

SENATOR VINCENT HUGHES

in partnership
with



Urban League of
Greater Philadelphia

Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.

present

YOUNG MEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Honoring the Legacy
of Malcolm X*

PROGRAM



  @SenHughesOffice

 @Vincent.Hughes.7

SenatorHughes.com

Dear Friends, Family, and Honorees,

It is both an honor and a privilege to welcome you to this year's *Young Men Making a Difference* celebration.

For decades, I have had the opportunity to serve the people of Philadelphia and beyond, and one thing has remained clear: our future is only as strong as the young leaders we invest in today. Throughout my career, I have worked to expand access to education, create pathways to opportunity, and uplift communities that deserve to thrive.

Today, we celebrate a group of extraordinary young men who embody those very ideals. Each honoree represents excellence, not only in their achievements, but in their character, leadership, and commitment to making a meaningful impact. They are proof that the next generation is not waiting for change; they are leading it.

To the honorees: You are already making your mark. Continue to pursue knowledge, stand firm in your values, and use your voice to uplift others. Your journey matters, and your purpose is powerful.

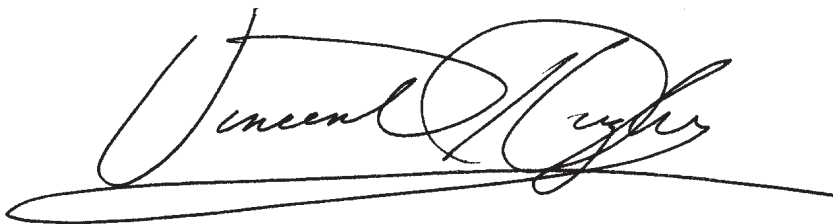
To the families, mentors, educators, and community partners: Thank you. Your guidance, support, and belief in these young men have helped shape who they are becoming. This moment reflects your investment as well.

I want to specifically thank the Urban League of Greater Philadelphia for their partnership in helping us host this event and honor these remarkable young men. We are at our best when we work as a community to uplift and empower the next generation.

As we gather, let us be reminded that leadership is not defined by title, but by action. The young men we honor today are setting a standard - one rooted in service, resilience, and excellence. It is our collective responsibility to continue building environments where they, and others like them, can succeed.

Congratulations to all this year's honorees. I am proud of you, and I look forward to all that you will accomplish in the years ahead.

With pride and commitment,



State Senator Vincent Hughes



REMARKS

from Darrin Anderson

At the Urban League of Greater Philadelphia, we believe that investing in young men is investing in the future of our communities, our cities, and our collective progress. The young men being honored today represent the very best of what leadership, resilience, discipline, and service can look like when purpose meets opportunity.

In the spirit of Malcolm X's enduring legacy, we celebrate men who are not only striving for personal success, but who are committed to uplifting others, standing for justice, and creating meaningful change in the communities around them. Their example reminds us that leadership is not defined solely by title or position, but by courage, integrity, and a willingness to serve.

We are proud to stand alongside Senator Vincent Hughes and our community partners in recognizing these extraordinary young men. Their stories reflect the power of mentorship, education, partnership, and community support working together to shape the next generation of leaders.

To each honoree: your voice matters, your leadership matters, and your future matters. Continue walking boldly in your purpose. Greater Philadelphia is stronger because of you.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D Anderson".

Darrin W. Anderson, Sr., PhD

President & CEO - Urban League of Greater Philadelphia

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Leon Smith

2026 National Teacher of the Year

Leon Smith, the 2026 National Teacher of the Year, serves Pennsylvania's Haverford High School as an Advanced Placement (AP) United States history and AP African American studies teacher, emphasizing critical thinking, civic engagement and creating spaces for students to find their voices and flourish.

Smith has more than two decades of experience as an educator, leader and mentor. He believes students are most successful when their classrooms foster connection. Whether it's through a morning circle, individualized feedback or engaging lessons, students feel confident to meet high expectations because Smith sees in them what they can't always see in themselves. Smith teaches students how to think critically. He creates opportunities for his students to contend with complex ideas and big questions with dignity and curiosity. Smith listens to his students. It was listening to them that became a catalyst for bringing the first-ever AP African American studies course to Haverford.

