

**THE  
BLACK LENS  
SPOKANE**

NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE



# A Not So Little Lesson In MISDIRECTION

## Rachel Dolezal And The "Gotcha" Tactic Used To Distract Blacks

*Analysis by Sandra Williams*

Based on the unprecedented level of fury and international "outrage" that was associated with the discovery that Rachel Dolezal, the former Spokane NAACP President, was in fact a "white imposter", as some people called her, you would have thought that she was responsible for pulling out her service revolver and emptying eight bullets into the back of an unarmed, fleeing black man. No wait, that wasn't her.

Well, if she didn't murder anybody, she must be the one to blame for the disproportionate rates of Black people that are being arrested and incarcerated in a criminal "justice" system that actually profits off of those arrests and incarcerations. But, no, that's not her either.

Well, then Rachel has to be the one responsible for creating a system that exploits the labor of Blacks while systematically developing barriers to prevent them from benefitting from the fruits of their labor. Nope. She didn't do that either.

So, why the over the top level of anger, and why did this "story" cause the entire world, it seems, to come to a virtual stand still for a period of time, bringing some to



the point of declaring that Rachel Dolezal was something akin to the embodiment of the anti-christ?

Many more years ago than I care to admit, when I was just beginning what would become my journey into the work of social justice, I was given some advice by a person whose face I can no longer even remember, but whose words have continued to echo in my ears. "When everybody else is looking to the right, you look to the left. When everybody else is looking down, you look up. That's where the answers are."



I had no idea at the time how profound that advice would turn out to be.

Misdirection, according to a 2012 article titled "Misdirection-Past, Present and the Future" by Gustav Kuhn and Luis M. Martinez, published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* (<http://journal.frontiersin.org>), is described as manipulating people's attention, thoughts, and memory.

"In a literal sense, the prefix 'mis' means wrong or wrongly, whilst direction means to point out a way, or to guide or to instruct. Misdirection can therefore literally

be defined as *pointing out the wrong way*. Another way of defining misdirection is by focusing on its function. Any magic effect (what the spectator sees) requires a method (the method used to produce the effect).

*The main purpose of misdirection is to disguise the method and thus prevent the audience from detecting the method whilst still experiencing the effect."*

In other words, doing something to distract people so that they don't notice what is actually happening.

If it wasn't such a painful thing to watch, it would have been fascinating to observe the degree to which our community got caught up in the "importance" of Rachel's identity. The "truth" of who she "really" was had been discovered, and uncovered, like someone pulling the curtain back on the Wizard of Oz. Gotcha! And everybody, and I mean everybody, had something to say about it. In fact, we were clamoring so desperately to be heard on the subject that I likened it to a school of piranha tasting a drop of blood.

There are many tactics that can be used to distract people. I think that in this day and age, given the way that we live our lives

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## SHOULDN'T OPO COMMISSIONERS GET DUE PROCESS TOO?

### The Black Lens Raises Questions About Investigation Into Misconduct

*By Sandra Williams*

Along with most of Spokane, I heard through media reports on Wednesday, June 17, about the summary of findings from an "independent investigation" into allegations of misconduct by three members of the Office of the Police Ombudsman (OPO) Commission, Rachel Dolezal, Kevin Berkompas and Adrian Dominguez.

Media outlets seemed to be reporting the findings of behavioral misconduct contained in the report as fact, and Mayor David Condon

and City Council President Ben Stuckart stood before cameras saying that they were "deeply disturbed by the findings" and calling on the three Commissioners to resign "immediately" based on what was contained in the report.

So, I downloaded a copy of the report that afternoon from the City's Website and began the process of reading through the twenty four pages, as well as the included exhibits, and looking through the websites for both the OPO and OPOC.

*I wonder how many other people in Spokane bothered to read the report for themselves?*

It took me several days just to get through the report and through the lengthy exhibits, and I am still looking for additional information, such as the recordings of OPOC meetings that were referenced multiple times in the report to prove misconduct.

I came away from my week long unfinished investigation not in agreement as to the findings that were issued to the public by the

city, but instead with a laundry list of questions and concerns about fundamental things such as the process with which the findings were obtained and what appears to me to be a lack of due process for the Commissioners.

However, on Thursday, June 18, merely, one day after the report was released to the public, the City Council held a special session and voted to remove Rachel Dolezal from the OPO Commission, and to accept the resignation of Kevin Berkompas. The final Commis-

sioner, Adrian Dominguez, who was out of town at the time, was given until June 24 to respond to the allegations, and has opted to resign as well.

In a joint statement issued yesterday by Mayor David Condon and Council President Ben Stuckart, they said, "Truth, transparency and trust are core City values. It's the reason we released the report for public inspection as soon as it was available."

Here is the link to the report issued by the city: *Continued on Page 14*

# ON MY MIND

THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR



by Sandra Williams

## The Blue Pill or the Red Pill

*“If you do not know what went on before you came here and what is happening at the time you live, but away from you, you will not know the world, and will be ignorant of the world and mankind.”*

-Marcus Garvey

In the famous scene from the now classic movie “The Matrix”, the character Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburne, offers the character Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, a choice between a blue pill or a red pill.

“This is your last chance,” Morpheus says, “After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I’m offering is the truth. Nothing more.”

For all of Hollywood’s catering to the lowest denominator by churning out an endless stream of movies that are nothing more than mindless advertisements for overpriced products, there are times when the folks behind the studio cameras get things right, and offer moviegoers a chance at higher level thinking disguised as entertainment. The Matrix was definitely one of those times.

I have always been a red pill kind of person, it seems. When faced throughout my life with the choice of looking at the reality of things, no matter how harsh or painful that reality may be, versus a much more pleasant and easier to swallow illusion, I seem to always pick the bumpy road. Every time. It doesn’t seem to be a choice for me any more, and if I were asked to choose a characteristic about myself that I am most proud of, I would have to say that consistently “choosing the path least travelled” would have to be one of them. But I have to admit that there are moments, like this past couple of weeks, when the blue pill sure does seem like a much more appetizing alternative.

I had a conversation over the weekend with a person who was asking about The Black Lens. They assumed that publishing a newspaper had been a dream of mine, and I think they were taken aback when I shook my head said that no it was not. I like what I am doing, I said, but it was not my dream.

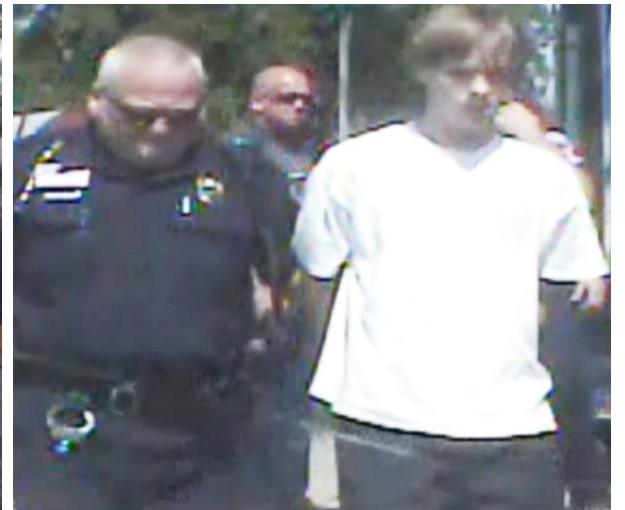
As I mentioned in a previous issue, this paper was a distraction for me when my dad was sick. It was my way of occupying my mind so thoroughly that I didn’t have the time or the energy to think about anything else.

If I had a dream, where this paper is concerned, it would have been just to have a little fun telling stories about our community, and the people in it, and all of the wonderful things that we do all of the time that you never ever hear about. That really is all that I was thinking about, and all that I was planning to do. But I guess God (however you define him or her) had other ideas.

I believe that as a people, if we truly want things to get better for us in this country, and in Spokane, then we have an obligation to start seeing things as they *really* are. There are many voices amongst us, some that I feature in this paper, who are playing the role of Morpheus. Offering us a chance to choose a different perspective. Offering us a chance to choose an alternative way of looking at things. Challenging us to look beyond what is easily seen and heard on the surface. But as with all things, *seeing* and *hearing* are a choice, sometimes a painful, disappointing, frustrating, and even dangerous choice, but a choice none-the-less. Blue pill or red pill? Which one are we Black folks going to choose?

# QUESTION OF THE MONTH

## Which person is under arrest for murdering nine unarmed people?



# 1 - Eric Garner, under arrest for selling “illegal” cigarettes; #2 - Dylann Roof, under arrest for murdering nine unarmed people in a Charleston Church.

# KYRS



88.1/92.3  
FM

Humaculture, the only locally produced African-American news and views radio program in the Northwest, Saturdays 1-2 PM

The Soul Dimensions of DX Pryme music program Fridays 10 AM - noon

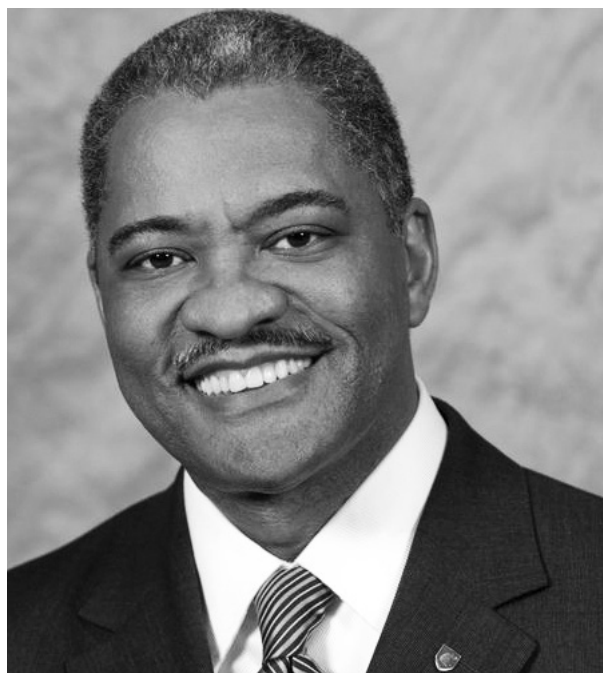
Streaming at [kyrs.org](http://kyrs.org)

### THE BLACK LENS NEWS SPOKANE

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# BLACK NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

## From Across the Country and Around the World



### WSU President Elson Floyd Dies Of Cancer At the Age of 59

(Source: <https://news.wsu.edu>)

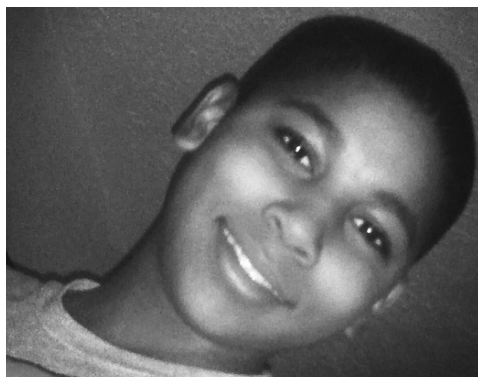
PULLMAN, Wash. – Elson S. Floyd, the 10th president of Washington State University, died on June 20, at the age of 59, of complications from colon cancer, according to the Washington State University website. A letter to WSU faculty and staff stated that Dr. Floyd “died in Pullman surrounded by family.”

