

# *The Langston*

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Tabor 100 Newsletter



# HAPPY WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

MARCH 2026



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**W**omen's History Month is a time to acknowledge the role women have played and continue to play in

shaping our lives, our society, and our future. With that in mind, I want to take a moment to recognize the many women of color who have broken barriers, continue to shatter glass ceilings, and are still making history right here in Washington State.

I think about the determination of Dorothy Hollingsworth, who became the first Black woman to serve on a Washington State school board in 1975. I reflect on the courage of Madame Luella Boyer, who opened her hair emporium in 1902, becoming Everett's first Black female business owner. And I can't help but wonder about the countless women whose names we may never know, those who were left out of the history books, overlooked in the rooms they helped build, and never fully recognized despite earning every right to be.

And yet, their impact remains.

In last month's message, I shared that recognition alone is not enough to create meaningful change. Closely tied to recognition is representation, and representation drives impact. Even when recognition is absent, impact does not disappear. It lives on

in the doors opened, the paths cleared, and the possibilities expanded for those who come next.

Representation matters. The influence of women, both known and unknown, has created ripples that have grown into



**"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."**

– Hebrews 11:1

waves of progress and hope that we are still feeling today.

Just in the last week, we've seen it in leaders like Megan Matthews, confirmed as Director of Washington State's Office of Equity. We've seen it in elected officials like Washington State Representative Kristine Reeves, who continues to advocate fiercely and with grace for Black and brown communities

across our state. We see it through organizations like the Black Future Co-op Fund Architects, who last month sponsored over 30 leaders, including myself on a powerful journey to South Africa. There, we connected with a culture that deeply honors its ancestors while cultivating well-being, and we deepened our understanding of who we are and how we move in the world. We also see it within Tabor 100, in every member who has chosen to stand together in the spirit of

community and the pursuit of a more equitable future.

I have experienced this impact personally. Because of the sacrifices and determination of those who came before me, I've had the opportunity to build a business, connect with leaders across the globe, and help create and lead organizations like Tabor 100. Their legacy is not just history, it is living proof of what is possible.

So many women walked by faith, believing in possibilities they could not yet see and creating opportunities they might never personally benefit from. Because of them, we now stand in spaces that were once closed to us.

While we still have work to do in achieving true equity and equality, we cannot ignore how far we've come. Progress has been made. Impact has been felt. And there is every reason to remain hopeful.

**Ollie Garrett**  
*CEO and President*

# Door Swings

March 2026 Visits | 916  
Since Opening | 35,953

We must stand together –  
Still, we Rise!



## SAVE the DATE

**2** April  
10 – 11:00 AM  
@ The Hub  
**Sound Transit Monthly Vendor Onboarding Session**

**21** April  
6 – 8:00 PM  
@ The Hub  
**(Hybrid) Managing & Understanding Blanket Contracts**  
NOTE: Join us in-person or virtually!  
**QuickBooks Interactive Drop-in Workshop**

**Tabor 100 has partnered with the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) to bring free compliance education and support to our members.**

If you have ever had questions about your responsibilities as an employer and were not sure where to turn, we are here to help.

Running a small business comes with a lot of moving parts. Keeping up with workplace safety rules, employment standards, workers' compensation insurance, and contractor registration requirements is no small task. Through this partnership, Tabor 100 will help connect our members directly to L&I's resources, tools, and staff so that finding answers is simpler and less stressful.

Members can access one-on-one and small group consultations, receive educational materials through our newsletter, and meet our team at tabling events around the region. When a question calls for more specialized help, we will connect you directly to the right person at L&I. All services are free to participating businesses.

## New Members – MARCH

**Sorone Shaw**  
Nutmeg & Pecan  
Enterprises, Corp.

**Alvin Nance**  
True Intelligence  
Consulting

**Steve LeMay**  
Data Motus

**Dwayne Alexander**  
Little Scholars  
Montessori Academy

**Angela K Battle**  
HNTB

**Tiarra N London**  
Black Diamond  
Advocacy

Have a question related to labor laws?

Scan this QR code or email:  
[OWS@tabor100.org](mailto:OWS@tabor100.org)



Seattle Office of  
Labor Standards

This partnership reflects L&I's commitment to reaching small businesses through organizations they already know and trust. As a Tabor 100 member, you are at the heart of that work, and we are glad to be in your corner.

