

THE

BLACK LENS

SPOKANE

TM

NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

AFRICANS JOIN U.S. MARCH FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

(TriceEdneyWire.com/Global Information Network) – Kenyan women joined women's marches Saturday for the protection of their rights, safety, families, health and the health of planet earth.

"Thank you to the organizers who made it happen and to the many people who turned out and made their voices heard," wrote Julia Cumes on Nairobi's women's march Facebook event wall.

"Yesterday, I was thrilled to join my voice to the millions here and abroad to begin the resistance to the most dangerous president in US history," wrote Reed Brody, a distinguished human rights lawyer working many years in Africa. "There were so many people in DC I didn't get to hear the great speeches, to which I'm now listening - Gloria Steinem, Alicia Keys, Angela Davis. I urge folks to take up Michael Moore's recommendations for action. WE are the majority, WE have the power. Let us create a hundred Standing Rocks. NO PAS-ARAN!"

The marches were initiated by women in the US, standing together for the rights of women, Black, minority, ethnic and refugee groups, immigrants of all statuses, those with diverse religious faiths, people who identify as LGBTQIA, people with disabilities, the economically impoverished, and survivors of sexual assault, recognizing that an attack on one, is an attack on all.

In Kenya they marched to demand reproductive rights, women's land and inheritance rights, and the implementation of



the 2/3 rule. They also marched to end sexual harassment and assault, female genital mutilation, and the trafficking of women and children; and to end discrimination against LGBTQ people, sex workers, disabled women, HIV positive women, refugee women, women in the informal sector and other marginalized groups.

The Women's March on Nairobi has been endorsed by Amnesty International Kenya, Center for Rights and Education Awareness (CREAW), Coalition for Grassroots Human

Rights Defenders, COVAW (Coalition on Violence Against Women), Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK), HER VOICE, Human Rights Watch, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya Sex Workers Alliance, Minority Women in Action, National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, and Progressive Americans in Kenya.

In Nigeria, the Women's March was scheduled to make its way to the House of Assembly in downtown Jos, where the nation's laws are voted on, to demand the passage of a controversial gender equality law.

The bill, which aims to eliminate all forms of gender related discrimination, provide girls with access to education, provide protections against sexual abuse and the "right to freedom," has already been voted down twice due to religious and cultural differences.

A hearing on the bill is set to happen in the next two weeks.

Meanwhile, among the first few executive orders by the new administration, Pres. Donald J. Trump has ruled that funding will be cut to health providers abroad who discuss abortion as a family-planning option.

GLOBAL INFORMATION NETWORK creates and distributes news and feature articles on current affairs in Africa to media outlets, scholars, students and activists in the U.S. and Canada. Our goal is to introduce important new voices on topics relevant to Americans, to increase the perspectives available to readers in North America and to bring into their view information about global issues that are overlooked or under-reported by mainstream media.

OPRAH WINFREY SIGNS WITH 60 MINUTES AS SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Special to Trice Edney News Wire from Target Market News

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Media mogul Oprah Winfrey will become a special contributor to CBS' "60 Minutes" news magazine, executive producer Jeff Fager announced in a statement. Winfrey will make her first appearance on CBS News' legendary Sunday night broadcast this fall.

"There is only one Oprah Winfrey," Fager said. "She has achieved excellence in everything she has touched. Her body of work is extraordinary, including thousands of interviews with people from all walks of life. She is a remarkable and talented woman with a level of integrity that sets her apart and makes her a perfect fit for 60 Minutes.' I am thrilled that she will be bringing her unique and powerful voice to our broadcast." Winfrey said that she's been a "big admirer" of "60 Minutes" since her days as a young reporter.

"I'm so excited and proud to join forces with this historic news program, which for me represents the bastion of journalistic storytelling," Winfrey said. "At a time when people are so divided, my intention is to bring relevant insight and perspective, to look at what separates us, and help facilitate real conversations between people from different backgrounds."

Winfrey has established during her storied career an enduring connection with the American people. For 25 years, Winfrey was host of her award-winning talk show "The Oprah Winfrey Show," which was the highest-rated television program of its kind in history.



While hosting and appearing on the No. 1 syndicated show, Winfrey founded her own production company, Harpo Productions. Under her leadership, Harpo developed many successful syndicated programs, including "Dr. Phil," "The Dr. Oz Show," and "Rachael Ray," among many others, plus motion pictures under her Harpo Films banner. Those films include the recent award-winning "Selma" in which she also had a featured role.

In 1985, Winfrey co-starred in Steven Spielberg's "The Color Purple," where she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. She earned critical acclaim in "Lee Daniels' The Butler" and will appear in the upcoming HBO movie "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks" and the feature film adaptation of "A Wrinkle in Time" from Disney.

In 2011, in partnership with Discovery Communications, Winfrey founded OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network and serves as its chairman and CEO. OWN has become one of the fastest growing cable networks for women, achieving its highest rated and most watched year in network history in 2016.

Winfrey founded O, The Oprah Magazine, which FORTUNE magazine declared the most successful start-up in that industry's history and recently debuted her first cookbook memoir, Food, Health and Happiness, which reached #1 on the New York Times Bestsellers List. She joined the Weight Watchers board of directors in 2015.

Winfrey is also one of the most active philanthropists in the world, donating more than \$20 million to the creation of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year, of which she has contributed more than \$100 million to provide education to academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2013, Winfrey was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama, the nation's highest civilian honor.

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ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

by Sandra Williams

I Am Not Your Negro

The paradox of education is precisely this- that as one begins to become conscious, one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated.

-James Baldwin



There were many things that I enjoyed about partnering with the Magic Lantern Theatre in February to host two screenings of the James Baldwin documentary, ‘I Am Not Your Negro’, but I have to admit that the thing that I enjoyed the most was having the opportunity to say the phrase “I am not your negro” over and over and over in the weeks leading up to the film screening.

To be honest, I said the phrase much more often than was probably necessary. I said it. I wrote it. I included it as the subject line in e-mails, and I used the biggest font that I was able to use when creating the flyer.

And each time I said the phrase or used the phrase or saw the phrase, I felt myself smile just a little bit, on the inside.

Black people, and I imagine other people of color as well, have learned how to live behind a mask. It’s one of those unspoken things that you just figure out how to do. Nobody tells you to do it, but you figure it out, usually the hard way.

That mask is what the mainstream public, white America, sees. The mask makes us careful about what we say, careful about what we do, careful about how we react. Careful even about what we think.

It’s exhausting actually, because behind that mask, we are never, ever, fully comfortable. Never, ever, fully present. Never truly safe.

But living behind the mask is a survival mechanism in America. Not figuratively. Literally. As a Black person in this country, knowing what to say or what not to say. Knowing what to do, or what not to do. Knowing how to act, or how not to act, is a matter of life and death. So, we do it, some more successfully than others, and I have come to acknowledge and respect the ability of our people to have learned this lesson as a matter of survival. After all, we are still here.

But, at the same time, despite our survival, living behind the mask has taken an enormous toll on us as a people. I personally can feel its effect on me physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, and I can see the impact that it has had on our community, and on our inability as a people to let our guard, or our mask, down long enough to embrace each other, support each other, or come together long enough to address our common struggles.

What I realized in the lead up to the documentary screening was that embedded in the

phrase, ‘I Am Not Your Negro’, is a declaration. No more mask. I am tired of it. Tired of, and weary of, making others comfortable at my expense. I am not your Negro!

My favorite scene in “I Am Not Your Negro” was a clip of James Baldwin from a 1968 episode of The Dick Cavett Show, when Baldwin responds to a white academic who in essence utters that common question, used by conservatives and progressives alike, to dismiss and minimize the struggles of Black people. Why do you have to focus so much on race?

Baldwin’s response is transcendent, and this frail little man, with his lilting poetic voice, quite literally blows that academic right out of his chair. The silence was deafening.

Here is an excerpt: “I don’t know what most white people in this country feel but I can only conclude what they feel from the state of their institutions. I don’t know if white Christians hate Negroes or not, but I know that we have a Christian church that is white and a Christian church that is Black. I know, as Malcom X once put it, ‘the most segregated hour in American life is high noon on Sunday’. That says a great deal to me about a Christian nation. It means that I cannot afford to trust most white Christians and I certainly cannot afford to trust the Christian church. I don’t know whether the labor unions and their bosses really hate me, that doesn’t matter. But I know that I’m not in their unions. I don’t know if the real estate lobby is against Black people, but I know the real estate lobby is keeping me in the ghetto. I don’t know if the Board of Education hates Black people, but I know the text books that they give my children to read and the schools that we have to go to. Now this is the evidence. You want me to make an act of faith, risking myself, my life, my woman, my sister, my children, on some idealism which you assure me exists in America, but which I have never seen.” I have never seen it either.

My daughter has told me that I have become increasingly cranky at the thought of helping others understand the reality of Black people in 2017. She’s right. Not because I don’t care, but because for too long I feel that I have been Baldwin’s proverbial Negro. I have been less cranky since the documentary screened. There is a liberation that comes from boldly declaring, “I Am Not Your Negro.” Not anymore. Thank you James Baldwin.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH



Which State Elected Nine Black Female Judges in the November 2017 Election?

Answer on Page 17

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Activist and Editor of The Black Lens

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THE BLACK LENS NEWS

The Black Lens is a community newspaper based in Spokane, WA. The paper is published on the first of each month, and it is focused on the news, events, issues, people and information important to Spokane’s African American Community and beyond.

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Subscriptions: Delivered monthly by mail - \$45/year

Submission/Advertising Deadline: 15th of the month
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BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

African Union Blasts Trump Rule Barring African Muslim Immigrants

(TriceEdneyWire.com/GIN) – An outraged African Union recalled the kidnapping of Black Africans as it considered the controversial new US anti-immigrant rules. After forcibly bringing Africans to the U.S. as slave labor, noted the AU, Washington now slams the door on Muslim immigrants entering the U.S.

“It is clear that globally we are entering very difficult times,” cautioned outgoing AU Commissioner Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, speaking at a recent two-day summit in Addis Ababa of the 53 member states.

“The very country to which many of our people were taken as slaves during the transatlantic slave trade has now decided to ban refugees from some of our countries.”

Just before the weekend, President Donald Trump suspended all US refugee programs and banned immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries, three of which are AU members.

The executive order signed by Mr. Trump specifically bars Libyans, Somalians and Sudanese from traveling to the US. It also blocks visas for citizens from four Middle Eastern countries – Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran.

All US refugee programs are frozen for 120 days, and the flow of Syrian refugees to America is ended indefinitely.



The new UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, speaking at the AU’s summit in Ethiopia, commended African countries for opening their borders to refugees and people fleeing violence while in other parts of the world, including the developed West, they are closing borders and building walls. He praised African nations for being among the world’s largest and most generous hosts of refugees.

AU Summit proceedings began with the swift election of Chadian Foreign Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat, 56, as the new chairperson of the AU Commission, beating four other candidates. Faki won in a final battle against his Kenyan counterpart Amina Mohamed after seven rounds of voting. The Kenyan government praised Ms. Mohamed, once the odds-on favorite, for waging a “valiant race”.

Faki takes on the role as his country’s President Idriss Deby Itno hands over the rotating presidency of the AU to Guinea’s Alpha Conde.

A former prime minister, Faki has been at the forefront of the fight against Islamists in Nigeria, Mali and the Sahel and has promised “development and security” will top his agenda as chief of the 54-member continental bloc.

Faki said he dreams of an Africa where the “sound of guns will be drowned out by cultural songs and rumbling factories” and pledged to streamline the bureaucratic AU during his four-year term in office.

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Kanari Gentry-Bowers, 12, Dies From Injuries Suffered in Chicago Weekend Shooting



(Source: Breanna Edwards, <http://www.theroot.com>)

Kanari Gentry-Bowers became the third child victim to die from injuries suffered in a Chicago shooting in two days. Kanari died Wednesday afternoon, February 15, just a day after 11-year-old Takiya Holmes, another victim of a weekend shooting in Chicago, died.

Kanari was shot in the back while playing basketball with friends at Henderson Elementary School over the weekend. According to the Chicago Tribune, the bullet hit her uppermost vertebrae, near the base of her head, causing brain damage.

“Her brain function was gone. There was nothing else they could do for her, nothing at all,” Dawn Valenti, a family friend and crisis counselor, told the Tribune. “It was out of their hands. She was gone.”

As the Tribune reports, no one is currently in custody for Kanari’s shooting, but authorities did announce Wednesday that they had detained a suspect, 19-year-old Antwan Jones, in Takiya’s shooting. A judge ordered Jones held without bond. On Tuesday, 2-year-old Lavontay White Jr. also lost his life when the car he was in was attacked in what police are describing as a gang-related attack.

As Chicago grapples with an uptick in violence, having suffered its deadliest year in 2016, the city is now left reeling with the loss of three young children to gun violence. At a Wednesday-morning news conference, Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson spoke out against the shootings, touting tougher gun laws in order to keep repeat offenders off the street.

Late Wednesday, Kanari’s family released a short statement, thanking supporters for their thoughts and prayers and urging others to keep their children safe.

Atlanta Conference Held to Enhance the Careers of Black Women Faculty Members



(Source: <https://www.jbhe.com>)

Four faculty members at Mississippi State University in Starkville, were the organizers of a conference held in Atlanta designed to empower African American women faculty members in academia. The conference, “Preparing Black Female Faculty for Prominence, Power, and Presence in the Academy,” was funded in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation. The conference was focused on helping current and future African American faculty members navigate the hiring, tenure, and promotion processes at predominantly White institutions of higher education, particularly in STEM disciplines.