Elson Floyd was born in Henderson, N.C., on Feb. 29, 1956, leap year, but celebrated his birthday on March 1. He was the eldest of four sons. His father, Elson Floyd, was a brick mason, and his mother, Dorothy, a third-shift

tobacco factory worker. Neither of them attended high school, however, both parents – especially his mother – emphasized a strong education for their children. Ultimately Dr. Floyd earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, a Master of Education in Adult Education and a Doctorate in Higher and Adult Education.

Dr. Floyd had been serving as WSU President since 2007. Under his leadership, overall student enrollment grew to record highs, hitting 28,686 in the fall of 2014, and the number of students of color nearly doubled. President Floyd took WSU’s land-grant responsibility into the field of health care, arguing successfully for a change in Washington state law to allow WSU to create a fully accredited medical school that will produce more primary care physicians for Washington’s underserved communities.

### Cleveland Judge Finds Probable Cause for Murder Charges in Tamir Rice Killing



(Source: Sameer Rao, <http://www.colorlines.com>)

Judge Ronald B. Adrine of Cleveland Municipal Court released an opinion today saying that police officer Timothy Loehmann should face murder and other charges in the shooting death of Tamir Rice, 12.

According to a report from the Northwest Ohio Media Group, Adrine did not find probable cause to charge another offending officer, Frank Garmback, with murder. The opinion was released days after a group of local clergy and activists used a little-known Ohio law that allows any citizen with knowledge of a case’s facts to file affidavits for an arrest warrant.

The move was designed to bypass the office of Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Timothy J. McGinty, as it begins a possibly lengthy process to present evidence to a grand jury. McGinty’s office received the case last week after the county sheriff’s department concluded its own investigation.

### Charles Barkley Announces \$3 Million in Donations to Auburn, Morehouse, and Wounded Warrior Project



(Source: Brandon Marcello, <http://www.al.com/sports>)

Charles Barkley, former basketball player and *Inside the NBA* analyst, announced plans to donate \$3 million total to three organizations. Barkley made the surprise announcement during a conference call for the American Century Championship’s celebrity golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. His plan is to donate \$1 million apiece to the Wounded Warrior Project, Morehouse College in Atlanta and to his alma mater, Auburn University.

### NY Housing Authority Requires City Workers to Wear Orange Vests “So NYPD Cops Don’t Shoot Them”



(Source: Jay Syrmopoulos, <http://http://www.alternet.org>)

The city Housing Authority in New York has ordered all workers fixing elevators in NYC housing projects to wear orange construction vests to identify them as city employees. The policy, which is new, was enacted after two incidents involving NYPD officers. In the first one, officers pulled a gun on a maintenance crew and in the second one, an officer fatally shot an unarmed man in a housing project stairwell.

According to a report in the New York Post, a source said the workers were told “We’re doing this for your protection. Your lives are in jeopardy, and we don’t want you to get hurt.”

A spokesperson for the Housing Authority said the new policies were “simply standard operating procedure regarding safety.” The source from the New York Post article however said that the workers were told “in case a cop stops you, we don’t want you reaching around in a back pocket, that could be another reason for a cop to shoot you.”

### Nigerian Student Ufot Ekong Solves Math Problem Unsolved for 30 Years



(Source: Lucy Sherriff, <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk>)

A Nigerian student, in his first semester at a Japanese University, has achieved the highest grades in the past 50 years, while solving a mathematical equation that has remained unsolved for 30 years.

Ufot Ekong achieved a first in electrical engineering at Tokai University in Tokyo, scoring the best marks since 1965, CCTV Africa reported. Ekong, who is from Lagos, Nigeria, speaks English, French, Japanese and Yoruba, his country’s native language, and paid his way through university himself.

### Twenty-Two Year Old Held In Prison For Three Years Without Trial Takes Own Life



(Source: Taylor Lewis, <http://www.essence.com>)

The New Yorker reported that 22 year old Kalief Browder, an African American man who was held in New York’s Rikers Island for three years without a trial, committed suicide on Saturday, June 6, two years after his release.

In 2010, at the age of 16, Browder was arrested for allegedly stealing a backpack in the Bronx. He denied the allegations, and though police had no evidence, he was charged with robbery, grand larceny and assault. Instead of taking a plea bargain and confessing to a crime that he insisted that he did not commit, Browder decided to have his case heard in court to prove his innocence. His family could not afford the \$10,000 bail, which meant he had to spend time behind bars. The charges were eventually dismissed three years later after a judge finally heard the case and Browder was released in 2013 at the age of 20.

During his three years at Rikers, Browder spent two thirds of the time in solitary confinement and the remaining year, he was attacked and beaten by both prisoners and guards. According to The New Yorker, surveillance video obtained by them shows correctional officers and other inmates violently attacking Browder.

The night before taking his life, Browder told his mother that he “couldn’t take it” anymore, and in a profile that was published about him in The New Yorker, he is quoted as saying, “people tell me because I have this case against the city, I’m all right, but I’m not all right. I’m messed up... I’m mentally scarred right now. That’s how I feel. Because there are certain things that changed about me, and they might not go back.”

Browder’s lawyer, Paul Prestia, told The New Yorker that she hopes his death will help push for criminal justice reform. She is quoted as saying, “When you go over the three years that he spent [at Rikers] and all the horrific details he endured, it’s unbelievable that this could happen to a teenager in New York City. He didn’t get tortured in some prison camp in another country. It was right here.”

A hundred mourners gathered in front of the Manhattan Detention Complex in downtown Manhattan to honor and remember Kalief Browder, and push for criminal justice reform.

# YOU SHOULD KNOW

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

## IDA B. WELLS: JOURNALIST

*Art and Article by Bertoni Jones*

The power of the press and freedom of speech are our guarantees in the Bill of Rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution. Ida B. Wells capitalized on this power and brought a new consciousness to her people who were being oppressed both physically and economically.

Ida B. Wells was born the eldest of seven children on July 16, 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Through the Freedmen's Bureau she went to school to learn all she could. But by 1878 the South experienced an epidemic of yellow fever devastating many towns and claiming the life of her mother, father, and one sibling. As Ida tried to keep her remaining family together, she applied, passed the exams, and gained a teaching job at a small school.

Eventually Ida took her two younger sisters with her to Shelby County, Tennessee to further her teaching future. She taught classes and wrote articles for a local Memphis paper called Free Speech and Headlight. Ida invested in the paper and became an equal partner. In May 1892, she met the famous African-American journalist T. Thomas Fortune. Mr. Fortune and Jerome B. Peterson owned and edited the New York Age. Impressed with Ida they offered her equal partnership in their paper in exchange for her Free Speech and Headlight subscription list.

From then on Ida took a revolutionary stance in journalism and became a leading activist in the anti-lynching crusade. She covered all lynchings and

injustices not mentioned in mainstream papers, the first time anyone ever dared publish such statistics. When combining her tally with national counts between 1882-1968, African-Americans were victims of lynching 3,446 times in America. For this type of coverage she received slander, negative attention, death threats, and vandalism of her offices

Through her first amendment power of the press and free speech Ida became an incredibly effective women who let society know that if poor treatment was African-America's portion then there would be boycotts of Caucasian owned businesses and the encouragement to leave certain states. Her public threats were effective, and politicians and businessmen gave in.

In 1895 she married the attorney and founder of the Chicago Conservator, F.L. Barnett. She settled in Chicago, took the name Ida B. Wells-Barnett, had four children, and through the pen and her voice continued the lifelong fight to expose and condemn injustice. After complications from kidney illness, Ida B. Wells passed away March 25, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois.

By covering the issues of society Ida spoke to the fact that racism wasn't really about liking or not liking African American, but about having economic control over them and keeping them financially dependent on mainstream America for all of their needs. With an uncompromising approach, Ida B. Wells delivered a new consciousness to her people, and demonstrated how essential and effec-



Bertoni Jones

IONES

tive the power of the press and free speech are for a people fighting for sovereignty and dignity.

Sources:

*Now Is Your Time* – Walter Dean Myers; *Constitution of the United States of America, (Bill of Rights – Amendment I)*; [blackpast.org/1879-ferdinand-l-barnett-race-unity](http://blackpast.org/1879-ferdinand-l-barnett-race-unity)

## MILDRED & RICHARD LOVING VS VIRGINIA: June 1967 Supreme Court Ruling Ends Ban on Interracial Marriage

(Excerpt from "The Loving Story", [www.lovinday.org](http://www.lovinday.org))

Loving v. Virginia was an important Supreme Court case, but it was also the story of a real couple.

