

**Connectional Lay Organization (CLO) Young  
Adult Representatives (YAR)  
The Hope for our Future!**

When the Lay Organization was recognized in 1912 as an organized body within the AME Church, there was a commitment made by the CLO to include young people to support the growth of the organization. It was during the formative years when money was tight, and funds were not consistently available that our leaders had problems moving the Lay Organization forward with a youth component. However, it was during the presidency of Mr. James L. Williams, Jr. (11<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District), who was elected to serve from 1993 – 2000, when the appointment process began. He and his core of officers made funds available to appoint a young adult (Mila Cooper) as the first YAR. A goal was to have the young person appointed and form teams from the local church to the connectional level to grow the Lay Organization. Another goal was to assist in teaching and training young individuals how to hone their leadership skills to help move the Lay organization in its continued upward thrust.

Today, the CLO is proud to share that the young people who represent the YAR position have made a significant difference through the years. The first three individuals were appointed; the latter 3 were elected. We are also proud to announce that now all YAR's are elected and have full rights and privileges as other CLO elected officers. Indeed, we continue to make progress!

Listed below are those six young women and men (the current age for a young adult is 18-35) who represent the history of service of the CLO. We thank God for their time, talent, leaderships skills and sense of teamwork that helped bring us to this point in our support of the AME Church. You will also note that we are briefly showcasing their most recent achievements.

**Mila Cooper** – Her title in the CLO was Director of Young Adult Activities. Currently, she is Rev. Dr. Cooper in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Episcopal District.

**James Brown** – His title was CLO Young Adult Coordinator. Currently, he serves as an Associate Minister in the 7<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. He also teaches in the South Carolina school system.

**Brent Shepherd** – His title was also that of CLO Young Adult Coordinator. He is currently a businessman in the 11<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. When he was appointed to the CLO position, he was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Episcopal District.

Because of their value added to the CLO, it was deemed that the CLO - YAR be an elected position. Mr. Jesse Burns, Jr was President when this decision was made. His core of YAR officers and Dr. Willie Clayton Glover, who was elected CLO President following Mr. Burns, are responsible for the language in the AME Church Doctrine and Discipline regarding the duties, responsibilities and qualifications for the elected CLO –YAR position.

**John Thomas, III** – was the first duly elected YAR of the CLO He served under the presidency of Dr. Willie Clayton Glover while also serving as an advisor to the President. He is currently an AME Church General Officer (Editor, The Christian Recorder and The AME News Digest). He also earned his Ph.D. and is currently serving in the 13th Episcopal District.

**Felicia Commodore** – She is the second person to be elected as YAR for the CLO. Currently, she is a Professor at the University of Illinois. She also earned her Ph.D. Dr. Commodore is currently serving in the 4th Episcopal District. When elected as the CLO – YAR, she was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Episcopal District.

**Jamesha Williams** – In addition to being elected to the CLO as its YAR, she is the first YAR to serve under Mr. M. A. Makiti, the CLO’s first President from Africa. Ms. Williams is a professional businesswoman and is from the 7<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. She is the current CLO -YAR.

The duties and responsibilities of the CLO elected officers are found on pages 479 and 480 in the **2021 Edition of the A.M.E Church Book of Doctrine and Discipline**. Qualifications for these positions are found on pages 487 and 488 in the same book.

The elected YARs also served under these three living CLO Historiographers:

- Mrs. Pam Tilly
- Dr. Emma Austin
- Dr. Dorothy Henderson

Many thanks to them for their continued support of the work of the CLO.

Mr. Matakane A. Makiti, CLO President  
Mr. William “Bill” Ayers, CLO Historiographer