



African American high school students in the Spokane area present their art, writings for event celebrating culture, community and joy. **PAGES 6-7**

# THE BLACK LENS

FEBRUARY 2024 - VOL. 9 - ISSUE NO. 1

SPOKANE'S BLACK COMMUNITY NEWS SOURCE

BLACKLENSNEWS.COM

## Making and celebrating Black history in Spokane

*'Wonder Woman' Wilkerson first woman, person of color in seat*

By **Lisa Gardner**  
THE BLACK LENS

Trailblazer. Forerunner. Pioneer. Words that describe the type of lead-

er making a historic win for Spokane. Betsy Wilkerson has become the first woman and the first person of color to be elected City Council president. Her win is a personal achievement and a significant milestone for the Black community in Spokane.

Wilkerson's win reflects the changing times and growing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in government. Her election sends a powerful message that peo-

ple of all backgrounds and races can achieve greatness and positively impact all communities.

Wilkerson wears the honor "first" as a badge of honor. In the footsteps of the first Black Spokane mayor, James Chase, and in the path of greatness behind former Councilwoman Roberta Greene, the first Black woman elected to City Council in Spokane, Wilkerson

See **WILKERSON, 10**



COURTESY

Newly elected Spokane City Council President Betsy Wilkerson, center, poses with her family on election night.

FROM THE EDITOR

## THE BLACK LENS IS BACK

It is my honor as editor to re-launch The Black Lens to the Black community here in Spokane.

We are forever grateful to our founder, Sandy Williams, for having the vision that is The Black Lens for the Black community in Spokane. If you knew Sandy, then you knew how much

work she put into publishing The Black Lens every month. Sandy worked tirelessly to launch and grow The Black Lens beginning in 2015. With the help of her partner in life, Pat Hicks, she was able to keep it going through January 2022. We honor their memory and carry their legacy forward for the benefit of generations to come.

The Black Lens is back to tell Black stories, share Black events and community happenings, and talk about how local and national issues are impacting the Black community.

Black people have not always had the benefit of a written history. Black History was often passed through the spoken word, storytelling, secret languages, and through music and art. Black people have also not always had the benefit of being able to safely congregate in order to share news, events, culture, or joy. The news, whether in print or digital form, is a way to connect us across neighborhoods, cities, and any other artificial borders. These mediums all make Black culture borderless. Stepping into this role as editor, I am well aware

See **EDITOR, 10**



**Natasha Hill**  
THE BLACK LENS  
EDITOR



MORE INSIDE

### IN FOCUS: HISTORY OF BLACK NEWSPAPERS

Washington state has been home to many Black newspapers over the years, including Sandy Williams' "The Black Lens." **SEE PAGE 4**

## FROM HERE, FOR HERE

*Spokane's new NAACP president is Lisa Gardner*

By **Jordy Blaine**  
THE BLACK LENS

Advocating for African Americans and equal rights in Spokane is more than a passion for Lisa Gardner, it's in her blood. Becoming the Spokane NAACP president seems to be destiny, and we are lucky to have a living legacy in leadership. Gardner was sworn in Thursday, Jan. 25.

Lisa was born and raised in the East Central Neighborhood. She grew up in Spokane when

See **GARDNER, 10**



COURTESY

## Knowing that Black Joy matters

IN HER WORDS

Black Joy is certainly meme-worthy, but cannot be minimized to cool T-shirts and hashtags.

Look closely at our collective Black history. Feel the power of our survival. Black Joy is a deliberate decision to find worth in our individual and joint existence. To fight cruel adversity and subjugation. To indulge in the second, third and fourth winds that carry us forward to the next generation. It reflects resilience and self-determination. It is more than a trend, it is a trait.

Black Joy stands as a pillar of things hoped for and often not yet seen. Black Joy was born from the footprints that followed the Big Dipper to freedom, camouflaged in the reference of the drinking gourd and sung by those who possessed the stubborn will to survive. Black Joy is the audacious notion that showing up and taking up space

See **JOY, 10**



**April Eberhardt**  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

INSIDE

### STATE LEGISLATION TO WATCH FOR THIS YEAR

Luc Jasmin III, the governor's East Side representative, talks about policy issues of particular interest to the Black community. **PAGE 2**

### EDUCATION CENTER PUTS FOCUS ON BLACK CHILDREN

Kerra Bower envisions re-creating what it means to be a Black student, particularly in predominantly white places like Spokane. **PAGE 3**

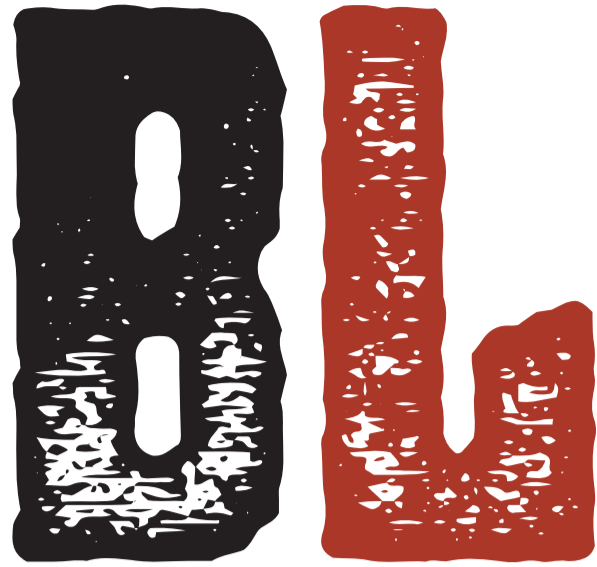
BLACK BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL ALLIANCE

### BLACK BUSINESS GUIDE

Your go-to list of Black businesses across the city. **PAGE 12**

Don't see your Black business represented or want to update the guide? Contact Editor Natasha Hill at [natasha@blacklensnews.com](mailto:natasha@blacklensnews.com).

**THIS MONTH'S ISSUE: MAKING AND CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY**



**NEWS**



**WE'RE ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, YOUTUBE, TIKTOK, YOUTUBE AND X: @BLACKLENSNEWS**

**BLACKLENS.NEWS**

**COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT**

**WAY TO JUSTICE: RESTORING RE-ENTRY SERVICES STATEWIDE**

By Alethea Dumas  
THE BLACK LENS



**When did the Way to Justice Start and Why?**

The Way to Justice was founded in 2020 by Virla Spencer and Camerina Zorrozua, BIPOC women with over three decades of experience working in the justice system. We understand that change will not happen overnight, so our work is focused on navigating systems as they are, to find The Way to Justice.

**Who does the Way to Justice Serve?**

Our clients and their loved ones have been unjustly impacted by our legal system. Too often, access to justice is denied due to poverty and structural bias. In our work, we focus on addressing systemic racism, removing barriers, empowering the most vulnerable, and amplifying the voices of the impacted community to create a more just system.

**What programs does the Way to Justice Offer?**

**Driver's relicensing:** We can help you qualify for a driver's license if yours has been suspended or revoked.

**Post-conviction relief:** We can help you vacate your convictions, reduce your Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs), and restore your rights.

**Justice Night:** We host a walk-in legal clinic where clients can meet with an attorney and get advice and resources.

**Youth empowerment:** This program empowers local youth by offering leadership training, resources, and a platform to advocate for system change.

**Racial justice:** All of our work is guided by an unwavering commitment to racial justice and equity.

**How do people find and support the Way to Justice?**

Scan the QR code or visit our website to complete an intake form for our services, or make a donation via PayPal: [www.thewaytojustice.com](http://www.thewaytojustice.com).

MORE INFORMATION

**THE WAY TO JUSTICE**

**WHERE:** 321 W. Boone Ave., Spokane, WA 99201  
**PHONE:** (509) 822-7514  
**FAX:** (509) 600-0075



This QR code can lead you to the Way to Justice website.

**Legislation to watch for this year**

By Natasha Hill  
THE BLACK LENS

The Black Lens interviewed Luc Jasmin III, the governor's Eastern Washington representative about policy issues of particular interest to the Black community in Washington.

Here is what we learned: Public safety has been a primary focus across our state. **Initiative 2113** was just certified to be placed on the ballot in November to lower the standard for when police can pursue suspects of certain crimes from probable cause to a reasonable suspicion. This lower standard has historically allowed police to stop and arrest for "driving while Black" under the guise of reasonable suspicion. Police pursuits are a serious threat to public safety and are the second leading cause of death for police activities. Lowering the standard from probable cause to reasonable suspicion increases the risk for bystanders. This initiative is opposed by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability.

**Senate Bill 5998** would amend and ease eligibility criteria for vacating nonviolent felony charges, including marijuana convictions. This will allow community members who have served their sentences to remove barriers to employment and other resources. Remember that even if you have a felony conviction, you are eligible to vote as long as you're not currently incarcerated.

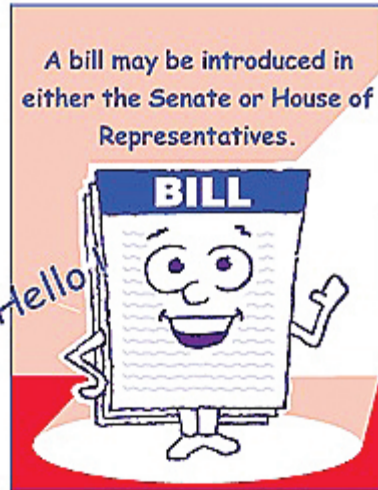
Jasmin also highlighted **Senate Bill 5852**, state Sen. Andy Billig's bill that passed last session and is being implemented now. This bill provides funds for revitalization to the East Central Neighborhood, where over 500 homes were removed and hundreds were displaced over the last two decades, which disproportionately impacted people of color and low-income residents in East Central.

To stay informed, you can go to [vote.wa.gov](http://vote.wa.gov) or [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov).

**More to know:** The Washington Legislature is made up of two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Washington has 49 legislative districts, each of which elects a senator and 2 representatives.

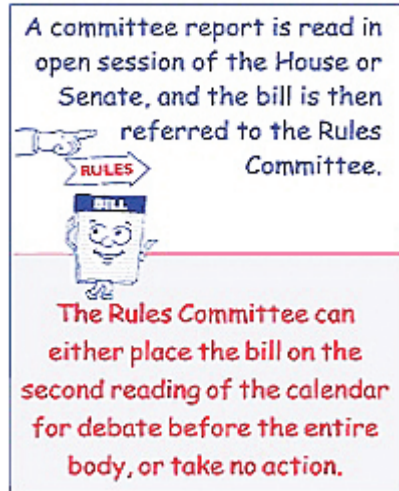
Senators serve four-year terms and representatives serve two-year terms.



