

Meet our Board of Directors



John Vassall, MD

Chairperson

Board member since 2026

Founding Director, Carolyn Downs Community Health Services Center, 1983

I am grateful to return to this role and to use my skills in service to our communities. After obtaining Master of Science and Doctor of Medicine degrees from the University of Washington School of Medicine, I completed my internal medicine training at Grady Memorial Hospital, Atlanta serving largely poor and Black populations. I returned to Seattle, opened a medical practice in an abandoned South Seattle record store, and went on to join the Minor & James Medical Group. I practiced as a primary care physician for 20 years before entering medical administration as Vice-President of Medical Affairs and later Chief Medical Officer of Swedish Health Services. I served as Associate Dean of Clinical Education for the WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, and currently serve as Adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine for Morehouse School of Medicine. I've served on many local, regional and national boards including the American Hospital Association, Seattle University and Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and the Hawaiian islands.



Khang To

Vice Chairperson

Board member since 2022

Khang is passionate about healthcare and biotechnology. Currently, he is a research associate at Pfizer (acquisition from Seagen), working on antibody-drug conjugate technology to cure cancer. He initially joined as an ex-officio board member at Seattle Roots helping the board align on their DEI missions. He is a recent graduate of UW Foster School of business. He is hoping to use his free time to give back to the community and to learn more about healthcare systems.



James King, Jr.

Treasurer

Board member since 2022

James is an Atlanta/Seattle-based environmental and outdoor recreational leader/executive who is dedicated to promoting accessibility and representation of African Americans and underrepresented groups. James has over 15 years of experience coordinating environmental stewardship, community & economic development, environmental justice and community health related concerns throughout the U.S and Internationally. James graduated Antioch University Seattle with a B.A. majoring in Urban Ecology; Leadership and Sustainable Business; Global and Social Justice. Graduated with his MAEd in Urban Environmental Education ('18) held at Island Wood /Antioch University Seattle. He currently serves as the CEO of Hollis King Consulting Firm.



Lois Martin
Secretary
Board member since 2024

"As a legacy resident of the Central Area, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible care and support that the staff at Seattle Roots provides our community. Both of my parents were patients at the very first clinic and continued to receive care until their passing in 2002 and 2011. Seattle Roots remains a beacon of hope—a place where those in need can access quality healthcare without fear of being turned away. I am honored to serve on the board of an organization that consistently puts its patients' well-being first."



Raji Venkateswaran
Program Committee Chair
Board member since 2025

"As a family physician at a local community health center since 1999, I am deeply committed to the Seattle Roots mission of excellent health care for all, without exceptions. I am passionate about advocating for ways to improve patient care and outcomes and participate in a role beyond clinical practice to meet the needs of our community. I am excited to collaborate with our amazing board members and honor the legacy of the founders to serve the mission and address the broader health challenges that face our community."



Kush Doshi
Past Chairperson
Board member since 2021

Kush Doshi, MHA, MPA, LMT, CMLDT graduated from the University of Washington in 2021 with Masters in Health Administration and Public Administration. Passionate about advancing health efforts for communities of color and mobilizing health equity, he currently works for Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW) as the Program Manager for Immigrant and Refugee Health for WA State. He also previously served on the City of Seattle's Immigrant and Refugee Commission. Prior to CHPW, he worked at Sea Mar Community Health Centers as the Health Center Administrator for the Marysville Medical and Dental sites and as the Sea Mar Medical Residency Program Manager. In September of 2024, he launched his company: Community First Massage Therapy focused on providing high quality and affordable massage therapy services to the community.



Djenom (Jen Ome) Benjamin
Board member since 2021

"I serve as a board member for Seattle Roots and am a member of Anti-Racism Advancement Committee, because as a Washington Native and patient, I know that medical care is a right, not a privilege. I currently work for King County/Seattle Public Health, but I have backgrounds in the medical field, corrections, law enforcement, and social services. In my personal time I served on the board for the Hitching Rail Wellness Center and Retreat. I extend my love for horses and assisted with equine therapy for military, first responders, and their families. I volunteered more than 4 years with Food not Bombs, which provides food for anyone that needs it. My passion is working with parenting youth so they can access community supports, thrive into adulthood, and gain generational wealth. Being part of the queer community and being an African American woman, I have lived experience with the ever-present racism and inequitable treatment of the Black/Brown Community by law enforcement, the medical field, and other entities that keep us marginalized. I am excited to be working with Seattle Roots to make needed changes in healthcare outcomes for the BIPOC community and help keep the legacy of Carolyn Downs alive."



Rik Wyman
Board member since 2011

"I've worn many different hats in my time on this planet — military, boxer, and medic — but in the last decades I have been in the logistics field. If they are wheels or widgets, all things must be accounted for, packed, shipped, and delivered all the while avoiding folding, spindling, and various forms of mutilation. That being said, none of those define who we are as human beings. I was first introduced to Seattle Roots as a patient in 2007 and joined the Board formally in 2011. I was in need of acute medical care with no insurance and this organization was there to supply that help unreservedly. I was grateful and impressed. About that same time I had been giving a lot of thought as to how to ameliorate the feelings of helplessness that many in our society go through. Some way to take action and not be a bystander to what goes on, the opportunity arose to serve on this board, it was a perfect solution. The thing I love about the board is the conviction that we are doing something that is positive and of great value to our patients and the community as a whole, that's not to mention the honor of serving with a group of caring, committed, and just all around good people. It has been a splendid experience, which has personally fit very well with my commitment to the fostering of peace through dialogue and outreach to the people. It is an honor to serve our community through Seattle Roots."



Victor Velazquez
Board member since 2023

"Honored to serve on the esteemed board of directors at Seattle Roots, steeped in historical community connections and a legacy of activism. With over two decades in curriculum development, education, and non-profit recruitment, my role as the former Director of Training & Recruitment at Exponents, Inc, a trailblazing NYC-based organization, included spearheading the groundbreaking Patient Peer model. This transformative experience honed my strategic acumen and relationship- building skills, fostering successful collaborations. Proficient in communication through writing, presenting, and interpersonal skills, I am enthusiastic about contributing my expertise to our collective success".