

Panelists from Jan. 17, 2021: A Candid Conversation about Systemic Racism

BRENDA KAYE JOHNSON – BIO

Brenda Kaye is a retired United States Army Reserve Officer. After leaving military service she home schooled her son and daughter for five years while working part time, starting a business and volunteering within her community.

The business, CreativEdge Enterprises competed and won two franchise locations within the Philadelphia International Airport, an Edy's Ice Cream and Pizzeria Uno. Prior to opening the locations, they were sold for a substantial profit. At the same time returning to part time military training, she attended Command and General Staff College at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Brenda Kaye attended California Polytechnic State University as a Speech Communications major and completed her Bachelor of Science in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Communications at Excelsior College.

Brenda Kaye grew up in a single parent home, however her mother was a strong figure and business woman, with a restaurant in New Haven Michigan and later as subcontractors for highway construction companies in Las Vegas and Reno. Business ownership was in her blood.

In 2006 she and the family relocated to the Middle East to live and work for three years returning to USA in 2009. Her son, Joseph attended the American School of Doha, Qatar where he graduated in June 2009 and her daughter Amber attended The College of the North Atlantic in Doha, Qatar becoming a star basketball player. Both adult children served in the Armed Forces.

Brenda Kaye lived in the United Arab Emirates and Kabul, Afghanistan where her company competed for government contracts. And in Kampala, Uganda where she started a chicken farm with locals.

Currently, Ms Brenda Kaye is writing her first novel as a co-writer with an inmate imprisoned for over thirty years for a crime he did not commit. She also, worked on the Biden/Harris Campaign as a Field Organizer, volunteers as Veterans Coordinator with Veterans Resource Coalition (VRC) and a member of Blue Star Mother's of America an organization for parents with Active Duty children.

Hobbies: Golf, kayaking, fishing, working out, dancing, singing and writing.

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Amber Viola

Amber spent most of her life moving from bases to base as her parents jobs were transferred around the country. The final place Amber called home was Gouldsboro, Pennsylvania, where she graduated from North Pocono High School.

After graduating, she spent one year at the University of Scranton. This was the first place where racism and discrimination was a daily part of life. The climate on campus was very racially insensitive and many students would comment on how she was able to get into the U of S. The very few Black students were often told they were not allowed to attend parties or were not welcome in certain houses on campus.

After completing her freshman year Amber went to the United States Navy and completed eight honorable years as a Gunner's Mate Second Class. Amber was often the only minority and only female in her work space. She saw first-hand how hard it is to work in an environment where there are no minority supervisors or minorities in leadership positions.

After leaving the Navy in 2018, Amber moved to Scranton to complete her degree in Social Work at Marywood University. Amber now works as the Human Resource Director for the City of Scranton. She is the highest ranking Black person at City Hall and one of few Black City of Scranton employees. Amber spent her life in predominantly white spaces and understands the importance of diversity.

Amber currently lives in Scranton with her daughter and spends her time working with local community groups and educating the public on racial bias and the need for diversity in organizations, nonprofits and local community groups.

Ways to follow Amber:

Instagram: [amber__viola](#)

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