A bill may be introduced in either the Senate or House of Representatives.

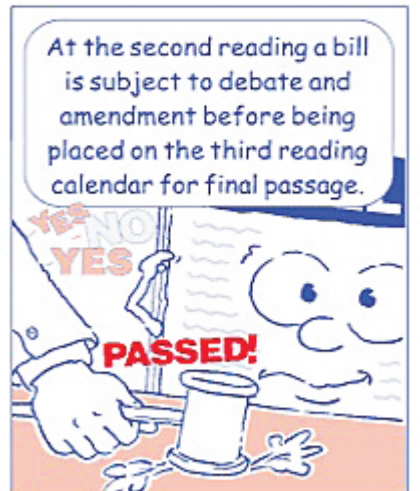


A committee studies the bill and often holds public hearings on it.

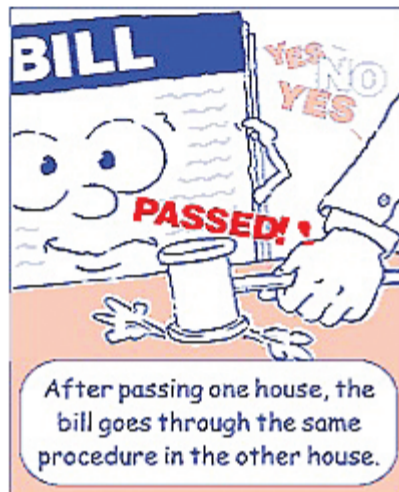


A committee report is read in open session of the House or Senate, and the bill is then referred to the Rules Committee.

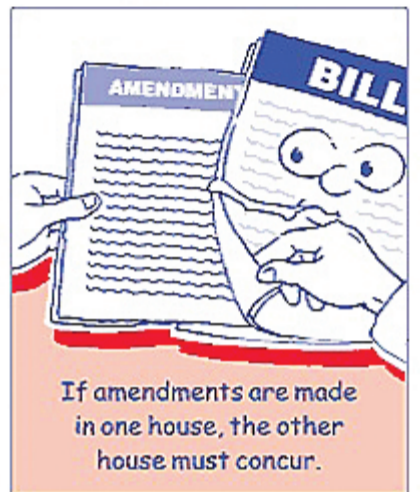
The Rules Committee can either place the bill on the second reading of the calendar for debate before the entire body, or take no action.



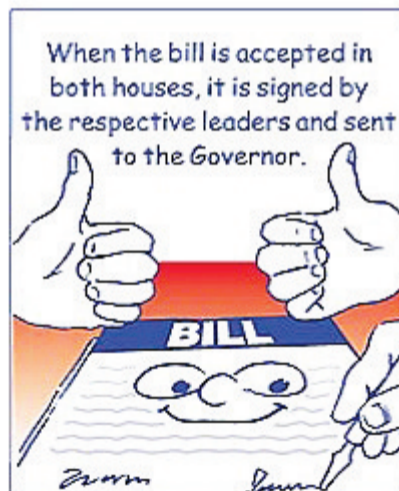
At the second reading a bill is subject to debate and amendment before being placed on the third reading calendar for final passage.



After passing one house, the bill goes through the same procedure in the other house.



If amendments are made in one house, the other house must concur.



When the bill is accepted in both houses, it is signed by the respective leaders and sent to the Governor.

**How to contact Luc Jasmin III**

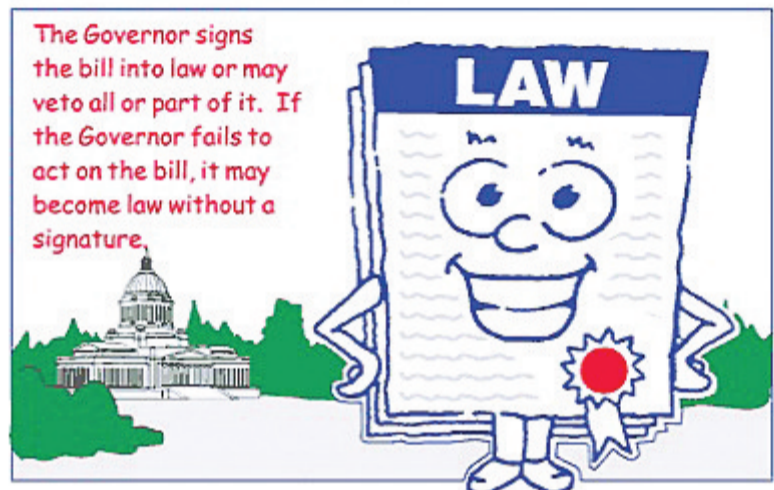
Luc Jasmin is a community organizer and entrepreneur who is the Eastern Washington regional outreach representative for Gov. Jay Inslee.



Luc Jasmin III

He can be reached by phone at (360) 878-1700 or by email at [Luc.Jasmin@gov.wa.gov](mailto:Luc.Jasmin@gov.wa.gov).

"How a Bill Becomes a Law" cartoon courtesy [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov)



The Governor signs the bill into law or may veto all or part of it. If the Governor fails to act on the bill, it may become law without a signature.

**SPOKANE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**MEASURE NO. 1  
LIBRARY OPERATIONS LEVY  
IS ON VOTER BALLOTS DUE  
FEBRUARY 13, 2024**

**VOTE**  
Ballots mailed: January 26  
Ballots due: February 13

**Upcoming election news**

On Feb. 13, the Spokane Public Library will ask the community to renew the levy that now funds 18% of library operations and services. The levy measure will allow the library to continue the expanded operations and services put in place with the passage of the original levy lid lift in 2013 and 2017.

To continue to meet the needs of the community, the library asks for a renewal at the current rate of the levy lid lift for a duration of three years. This is an existing tax and the tax rate will not change. The existing levy has been dedicating a rate of 7 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value to the library since 2013.

Spokane Public Library

**THE BLACK LENS**

Serving Spokane's Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS  
FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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General information  
Schoenberg Center/Gonzaga University  
800 N. Pearl St.  
Spokane, WA 99202

About The Black Lens



The Black Lens is a nonprofit news organization funded through foundations, major donors, subscribers, sponsors and the community it serves. The stories, photos, graphics and columns created by The Black Lens are owned by the community it serves, and can be republished by other organizations for free under a Creative Commons license.

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The Black Lens newspaper is published daily online and monthly in print by "comma," a nonprofit community journalism lab. For information on comma, or to make a donation, please contact Innovia at (509) 624-2606 or visit [www.blacklensnews.com/donate](http://www.blacklensnews.com/donate).

Statement of Independence

The Black Lens is a not-for-profit, independent newspaper that focuses on all aspects of the Black community in Eastern Washington. The Black Lens editor reports to its own board of directors, which was set up under the guidance of the founders' family.

As journalism calls for increased transparency, The Black Lens believes in being transparent about its work. The Black Lens is funded through foundations, donors, subscribers and the community. That funding pays for the work of the editors, reporters, photographers, designers, correspondents and columnists who produce The Black Lens newspaper, website and other platforms.

The Black Lens retains full authority over its editorial content. This organization maintains a strict firewall between news coverage decisions and funding sources and in-kind help. Acceptance of financial support does not constitute implied or actual endorsement of donors or their products, services or opinions.

All story decisions made by The Black Lens newsroom and its leaders are made independently and not on the basis of donor support. This organization does not give supporters the rights to assign, review or edit content, and if a supporter is covered in a story or other editorial content, The Black Lens will disclose this at the bottom of the story.

The Black Lens is a partner of the "comma" community journalism lab. The Black Lens will be located within the community journalism lab newsroom that is set to be stationed on the main campus of Gonzaga University in Spokane. Though The Black Lens and lab may be housed at Gonzaga, the university has no control or authority over the journalism created by The Black Lens or other newsrooms located within the lab. The comma community journalism lab is a nonprofit news organization with its own board of directors, separate from the university and separate from The Black Lens. The Black Lens' board of directors works closely with the comma community journalism lab and its leaders to

ensure that journalism's protected First Amendment rights continue to be an essential part of our nation's democracy.

Though much of the content created by The Black Lens may appear in regional publications, newspapers or news websites, those organizations have no rights, authority or influence over the content created by this publication. The Black Lens' publications are only responsible to boards of directors for The Black Lens and the comma community journalism lab. Though other publications, including The Spokesman-Review, may assist in distribution, The Black Lens is not a publication of any of its third-party distribution partners.



NEWS



*I want Raze to be a place where you can make Black history, you can learn about Black history, but even more than that you can fully understand, fully grasp the fact that Black history is American history.”*

Kerra Bower, owner and CEO of RAZE

# BLACK-CENTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MADE REAL IN SPOKANE THROUGH RAZE

By April R. Eberhardt  
BLACK LENS NEWS

How transformational would education be for Black students if they were taught through the lens of Black American history? Raze Early Learning and Development Center was founded in 2023 in Spokane with a focus on Black culture and excellence starting in preschool. The name “Raze” denotes the tearing down of things that hold us back and keep us from obtaining our dreams. Doors are expected to open in September 2024.

Kerra Bower, owner and CEO of Raze, envisioned recreating what it means to be a Black student, particularly in predominantly white places like Spokane. The first five years of a child’s life is when their initial blueprints for life are built.

“I want Raze to be a place where you can make Black history, you can learn about Black history, but even more than that you can fully understand, fully grasp the fact that Black history is American history,” Bower said.

As important, when children of other races also learn about the beauty and excellence of Blackness in America, it is less likely for them to believe in untruths spoken about their Black peers. All children, regardless of race, need to know that Black history is integral to American history.

“We want to embolden children to not just be allies but to be partners in creating equity,” Bower



Kerra Bower, owner and CEO of RAZE.

said.

A profound insight that Bower gives is that no matter what race a child is, the more that children understand about themselves, the less they can be influenced by untruths.

“I want this to be a place where we celebrate the excellence of Black people. I think of my mom, and she tells me the stories of her going to a desegregated school and the embarrassment that she felt when she did not know the answers because she had not been

given any instruction and then being ridiculed and singled out in front of everyone; this was in the ‘60s ... I just think about how much our kids still go through that.”

Bower opened her first in-home child care center in West Central nearly 15 years ago. She served students from across the city and began to see differences with the homework her students were given and how expectations varied depending on the school students were coming from; certain

groups of students had different standards; she noticed a trend among her Black students who were given less homework and lower expectations.