Mildred Jeter and Richard Loving grew up in Caroline County, Virginia. They fell in love and decided to get married. Unfortunately, getting married was not as simple in 1958 as it is today. Mildred was black and Richard was white, and there were laws that forbade people of different races from marrying each other. This was true in many states, including Mildred and Richard's home state of Virginia. However, interracial marriage was legal in Washington, DC at that time. Therefore, the couple decided to drive to DC, get married, and return to Virginia to begin their life together.

This proved to be a short term solution. The law in Virginia not only forbade interracial marriage ceremonies, but it also forbade interracial couples from getting married elsewhere and returning to Virginia. One night, while they were asleep, the newly-married Lovings were awakened by the police in their bedroom. The Lovings were taken to jail for the crime of being married.

When they went to trial, the judge found them guilty and sentenced them to a jail term of one to three years. However, the judge told the Lovings that he would sus-



pend the sentence if they agreed to leave Virginia for a period of twenty five years. Given the choice between imprisonment and banishment, they chose banishment. The Lovings moved to Washington, DC.

The Lovings were able to live together legally in Washington DC, but they did not have an easy time. They faced discrimination everywhere. They were not able to rent property in most parts of the city, and they were often the target of racist taunting. Also, they were facing the emotional hardship of separation from their families. Life was both difficult and unpleasant for the Lovings in Washington. They were having difficulty supporting their children. In desperation, Mildred sent a letter to Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General of the United States.

Mildred's letter was forwarded from the Attorney General's office to the offices of the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) in New York. They took interest in the Loving's case and helped them find an attorney. Two lawyers, Bernard S. Cohen and Philip J. Hirschkop, also felt that the Lovings were entitled to be married and to live in the state of their choice. They agreed to work on the Loving's case for free.

Their case went through many levels of the justice system and their appeal was denied every time. Eventually their case appeared before the United States Supreme Court. The Court decided unanimously in their favor on June 12, 1967. Finally, after nine years of struggle, the Lovings won the right to live together as husband and wife in their home state. In the words of Chief

Justice Earl Warren, "Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides within the individual and cannot be infringed on by the State."

The Loving's case not only won them their freedom to love, but it also granted the same freedom to every interracial couple in every state in America.

At the time of the Loving decision, sixteen states from Delaware to Texas had laws banning interracial couples. Loving v. Virginia (1967) made it illegal for these states to enforce those laws. This ended a long era of laws that were enforced in forty-two states over the course of American history. These laws did not only apply to black people and white people; many states also restricted relationships with Asians, Native Americans, Indians, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups.

The freedom to love is something most of us take for granted. Like many other freedoms, the right for interracial couples to be together was fought for and won as a part of our civil rights.

Many people see this as the longest-lasting part of the legal segregation that used to rule our nation. The Lovings, like Rosa Parks, played an important role in freeing us from laws that punished people for no other reason than the color of their skin.

For more information visit: <http://www.lovinday.org> and <https://www.aclu.org>

# NAACP UPDATE:

**SPOKANE**  
NAACP

<http://www.SpokaneNAACP.com>

## Naima Quarles-Burnley Steps In As President

By Naima Quarles-Burnley

The NAACP was a factor that influenced our move to Spokane. My husband, Lawrence Burnley and I were in Spokane discerning whether or not Whitworth University was where God was leading us. During this time of discernment we attended a "Meet & Greet" at the home of James and Roberta Wilburn. It was there we were introduced to Mrs. V. Ann Smith, head of the NAACP at that time. Our conversation with the NAACP President and other influential people of color, helped make it clear to us that this was a place where we could fit in and have an opportunity to use our skills.

We met talented, educated people who were using their skills to uplift people of color in particular and the community as a whole. We recognized that Spokane's African American population was small and scattered, but they had come together in the Wilburn's home for the purpose of inviting us into the fold. We left there saying "God has Spokane!" and we believed that Whitworth and Spokane was where we were supposed to be.

I moved here in 2010 with my husband, son and elderly parents. Since then, both of my parents have transitioned from here to eternity. Yet both of my parents instilled in me a legacy of giving back to the community and using our skills to make a difference in the lives of others. The NAACP was one of the places where we had served the community in other cities, so I sought out the local branch here. I attended the "Black Summit" and a few events under V. Ann Smith's term of office.

I officially joined the local branch under James Wilburn's leadership, helping behind the scenes in a variety of capacities, later taking a leadership role in collaborating with the NAACP and the African Americans Reach & Teach Health



(AARTH) Ministry to sponsor the "Harvest Health Fest."

When Rachel Dolezal was elected President, the Executive Committee voted to appoint me to serve as the 3rd Vice President. Subsequent to the commencement of my term, and during the time of my medical leave for Total Knee Replacement, both the 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents resigned for personal reasons. I then ascended to Vice President and ultimately to President upon the resignation of the former President.

So here I am, coming off medical leave in the midst of these difficult circumstances, endeavoring to do my best to lead the Spokane NAACP to stability and continued growth. Together we can do it!

The Spokane Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has a ninety-six (96) year legacy of connecting with community and governmental partners to

address social justice concerns. We cannot allow the actions of one individual to derail the work of many.

The Spokane NAACP Executive Board realizes that some of our relationships have been fractured as a result of the circumstances that lead to the resignation of the former Branch President. We want to restore these relationships by creating space for honest and civil dialogue. Dialogue that will help our membership and our community address the hurt and anger that have been voiced.

Integrity does matter, truth does matter! We need to name the hurt so the breach can be mended. To that end, the Spokane NAACP has invited the Eastern Washington Representative of the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs to come to our next NAACP General Membership meeting to facilitate a "Community Conversation: Moving Towards Healing," on Monday, June 29, 2015, 7pm, at Holy Temple COGIC (806 W Indiana Avenue).

The NAACP (AOW) Alaska/Oregon/Washington State-Area President has also been invited to be a part of the conversation. We will set aside the business of the day, as we endeavor to move toward healing, rebuilding trust and revitalizing relationships.

I pledge, as the current Spokane NAACP President, with the support of the Executive Committee, that we are ready to restore our partnerships so we can effectively move forward with our current programs and initiatives aimed at achieving positive outcomes for marginalized, oppressed and underserved communities.

See the Black Lens Calendar on Page 15 for upcoming NAACP events. For morning information, contact the NAACP at (509) 209-2425 (extension 1141), or visit the Spokane NAACP website at <http://spokanenaacp.com>.

## THOUGHTS FROM A GRANDMOTHER

### SELF-DISCIPLINE

By Evelyn Anderton

When I hear the word discipline the first thing that comes to my mind is punishment. Discipline, for me and many others, has always had a negative connotation, but for some discipline was positive. It does not matter who you are, what your life goals may be, you can use discipline in your life.

Self-discipline may be one of the most difficult tasks you may face. Do you need to lose a few pounds, exercise a little more, stop smoking, or eliminate any bad habits you are facing? This will require you to discipline yourself, and take total control of your daily life.

For example, athletes like LeBron James, Serena Williams, Michael Jordan, and Russell Wilson all have a lot in common; they all embrace self-discipline. They all welcome the hard work

it takes to stay on top of their game. It is up to each of us to recognize that discipline, hard work, and dedication will keep you on the path of success.

It is so easy for many people to be strong disciplinarians about many things, except themselves. They often are the ones who can tell everyone else how to handle their lives, children, and relationships; yet their own lives, children, and relationships are falling apart. We must first be accountable and take ownership for our own behaviors before we can help or criticize others. Managing self-discipline will certainly require that you say no to yourself. How many of us really have what it take to say no to ourselves? Remembering that you should always allow yourself room for disappointment. Don't get bogged down with excuses like, "I fell off the wagon," as a reason to quit. It is the reason to just get back up and start over again.

The real benefit of self-discipline is that you are developing a characteristic necessary to stay on the path to success. Disciplining yourself isn't an easy endeavor and sometimes may seem like



an uphill battle, but the end result is worth the fight. Self-discipline is a skill you will need to practice every day, the moment you stop practicing it, is when you may start losing it.

**Self-discipline is a skill worth practicing, because practice makes perfect.**

# HONORING OUR ELDERERS

## DENISE OSEI RETIRES A Life and Career Spent Serving Others

Denise Osei has been a pillar in the Spokane community for as long as I can remember. She retired this year from Spokane Falls Community College, and when the Spokane community honored her in May for her many years of community service and dedication to helping Spokane's youth and young adults, she made a point of first recognizing those that she says paved the way for what she has been able to accomplish.

"I am thankful for what our elders went through, because if they had not done what they did, people from my generation, we would not have been able to hold the jobs that we did, and accomplish the things that we have. So, it wasn't that Denise Osei was so special, it was what was instilled in me at a very early age."

Denise Osei was born in Paducah, Kentucky, a small town in the segregated south, where she attended segregated schools. She grew up poor, but realized that she was rich in many other ways.

"Maybe in a way I knew I was poor, but it didn't sink in to me because we had all of this love, and there was one thing that the community did, particularly the black community, was to share with each other, so that everyone could make it somehow, and to not just love your child, but to love the other children as well. Unlike today, if they saw you do something wrong, they were going to admonish you right there. Then they were going to call your momma."

Denise's mother was a maid. In fact, Denise says, "I can't think of any mothers that were not maids." But she said her mother did whatever she had to do to take care of her children and to instill in them that they could do better. "She always told us, what you have in your head nobody can take away from you, so get your education."

Denise did just that. She attended Linfield College, a small, Baptist college in McMinnville, Oregon, where she earned



two Bachelor's Degrees, one in Psychology and the other in Sociology, while working 2-3 jobs to put herself through school. Her first job out of college, was as a counselor with a company called Talent Search, where she spent two years as a counselor before being promoted to director.

"Working in Portland was amazing. I could call a workshop at 8am on a Saturday morning, and we would use the ballroom at Portland State, and it would be full. The parents wanted so much for their children to do better. The students would come, the parents would come. It was a beautiful thing. I placed students all over the country in colleges and now they are Vice Presidents of banks. Human Resources. Computer Scientists."

