
**GERRY A. FERNANDEZ, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF THE MULTICULTURAL
FOODSERVICE & HOSPITALITY ALLIANCE TO STEP DOWN AFTER 27 YEARS**

Industry Icon Leaves Legacy of Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Washington, DC – (8/24/23) – The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) today announced that President and Founder Gerry A. Fernandez will be retiring effective December 31, 2023. Beginning next year, Gerry will support MFHA in an advisory role.

After 27 years at the helm of MFHA and nearly 50 years in the restaurant and hospitality industry, Gerry leaves a legacy of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds.



Under Gerry's leadership, MFHA has helped countless restaurant, foodservice and lodging businesses improve their cultural competency, create diverse and inclusive work environments and attract more diverse talent, especially in leadership positions. He also developed a supplier diversity directory and conducted the industry's first diverse practices survey. In 2022, MFHA, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF) and Cornell University issued a new DEI Report outlining the effectiveness of DEI practices among restaurant employees. An outcome of the report was MFHA's launch of ELEVATE, an award-winning comprehensive framework and toolkit that any restaurant can use to build a successful DEI program.

Gerry and MFHA are well-known throughout the industry for sharing best practices and offering products, services and solutions that are relevant to today's ever-changing DEI landscape. Gerry is also well-known for his knowledge-based workshops, webinars, research, programs, speaking engagements and consulting services. This year, MFHA is hosting a series of Leadership Roundtables for MFHA members and non-members to learn more about current DEI trends, issues and challenges facing the foodservice and hospitality industry.

"Gerry has a gift for convening thought leaders and for putting plans into action in service to our industry," said Michelle Korsmo, President & CEO of the National Restaurant Association and CEO of the NRAEF. "His innate leadership, commitment to others' success, and passion for

hospitality have helped thousands of restaurant and foodservice workers build a future of opportunity.”

“Gerry’s focus on access and training have allowed companies large and small to significantly enhance their DEI strategies and attract and retain a more diverse workforce,” said Rob Gifford, President, NRAEF. “He is highly regarded as a leading DEI expert and is not afraid to tackle cultural and DEI issues head on. I’m confident Gerry will continue to be on the front lines of advancing our industry and its people for many years to come.”

MFHA Chair, Max Langenkamp added, “Gerry always has his finger on the pulse of what’s happening both at the corporate level and with the people this industry depends on. He understands the impact social and cultural changes have on us all and what we can do together to effect positive change.”

Gerry earned his bachelor’s degree in Foodservice Management and a degree in Culinary Arts from Johnson & Wales University and successfully managed operations at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Hemenway’s Seafood Grill, Oyster Bar and The Capital Grille. He transitioned into foodservice research and development at General Mills, which supported him in the launch of MFHA.

Awards and recognition include – honorary doctorate in Business Administration from Johnson & Wales University, special recognition as a top leader and innovator by *Nation’s Restaurant News*, *Lodging Magazine*, and *Black Meetings & Tourism*, as well as The Black Culinary Alliance and the Rainbow/P.U.S.H. Coalition. Gerry is also an honorary Board Member of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and life member of the NAACP and the Women’s Foodservice Forum (WFF).

MFHA will be conducting a national search for his successor.

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About the Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA)

The Multicultural Foodservice & Hospitality Alliance (MFHA) is dedicated to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across the \$899 billion restaurant, foodservice, and hospitality industry. Founded by Gerry Fernandez in 1996, MFHA serves as a leading resource for companies large and small seeking to improve DEI across their organization and to become culturally competent. MFHA provides tailored solutions and guidance that draw from a broad range of best practices, research, DEI partnerships and expertise in current and emerging social issues. www.mfha.net

About the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

As the supporting philanthropic foundation of the National Restaurant Association, the NRAEF's charitable mission includes enhancing the industry's training and education, career development, and community engagement efforts. The NRAEF and its programs work to Attract, Empower, and Advance today's and tomorrow's restaurant and foodservice workforce. For more information on the NRAEF, visit [ChooseRestaurants.org](https://www.chooserestaurants.org). Click [here](#) for the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation's 2022 Annual Impact Report.

About the National Restaurant Association

Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which comprises nearly 1 million restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of 14.5 million employees. Together with 52 State Associations, we are a network of professional organizations dedicated to serving every restaurant through advocacy, education, and food safety. We sponsor the industry's largest trade show ([National Restaurant Association Show](#)); leading food safety training and certification program ServSafe, unique career-building high school program ([the NRAEF's ProStart](#)). For more information, visit [Restaurant.org](https://www.restaurant.org) and find @WeRRestaurants on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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