**Secretary Speaker Series**

**Celebrating Conservation Roots**

**February 27, 2024**

Secretary Speaker Series: <https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Secretary-Speaker-Series>

**California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot**

<https://resources.ca.gov/About-Us/Secretary-Speaker-Series>

Celebrate Black History Month with CNRA: <https://resources.ca.gov/blackhistorymonth>

**Panelists:**

* Susan D. Anderson, History Curator and Program Manager, California African American Museum
* Dana Cota, Native American Cultural Studies Chief (Acting), CalTrans
* **Baraka Carter,** Santa Clara Unit Chief California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
* Surlene Grant, Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Equity, Department of Toxic Substances Control
* Ebenezer Ampah, Racial Equity Officer, Department of Water Resources
* JP, Director, California Conservation Corps

**Susan D. Anderson, History Curator and Program Manager, California African American Museum**

**California African American Museum:** [**https://caamuseum.org/**](https://caamuseum.org/)

**Meet Susan D. Anderson:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqnPqso3-IY**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqnPqso3-IY)

History Curator and Program Manager at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, and a member of the editorial board of *California History* journal.  Previously, she was Director of Collections, Library, Exhibitions and Programs at the California Historical Society in San Francisco, as well as Interim Chief Curator at the African American Museum & Library at Oakland, and Curator of Collecting Los Angeles at UCLA Library Special Collections.

For decades, she has brought her scholarly interest in California’s hidden African American history to her writing, lectures and public history projects including exhibitions, podcasts and programming. A third-generation Californian, her mother and father’s families include founders of historic black churches, Washington Chapel AME Church in Tuskegee, Alabama, established 1898, and Bethlehem Lutheran Church in West Oakland, California, founded 1929.

**Dana Cota, Native American Cultural Studies Chief (Acting), Department of Transportation (CalTrans)**

Department of Transportation (CalTrans): <https://dot.ca.gov/>

Dana Cota is the acting Native American Cultural Studies Chief (Acting) at CalTrans. Ms. Cota is passionate about diversity, equity, inclusion, environmental justice, and working with Native American tribes. She most recently served as Caltrans’ Broadband North Region Native American Coordinator (the first to hold this position), where she worked with the Native American Coordinators and tribes in Caltrans Districts 1, 2, and 3 to ensure Federally and non-Federally recognized tribes throughout all 22 counties in Northern California who are involved in ground-disturbing activities during Broadband construction.

**Baraka Carter**, **Santa Clara Unit Chief California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection** (CAL FIRE)

CAL FIRE: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/>

Chief Carter has a distinguished career spanning over two decades in fire service. He commenced his journey as a Firefighter in 1997, swiftly advancing to roles such as Fire Apparatus Engineer and Fire Captain across various stations. His leadership trajectory saw him rise to Battalion Chief, overseeing critical units within CAL FIRE. Notably, he excelled in Incident Management Teams for 12 years, assuming pivotal roles such as Safety Officer and Incident Commander. Chief Carter's expertise extends beyond operational roles; he has contributed significantly to statewide committees and cadres, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing safety protocols and incident management frameworks. He was Appointed Santa Clara Unit Chief on October 30, 2023.

**Ebenezer Ampah, Racial Equity Officer, Department of Water Resources**

**Department of Water Resources:** [**https://water.ca.gov/**](https://water.ca.gov/)

Ebenezer Ampah is currently the Racial Equity Officer at the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and is responsible for implementing DWR’s Racial Equity Action Plan, as well as providing technical expertise and policy guidance to the Department on racial equity and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Ebenezer has over ten years of experience within state government.  He recently served as Deputy Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at Covered California.  He has held positions as the Chief of the Equal Employment Opportunity Office for the Department of General Services and the Chief of the Office of Human Rights and Advocacy Services at the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

**DWR Recognizes the Need for a Diverse and Equitable Workplace to be able to Serve all Californians for Generations to Come**

<https://water.ca.gov/News/Blog/2022/June-22/DWR-Recognizes-the-Need-for-a-Diverse-and-Equitable-Workplace>

**DWR Racial Equity Plan:** <https://water.ca.gov/-/media/DWR-Website/Web-Pages/About/Files/DWR-REAP-06142022-FINAL_ay11.pdf>

**Surlene Grant, Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Equity, Department of Toxic Substances Control**

**Department of Toxic Substances Control -** [**https://dtsc.ca.gov/**](https://dtsc.ca.gov/)

[**https://www.surlenegrant.com/about**](https://www.surlenegrant.com/about)

Surlene Grant is long-time community advocate for affordable housing, quality healthcare, environmental justice, and community development. For 20 + years, she managed her own public affairs and community relations consulting firm which focused housing, transportation and community development projects with an equity and environmental justice approach. In June 2023, Governor Gavin Newson appointed Ms. Grant to Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Equity for the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). In this position, she holds responsibility for public participation, environmental justice, and Tribal affairs for the Department.

**Redlining and Housing Discrimination History in San Leandro** <https://www.sanleandro.org/1086/Redlining-and-Housing-Discrimination-His>

**San Leandro Experiences**

<https://www.sanleandro.org/1093/San-Leandro-Experiences>

**JP Patton, Director, California Conservation Corps**

**California Conservation Corps:** [**https://ccc.ca.gov/**](https://ccc.ca.gov/)

**About JP:** [**https://ccc.ca.gov/jp-patton/**](https://ccc.ca.gov/jp-patton/)

JP Patton leads the California Conservation Corps in our commitment to expand our reach to young adults and to protect California’s natural resources through environmentally focused work that makes California an even better place for all.

On November 1, 2023, Governor Gavin Newsom appointed JP to serve as the CCC Director. JP’s career with the CCC started in 2021 as a Deputy Director over Region 1. As Deputy Director, he supported multiple Northern California CCC centers all actively engaged in mission critical work of Corpsmember development, natural resource conservation, climate resilience, and emergency response.