From Portland, Denise moved to Texas with her husband who was attending graduate school. Texas, she says, was "very different." When Denise went into the local school district and asked for an application for employment, the

lady at the counter asked if she wanted a custodial or a cafeteria application. Denise was hired by Texas A&M University and worked in residential life, supervising staff, before moving to Spokane in 1991.

In Spokane, Denise started at Spokane Community College as a Multicultural Specialist, primarily working with students of color, then moved to the Institute for Extended Learning as a Diversity Specialist, working with special populations and underrepresented students, and finally she moved to Spokane Falls Community College, where she was hired as a General Counselor, but did so much more than that for the college and for the community.

As Ben Cabildo, the Economic Development Director at Community Minded Enterprises, put it, "Denise went beyond her job as an advisor and counselor. She took care of her students like a mother caring for her sons and daughters." Wallace Williams, a long time educator in Spokane, added that for Denise, "every day was about improving the lives of young people and she made a significant impact."

On a personal note, Mona Carter, Denise's friend of fifty plus years, who travelled to Spokane from Florida for the retirement celebration, said "Denise is a rare jewel and I know that is the same thing that the people in Spokane have seen in her as well."

The highlight of her career, Denise says, "was to be able to help others, to help them change their lives so that they didn't have to worry about how they were going to pay rent or get food on the table or take care of their children, that was what was most important to me." She also mentioned the joy of seeing students achieve. "Like a rose at the beginning of the year, it was closed, but by the end of the year, it was in full bloom. Just to see that growth was a wonderful thing for me, because I got as much from them as I gave to them."

*Continued on Page 14*

## SGT. MALBERT M. COOPER: Geneologist Helps Veteran Get Grave Marker



If Patricia Bayonne-Johnson, a resident of Spokane since 2004, had not decided to try her hand at "cold" geneology, researching a person who is not your family member and that you know nothing about, then Sgt. Malbert Montgomery Cooper might still be buried in Spokane-Cheney Memorial Gardens without a headstone on his grave.

Bayonne-Johnson became interested in Geneology in the late 90s after the death of her grandmother, which she says is how most of the people that she knows got interested in geneology, "after there is a death in the family and they think, I wish I had talked to my grandmother or grandfather more."

She had already done a little research prior to that. "My dad had inherited some property and on the royalty statements that he got, which eventually came to us, there was this plantation owner's name, and we never knew how my family got that property." Pa-

tricia was curious who the white plantation owner was and how her family came to own the property, so she started researching, and eventually discovered that her great grandfather had actually purchased the property in 1870, something that came as a surprise.

Patricia joined the African American Geneological Society of Northern California in 1999, making the research of African Americans her platform, and eventually she became their Vice President. When she later moved to Spokane with her husband, she joined the Geneological Society in Spokane as well and is currently serving her second term as Vice President.

An article in the geneology newsletter introduced the concept of "cold case" geneology to Bayonne-Johnson, and she originally chose a woman for her project, but couldn't find out anything about her. "Women are harder to research," she says, "because women change their names, and usually when you see women in a record, it's always associated with a man." So she decided to try again. In a book titled "All Through the Night: The History of Spokane Black Americans, 1860-1940" by Joseph Franklin, she came across Malbert Cooper. The name was unique enough that she felt it would be easier to research.

As Bayonne-Johnson pieced Cooper's life story together, she discovered that he was born in Baltimore, enlisted in the Army

in 1910, and was soon transferred to Ft. George Wright, where he became the First Sergeant of H Company. He travelled to Hawaii and the Phillipines before his final discharge which brought him back to Spokane.

Wanting a photo of Cooper's final resting place, Bayonne-Johnson used the small obituary that she had discovered and tracked him to the Spokane-Cheney Memorial Gardens where he was buried in 1979. With his plot number in hand, she thought it would only take a few minutes to find him, but after she and her husband spent an hour searching for Cooper's plot, Patricia realized that he did not have a headstone. "This was May 11, 2009," she said, "he had been in that grave for 30 years without a headstone."

When Bayonne-Johnson was informed that the law said she needed to be "next of kin" to request a headstone for Cooper, she contacted Chuck Elmore, Director of Spokane County Veteran Services, who contacted Nadel Barrett, the Veteran Services Officer, and six long years, a good deal of effort, and plenty of red tape later, Sgt. Malbert M. Cooper received his headstone and was given a long overdue memorial service on May 27, 2015. The law was also changed making it easier to honor veterans like Cooper.

Patricia says she started feeling like Malbert Cooper was her kin. "I kind of adopted him. I just didn't let the story go. Everybody that I talked to knew about Malbert, my soldier



who didn't have a headstone. I learned that you really can feel close to a person who is not your relative, by association, and learning the facts of their life."

Patricia says she wishes that she could get more African Americans interested in geneology. "The first step," she says, "is to talk to our elders, if you have a grandmother or grandfather who are living, get to them right away and talk to them."

*Patricia Bayonne-Johnson volunteers at the downtown Spokane Public Library on Tuesdays from 10am - 3pm to help people learn about geneology.*

# JUNETEENTH 2015

## Spokane's 5th Juneteenth Celebration Honoring the 150th Anniversary of the End of Slavery



Inland Northwest Juneteenth Coalition (<http://www.inwjc.org>) Photos Courtesy Marshall The Photographer, 509-270-5804.

# OUR COMMUNITY PEOPLE SERVICES PROGRAMS

## LINKS ANNUAL WHITE ROSE BRUNCH

### Honoring Community Members & Raising Money For Scholarships



*Linked in Friendship, Connected in Service*

The Spokane Chapter of The Links Incorporated held their annual White Rose Brunch on Saturday, May 30 at the Ramada Inn at the Airport.

The brunch, according to Links President Shirlyn Hillson, “is a celebration of friendship and service, honoring members of the Spokane community who have given unselfishly of themselves to aid in the betterment of all of its citizens, and recognizing the accomplishments of some of Spokane’s finest.”

The Spokane Chapter of the Links, Inc., which was chartered in 1978, has been active since its inception, and has been serving the Spokane

community for the past 37 years. Links Western Area Director, Constance Fitzpatrick Smith, praised the “philanthropic endeavors and civic consciousness” of the Spokane chapter, stating that the chapter “continues to provide transformational and sustainable programming which focuses on National & International Trends and Services, the Arts, Services to Youth, and Health and Human Services.



*2015 Links Honoree Alice Moore*



*Shirlyn Hillson, President Spokane Links*

The 2015 Spokane Links Honoree’s were Pastor Lonnie A. Mitchell, Sr., Kahlil Wilson-Moore, Alice Moore, Esther-Diane Greene-Kelly, Madelyn Wilson and Rosa Anderson.

Proceeds from the White Rose Brunch went to support the “V. Ann Smith Scholarship Fund”. The fund enables the Links “to reach out to deserving youth who are venturing into the arena of higher education,” said Spokane Links President Shirlyn Hillson.

## SOUTH EAST DAY CARE CENTER

### Educating East Central Children For 46 Years

Since 1969, the Southeast Day Care Center, located at East 2227 Hartson St, near the I-90 Altamont and Second Street exits, has been serving and educating children in the East Central Community and beyond.

The SE Day Care Center is a program of the *League of Women for Community Action (LWCA)*, which is a non-profit organization that had its beginning in the 1960s by a group of dedicated African American women who started out as a social group, spending time together on the weekends talking and playing cards. One day, however, their card game was interrupted when they heard that one of the homes in the neighborhood had just burned down and there was a family in need.

Lee Ada Wade, one of the founding members of LWCA, explained, “we just left the cards on the table and walked out in the street and started asking people

to help.” The women raised money for the family, gathered clothes for the children, and even found them a home to live in. A short time later, another neighbor needed help, so the ladies put down their cards again.

“We were going to the aid of all of these people,” Mrs. Wade reflected, “and we said, hey look, maybe instead of playing cards, we should take a look at our neighborhood and see what needs to be done. We asked ourselves what can we do to strengthen the neighborhood.” Out of that question, the League of Women for Community Action was born.

The women went door to door asking people in the neighbor what their needs were and the one need that kept coming up again and again was childcare.

“People didn’t have aunts, uncles, cousins, parents or grandparents in this city to help them,” Mrs. Wade said, “and for a mother and father to go to work, they had to wait for the children to get old enough to take care of themselves because they didn’t have anybody to help.”

The first Day Care Center, which served 15-25 children, was located on Browne street inside of the Lincoln School building, which was not being used. As the program grew, they got permission to move into what had been St. Anne’s Catholic School, which was also not being used, and was larger and more up to date.

By 1980, after the LWCA obtained substantial donations from individuals and businesses who understood their vision, such as the Comstock Foundation, and Pacific Northwest Bell, along with matching Community Development Funds, they were able to build a new facility at their current location, which is now licensed for 95 children, ages one-month through 12 years, making the Center a valuable resource for East Central.

The mission statement of the South East Day Care Center is to “provide an affordable safe and loving environment for our most valuable assets, our children, with specific emphasis on providing quality care to low in-



*2015 South East Day Care Center Graduation*

come households”. Child care is extended to the homeless, to the working poor, to parents who are continuing their education, and to custodial grandparents as well.

When asked what she had hoped for when they started the Day Care Center, Mrs. Wade responded, “children are so happy when they are learning. We ask them, what would you like to be or do when you grow up and some will say a carpenter or a bus driver or whatever, but how are they going to get from here to there. That’s what we wanted to do, to help them with that.”

Forty-six years later the South East Day Care Center is still helping some of Spokane’s most vulnerable children get from where they are to wherever they want to go.

*The South East Day Care Center is located at 2227 E Hartson, Spokane, WA 99202. For more information or to schedule a tour, call at 509-535-4794.*



*Carol Shook (left) Board Member and Sug Vilella (right) Center Director*



# OUR COMMUNITY **PEOPLE SERVICES PROGRAMS**

## EWU AFRICANA STUDIES PROGRAM: RICHARD B. WILLIAMS GRADUATION CELEBRATION



*Congratulations to the graduates of the class of 2015!*

## NAACP HOSTS CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES



The Political Action Committee of the Spokane NAACP sponsored a forum for Spokane City Council Candidates on Tuesday, June 23.

