

# DIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT



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State Auditor  
**Brian S. Colón, Esq.**

## EMBRACING EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY + INCLUSION CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

*In recognition of Black History Month, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the excellence of African Americans in their contributions to the field of accountancy.*

*When the National Association of Black Accountants was founded in 1969, less than 1% of all Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) in the United States were African American. While African Americans have made great strides in entering the field of accounting, the United States Census reports that African Americans make up less than 9% of Auditors and CPAs. Indeed, while great strides have been made over the past 50 years, there is still plenty of work to be done.*

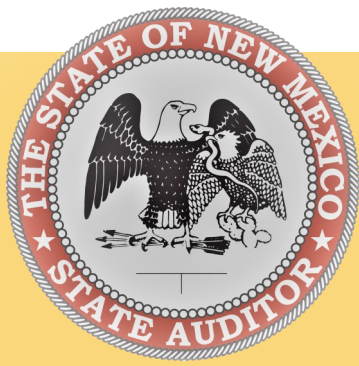
*In addition to its commitment to increase diversity internally, the OSA is fiercely dedicated to celebrating inclusion. Please join the OSA in recognizing African Americans who helped break barriers within the accounting profession and opened doors to others.*

### Local Spotlight: Marcus J. Mimms, CPA



Born and raised in New Mexico, Marcus attended New Mexico State University and holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and a bachelor's degree in business administration. He is a certified public accountant. He currently serves as a board member of the Albuquerque Community Foundation, the Economic Forum, the New Mexico Tax Research Institute, New Mexico First and the UNM Anderson School Foundation. Marcus is also a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the New Mexico Society of Certified Public Accountants (NMSCPA).

Marcus Mims is a tax principal in CliftonLarsonAllen's Albuquerque office. He has over 29 years of public and private experience. Prior to joining CliftonLarsonAllen, Marcus worked for a Big 4 and a large national accounting firm where he served as both firms' New Mexico State and Local Tax Practice leader. Marcus also worked in industry for a healthcare organizations and in state government.



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### John Cromwell

John Cromwell was the first African American CPA. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth College in 1906 and later earned a master's degree. Due to limited employment opportunities, he taught math at an African American high school in Washington D.C., and went to New Hampshire to take

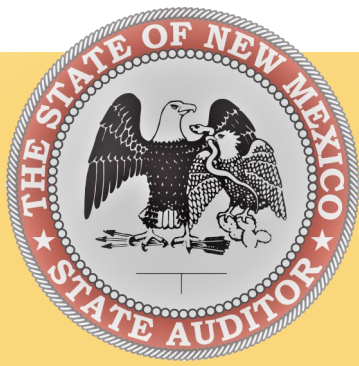
the CPA examination in 1921. At that time, African Americans could not find employment with CPA firms, and New Hampshire was attractive because it did not yet have an experience requirement. Cromwell continued to teach and later became Controller at Howard University in 1930. In the early 1960s, 40 years after he earned his certificate, John Cromwell was still the only African American CPA in our nation's capital.

### Mary T. Washington (Seated)

Mary T. Washington became the first female African American CPA in 1943. She opened her own accounting firm in 1939, largely serving small African American owned companies. Many white-owned firms would not hire African Americans, and she is credited with giving numerous aspiring African American accountants the chance to meet the experience requirement for becoming CPAs. She soon built a thriving business serving Chicago's large African American middle class. Her firm, which



ultimately became Washington, Pittman, and McKeever, grew into one of the largest African American owned CPA firms in the country. Clients included Fuller Products and (early in his career) Muhammad Ali, as well as the city of Chicago, the Chicago Public Library, and the Chicago Housing Authority.



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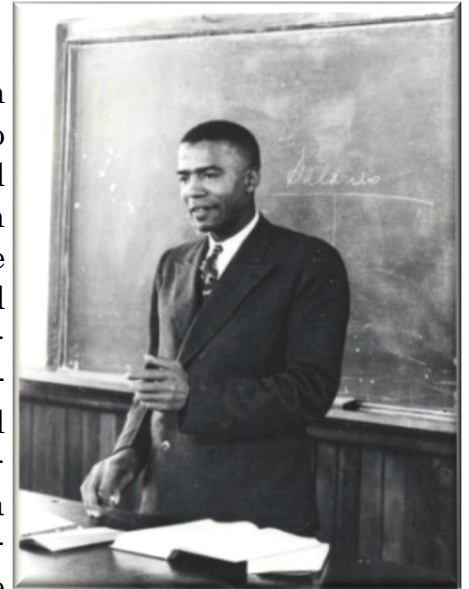
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### Professor Jesse B. Blayton

Professor Jesse B. Blayton, licensed in 1928, was known as the “Dean of Negro Accountants” because he encouraged and trained numerous African American CPAs. He taught at Morehouse College and Atlanta University for decades, and consulted with cabinet members in President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration regarding the impact of New Deal programs on the African American community. In the 1960s, he and his Atlanta-based firm provided services to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. (Source: Accounting Today, *Black CPAs Who Paved the Way*).



### Bernadette Cloes Gines (pictured on the right)

Bernadine Coles Gines earned an MBA from New York University in 1947 and became the first African American female CPA in New York in 1954. Barred from attending the University of Virginia, due to her race, Gines moved to New York in the hope of finding better opportunities.

Nonetheless, it was difficult to find a firm to hire her. The one African American owned firm in New York did not employ women. After years of searching, she finally found employment with a small Jewish-owned firm. She went on to work for the City of New York until she retired. Her sister, Ruth Coles Harris, became the first African American female CPA

#### Notes and references:

Black CPAs That Paved The Way. (2015, May 20). Retrieved from Way <https://www.accountingtoday.com/slideshow/black-cpas-who-paved-the-way>

A History of Determination. (2005, October 01). Retrieved from <https://www.journalofaccountancy.com/>