Linda T. Coats, a professor of educational leadership and the principal investigator of the grant project, stated that “African American female faculty members often face deep-rooted challenges that threaten their continued participation in STEM fields.”

As part of the conference, organizers created a social network to “link tenured African American female faculty with their graduate and undergraduates students to facilitate the sharing of experiences that fosters upward mobility in academic environments.”

Dr. Coats told JBHE that the symposium was a success: “The results of participants’ evaluation indicate that the symposium’s objectives, to establish a platform for intergroup discussions about diversity in the workplace, to illuminate gaps in existing literature to help target future research, and to propose pathways for assisting Black female faculty and graduate students succeed in the academy were achieved.”

Professor Coats added that “the results from this symposium will serve as a baseline for instituting pathways capable of forestalling negative encounters prevalent in higher education settings. The impact will reach across disciplines and institutional types to increase the diversity and quality of the nation’s STEM workforce, which in turn, will help the United States maintain its status in a global society and marketplace.”

12-Year-Old Marley Dias Is Publishing An Activism Guide For Children And Teens



(Source: Sydney Rappis, www.bustle.com, photo credit: Andrea Cipriani Mecchi/Scholastic)

Scholastic announced that activist Marley Dias, best known for the social activism movement **#1000BlackGirlBooks**, is publishing an activism guide for children and teens, due to be released in spring 2018.

After growing tired of reading about “white boys and dogs,” Dias decided to start her own book drive. The goal was to collect 1,000 books with black female protagonists. With the help of social media, Marley’s story went viral and soon readers across the world wanted to participate in the project. Having collected over 8,000 books to date, Marley and the GrassROOTS Community Foundation have donated far more schools than they originally anticipated.

But her achievements don’t stop there. Marley Dias has been named Editor in Residence of Elle.com, where she interviewed Ava DuVernay, Misty Copeland, and Hillary Clinton. In addition to appearing in Elle, she has also been seen in People, PhillyCoive, FOX29’s Good Day Philadelphia, The Huffington Post, and on Ellen.

In her book, Dias will discuss how kids can make their dreams come true and how they can use their passion to capture the attention of the media and policy makers to change the world. Exploring activism, social justice, volunteerism, equality and inclusion, and social media, with a focus on the importance of literacy and diversity, the book will reflect Dias’ mission to change the world through books.

Scholastic, the world’s largest publisher of children’s books, says that “through her smarts and ingenuity, [Dias] has delivered a jolt of inspiration that’s sent an unstoppable shock-wave to kids everywhere who’ve stood up with Marley to shout ‘Yes!’ to the power of positive action.... We’re thrilled to welcome her to the Scholastic family.”

BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Local, State, National and Around the World

One in 12 Products for Black Women Rated Highly Hazardous

In an analysis of ingredients in 1,177 beauty and personal care products marketed to Black women, about one in 12 was ranked highly hazardous on the scoring system of EWG's Skin Deep® Cosmetics Database, a free online resource for finding less-hazardous alternatives to personal care products.

Skin Deep® compares product ingredients to more than 60 toxicity and regulatory databases and scientific studies, and rates the products from 1 (lowest hazard) to 10 (highest hazard). With the addition of the products analyzed for this report, Skin Deep® now rates more than 64,000 products.

What the analysis also found:

Fewer than one-fourth of the products marketed to Black women scored low in potentially hazardous ingredients, compared to about 40 percent of the items in Skin Deep® marketed to the general public. The percentage of products scored as "high hazard" was about the same for both



market segments, but the disparity in products scored as "low hazard" suggests that there may be a narrower range of choices for safer-scoring products specifically marketed to Black women.

Potential hazards linked to product ingredients include cancer, hormone disruption, developmental and reproductive damage, allergies and other adverse health effects.

The worst-scoring products marketed to Black women were hair relaxers, and hair colors and bleaching products. Each of these categories had an average product score indicating high potential hazard.

In the categories of hair relaxers, hair colors and bleaching products, lipsticks, and concealers, foundations and sun-protective makeup, none of the products analyzed were scored as "low hazard."

Not enough is known about the health hazards of cosmetics and other personal care products marketed to Black women. Advocacy organizations such as Black Women for Wellness, West Harlem Environmental Action and Women's Voices for the Earth

have reported on the issue and published guides for minimizing exposure to potentially hazardous ingredients, but the body of scientific research is woefully sparse. Still, the available studies raise serious concerns.

The Environmental Working Group is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. It's mission is to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep>.



Imelme Umana: First Black Woman Elected President Of Harvard Law Review



(Source: <https://newsone.com>, NBC News, Harvard Crimson)

Barack Obama made history in 1990 when he became The Harvard Law Review's first Black President. This year, Imelme Umana also made history when she was elected the first Black female president. A first in the journal's 130 year history.

The Harvard Crimson, the university's daily student newspaper, reports that Umana was selected from a field of 12 candidates, eight of whom were women and eight of whom were people of color. All candidates for president must answer questions from a forum of editors, write responses to submitted questions and participate in mock editorial activities.

In her job as president, Umana will oversee the work of 90 student editors and staff members, as well as communicate with a group of writers that includes faculty members.

Umana was raised in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, received a Bachelor's degree in African American Studies and Government from Harvard College in 2014 and is a third year student at Harvard Law. She has been actively involved in politics and law on campus, as Community Action Chair of the Harvard University Institute of Politics, Professional Developmental Chair for Public Interest for the Harvard Black Law Students Association, and criminal law intern for Public Defender Service.

In a statement to NBC, Umana said of the election, "It is a great privilege to be able to serve and work with the remarkably talented and committed group of editors on the Law Review,"

U.S. Army Finally Lifts Ban on Dreadlocks



(Source: Tanasia Kenney, <http://atlantablackstar.com>, photo courtesy Marine Corps)

The Army announced plans to lift the ban on locs in early January in a directive that largely focused on grooming policy changes that pertained to religious accommodations, according to The New York Times.

But, according to the Times, buried in the memo was text stating that female service members would now be permitted to wear "dreadlocks/locs," as long as the strands are less than 1/8 inch wide, the scalp grid is uniformed and neat, and, when gathered, all the hair fits into the authorized bun size of 3 1/2 inches wide by 2 inches deep, as stated under Army Regulation 670-1.

In April 2014, the Army enacted policies that explicitly prohibited locs, twists, braids and other protective hairstyles common in the African-American community. African American service women were outraged and many argued that the regulations were confusing, discriminatory and left Black servicewomen with little hairstyle options while in uniform. The Army later loosened its regulations on two-strand twists and braids, but the ban of dreadlocks/locs remained.

The Army Times reported that the effort to authorize locs was spearheaded by Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Cherie Wright. Andrews later teamed up with Youtube guru Nikki Nwamokobia, who has a channel on natural beauty, and together, they put together a nine-minute video examining the Army's hair regulations. The video featured illustrations of how female soldiers could still be within standard(s) with locs, just as they could be with braids and twists.

Prior to its policy revision, the Army and the Navy were the only military branches that didn't permit dreadlocks, as the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard had already authorized the style. The Air Force is still weighing the matter.

After Thirty-Three Seasons Rachel Lindsay named ABC's first Black 'Bachelorette'



(Source: <http://thegrio.com>)

After 33 seasons of The Bachelor and The Bachelorette, according to thegriot.com, there will finally be a Black lead.

Rachel Lindsay, an attorney from Texas, will be the star of the next season of The Bachelorette. Technically, she is still a contestant on The Bachelor, and traditionally, ABC holds off on announcing their bachelorette until after that show is complete, but they are breaking with tradition this time around.

ABC Entertainment Group president Channing Dungey, the first African-American woman to run a broadcast entertainment division, told reporters at the 2016 Television Critics Association's summer press tour that ABC's diversity issues stem from a lack of diversity at the beginning of this show, since contestants are usually chosen from popular candidates on the previous show.

"It's worked very well for us because the audiences feel really engaged [in choosing] that candidate" she said of the process. "What we'd like to do is broaden that. We need to increase the pool of diverse candidates in the beginning. That is something we really want to put some effort and energy toward."

Lindsay's announcement was made on an episode of Jimmy Kimmel Live! as she assured the host that even though this means she didn't find love with the current bachelor, she is still looking.

"I'm looking for someone who's ready for what I'm looking for," she said. "At this point in my life, I'm 31, I'm ready to find a husband, someone who's ready to start a family."

YOU SHOULD KNOW

(Or Things You Probably Didn't Learn In School)

LUCY LANEY: EDUCATOR, ACTIVIST, SCHOOL FOUNDER

Reprinted from BlackPast.org

Lucy Craft Laney, educator, school founder, and civil rights activist, was born on April 13, 1854 in Macon, Georgia to free parents Louisa and David Laney.

David Laney, a Presbyterian minister and skilled carpenter, had purchased his freedom approximately twenty years before Lucy Laney's birth. He purchased his wife Louisa's freedom shortly after they were married.

Lucy Laney learned to read and write by the age of four and by the time she was twelve, she was able to translate difficult passages in Latin including Julius Caesar's Commentaries on the Gallic War.

Laney attended Lewis (later Ballard) High School in Macon, Georgia and in 1869, at the age of fifteen, she joined Atlanta University's first class. Four years later she graduated from the teacher's training program at the University.

After teaching for ten years in Macon, Savannah, Milledgeville, and Augusta, in 1883 Laney opened her own school in the basement of Christ Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia. Originally intended only for girls, when several boys appeared she accepted them as pupils.

For the first couple of years, only a handful of students attended, but by the end of the second year over 200 African American children were pupils at her school. Three years after the founding of the school, the state licensed it as Haines Normal and Industrial Institute. The school was named after Francine E.H. Haines, a lifetime benefactor of the school who donated \$10,000 to establish the Institute.

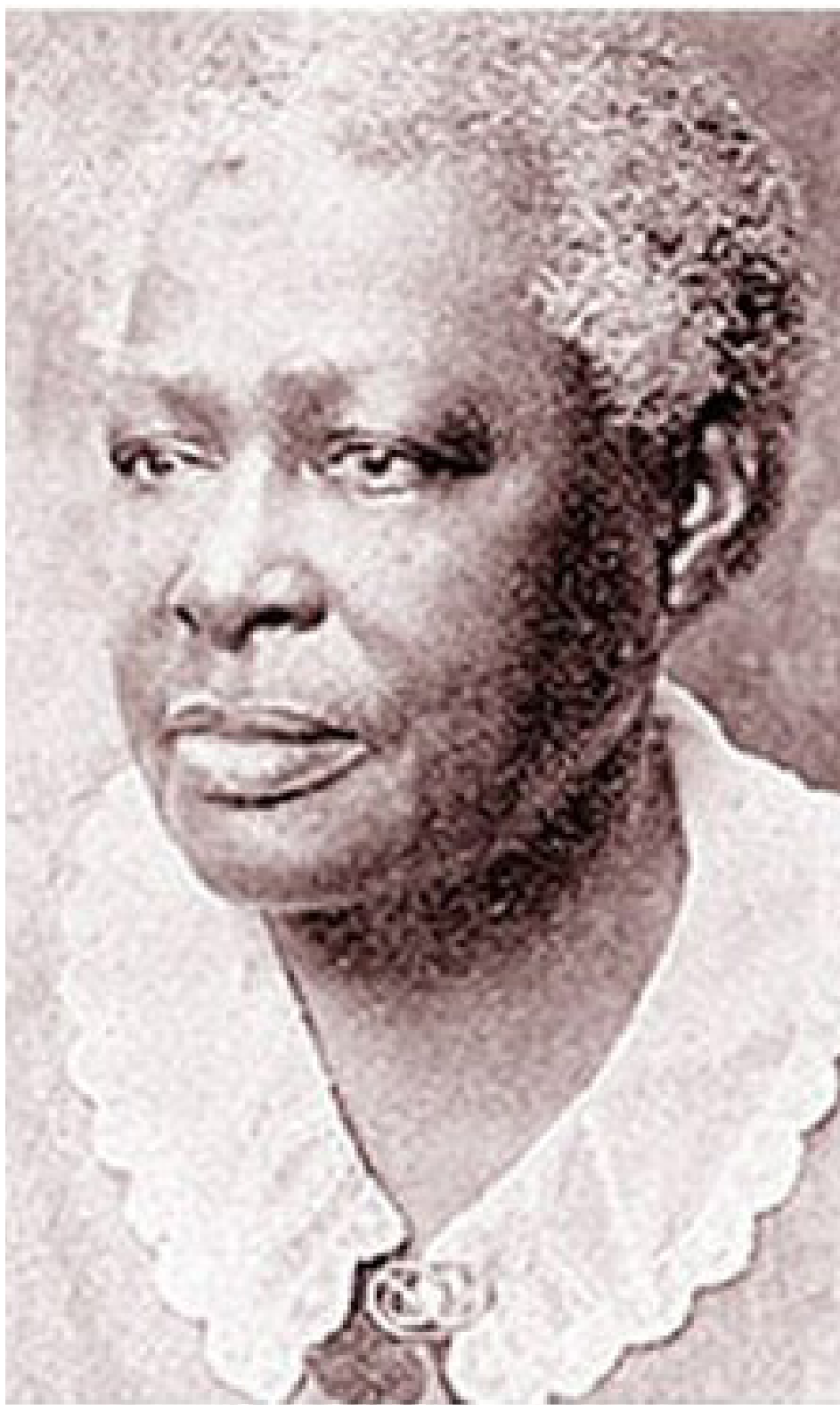
In the 1890s the Haines Institute was the first school to offer a kindergarten class for African American children in Georgia. By 1912 it employed thirty-four teachers, and had over nine hundred students enrolled.