In attendance were Council President Ben Stuckart, Lori Kinnear, John Waite, Mike Fagan, Dave White, Evan Verduin, LaVerne Beiel, Kelly Cruz, Karen Stratton, and Randy Ramos.

Questions for the candidates, which were submitted by NAACP members prior to the event, as well as by forum attendees, asked the candidates to define the role of the City Council. Additional questions focused on issues such as racism in Spokane, gender inequity, homelessness and the "sit and lie" ordinance, "ban the box", and Smart Justice efforts. The final question asked candidates how candidates see themselves working with the NAACP.

The forum was moderated by Black Lens Publisher/Editor Sandy Williams. Primary elections are scheduled for August 4.



Robert Lloyd



Robert Lloyd



Robert Lloyd



Robert Lloyd

Self-fulfillment begins with charting your own journey—desiring, envisioning, learning, applying, remembering, preparing, and finally pursuing the course that becomes one's destiny. Disparage not the dreams of others, for individuals dream differently, but rather seek to encourage, assist, uplift and if necessary, refine. Through the process of influencing another's dreams we realize our own.

Angela Schwendiman, Lecturer, Africana Studies

# IN THE SPIRIT

## REVEREND CLEMENTA PINCKNEY

### “Mother Emanuel” A.M.E. Church, Charleston, SC

#### Obituary



The Honorable Reverend Clementa Carlos Pinckney, was born on July 30, 1973, the son of Mr. John Pinckney and the late Theopia Stevenson Aikens of Ridgeland, South Carolina. He departed this life on Wednesday, June 17, 2015, along with eight other saints of God, studying the Word of God at the Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church, in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Honorable Reverend Pinckney was educated in the public schools of Jasper County. He graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Allen University, Columbia, South Carolina. While at Allen University, he served as freshman class president, student body president, and senior class president. Ebony Magazine recognized the Honorable Reverend Pinckney as one of the “Top College Students in America.”

Rev. Pinckney earned a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, and a Master's of Divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Reverend Pinckney was actively working on a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Reverend Pinckney answered the call to preach at

the age of thirteen and received his first appointment to pastor at the age of eighteen.

He loved the Lord, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the people of God. He served the following churches: Young's Chapel A.M.E.-Irmo, SC, The Port Royal Circuit-Beaufort, SC, Mount Horr A.M.E.-Yonges Island, SC, Campbell Chapel A.M.E., Bluffton, SC and also served as the Presiding Elder of the Wateree District. He was serving with distinction as the pastor of the historic Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, South Carolina at the time of his untimely death.

The Honorable Reverend Pinckney was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1996 at the age of twenty-three. In the year 2000, at the age of twenty-seven, he was elected to the South Carolina State Senate. He was the youngest African-American in South Carolina history to be elected to the South Carolina State Legislature. He represented Jasper, Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, and Hampton Counties, and was a distinguished member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Pinckney leaves behind his beloved wife, Jennifer Benjamin Pinckney and two daughters, Eliana Yvette and Malana Elise Pinckney.

President Barack Obama is scheduled to deliver the eulogy at Rev. Pinckney's funeral on Friday, 6/26.

## WORDS OF INSPIRATION: PUSHING PASSED THE PAIN

BY TOMMY GILBERT

Antionette Tuff, from my home state of Georgia, faced a life and death situation when Michael Brandon Hill brought an AK-47 into her elementary school and was determined to harm students, teachers and others in the school. Tuff was able to somehow change the would-be killer's mind by demonstrating what she later would call “Pushing Passed the Pain.”

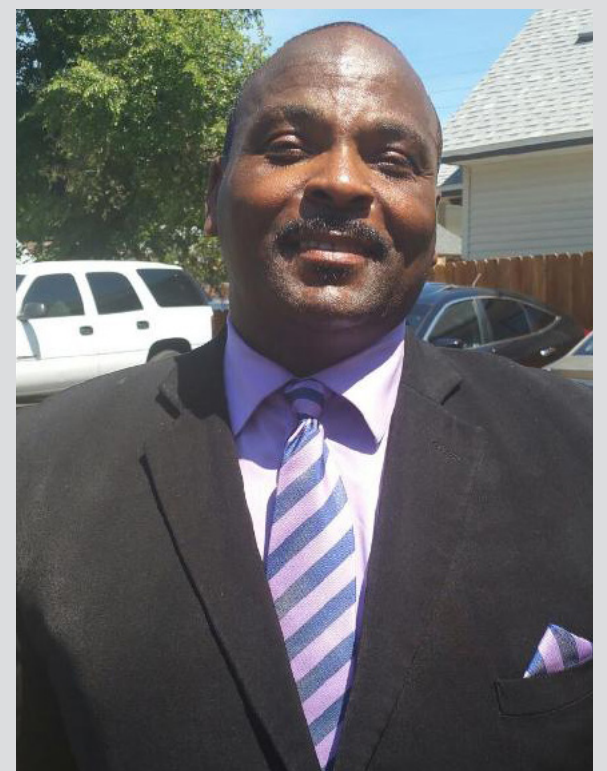
A great multitude of people have pushed passed the pain. However, there have been others that have failed in this area. A recent father killed his wife and three children in Montana and then committed suicide. A University of Maryland student was killed by her ex-boyfriend because she broke up with him.

What causes others to push passed the pain? There are numerous stories on this subject. It is my belief that when you love yourself and know that God loves you, you will always persevere.

In the Bible, Paul goes through pain and rose up against it, and David pushed through many painful situations. My suggestion is to help others and then your pushing passed the pain experiences will change.

Allow me to illustrate. Many times in my life I have had to push passed the pain. Placed in a homeless shelter because of a divorce and not allowed to see my children the way I was accustomed to seeing them was a very painful situation. However, despite my pain and despite being misunderstood, I made a decision to still love and up lift everyone.

Look around and you will see many situations where people just can't cope with pain. The measure of life is pushing passed painful situations. It actually makes you stronger. So, the next time you see an opportunity to assist others in pain, lift them up. It will cause abundance and blessings to happen in your life.



New Hope Baptist Church

Pastor Happy Watkins

409 S. Greene Street, Spokane WA 509-535-1336

11am Sundays www.NewHopeSpokane.com



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## THREE TONY AWARDS AND COUNTING... An Interview with Actor & Tony Award-Winning Producer Ron Simons By Tracy Poindexter-Canton

He has acted on stage, film and television, and is a University of Washington alum. He has produced independent Sundance films, including "Night Catches Us," set in the Black Power era, starring Kerry Washington (of Scandal fame); "Mother of George," depicting the cultural issues facing a Nigerian couple adjusting to a new life in Brooklyn, and "Blue Caprice," a drama inspired by the 2002 D.C. sniper shootings. He has garnered three Tony Awards for producing the Broadway hits "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," "Porgy and Bess" and "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike;" and the list of projects and accolades keeps going.

I recently spoke with Ron Simons, founder and CEO of SimonSays Entertainment, a film and production company based in New York City, about his artistic journey, his recent visit to the Inland Northwest and his company's commitment to narrate stories rarely told.

**Q: When did you become interested in acting and producing theatre and film?**

**RON SIMONS:** My acting interest goes all the way back to my high school days at the University of Detroit High School. We had a drama club called the Harlequin and I was very active in that club. And then when I went away to college to be a pre-med student, I ended up studying both theatre arts and computer science and then when I graduated, it was between going to Yale School of Drama and going to Silicon Valley, and I chose Silicon Valley.

Then many years later I decided after I had gone to work in the corporate sector for quite some time, and had gotten my



M.B.A. in marketing, that I wanted to go back and study theatre. So I left corporate America and started acting on stage in Seattle, and eventually decided to pursue my M.F.A. in acting at the University of Washington's Professional Actor Training Program.

When I graduated from there, I moved to New York City and became an actor. I became a company member at the Classical Theatre of Harlem, and then after getting an agent I started doing film and television work. Then around 2009, I decided that I should produce work, so I started a production company and made my first film,

"Night Catches Us." I've since produced or executive produced four more films, one of which was a documentary ["25 Years to Life"], the others were narrative films.

In the middle of that, I started producing Broadway shows. The first was the Broadway production of "Porgy and Bess." Then I produced "A Streetcar Named Desire" – an all-black production of that. Then I did "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike," and then the most recent one is "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," which is still running on Broadway.

**Q: You recently served as the keynote speaker at Eastern Washington Universi-**

**ty's Lavender Graduation (A celebration for area LGBTQ students and allies). What was your message to those students?**

**SIMONS:** Basically the theme of the talk was release the fear. Do not let fear of what society might think you are capable of, or should be doing, interfere with what it is that you feel you are destined to do.

**Q: Are there any artists in particular who inspire your work?**

**SIMONS:** From an acting point of view, I've always said that I would have loved to have the career of Forest Whitaker. His career is one that I follow with interest because he takes non-traditional roles that aren't always necessarily written as an African American character, whether that's "Good Morning, Vietnam" or whether that's "Prêt-à-Porter." I just feel that he's a very diverse actor who is very talented. I thought that he was phenomenal in "The Last King of Scotland," of course, "The Butler"; "Phone Booth" is one of my favorite movies. I think he's shown himself to be an actor and an artist with high artistic integrity who consistently delivers quality work.

**Q: What has been the hardest role you've had to play or the most difficult project you've worked on?**

**SIMONS:** I think the most challenging role that I've played was probably the lead role of the Duke in [William Shakespeare's] "Measure for Measure" at the Pearl Theatre in New York City. It was the first time I'd had a lead role in any production and it's the third largest character in Shakespeare's canon. *Continued on Page 14*

## CULTURE OVER THE AIRWAVES James and Roberta Wilburn Host Humaculture On KYRS Radio

The James Wilburn Humaculture Show aired its first program on Saturday, August 9, 2008 on KYRS Thin Air Community Radio. The purpose of the show is to enlighten listeners about issues of culture in and around the Spokane community. The Humaculture show tries to keep its listeners abreast of things of interest to African Americans specifically and people of color in general, and focuses on a broad range of topics including education, health, politics, history, music and current events.