Bower grew her in-home preschool into Little Scholars, now located in the Garfield-Emerson Neighborhood on North Monroe Street. Little Scholars focuses on cultivating learning through a multicultural lens. At the time she opened Little Scholars, the Salish School of Spokane was also opening theirs for

## Interested in learning more?

COME TO A PAID PARENT LISTENING SESSION

In expectation of RAZE’s grand opening, and in partnership with the Shades of Motherhood, Raze is looking for parents, grandparents and guardians to review RAZE’s parent policy handbook and provide input into center etiquette and family communication and support.

**WHAT YOU EARN:** \$150 per session

**WHEN:** 6 p.m. March 1, 11 and 21

**WHERE:** RAZE Early Learning & Development Center

**TO JOIN:** Text this number (509) 294-9494 with your name and date of the session you are interested in attending

**MORE INFO:** [www.razethenarrative.com](http://www.razethenarrative.com)

Native American students, with a focus on revitalization of the Salish language and cultural renewal. Seeing this model of teaching and learning planted a seed that Bower has not stopped watering, and ultimately it flourished into Raze.

Bower’s aspirations took 10 years to take root.

“I do not want to build on a broken foundation,” she said.

Bower knew she had to build a solid foundation of support and funding to ensure longevity. She created a synergy around the vision of Raze in Spokane and across the state, including Gov. Jay Inslee, State Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, state departments and agencies, and local unions. Spokane is ready and Bower has made sure of that.

Bower knows that Raze can change the educational trajectory for Black students, one that does not only teach to their trauma or hold lower expectations, but one that em-

phasizes their value and contributions to the world by showing them the value and contributions of those who came before them. Learning through the lens of tradition and culture is a pivot from the norm in today’s educational system. Bower believes that identity awareness can foster a sense of belonging for Black students the same way the Salish School does for Native students.

Social emotional learning will be paramount in the learning paradigm at Raze, as understanding the impact of poverty, racism, and the effects of trauma on a child’s ability to learn is critical to their success and healing. Going beyond the trauma, once it is effectively supported, is equally as important.

“An early childhood education ensures the opportunity for Black and Brown children to not just survive but thrive,” Bower said.

Please support Raze by attending the upcoming listening sessions.



## Building an Inclusive Holistic Healthcare Clinic

Maji Rising is based in Spokane, Washington, with a mission to cultivate a community of holistic care that empowers individuals to seek better outcomes for themselves. With a vision firmly set on creating a more equitable future, Maji Rising aims to foster the traditions of lineage-based health care, establishing a transformative community dedicated to healing and promoting overall well-being.

Together with our partner organization, Take Up the Cause, we form Beloved Kijiji - this unique project will encompass a harmonious blend of mixed-use housing, education, and healthcare services, catering specifically to the diverse needs of Spokane residents and neighbors. Inspired by the Swahili word for village, Beloved Kijiji represents a space where individuals can unite, celebrate and thrive collectively.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIALS



Help us Build.  
Take the Community Needs Survey Today!



[WWW.MAJIRISING.ORG](http://WWW.MAJIRISING.ORG)

FOCUS

NORTHWEST NEWS FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW



FROM STAFF REPORTS  
THE BLACK LENS

We look at other Black newspapers throughout Washington history, as well as editors and publishers who had a national effect.

Spokane activist and original Black Lens publisher Sandy Williams in 2016.

DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

IMPORTANT PEOPLE



BLACKPAST.ORG

HORACE CAYTON

Born a free man, but the child of a slave Horace Cayton had a personal connection with slavery and racism his whole life. He moved to the North and became a prominent Republican figure as a large amount of Black Americans did.

He founded the Seattle Republican and later ran the Cayton Monthly with his wife. He served aboard the Washington NAACP board and was a member of Seattle's Negro Business League.

ADOLPHUS GRIFFIN

Adolphus Griffin, a prominent Black newspaper publisher, had his start editing the Northwest Echo in Spokane. After three years in Spokane, he moved to Portland, founding the first Black newspaper in the blossoming city.



Griffin had an eclectic life, having moved to Kansas after establishing the New Age. He became a city detective in Topeka and edited the local Black newspaper while fulfilling his police role. Griffin also served as an adviser for the predominantly Black Western University in Kansas.

IMPORTANT PAPERS

SEATTLE REPUBLICAN

From 1894-1913, the Seattle Republican served as a reliable weekly newspaper for Blacks and whites. Through the preservation and digitization of the Seattle Republican's archives, much of Washington's early Black history has been saved and extensively documented.



SEATTLE STANDARD

The Seattle Standard was the first Black newspaper founded in Washington. While not as successful as the later Republican, it managed to gain traction by having its stories published in more mainstream newspapers throughout the state of Washington.

SEATTLE MEDIUM

Born in 1970, the Seattle Medium has stayed active since then as a Black newspaper for the community of Western Washington. It still features a weekly print newspaper and recently won several awards through 2021's National Newspaper Publishers Association.

THE NEW AGE

Formed in 1896 and based in Portland, the New Age provided a sense of community for the growing Black community in Oregon. It fought extensively against the rise of the KKK, as well as helped to find shelter and jobs for the rising Black population in Oregon.

TACOMA FORUM

Published as a weekly from 1903-1918, the Tacoma was Black run, but encompassed all aspects of its local community. It later merged with the distinctively Black newspaper the Tacoma Sun, gaining better African American coverage and consolidation.



CROSSCUT

Sandy Williams, pictured July 7, 2022.

THE BLACK LENS

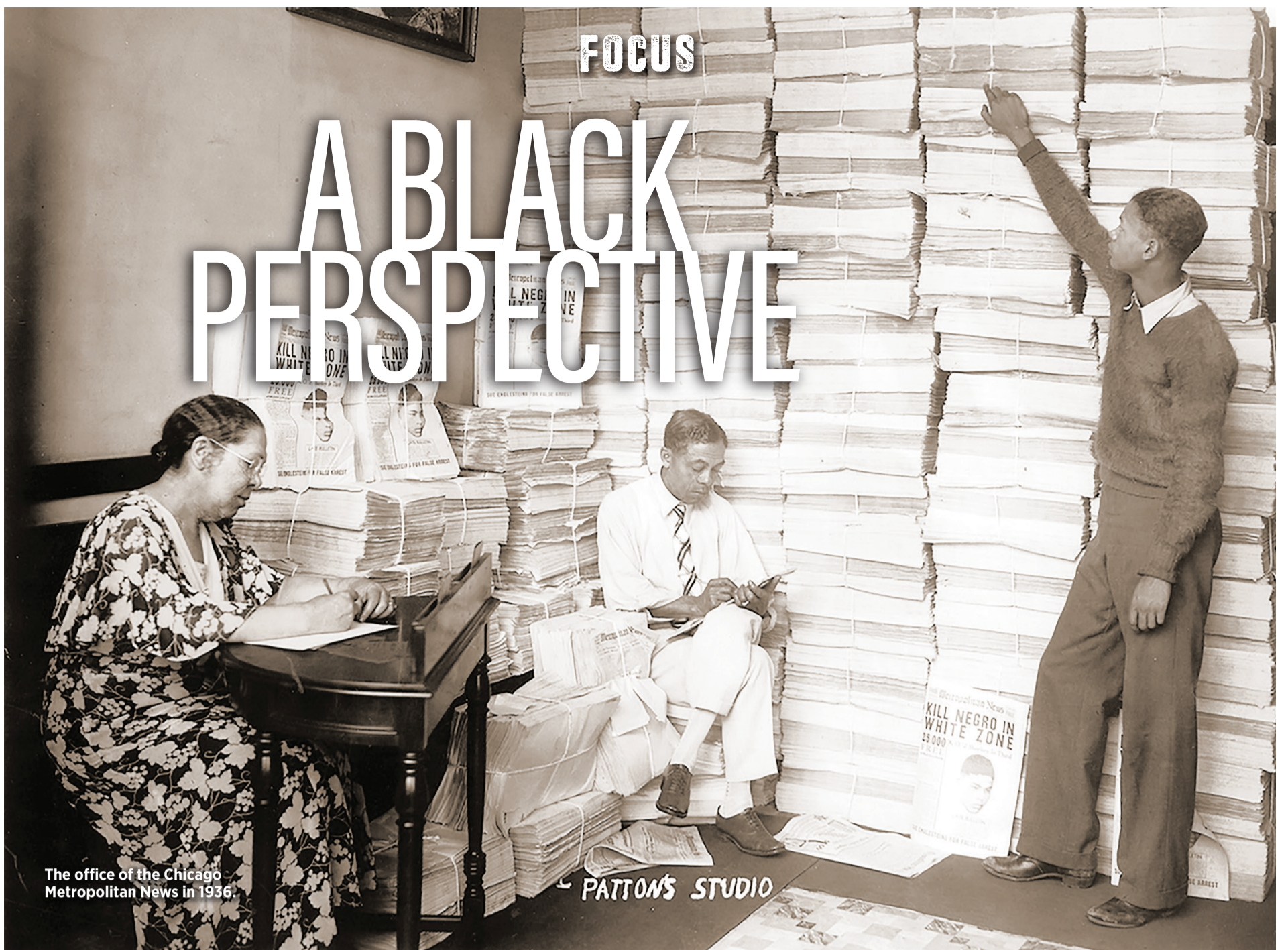
The Black Lens initially launched in 2015, published by prominent Spokane activist Sandy Williams. The original Black Lens served to provide a voice for the disenfranchised, as well as highlight local businesses and joys within Spokane's Black community.

The paper was put on hold in 2022 as Williams worked to open the Carl Maxey Center, a community resource organization in East Central, Spokane. Williams died Sept. 4, 2022, in a seaplane crash. After her death, local families and journalism professionals partnered with area businesses and the Innovia Foundation to restart The Black Lens.



A 2018 article from the original Black Lens.

Sources: Cornerstones of Community: Building of Portland Africans, Blackpast.org, Washington State University, Western Washington University, Crosscut, Washington Digital Newspapers.org, Library of Congress, Tacoma Forum



The office of the Chicago Metropolitan News in 1936.

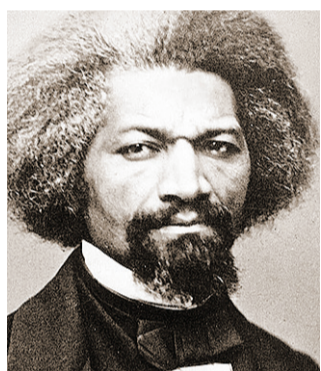
PATTON'S STUDIO

CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

FROM STAFF REPORTS | THE BLACK LENS

To celebrate the launch of The Black Lens, we look back at the contributions of prominent African American newspapers from the 1800s to today.