Among the graduates of Haines Institute were Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Joseph Simeon Flipper, and Frank Yerby.

In Augusta in 1918, Lucy Laney helped to found the Augusta branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She was also active in the Interracial Commission, the National Association of Colored Women, and the Niagara Movement. Laney helped to integrate the community work of the YMCA and YWCA. She served as the director of the cultural center for Augusta's African American community.

Lucy Laney died on October 23, 1933 in Augusta. Because of her work in education, Laney was one of the first African Americans to have her portrait displayed in the Georgia state capital in Atlanta.

Contributor: Ashley Jones, University of Washington, Seattle; Sources: Asa C. Griggs, "Notes: Lucy Craft Laney," Journal of Negro History 19 (January 1934); Mary M. Marshall, "Tell Them We Are Rising!" Black Intellectuals and Lucy Craft Laney in Post Civil War Augusta, Georgia" (Ph.D., dissertation, Drew University, 1998); Gloria Taylor Williams-Way, "Lucy Craft Laney, 'The Mother of the Children of the People': Educator, Reformer, Social Activist" (Ph.D., dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1998); Barbra McCaskill, Post-Bellum, Pre-Harlem: African American Literature and Culture, 1877 (New York: New York University Press, 2006); <http://www.biography.com/search/article.do?id=9372857>



ODESSA BROWN: SEATTLE CHILDREN'S CLINIC



Reprinted from BlackPast.org

Odessa Brown, for whom the Children's Clinic in Seattle is named, was born April 30, 1920, in Des Arc, Arkansas. She moved to Seattle in 1963 after receiving training as a licensed beautician at the C. J. Walker Beauty School in Chicago.

A mother of four, she supported her family by working as a Community Organizer for the Central Area Motivation Program beginning in 1965, and as a beautician.

Brown was a staunch supporter of a health care facility for children in the Central Area. She worked tirelessly in this mostly African American neighborhood to make residents aware of the health needs of the area and to express these needs to the planners at Seattle Model Cities, a federally-funded anti-poverty agency.

Odessa Brown was a quiet, private person but when she spoke people listened, particularly when it concerned health care for children. Her efforts persuaded Seattle Model Cities to develop a children's clinic to serve the city's Central District.

During her campaign for the clinic, few friends or associates were aware of her battle with leukemia which she had fought during her years as a CAMP community organizer.

Brown died on October 15, 1969. When the time came to name the children's clinic after it opened its doors in 1970, there was never a question but that it be named the Odessa Brown Children's Clinic.

Contributor: Mary Henry, Independent Historian; Sources: Odessa Brown (1920-1969); Mary T. Henry, Tribute: Seattle Public Places Named for Black People (Seattle: Statice Press, 1997).

‘I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO’

The Black Lens Hosts Two Sold Out Screenings of New Baldwin Documentary at Magic Lantern

By Sandy Williams

The Black Lens has as one of its goals, to not only report on the news and cover the issues that are important to the African American community, but to also be a catalyst for important community conversations about those issues. On February 20 and 21, The Black Lens partnered with The Magic Lantern Theatre in downtown Spokane to host its first event of that kind, two screenings of the newly released James Baldwin documentary, “I Am Not Your Negro.”

The event was intended to be a fundraiser for the Lens, and despite initial concerns as to whether or not a feature length documentary about the writings of African American author James Baldwin would be able to even cover the expenses associated with bringing it to Spokane, much less raise needed funds, the first 100 tickets sold out in a little over thirty-six hours. The second screening sold out in a week.

The documentary appears to have struck a nerve. Not just in Spokane, but around the country, as box office after box office is selling out and mainstream theaters, like the AMC in River Park Square, are now offering it in their line-up.

The basis for the film is James Baldwin’s unfinished manuscript. In 1979, Baldwin wrote a letter to his literary agent proposing what would be his next project a book titled “**Remember This House.**” The book was to be a revolutionary,

personal account of the lives and successive assassinations of three of his close friends—Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time of Baldwin’s death from liver cancer in 1987, he left behind only thirty completed pages of his manuscript. The film’s Director, Raoul Peck, who was born in Haiti, uses that manuscript, and Baldwin’s own words, as the foundation for a powerful and thought provoking reflection on race in America.

Peck says he started reading James Baldwin when he was a 15-year-old boy, “searching for rational explanations to the contradictions I was confronting in my already nomadic life, which took me from Haiti to Congo to France to Germany and to the United States of America.” Baldwin was one of the few authors that Peck says he could call his own. “Authors who were speaking of a world I knew, in which I was not just a footnote.” James Baldwin, Peck says, “saw through the system. He loved these men. These assassinations broke him down. He was determined to expose the complex links and similarities among these three individuals. He was going to write about them.”

Unfortunately, Baldwin never got the chance, but in the conversations that followed each of the screenings, it was evident that Baldwin was a visionary, and that his critique of this country’s race relations speaks as much of the time he was living in then as it does of what we are living through today.



THOUGHTS FROM A GRANDMOTHER

How to Apologize

By Evelyn Anderton

So often I ask myself why is it so hard for the average person to apologize? Could it be that many people today just don’t know how to apologize?

The definition of an apology is a written or spoken expression of one’s regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, or wounded another.

First, it is very important to face the fact that an apology is necessary. Secondly, it is extremely important to know how to apologize with grace and sincerity.

With the popularity of social media, many may want to take a shortcut and use their cell phone or computer to apologize. It is often not a wise decision to apologize by texting, with some exceptions, such as to apologize in advance to someone that you will be arriving late or not at all.

What about using emails? Emails are like text messaging, and for the most part they are very impersonal.

Giving an apology is personal and these indirect formats take away from the personal aspect and put it more into a general contact. There are instances when email is a better option, for an apology, for instance, when you don’t know the other party personally.

The most important information to know about successful apologies is the delivery. Too often many apologies sound like this “I’m sorry for what I said or did and I hope you will forgive me, BUT I really don’t know what I said or did that offended you”.

How graceful and sincere is that apology, before or after the word (but) was interjected? Or how about this one, “I’m sorry IF I offended or hurt anyone’s feelings.”

If that is the best you can do, try reconsidering your apology for a later date.

An apology should be from your heart with sincerity. It should be done with the

greatest intention not to offend again. It should be courteous, respectful, and graceful, showing a great deal of humility.

If you never had the need to apologize and you’re over the age of 5, you truly deserve saint hood. But for the rest of us..... if you find yourself in a position for the need to apologize take it very serious.

You may need to practice what you would like to say, or write it down on paper, just remember to keep it plain, short, and to the point and most of all delivered with grace and respect.

Don’t get caught up trying to re-litigate the issue or thinking you are weak; just embrace doing the right thing. Too many families are divided, marriages suffering, friendships damaged, workplaces hostile, and our churches not on one accord, because too many people don’t know how to apologize.

Take it from an expert, it doesn’t hurt and you will feel much better.

TRY IT SOMETIMES!



GOVERNMENT / POLITICS

LaKecia Farmer: Face of the Future

Tell me a little about yourself.

I was born (in 1993) and raised in Spokane. I grew up mainly in the South Hill area but also in the Spokane Valley when I was a kid. We moved a lot. I went to Lewis & Clark High School for four years, but I also did running start at Eastern Washington University. I transferred to Washington State University and graduated with a degree in Political Science and Philosophy.

What prompted you to pursue a degree in Political Science?

You know it’s really interesting. When I did running start, I took a government class at EWU and that was the first time I was ever exposed to the philosophy of politics. I guess you could say our government. It also happened to be the year that, I forget what the group was called, but I joined this group where we advocated in Olympia on things that we were interested in. So, it was the first time I did lobbying. It was the first time I took government classes and I realized there was a correlation between my life, like what I saw in my parents lives, my life, my siblings lives, and policy. So for example, I advocated for health care in Olympia because my dad was really sick, and he didn’t have health care at the time. This was before the Affordable Care Act. So, I just I realized that there is this connection between policy and our everyday lives and decided to pursue my interest in that.

When you were going to school at WSU, you ran for the Pullman City Council, can you talk about why you decided to run for office?

I declared when I was nineteen and technically I think I was twenty years old when I ran. I felt like our, and when I say our I mean students voices, were not being heard. There were various housing issues. You know we had a lot of landlords who were taking advantage of students. The relationship between the university and the city was an important one, but we didn’t have any representation on the city council from the student perspective, who made up half, or more than half, of the population.

I was in student government, in Associated Students of Washington State University, and I grew really frustrated. I felt like the City Council did great work, but it was not reflective of the people that they were supposedly repre-



senting. So I took a gamble. There was an open position and I decided to run for that position. I lost, but it was a really good experience.

Like any good candidate, I went door to door. I raised money. I talked to my neighbors. I talked to students. The only unfortunate thing is that by the time it was actually time to vote in August the students were all gone. So I had to really go deep into the Pullman community and make my case for why we needed better representation on the city council and that was really a great experience.

What did you learn about yourself in the process?

I think the biggest lesson that I learned was everyone seems to have an opinion on some subject, and while that’s great, people don’t realize how much power they have just

within themselves. When I say that, I mean I didn’t realize how much power I had as one individual who can be connected with hundreds of people during the campaign to learn about their issues. I realized how much power one individual can have when they just use their voice, and that can be advocating for something and protesting, but it can also be as simple as running for an office to represent everyone’s voices. There’s various avenues in my mind about how you can get involved, but I realized that just getting involved is that much more powerful.

After you graduated from Washington State University?

I made my way to Seattle by getting a job at a nonprofit that does civic engagement. We coordinated a lot of voter registration drives and things like that across the state. After about a year, almost exactly, I decided to that I like government a lot, and although I enjoyed doing voter registration and things like that, I felt like my heart was in policy and seeing where we can connect policy to people and vice versa. So, I applied for this Legislative Aide position. Got it. And I’ve been here for about six months now working as a Legislative Aide for Mike O’Brien, Seattle City Councilman, District 6.

Why do you think it’s important for African Americans to be engaged in the political process?

Maybe I’m biased but I feel like a lot of the movements and a lot of the rights that we have gained were on the shoulders of Black women. There is a lot of power in the Black woman. I think of my mom and how resilient she’s been. I think of my grandmother, Jerrelene Williamson. I think of these women and when it comes to politics or government, Black women, women of color, any person of color really, is so underrepresented in every aspect, from the judicial branch to the local government, to the school board, in every position our voices are missing. That’s one thing that I’ve noticed. When I’m in a room, even in Seattle, where there are a lot of Black women, more than Spokane, I’m still the only one in the room a lot of the time.

So I think now more than ever it’s so important to get involved, even if it’s just a phone call or a letter or e-mail to your elected official. I think it’s important for Black women to get involved because our resiliency is needed, and our perspective is needed in government badly. That may be my biased opinion, but just being involved, just being that person. It’s definitely needed.

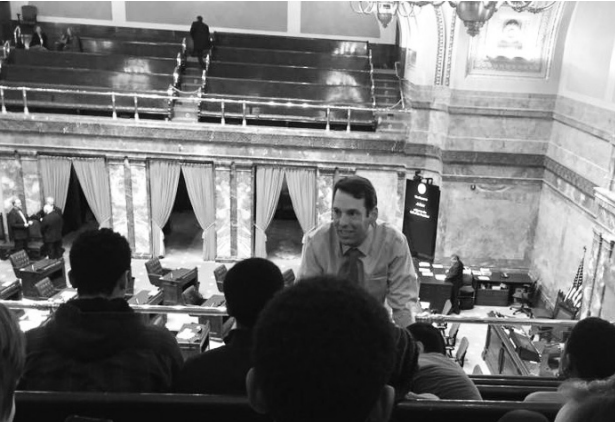
HAVE A HEART FOR KIDS DAY IN OLYMPIA

By Betsy Williams

The youth of Neighborhood Networks South Perry Learning Center’s After School Program started their day on January 27, 2017 at 2:00 am to catch a bus chartered by Children’s Alliance for “Have a Heart for Kids Day.”

This was a day the children, parents, volunteers and staff took time to travel to Olympia, the state capitol, to speak to our 3rd District Representatives and advocate for issues concerning our kids.

It was inspiring to have Senator Andy Billig, Representative Marcus Riccelli and Representative Timm Ormsby take time to talk to and answer questions with our youth. As everyone learned and toured the state capital the youth found the importance of how revenue invested in this young generation benefits everyone.



“On this day I had a different outlook on what is happening at the Capital and how I can be involved.”

Tyjeus Golden, Ferris High School who will be applying for sponsorship as a “Page” for the House of Representatives

Children’s Alliance Advocacy Issues were:
Early Learning: “Quality preschool helps kids to reach their full potential for success in school and in life.

Children’s Health: Dental therapists bring affordable, preventive care to kids and families.

Department of Children, Youth and Families: We support the creation of a Department of Children, Youth, and Families with racial equity integrated into the mission, operations, and accountability measures.

Revenue: Public Investments in the youngest generation

benefit us all. Solutions to the McCleary ruling must include new revenue for education as well as the services and supports that help children learn.

With a funding partnership between the Raikes Foundation and Spokane County United Way, Neighborhood Networks South Perry Learning Center has received funding to support the work that they do in their youth program. This funding supports coaching, training and a quality improvement assessment process with the goal that youth are receiving high quality programming. To see a short video highlighting the program visit <http://sparkwindmovement.org>.



