

As Cal State San Bernardino celebrates Black History Month, we are also celebrating some of our nonsworn staff and sworn personnel of color who help make University Police Department and our partner, Parking & Transportation Services the strong team it is today.



Lt. John Gutierrez

Lt. John Gutierrez believes strongly in the power of education. The Lieutenant, who joined UPD last summer in 2021, said he was drawn to CSUSB by the opportunity to work in law enforcement in a higher education setting.

A 30-year veteran of law enforcement, Gutierrez has served with the Los Angeles Unified School District Police, the San Bernardino City Unified School District Police and as a California State Police Officer.

Lt. Gutierrez has always championed the vital necessity of education among young people, as he cheers on students and athletes at CSUSB. However, he believes education will not only shape but transform and prepare our youth as future leaders. But he is especially mindful of the power of education in regard to at-risk youth. He even collaborated with the Los Angeles County Superior Court during his time at LAUSD to develop and help implement a new Truancy Diversion Program, which has since become a national model for Daytime Curfew. The program resulted in fewer dropouts and decreased expulsion to zero, by more consistent use of in-school suspension, thereby increasing attendance and graduation rates.

He not only promotes education, but also walks the walk, having earned both his bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and his master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Union Institute and University. He is currently working on his Doctorate in Public Administration through Liberty University.

Lt. Gutierrez views Black History Month as meaningful in that it is "a celebration of our ancestors and pillars of our people and community."

The African-American culture has, and continues to have a profound impact and build American culture in many areas such as music, dance, art, literature, sports, education, and more, Gutierrez said.

"It means everything to me to honor our Legacy, and it a true blessing," he said. "In short, Black History, is American History."



Director of Parking & Transportation Services Grace Munyiri

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Munyiri has been serving the CSUSB campus for over a decade.

Today, she is at the helm of Parking & Transportation, the same department where she started off as a student assistant.

She replaced Interim Director Miguel Martin in 2019, having previously served as the department's budget analyst. As a CSUSB alumnus, Grace earned her master's degree in Business Administration in 2010.

She said she applied to be department director because of her desire to see the department advance and her commitment to the campus.

Grace has said her goal is to steer the department through the adoption of innovative and progressive parking solutions as the department collaborates with various campus partners to meet the changing needs of the university.



Dispatcher Deja Watkins

Dispatcher Deja Watkins joined UPD one year ago, after working as a dispatcher for Pechanga Casino.

A graduate of the University of California, Riverside, where she competed as a track and field throws athlete. Deja also worked as a Community Service Officer for the UCR University Police Department. It was there that she was inspired by the idea of working side-by-side with law enforcement.

Now that she is a police dispatcher, Deja says she realizes law enforcement is her true calling.

“Here – I am actually working for a police department rather than just security,” she said. “Back when we had issues at Pechanga, we used to call 911, she said. “And now I am 911.”

Deja is also inspired by how diverse the CSUSB University Police Department is and it makes her hopeful about her future career opportunities.

“Diversity in my department is everything to me!” she said. “I love coming into work and seeing people that look like me in positions that I could possibly be in. It puts a huge smile on my face because it reassures me that one day - I can be in a higher-level position without the color of my skin stopping me.”

“Black History Month is a recognition of our overall culture – a celebration of what got us here today,” she said. “Yes, we have some more work to do but I am proud of how far we have come and can’t wait to see how much further we will go!”



Natasha Fowler

Administrative Support Coordinator Natasha Fowler understands the value of hard work.

A former Community Service Officer with UPD, Natasha started in 2012 and holds the distinction of longest tenure for any student assistant in both parking and UPD. She graduated in 2018 with a double major in business administration and theatre arts and took a position as a full-time administrative assistant for Parking & Transportation Services. Not long after, she was promoted to Administrative Support Coordinator. She enjoys her job helping faculty, staff and students and said it is her main motivation for coming to work.

Natasha looks forward to Black History Month all year, which she says is her favorite month.

“It’s not just Black History Month but it’s my sister’s and my father’s birthdays - I love this month!” she said. “But it’s also about my people and the fact that others get to learn about my people and where they come from.”

She feels UPD is headed in the right direction in terms of diversity, meaning representation of everybody and inclusive of all races and cultures.

“This is a step forward and we are moving forward with grace,” she said. “As of right now we are doing well with our people of color, we are on our way.”



Erika Roberts

Executive Assistant to the Police Chief Erika Roberts joined the University Police Department nearly one year ago, and she describes the university and the department as “a great fit.”

I enjoy coming into work every day knowing that I can depend upon my co-workers for guidance and assistance when needed, we lift each other up instead of tearing one another down. We are like one big family.”

Camaraderie, a sense of community and public service are a big part of why she wanted to leave the private sector and work for UPD. The diversity she has seen here has also impressed her.

Diversity and Black History Month is also important at UPD because it is such a diverse department, Erika said. The strong sense of community is vital and that’s what makes Black History Month an important way to honor our ancestors and the legacies they have built in our community, she noted.

