described as a “force for change in the city.” He joined the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association and is on the board of Newton’s Foundation for Ethnic, Racial and Religious Harmony (also known as the Harmony Foundation) where he is instrumental in helping to plan Newton’s annual MLK Day Celebration and the Mayor’s Community Breakfast.

Darryl Settles

President & Managing Partner
Catalyst Ventures Development



A serial entrepreneur, Newton resident Settles established Darryl’s Corner Bar & Kitchen in Boston and moved on to real estate development. He is known for his transformative initiatives and partnerships that empower communities of color in the hospitality, real estate, and business development sectors where he promotes minority businesses and recruits minority investors. His residential projects are committed to creating vibrant, attractive, and sustainable neighborhoods and his music projects - BeanTown Jazz Festival and The Beehive - have enhanced the local cultural scene. Settles’ latest innovation is the Critical Mass, a vast resource of information and statistics as well as ways to take positive action to combat racial injustice. He has been active in the community as chair of the Newton Economic Development Commission and founder/board member of the Black Economic Council. He has served on many boards and shares his knowledge and experience with the next generation of leaders as a lecturer at Babson College and Lasell University. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors for his success, leadership, and commitment to economic justice.

Jay Spencer

Owner
French Press Bakery



Spencer has been a leading champion of the economic vitality of downtown Needham for more than a dozen years. After eight years owning and operating the Petit Robert Bistro in downtown Needham, in 2015 Spencer moved diagonally across the street to open French Press Bakery & Café, where he works with his team of bakers and baristas to create, produce, and sell premium French-inspired pastries, desserts, food, coffee and tea. Spencer raised the bar on cafe offerings in Needham, creating a cafe atmosphere with a carefully curated menu and ambiance, and pushed to become one of the town’s first locations to offer outdoor seating in a “parklet.” Spencer is a newly elected member of the board of the Newton-Needham Regional Chamber and committee chair for the chamber’s Newton-Needham Dining Collaborative, leading a large group of restaurateurs working together to navigate the current challenging business environment.

Yvonne M. Spicer, Ph.D.

Mayor
City of Framingham



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.

Monica Tibbits-Nutt

Executive Director
128 Business Council



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.

Eric M. Turner

Provost
Lasell University



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.

Mariela Vargas-Irwin, Psy.D.

Director & Owner
Applied Behavioral Learning Services



A Venezuelan immigrant, graduate of Harvard Medical School, 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 300 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.

Lawrence P. Ward, Ed.D

VP for Learner Success
Babson College



Becoming the chief student development officer at Babson College just this past summer, Ward establishes and implements institutional priorities, strategic plans, and an organizational philosophy that strengthens student success and the student experience across all undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Ward collaborates with the dean of the college and faculty to advance academic strategy and provide greater intentionality and continuity 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.

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.

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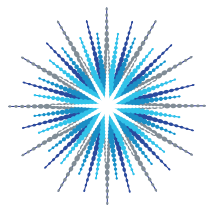
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So now what?

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.



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A portrait of Latoyia Edwards, a woman with dark hair, wearing a magenta dress, standing with her arms crossed against a blue background with faint white geometric patterns.

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