DR. JOY DEGRUY

BSU Brings ‘Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome’ Author to EWU



By Leah Nemeth

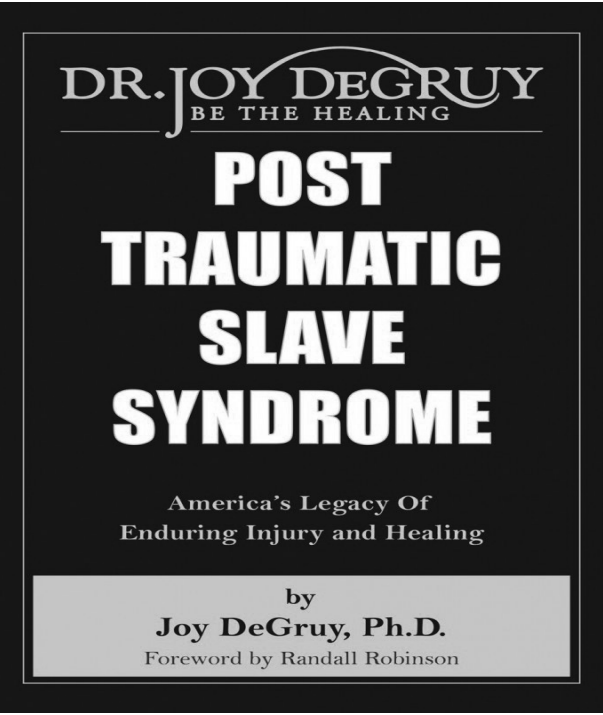
The Black Student Union of Eastern Washington University hosted Dr. Joy DeGruy, a world renowned educator and author of “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome”, on February 16th for Black History Month.

Her workshop, titled “Culture Specific Models: Service, Delivery & Practice”, reviewed cultural sensitivity and diversity, as well as mental health and ecological resilience. The audience who attended the workshop, which was conducted for folks from the EWU, Cheney, and Spokane community,

described Dr. DeGruy’s presentation as “mind-blowing” and “astounding.”

Others said that “she presented great analogies and research”, and that she presented “heavy content in a way that delivered fantastically to the audience.” Many have expressed that they’d like to bring her back to the university or to the Spokane area in the near future, and EWU Black Student Union would love to do that as well.

For more information about Dr. Joy DeGruy and her books, visit her website at <http://joydegruy.com>



MY REFLECTIONS ON DR. DEGRUY

By Lorena Esquivel (EWU student)

The harsh reality and not shunning away or dancing around the topic of slavery and its lingering roots in racism today was what I think many people in the room needed to hear.

It was direct, yet a learning experience that still needs to be spoken about. Many people may disagree because of the heightened emotions in this country right now, but that is exactly why.

One of the most interesting things I learned was about the testing of skin color to an officer’s biases, when it came to hesitation or none at all. That is not something that has been brought to the forefront of police training and its own sociological and psychological fields.

Dr. Joy’s speech was an asset and a real reminder. I believe many of my peers, and myself included, took a piece of learning home with us that day.

GET OUT and See Get Out

A Racially-Charged Horror Film that brings Social Issues to the Silver Screen

Movie Review



By Renika Williams

In today’s political and social climate, with hate-speech, political correctness, and cultural divisiveness on the rise, the horror-based, social satire, “Get Out”, provides us with a fun and educational look into the realities of race-relations in this country.

The plot features Chris, a young Black photographer, traveling to an upper-class, all-white suburb with his girlfriend Rose to meet her parents for the very first time.

While the movie’s initial theme hearkens back to the 1967 classic, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner”, starring Sidney Poitier, Spencer Tracy, and Katharine Hepburn, that’s where all similarities end. Chris quickly learns that his deeply embedded fear “of too many white people in one place” is justified, and this sleepy, super-rich suburb hides more than one sinister secret.

I can’t go too much further into the details without spoiling the story, but I will say that the movie deals with race from the largest points--such as interracial dating, racial stigmas and stereotyping--

to the smallest points, using highly accurate portrayals, including a montage of micro-aggressions that had me turning to my European-American boyfriend for a teachable moment.

The best part of this film is not the story or the acting, but it is first-time director Jordan Peele’s ability to seamlessly intertwine social issues, that would be almost too taboo to discuss in the mainstream, with the most mainstream of movie genres.

The result is ninety minutes of non-threatening racial discussion, dabbled between mind-bending thrills and horrifying chills.

So, if you aren’t afraid of things that go bump in the night, PLEASE SEE THIS FILM.

Renika’s Rating: 9/10



ART & ENTERTAINMENT

ALIAH (A.M.) DARKE | SHANTELL JACKSON

Media Artist Creates Virtual Reality Experience For New Art Display

Media Artist A.M. Darke opens her new virtual reality work, titled *In Passing*, at the Community Building on Saturday, March 4.

In Passing is “a virtual reality experience about what it’s like to navigate public space based on one’s intersecting identities,” according to Darke, allowing the observer to listen to, understand, and gain empathy.

A.M. Darke is a media artist and game developer with a B.F.A. (Bachelor of Fine Arts) in Design and an M.F.A. (Master of Fine Arts) in Media Arts. She is a long-time resident of the **UCLA Game Lab** and a co-founder of the feminist art and tech collective **Voidlab**.

Darke is currently a resident of Spokane’s **Laboratory**, which is

an artist residency program focused on interactive art. Laboratory brings artists to Spokane for 1 to 3 months to make work that involves the viewer as an active participant in the work - everything from virtual reality experiences to sculptures that you can climb on.

In describing Darke’s work, Alan Chatham, Laboratory’s Director, says “her work explores agency, identity and culture, and harnesses the power of humor to tackle difficult and personal subject matter.” Darke’s recent work includes a grocery-based VR (virtual reality) game, a first person SIM about life with lobster claws for hands, and *Objectif*, a card game about race and beauty.

Darke’s *In Passing* is “kind of a game about listening to other




people and understanding their reality,” said Chatham. “Audience members will be putting on a VR (virtual reality) headset and entering a scene where you will walk around the Ridpath block. Along that walk, you’ll encounter a wide variety of characters, all telling stories about their experiences walking around town.”

In Passing will be at the Community Building (35 W. Main Ave, Spokane) on Saturday, March 4th, from 5 to 8pm, and then the work will be on display at Saranac Art Projects (25 W Main Ave, Spokane) for the rest of March during their gallery hours, which are Thursday 2-6pm, Friday 12-8pm, Saturday 12-8pm. For more information about Laboratory visit <https://laboratoryspokane.com>.



Shantell Jackson, a local Mixed Media Abstract Artist, displayed her work as a part of the 2017 SATURATE Arts Tour that took place in venues around Spokane from February 3-5. Saturate was a city-wide collaboration, sponsored by Spokane Arts, that was meant to call attention to Spokane’s diverse yet under-recognized artists. Shantell’s work, which included acrylic, print block pieces, freehand line work, original digital artwork and prints, was displayed at the Blue Door Theater.

JOIN US!



TIFFANY RENEE'
Self Esteem Expert, Life Coach, Speaker and Best Selling Author
www.tiffanyreneespeaks.com
iAm Woman: Conversations with Our Daughters

**IAM WOMAN:
CONVERSATIONS WITH
OUR DAUGHTERS**
Date: 03/25/2017
Time: 8am-2pm
Morning Star Baptist Church
3909 W. Rowan Ave
Spokane, WA99205

iAm Woman: Conversations with Our Daughters is a transforming, thought-provoking workshop series that opens the lines of communication between mothers and daughters and allows women to have the most needed conversations about topics that often are not discussed, yet experienced!

Join us as we equip you with the tools to have those most needed conversations with your daughters, mothers, nieces, aunts and sisters. For iAm Woman and so Are You!



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HEALTH & MEDICINE

The New Face of Depression: The “Strong” Black Woman

Reprinted from BlackDoctor.org

There are countless myths and stigmas that surround depression in the Black community—particularly Black women. Myths surrounding the “strong Black woman” can create needless pain and confusion, and can ultimately keep people from getting proper treatment.

Strong Black women are supposed to 1) have their own, 2) not depend on anyone else for anything, 3) be able to do for others and for themselves without showing weakness, etc right?

The following statements reflect some common misconceptions about African Americans and depression:

“If our people could make it through slavery, we can make it through anything.”

“When a Black woman suffers from a mental disorder, the opinion is that she is weak. And weakness in Black women is intolerable.”

“You should take your troubles to Jesus, not some stranger/psychiatrist.”

“You’re too strong of a Black woman to be feeling this way. Get over yourself.”

The truth is, people with depression can’t just “snap out of it.” Professor and blogger Monica Coleman, Ph.D writes:

“In many ways, I do think that there is a greater stigma in African American culture than in white culture. I live in south-



ern California, and many white people will freely reference “seeing a therapist” in normal conversation. Black people don’t do that. Seeing a therapist is generally seen as a sign of weakness or a lack of faith.”

“There is still an active mythos of “the strong Black woman,” who is supposed to be strong and present and capable for everyone in her family – and neglects her own needs. In the midst of a depressive episode, I had a friend say to me, “We are the descendants of those who survived the Middle Passage and slavery. Whatever you’re going through cannot be that bad.”

“I was so hurt and angry by that statement. No, depression isn’t human trafficking, genocide or slavery, but it is real death-threatening pain to me. And of course, there are those who did not survive those travesties. But that comment just made me feel small and selfish and far worse than before. It made me wish I had never said anything at all.”

Symptoms of clinical depression can happen at any time to any woman. Due to cultural backgrounds, depression may be exhibited differently among African Americans.

If you suspect that you—or someone you care about—could have clinical depression, take a look at the following list of symptoms.

If you experience five or more for longer than two weeks, if you feel suicidal, or if the symptoms interfere with your daily routine, see your doctor:

- ~A persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood, or excessive crying
- ~Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain
- ~Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches,
- ~Digestive disorders and chronic pain
- ~Irritability, restlessness
- ~Decreased energy, fatigue, feeling “slowed down”
- ~Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, pessimism
- ~Sleeping too much or too little, early-morning waking
- ~Loss of interest or pleasure in activities, including sex
- ~Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- ~Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts

Remember, there’s no shame in seeking help. No man—or woman—is an island.

If you are in crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HELLO to 741-741.

SPOKANE LINKS AND INLAND IMAGING Host Annual Mammogram Party to Fight Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States. According to an American Cancer Society article titled, “Report: Breast Cancer Rates Rising Among African-American Women” by Stacy Simon, it accounts for nearly 1 in 3 of the cancers that are diagnosed in women, and the rate of cancer amongst African American women is rising.

In an effort to reach out to Spokane’s African American women and encourage them to get mammograms and breast cancer screenings, Inland Imaging has been partnering with the Links, Inc. to offer Mammogram parties each year. This year’s “Mam” Party took place on January 24 and was located at the Inland Imaging facility located inside Holy Family Hospital.

The annual mammogram parties, which are spearheaded each year by Faith Washington, a nurse manager at Inland Imaging, originally started as a part of My Sister’s Temple, a non-profit organization that was established in 2008 as a program of The Links, Inc. to serve low income residents and communities of color in Spokane.

The “Mam Parties break down many of the barriers that keep Black women from seeking medical treatment. The atmosphere is relaxing, and much more like a gathering of sisters than a visit to a medical clinic. There is a lot of laughter and conversation, as the women socialize and catch up with old friends, while enjoying appetizers, desserts and give aways.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women should begin having yearly mammograms by the age of 45.



BUSINESS/ENTERPRISE

Robotics Scientist Launches STEM Startup

by Samara Lynn
(Reprinted from BlackEnterprise.com)

In 2016, Black Enterprise interviewed Ayanna Howard, Ph.D., an award-winning robotics scientist. Howard has worked with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab, where she led various robotics projects. She is also a Motorola Foundation Professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Georgia Tech’s Institute for Robotics and Intelligent Machines.

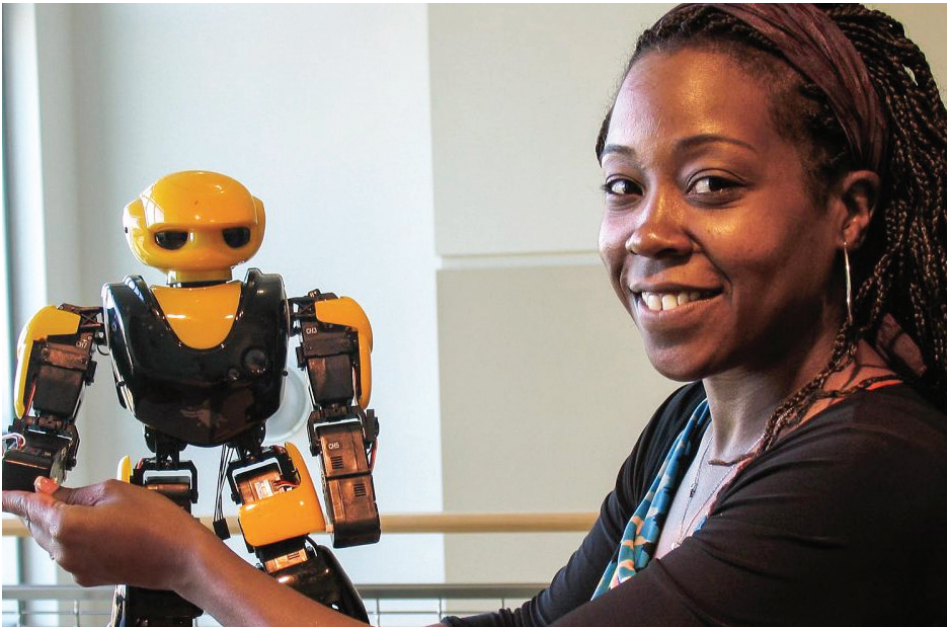
A few years ago, Howard, along with several other technology leaders and innovators, launched Zyrobotics, a startup offering technologies for accessible science,

technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

Howard and her team were at CES 2017 (Consumer Electronics Show) to showcase the company’s latest product, the Zumo Learning System.