PRESS PIONEERS



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

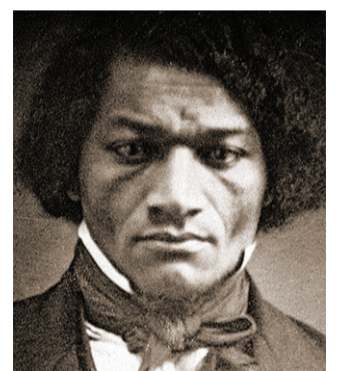
Born into slavery in Maryland sometime around 1818, Frederick Douglass learned to write on his own at an early age. Escaping servitude and making it to Massachusetts, Douglass was invited often to speak about his experiences as a slave. He established The North Star newspaper, inspired by how reading the press had informed him as a child.

THE NORTH STAR

Named after the star used to lead slaves to freedom in the North, The North Star was the most influential African American newspaper in antebellum America. It served as both a platform for social justice and education on every facet of slavery and anti-slavery movements through the United States.



After his career in journalism, Douglass advised presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Jackson on Black soldiers and Black suffrage within the states. He frequently wrote poignant letters, advocating for the advancement of African American freedoms throughout the country. He also held a number of public positions.



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

TRAILBLAZING VOICES



Acting on reports from The North Star and William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator of mass wealth in the west, many African Americans moved across the country hoping for success. As they arrived in the new states, so did their own newspapers, with local papers being established by African American leaders throughout California and the frontier in order to guide new Black settlers arriving hot on the trails of the gold rush. These papers helped Black newcomers find jobs, safe communities and opportunity throughout the racially charged environment of early California.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIBRARIES

Founded by John J. Neimore in 1879, the California Owl was dreamed up to help provide urgent information to other African American settlers arriving into California. The California Owl was later renamed to the Eagle then the California Eagle. It operated until 1964, becoming the largest Black newspaper in California. After California had settled, the California Eagle highlighted important issues in the L.A. community, as well as mounting state and federal challenges.

"The two-headed monster, segregation and discrimination," is what Charlotta Bass, the editor of the California Eagle after Neimore, vowed to fight. She ran the newspaper for 39 years, using it as a platform for education and advocacy. Bass became the first African American woman to run for vice president and ran for congress several times in L.A.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIBRARIES

JAZZ AGE JOURNALISM

Black journalism flourished in the early 20th century, as civil rights movements steadily became more mainstream. Such papers of the time like the Chicago Defender or Pittsburgh Courier not only educated on issues within the Black community, but through A&E, and then-dubbed "society" pages provided an uplifting spirit of what Black culture could be, celebrating new African American music like blues 'n' jazz.



CHICAGO LITERARY HALL OF FAME

Robert S. Abbott was the founder and publisher of the Chicago Defender, creating the newspaper in 1905. The Defender gained a circulation of up to 500,000, with more than two-thirds of their readers coming from outside of Chicago. The Chicago Defender featured scathing headlines and prominently featured some of Black journalism's most famous writers, like Ethel Payne and Ida B. Wells. The Chicago Defender helped popularize the African American migration and exodus from the South.



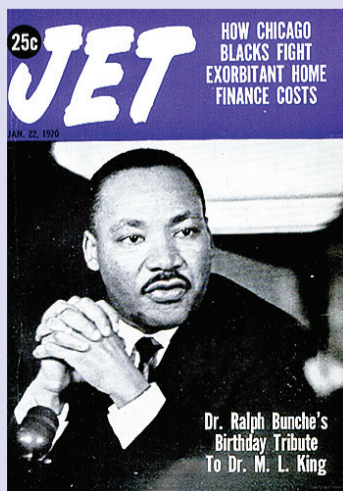
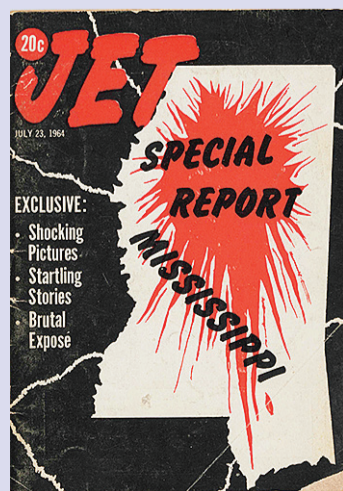
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Among the most influential writers at the Chicago Defender was Ethel Payne, who became the first Black woman to become a member of the White House press corps. She gained a reputation for asking tough questions and covered brutal wars, from Korea to Vietnam, giving these global events a local eye.

THE IMPACT OF 'JET'

JET magazine was founded within the 1950s, a period of growth and celebrations, before Vietnam came. The magazine was named "JET," after both the distinct black color, and the jet engine allowing new levels of speed in the '50s.

The magazine grew like wildfire in popularity, reaching up to 900,000 readers with its weekly circulation. It was seemingly everywhere, according to its reader - it was at salons, coffee shops, work. Wherever Americans went, JET magazine came with.



Unlike the common tabloids of today, JET was considered a fairly respectable medium of news. It grew famous for its extensive coverage of Emmett Till's lynching and murder. With daring photographers, capturing exclusive glimpses into the Civil Rights movement. JET became the go-to source for Black news for many African Americans.

It also helped to unify Black culture, covering prominent Black models and actresses in an effort to bring Black beauty to the mainstream of society. It joined alongside coverage of growing Black artists such as Marvin Gaye.

Sources: Blackpast.org, New-York Historical Society, African American Registry, PBS, Britannica, Library of Congress, Washington State University, The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, California Revealed, The Weekly Challenger, Hosiery State Chronicles, The Atlantic, Crosscut

# BLACK VOICES

In celebration of Black History Month and the relaunch of The Black Lens in print publication, Northwest Passages presented the third-annual Spokane Black Voices Symposium on Feb. 1. The event honored African American students from the Spokane area, who presented this work, focusing on the theme of “Black Joy - An Aspirational Mindset.”

## ‘I Feel Joy’

By Sameer Jefferson  
Centennial Middle School



## ‘Joy in Overcoming’

By Aisha Rodriguez | Shadle Park High School



## ‘Convinced’

By Jalani Jefferson | Ness Elementary

## ‘A Feeling That Lives Within You’

By Alima Tambwe | Rogers High School

Hair--entwined, resembling tree roots, skin--replicating nature's soil, eyes--embracing the night sky, radiating our galaxies.

I've heard stories: books, histories documented to humiliate and conceal black joy.

Our skin and hair, classified as “unfit” “unprofessional” “nothing but a mess”

Constant daily reminders of how inhuman we look.

What once was styled for an escape route and buried with rice in case malnourished, is now a garden filled with memories and laughter.

Watching the older generation be withered from their beauty empowers our generation to embrace mother nature's charm and live our life to the fullest.

Black joy is that feeling of being surrounded by the people of our community.

That feeling of looking at how far our brothers, sisters, mothers, families and friends have come to make all that we can do now possible.

That feeling when all you can do is look around and find others who are just like you,

People who resemble you,  
Resemble the same history as you,  
Resemble the same experiences as you.  
Black joy is a feeling that lives within you.

Alima Tambwe is a senior at Rogers High School. She is from Bujumbura, Burundi, and has lived in Spokane for eight years.



## ‘Her Name is Joy’

By TaeZhanae Hays-Cormier | Rogers High School

Her Name is Joy.  
Where are the places you seek her?  
I think lately she's been hard to find.  
I come across her as the women of my past,  
Have before.  
When the days are long and hot,  
I hear her in their songs.

I breathe with the same nose,  
My Father's Family has shared for generations.  
When I brush my curly hair,  
She's combed in there too.  
I see her in the mirror,  
Big brown eyes and brown skin  
Although I tend to forget about these gracious gifts,  
Black joy has given me, she re-

turns.  
Arms outstretched like summer,  
She's everywhere.  
And comes back with the force of the sun,  
As it rises and sets.  
Where do you find black joy?

TaeZhanae Hays-Cormier is a junior at Rogers High School.

## ‘Trials Are the Joy of Tomorrow’

By Donalda Brantley | Rogers High School

Joy is not just found in success, but it is found in my deepest failures.

Not just beauty and perfection but insecurities and displacement.

I was given this gift from God not just for myself but to share with others.

Joy is not lost but is kept with perseverance. Not just delights and pleasure but with grit and triumph.

I've been given trials and tribulations. I've been given trauma and distaste. But most importantly I've been given power to overcome. I've been given joy. An everlasting power that never leaves.

I know hurt and pain, but I know love and care.  
I know abandonment and manipulation, but I

know God is always there.

I know perseverance and determination can be exhausting but the reward of getting through it is the best rest of all. I know that tears can feel like an ocean and that you've been swimming as this “strong independent black woman” for so long but what's your strongest is your power to hold on. Joy is not dependent that's why it's there regardless of the storm.

So let me tell you again. Joy is not just found in success but in my deepest failures too. I know that happy or sad I can still laugh. I know mad or glad I know there's joy that I still have.

Donalda Brantley is a senior at Rogers High School.



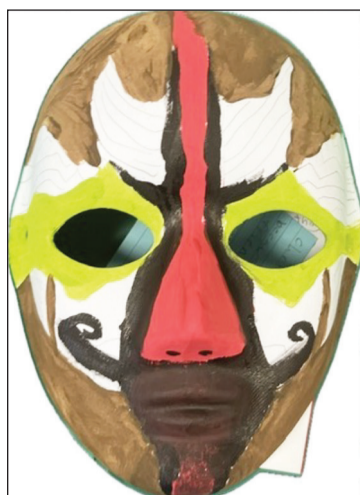
## ‘Joy Lives in the Little Things’

By Mya Jefferson | West Valley High School

# BLACK VOICES

## 'We Are All Precious'

By Ky'Aira Hart-Carter | Opportunity Elementary



## 'Fellowship is Joy'

By Christopher Strozier | Gonzaga Prep



## 'Resilient'

By Thomas Armstrong | Ferris High School

## 'Capable'

By Asia Armstrong | Ferris High School

# 'My Joyous Black Joy'

By Melissa Pirie | Rogers High School

Black Joy can be put down and killed. Black Joy can be diminished like it is nothing and everything less than anything human. But Black Joy is something to be proud of, something to shove in the faces of hatred and inhumane behavior towards people of color.

Black Joy is the hair on my head, the features on my face, the voice that says I am here. Black Joy is the very ground I walk on that was built from nothing and came from the black Joy spawned many years ago. Black Joy is the pattern on my back imported from Africa and shipped from the minds of very fragile and creative people. My people.