To learn more or get started, visit us at [tabor100.org](http://tabor100.org) or call (425) 528-0111. ▶

# DES Strengthens its Commitment to Business Diversity

DES is improving how it serves businesses and communities across Washington.

**A**s part of a recent agencywide reorganization, DES launched a centralized Business Diversity Program, led by Dr. Adrian Thompson, DES' Chief Equity and Performance Officer. This combines programs and resources into one coordinated effort for both goods and services and public works—strengthening the state's ability to deliver fair access to contracting opportunities and accountability to the public.

This work is grounded in building programs that create opportunities for small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses. We want inclusion to be the default for state business, building equity into our processes from the start.

Business is hard. Government contracting is harder. Winning contracts is harder still — but “hard” shouldn't be impossible. It should mean clear rules protecting the public, not barriers protecting government. Today, the system doesn't always work well for small, diverse, and veteran-owned businesses.

DES designs the architecture of state procurement — how contracts are structured, what requirements are used, how risk is handled, and how consistent processes are across 152 state agencies.

This affects who can bid, how much it costs, and how predictable the outcome feels. When the system works,

the effort reflects real competition and accountability. When it doesn't work, it creates obstacles serving the system instead of the public.

Our job is to identify the difference and fix what gets in the way.

For community partners like Tabor 100, this means better alignment and more opportunities to support Washington businesses.

The Business Diversity Program is focused on turning strategy into action: developing enforceable goals, strengthening accountability and creating systems to track progress. We're also expanding efforts like the Washington EDGE program and exploring new approaches,

including reserved contracts and improvements to how statewide contracts are used.

We are also making practical improvements — reviewing solicitation and contract language, improving contractor inclusion plans, increasing use of the Small Works Roster, and offering more opportunities to connect through open houses, matchmaking events, and technical assistance.

We appreciate the feedback we've heard from businesses and community partners. It's shaping how we move forward. ▶



# Bravely Sprouting Not Alone

By Filiz Efe McKinney

**F**iliz Efe McKinney is a woman filmmaker and an immigrant. Both identities taught her the same thing: how to claim space in rooms that weren't built for her.

She came to the United States from Türkiye in 2008 with over a decade of experience in international corporate communications and filmmaking, where English was the professional language. "I double-stitched my credentials with a second graduate degree in communications at the University of Washington to avoid any second-guessing of my capabilities," Filiz said. But the

## TABOR 100 OMWBE NARRATIVE HIGHLIGHT

### FILIZ EFE MCKINNEY BRAVE SPROUT PRODUCTIONS

barrier wasn't a lack of training or skillset. It was what happened at the gatekeeping stage, before she could show her work.

"In communications, your voice represents organizations publicly. Your social identity markers matter. The closer they sit to power and social status, the more access and validation you receive. When they don't match the colors of the dominant culture, they become oversaturated, and the higher the stakes, the more visible they get. My ambiguous accent is a puzzle people can't place, and solving it becomes their priority before my work ever enters the conversation."

Nobody talks about how subtle acts of conformity take a toll on migrants. The adjustments you make to fit in, the parts of yourself you learn to quiet, the energy spent performing credibility before you can actually demonstrate it. For Filiz, years of applying for roles at major companies and institutions ended the same way: screened out early, despite everything she'd brought to the table.

"That's the immigrant experience: You work hard. You compromise. You become resourceful. You



learn to survive. You reclaim your identity."

Filiz channeled that energy into building something of her own. In 2015, she founded Brave Sprout Productions, providing video production and consulting services for local government and mission-driven organizations. Her business name is the direct translation of her Turkish name and the reflection of her immigrant spirit: Brave Sprout.

She immediately pursued WBE and DBE certifications, not as proof of her qualifications, but as a way to get a fair chance to present them. "Nobody hires you for a certification if you can't do the work," Filiz said. "But the certification opens the door." Once through it, Filiz built her reputation through deliverables

rather than first impressions. Over the next decade, the work earned recognition, including an Emmy nomination and multiple awards in social impact filmmaking.

Then 2025 hit.

Organizations pulled back in fear of being targeted by changes from the new federal administration. The impact wasn't just on businesses. It was on the people and communities that work was meant to serve. With Brave Sprout under real financial pressure, a new contract with the City of Seattle offered a lifeline. But just as the business was stabilizing, Filiz faced a new hurdle: reclaiming her Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification.

