

PRACTITIONERS OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION OFFER 4TH ANNUAL ANCESTRAL REVERENCE RITUAL OCT. 31

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The Council for Global Ancestral Reverence, a group of elders who practice African Traditional Religion, will lead a nine-day offering of prayer appealing to their blessed ancestors from Oct. 31- Nov. 8, 2023. The post Practitioners of African Traditional Religion Offer 4th Annual Ancestral Reverence Ritual Oct. 31 first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Antonio Ray Harvey, California Black Media

The [California Fire Foundation](#) hosted its 2023 Annual California Firefighters Memorial and Procession Ceremony on Oct. 14 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Sacramento.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, Attorney General Rob Bonta, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond attended the event, which was organized to honor 35 firefighters who died in the line of duty. Among the honorees was Ronald Yale Wiley, an African American deputy fire marshal from Richmond who died on duty in 2007.

The state formally presented a United States flag to each of the families of the honorees, whose names are being added to the Fire Fighter's Memorial Wall in Capitol Park on the east side of the State Capitol.

"We're recognizing and celebrating the life and times of people who tried to make the world a little bit gentler," Newsom said of the fallen. "They stood tall because they bent down on one knee to help lift other people up. People that came from every conceivable walk of life, political background, and different generations. The 35, we memorialize here today — all with a singular love, and that is a love for public service."



Thomas Jay, retired Fire Battalion Chief for Riverside, leads the indoor procession at the California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento. The event honored 35 firefighters who died in the line of duty. Photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

Nearly 1,000 people attended the ceremony. The procession showcased firefighting apparatuses and was marked by the presence of hundreds of active-duty firefighters from all over California, forming a "sea of blue."

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Accompanying them were the Pipes and Drums of California Professional Firefighters, honor guards from dozens of fire departments, the families of fallen firefighters from across the state, and various state officials and guests.

The ceremony commenced with a bagpiper playing at the Memorial Wall, a monument built in Sacramento in 2002 to honor the memory, sacrifice and bravery of firefighters who paid the ultimate price while keeping Californians safe.

"When they were called to duty ... they came through and they gave as much as anybody is expected to give for their community," said Brian K. Rice, the president of California Professional Firefighters. "This ceremony is a tribute to that selfless dedication, and more than that, a tribute to the families that stood behind these men."

In 2007, honoree Wiley was returning to his office from a meeting in Vallejo when the city-owned vehicle he was driving crashed and burned on the Carquinez Bridge on I-80. Wiley, 47, was 16 years into the profession when the incident happened, his son Dante told California Black Media. Dante Wiley attended the ceremony with his wife, children, uncle, and other family members.

"This was a powerful event," the younger Wiley said of the ceremony. "I brought my three children out here with me so that they can have a better understanding of who my father was."

Dante Wiley is one of the 20 Black firefighters among Richmond's 97 firefighters. He said his uncle also spent 30 years as a firefighter in Oakland.

Nationwide, the number of Black professional and volunteer firefighters is relatively low. According to [Data USA](#), there were 324,149 firefighters in the United States in 2021. Of this figure, 4.38% were women and 95.6% were men. Black firefighters represented 7.4% and Hispanics made up 11.2%. White firefighters were 82.2% of the total.

California has around 35,000 firefighters, Rice said at the ceremony. In many jurisdictions, the workforces do not reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. During a 12-year stretch from 1993 to 2005, for example, the [San Bernardino City Fire Department](#) (SBCFD) did not hire any Black firefighters.

Now, SBCFD, one of the oldest and largest fire departments in San Bernardino County, has hired a total of 19 Black firefighters, according to [Factors Affecting the Hiring of Black Firefighters](#), a report by James M. Fratus. The late Jimmy Jews became San Bernardino's first Black firefighter in 1971.

Dante Wiley is actively involved in recruiting efforts.

"I do believe representation matters, and so does education," Wiley said. "When I mean education, I mean outreach.

"I was fortunate because I saw it every day with my father and, before him, my uncle. A lot of people don't have that exposure," Wiley continued. "One of my goals is to get out there and talk to people at high schools, junior colleges, or colleges. Is it for everybody? No. But there are different ways you can go out there and help people. For me, I just want to be of service for my community."

There are no comments yet.