Black Joy is the people I came from, the people who expressed their feelings and exercised their rights to freedom. Black Joy is the kitchen I cook in. Black Joy smells like the comfort of soul food made from the sweat and blood and nothing else but love for anyone and everyone who can get their hands on the wholesome taste of heaven, something greater than words itself. Black Joy smells like the spices and herbs brought in from the spiciest and most exotic places on earth. Black Joy smells like the castor oils imported from Jamaica and the Shea butter found along the dry Savannah belt near

west and south Africa. Black Joy smells like the Mongongo oil that immigrated from subtropical Southern Africa.

Black Joy is the traditions we celebrate and legacies we carry and pass on one after another, again and again. Black Joy is the love we have for one another. Black Joy is the unspoken loyalty shared amongst those identifying as black or African.

Black Joy is sounds like the streets of hip hop and R&B joined on a freeway, connecting and vibing. Black Joy sounds like Brandy, Carl Thomas, Angela Day, Fantasia, and Leela James. Black Joy sounds like SWV, TLC, Boys II Men, Brian McKnight, Jaheim, Aaliyah, Beyoncé, and Alicia Keys. Black Joy sounds like John Legend, Tens, Aya Starr, OutKast, Trey Songz, Usher, Keith Sweat, Prince, D'Angelo, Lucky Daye, Maxwell, and Mary J. Blige. Black Joy sounds like Kevin Ross, Erykah Badu, NeYo, Monica, Coco Jones, Charlie Wilson, The Temptations, Sam Cooke, Ashanti, Keyshia Cole, Soul for Real, and Michael Jackson. Black Joy sounds like mornings and nights, silence or filled with voices sharing their life's work and what makes them happy.

Black Joy is watching people in your family and community making a name

for themselves in a dog-eat-dog world. Black Joy is paying attention to what others who look like you and are around you create something of their own for others to notice and applause. Black Joy is watching your siblings who look like you and are around you learn what you learned around their age, that their identity is Black Joy and can be discriminated against but not taken away for good, and not without a fight.

Black Joy is me and you. Black Joy is us altogether, beating the odds and systems placed against us for so many unfit reasons, but hand in hand, nonetheless. Black Joy is the chants and noise from organizations and movements fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves. Black Joy is churches and temples filled with adults waiting for their hearts to be touched and kids watching and playing, confused but present, aware yet unaware of the entirety of what is to come along with the truth. Black Joy is the stories and experiences shared to keep memories and spirits from years ago alive and living. Black Joy is the folk tales and lessons taught to us in life in order to keep our knowledge and belief of our God's and spiritual beings, whether in our minds, hearts, or in person. Black Joy is

the civil rights and freedom we fought for.

Black Joy is Black people expressing their own Black Joy because Black Joy is Black joy. All our battles, won or lost, are our representation of the start of Black Joy. Black Joy is who I am and what I represent formerly and in my community. Black Joy is me taking time for myself and distributing myself to those who deserve it and those who are rightfully in need of a second chance. Black Joy is knowing my worth and allowing others to recognize out too, not to build my ego but to instead show an example of who they can be, what they can accomplish and what representation they can portray so that they can express what black Joy is to them. Black Joy is old and young, small or big. Black Joy is living as one, knowing that everyone belongs to themselves thanks to those who have come before us.

Black Joy is thanks given to those who have went to war for their future family not knowing if what they did was enough, but little do they know that it was enough because now we get to have black joy as our own.

Melissa Pirie is a sophomore at Rogers High School.



## 'Sunsets and Freedom'

By Sian Armstrong | Ferris High School



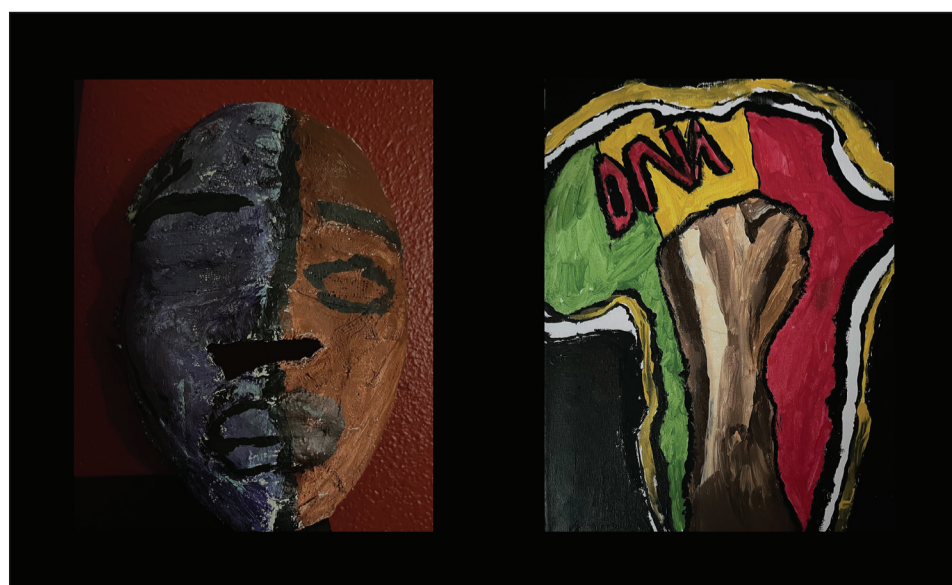
## 'Never Alone'

By Jaxon Jefferson  
Centennial Middle School



## 'Turtles Make Me Happy'

By Beatriz Devine | Audubon Elementary



## 'Black Joy is Lineage'

By Emmanuel Eberhardt | Medical Lake Middle School

COMMUNITY

# COMMUNITY DISCUSSES NORTH SPOKANE CORRIDOR WITH WSDOT AT CARL MAXEY CENTER



BLACK LENS STAFF REPORTS | PHOTOS BY BOB LLOYD

**East Central neighbors and Spokane residents from across the city joined in a conversation with Washington State Department of**

**Transportation officials on Jan. 10 at the Carl Maxey Center to discuss the Interstate 90 to North Spokane Corridor connection.**

**Planners and engineers spoke at the meeting, where they talked aesthetics, pros and cons and the shape of the future Our Place Park.**



IN HER WORDS

## YOUTH REFLECTS ON 2023 BLACK PILLAR AWARDS

By Madison Wade  
THE BLACK LENS

On June 20, 2023, the Inland Northwest Juneteenth Coalition hosted the 10th-annual Black Pillar Awards. Here are my reflections as an attendee:

*The choir sang jubilantly, the womens' heads lifted high as their voices.*

*Lift every voice and sing, 'Til earth and heaven ring. Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;*

Their voices dropped deeply, channeling a thousand souls, intimate with the weight of this world and this country, and empowered by the freedom that was claimed, not given.

*Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us, Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.*

I watched, one by one, as nominees for the pillars of Spokane's black community were listed and award winners and their categories named, everyone cheering along the way.

Women wore glittering dresses, boots and stilettos that shone under the beautiful spotlights, every girl and woman held as they walked up the steps to the stage. Afterward, they'd pose on the black carpet together, being photographed by the bantering, insistent photographer in his sharp suit and tie.

I went alone, but I didn't feel alone, and graciously, I didn't leave alone, either. I felt just as held and celebrated as the men

and women who won that night, feeling welcomed, encouraged, empowered, inspired and hopeful, like the song deemed our "Black National Anthem" suggests to be.

Watching the singers belting their notes, standing against the Fox theatre's beautiful blue velvet curtain, crystals on their dresses gleaming, made me feel like I was in one of Maya Angelou's memoirs. Like I was in the Harlem Renaissance, witnessing history and, not only that, but joining the fray.

They are not the future, they are NOW, the host of the event kept saying of the youth in attendance, already doing great things and preparing to be of use to their community.

This experience has carried me through this past week. I have ate and slept amongst people who are different than me in more ways

than they are from each other. I have shared my perspective with them, and laughed and played games, and drank with merry.

I have worked and been hit and been shocked and had school and had to advocate for myself and others, in various situations. I have been doubted. I have been praised. I have been asked questions. I have been lazy, I have been overworked. I have been everything. I have been nothing.

That weekend reminded me that it is all for something.

*Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, Let us march on 'til victory is won.*

*Stony the road we trod, Bitter the chastening rod,*

*Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; Yet with a steady beat, Have not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers sighed?*



# COMMUNITY

## BLACK COMEDIAN PUTS SPOKANE COMEDY ON MAP

By **Natasha Hill**  
THE BLACK LENS

Anthony Singleton is putting Spokane comedy on the map and helping change the face of comedy across the state of Washington. Anthony is one of the fastest up-and-coming comedians in

Spokane. He is the visionary behind the only comedy series in the city, Black History Comedy Showcase. He created this platform to showcase talented comedians and musicians and help them reach new heights of success here in Spokane and grow into other markets. Anthony has forged partner-

ships with local black-owned businesses, such as the Goody Bar & Grill, to support the community and celebrate Black History Month.

*Come witness a local Rising Star and the transformation of a city at 7 p.m. on Feb. 17 at The Goody Bar & Grill.*



COURTESY  
**Comedian Anthony Singleton**

IF YOU GO

### Black History Month Comedy Showcase

Featuring Darryl Burns, Charles Hall Jr., and Anthony Singleton

**WHEN:** 7 p.m. Feb. 17

**WHERE:** Goody Bar & Grill, 8714 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 1, Spokane Valley, WA 99212

### IN THEIR WORDS

## Defeating Measure 1 jail tax

Stan Harewood  
ALL OF US OR NONE



Community organizing for the win!

In a remarkable grassroots effort, Spokane County's Measure 1 was successfully defeated – no new jails in Spokane. There is a better way to address health, safety and justice in our community.

The campaign, backed by more than a dozen nonprofit political organizations and funding from philanthropic organizations Empire Health Community Advocacy Fund and Inatai Foundation, utilized a multifaceted approach, including a challenge to the language on the ballot in court that was successful and a political campaign with TV commercials, digital ads, mailings, and direct voter contact methods such as text messages, phone calls, and door knocking to reach a broad audience. A staggering 48,500 voter contacts were made, showcasing the dedication of the volunteers involved.

The genesis of Measure 1 can be traced back to the deliberations of Spokane County Commissioners, Justice not Jails reports. In December, Commissioners Josh Kerns and Al French voted in favor of placing Measure 1 on the ballot. The proposal sought to introduce a 0.2% sales tax increase for 30 years to address various issues within the county's public safety and criminal justice systems. The primary goals were to improve correctional facilities and invest in behavioral health programs. The timing of the proposal stirred controversy. It was introduced just before the swearing-in of new County Commissioners, Amber Waldref and Chris Jordan, both of whom were Democrats. Critics argued



that the timing appeared to sideline the incoming commissioners and raised concerns about transparency and accountability. This timing controversy became a focal point in the ongoing discussions surrounding Measure 1, Justice not Jails writes.