“We gamify science and math,” said Howard. “We use toys, stuffed animals, stories that show different characters.” The characters are featured in several educational stories via apps and represent genders, different races, as well as children with disabilities.

Zumo is a plush, stuffed turtle that children use to interact with the apps.



For Howard, a seasoned scientist, the goal of Zyrobotics is clear and personal to her. “We want to make STEM engaging for kids ages 3 to 6, so they’re not afraid. So that when they go into elementary and high school, it’s “Yeah, I can be an engineer, I can be a scientist,” she said.

Children will likely get a great STEM jump-start using Zyrobotics’ products. In addition to Howard are several other Black scientists and thought leaders with the company. The company’s co-founder and COO is John V. Harding, an electrical engineering graduate from Stanford and Howard University. Harding served

in several engineering leadership roles for companies including Motorola.

Zyrobotics’ CEO is J. MacCalla, Ph.D., who has three decades’ business management experience. Most recently MacCalla was the CEO of Automated Switching and Controls Inc., a communications and controls company with more than \$8 million in annual contracts with city and state transit. She has degrees from Brown University, Stanford University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

For more information visit <https://zyrobotics.com>.




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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & THE LAW

I AM NOT MERELY A WITNESS

Lobbying in Olympia With “I Did The Time”

By Lakeisha Jones

I have always had a passion to be involved in criminal justice reform, as a result of witnessing the lengthy incarceration of my dad, male cousins, and now my first nephew. The legal barriers they face upon release causes a vicious cycle of recidivism.

The truth is, I am not merely a witness. I vicariously experience their struggles. However, the voice of the loved ones, especially the voice of Black women, is muted regarding the issue of mass incarceration.

I first voiced my perspective through a monologue I wrote entitled, “*If I Could Talk to Dr. King*,” which I performed as Ms. EWU 2010. It is my belief that Dr. King would be a fierce advocate for criminal justice reform if he were here. The monologue was my way of being heard.

Layne Pavey, the Founder and Director of “I Did the Time,” invited me to participate in a lobby trip to Olympia and she excitedly supported me inviting my dad, Robert Jones. She said our stories were essential and powerful together. This would be my second time to be heard. However, there were no words that could depict the emotion that I experienced



when I watched my dad speak directly to a state representative about the impacts of the system on his life and advocate directly for my nephew, and many like him. Never did I envision such a phenomenal experience.

My dad, the one labeled a felon, an addict, and rejected by society in every way, is now the owner of his own gym,

being a personal trainer and an irreplaceable father. He always tells me that it is by the grace of God that he is where he is today.

That grace came in many forms and I am always thankful to my cousin J.T. Leggin for providing my dad an opportunity and showing respect for my dad in asking my dad to take over his gym in Tacoma, WA.

Some may argue, “Well if they did not do the crime, they would not have the time.” That is true. I would also challenge you to educate yourself on one of the main reasons for mass incarceration for Black and brown men, the “War on Drugs.” Our story demonstrates the importance of community, family, restoration and second chances.

On January 16, 2017, in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on his national holiday, I was humbled to have the opportunity to talk with legislators in Olympia, WA. It was my first time lobbying.

We, IDTT (I Did The Time), were unified in our bright orange t-shirts that stated on the front, “End Mass Incarceration Now” and on the back “Outmate”. We lobbied at the state capital. The two bills we focused on were, “Ban the Box” and “Legal Financial Obligation Reform”.

This is an ongoing battle, and my family “I Did the Time,” is the fierce advocates in our city of Spokane for criminal justice reform.



BE BOLD FOR CHANGE

SPOKANE WOMAN'S CLUB
1428 W 9TH AVE | MARCH 4 | 12:30-5:00PM
WITH FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ
& IDAHO REP PAULETTE JORDAN

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

What Seeing the Movie ‘Hidden Figures’ Meant to Me

A group of youth, family members and friends braved a Spokane winter storm to attend a special screening of the movie ‘Hidden Figures’ that was held at the Village Center Theater at Wandermere on February 4. The movie screening, about the previously untold story of Black women in NASA’s Space program, was sponsored by Bob Lloyd’s Breakfast Group, a gathering of motivated community members that meets monthly to discuss how they can improve Spokane. One of the group’s participants felt that all kids should be able to see the movie and donated the cost of the tickets. Over 100 youth were signed up to attend, but the snow storm cut the number down. Despite that, the Breakfast club was excited by the success of their first event and members plan to host more events in the future.



By Stacey M. Smalls

I think the Hidden Figures movie was an amazing movie because it told you about three Black women who you don’t hear about in school, on TV, or on the radio.

I was really sad when Katherine G. Johnson had to walk a half a mile to use the colored only bathroom. When she went to the bathroom, it didn’t have any soap or paper towels for her to use.

My favorite character was Mary Jackson. Why you ask? Because she was funny and worked hard. It was also sad that Dorothy Vaugh wanted to be a supervisor but couldn’t because of the color of her skin, even though she was skilled enough to do the job. Later Dorothy Vaugh taught herself how to program the IBM computers and did become a supervisor.

This movie is humorous and also teaches you about how important Black women helped improve NASA.



By Arionna Mariea Comito
(with help from Grandma Anita Bryant)

Hi my name is Arionna Mariea Comito. I go to Grant Elementary School and I go the Neighborhood Networks After School Program. Our After School program went to the “Hidden Figures “ movie on a really snowy day.

When we got to the movie we got a kid’s bucket treat with popcorn, a drink and a piece of candy.

The movie was so good because it made me want to learn and it also made me sad. This is what I learned when the lady got her high heel stuck while learning about the rocket with all the other men. She did not get upset but kept going. She also wanted to go to school when they told her she could not by being the first Black women. She told the man in the court that she wanted to be first and he let her go to school. That made me sad she had to go to court to want to go to school. People in the movie started clapping.

I learned that the Black woman had to run to the bathroom and could not use the bathroom with all the people she worked with. This made Katherine angry because the man asked her why she takes so long to go to the bathroom, but she told him why it took so long. The man then got mad after she told him why and made the bathroom so she could use the bathroom with all the people she worked with and not run anymore.

It also made me sad when Katherine was really smart to do all the papers with numbers and the man from the “Big Bang Theory” told her to “dummy proof “her work when she was really smart. “Sir,” she said, “I can’t read this,” but she found a way to read it by putting it to the light.

All these things made me sad and want to learn, but I really liked that even though people were mean to the Black women they still laughed and helped each other be the best in their work. After I watched the movie I am ready to start writing numbers and figures. When I grow up I want to be a scientist. Thank you, Arionna

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A vibrant, colorful graphic at the bottom of the page. It features a stylized bird, possibly a phoenix, with its wings spread, rising from a background of intricate geometric patterns in shades of red, yellow, and blue. The bird is depicted in a dark silhouette with some internal details in red and yellow.

IN THE SPIRIT

Dora Williams

“I am an African American Muslim”

I am an African American Muslim woman. I haven’t always been a Muslim. I was born and raised in Seattle Washington. My mom was born in Tacoma and my dad was born in Spokane. He was there when I was born, but left when I was about one or two years old and I didn’t meet him again until I was in the fourth or fifth grade. My grandpa was a devout Catholic.

The first religion I was introduced to was Jehovah Witness. There were some kids in the neighborhood, twins named Tammy and Pammy, and their family was Jehovah Witness. My younger sister and I wanted to learn about it, so we would go to class with them, but that only lasted for a little bit.

Then when I got to seventh grade, I went to St. Theresa’s, a Catholic school. I studied Catholicism in seventh and eighth grade and I wanted to learn about being a Catholic and about the Rosary Beads and all that stuff. That lasted for just a minute.

After that, I didn’t know a religion until I had my son. But even when I didn’t go to church, I always believed in something higher than me and more powerful than I was.

One of my uncles became a Christian, then became a pastor. I started going to my uncle’s church, and I was a Christian for about twenty years. I went to Church of God in Christ, so I was COGIC for a while. I was pentecostal. I was non-denominational. I liked the singing and shouting, and the dancing and being “slayed in the spirit”, the music and everything else.

But I always questioned. I felt we should always go back to the Old Testament. It could be me, but it felt like ‘Grace and Mercy’ was just too loose. You know, that I kind of could do whatever I wanted and then just go to church and ask for forgiveness and then go back out and do the same thing, you know, and not take it seriously and not have to really study or do anything for myself.

Then I met my husband and I thought we could never get together because he was Muslim and I was Christian. I saw how devoted he was to his religion and to Allah and I thought, he’ll make a good Christian.

But I had a coworker where I worked, she was Muslim, and there were people from Africa, a couple were Muslim and there were a couple of them that were Christian. We would sit and talk, and it was really interesting and it was really humbling.

I thought I was going to change my husband to be a Christian and maybe change my co-worker, but it turned out to be the other way around. So, in March of 2015 I took my Shahada, which is giving your life to the law, just like when you give your life to Christ.

Like most people I didn’t know anything about Islam, only what I had been told and what the media had showed me, which was mostly negative. I didn’t realize the peace, commitment, dedication, unity, diversity, modesty and humbleness that the believers of Islam had. I wanted that. I needed that.

One of the hardest things about being an African American Muslim is that you really don’t fit in with the Muslim community because you weren’t born into the religion. Then there are the African Americans who are Christian who really don’t know how to feel about you because you are Muslim, and there is the judgment and stigma that comes from being Black. So, we are stuck in the middle with really no associates on either side.

I don’t appreciate being treated as if I should apologize for being part of a religion that brings me peace. I shouldn’t have to apologize because others let the fear from the media make them think I am different. We all have a common goal in life, to be and do good. I will not live my life apologetically. Not for me, nor for people who look like me, who live like me or who pray like me.



SHE WALKS IN THE ROOM (HAIR DOWN)

By Sharron Davis

She walks in the room with her hair down
She walks in the room, hair crown
Hair on display
Her head down faced toward the ground,
Her face hidden beneath the shadow of her hair crown
She walks in the room
Where Jesus is having dinner with a Pharisee, religious ruler
See the scene
Jesus and a Pharisee and a woman with her hair down
Carrying a box alabaster
Could’ve been a bastard
If speculation true, could’ve been a prostitute
Very few fathers prohibit their daughter to sell her body,
Vulnerability costly
Lack of protection could’ve cost her reputation and dignity

They value the box she is carrying
Everyone knows what it cost her
The price expensive, her plight expensive, the value of her possession enough to give money to the poor
She pours oil on His head, tears she dries from feet with hair rooted in follicle
Each strand numbered by God



He knew which numbers grazed his feet as she graced His feet with mini rain drops from her eyes
Like the ground of a garden
His feet she watered
With head garment covering the part of Him only the ground knows
Glorious humility
Not deeming her hair too good to get dirty, not seeing

her hands worthy of the Master’s feet
Unashamed to publicly display her love for Him,
She anoints Him

Just before His feet hit the ground
of Gethsemane’s garden
He pardons her when ridicule and criticism scrutinize her gesture of love
Jesus justifies her action
Knowing what she’d done, where she’d been and possibly who she’d been with - her sin list
Exceeded that of His company
None of them gone as far as she to adorn His majesty
For forgiveness like abundant rain after a soul’s drought filled her soul
He knew how much she adored Him
Although others didn’t understand
Eyes unable to see what the heart is blind to

Her story only to measure the magnitude of forgiveness she received from Him
It’s depths unknown, but walking into a room carrying an Alabaster box to pour oil on Jesus
Tears and hair alone enough
To measure a woman’s praise
Loving Jesus beyond degree
We recall love wrapped in bravery
because she walked
Into the room

EDUCATION/SCHOOLS

Roberta Wilburn Receives 2017 INSIGHT Into Diversity Giving Back Award

INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine, the oldest and largest diversity and inclusion publication in higher education, announced the 39 recipients of the **2017 Giving Back Award**. The award honors college and university administrators who go above and beyond their everyday leadership duties and “give back” to their campuses and communities. Recipients will be featured in the April 2017 Leadership Support and Giving Back issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine.

Giving Back Award recipients were nominated by their colleagues and selected by INSIGHT Into Diversity based on their outstanding demonstration of social responsibility; involvement with students, faculty, staff, and the community; and commitment to serving underrepresented populations. Each honoree is recognized for his or her passion, dedication, and support for diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Roberta Wilburn, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in Education at Whitworth University was notified by Holly Mendelson, publisher of INSIGHT Into Diversity Magazine, that she was nominated by Dennis W. Sterner, Professor of Education and Dean Emeritus in Whitworth’s School of Education.



“We are honored to let you know that you have been selected as a recipient of the only national award that honors college and university administrators for their commitment to diversity through leadership, and for giving back to their campus and community,” the notification read. “The award is being presented to you as a tribute to your passion and dedication, along with your demonstration of outstanding

social responsibility throughout your campus and community.”

