

NAR Realtor Celebrates 5-Notable African Americans in Real Estate for Black History Month

Fine Art and Real Estate Broker Anna D. Smith celebrates Black History Month by telling the stories of 5-notable African Americans in Real Estate.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- In "5-Notable African Americans in Real Estate," Silicon Valley fine art and real estate broker, and member of the National Association of Realtors, Anna D. Smith, writes about such notable African Americans in real estate, as Bridget "Biddy" Mason, Paul Revere Williams, Igalious "Ike" Mills, Dana White, and Tenisha Williams.

Bridget "Biddy" Mason was born into slavery on August 15, 1818, in Mississippi. Her last owner was a Mississippi Mormon convert, who decided to establish a Mormon community in what would become Salt Lake City, Utah. At the time, Utah was still a part of Mexico.

In 1851, Smith moved his family and slaves to a new Mormon community in San Bernardino, California. However, slavery was illegal in California. Upon urging, Mason contested her slave



Theme Building at LAX designed by Architect Paul Revere Williams



Real Estate Magnate Bridget "Biddy" Mason

status in the California courts.

On January 21, 1856, L.A. District Judge Benjamin Hayes approved Mason's petition, the ruling freed her from slavery.

During a smallpox epidemic in Los Angeles, Mason risked her life to care for those affected by the virus. Her knowledge of herbal remedies kept her employed during the epidemic.

Saving carefully, Mason became one of the first African American women to own land in Los Angeles; and as a businesswoman, she amassed a fortune, estimated at \$3 million.

Mason became a real estate magnate. She donated the land to what would become the home to the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Los Angeles, the city's first African American church.

She also helped to establish the first elementary school for African American children in Los Angeles.

Paul Revere Williams was born on February 18, 1894, in Los Angeles, California. In 1896, his father died from tuberculosis and his mother died two years later from tuberculosis as well.

He was eventually adopted, and was the only African American student in his elementary school. His foster mother ensured he received a proper education. This allowed Williams to follow his dream in becoming an architect.

From 1916 to 1919, Williams attended a program for architectural engineering at the University of Southern California. He took a series of low-paying jobs at several architectural firms to learn



Farmer Igalious "Ike" Mills



Franchisor Dana White

as much as he could. During this time in 1917, he married Della Mae Givens at the Bridget “Biddy” Mason built, First AME Church in Los Angeles, and they had three children.

In 1921, Williams received a license to practice architecture in California, and became the first certified African-American architect west of the Mississippi. A year later, at age 28, Williams founded his own business, Paul R. Williams and Associates.

As Williams’s reputation grew, he received commissions to design houses for such Hollywood stars as Lon Chaney, Lucille Ball, Frank Sinatra, Bill (“Bojangles”) Robinson, Barbara Stanwyck, Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Anthony Quinn, Julie London, Tyrone Power, Bert Lahr, Charles Correll, Will Hays, Zasu Pitts, and Danny Thomas.

During his career, Williams designed more than 2,000 private homes, and more than 2,000 public buildings, including the flying saucer-shaped Theme Building at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).



Real Estate Broker Tenisha Williams

Born in 1953, Igalious “Ike” Mills grew up working his family’s farm in the Piney Woods town of Nacogdoches, Texas. His siblings still keep it running, relying on a lot of the same equipment used by their father and grandfather.

Mills remembers milking cows and making butter with a churn as a child. His family grew corn and raised cattle, largely for themselves. While the farm was largely self-sustaining, a white-owned feed store allowed his family to buy goods on credit until his dad got the money.

The store essentially served as the family’s bank, because access to financial institutions was unheard of. Mills said buyers offered his dad lower prices than they would white farmers, as this was expected during Jim Crow.

Due to biased government and private discriminatory practices, African American farmers lost more than 12 million acres of farmland over the past century; and according to a CNN analysis, 42% of African American farmers were rejected for direct USDA loans in 2021, more than any other demographic group.

As the director of the Texas Agriforestry Small Farmers and Ranchers, Mills has spent much of his energy trying to connect a dwindling number of African American farmers with state and

federal programs that can help them keep their operations running.

Dana White, owner of the Detroit-Based Paralee Boyd Salon, is the first African American woman in the U.S. to franchise a salon business.

White began her entrepreneurial journey as a salon owner in 2012, after taking out a \$30,000 personal loan. A chance experience inside of a Dominican hair salon in New Jersey changed her life, as she went to the hair appointment at 10ish, and was done by 11:30, she told the Atlanta Black Star.

This experience led to her vision to reduce the time a client's hair was being serviced without affecting the quality of the outcome.

Tenisha Williams is the CEO and Founder of Elite Realty Partners, the largest African American owned, and woman-owned real estate brokerage firm in South Florida.

For Williams, her path to managing 150 real estate brokers and generating over \$200 million in revenue, was a path not often traveled. At 15, Williams found herself pregnant; by 16, she was a teenage mom, and a not so common predictor of future success.

After graduating from high school, she went to college at Florida A&M University. As a student and mom, these two worlds often intersected, requiring her daughter to be with her at University.

According to Williams, her success is attributable to her faith. Her nickname as "Your Favored Broker," is a faith based reference to being highly favored. Living through that faith inspired her to form the non-profit organization She Is Me Advancement Group to help mothers and teenage daughters thrive through hard times.

To learn far more about these, "5-Notable African Americans in Real Estate," be sure to check out Anna D. Smith's Fine Art and Real Estate Blog, or the audio versions on Spotify or YouTube.

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