Several elected leaders stressed that the lack of specific details about how the revenue would be allocated was a significant concern. Advocates for delay sought a more comprehensive approach that would involve a broader cross-section of the community in decision-making. In the midst of these debates, nine petitioning organizations played a crucial role in advocating for transparency and clarity and pushed for a clearer understanding of how the ballot measure's funds would be utilized. They emphasized the importance of addressing systemic issues, racial disparities, and community involvement.

The advocacy efforts for transparency bore fruit when, on Aug. 29, 2023, Judge Tony Hazel ruled that an amendment to the ballot language for Measure 1 was necessary to ensure that voters were fully informed about its essential contents. This decision marked a significant victory for transparency and accountability advocates, ensuring that voters would have a clearer understanding of the measure's implications when casting their ballots.

The campaign faced adversity when proponents of Measure 1 launched a smear campaign against campaign managers Stan Harewood, a black man who is an active member of Eastern Washington's All of Us or None organization focusing on civil and family rights of currently and formerly incarcerated individuals, and Justice Forrall, a local activist with Spokane Community Against Racism who is frequently targeted by Spokane Police at rallies and government meetings. Both having had experience in Spokane County Jail, these attacks prompted discussions about the safety for individuals speaking out and what it means to have your rights restored if you continue to be targeted even after you've done your time and are a productive member of society, paying taxes, engaging in civic duties, caring for family and community.

Despite facing challenges such as smear campaigns and personal attacks, the political committee, Justice Not Jails, mobilized over 100 volunteers, raised \$500,000, and hired formerly incarcerated individuals to champion their cause. Justice Not Jails strategic plan led to a resounding victory.

The success of the campaign underscores the power of community organizing, grassroots mobilization, and centering the experiences of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people, emphasizing the importance of allowing those individuals with lived experiences to define their narratives.

For more information, visit [www.justicenotjails.vote/](http://www.justicenotjails.vote/) and [prisonerswithchildren.org/](http://prisonerswithchildren.org/). Locally on Facebook at [facebook.com/AoUoNEasternWA/](https://facebook.com/AoUoNEasternWA/).

### CULTURE

## A DIASPORA OF BLACK ART AND CULTURE IN SPOKANE

By **Zipporah Ingram**  
THE BLACK LENS

Being Black in America means we have a collective culture of shared histories from all around the world. Our fight for freedom and respect connects so many of us, from the Atlantan slave exchange, to the Haitian revolution, to the Kenyan Mau Mau rebellion.

From all corners of the world, to our country, our state and our city of Spokane, Black art is influential, beautiful, diverse and reflects many African, Caribbean and South American influences. Popular artists from Washington include Jimmi Hendrix, singer, songwriter and guitarist; Sir Mix-a-lot, rapper, songwriter and producer; and the Wailers, a reggae band formed from the remaining members of Bob Marley and the Wailers.

In their music, you hear stories of oppression, love, acceptance, struggle and culture that binds us as a community. You hear the sounds of the Black diaspora in their music, from Africa to Washington state.

In a region like ours with a smaller Black population, Black art can be harder to find. In my research, I came across an organization led by African American women started here in Spokane in 1913 to showcase Black art and

talent, the Wednesday Art Club.

In 1936, they hosted the Grace Campbell Exhibit, showcasing popular Black artists like Aaron Douglas, an American painter, illustrator and visual arts educator and major figure in the Harlem Renaissance, and William Arthur Cooper, an artist and minister that sought to depict the truth of African Americans, not caricatures, publishing a memorable portrait series that became a book, "A Portrayal of Negro Life."

The Wednesday Art Club hosted an annual Charity Ball, culture festivals, comedy shows, a "Tiny Tim" fund that gave college students scholarships, and a Negro Week in 1972, where Carl Maxey, the civil right activist and lawyer, spoke. Its impact was notable and not just for Spokane.

It unfortunately disbanded in the 1980s, reported Ehriza Chavez, of Spokane Historical.

As we make and celebrate Black History Month this February with the 2024 theme of "African Americans and the Arts," be encouraged to find opportunities to enjoy and support local Black Art and Culture in Spokane. Let's also find ways we can expand the visibility of Black art and Culture and create more spaces where we are seen, heard and cared for.

GONZAGA'S BLACK STUDENT UNION PRESENTS

### A CULTURAL EXPLOSION:

An Exploration of the Black Diaspora

February 10, 2025 | 6:00 PM- 8:00 PM | Doors Open at 5:00 PM  
Hemmingson Ballroom

Student Tickets: \$15	QR CODE	Community Tickets: \$16
Student Tables: \$100		Community Tables: \$116

## 18th Annual Viva Vino Gala

Nuestras Raíces invites you it's 18th annual fundraiser that benefits our youth program, LUNAA. Last year, we awarded \$24,000 in academic scholarships, \$3,500 in cultural youth scholarships, four summer paid fellowships, over 1,000 hours in youth peer counseling, and engaged 275 new youth in cultural events and civic engagement.

**PURCHASE TICKETS**

Scan Me

If you are not able to attend, we hope you consider donating to the scholarship fund or provide an item for our silent auction.

please contact us at [office@hbpaofspokane.org](mailto:office@hbpaofspokane.org)

**TO DONATE**

**FEBRUARY**

SATURDAY **17** 6 PM

DOORS OPENS AT 5:30PM

1110 W. RIVERSIDE AVE. SPOKANE, WA

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS, PLEASE VISIT [HBPAOFSPOKANE.ORG](http://HBPAOFSPOKANE.ORG) AND FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA NUESTRAS RAICES COMMUNITY CENTER

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE

# About our founder and Spokane legend Sandy Williams

Sandra Williams was an activist, lecturer, filmmaker and entrepreneur, with an extensive background addressing issues of discrimination, equity and social justice.

Sandra received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Washington State University and her master's degree in film/television production from the University of Southern California School of Cinema.

She was involved in anti-oppression/anti-discrimination work for nearly 40 years, as the coordinator of the Pride Center at Eastern Washington University, the executive director of Odyssey Youth Center, the Spokane Field Coordinator for Youth Suicide Prevention Program and as an HIV/AIDS prevention educator, focused on communities of color.

In addition to activism and grassroots organizing, Sandra effectively used the mediums of film, video, theater and the spoken word as tools to address discrimination and oppression. In 2008, she ventured into radio with the development of a bi-monthly public affairs program on KYRS Radio 92.3 FM in Spokane. Her program, "Revolutionary Spirituality," which aired for four years, looked at the diversity that exists within religious and spiritual beliefs, and addressed the ways that organized religion has been used as a weapon of oppression.

In 2013, focusing her attention primarily on the needs of Spokane's African American community, Sandra accepted an appointment by Governor Jay Inslee to the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs as the Eastern Washington representative and served from 2013 to 2018.

In 2018, Sandra spearheaded the development of the Carl Maxey Center, an African American cultural center located on Fifth Avenue in Spokane's East Central Neighborhood. The Maxey Center purchased its building in August 2018 with the goal of uplifting and empowering Spokane's African American community from



The Black Lens founder Sandy Williams.

## The Sandy Williams Justice Center

The Sandy Williams Justice Center provides limited civil legal aid services to assist unrepresented individuals representing themselves in court proceedings. It does not provide representation and services do not constitute an attorney-client relationship. Legal Clinic Consultations do not substitute for an attorney-client relationship.

Volunteer attorneys are available during Legal Clinics only. For questions about services, please email [selfhelp@carlmaxeycenter.org](mailto:selfhelp@carlmaxeycenter.org). Please do not email confidential information.

the inside out. It continues its transformation into a sustainable (green) and technologically innovative hub that focusing on Equity, Racial & Social Justice, Business & Workforce Development, Education & Advocacy and Cultural Enrichment.

Sandra Williams' contributions to the Spokane community, Washington state and beyond are immeasurable, and will not only be remembered but will serve as the foundation for future progress for Spokane's Black community. A pillar and Spokane treasure. Thank you, Sandy.



Natasha Hill, editor of The Black Lens.

## EDITOR

Continued from 1

of the importance of this platform and the power of the written word. I intend to protect the independence of The Black Lens, a newly formed Washington nonprofit entity, and ensure it continues its mission as an independent community publication focused on news, events, people, issues, and information

of importance to Spokane's Black community.

Of course, I could never do this alone, nor would I want to. It will take the support of the Black community, partnerships with the greater Spokane community, and a strong board to lead The Black Lens into this new era. Please join me in welcoming board members Robert Lloyd, Nikki Williams, Alethea Dumans, Michael Betheley, Luc Jamin III and Rick Williams.

It is my hope that the possibilities of this paper are endless and that Black people in Spokane see endless possibilities for themselves and our community. So, for this first edition, I share this sentiment: There is no platform or place too small, including Spokane, that we can't make change that impacts the whole world. Each of us is enough. Right where we are. No matter where or what we come from. Let's go!

## JOY

Continued from 1

across this world is a revolutionary act.

It was woven into the strategic military mind of Toussaint Louverture to defeat French colonizers in Haiti and fueled a revolution that insisted on the respect of our humanity. It compelled 15-year-old Claudette Colvin to keep sitting in her seat at the front of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1955, knowing the consequences but taking the risk anyhow, finding the determination as a youth to stand up against propagandized lies of inferiority to demand the change you want to see and helping desegregate public transportation.

Black Joy is the investment of those who came before us with the mandate that Black people be treated with dignity and that our humanity be seen. It dangles between the spaces of "meanwhile" and "despite," in the long, weary sighs and recurring disappointments, reminding us that nothing can break our soul or take our spirit.

James Baldwin said, "Fires can't be made with dead embers, nor can enthusiasm be stirred by

spiritless men. Enthusiasm in our daily work lightens effort and turns even labor into pleasant tasks."

Black Joy lives in the fires burning in our eyes and passion in our spirit. It reaches back to teach the next generation how to move forward and learn from the blueprints of our ancestors. It waters the seeds of resilience with tears of arduous labor, to make a better way, sprouting new carriers of the dream of a fair and equitable society.

Black Joy tells us we belong and is with us when we walk in that truth. Black Joy grows from our resilience, wrapping itself around our coming and going, affirming us, giving us relief, and reassuring us of our value.