“We interact with each other on a daily basis, and we are consistently learning about each other’s cultures and backgrounds which helps us to grow stronger together,” Erika said. “Diversity will help to broaden and bring different perspectives and ideas to the table to allow us to understand that each individual is unique and recognize our individual differences, but at the same time it will assist us with collaboration, problem solving, promote creativity, and increase work productivity.”

Erika has both a bachelor’s degree in child development from California State University, Northridge, and a Master’s in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix.



Lead Dispatcher Michael J. Harris

Dispatcher Lead Michael J. Harris has been working in law enforcement since 1978. He originally served as deputy in Cook County Sheriff’s Department in Chicago, Il and then in private security for the next two before moving to California, where he discovered his true calling as a dispatcher.

He started as a dispatcher for San Bernardino Police Department in 1997 before coming to the University Police in 2000. Michael originally wanted to be a police officer before he realized his love for dispatching, which he says is his way of “protecting and serving and the best way to fulfill a lifelong desire to serve my community.”

Community is a large part of why he stays at UPD, Michael said.

“I am proud to be a member of CSUSB and CSUSB PD,” he said. “This department has experienced a vast change over the years of my tenure here. Our department has grown to become inclusive of all ethnicities, as well as recognizing the LGBTQ community and appointing our first female police chief.

“CSUSB continues to move forward in its diversity efforts by expanding our PD staffing, both in dispatch and the administrative side.”



Kendra Ekpo

Kendra Ekpo is an example of a true American success story.

Since being hired on as the **Executive Assistant to Parking Director Grace Munyiri** in September 2021, Kendra has done just that.

The former bank teller and mortgage loan officer knew she wanted something different for herself – a different life. So, she took a leap of faith and emigrated to the United States from her home in Belize.

Kendra said the job in parking is similar in scale to what she did before in the Magistrate Court Government of Belize where she worked for 6 years dealing with payroll and parking.

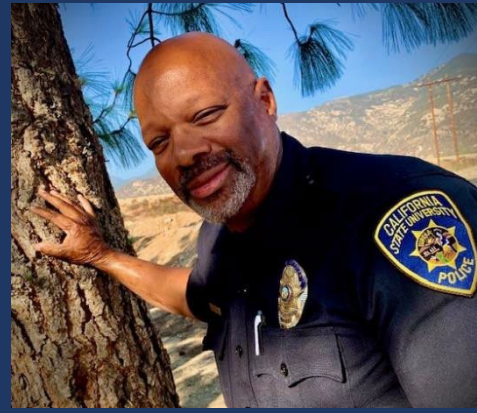
However, Belize was becoming increasingly dangerous and violent, so Kendra fled the violence after her brother was tragically murdered by gangs in 2014.

“I came here to the U.S. and had to adjust to a whole new life,” she said. “It took about a year for me to adapt and I’m now very happy here.”

She has become successful enough in her new life that she brought her two younger sisters over from Belize, then 8 and 16, and she and her husband adopted them and raised them along with their own daughter.

Her sacrifices have paid off, too.

Her oldest, now 20, will start nursing school in early 2022.



Officer Eddie McCloud

Officer Eddie McCloud enjoys working for the University Police Department because he says, “it just feels like home.”

“I like that it’s a small department and nice people work here,” he said. “It’s just got that home feel to it.”

A 32-year veteran of law enforcement, Officer McCloud has been with the University Police since December 2016. Before that, he served with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and the Los Angeles Police Department, working various assignments such as patrol, narcotics, traffic, and gangs.

Officer McCloud was named the 2018 Officer of the Year by both UPD and that same year by the Inland Empire chapter of the International Footprinter Assn. Honorees are recognized during the ceremony for their commitment to public service and dedication to law enforcement.

Both the university and the department are both very diverse and inclusive of all races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions here, Officer McCloud said.

“We have a way to go but the university and the department are moving in an awesome direction,” he said.



Jazmin Morris

Community Service Officer Jazmin Morris is thinking about her future.

The third year CSUSB student understands the value of work. Even at a young age, Jazmin has always worked, whether it was in retail, at festivals or movie theatres or even construction and general contracting with her family.

Today, the 20-year-old is majoring in Intelligence and Crime Analysis with an emphasis in Cybersecurity, which will be the key to her future.

She wants to be a federal agent or start her own intelligence firm.

Jazmin, who joined the UPD student team in late 2021, says she enjoys being a CSO because she likes being an asset to the entire campus community. While she has always had a passion for crime prevention and crime solving and started watching “Law & Order” at three years old, a tragedy struck her family and made her want to pursue a career in law enforcement. Innocent family members who lived in a high-crime area in Compton were killed on her grandparents’ lawn. That event made her want to join law enforcement and serve her community.

Seeing the diversity in a police department such as UPD has buoyed her spirits and given her hope.

“I would like to see more diversity at UPD, but we have come a long way for sure,” she said. “Diversity is an important way to bring more awareness to the issue and in creating a new narrative for UPD in this political climate.”