

Diversity in Business Awards: Hear from the 2020 honorees on racism and what employers can do about it

Aug 6, 2020, 8:01pm EDT Updated: Aug 7, 2020, 9:29am EDT



JEFFRY KONCZAL FOR ACBJ

Carolyn Williams has mentored Columbus students for years at her design company, Williams Interior Designs.

Columbus Business First on Thursday celebrated another class of Diversity in Business Awards honorees, recognizing several organizations and individuals that lead the way in promoting equity and inclusiveness in Central Ohio.

The fifth year for the annual awards program was the most unusual yet, with the coronavirus pandemic canceling plans for an in-person gala. We went ahead with a virtual celebration instead, keynoted by a panel discussion centered on race in America and what the corporate community can do to make a difference.

We also 'handed out' awards to a deserving group of individuals and organizations that have demonstrated excellence in encouraging diversity in age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race and religion at local workplaces.

This year's honorees were selected with the help of outside judges recruited by *Business First*, based on applications submitted by nominated people and companies. Many thanks to Ralph Smithers, AVP of diversity and community relations at Encova Insurance, and Mo Wright, CEO of RAMA Consulting, for their time in helping choose the honorees.

Check out the slideshow and links below for more from the honorees.

[Diversity in Business Awards: City of Columbus' Henry Golatt](#)

[Diversity in Business Awards: Columbus Regional Airport Authority's Karmin Bailey](#)

[Diversity in Business Awards: JPMorgan Chase's Christopher Thompson](#)

[Diversity in Business Awards: Columbus Speech & Hearing's Anna Lichtenstein](#)

[Diversity in Business Awards: City of Columbus' Henry Golatt](#)

[Diversity in Business Awards – Lifetime Achievement: Ohio State University's Rose Wilson-Hill](#)



Doug Buchanan
Editor in chief

Diversity in Business

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**DIVERSITY
IN BUSINESS**
AWARDS

**Williams Interior
Designs Inc.**

Image: Columbus Business First

Williams Interior Designs Inc.

Number of employees: 3

Top officer: Carolyn Williams Francis

Top diversity officer: Carolyn Williams Francis

Now that the city and county consider racism is a public health crisis, how do we as a community resolve that? I believe it's important to have minority companies at the table helping to address the issue of racism being a public health crisis. Local, State and Federal legislators who are drafting and implementing these new laws need to have the perspectives of those who are experiencing racism first-hand so they can receive the best information possible to help them address the issue of racism being a public health crisis. This can be done by forming focus groups of diverse business owners, diverse community organizational leaders and diverse residents, conducting community forums and diverse business round tables that inclusively involve all diverse aspects of our society.

What is your company doing to address racism? As an African American, female owned firm we address racism in several ways. Williams Interior Designs Inc. is very involved in advocating for the minority community. We mentor African American high school students annually. For the past 24 years, we have provided employment for diverse youth and students through working with organizations like the Columbus Urban League and Columbus City Schools. Our firm has provided internships for college students for the past 15 years.

The American Red Cross has hosted blood drives at our office for the past three years. For the past three years, our firm has also been a proud supporter for The Stefanie Spielman Breast Cancer Walk. Cancer has hit close to home for me personally. My twin sister Carla Bailey is a stage 4 breast cancer survivor.

Williams Interior Designs has been a member of the Ohio Minority Supplier Development Council (OMSDC) for 28 years. This organization was founded to help minority-owned businesses get an opportunity to play on a level playing field when seeking business from major corporations. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, many minority businesses have shut down or will not survive for very long. We are working hard to survive this crisis.

What benefits does your company offer specifically to LGBTQ employees? Although Williams Interior does not currently have employees that have voluntarily identified with the LGBTQ community, we have always been open and welcoming to diverse individuals and business owners, including those that have an affinity with or connection to the LGBTQ community. We look forward to celebrating the achievements and supporting the efforts of the LGBTQ community for equality and justice, and we proudly recognize the month of June as Pride Month.