It shows up at the dinner tables of our grandmas and aunts after a stressful week of mental tug of war in the workplace or school. It vibrates in the cackle of competitors in a game of spades. It pulsates in the rotation of Aretha's R-E-S-P-E-C-T on the turntable. It is where code-switching turns off, and vernacular and colloquialisms generate laughter and agreement among friends, away from the judgment of assimilation. It is in the hope of the collective, where many

hands make the work light. It straightens our spine as we recall the chastisement of our elders intended to guide, teach, and protect us, and understanding this is how they showed love.

Black Joy is in reconciliation after community and family rifts. It lives in tears of joy when detrimental cycles are finally broken and healing is possible. Black Joy does not always look like fixed problems. It beckons us to stand, unapologetically, in our existence with a free and informed mind. It is the awareness that life can knock us around, and the resolve in knowing that those hard knocks can build character and unleash our superpower: Black Joy.

Black Joy is an intrinsic force that anchors us through the turbulence, compelling us to hold on and fight, the same way it did for Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ida B. Wells, Myrlie Evers, Betty Shabazz, Mammie Till and countless others. It hums an overcomer's anthem that follows our brother James Baldwin's call to "rejoice in the force of life."

Black Joy exists to remind us that our humanity matters and is absolutely worth fighting for. Find it, share it and never lose it.

**"It's the honor of a lifetime to be the first woman & first person of color elected Spokane City Council President. I promise to make you proud."**

*Betsy Wilkerson*

## WILKERSON

Continued from 1

brings compassion, bravery and the type of government tenacity voters admire and that inspires our youth.

"It is an extreme honor to be the first woman of color council president for Spokane, but it comes with high expectations," Wilkerson said.

"I never saw myself as a barrier breaker - I am a mother and grandmother; I just wanted to do good for my family. An entire community is now looking at my leadership, especially as a Black woman and the first. People can and will judge Black people based on me. However, I have solace in knowing that the next person of color to hold this position will hopefully be able to normalize people of color in leadership roles in Spokane."

As City Council president, Wilkerson is committed to improving the quality of life for all residents, especially those historically marginalized and underserved. Wilkerson has prioritized advocating for the residents and businesses of East Central, and she has pledged to address issues such as affordable housing, economic development, public safety, and equity and justice in all aspects of city governance.

In her first year as a council member, Wilkerson engaged the East Central community around "The 5th Avenue Initiative Community Strategy." This strategy results from a multi-year process of community involvement and collaboration between residents, businesses, community leaders and the city government, along with other agencies such as the Washington State Department of Transporta-



COURTESY

Spokane City Council President Betsy Wilkerson

tation. WSDOT has committed to ensuring that the land is revitalized and released back to the East Central community after the displacement of homes during the construction of the North Spokane Corridor.

Understanding that Spokane has many pressure points, such as homelessness, the fentanyl crisis, and the mental and behavioral health epidemic, Wilkerson will seek the advice of industry experts, listen to those with lived experience, and work with fellow elected officials, local and statewide, to push forward any legislative policy, capital budgets, or grant funding that moves Spokane in the direction of equitable improvements and prosperity.

"There is an old saying that goes 'heavy is the head that wears the crown' or in my case, 'heavy is the

hand that carries the gavel.' Making the right decisions and navigating the bureaucratic nuances of city government takes a level of diplomacy that I did not imagine," Wilkerson said. "I won't be able to please everyone, but my goal is to make my family proud, serve my city and constituents to the best of my ability, and rest in that I cleared the path for others who look like me to come through."

Wilkerson transcended doubt, adversity and naysaying, victoriously to ensure the Black community is represented in Spokane. Her leadership and commitment to serving the people of Spokane have earned her the trust and support of her constituents, and her election is a symbol of hope and progress.

We celebrate Wilkerson in making Black history in Spokane.

## GARDNER

Continued from 1

Francis Scott Elementary was Sheridan and when Chase Middle School was Libby. She was raised by her grandmother, Sarah Gardner, known locally and throughout the Pacific Northwest for having a heart against hatred.

Like Lisa, Sarah weaved her way into the heart of the Spokane community. She put down roots in East Central, bringing sunshine to what some considered dark areas of town. Sarah's Beauty Shop was known for welcoming the walks of life other establishments might not support: pimps, preachers, prostitutes and the Brown people down the street were all invited into Sarah's community. In 1987, Sarah ran for a City Council seat to ensure improvements to her community. She was killed two days after she lost her City Council seat race. No one was ever convicted of Sarah's death and her case was sadly closed by the Spokane Police Department.

The loss of Sarah Gardner was felt heavily. It planted a seed that spread throughout the community, compelling many East Central residents to carry forward her legacy, although none quite like her own granddaughter, Lisa.

In 2020, Lisa Gardner stepped into a role any grandmother would be proud of, but especially hers, serving as the city communications director. She now adds Spokane NAACP president to her duties. Gardner joined the Spokane NAACP three years ago after a conversation with then-president Kiantha Duncan.

"It was through a conversation about how Spokane has changed over the years," Gardner said. "Mrs. Duncan then went on to say, 'You have a legacy,

## NAACP meetings

To join, visit [naacpspokane.com/contact](http://naacpspokane.com/contact).

**GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** Third Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

**HEALTHCARE COMMITTEE:** Second Monday of each month at 5:15 p.m.

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE:** Second Wednesday via zoom at 7 p.m.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** Fourth Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** First Tuesday at 5 p.m.

Lisa. Your grandmother lived and died for the cause of bettering Spokane for Black people, so it only makes sense for you to join NAACP and pick up where your granny left off."

Lisa tells us she didn't expect to get swept up in the cause.

"Soon, I found that I kept volunteering for speaking engagements, to write NAACP articles for the Black Lens, and assisting with event planning; just things that I knew I could do to help amplify NAACP," Gardner said.

After working alongside Duncan, then serving as second vice president over the last year with past Chapter President Kurtis Robinson, Gardner holds the key to one of the oldest NAACP chapters in the U.S.

"I plan to continue to do what I set out to do: mobilize the message of the NAACP of social justice," Gardner says.

With her local roots, Lisa believes Spokane is a great community and sees folks willing to do the work without regard for personal reward.

"They have to love their community to a point where money or title doesn't matter," Gardner said. "The only thing that matters is making sure Spokane is a safe place for all of us."

Much like her grandmother, Lisa is bringing people together.

"I typically am the one to shy away from leadership roles and be the

worker bee," she said. "I still want to continue being that worker bee, but I also want to use my position as the president to unlock and open doors. To pull chairs from out the corner and sit at the table."

The NAACP president knows the sacrifices that come with holding a position that advocates for powerful issues.

"In history, activists and advocates have been killed: MLK, Malcolm X, President Kennedy. Even my own grandmother," Gardner said. "All left a legacy of fighting for basic human rights. No one should have to fight for human rights, but here we are in 2024, still fighting, and it will happen long after we're gone if we don't stay vigilant and persistent in eliminating hate."

With changes in city and county administrations, she is ready for a fresh start.

"It is imperative that we're in lock-step with the Office of Civil Rights when it comes to social justice in Spokane," Gardner said.

With a new year and a new chapter president, Lisa has confidence in her leadership and the NAACP's membership.

"Spokane's branch of NAACP was established in 1919, so for over 100 years, NAACP has been the primary organization fighting for social justice. It's time to grow our army of soldiers in this continued fight," Gardner said.

# BLACK BUSINESS DIRECTORY

**4AM Vintage** – Vintage clothing store owned by Christian Jones. Contact (832) 652-4580 or coojones4am@gmail.com. 1009 N. Washington St., Suite A, Spokane, 99201. Instagram: 4am.spokane.

**A Do Good Cleaning Service LLC** – Janitorial service by Daryl Givens Jr. Contact (509) 714-8113 or dgizzle21@gmail.com.

**A Man & A Truck** – Junk removal by Demetrius Bell. Contact (509) 319-8860, (509) 319-7126 or amanandatruckspokane@gmail.com.

**A Truly Reliable Cleaning Services LLC** – Janitorial service by Tatiana Ross. Contact (678) 974-6907 or trulyreliablecleaning@gmail.com.

**A Woman's Worth** – Woman Empowerment Group by Gaye Hallman. Contact (509) 290-7687, (509) 385-7074 or ghallman@aww.community. 59 E. Queen Ave., Suite 210, Spokane, 99206.

**Allie & Austin Accounting Services** – Bookkeeping by Dorothy Hood. Contact (509) 242-3324 or dhood@allieaustin.com. P.O. Box 142207 Spokane Valley, 99214.

**Allowing Change, LLC.** – Pre- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Certified Life & Relationship Coach Brittney Richards (she/her). Contact (509) 795-0376 or allowingchange@gmail.com. 9 S. Washington St., Suite 420, Spokane, 99201.

**Andrews Care** – Assisted Living Facility for Adults with Disabilities owned by Ashley Andrews. Contact (509) 939-7218 or ashandrews@comcast.net. P.O. Box 1629, Veradale, Wash., 99037.

**Spokane Beard Papa's** – Cream puff bakery owned by Marc Bryant. Contact (509) 290-5128 or spokanebeardpapas@gmail.com. 4808 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 204, Spokane Valley, 99212.

**Beauchamp and Chase** – Luxury Soaps and Comfort Wear by Genesis Veronon. Contact (509) 608-1511 or beauchampandchase@gmail.com.

**Bethely Entertainment Group** – Owned by Michael Bethely. Contact (509) 710-1338 or mbethely@be2become.com. P.O. Box 28931, Spokane, 99228.

**Betty Jean's BBQ** – Restaurant owned by Omar Jones. Contact (509) 828-5931 or bettyjeansbbq@yahoo.com. 2926 E. 29th Ave., Spokane, 99223. Online at www.bettyjeansbbq.com, Instagram: Betty\_jeans\_bbq and Facebook: Bettyjeansbbq.

**Brendan Blocker Realty Services** – Real Estate Agent Brendan Blocker. Contact (509) 290-9645 or brendan.blocker@gmail.com. 4407 N. Division St., Suite 200, Spokane, 99207. Online at brendan.spokanearealestate.com or Facebook: Blocker Real Estate.

**Brittany Trambitas Hair Design** – Natural hair stylist Brittany Trambitas. Contact (509) 768-3925 or btrambitas1228@gmail.com. 802 E. 29th Ave., Suite 14, Spokane, 99203.

**B & B Pro Video** – Video Production by DeShawn Bedford and Michael Bethely. Contact (509) 818-0864 or admin@bbpvideo.com. 1011 W. Railroad Alley, Suite 100, Spokane, 99201. Online at bbpvideo.com.

**Cascadia Public House** – Restaurant owned by Jordan Smith. Contact (509) 321-7051 or info@cascadiapublichouse.com. 6314 N. Ash St., Spokane, 99208.

