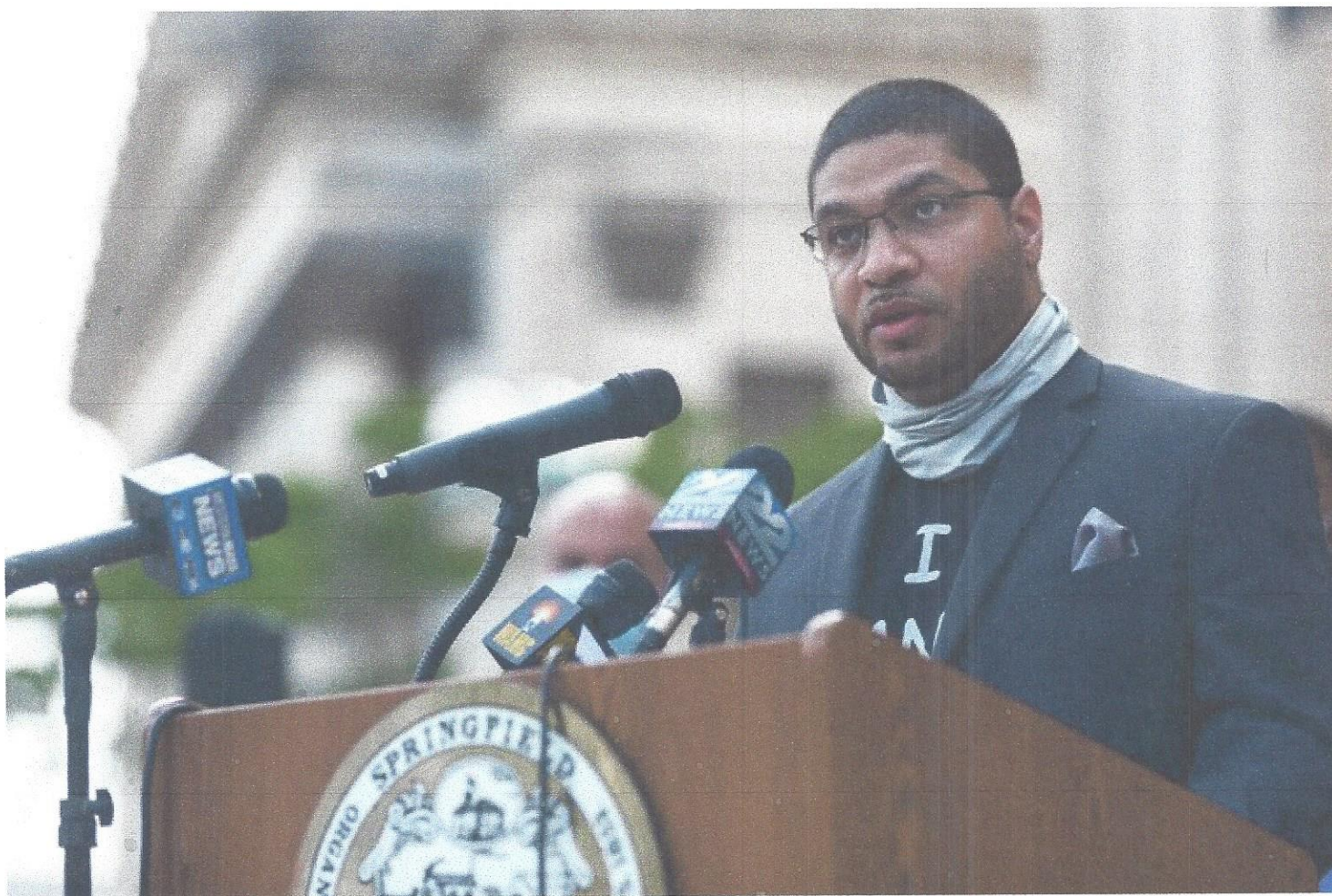


Banks, businesses need to diversify corporate boards (Viewpoint)

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Ward 8 Springfield City Councilor and state Rep.-elect Orlando Ramos is among a group of community leaders of color who have expressed an interest in serving on bank and corporate boards. The group has been organized by retired businessman Ron Davis, of WAMF (Winners Are My Friends) consulting. (Hoang 'Leon' Nguyen / The Republican)

By Ron Davis | President, WAMF Consulting

Nearly 37 years ago, my longtime love affair began with selling software and services to financial institutions and corporations in the Northeast. This was during a time that many banks and corporations were expanding throughout the country.

I had a successful run, in which I met and worked alongside many successful people. I felt there was something missing.

What was missing? I had experienced and learned that the financial industry lacked diversity representation when it came to diversifying its executive leadership and its board members.

Why is this? I was raised by my Native American mother and African American father in Dallas. Growing up in Texas taught me to be proud of my heritage. In my early career, while earning a business-management and economics degree, I started my career selling to the banking and corporate industry in the Northeast. However, throughout my career in the financial services industry, I came to the realization that many people working in the industry and moving up the ranks, often, did not look like me. That's what was missing!

In the early 1980s, upon entering a board room, I found not one single person that looked like me. This became an ongoing theme that also showed up in the 1990s. Then, slight improvements began taking shape in the 2000s.

Now, in 2020 our nation is experiencing unprecedented racial unrest and protests about racial injustices. People who identify as African American, Black, Latino, Asian American, indigenous or mixed-race experience exclusion

throughout many facets of their daily lives. In certain sectors reaching leadership roles is considered unattainable.

The “theme” appears to classify as a “real life journey” for people of color in their career’s life experiences and communities. Often, equality policies are created without the voices of diverse people involved to help develop and implement the policies.

In 2017, I retired from the industry and started my own consulting firm. I wanted to help banks and corporations with their strategies on implementing and practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion. I started WAMF Consulting, which stands for “Winners Are My Friends.”

After talking to many community leaders involved in public service, corporations and banks for guidance and support, I decided to recruit talented individuals from various sectors. These individuals include professionals from higher education, social services, nonprofit organizations, corporations, government

agencies and entrepreneurs. I needed to develop a pool of diverse individuals interested in serving on bank and corporation boards.

These individuals, including [state Rep.-elect Orlando Ramos](#) and Springfield City Councilor Melvin Edwards, have been dedicating their time to serve as the associates of WAMF Consulting to be eventually recruited to serve on bank and corporation boards. These professionals are committed to advance racial equality and inclusion practices.

Hopefully, banks and corporations can advance their missions and better serve their communities and customers through an “equity lens.” I have a true passion for advancing diversity throughout the business community. Now, (members of) “Winners