According to Mendelson, “The Giving Back Award is awarded to leaders of institutions of higher education who exemplify what it truly means to ‘give back’ to others.” Mendelson says, “these administrators are role models, and we honor their efforts to promote diversity and inclusion on their campuses and in their communities.”

Dr. Wilburn received her Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) from Jacksonville Theological Seminary, Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) from George Washington University and her Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) from Mount Holyoke College. She joined the faculty of Whitworth University in 2007.

A call for nominations for the Giving Back Award was announced in October 2016. Award recipients include administrators of both community colleges and baccalaureate-granting institutions.

For more information about the 2017 INSIGHT Into Diversity Giving Back Award and a full list of recipients visit <http://www.insightintodiversity.com/giving-back-award>.

Top 2017 African-American, Minority and Diversity Summer Internship Programs

Reprinted from BlackNews.com

Nationwide — Many companies and organizations are already announcing that they are accepting applications for their upcoming internship programs.

Here’s a list of the top 2017 summer internship programs for African Americans:

#1 – The NBA Internship Program offers college students an exciting opportunity to use their skills and classroom learning within a national sports environment. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/10/nba-internship-program.html

#2 – The NASCAR Diversity Internship Program is a 10-week, full-time, paid summer work opportunity for deserving students with an interest in the NASCAR industry. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/03/nascar-diversity-internship-program.html

#3 – Black Enterprise Internships are designed to provide real-life work experiences for college students interested in a career in the media industry. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/10/black-enterprise-internships.html

#4 – The NCAA Ethnic Minority and Women’s Internship offers an opportunity for a minority, female college student to be chosen for a unique two-year internship program. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/10/ncaa-ethnic-minority-and-womens.html

#5 – The Minority Access Internship Program offers spring, summer and fall internships for college sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduates and professionals. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/05/minority-access-internship-program.html

#6 – Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Internships are available for college students pursuing undergraduate associates or bachelors degrees. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/09/congressional-black-caucus-foundation.html



#7 – Explore Microsoft Internship Program is for current college undergraduate minority students pursuing a degree in computer science or software engineering. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/04/Explore-Microsoft-Internship-Program.html

#8 – BET Networks Internships provides paid internships for both undergraduate and graduate college students at five different locations. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/09/bet-networks-internships.html

#9 – The UNCF/NAACP Gateway to Leadership Internship Program is a 10-week paid summer internship for undergraduate students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/04/uncf-naacp-gateway-to-leadership-internship-program.html

#10 – Google Internships is rated No. 1 by Forbes as the best internship opportunity for college students interested in a career in software engineering. Google offers an open culture and rich learning experience as well as good pay. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/02/google-internships_15.html

#11 – The TV One Internship Program is open to full-time or part-time students attending an accredited college or university with an interest in a career in the media industry. TV One, one of the largest African American cable networks. Internships are offered to undergraduate college students in the Fall, Spring and Summer. Learn more

at www.findinternships.com/2013/09/tv-one-internship-program_12.html

#12 – Oracle offers a 8-week, paid internship for students who attend one of the 39-member historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The internships help students to gain knowledge and experience in the field of technology. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2014/01/oracle-diversity-internships_95.html

#13 – The National Urban League Summer Internship Program offers internships to students who are interested in a career in the non-profit industry. The program provides an 8-week paid internship for college students in either New York City or Washington, D.C. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/04/national-urban-league-summer-internship_8.html

#14 – The National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) offers internships to minority students interested in pursuing a future career in journalism. Applicants selected for a 10-week internship will be offered positions in print, broadcast or online disciplines at selected news organizations across the country. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2016/11/nabj-internships.html

#15 – The Essence Communications Internship is a 9-week, paid internship is open to both undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in a career in the media industry. Candidates must have a strong interest in issues among African American women. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/10/essence-communications-internship_73.html

#16 – The Multicultural Advertising Intern Program (MAIP) offers a full-time summer work experience for college students pursuing a career in advertising. Eligible students must be Asian/Asian American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Multiracial or Multi-ethnic. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/05/multicultural-advertising-intern-program_5.html

#17 – Merck offers 9-11 week internships are available to college students in the areas of research & development, sales & marketing, information technology, human resources, communications, finance and legal, as well as internships in biology and chemistry. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/03/merck-internships_1.html

#18 – General Motors offers internships in the areas of communications, finance, information technology, marketing, engineering, manufacturing, health and safety. The internships offer a paid opportunity for students to receive a challenging work experience in the automotive industry. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/04/general-motors-internships_33.html

#19 – DELL Computers offers 10-12 week internships during the summer for undergraduate and graduate students in the areas of marketing and sales, finance and accounting, IT and more. Internships provide real-world experience for college students while they are still in school. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2014/01/dell-internships_9.html

#20 – PricewaterhouseCoopers offers more than 700 internships each year across 29 countries for college students majoring in accounting and finance. Students will work with highly skilled professionals and receive a realistic insight into the accounting and finance profession. Learn more at www.findinternships.com/2013/03/pricewaterhousecoopers-internships_67.html

To view more 2017 minority summer internships, visit: www.findinternships.com/search/label/Minorities



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At age 12, Nina Simone refused to play at a church revival because her parents were being forced to sit at the back of the hall to accommodate white audience members. Throughout her life, she stayed true to her political convictions and believed that an artist's duty "is to reflect the times."

#WETOOREAMERICA

NINA SIMONE (1933 - 2003)

ICONIC MUSICIAN, STORYTELLER AND CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST

H

Question of the Month

Continued from Page 2

Nine Black women were elected as circuit and district judges in **Jefferson County, Alabama** in the November 2016 election.

(Source Monique Jones, <http://www.birminghamtimes.com>)



Nakita "Niki" Perryman Blocton
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 39)

Education: Birmingham School of Law, Doctor of Jurisprudence; Miles College, Bachelor of Arts in Political Science



Agnes Chappell
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 64)

Education: University of Alabama School of Law, Juris Doctorate; University of Alabama, Bachelor's Degree



Elisabeth French
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 43)

Education: Cumberland School of Law, Juris Doctorate; University of Montevallo, Bachelor's in Political Science and Spanish



Shera Craig Grant
Jefferson County District Court (Age 39)

Education: Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Louisiana State University, Juris Doctorate & Bachelor's Degree, Civil Law



Brendette Brown Green
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 59)

Education: Judicial College; Miles Law School, Juris Doctorate; University of Alabama, Bachelor's of Science



Tamara Harris Johnson
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 62)

Education: Howard University Law School, Juris Doctorate; Spelman College, Bachelor of Arts



Javan J. Patton
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 34)

Education: Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Juris Doctorate; University of Alabama, Bachelor's in Political Science



Annetta H. Verin
10th Judicial Circuit (Age 62)

Education: Howard University, Doctor of Jurisprudence and Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting



Debra Bennett Winston

Jefferson County District Court (Age 65)
Education: Southern University Law Center, Juris Doctorate; University of Alabama at Birmingham, Bachelor's Degree

To read the full background on each judge, visit <http://www.birminghamtimes.com/2016/11/jefferson-countys-historic-number-of-black-female-judges-come-highly-qualified/>



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MONEY/FINANCE

TEACHING TEENS ABOUT MONEY: 3 KEY LESSONS

By Alfred Edmond, Jr.
Reprinted from <http://www.blackenterprise.com/money>

Teaching teens about money can seem like a real challenge. But the truth is, teenagers get their cues about how to handle money from the adults in their lives. As teens, we observe and adopt the financial habits that are the major determinants of our financial success—or failures—in adulthood.

We all benefit from financial education. However, teenagers are often in critical need of information and guidance about money. People often get their first taste of real spending power as teens, whether from summer or after-school jobs or a generous allowance from parents. When teaching teens about money, start with these key financial lessons:

1. Less is more when you start saving early.

Teens can learn the value of saving while they are young, thanks to compound interest. If an 18-year-old put \$3,000 into a retirement account today, and it earned an average interest rate of 8%, he or she would have more than \$100,000 in that account when they turns 65. However, if he or she waited until they were 30 to start saving, they would have only \$44,000 by age 65.

When teaching teens about money, also give them another reality check about interest: When they borrow money (including via credit cards) they'll be paying it. On the other hand, when they save money in an account at a bank or other financial institution, it will be paid to them.



2. Earned money is the best money.

Teens need to be taught to value earned money—via employment, entrepreneurship, and investing—over loans or gifts. If the only time you ever talk about money is when they're asking you for some, that's a problem.

When teaching teens about money, draw the distinction between using their own funds and spending other people's money. They will be far more financially responsible when they spend the money they worked to earn.

For example, when my oldest daughter was a teen, she asked me to buy a pair of Air Jordans for her. However, when I said she should use her own savings to buy them, the Jordans somehow lost their appeal. She somehow managed to find “cuter” athletic shoes (without the pricey brand name) on sale.

3. Disciplined savings is better than the convenience of credit.

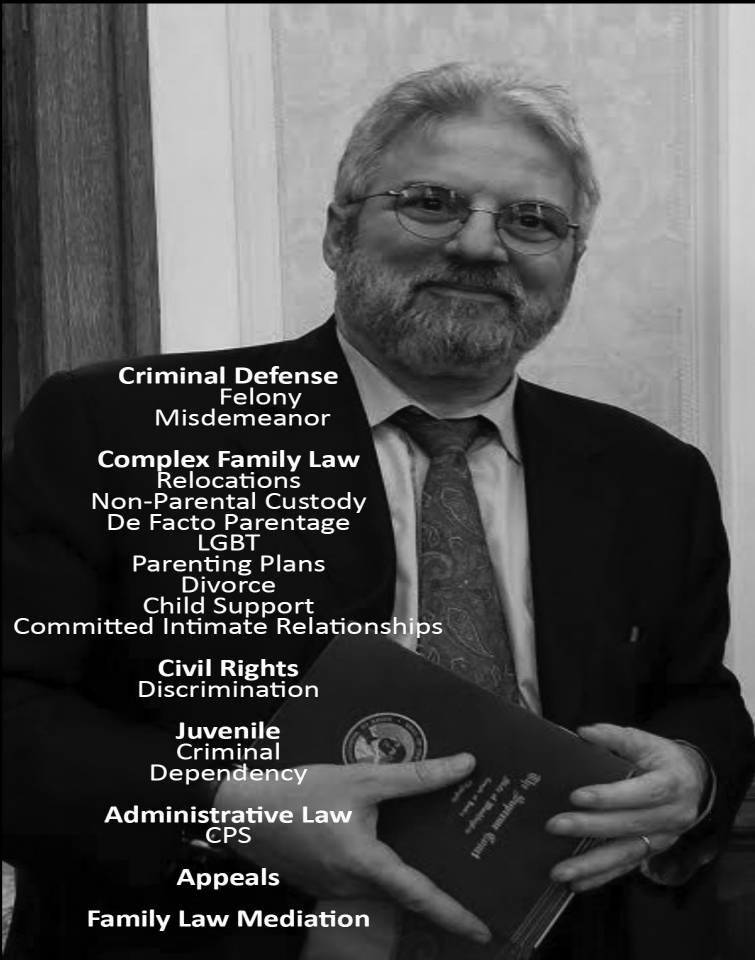
Teach teens the rewards of delayed gratification. Let them know that it's far better to save for what they want, instead of taking on credit card debt just to get it right away.

For example, let's say your daughter wants a \$2,000 prom dress. You could put it on a credit card at 14% interest. With monthly payments of \$100, you could pay off that balance in 23 months—with an extra \$290.90 in interest payments. The alternative? Save \$100 a month for 20 months and buy the dress outright, with no interest payments. That's \$290 saved via a little planning and disciplined saving.

Of course, when teaching kids about money, it helps to teach by example. When it comes to teens, “do as I say, not as I do” just won't cut it.

Black Enterprise Executive Editor-At-Large Alfred Edmond Jr. is an award-winning business and financial journalist, media executive, entrepreneurship expert, personal growth/relationships coach, and co-founder of Grown Zone, a relationship education initiative focused on personal growth and healthy decision-making. Follow him on Twitter at @AlfredEdmondJr.

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Tongues of Fire

By Beverly Spears

Namaste

Confession; I am not doing well. One minute I'm riding mighty waves of prophetic resistance, the next I'm drowning in my own fear and anger. I stand on one side of an ever-widening, ever-deepening chasm, feeling nothing but disgust and enmity for those on the other side. I hate their willful ignorance—I hate their hate. Have a conversation with them? Practice empathy and compassion? I don't think so!

Fear controls me and anger hardens my heart. It is exhausting and debilitating. I don't want to be this person. I feel the same struggle happening in others. On a regular basis someone in my Facebook community posts that they are tuning out: no social media, no newspapers, no cable TV news—no politics! It's a matter of self-preservation. We are overwhelmed by the fear, uncertainty and malevolence that seem to permeate the very air we breathe these days. Why do I feel as if every time I exhale, I am contributing to the smog?

I've been thinking a lot about the word resist. To resist means to stand against. So much of our energy is going toward fighting against polices, actions, and people. Resistance is a good and necessary thing, but it's hard to sustain over time, and it's not enough to effect lasting change. What if we shifted our perspective, and organized our movement around what we stand for? What if the goal was transformation of minds and hearts, and not simply to get people to stop what they are doing? How might this change the collective energy?

Recently I've received two thought provoking and inspiring Facebook posts. The first story is about a Chicago-born, African-American musician named Daryl Davis, who over the last 30 years has convinced 200 Ku Klux Klansmen to leave their white supremacist group, simply by befriending them.