James Wilburn was asked to develop a show for KYRS Radio when then program director, Angela Johnson, heard him give the keynote address at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Convocation at Spokane Falls Community College. She indicated they did not have a public affairs radio show dealing with African American issues and wanted him to develop one for their station. After consulting with his wife, Roberta, who he affectionately calls "Doc", they decided it was something they wanted to pursue, since both were interested in promoting cultural awareness and issues of diversity.

Also, hosting a radio program was a long time desire of James. He completed Columbia School of Broadcasting in Mem-

phis, TN in the 70's, but was never able to have his own radio show after he completed school because African Americans in the South were given very little opportunity to be on the radio, and few, if any, were given their own radio shows.

Excited at the opportunity, the husband and wife team decided to do the show together, with James, aka, the Mayor, as the visionary and host, and with Doc as the co-host and producer of the show. Together they have a winning combination.

The title of the show, Humaculture, is derived from the work of Dr. Nkosi Ajanaku. It deals with the human aspect of culture, where all cultural groups are on an equal playing field.

On the Humaculture show James and Roberta present the Afrocentric perspective of issues, although topics of interest to the general public are presented as well.

The original theme song of the Humaculture show is "Wake Up Everybody" by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. James and Roberta believe it embodies the message that they are trying to convey, "we have to change the way we are thinking and it is going to take all of us working together to make the world a better place for



our children and future generations."

*Wake up everybody  
no more sleeping in bed  
No more backward thinking,  
time for thinking ahead ....  
The world won't get no better  
If we just let it be  
The world won't get no better  
We gotta change it, yeah  
Just you and me*

At the beginning of this year, the Humaculture Show added a new component called "Journey to Our Roots," which adds a regular historic perspective that emphasizes our African ancestry. Quincy Jones' song "Roots Mural" from the Alex Haley

television miniseries, Roots, is used as the theme song for this segment, which usually focuses on the great kings, queens, and scholars from Africa and/or the contributions of historic African American figures.

In addition, the show also features interviews of guests who share their expertise on various topics discussed. Regardless of the topic or the format of the show, it always features great music that makes the whole show flow together.

**Humaculture airs every Saturday from 1:00-2:00 pm on KYRS, 92.3 or 88.1 FM or streamed live at kyrs.org .**

# OUR VOICES

## BLACK GULLIBILITY IN THE TIME OF DIGITAL LYNCHING

By Romeal Watson

Given our history in the United States, why Black folks still continue to look to White media outlets for their source of information is beyond me. The fact that we allow them to caricature the issues of Blackness, place them before us, and watch us scramble, is blasphemous at the very least. Isn't it evident at this point that our need to be properly informed is not in the best interest of White supremacy? That mass confusion, character assassination, as well as divide-and-conquer, have become the best weapons that the system uses?

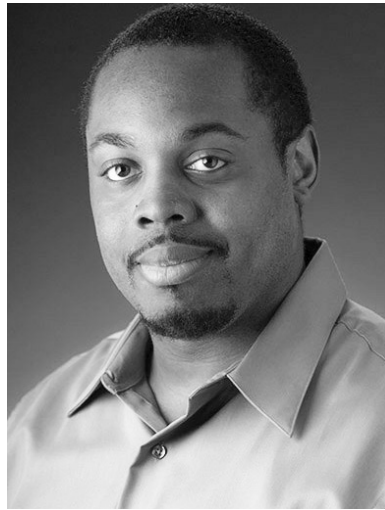
What is unique in the case of Rachel Dolezal, is that for many of us who know her, we got a front row seat to some good old 'merican lynching, in this case, a digital lynching. But unfortunately for the smart Black folks, we also got a chance to witness something much much worse.

The question we should all be asking ourselves is, if someone is on the right

side of justice, what motive would someone else have to investigate and reveal their personal background so intensely?

And what does that mean for any other person who decides to fight for justice or is in any position of power? Will they first have to cover up any blemishes that could damage their career? Will a social justice advocate have to set aside a budget for a publicist, out of fear that some random hater will dig out their personal history? Walk on eggshells their whole career? Minimize contact with questionable family members?

But perhaps the biggest question of them all is what does it take to put someone who helps Black America



on "preemptive" trial with Black America? Posing as a cocaine dealer won't do it. Asking for, and getting, a 65 million dollar plane from your congregation won't do it, but apparently White America can present "their" issues of Blackness to Black people, and like humble slaves, we go ape \$#!# over it.

This is much bigger than Rachel Dolezal. This is about Black folks not understanding chess, and allowing White colonialist oligarchs to show them the rules of the game, and how the pieces move. White folks on the side of White supremacy know how to keep secrets for their own betterment, and know how to use information to engineer a social response. Yet, we constantly stumble over ourselves

when media groups attempt to tell us what "our" issues are. What license should anyone have in a system with such arrogance and hypocrisy?

With all of the "coons", "sambos", and "buck-dancers" we have on elite payrolls, shouldn't we be smarter about the way we build alliances, and what syndications we listen to? Perhaps even question why information is released the way it is, when words such as "pretend" or "deceived" are used, but no official statement has been made.

Do we really want to bicker with each other about the few resources that we do have, or do we want to assemble ourselves and repair our condition? But then again, maybe everything is right because White folks said so.

Maybe a month from now, they'll say that I was consorting with a prostitute. I would hope you wouldn't come to a conclusion until you hear my side, but given the nature of how gullible we've become, it's highly doubtful.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM A SPOKANE TRANSPLANT

By Marilyn Euseary



MELISSA L. COMMODORE

As I entered the Foley library, located on the campus of Gonzaga University, I saw a delightful, fascinating and beautiful young sister studying her books, Melissa L. Commodore. The library was practically empty due to summer break, but she was there studying for a summer class to stay on top of her educational objectives. When Melissa recognized me, her whole demeanor

ignited with a smile and a welcoming look. After greeting one another, I asked Melissa what was her perspective of Spokane after living here for less than a year. Here are her thoughts:

"Initially I said to myself, 'I'm in the Twilight Zone'. Spokane appears to be very stuck in the past in some ways, because I see the racism that is here, and although racism is everywhere, you would expect to see this kind of racism back in the south or in the fifties. I was more accepted in the south than I have been in Spokane. There is a lot of ignorance about the other cultures that are here. Some people have not seen people of color up close and personal. It seems like the people here are just planted and don't move. They don't travel much. In my age bracket, brown women of African American decent are not the norm."

"Before coming here I thought Spokane would be the perfect place to live, without all the traffic of Seattle and cheaper to live. When I started having problems with my son, I saw the racism and how tight the people stick together. A lot of the people here work together, not for justice, but for the pure sake of injustice. Now that is not everybody. I have met some good people here, and those good people outweigh the bad people."

"I have seen others struggle with my education. People don't know how to take me. I'm like, 'oh wow, did you expect me to be stupid'. I am a mother, and some people have a preconceived view of single mothers as being lazy and stupid. Some people are so shocked that I know how to challenge the systems that are unjust and stand up for myself and fight when necessary. Just because you are educated does not mean that racism just goes away. Now I don't get any of this from my instructors, they respect me for who I am."

I shared with Melissa two recent reports that came out in the past month. One said that Black women are the most educated in America and another report stated that Black women were the least attractive women in society.

Melissa replied, "that is what a certain amount of people feel, but that is not how all people feel. You have to look at who is doing these studies and forming their statistics. For example; if I wanted to prove my theory that all blacks have high blood pressure, I would go to a low income urban neighborhood where people have poor diets and lack good medical care to prove my theory as truth."

Melissa is completing her Doctorate in Philosophy of Leadership Studies at Gon-

zaga University. When asked if she planned to stay in Spokane after graduation, Melissa responded, the employment opportunity would have to be "excellent, it would have to be superb, it would have to be out of this world, and it would have to be God." In the mean time, she says she is adjusting to Spokane: "Now I am understanding the culture here. Now that I see the skeletons, I am learning how to deal with it, and I am adjusting, but I believe a lot of us come and go, and not many African Americans stay here in Spokane."

In summing things up, Melissa added, "I think people just need to be real and not fear one another. I think that when we can overcome our fear and create a healing process, a reconciliation process, a forgiveness process, we can do something about racism and quit hiding from real life problems, but people don't want to know the truth."

After interviewing Melissa, I realized that I had just talked with a younger version of myself. Her views and concepts were totally in line with me and my thought processes, and we are both over-comers with resilience and a determination that nobody is gonna keep us down. Melissa is not only surviving, but she is thriving. I view her as Unstoppable. Unbreakable.



# OUR VOICES

## THE FLAG AND ROOF Are Symptoms Not the Disease

By David A. Love, JD (Courtesy of The Black Commentator - <http://www.blackcommentator.com>)

The Confederate flag and Dylann Storm Roof are perhaps the most potent and virulent symbols of racial hatred these days, and understandably so. When Roof committed mass murder by gunning down nine black parishioners at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, he did so in the spirit of the Confederacy he seems to love so much.

However, as much as we are paying attention to this madman and a Rebel flag which defended slavery, segregation and lynching — and we should — let us not lose sight of the bigger picture. These are merely extreme symbols of racism. Ultimately, we must focus on systemic racism, the pervasive forms of racial oppression that plague our economy, the education system, law enforcement and the judicial system. And if we ignore this painful reality, then we are merely opting for symbolism rather than real change.

Roof, who is the subject of a federal hate crime investigation, is a domestic terrorist whose purported racist manifesto reveals much about the killer's pro-apartheid, neo-Confederate and neo-Nazi sentiments. And while he was apparently acting alone, he really was not alone. South Carolina is home to at least 19 hate groups, according to the

Southern Poverty Law Center, including two Ku Klux Klan chapters, four white nationalist groups, including the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), and six neo-Confederate organizations such as the League of the South. Roof was reportedly radicalized by the CCC, a reincarnation of the Whites Citizens Councils of the 1950s and 1960s that is now associated with Republican politicians.

