

UMOJA NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021 | UMOJA COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION



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Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer

NZINGHA S.
DUGAS

"Knowledge is a garden. If it isn't cultivated, you can't harvest it."

African Proverb



umojacommunity.org

» Umoja Students Excel

I've learned for certain that the Umoja Community is made of the most resilient and tenacious students, and practitioners, administrators. Over the past 18 months, we've learned about our capacity to lead and learn with greater efficiency, patience and strength. We have so much to be proud of. I'm honored to lead this organization and to be in partnership with YOU!

The last year has also affirmed the need for our work and the expansion of our mission to support and empower students and train faculty. This year, we will dig deeper. With your help, we will

expand our programmatic efforts to include more campuses while collaborating with our partners to advance the Umoja mission.

We need your help to generate resources to support our students. This summer, Umoja launched our first capital campaign, The Campaign for Black Student Success. We have a goal to raise funds to provide our students with scholarships that support their academic dreams. We have been overwhelmed by the support of the community thus far.

If you would like to support student scholarships, go to:

umojacommunity.org/donate

Umoja is the preeminent global educational organization that provides transformative, emancipatory education to uplift and inspire academic excellence of self-actualization for students of African descent.

Welcome!

Umoja welcomes new team members



SPARKLE DURIO *Executive Assistant*

Sparkle Durio is the Executive Assistant for Umoja Community. She graduated from the California State University Maritime Academy with a BS in International Business and Logistics. She has previously worked with the state of California as a purchaser and small business liaison.



MIA DAVIS *Regional Coordinator*

Mia has worked in higher education for over a decade within the California Community College and University of California systems. Her positions have included Adjunct Faculty Counselor and Instructor for multiple community colleges. Most recently, she served as a Program Director at UCLA. She has a passion for supporting Black students. This strong conviction stems from the support she received during her journey through college.



DE'VON WALKER *Regional Coordinator*

De'Von comes to Umoja with over 5 years of experience in UC Admissions, Strategic Partnerships, and Team Development with UC Riverside and most recently UCLA. He is passionate about student success and increasing the financial literacy of the Black Community. De'Von is ready and excited to support Region 4.



Learn more about our new team members at umojacommunity.org/staff

UPCOMING

Join us for the Umoja Conference XVII! The conference will be held virtually November 4-6, 2021. You can learn more on our website. Go to umojacommunity.org/UmojaConferenceXVII



Umoja Alumni Highlight



Meet Antoinette Banks

"I will continue to forge a path for myself and others like me to succeed."

Antoinette is a proud mother of a neurodiverse teenager with autism, author, award-winning entrepreneur, McNair scholar and researcher with a passion for education and inspiration.

She earned her associate's degree from Los Angeles City College, where she was active with the Umoja program and the inaugural Umoja Club President. She sought to create an endowment fund for the further advancement of Umoja students. In the Fall of 2020, she transferred to the University of California, Davis to pursue a bachelors degree in Cognitive Science.

In her first year at UC Davis, Antoinette was named the Sam C. Allen Rising Star Award recipient, winner of the \$10,000 Blue & Gold Aggie Scholarship and served as keynote speaker at the Soroptimist International Camino Real Region Spring Conference.

Antoinette's first year at UC Davis is huge for her as dreams on hold to provide the hands-on support her daughter needed to function optimally in life. Now a teenager, Antoinette's daughter has surpassed all previous doctors' expectations with unrelenting determination. An incredible journey that led to her first book, *Better than a Diagnosis: A Single Parent's Guide to Autism*.

Fueled by her discoveries as a mother, she sought scholarly programs and laboratories focused on how parental behaviors impact cognitive development in childhood and throughout the lifespan. In 2020, she joined Dr. Yuko Munakata's Cognition in Context Laboratory at the Center for Mind and Brain. As such, Antoinette was a presenter at the 32nd Annual UC Davis Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities Conference and the 2021 UCLA National Ronald E. McNair Conference. Her presentation was entitled "Parental Scaffolding Prepares Ground Work for Children to Thrive with Executive Functions."

Inspired by machine learning methods and invested in special education (SPED), Antoinette developed a solution called Expert IEP for the self-actualization of students with disabilities by creating an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) using predictive analytics. With the conceptualization of Expert IEP, Antoinette has competed and won First Place in the UC Davis' business accelerator, PLASMA (\$5,000), and in the Social Entrepreneurship category of the 2021 UC Davis Big Bang! Competition (\$10,000).

In this phase of life, as she pursues doctoral programs, Antoinette believes that setbacks happen as a launchpad for success. Antoinette represents student mothers, transfer and re-entry students, and women of color, standing at the intersection of research and innovation. She has said, "I will continue to forge a path for myself and others like me to succeed."



Tell us about other outstanding Umoja Alumni at umojacommunity.org/Alumni



AROUND UMOJA

Umoja welcomes New Programs

We are excited to welcome our newest partner colleges and high schools.

NEW HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Eleanor Roosevelt High School

Eva Isett
Assistant Vice Principal

Centennial High School

DuJuan "DJ" Johnson
Assistant Vice Principal

NEW COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Butte College

Oroville, CA

East Los Angeles College

Monterey Park, CA

Merced College

Merced, CA

Mission College

Santa Clara, CA

Santa Ana College

Santa Ana, CA

West Hills College Lemoore

Lemoore, CA



GIVE TO UMOJA!

MAKE A DONATION TO SUPPORT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS.

UMOJACOMMUNITY.ORG/DONATE



"My goal is to ultimately lead a nationwide movement for human rights by exposing the way capitalism, intertwined with white supremacy, keeps the working class impoverished and undereducated."

UMOJA MOORE FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO FISK-BOUND UMOJA STUDENT

» Meet Dylan Olivier

The 2021 Umoja/Moore Family Scholarship was awarded to Umoja student, Dylan Olivier. This fall, Dylan will be attending Fisk University, majoring in political science. After attaining a Bachelor's Degree, Dylan plans to attend law school to aid wrongfully convicted felons and inmates with petty drug charges.

"These are two categories that disproportionately affect black and brown communities," Dylan noted. "I aspire to practice law and fight for communities of color within the corrupt American Justice System." Dylan would like to hold public office as a U.S. Senator, pursuing increased rights and economic mobility for the African American community.

About the Scholarship

The Umoja Community strives to create pathways for students to achieve their dream of higher education through an ethic of love and intentional support. The Umoja Moore Family Scholarship awards \$3,000 in scholarships to HBCU-bound students to reward their academic success and encourage them on their path to greatness.



SHARE A STUDENT STORY



**WE WANT TO KNOW MORE
ABOUT OUR AMAZING UMOJA STUDENTS**
umojacommunity.org/share-umoja-stories

AROUND UMOJA

MISSION STATEMENT

Umoja, (a Kiswahili word meaning unity) is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students. We believe that when the voices and histories of students are deliberately and intentionally recognized, the opportunity for self-efficacy emerges and a foundation is formed for academic success. Umoja actively serves and promotes student success for all students through a curriculum and pedagogy responsive to the legacy of the African and African American Diasporas.

VISION STATEMENT

Umoja is the preeminent global educational organization that provides transformative, emancipatory education to uplift and inspire academic excellence of self-actualization for students of African descent.

UMOJA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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STAY CONNECTED



Follow us on social media! We want to connect with you!

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