Davis has traveled the country for thirty years meeting individually with self-proclaimed white supremacists. His question to them was simple, "How can you hate me, when you don't even know me?" Davis then offered them a chance to get to know him, and a chance to treat him the way they themselves wanted to be treated. Davis says he struck up a relationship with each person he met. At some point after knowing Daryl, each of the Klansmen came to their own conclusion; that they could no longer embrace white supremacist ideology. A former KKK Imperial Wizard



gave Davis his Imperial Wizard robe as a sign of his transformation. Mr. Davis wrote a book about his experiences: Klan-destine Relationship: A Black Man's Odyssey into the Ku Klux Klan. I haven't read the book so I don't know why Davis set out to do this, but I know that what he did was a peaceful act of immense courage.

The second story is of Heather McGhee and Garry Civitello. Ms. McGhee is president of a public policy advocacy organization, Demos. She is African-American. Appearing as a guest on C-SPAN's Washington Journal, Ms. McGhee was taking questions from callers. One of those callers was a white man named Garry Civitello of Ashville, North Carolina. Very sincerely, Mr. Civitello said:

I was hoping [you] could help me change my mind about some things. I'm a white male, and I am prejudiced. And the reason, it is something I wasn't taught, but it's kind of something that I learned. I come off as being prejudiced, but I just have fears... What can I do to change? You know, to be a better American?

McGhee listened attentively and then engaged with Civitello in an open, compassionate, non-judgmental way. McGhee was grateful for his call, she said. She told him that people of all races hold prejudices, so his ability to say he has these fears and prejudices, and that he wants to get over them is one of the most powerful things that he/we can do right now in this moment in our history. She then went on to suggest some actions he might consider in order to gain more understanding and compassion for people of

color, such as attending a Black or racially diverse church, if he was religiously inclined, reading African-American history, and sharing his learning and experiences with his white community. But McGhee didn't stop there. She later went to visit Civitello in person in Ashville to continue the conversation. In a later interview, Garry Civitello said, "when you get to know people, usually your fears are unjustified."

Daryl Davis and Garry Civitello are profiles in courage. They became extremely vulnerable in service to something deeper and truer than just themselves. Heather McGhee and the Klansmen were in positions of relative power. McGhee could have reacted to Civitello with anger and bitterness. That would have ended the conversation. The Klansmen could quite literally have killed Daryl Davis. That's not what happened. Why?

When McGhee was asked what was going through her mind as she listened to Garry Civitello she said, "it was what was going through my heart, which was a sense of connection to his vulnerability. He was someone who is swimming against a tide of racist images, narratives, stereotypes...."

Davis and McGhee's approach to people, who could easily be considered enemies, was non-confrontational, and non-judgmental, but they didn't avoid honesty and hard truths. I think of Namaste—the gesture of the hands coming together at the heart and a slight bow of the head in greeting another person. It is a symbolic gesture meaning the Divine in me recognizes and honors the Divine in you.

Why don't we stop feasting on the garbage of the world? What if our actions were driven by compassion and not anger? Why don't we let our hearts lead our heads in our interactions with people with whom we may profoundly disagree? What if we set aside our egoic, conflict-driven strategies and tactics of resistance, and give our spiritual-selves the reins? Each of us must find our own way back to love-inspired action for the greater good. Tune out the fray, and turn inward for some portion of everyday. Don't wait until we are half-past lost our minds! Yes, it is far easier said, than done. It requires great discipline, but I know no other way to sustain my life in love and integrity, and support others in sustaining theirs.

To be continued...

Rev. Beverly Spears is an ordained American Baptist minister, teacher and preacher of Evolutionary Christianity.

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OUR VOICES

Trump is One Example Why We Need Black History Month



By Rev. Irene Monroe

February 1 began Black History Month, a national annual observance since 1926, honoring and celebrating the achievements of African Americans.

To commemorate its start President Trump hosted a “listening session” at the White House that left listeners scratching their heads wondering if he knew Frederick Douglass, a former slave, and abolitionist, died in 1895, and 2018 will be the bicentennial of his birth.

“Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who has done an amazing job and is being recognized more and more, I notice.”

Expecting White House press secretary Sean Spicer to clarify what Trump meant regarding his comment on Douglass, Spicer, however, made it clear he, too, doesn’t quite know if Douglass is dead.

“I think he wants to highlight the contributions he has made. And I think through a lot of the actions and statements he’s going to make, I think that the contributions of

Frederick Douglass will become more and more.”

The remarks from both Trump and Spicer could have been an episode of “Drunk History,” a TV comedy series where an inebriated narrator fumbles recounting historical events, which would illustrate why we need Black History Month.

And, if Dr. Carter Woodson, the Father of Black History, were alive today he would’ve been troubled by their remarks. However, it’s not just African Americans troubled by Trump’s lack of knowledge; it’s across various racial and ethnic groups.

“He’s embarrassing!,” Scott Kearnan, who’s white, and the Boston Herald’s Food Editor stated. “It’s generally revealing of his lack of interest in the history of this country and civil right struggles in particular.”

Sue O’Connell, publisher and editor of South End News and Bay Windows, and host of NECN’s “The Take with Sue O’Connell,” who is white, brought to my attention that Trump is not alone in not knowing basic Black history. She reminded me when Libertarian presidential candidate Gary John was being shepherded to a room at a convention center named after Harriet Tubman, and he asked the aide “Who’s Harriet Tubman?”

“These two men, Trump and Johnson, regardless of their opposing political views had no idea who Harriett Tubman was. Trump enthusiastically is learning about Frederick Douglass for the first time.”

Since its inception, Black History, however, has been the subject of criticism from African American as well as from other races and ethnicities. Many African Americans are insulted that the shortest month in the calendar year is solely focused on the histories and achievements of a people who have been

dragged to these shores since 1619. When Obama was first elected, Millennials, in particular -African- Americans, people of color or as well as whites - whose ballots helped elect the country’s first African-American president, revealed celebrating Black History Month seemed outdated to them. Many of them viewed the celebration as a relic tethered to an old defunct paradigm of the civil rights era and a hindrance to all people moving forward.

Obama’s candidacy was thought to have marshaled in America’s dream of a “post-racial” era where race had finally become a “non-issue.” And Obama’s election encapsulated for them both the physical and symbolic representation of Martin Luther Kings’ vision uttered in his historic “ I Have a Dream” speech during the 1963 March on Washington.

“King said don’t judge by the color of our skin, but instead the content of our character,” Josh Dawson, 26 of New Hampshire told me.

In proving how “post-racial” Obama was as a presidential candidate, Michael Crowley of “The New Republic” wrote in his article “Post-racial” that it wasn’t only liberals who had no problem with Obama’s race but conservatives had no problem also, even the infamous ex-Klansman David Duke.

“Even white Supremacists don’t hate Obama,” Crowley writes about Duke. “[Duke] seems almost nonchalant about Obama, don’t see much difference in Barack Obama than Hillary Clinton--or, for that matter, John McCain.”

For years, the celebration of Black History Month, especially among white conservatives, has always brought up the ire around “identity politics” and “special rights.” “If we’re gonna have Black History Month,

why not White History Month? Italian History Month?” Dawson also questioned.

With the alt-right movement afoot and Trump removing white supremacist groups- Ku Klux Klan, Identitarians, Identity Christianity, Neo-Nazis, and Neo- Confederates, to name a few - from the Countering Violent Extremism program to profile Muslims, these groups as well as many white Trumpian conservatives are now more emboldened than ever to not only contest the celebration of Black History Month but to also insist now on a white history month.

This push back against Black History Month by whites has been going on for decades, and is shown in how some court decisions bolster the resistance.

During the George W. Bush years we saw the waning interest in “identity politics,” creating both political and systematic disempowerment of marginalized groups, like people of color, women, LGBTQ people, and a disinterest in these histories and struggles. We also saw the gradual dismantling of affirmative action policies, like in 2003 when the Supreme Court split the difference on affirmative action, allowing the Bakke case on “reverse discrimination” to stand.

The creation of Black History Month was never intended by Woodson to be divisive but rather to educate all Americans about the African Americans contributions to the U. S. In so doing, it aims to engage and invite informed “listening sessions” on the histories all minorities as integral to American History.

Reverend Dr. William Barber is president of the North Carolina branch of the NAACP, <http://www.naacpnc.org/president>. For more information about Democracy Now visit <https://democracynow.org>.

THE MIX: A Voice for Black & Biracial Girls

MIX

THE MAGAZINE FOR GIRLS ONLY

Cover Story:
My Life In Spokane

THRIVE:
NEW YEARS
RESOLUTION

KRISTAN IN THE KITCHEN
AMAZING MAC & CHEESE

The Mix is a Black and Biracial teen magazine founded by Toni D Moize of Spokane, WA, who is also the C.E.O. of the publication. The focus of the online magazine is girls between the ages of 13-19.

The Mix was created, Moize said, “to inform girls of all different races and diverse backgrounds that they are loved for their beauty as well as their brains.” The magazine “not only does what Seventeen has been doing for years,” Moize continues, “it also does what Seventeen and other magazine have not done in awhile.”

The mission statement for the magazine is to “help girls with their self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness and the dream vision for their future.”

Moize wants girls to feel like this is their magazine. “We want girls to write: poems, short stories, shout-outs to your best friends and we also want you to send your ideas. This is a girls magazine that is not going to “bump up” famous people. We want girls to know their backgrounds, their cultures, and their roots.”

The second issue of the Mix was published in December 2016. The magazine is available online through the digital newsstand www.magzter.com at \$1.99 per issue. The app is also available through playstore, iTunes and others. To subscribe, visit Magzter.com and put The Mix in the search bar. The Mix is also on Facebook @TheMix-Magazine.

My Life In Spokane

OUR VOICES

Divided We Fall Every Time

By **Jamala Rogers**

(BlackCommentator.com) - I recently had the opportunity to view the documentary, *Divided We Fall* while in Madison, Wisconsin. The insightful documentary is the maiden project of Katherine Acosta who was present with her crew to facilitate the post-screening discussion. I had a couple of flashbacks that I'd like to share with you. But first, let me tell you what the film is about and why I think it can be a valuable addition to the discussion progressives are having in response to trump's new world.

The documentary is a deep dive into the resistance to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's Act 10. Like most uprisings, it's not the one thing that sparks the inferno, it's a series of things that accumulate until The People can't take it anymore. Act 10 was that thing that ignited the flame.

Act 10 was part of the Republican playbook to undermine unions and the Labor Movement. To address a nearly \$4 billion deficit, the Republican Governor and his cronies in the state legislature decided to target bargaining rights, wages and benefits of public sector employees. Governor Walker unapologetically stated his strategy would be divide-and-conquer, to kick up the tensions between rural and urban citizens. The narrative became the "greedy" public sector workers in the cities were the reason Wisconsin's small towns were suffering.

Dubbed the "largest sustained protest in US history" filmmaker Acosta accessed compelling archival footage from inside of the organic resistance. This helped to give viewers a front row seat into the strategizing and organizing actions going on at the Capitol during the two weeks of resistance. At its height, up to 100,000 people from across different backgrounds and affiliations united to make their voices heard. I can remember following the actions from St. Louis and rooting on the protesters, including the 14 Democratic Senators in the Senate who left the state as a tactic to stall the vote on Act 10.

My first flashback was seeing the chaos as thousands converged on the Capitol Building. It was reminiscent of the Ferguson Uprising. You are literally in the fire trying to bring organization to the situation and to figure out strategy simultaneously.

The generous material support from across the nation also struck a nerve.

My second flashback was seeing the treacherous actions of three major unions—American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC). John Matthews, head of Madison Teachers Inc., criticized that the sell-out decision "pulled the rug out" of the mass action. MTI had already led a successful teacher walk-out in response to Act 10. Many were hoping it was the beginning of a general strike if other unions joined in.

In 1964, the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party (MDFP), led by the uncompromising Fannie Lou Hamer, took their 68-member delegation to the Democratic National Convention and demanded to be seated. Instead the Democratic Party proposed two at-large seats to the convention with no voting privileges.

Seeing the power of this delegation and its impact on the South if successful, a united front from then President Lyndon B. Johnson to Walter Reuther was hastily assembled and Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), was recruited by the White House to put pressure on the MFDP delegation to accept the compromise. The powerful union leader threatened political retaliation on MFDP members and supporters if they didn't accept the Democratic National Convention's offer.

The threats didn't stop there. Joseph Rauh, who was the attorney for both the UAW and the MFDP, was told he would be fired if he broke ranks. He fell in line as sadly did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was threatened with loss of funds for his work if he didn't support the compromise.

That's at least twice at historical junctures that unions and Democrats colluded to maintain white supremacy and sabotaged the struggle for Black political power and self-determination. I'm sure there are other examples, more local or regional, that others can add, but the point is that both the Labor Movement and the Democratic Party are in dire need of racial introspection and transformation. In building our own united front against Trump, we don't need to repeat the ugly, racist mistakes of the past. We need a re-alignment of social forces



who are uncompromising on principles - like the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party.

Act 10 was eventually passed. The massive recall campaign against Gov. Walker failed. The Democratic candidate who ran against Walker lost. Acosta is not shy about exposing the undermining roles of the unions and the Democratic Party. Neither does she try to shield the internal struggles of organizers, particularly the Teachers Assistants Association (TAA), to keep it all together.