Dylann Roof may have been radicalized, but a major political party in this country has been radicalized as well. Once the party of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, the GOP has become the new segregationist Dixiecrats for the twenty-first century.

As Fox News and rightwing talk radio fan the flames of racial hatred, Republican politicians enact laws making it more difficult for black people to vote and easier for white supremacists to amass the firearms they need to kill black people — and acquit them when they kill black people. With the conserva-



tive movement directing their hatred towards people of color, pulling the levers of power and encouraging an armed insurrection against a black president through “Second Amendment” remedies, it is no wonder that the Dylan Roofs of the nation dare to start a race war as they do.

Blaming a lone gunman or a Civil War flag for racism only clears society of wrongdoing. While many whites believe they are not racists because they don't use racial epithets or gun down a black church, racism is not merely the acts of a handful of people who hate black folks. Institutional racism is a system of white skin privilege and white supremacy that benefits preferred members through specific policies and rigs the game against outsiders.

Unjust laws determine that the public schools in black and Latino communities should be underfunded and fail those children or that banks will deny loans on the black side of town. With racist policies and practices, the

police stop and search and arrest men of color, and the prosecutors and judges send these black and brown bodies to prison. And while some would forgive Roof for his crimes, who do we forgive for the subprime mortgage crisis which preyed upon black homeowners and resulted in the largest loss of black wealth in history? Who would we forgive for sending a black man to solitary confinement for forty years in a former slave plantation — if we chose to forgive — and who should accept responsibility? Who do we punish for high black unemployment, for black women earning 64 cents for every dollar a white man earns? And who pays for the cradle to prison pipeline, or a war on drugs that has amounted to a war on black America?

Let's all hope the flag gets removed forever and that Roof receives full and swift justice for violently ending nine beautiful lives. However, it will be at our nation's peril if we confuse these two symptoms for our nation's true disease — the cancer of systemic racism.

As the Reverend Dr. William Barber of the North Carolina NAACP eloquently said, “The perpetrator was caught in Shelby, but the killer is still at large.”

David A. Love, JD serves BlackCommentator.com as Executive Editor. He is journalist and human rights advocate based in Philadelphia. He blogs at <http://www.davidalove.com>.

## A RIGHT CROSS AND A LEFT HOOK

By Dr. James Clingman

(TriceEdneyWire.com) - For the past 50 years most of our conversation and efforts have been centered on politics. Reminiscent of Reconstruction, when Blacks occupied political offices for the first time, many of our politicians are just figureheads, toothless tigers and lackeys for the establishment. Many of them are simply “employed” and are only concerned about keeping their “jobs.” Many Black politicians actually work harder on behalf of others than they do for their own brothers and sisters. We must change our conversation from politics to economics.

Before you political hacks get angry, let me say that we must continue to be involved in politics. We must run for office and we must leverage our votes, by all means. But we cannot afford to stop there. We saw what happened in 2008 and 2012; both times Black folks were told to “go out and vote.” We were told we must vote in even greater numbers in 2012 than we did in 2008. We did it, and we still cannot even get a hearing on reparations. A few years ago, P Diddy told the young people to, “Vote or die.” They voted and yet, when it comes to economic empowerment, they, and we, are nearly dead. Like I said in a previous article, where is the “Start a business or die” campaign, the “Pool our money or die” campaign?

Black people must realize that while our relatives fought and died for voting rights,

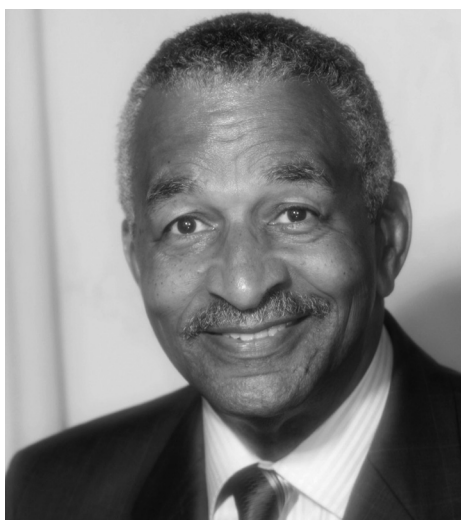
those folks didn't die so we could spend the majority of our time “playing” politics. They wanted us to take our participation to the next level.

Similarly, Black folks, your relatives and mine, also lost their lives because they chose to go into business; where is the rallying cry for entrepreneurship?

Black politicians that do absolutely nothing for Black folks, come out every couple of years to tell us how good they have been and what they stand for on our behalf. What a load of fertilizer that is!

Even stranger is the fact that Democrats and Republicans, Liberals and Conservatives do the same things. We may duck the “right” cross, but we still get hit by the “left” hook. In other words, we have nothing coming from either political party, and they have proven that to us time and time again.

Since our vaunted voting “power” is so important to the two political parties, we should be using it in ways that support the most important political principle: Quid



pro quo (something that is given to you or done for you in return for something you have given to or done for someone else—Mirriam Webster's Dictionary).

We should be leveraging our votes; otherwise, why participate at all?

It really doesn't matter what color the politician is.

What matters most is what Black folks are getting from the system, and Black folks are getting the shaft from most of our politicians. You know it, I know it, and they know it.

It's bad enough that the leadership in the two major parties really doesn't care about us. One is throwing Mike Tyson right crosses and the other is throwing Joe Frazier left hooks at us, causing us to be off-balance, out of sync, and off-kilter, as we try to avoid their vicious haymakers.

The political “leaders” who continue to tell us that all we have to do is vote to change things should be voted out of office. This voting for all democrats or all republicans by Black folks is nothing short of politi-

cal suicide. Carter G. Woodson said, “Any people who would vote the same way for three generations without thereby obtaining results ought to be ignored and disenfranchised.”

The old game of Black folks being all or nothing to either party has proven to be our political demise. We give our all and get nothing in return. Eighty years ago nearly all Blacks voted republican; now it's just the opposite. Neither scenario has worked, so why do we continue that insanity? Black folks have been getting hit with right crosses and left hooks since we got into this political game, and now we need to start throwing some punches of our own.

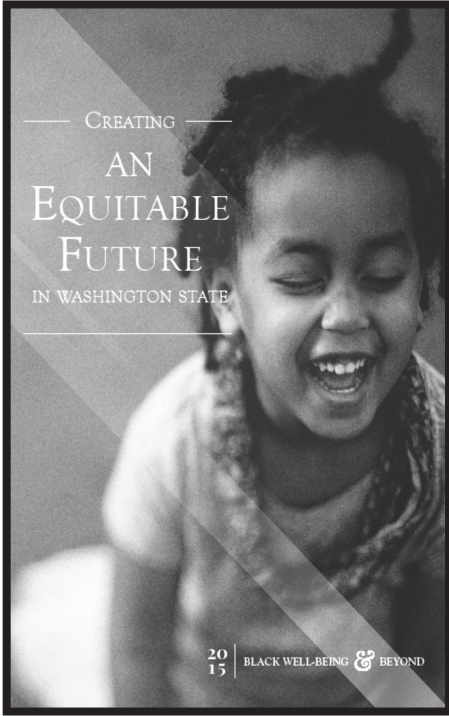
The hardest punches we can throw are economic punches. We must be willing to take off the gloves and go with bare-knuckles into the marketplace and let our presence be known by withholding and redirecting our dollars. We must put our money where our mouth is and contribute to politicians who speak and act on our behalf. The only things that count with politicians are dollars and votes — in that order. We must leverage both to get what we need from either the “Demopublicans” or the “Republicrats.”

As the right crosses and left hooks continue to be thrown by crooked, immoral, and unethical politicians, both White and Black, let's get busy economically and start punching back, before we get knocked out.

# THE STATE OF BLACK WASHINGTON (PT. 3)

Presented by the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, African American Leadership Forum and Centerstone

## EDUCATION: ESSENTIAL TO PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS



On March 30, 2015, the results were released from the study "Creating an Equitable Future for Black Washingtonians." Over the next several months, The Black Lens will address each one of the focus areas through highlights of the report. This month the focus is on:

### Education

"High-quality education—from preschool through college—is essential to preparing Washingtonians for success as workers, citizens, parents, and the leaders of tomorrow. Learning begins at birth, and the first five years of a child's life are particularly important for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Higher levels of educational achievement are associated with future success, such as quality job opportunities, higher incomes, good health, and better parenting—the benefits of which pass

from one generation to the next.

### Major Obstacles to Education Opportunities

**The high cost of early learning opportunities.** High quality early learning experiences, such as those provided in child care settings, are essential for development and to help prepare children to be successful in school. The cost of child care, however, is prohibitive for many families. Child care for a family of three can cost up to 18 percent of monthly household income; for a Black family of three it can consume up to 27 percent of income.

### Inadequate state funding for K-12.

In 2012, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled in McCleary v. State of Washington that the state is not fulfilling its paramount duty under the state constitution to fund basic K-12 education. In its ruling, the Supreme Court

gave the Legislature until 2018 to invest an additional \$4.5 billion into the K-12 system to meet its constitutional obligation.

### Disproportionality in student discipline.

Being suspended or expelled from school is associated with falling behind in coursework and dropping out, and increases the chances of a student becoming involved with the criminal justice system. At nine percent, the rate of suspension or expulsion for African-American children in Washington state is more than twice as high as the state average of four percent. Black students born outside the United States have a rate of six percent.

### Lack of teacher diversity.

Research shows that students of color who are taught by teachers of color do better in school. Of every 10 students in Washington state

public schools, four are of color, yet just one of every 10 teachers is of color.

### Rising cost of college tuition.

The growing cost of higher education is felt by all Washingtonians, but is particularly significant for students with low incomes and those of color. College tuition for four-year public universities has increased by 81 percent since the start of the Great Recession. Today one year of tuition at a four-year public university in Washington state would take one quarter (25 percent) of a Black family's median income.