**Chicken-N-More** – Restaurant owned by Bob and Teresa Hemphill. Contact (509) 838-5071 or manysmiles@comcast.net. 414½ W. Sprague Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**Clear View** – Window cleaning by Limmie Smith. Contact (509) 319-7526 or fresh00274@icloud.com. 3011 E. Columbia Ave., Apt 3, Spokane, 99208.

**Dennis Mitchell Empowerment Seminars** – Education services by Dennis Mitchell. Contact (509) 981-0646 or dennispeaks@gmail.com. 9116 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 66, Spokane Valley, 99206.

**DM & Owl** – Vending service by Deandre Meighan. Contact (702) 954-2562 or dm.owl247@gmail.com.

**Discovery Counseling Group LLC** – Mental/ Behavioral Health Counseling by Melissa Mace. Contact (509) 413-1193 or info@discovery-counseling.org. 1008 N. Washington St., Spokane, 99201.

**Ebony Hair Salon** – Salon owned by Pam Thornton. Contact (509) 325-4089 or ebhair3@yahoo.com. 3125 N. Division St., Spokane, 99207.

**Ethan Mendoza-Pena Insurance Agency, LLC** – Insurance Agency owned by Ethan Mendoza-Pena, M.A. Contact (509) 590-4726 or emendoza@farmersagent.com. 2010 N. Ruby St., Spokane, 99207.

**Exclusive Barber Shop** – Barber shop owned by Keno Branch. Contact (509) 862-4723 or branchingoutbiz@gmail.com. 1423 N. Argonne Road, Spokane Valley, 99212.

**Fantasy Kleaning LLC** – Commercial Janitorial Service by Nathaniel Harris. Contact (509) 890-0819 or fantasy.kleaning@gmail.com.

**Fresh Soul** – Restaurant owned by Michael Brown. Contact (509) 242-3377 or spokanereunion@gmail.com. 3029 E. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202. Online at freshsoulrestaurant.com.

**Gorilla Park Music** – Music production by Brandon Batts. Contact (256) 642-6463 or gorillapark2@gmail.com.

**I Hear You Sis LLC** – Nutrition/health coaching by Prosperetti Coleman. Contact (509) 995-7044 or ihearyousis1@gmail.com. Online at www.ihearyousis.com, TikTok: tiktok.com/@i.hearyousis.

**Inter-Tribal Beauty** – Master esthetician, Reiki practitioner and TV/film makeup artist Octavia Lewis. Contact (509) 201-8664 or octavia@intertribalbeauty.co. 59 E. Queen Ave., Spokane, 99207. Online at www.intertribalbeauty.com, Instagram: instagram.com/inter\_tribal\_beauty/.

**JSandoval Real Estate** – Real Estate Broker Jacquelynn Sandoval. Contact (509) 460-8197 or JSandoval@windermere.com. 1620 E. Indiana Ave., Suite 1250, Spokane Valley, 99216. Instagram: instagram.com/thealestateantie/.

**Koala Koi Massage** – Massage therapy by Joy Robinson. Contact (509) 900-8968 or koalakoimassage@gmail.com. 1008 N. Washington St., Spokane, 99201.

**Lacquered and Luxe** – Nail salon owned by Lisa-Mae Brown. Contact (509) 993-7938 or brownlisamae@yahoo.com. 33 E. Lincoln Road, Suite 205, Spokane, 99208.

**Legacy Barbershop** – Barbershop owned by Dougie Fades. Contact (509) 315-8312. 28 E. Sharp Ave., Spokane, 99202.

**Lilac City Legends Inc.** – Professional sports team owned by Michael Bethely. Contact (509) 774-4704, info@lilaccitylegends.com or michael@lilaccitylegends.com. 631 S. Richard Allen Court, Suite 205, Spokane, 99202. Also at P.O. Box 28931, Spokane, 99228.

**Maranatha Evangelical Church** – Church owned by Luc Fils Jasmin. Contact (509) 389-4539 or eem.maranatha@gmail.com. 631 S. Richard Allen Court, Suite 211, Spokane, 99202.

**Mary Kay** – Beauty Consultant Nicole Mills. Contact (509) 666-4929, (252) 365-4971 or MKwithNicole@gmail.com. Online at mkwithnicole.wordpress.com, Facebook: facebook.com/MKwithNicoleM.

**Maxey Law Office** – Lawyer Bevan Maxey. Contact (509) 326-0338 or info@maxeylaw.com. 1835 W. Broadway Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**Mo-Nu Hair City** – Wig retailer Jackie Douglas. Contact (509) 443-3193 or jazzyjackie9@yahoo.com. 4750 N. Division St., Spokane, 99207.

**Moore's Boarding Home** – Residential care by Betsy Wilkerson. Contact (509) 747-1745 or betsy@mooresassistedliving.com. 1803 W. Pacific Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**MoVin Properties** – Property management by Latrice Williams. Contact (509) 565-0325 or movinproperties@gmail.com. 5723 N. Division St., Spokane, 99201.

**Natasha L. Hill, P.S.** – Lawyer Natasha Hill. Contact (509) 350-2817, (509) 357-1757 or natasha@nlhlawoffices.com. Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. Second Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**New Developed Nations** – Level 1 & 2 Substance Use and Mental Health Outpatient Facility owned by Rickey "Deekon" Jones. Contact (509) 964-1747 or info@newdevelopednations.com. 3026 E. Fifth Ave. Spokane, 99202.

**Nina Cherie Couture** – Bridal boutique owned by Nina Nichols. Contact (509) 240-1782 or info@ninacherie.com. 827 W. First Ave., Suite 109, Spokane, 99201.

**Operation Healthy Family** – Dental and youth programs by Tommy Williams. Contact (509) 720-4645 or tommy@ohfspokane.org. Good News Dental is located at 3009 S. Mount Vernon St. at (509) 443-4409. Emmanuel Fitness is located at 631 S. Richard Allen Court at (509) 822-7058.

**Parkview Early Learning Center** – Early Learning Center owned by Luc Jasmin. Contact (509) 326-5610 or parkviewelc@gmail.com. 5122 N. Division St. Spokane, 99207.

**Pro Mobile Auto Detail LLC** – Auto detailer Antonio Holder. Contact (509) 995-9950 or antonio@spokanepromobile.com.

**Provisional Solutions** – Counseling and coaching by Charina Carothers, LICSW. Contact (509) 795-0150 or info@psurnotalone.com. Richard Allen Court, Spokane, 99202.

**Quality Blacktop & Striping** – Residential and commercial blacktop by Barrington Young Jr. Contact (509) 251-6019 or young.barrington@gmail.com. 5759 E. Broadway Ave., Spokane, 99212.

**Queen of Sheba** – Restaurant owned by Almaz Ainuu. Contact (509) 328-3958 or info@queenofsheeba.com. 2621 W. Mallon Ave., Suite 426, Spokane, 99201.

**Quick and Classy Auto Customs** – Mechanic Jamar Dickerson. Contact (509) 315-5090, (509) 795-6065 or 2gn2tythoon@gmail.com. 3627 E. Broadway Ave., Spokane, 99201.

**Share Farm Inc.** – Online farmers market and supply chain logistics company owned by Vincent Peak. Contact (509) 995-8451 or vince@sharefarm.com.

**Smoo Cutz Barber Shop** – Barber shop owned by Jason "Smoo" Watson. Contact (509) 703-7949 or jsmooov923@gmail.com. Two locations at 13817 E. Sprague Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216, and 14700 E. Indiana Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216.

**Southeast Daycare Center** – Nonprofit Child Care Center owned by director Shug Vilella and the League of Women for Community Action. Contact (509) 535-4794 or lwca.sedc@gmail.com. 2227 E. Hartson Ave., Spokane, 99202.

**Spacehub Production** – Photography Studio owned by event photographer Eugene Muzing. Contact (509) 216-1072 or spacehub@gmail.com. 1023 W. Sixth Ave., Building 1, Spokane, 99204.

**Vision Properties** – Real estate firm owned by Latrice Williams. Contact (509) 431-0773 or transactions.thevision@gmail.com. 5723 N. Division St., Spokane, 99201.

**3 Performance Institute** – Sports performance and physical therapy by Louis Hurd III. Contact (509) 869-2344 or Louis@spokane3pi.com. 211 W. Second Ave., Spokane, WA 99205. Online at spokane3pi.com.

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COURTESY

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was organized April 6, 1890, by the Rev. A.C. Augustus in the home of Mrs. D.F.C. Washington at South Steven Street, between Second Avenue and the Northern Pacific Railroad Tracks. The first pastor was the Rev. G. W. White. The Rev. Benjamin D. Watson, Sr., is the current pastor.

## AREA BLACK CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES

**Holy Temple Church of God in Christ** – Auxiliary Bishop Ezra Kinlow. 806 W. Indiana Ave, Spokane, 99205. Sunday School is 9:45 a.m. Worship Service is 11 a.m.

**Bethel African Methodist Episcopal** – The Rev. Benjamin D. Watson, Sr. 645 S. Richard Allen Court, Spokane, 99202. Sunday School is 9:30 a.m. Sunday Service is 11 a.m.

**Calvary Baptist** – The Rev. Dr. C. W. Andrews. 203 E. Third Ave., Spokane, WA, 99202. Sunday School is 9 a.m. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

**Morning Star Baptist** – The Rev. Walter Kendricks. 3909 W. Rowan Ave., Spokane, 99205. Sunday School is 9:30 a.m. Sunday Service is 10:45 a.m.

**New Hope Baptist** – The Rev. James Watkins. 9021 E.

Boone Ave., Spokane Valley, 99212. Sunday Service is 10:45 a.m.

**Saving Grace Ministries** – The Rev. Earon Davis Jr. 3151 E. 27th Ave., Spokane, 99223. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

**Word of Faith** – The Rev. Otis Manning. 9212 E. Montgomery Ave., Spokane Valley, 99206. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

**Jesus is the Answer** – The Rev. Shon L. Davis. 1803 E. Desmet St. Spokane, 99202. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

**Restoration Church** – The Rev. Andre A. Dove. 2815 W. Sunset Blvd., Spokane, 99224. Sunday Service is 10:45 a.m.

**Mt. Olive Baptist Church** – The Rev. Patrick Hamm. 2026 E. Fourth Ave., Spokane, 99202. Sunday Service is 11 a.m. Wednesday Bible Study is 6 p.m.

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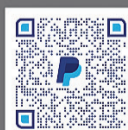
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*A complete list of donors was announced at the Feb. 1 Black Voices event at Gonzaga University.*

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