There are lessons to be learned from the Wisconsin Uprising, just as there are from the Ferguson Uprising. The new US president has made it clear that our learning curve must be short as he puts his neo-fascist policies and laws in place. We must start racking up some victories.

Finally, there must be a radical transformation of our social justice movements, from labor to faith, if we are to build a formidable united front that centers on trust and a shared vision for democracy and justice. Otherwise divided, we fall. Every time.

Jamala Rogers is founder and Chair Emeritus of the Organization for Black Struggle in St. Louis. She is an organizer, trainer, speaker, columnists, and BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member. She is the author of "The Best of the Way I See It - A Chronicle of Struggle". Other writings by Ms. Rogers can be found on her blog jamalarogers.com.

The Grit and Grace of Coretta King



By **Julianne Malveaux**

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - Every day that he holds the Presidency, Donald Trump does something outrageous. He blusters, he just plain lies, and he bullies. He pushes his decisions, his executive orders, down the throats of a Congress that he dominates. Why not let the democratic process work and let them vote to build a wall and pay for it, instead of insisting, by executive order, that the wall will be built. In just one short week as President, he has demeaned our democracy and our voters, caused international turmoil, and more. But he is doing exactly what he said he would do.

We've been here before. Remember Ronald Reagan, the President who cut school lunches and declared ketchup a vegetable? Remember warmonger George W. Bush? Remember Richard Nixon and his

coldness toward Coretta Scott King? Remember history!

Journalist Rev. Dr. Barbara Reynolds offers us the opportunity to remember history in the Coretta Scott King memoir, *My Life, My Love, My Legacy*. Reynolds took copious notes and made extensive recordings in the decades that she worked and travelled with Coretta King, and she has turned them into a memoir. Completed in 2007, it has taken a decade for the book to be published, largely because of complications with the King estate. But Reynolds chooses not to talk about the complications, instead choosing to talk about the many ways her life was enriched and enhanced by her association with Mrs. King. She also chooses to illuminate the leadership roles that Mrs. King embraced, both while her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was living, and after his death.

The book is a great and inspirational read, especially now, when so many have despaired at the irrational-seeming leadership of Donald Trump. It is a reminder that it took 15 years of persistence to establish the King holiday that we now all take for granted. It is easy to forget that Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) introduced the King Holiday legislation in 1968, just days after Dr. King's assassination. He introduced it again and again, year after year. According to Coretta King, the bill was rejected more than seventy times. But she, and Conyers, persisted

in their efforts to create a national holiday. Coretta King met with the reformed segregationist Senator Robert Byrd. She says she would have been "anxious" to meet with a man who filibustered the 1964 Civil Rights Bill, but was assured that his views had changed. Indeed, Byrd supported the effort to establish the King holiday, but through a rules change, a two-thirds vote was needed to establish a holiday instead of a simple majority. In 1979, the bill lost by a mere five votes.

Agitation continued after this loss. A petition drive yielded six million signatures. Stevie Wonder released his Happy Birthday song that advocated for a King holiday. Senator Jesse Helms opposed the holiday, introducing a 300-page document that detailed King's "Communist activities". Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan was so outraged by the document that he threw it to the ground, describing it as a "packet of filth". On October 19, 1983, the Senate passed King holiday legislation 78-22, following a House vote of 338-90. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law on November 3, 1983, establishing the King holiday on the third Monday of January, beginning in 1986. Of course, some states dragged their feet. Arizona did not acknowledge the holiday until the NFL moved a Super Bowl in protest in 1992. South Carolina waited until 2000 to acknowledge the holiday.

We often see Coretta Scott King as a stoic, dignified lady, and a graceful partner to

civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King. This memoir shows her from another perspective, as a leader in her own right, as a dedicated pacifist, as a persistent adherent to principles of nonviolence, as a gritty fighter for her husband's legacy through the holiday and the establishment of the King Center. We also see her as a mother, and can read her assessment of her children, their strengths and their challenges. While I had the privilege to be in Mrs. King's company on many occasions, and to speak with her personally and at length more than once, this book adds a depth to my knowledge of her and makes me wish I'd had the opportunity to know the side of her that laughed with Betty Shabazz and Myrlie Evers (I laughed with both of those women, but never Coretta), enjoyed opera, and let her hair down.

As we attempt to develop the "fight back" plan for the outrageousness of the Trump presidency, it is useful to consider the women on whose shoulders we stand - Fannie Lou Hamer, Ida B. Wells, Shirley Chisholm and so many others. And it is useful to remember the grit and grace of Coretta Scott King, the power and passion in her persistence. For me, this book put steel in my spine. The Trump years will be a long four years, but imagine waiting 17 years to establish a King holiday that is now so widely celebrated!

Julianne Malveaux is an author and economist, for more information visit www.julianne-malveaux.com.

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**Community Colleges
of Spokane**

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Community Colleges of Spokane is seeking a highly motivated and qualified individual for the position of **Program Coordinator - Workforce Transitions Grant** in the Student Services Division at Spokane Community College.

Under general supervision, this position will coordinate activities for Workforce Transitions Grants (BFET, Opportunity Grant, Workfirst and Worker Retraining) and other special programs as assigned.

Responsibilities include: extensive involvement with students, staff, faculty, the public and partner agencies in carrying out program activities, as well as coordinating, scheduling and monitoring program activities to determine consistency with program goals.

Minimum Qualifications: Knowledge of State regulations related to Workforce Funding Grants and other assigned programs; strong and effective presentation skills; proficient in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and grammar; knowledge of computers and spreadsheets, database and word processing software.

To apply for this position or to see other employment openings at CCS visit <http://www.ccs.spokane.edu/hr>

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Dates & sites for classes: (Subject to change)

SESSION 1:

Monday, April 3 – Friday, May 12: 407 N. Madelia – PuraVida Works

SESSION 2:

Monday, April 24 – Friday, June 2: 4001 N. Cook - NE Community Center

SESSION 3:

Monday, June 5 – Friday, July 14: 1102 W. College – Vets Garage

SESSION 4:

Monday, July 17 – Friday, August 25: 500 S. Stone – East Central Community Center

For more information or to receive an application send an e-mail to Judith Gilmore at Judithg721@comcast.net or call 509-319-4143.

For more information or to place an employment advertisement contact The Black Lens at 509-795-1964 or sandy@blacklensnews.com. For price information visit the website at www.blacklensnews.com and click on the advertising tab at the top of the home page.

MARCH EVENTS

MARCH 10 & 15

2017 FIG TREE BENEFIT BREAKFAST AND LUNCH - "BEYOND THE NEWS: REVEALING COMMUNITY"

Sharing news of people who make a difference and connecting with people in the caring community.

Lunch - 3/10/17 - 11:45am -1:00pm

Breakfast - 3/15/17 - 7am -8:30am

Gonzaga University, Cataldo Hall

1200 N Addison Ave; Spokane, WA 99202

Cost: Complimentary (guests are invited to donate to support The Fig Tree). For more information call 509.535.4112 or 509.535.1813 or visit www.thefigtree.org.

MARCH 20

NAACP MONTHLY MEETING

Join the NAACP for our monthly general meeting

7:00pm

Community Building - Lobby

35 W. Main Street, Spokane WA

For more information contact the NAACP at 509-209-2425 (ext 1141) or visit the website at <http://spokaneNAACP.com>

MARCH 21

A CONVERSATION WITH SPOKANE POLICE CHIEF CRAIG MEIDL

The Neighborhood Councils of District 1 are pleased to present: A Conversation with Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl- an opportunity to ask those burning questions.

6-8 pm

North East Community Center - Assembly Room

4001 N Cook, Spokane, WA

MARCH 25

I AM WOMAN: CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR DAUGHTERS WITH TIFFANY RENEE'

I Am Woman: Conversations with Our Daughters is a transforming, thought provoking workshop that opens the lines of communication between mothers and daughters.!

8AM - 2PM

Morning Star Baptist Church

3909 W. Rowan Ave, Spokane, WA 99205

Tiffany Renee' is a self esteem expert, life coach, speaker and best selling author. Visit: tiffanyreneespeaks.com

MARCH 25

2017 TOM FOLEY LEGACY DINNER

Join the Spokane County Democrats for the 2017 Tom Foley Legacy Dinner & Fundraiser. Keynote Speaker, the Honorable, Nina Turner, with special Guest Speakers Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Washington State Democrats Chair, Tina Podlodowski.

5:30PM - 9:30PM

Lincoln Center

1316 N Lincoln Street, Spokane, WA

Limited Tickets Available: Get your tickets now!

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APRIL 1

BLACK VIOLIN

Join the Spokane County Democrats for the 2017 Tom Foley Legacy Dinner & Fundraiser. Keynote Speaker, the Honorable, Nina Turner, with special Guest Speakers Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson and Washington State Democrats Chair, Tina Podlodowski.

5:30PM - 9:30PM

Lincoln Center

1316 N Lincoln Street, Spokane, WA

Limited Tickets Available: Get your tickets now!

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APRIL 22

AFRICAN AMERICAN GRADUATION

You are invited to the 21st Annual African American Graduation: A Cultural Salute for Outstanding Academic Achievement to honor African American graduates from K-12 schools, colleges and universities in Spokane and the surrounding areas.

3PM

Gonzaga University - Hemmingson Center Ballroom

702 E Desmet Ave, Spokane, WA 99202

For information or special accommodation contact Dan Whye at 509.434.5183 or email at daniel.why@ccs.spokane.edu or Chrissy Davis at 509.533.3743 or Chrissy.Davis@sfcc.spokane.edu.

Please send information about upcoming community events to sandy@blacklens-news.com or call 509-795-1964.








May 4 - 6

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 or call 509-318-9998.

BLACK VIOLIN STOPS IN SPOKANE ON APRIL 1

By Sandy Williams

Black Violin is composed of classically trained violist and violinist **Wil B.** and **Kev Marcus** who combine their classical training and hip-hop influences to create a distinctive multi-genre sound that is often described as "classical boom."

The two men have different stories as to how they ended up playing the unlikely instruments, but both stories involve coincidence, if you believe in that sort of thing. "I wanted to play the saxophone," Will B. recalled in an interview with the Black Lens last month, "and they put me in the wrong class." Kev, on the other hand, he says, "was getting into trouble in the neighborhood and his mother was trying to get him out of hanging around with the neighborhood kids, so she signed him up for a Saturday class and when he went into the class, the violin was the only thing they had left."

The young men met in high school. Will B. was a freshman and Kev was a sophomore, both were still playing their violins. After high school, they went their separate ways. Kev went to Florida International University (FIU) in Miami and Will B. went to Florida State in Tallahassee. The separation though did not impact their connection. They came back together and started producing.

We wanted to be the next Neptunes," said Will B. "We wanted to be one of the major producers and incorporate what we knew, which was classical music. Will B. says the artist thing was something that they never really thought about. But the Black Violin audiences seemed to have other ideas. "It just so happened that while we were performing with artists, we were behind them playing the violin and the viola, and I mean the crowd was very



engaged with us. Vibing with us. So we said, let's just put a tape together."

They put a fifteen minute tape together, "just us playing in the middle of the little living room," and sent the tape off to the Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY. Two years later they heard back. They went on Showtime at the Apollo, and "never lost."

Black Violin released their major label debut album *Stereotypes* on Universal Music, which debuted at #1 on the Billboard Classical Crossover Chart and #4 on the Billboard R&B Chart. The musicians have shared stages with top names, including Kayne West, Aerosmith and Tom Petty, and have creatively collaborated with the likes of Wu-Tang Clan, Wyclef Jean and Alicia Keys.

Recognizing where they came from, Will B. and Kev place heavy emphasis on educational out-

reach, and have performed for more than 100,000 students in North America and Europe in the past 12 months. Part of the educational experience that Black Violin hopes to offer is bridging the gap that exists between classical music and kids of color. What kids of color may not know, says Will B., is that "classical music is very similar to hip hop."

In fact, there are a lot of similarities, he says. "If you think of Beethoven and Bach and Mozart, they were the producers of those days. If someone was putting on a party or a gala, they would be like, 'Mozart I'm putting on this party and need some new tunes' and he would go in and whip up some new pieces that no one had ever heard before, and that's exactly what it was, for the most part."

When asked why African Americans don't gravitate to classical music, Will B. cited the lack of

exposure, noting that he had never seen a violin up close until his first class. "If you're not raised in a certain environment, you're not introduced to it. You have no idea." Another factor, he added, is the attitude. "It (classical music) is not very inclusive. Not very welcoming." The message, he says, is dismissive, "almost like, we're good. We're okay. We don't need you guys. I talk about this all the time. Even if you go in and sit in with an orchestra, their energy and their vibe is just different, and that's the difference between classical and hip hop. You know, hip hop is just completely opposite. So that's the disconnect."

But Will B. says he is grateful that he was introduced to classical music. "We were just fortunate. I don't know how it happened, it just kind of happened and I thank God that it did, because it is a beautiful culture. It is a beautiful genre of music, and I was just blessed to be introduced to it."

Black Violin is currently on a Unity Tour. Their focus is to bring people together.

"We've spent the last 10 years working to encourage and empower people of all ages, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to find what connects us, rather than shine a light on what divides us. As Black men living in America, we understand challenges, and we also understand the power of 'I can't', yet we decide to live by and promote the power of 'I can'. We realize that every opportunity to connect our diverse fans is an opportunity to break down the barriers that separate us, empower individuality and encourage progress."

Black Violin will be in Spokane for ONE performance on April 1, 2017, 8pm at the Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox. For tickets visit foxtheaterspokane.com or call 509 624 1200.



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