The full report is available online at:

[http://center-stone.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SOBW\\_report\\_r701\\_Final\\_032515\\_LowRes\\_spreads.pdf](http://center-stone.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SOBW_report_r701_Final_032515_LowRes_spreads.pdf)

## Misdirection

Continued from Page 1

so openly in public for all to see, one of the most effective forms of distraction has become, "gotcha!"

Oh how we revel in the joy of catching somebody making a mistake, or lying, or cheating, or saying something they shouldn't have said or slipping and falling.

And in the mean time, while we have our attention fixated on the spectacle, laughing at it and commenting about it and analyzing it and obsessing over it, working ourselves up into a veritable frenzy, looking to the right, the magician is calmly going about his or her magic unnoticed on the left.

So what was happening to the left?

Progress was stopped. Reputations were destroyed. An effective leader, (irregardless of what you thought about her personally), was taken down. And a community was left divided. Gotcha!

## Questions About OPO Report

Continued From Page 1

<https://my.spokanecity.org/news/releases/2015/06/17/whistleblower-report-finds-commissioner-misconduct/>

The Black Lens is issuing a challenge to readers. Read the report. Look at the exhibits. Listen to the recordings, and see if you come up with the same results.

The Black Lens will be publishing a detailed article on our questions and concerns in the August newspaper, but my hope is that you will come to your own conclusions.

No matter who a person is, or what we think they have done, each person deserves due process under the law. Even the murderer of nine innocent people in Charlotte, SC, will get due process, volunteer Commissioners deserve nothing less.

## Denise Osei

Continued from Page 6

Denise also said that she is grateful for the support of her her husband and her son, who she says she was always dragging along with her. "Whatever we did, we did as a family, and you will find that most of the time when people talk about me, they will talk about us, because were always together."

Now that she is retired, Denise has followed her son's advice and started doing ceramics, something that she gave up when she became a mother. She is also doing more reading, and is helping out at her church, Bethel AME.

And she is planning to start travelling, Denise said, "any of the Islands. I love the islands and I want to see my son more often. I don't think God is done with me yet."

It is a retirement that was well earned. Thank you Denise for your service to the Spokane Community.

## Ron Simons Continued From Page 11

It was a non-trivial part to not only study and learn, but also to portray and I was a replacement. I had to start with very little lead time so it was a very steep learning curve. I think that the first one [film production project, "Night Catches Us"] was very challenging because I didn't know what I was doing and I had to produce a period piece with a relatively minute budget. We had to cut corners in many ways and because of my lack of experience, I think that I made tons and tons of mistakes, which had I had more experience would've made my life a little easier.

**Q: Have you ever experienced a creative block and how did you overcome it?**

**SIMONS:** Sure. I also write so I'm currently writing a one-person show and a screenplay and sometimes inspiration just doesn't come. So when inspiration isn't knocking at your door, you really can't force it. You just have to make space for it to come. So that means I need to clear my mind of distractions, give myself time and permission to not stress about the work or try to grind the work out, or try to force creativity. I just need to open the door to creativity and invite it in.

**Q: What advice can you give to aspiring African American artists?**

**SIMONS:** I would encourage them to study the craft and the art form that they hope to achieve success in and try not to be discouraged and give up hope when things don't work out in the timeframe that you want or in the way that you expect. For example, when I came to New York as an actor, I hoped that one day that I might win awards that would show the rest of the world that, in many ways, I was worthy of being on the boards, but I had to let that go and just follow the art. I didn't know I was going to be a producer. I didn't plan on being a producer. The opportunity arose and I made a decision. So, I really see it as the universe validating my decision to follow what I'm supposed to be doing right now; maybe not two years from now or five years from now or 10 years, but I think that for the awards that I've been fortunate enough to receive, to me, says that I must be doing the right thing that I'm supposed to be doing right now.

**Q: What projects are you currently working on?**

**SIMONS:** I'm developing a one-person show that I am looking to workshop hopefully by the winter of next year. I'm producing a new play called "Turn Me Loose," that is starring Joe Morton, who plays Olivia Pope's father on "Scandal." It's a one-person show about the life of Dick Gregory and it's an opening project for the Apollo's fall season. I'm working on a new screen adaptation of [Anton] Chekhov's "The Seagull" starring Annette Bening. I'm also working on developing two web series pilots. I'm working on a narrative feature about a disabled young man who has cerebral palsy – a coming-of-age story of a young, gay man. And I am working on the tour of a number of projects, so I'm producing the national tour of "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," which is the show that I currently have running on Broadway.

**Q: Anything else that you'd like Black Lens readers to know about you and your production company?**

**SIMONS:** Our [SimonSays Entertainment] mission is to 'Tell Every Story®' – that's our registered trademark, so we seek to tell stories about underrepresented communities that are largely ignored by Hollywood and studio film machines. If you're interested in following film, television and plays then check us out on our website, [www.simonssaysentertainment.com](http://www.simonssaysentertainment.com) and like our page on Facebook.

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# JULY EVENTS

**JULY 8**

**SPOKANE REGIONAL LAW AND JUSTICE COUNCIL**

The mission of the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council is to create and sustain a cost-effective regional criminal justice system that builds a healthy and strong community by fostering the best possible outcomes for the community, including reducing recidivism and increasing system collaboration.

**12:00 - 1:30**

**Spokane Regional Health District  
1101 W. College Ave, Room 321**

**JULY 8**

**SMART JUSTICE QUARTERLY MEETING**

Guest Presenters: Vera Institute of Justice  
We are in an exciting moment right now! This meeting is focused on making community voices heard by the Vera Institute for Justice and learning about Vera's role in guiding the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council (SRL-JC) in developing a proposal to the MacArthur Foundation. If the MacArthur Foundation funds Spokane County, it will mean millions of dollars to enact specific reforms to decrease the jail population and address racial disparities!

The Vera Institute is committed to listening to community members from impacted communities in the process of identifying problems and solutions -- people of color, people living with addictions, mental illness and disability and their family members, people leaving jail and trying to move forward! Your story matters, so please come make your voice heard!

**6pm-Snacks; 6:30-8pm Program  
Emmanuel Family Life Center**

**631 S. Richard Allen Court, Spokane**  
For more information contact Greater Spokane Progress at 509-624-5657

**JULY 12**

**NATIONAL DAY OF UNITY**

**Calling all Pastors to Preach, Share, Act!**

Please join the NAACP in the national Day of Unity, a day in which faith leaders across the country unite to preach from the pulpit about HIV/AIDS as a social justice issue. *A cornerstone of The Black Church and HIV: The Social Justice Imperative*, the Day of Unity is designed to encourage pastors to address the HIV epidemic in their communities, reduce stigma and create a network of knowledge and action around HIV as a social justice issue. We ask that you join us in our fight and commit to one or more of the following actions:

**Join Us** - Make a commitment to participate in Day of Unity

**Preach** - From the pulpit to the pew with messages about HIV

**Share** - On social media using the hashtag #DayofUnity, with local media, and in your community

**Act** - Fight HIV with a testing drive or community event

**For more information, visit the NAACP website at <http://spokanenaacp.com>.**

**JULY 19**

**NAACP CHURCH TOUR**

The "NAACP Church Tour" will resume on **July 19, 2015 with Word of Faith Church, Pastor Otis Manning.**

Word of Faith, 4001 N. Cook Ave, Spokane  
For more information contact the NAACP at 509-209-2425 or visit the website at <http://www.spokaneNAACP.com>

**JULY 20**

**NAACP MONTHLY MEETING**

Join the NAACP for our monthly general membership meeting  
**7:00pm**

**Community Building - Lobby  
25 W. Main Street, Spokane WA**

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

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

### AVISTA

**Customer Service Contact Centers in Spokane and Coeur d'Alene are hiring**

Avista is preparing to hire the next class of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) in order to make sure our contact centers are staffed appropriately. Avista is an Equal Opportunity Employer and we are hoping to attract a diverse candidate pool.

Avista is accepting applications for Customer Service Representative Flex II positions for the Spokane and Coeur d'Alene areas from


**June 22 through July 5.**

**About the CSR Flex II position:**

The CSR Flex II positions are a base schedule of 20 hours per week but may be scheduled up to 40 hours per week as call volumes fluctuate. The hours of the call center are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Flex II schedules change weekly so flexibility is important. Positions will be located in Spokane and, Coeur d'Alene. Medical benefits are also available at a prorated premium fee based on average number of hours worked.

**Complete an online application at <http://www.avistacorp.com/careers>**

*Please send information about upcoming community events to [sandy@blacklensnews.com](mailto:sandy@blacklensnews.com).*



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# Save the Date:

NAACP  
Alaska Oregon Washington State Area Conference  
2015 Annual Convention

Spokane, Washington  
September 18th-20th

*Details to follow:  
event sponsorship, registration and workshops  
[www.naacpaowsac.org/news-listing.php](http://www.naacpaowsac.org/news-listing.php)*

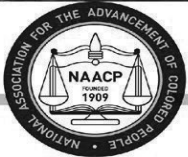


*The NAACP State Area Conference of Alaska, Oregon and Washington is pleased to announce that the host city selected for its 2015 Annual Convention is Spokane, WA. The Convention will be held September 18th through 20th of 2015.*

*As the nation's oldest civil rights organization, regional civil rights leaders from all corners of the Pacific Northwest will gather in Spokane to reflect on the Civil Rights movement for the 21st Century. The theme of this year is "Pursuing Liberty in the Face of Injustice."*

*State Area President, Gerald Hankerson, summed up the spirit of the convention: "From Ferguson to Baltimore, from Anchorage to Pasco, this is our time to come out and talk through issues and strategy for meaningful change. That's what this coming together in Spokane is all about."*

More information on the Convention including accommodations, schedule, workshop descriptions, and keynote speakers can be found at [www.naacpaowsac.org](http://www.naacpaowsac.org) as it becomes available.



# NAACP

Alaska Oregon Washington State Area Conference

**MY CARE  
MY WAY  
IS** *experts who understand me*

@PPGWNI

Spokane:  
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Spokane Valley:  
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1.800.230.PLAN  
[WWW.PPGWNI.ORG](http://WWW.PPGWNI.ORG)

