

Rachel B. Noel
Distinguished Visiting
Professorship

Voices of Impact:

Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future

VAN JONES

**CNN Host, Author,
Civil Rights Activist**

Wednesday, April 23, 2025



Program

Agenda

Welcome

Tamara Banks

Event Emcee

Invocation

Rev. Dr. Timothy Tyler

Pastor, Shorter Community AME Church

University Remarks

Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

MSU Denver President

Michael Benitez, Ph.D.

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion and

Associate Professor of Multicultural Education

Recognition of the Hope for the Future Award Recipients

Rashad Anderson, Ph.D.

Russell Noles

Rachel B. Noel Scholarship Recipients

2024-2025

Christine Emereuwa

Janet Nyepan

Precious Osei

2025-2026

Juan Izaguirre

Daneilia Whyte

Keynote by Van Jones

Remarks from the Noel Family

Buddy Noel, Esq.

Music Selection Performed by:

Rachel B. Noel Community Legacy Choir

Min. Daryl J. Walker, Choir Director

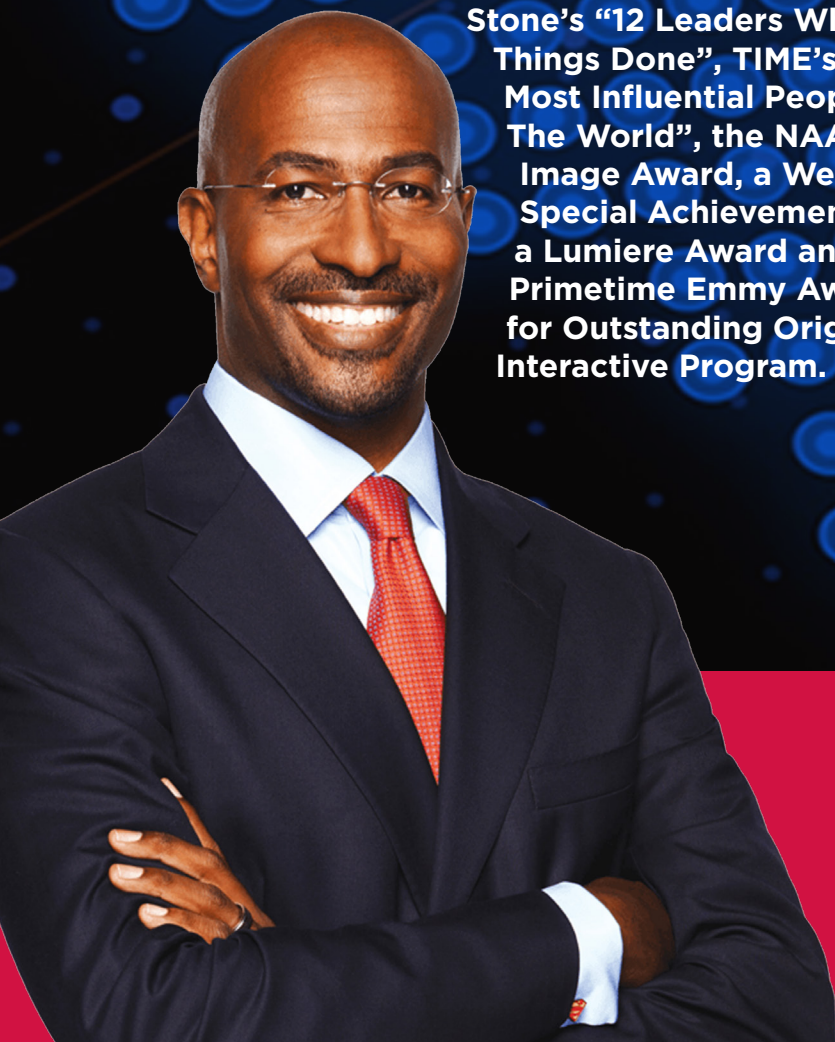
Van Jones

Van Jones is a CNN host, political commentator, Emmy Award-winning producer, and author of three New York Times best-selling books: *The Green Collar Economy*, *Rebuild the Dream*, and *Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together*.

Van has also found success as a social entrepreneur, having founded and led many thriving enterprises including the REFORM Alliance, Color of Change, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, and Dream.org, which works to close prison doors and open doors of opportunity in the green and tech economies.