In October 2025, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued an Interim Final Rule that changed how DBE eligibility works. The rule removed the presumption of social and economic disadvantage based on race or gender. It applies retroactively, meaning every previously certified DBE business must now submit a personal narrative proving their disadvantage from scratch, regardless of how long they've held certification.

In Washington, the process is administered by the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE). Applicants must describe specific personal experiences of hardship, systemic

barriers, and denied opportunities, but with constraints: it must have happened in the US, it must be personal rather than general, and it cannot rely on race or gender alone. In other words, you have to document the barriers you've faced without naming the systems that created them.

"Instead of focusing on where I shine, I had to prove that I am not making up the social barriers I experience."

Filiz had spent years muting parts of herself to fit in. She had built a business that carried her name, her identity, in its translation. She had earned her certifications to get a fair chance. Now the same system that created the barriers was asking her to prove they existed, under rules that made them nearly impossible to name. It was the gatekeeping all over again, just on paper.

She was ready to give up. She didn't have the fight in her alone.

That's when Tabor 100 showed up. Through OMWBE, Filiz learned that Tabor 100 provides free

technical assistance, including narrative writing support for the DBE process. With her deadline just days away, she applied and was quickly matched with a consultant from Golden Gift Consulting.

What she received wasn't just help with the writing. It was someone telling her not to give in, to keep fighting.

"We all need community," Filiz said. "Someone who says: don't give up. I have your back."

Filiz submitted her narrative to OMWBE. A week later, she was approved.

"I reclaimed my seat at the table with the support of an organization who didn't owe me a favor," she said.

"Sometimes the biggest act of resistance isn't doing it alone," Filiz said. "It's letting someone have your back. And having someone's back when you can."

For more information on Brave Sprout, visit [bravesprout.com](https://bravesprout.com). To request Technical Assistance, visit [tabor100.org/technicalassistance](https://tabor100.org/technicalassistance). ▀



# THE WORK AHEAD: Organizing, Prioritizing and Sticking Together

By Crystal Wright

**K**ristine Reeves is not here to make you feel better. The Washington State Representative who chairs the

Legislative Black Caucus didn't call this meeting to pass out affirmations. She called it because the house is on fire and too many people are still arguing about whose turn it is to hold the hose.

Reeves — an Afro-Latina who grew up in foster care, went homeless as a teenager, survived her mother's addiction, served in the United States

Army, and went on to become the first Black woman elected to the Washington State Legislature in eighteen years — has three words she's been driving into the walls of that building like nails: Organize. Prioritize. Stick together. She says it like a prayer, but she means it like a warning.

"We are so busy fighting each other," Reeves told me, with the steadiness of a leader who's said it a thousand times. "We have forgotten that there's still a

plantation owner out there that we've got to go figure out how to take down."

You see, the gap between what policy promises and what Black people actually experience isn't in the legislation or buried in the policy language that goes into committee and comes out scrubbed of anything useful. The gap is in us — in the habit that was deliberately engineered over centuries to keep us treating each other like the enemy.

House slave versus field slave. She names it directly. Not as a metaphor. As an operating procedure. "We spend more time asking which plantation you were on and whether you got better treatment than we did, instead of partnering with each other to go after the plantation owner," she said. Meanwhile, the plantation owner is not confused about who his enemies are. He'll take both of you out.

Reeves arrived in Olympia alone. She was the first Black woman elected to that legislature in nearly two decades. She walked into that building, asked Black community for backup — and got thrown under the bus by men in her own community who said she wasn't Black enough. That her father is Mexican made her suspect. A message on NAACP letterhead questioned whether she spoke for Black people at all.

"What a missed opportunity," she said, less like anger than grief, for what could have been built sooner.

One becomes two. Two becomes four. There are now fourteen Black legislators in that building. Reeves chairs the whole operation. It's fourteen people who weren't supposed to be there, moving together.

But fourteen people, she'll tell you fast, cannot hold off Donald Trump.

What's required now is something this country hasn't fully committed to since

**"We are so busy fighting each other. We have forgotten that there's still a plantation owner out there that we've got to go figure out how to take down."**

**"Fourteen people in the building aren't gonna hold off Donald Trump."**

the 1960s: a civil rights-era level of movement. Not a march on a Saturday. A sustained deliberate campaign that requires Black people to stop litigating each other's identities — who's the right kind of Black, who suffered enough, who's too progressive, who's not progressive enough.