Smith is deliberate in connecting students with community. As part of AP Advocacy Day, Smith takes students to the Pennsylvania State Capitol to interact with AP scholars from all over the state and meet with their local legislators to share the impact of AP courses on their lives. Students engage with policymakers, asking questions and learning the basics of storytelling to build empathy and understanding.

His leadership extends to championing the recruitment and retention of teachers. Not only does he speak passionately about the profession, he created an Educators Rising chapter in his high school so students can begin to see themselves as teachers too. Above all, he carries the belief that "it is a great power to be in education; it's something we should have a reverence for."

Smith earned a Bachelor of Arts in secondary social studies education from the University of Maryland at College Park, a Master of Education in instructional systems from Pennsylvania State University and a PK-12 principal certification from Cabrini University. He has coached freshman basketball for more than 20 years.



FOR YOUNG, EXTRAORDINARY
 PROFESSIONALS **LOOKING TO GROW**
 TOGETHER, **BUILD TOGETHER, WIN**
 TOGETHER, AND **MAKE THE MOST OUT OF**
LIFE TOGETHER

AGES 21-44



SIGN UP FOR A "NEXT
 ADVOCATE" OR "NEXT
 EQUALITY" MEMBERSHIP

**COMMUNITY &
 CONNECTION**

- Genuine relationships with driven young professionals
- Social events, mixers, and networking opportunities
- Be part of a movement shaping the future of Philadelphia and beyond

**PERSONAL &
 PROFESSIONAL
 GROWTH**

- Career development workshops
- Mentorship and leadership opportunities
- Financial literacy, wellness, and skill-building programs

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
 AND IMPACT**

- Volunteering and advocacy initiatives
- Youth mentorship and education support
- Collaborations with the Urban League of Greater Philadelphia to drive change



C2L - PHL

Career Connected Learning PHL (C2L-PHL) is a citywide initiative that connects Philadelphia youth (ages 12–24) to **real-world, work-based learning experiences**. These opportunities include internships, job shadowing, mentoring, and career exploration designed to prepare youth for long-term success. The program is led by the City of Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia, and Philadelphia Works, and is focused on helping youth **explore careers, build skills, and discover their strengths**.

What Can You Do in C2L-PHL?

You can try out different career experiences like:

- Internships
- Job shadowing (seeing what a job is really like)
- Mentoring (learning from professionals)
- Hands-on projects
- Career workshops



Many students say the program helps them step out of their comfort zone and believe in themselves more. Participation can also **support graduation requirements (Act 158)** and **career readiness benchmarks**.

Get Paid to Learn

You can earn money (stipends) for participating. Payments are based on your attendance and participation. Some students earn up to \$1,300–\$1,500, depending on the program.

How Do You Apply?

Applications usually open in March–April. You must live in Philadelphia and be age 12–24. Apply online through the C2L-PHL portal, where you'll be matched with a program based on your interests.

Why It Matters

C2L-PHL helps you move from:

“What do I want to be?” to **“I’ve actually tried it!”** It’s your chance to **explore your future**.

How Schools Can Get Involved

Schools can partner with local C2L providers, host career exploration events, invite industry professionals into classrooms, and connect with workforce partners for student placements.

- For potential host sites, email C2LPHL@jevs.org or call **833-750-5627**.

Why It Matters

C2L-PHL bridges the gap between **education and opportunity**, giving students access to experiences that help them see real career pathways, build confidence, and prepare for life after graduation.

2026 HONOREES

Ridhwaan Abdus-Salaam

Dylan Adkins

Zachary Anderson

Andrew Ankamah Jr.

Nicholas Barksdale

Khalif Barakat-Cooper

Barry Battle

Jaden Black

Emmett Boone

Imer Bradley

Shamere Briggs

Kamani Bright

Matthias Brockington

Mikel Brown

Tymir Bush

Jarvis Cain, Jr.

Ashon Calhoun

Kevin Carolina

Kris Chester

Breon Clark

Kazier Curtis

Joar Dahn

Amir Davis

Malik Diggins

Daniel Douglas

Alphonso Evans, Jr.

Alexzander Flowers

Marquise Floyd Reid

Talmage Gaither

Charles Gaskins

Samuel Gatheca

Cahiem Gills-Payton

Ahijah Goins

Johandy Gomez

Tyresse Gordon

Knowledge Gossett

JaDore Hamilton-Thomas

Rameir Hardy

Tyson Harrington

Daymond Hart

Jahiem Hill

Xavier Howard

Norris Ingram

Ashton James

Kristofer James

Marvin Jenkins

Amir Johnson

Samuel Johnson

Everett Johnson Jr.