Jones has stewarded several bipartisan legislative and advocacy efforts, racking up wins under the last four US Presidents: Clinton, Bush, Obama, and Trump. Jones' most recent victory was advocating successfully for the passage of the FIRST STEP Act, which the New York Times calls the most substantial breakthrough in criminal justice in a generation.

A Yale-educated attorney, Jones has won numerous awards, including the World Economic Forum's "Young Global Leader" designation, Rolling Stone's "12 Leaders Who Get Things Done", TIME's "100 Most Influential People in The World", the NAACP Image Award, a Webby Special Achievement Award, a Lumiere Award and a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Original Interactive Program.



Event Emcee

Tamara Banks

Emmy Award winning journalist Tamara Banks lives by her motto: “One Person Can Make a Difference.”

Tamara is a freelance national and international TV news correspondent/producer, talk show host, and documentary filmmaker, focusing on social justice, and dedicated to creating transformative social change through excellence in journalism.

Tamara spent many years in Denver as an Anchor/Reporter on WB2 News. Her work has been featured on numerous news networks including PBS, CNN, ABC News, HDNet’s World Report, BBC, NPR, Al Jazeera America, Al Jazeera, WB 2 News, FOX News, as well on as a number of radio stations and newspapers over the past 20-plus years. In addition to social justice, her areas of expertise include genocide, crimes against humanity, and political issues across the U.S. and internationally... particularly in South Sudan and Darfur. She will soon head to another conflict zone. That one... in northern Ethiopia.



Support the Legacy of

Rachel B. Noel

Join us in advancing the ideals of equity and education through your support of the Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship and Scholarship. Your donation fuels impactful events and empowers students dedicated to social justice and academic excellence. Together, we can honor Rachel Noel’s legacy and inspire future generations.

Donate online:

msudenver.edu/giving-rachel-b-noel/



Scholarships

2024-2025

Christine Emereuwa

Janet Nyepan

Precious Osei

2025-2026

Juan Izaguirre

Daneilia Whyte

Hope for the Future

Award Recipients

Rashad Anderson, Ph.D.

Dr. Rashad Anderson serves in dual roles as both a Director & Associate Professor at MSU Denver, where his work focuses on recruiting, cultivating, and retaining African American male educators. A published author and national speaker, his research focuses on school discipline and social justice in education for students at risk. Dr. Anderson has also presented at over 150 education conferences and was a 2019 keynote speaker at the U.S. Department of Education.



Russell Noles

Russell Noles is a Denver native and serves on the Board of Trustees for MSU Denver and is former Chair. He is a proud MSU Denver alumnus and Denver Public Schools graduate.

Russell holds a B.S. Degree in Accounting from MSU Denver and an MBA in Finance from the University of Denver.

He began his career with one of the “Big Eight” CPA firms in 1981 and progressed to senior executive roles in three Fortune 500 companies, retiring in 2019.

Previously, Russell served on the MSU Denver Alumni and Foundation Boards, and the Board of Directors for Consumer Reports. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Jackson Financial, Inc., a publicly listed insurance company where he chairs the Finance & Risk Committee. Russell is a proud father of two daughters and has three grandchildren.



Rachel B. Noel

A champion of the civil rights movement in Denver and in Colorado, Rachel Noel was the first African American woman elected to public office in Colorado, the first African American elected to the Denver Public Schools' (DPS) Board of Education, the first African American to be a member and chair of the University of Colorado Board of Regents, and the first African American woman elected statewide in Colorado.

On April 25, 1968, she presented the DPS board with the Noel Resolution, recognizing that the "establishment of an integrated school population is desirable to achieve equality of educational opportunity." It directed the superintendent to develop "a comprehensive plan for the integration of the Denver Public Schools." Under a cloud of threats to Noel and her family, the resolution passed on May 17, 1968. The U.S. Supreme Court would eventually affirm Noel's position in its landmark decision of 1973, *Keyes v. Denver School District No. 1*, making Denver the first city outside the American South to be instructed by the country's highest court to address de facto segregation with school busing.

Noel also played a critical role in MSU Denver's history. She came to MSU Denver as a teacher of sociology and African American Studies in 1969 and served as chair of the African American Studies Department from 1971 to 1980.

Noel passed at the age of 90 in 2008. During her lifetime and after, Noel's legacy has inspired the MSU Denver community and beyond. In 1981, the University created The Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Visiting Professorship to honor Noel.