And Black women, she said, have always been the actual organizers. Not the ones on the posters. The ones in the church basements making the calls, printing the flyers, getting the bodies in the streets. The men walked in front of the cameras. The women made the march possible. Every generation. Same story. They still have to fight for their due.

Reeves thinks about her great-grandmother Beatrice — a Democratic Party precinct committee officer in Los Angeles during the civil rights movement. A woman who showed up when the stakes were everything. WWBD — What Would Beatrice Do?



**"It's not about me. It's look at we — look at the power of what we can do when we work together."**

**"They've been taught activism. They haven't been taught oppression."**

"What would Beatrice do in this moment?" she asked, "knowing that our rights are being infringed, and federal government is trying to roll back those hard-fought wins." She'd organize, prioritize, and stick together.

The spark of a movement, Reeves believes, may already be lit — fourteen legislators, a first-ever statewide Black town hall, the slow building of muscle. The Civil Rights Act didn't arrive in six months. It started with a bus boycott and took five years to become law.

"In my mind," she said, "it has always been Black excellence that has lit the way to liberation."

And what exactly are we seeking liberation from right now? Authoritarianism. Fascism. Oppression. And a federal administration that is betting —

hard — that we are too busy fighting each other to notice. Beatrice noticed.

So I asked Reeves directly: what do you need us to do? Her answer was the same three words she's been living by, and she spelled them out.

**Organize** — around shared values. Not shared skin tone, politics, or pain. Shared values and a shared direction.

**Prioritize** — what short-term, mid-term, and long-term success actually looks like. Name it. Write it down. Measure it.

**Stick together** — even when you don't agree, or when you can't all see the same parts of the puzzle. "Believe in the power of the team," she said. "Build on each other's strengths. Mitigate each other's weaknesses. And recognize that while we may not be a monolith, we are a movement — and together, we can win this moment."

The question is whether we will. ▀



# Tabor 100's Black Business Showcase

Colorful paintings, hand-crafted tote bags, and knick-knacks added a punch of color.

The comforting smells of cobblers and pastries filled the rooms. The sounds of passionate business owners and entrepreneurs proudly sharing their wares, crafts, and practices to passersby. All of these aspects created a vibrancy that compounds into one theme, one word....

Community. That was the theme of Tabor 100's Black Business Trade Show from February 25th, 2026.

In recognition of Black History Month, Tabor 100 hosted its second-ever business spotlight expo. This time around, the expo focused on platforming black-owned businesses

and entrepreneurs within the local community and across Washington State.

With over 70 businesses and entities registered, this trade show served as a central hub for a wide range of black-owned businesses and the industries they represent. From retail to food/catering services, to applicable services such as traffic control, electrical, and HVAC services, the event did something important-

Provide a physical location where everyone could see each other, support each other, network with each other, and celebrate one another.

For more information on Tabor 100 and the various services it provides, please visit [www.tabor100.org](http://www.tabor100.org). ▶



*"It was bigger than I thought, great networking and fun!"* – Lean Revisions



*"It was great! You're gonna need more space next year!"* – Yes We Can Flaggers



*"As a newer member of Tabor 100, this was our first event, so we really came with open expectations. I was genuinely pleased to connect with other business owners doing a variety of things."* – Blantyre Business Services



*"It was a great event and great exposure for ACMS Northwest as we are expanding our services in Washington."* – ACMS Northwest





# Access to Equal Opportunity

The Port of Seattle is committed to building a strong, inclusive economy. With the Diversity in Contracting Resolution, we're making sure that includes businesses like yours.

Our goal is to triple the number of women and minority-owned businesses that contract with the Port by 2024 and remove barriers to expand the development of other disadvantaged business enterprises.

## **GROW YOUR BUSINESS AND SKILLS WITH THE PORT:**

### **1. Bid on open contacts**

Register your business in our database, and search and apply for contracts through a clear and fair process on <http://bit.ly/Facts19>.

### **2. Train with PortGen Workshops**

Excited for opportunities but not sure where to start? We're here to support you. Join quarterly workshops to learn how to do business with the Port, get certified as a vendor, and network with representatives.

### **3. Learn on our site**

Access resources year-round on the site. From video how-tos to lists of upcoming opportunities and events, you can find all the information you need for success.

[Learn More](#)

<http://bit.ly/Facts19>