Dontez Jolly

Jasir Jones

Langston Jones

Jibril Jubilee

Nasir Leach

See full bios at: <https://www.senatorhughes.com/menmakingadifference/>

2026 HONOREES CONT.

Sir Brandon Lewis, Jr.	Kasir Sabree	Anthony Wallace
Marquise Lindsey-Bradley	Juliano Saint Fort	Aaron Watkins-Lopez
Ishmael Marshall	Lonce Scott	Kasim Wheeler
Markee Marshall	Terrence Scott-Tillman	Tyrique Whitson
Tyler McCants	Owen Sears	Leshan Wilkinson
Justin McFadden	Robert Silver	Chase Williams
Xavier Mills	Tali Simpkins	Raphael Wimmer
Jermaine Moore	Chase Smith	Leon Smith
Chris Moore	Jayzen Smith	
Gabriel Newsome	Samuel Smith	
Kyseem Nicholson	Jy'Aire Smith-Pennick	
Myles Noel	Malachi Somerville	
Jeremiah Price	Brice Staples	
Lefa Reed	Amir Staten	
Jeremiah Roach	Jasir Stovall-Lomax	
Matthew Robinson	Malik Sylla	
Malachi Rose	Jeremy Turner	
Mekhi Ross	Anthony VanCliff	

See full bios at: <https://www.senatorhughes.com/menmakingadifference/>

2025 HONOREES

Robert Adams	Ryan Harris	Eric Robbins
Ameen Akbar	Lovett Hines	Michael Robinson Sr.
Tumar Alexander	Curtis Johnson	Mungu Sanchez
Greg Allen	Keita Kalonji Johnson, Esq.	Steven Sanders
Abdul-Kareem As-Salafi	Brent Johnstone	Jerome Shabazz
Charles Barr	Willie Jordan	Larry Skinner
Keith Bethel	Jordan King	Bernard Smalley
Mosi Blaylock	S. Archye Leacock	Herb Smith
Anthony Brown	Roland Martin	Akeiff Staples
David Brown	Larry McCrae	G. Lamar Stewart
Rev. Aaron Campbell	Joe Meade	Rev. Michael Stitt
Dr. Norman Clark	Rev. Leroy Miles	Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Gilbert Coleman Sr.	Anton Moore	Darryl Thomas
Jarel Daniels	James Morse	Rahim Thompson
De'Wayne Drummond	Taj Murdock	Carlton Tribble
Sharif El-Mekki	Dennis Nicholson	Kevin Upshur
Charles Gibbs	Lawrence J. Nuble Jr.	Gerald Veasley
Rev. Dr. Wilson Goode	Ernest Owens	Craig Williams
Richard M. Gordon IV	Troy Parham	Derrick E. Wood
David Gould	Derrick Pratt	Jessie Woodhouse
Kevin Haley	David Richardson	

**THANK YOU
TO OUR
PARTNER**



Urban League of
Greater Philadelphia

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

9am - 9:02am

Senator Vincent Hughes introduces Pastor Dawkins for prayer.

9:04am - 9:06am

Prayer from Pastor Dawkins.

9:08am - 9:10am

Senator Vincent Hughes introduces Darrin Anderson.

9:12am - 9:15am

Welcome from Darrin Anderson.

9:17am - 9:20am

Statement of Purpose from Senator Vincent Hughes.

9:22am - 9:24am

Senator Vincent Hughes introduces Mayor Parker.

9:26am - 9:30am

Speech from Mayor Parker.

9:32am - 9:34am

Senator Vincent Hughes introduces Representative from Next Philadelphia, George Morse IV.

9:36am - 9:40am

Next Philadelphia.

9:42am - 10:12am

First 50 awards distributed.

10:14am - 10:17am

Senator Vincent Hughes presents Leon Smith with citation.

10:18am - 10:20am

Senator Vincent Hughes reads Leon Smith bio.

10:22am - 10:42am

Leon Smith.

10:44am - 11:14am

Second half of awards distributed.

11:16am - 11:18am

Senator Vincent Hughes explains second half of event (networking and lunch).

11:19am - 11:24am

Closing from Senator Vincent Hughes.