

Gerald W. Johnson: A Champion's Legacy

By Käto Cooks

Gerald W. Johnson—national champion of diversity, equity, inclusion, antiracism—joined the ancestors on May 5, 2026, at age 101. Buoyed in the comfort of his spouse and business partner, Valerie Voorhies, along with others who loved him, Mr. Johnson passed softly, quietly, yet storming into our history.

His legacy remains. Some missed the opportunity to know him, to be around him, to learn from him. Others of us are fortunate enough to have learned of him as he lived. Many missed the warmth of his smile and being, the strength that he carried and shared, those unspoken gifts captured in his grimaces, gestures, jokes, and manner. All of that remains: see the YouTube links at the bottom of this very short obsequy that I am honored to have been selected to pen. Also review the references and a few other articles that appeared over time in the Small Business Exchange newspapers, print and online editions. I was lucky enough to contribute to that oeuvre, too.

For Mr. Johnson's 100th birthday, I started my celebration with this:

He steps smoothly into Mr. B's, his favorite New Orleans retreat, to relax with his spouse and business partner, Valerie Voorhies. He is dressed casually, neatly, and comfortably. Adorning his head is a cap with the inscription: Took 100 years to look this good.

And he smiles about it. "He" is Gerald Johnson, publisher and co-founder of the Small Business Exchange trade newspaper, digital and print. "It" is his 100th birthday on January 28.

There were a lot of experiences leading up to this and several yet to come. For example, the City of New Orleans issued a proclamation to him on January 26. The California-based Construction Contractors Alliance announced a scholarship in his honor that covers five students. And something is stirring in San Francisco along the lines of another proclamation. His world percolates. But leading up to today . . .

San Francisco honored him by making January 28 Gerald W. Johnson Day. We will recognize every year going forward in the same way.



California-based Construction Contractors Alliance (www.ConstructionContractorsAlliance.org) raised the Gerald W. Johnson Scholarship to \$2,500 per student to cover tuition for a National University online course in certified administrative assistant

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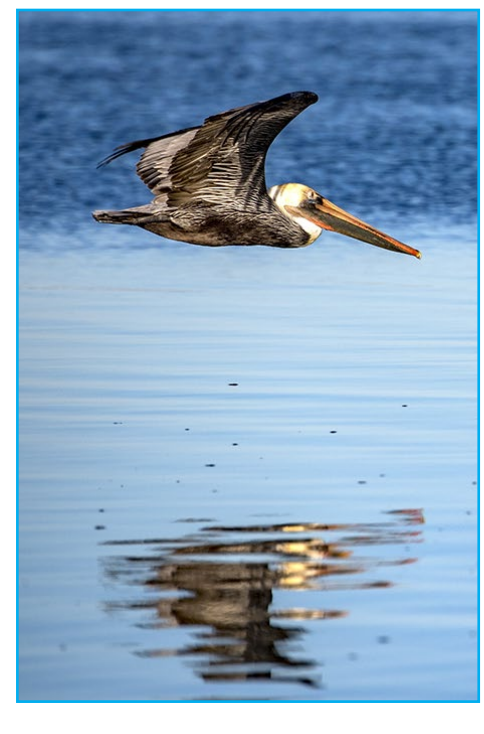
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small businesses. This event will cover the basics of navigating the federal contracting process, as well as the various certifications available to help your small business succeed in the government marketplace. Certifications include: 8(a) Business Development Program, HUBZone Certification, Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB/EDWOSB), and Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB). Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable insights and resources to help your small business. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/federal-contracting-basics-and-certifications-for-small-businesses-tickets-1977729664666>

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Monday, June 8, 2026, 9:00 am–10:00 am CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration, Rhode Island District Office
Contact: Brian Hopkins, 401-528-4575, brian.hopkins@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

This free workshop, presented by the Rhode Island District Office, is designed to help entrepreneurs understand the various SBA programs and services available to help them as they start, expand, grow, and recover their businesses. This overview presentation covers: Introduction to the SBA; SBA Resource Partner Network—Business Training and One-on-One Counseling; Selling to the Federal Government—SBA Contracting Certification Programs; Access to Capital—Loan and Surety Bond Programs; International Trade Assistance; Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Assistance Loans. Register online for the free workshop webinar at <https://www.sba.gov/event/80670>

Federal Contracting for Small Businesses Webinar
Tuesday, June 9, 2026, 11:00 am–12:30 pm CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Irene Gonzalez, 208-334-1673, irene.gonzalez@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

Learn the essentials of federal contracting for

Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Program Webinar
Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 1:00 pm–3:00 pm CDT Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Patrice Dozier, patrice.dozier@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required

SBA is creating a space for Woman-Owned Small Businesses, via WOSB certification! Are you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions include an overview of the self-certification process, and a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-1986913543896>

CERTIFICATION

Small Business Exchange, Inc. is **DBE certified** by the Louisiana UCP.

