

Member Highlight Uduak-Joe Ntuk



The Historical Society of Long Beach is proud to feature Uduak-Joe Ntuk, a Long Beach native whose life story reflects many of the defining themes of the city's history—education, migration, public service, and community resilience.

Raised in North Long Beach, Ntuk's journey—from student at Long Beach City College to President of the Board of Trustees representing the same community—illustrates the enduring role local education institutions play in shaping opportunity and civic leadership in Long Beach.

Long Beach Roots and Historical Perspective

Q: You grew up in Long Beach during a time of significant change in the city. What are your earliest memories of your neighborhood and community?

A: I started my educational journey at Clara Barton Elementary School for Kindergarten. I remember sitting in the classroom and playing on the grass during recess. I finished my elementary school education at St. Barnabus, where I served as an altar boy, participated in cub scouts, and played organized soccer at Heartwell Park.

Q: Your family's story is closely tied to Long Beach—from your grandfather's service at the Long Beach Naval Base to your parents building a life here. How does that history shape your connection to the city today?

A: My grandparents (Richard and Madeline Teubert) were originally from Providence, Rhode Island. My grandfather was a flight deck captain stationed at the Long Beach Naval Complex, where he deployed to the Pacific Theater of World War II. When the war ended, they decided to stay and bought their first home in North Long Beach using his GI Bill. That house is still in the family today. My mother went into the Peace Corps after college. She was stationed in Nigeria, teaching math and science to high school girls. That's where she met my father, another teacher at the same school. She helped him come to Long Beach State as an international student. Through fundraising in the Bixby Knolls neighborhood and the St. Barnabus parish, she secured the funds for him to immigrate from West Africa to Long Beach.

Q: Why is preserving Long Beach's history important to you?

A: Long Beach has changed dramatically over the last eighty years since my family first moved to the city. Maintaining records of that history is important to understand how our community has evolved, respect the various cultures, and recognize demographic transformation. Photos, old film reels, and audio recordings are snapshots of people's lives and the community that helped create our city today.

Q: You attended St. Anthony's and later played football at Long Beach City College. What did that experience teach you?

A: Athletics was an integral part of my childhood. Soccer and Football were my two favorite sports. I played both at St. Anthony High School, where I was team captain, All-CIF, and Long Beach Press-Telegram All-City in both sports. I learned perseverance, mental fortitude, strategy, and leadership from my time as a student athlete. I went on to play three years of college football at Long Beach City College and West Texas A&M University. Earning an NCAA College Football Scholarship was a goal of mine at the time, and it was a significant achievement as a young adult. It gave me the confidence to continue pursuing other goals in life. My dad always said, "Look Up and Aim High."

Q: What role does the Historical Society of Long Beach play in the community?

A: I have always found the Historical Society to be a key convenor for discussions of key citywide issues, macrodynamic changes, and amplifying the diverse voices of Long Beach. As a member, I have attended photo exhibits and panel discussions. It's also given me the opportunity to review microfilm of old Press Telegram articles from the 1990's.

Q: Long Beach City College has played a major role in the city's history as a gateway to opportunity. How did your experience at Long Beach City College influence your path?

A: I earned my Liberal Arts degree at Long Beach City College, which was my first experience in higher education. It gave me the confidence that I could finish my bachelor's degree and graduate school. It had a much larger student population than St. Anthony High School. I had classmates and teammates from Louisiana, Texas, Ohio, and Illinois. Seeing and hearing the worldviews of students from across the country was an eye-opening experience during my community college time.

Q: Many residents see education as a pathway to advancement in Long Beach. How do you see institutions like Long Beach City College continuing that legacy today?

A: LBCC is the equity epicenter of Long Beach. We have a 100% admission rate. It's a unique institution open to the entire community to invest in themselves and their future goals. The college offers traditional associate degrees and certificates, but we also have short-term job training and pre-apprenticeship programs for those who need to upskill or return to the workforce quickly. Many are either low-cost or no-cost. Graduation is my favorite time of year. There are so many amazing student stories of overcoming obstacles and reaching new heights they didn't imagine for themselves when they first stepped on campus.

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Q: Long Beach has been shaped by industries like oil, shipping, and education. How do you see your work in engineering and public service connecting to that broader history?

A: I've had the privilege of learning and working in these three industries. I earned my master's degree in petroleum engineering from the University of Southern California. This degree gave me the technical insights into oil and gas operations, which I utilized on behalf of residents while working in various energy roles for the City of Long Beach, City of Los Angeles, and the State of California. During my undergrad at Long Beach State, I earned a certificate in global logistics, which helped me get on the docks at the Port of Long Beach as a college student. International trade is a key economic engine for our region. Educationally, I taught undergraduate thermodynamic courses at Long Beach State for several years before being elected to the Long Beach City College Board of Trustees. My parents were teachers. They made education a priority for our family. Contributing to our local education systems has been a very meaningful experience for me as I have invested my time in the next generation of students and future leaders.

Q: North Long Beach has a rich and often underrepresented history. What stories or experiences from that part of the city do you think deserve more recognition?

A: I grew up in the Deforrest Park neighborhood and spent many days playing at Houghton Park during my youth. North Long Beach has a vibrant history of veterans, immigrants, and horses. The community revitalization over the last decade has been truly transformational. The new Michelle Obama Library, the rebuild of Jordan High School, and the Ron Arias Health Equity Center have been meaningful public investments in North Long Beach. We call it the "Uptown Renaissance," and I don't think there has been enough recognition of the true community leadership that made these once in a generation changes possible.

Q: Why is it important for communities to preserve and share their local history?

A: I would love to see the history of the Carmelitos community be preserved and uplifted. When it opened in the 1940's, it was Southern California's first public housing project for factory workers and sailors. Today it's a Los Angeles County-run affordable housing development for seniors and families. This community holds so many stories of changes over the decades that mirror the larger transformation of Long Beach.

Q: What role does the Historical Society of Long Beach play in helping tell the story of neighborhoods like those in North Long Beach?

A: The Historical Society has a tremendous volume of records. I don't believe the full story of North Long Beach has been captured. I would love to see a North Long Beach book published. Speaker panels, community storytelling sessions, or photo exhibits would be a great community building exercise.

Q: Looking ahead, what do you hope future generations will understand about Long Beach and its history?

A: Long Beach has always had a strong independent streak. We've done things differently and our own way. From the historical development of the Port of Long Beach to our own Health Department and the common boundaries of the Long Beach Unified School District and Long Beach City College. I hope future generations continue this spirit amid the changing economy and new technological advancements. The future is not determined yet. I believe our investment in our young people today will build a more resilient city in the future.

The Historical Society of Long Beach thanks Uduak-Joe Ntuk for his commitment to the Long Beach community and for supporting efforts to preserve and share the city's history. Through members like Ntuk, the Historical Society of Long Beach continues to ensure that the stories of Long Beach's neighborhoods and residents are remembered and celebrated.

Fast Facts: Long Beach Connection with Uduak-Joe Ntuk

- Favorite Long Beach Neighborhood or Street: *The Atlantic Ave Corridor from Wardlow to Artesia Blvd.*
- A Historic Place in Long Beach That Stands Out to You: *St. Anthony High School Basement Bomb Shelter*
- A Long Beach Tradition or Experience You Value: *Fall Youth Soccer Season at Heartwell Park*
- Favorite Way to Spend Time in Long Beach: *Dinner at the Belmont Brewing Company during sunset.*
- One Word That Describes Long Beach to You: *Independent*