

DEMANDING ACTION

Wilson Elementary's racist flyer shines spotlight on generational trauma in Spokane Public Schools system. PAGES 6-7

HARASSMENT OF NCAA TEAM HIGHLIGHTS WHAT OUR PEOPLE HAVE LONG KNOWN

Utah basketball team's experience in Coeur d'Alene is part of a long history of hate in our region. Experts demand future change. PAGE 5

THE BLACK LENS

APRIL 2024 - VOL. 9 - ISSUE NO. 3



THE UNSUNG HEROES Jackie Robinson, Negro Leagues and the Black Press

Few stories resonate in American sports history as profoundly as the integration of baseball. At its heart lies the courageous journey of Jackie Robinson, who broke



By Natasha Hill THE BLACK LENS BOARD MEMBER



Major League Baseball's color barrier in 1947. But behind Robinson's iconic strides lay the rich tapestry of the Negro Leagues and the pivotal role played by the Black press in fostering change.

The Negro Leagues, born out of necessity due to segregation in the early 20th century, became a beacon of hope and talent for African American baseball players. Teams like the Kansas City Monarchs, Homestead Grays, and Birmingham Black Barons showcased extraordinary skill and passion, captivating audiences across the country. Yet, their triumphs unfolded in the shadows of mainstream baseball, barred from the Major Leagues solely because of the color of their skin.

Enter the Black press, an indispensable voice in the fight for equality. Newspapers such as the Chicago Defender, Pittsburgh Courier, and Baltimore Afro-American served as megaphones for African American commu-

See ROBINSON, 10

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH MONTH

THE SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD

Grassroots approach helps to improve outcomes for Black mothers

By April Eberhardt THE BLACK LENS

Black maternal mortality is a reality that pierces through conversations about health equity. It leaves a gaping hole where questions about warning signs and red flags linger once hindsight is too late. Headaches, swelling, erratic blood pressure readings, internal bleeding, pain, blurred vision; these scenarios can play out to an unnecessary, fatal end when Black women are ignored during postpartum care. Compound the dismissal of critical symptoms with the caste system that engulfs health insurance, and you have a recipe for disaster. Ironically, even in cases where private, expensive insurance prevails, the threat of Black maternal mortality is still very much present and even money and resources are not a fail-safe. We must beg the question and demand answers: Why?

Stephaine Courtney explains that racism is at the core of this and until we acknowledge that, we cannot truly move forward. From the very beginning, Black women have been communal in the birthing experience by way of midwives who acquired knowledge on how to navigate pregnancy when the world didn't care about their survival. Changing the system and community in correlation to how people understand giving birth and the children who are coming into the world is paramount. She is committed to answering this question out loud. She is equally dedicated to developing solutions that emphasize support, agency, and centering the community as a source of power and strength for Black women during prenatal and postpartum care.



ULYSSES CURRY/INATAI FOUNDATION

Stephaine Courtney founded the nonprofit Shades of Motherhood Network in 2021.

tum care. Courtney started The Shades of Motherhood Network (SOMN), a nonprofit, in 2021 out of need. This has become her answer.

Since what is past is prologue, the lack of respectful care for Black people was the catalyst for Courtney's SOMN. As a part of the Learning Project Network, Courtney's business centers around training, social justice, and art activism, like her Black maternal health art exhibit.

"We realized that we needed to shine a light on the crisis that was taking place with Black women," she said. "Black women are 3 to 4 times more likely to die due to pregnancy related issues, and 60% of those are preventable. One of those measures of preventability is doulas.

"Research shows that doulas decrease C-section rates, they are 6 to 11 times more likely to spend time with families or individuals as they are going through prenatal and postpartum, and

See MOTHERHOOD, 10

Moms and their children

Selected statistics from the ninth annual "State of the World's Mothers" report:

The best places ...

- 1 Sweden
- 2 Norway
- 3 Iceland
- 4 New Zealand
- 5 Denmark
- 6 Australia
- 7 Finland
- 8 Ireland
- 9 Germany
- 10 France

... and the worst to be a mom

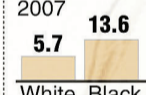
- 146 Niger
- 145 Chad
- 144 Yemen
- 143 Sierra Leone
- 142 Angola
- 141 Guinea-Bissau
- 140 Eritrea
- 139 Djibouti
- 138 Mali
- 137 Ethiopia

Status in the U.S.

One reason the U.S. ranks 27th is the nation's infant and maternal mortality rates, which are particularly high for African-Americans

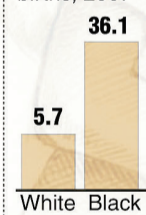
Infant mortality rate

Per 1,000 live births, 2007



Maternal mortality rate

Per 100,000 live births, 2007



© 2008 MCT

Source: Save the Children Graphic: Pat Carr, Lee Hulteng

Providence aims to diversify nursing program, shares information with Rogers students

By Jordy Blaine THE BLACK LENS

The United States is facing a health care worker shortage and the NAACP and Providence brought in Rogers High School students to educate them on how they can answer this necessary call.

The NAACP partnered with

Sacred Heart Hospital and Providence to bring the annual Rogers High School Health Care Career Day to a new level in 2024.

The James W. Mounsey Clinical Simulation Lab held in February, gave students like Marissa Angel hope for a bright and successful future in the medical field. A junior at Rogers, Angel has wanted to be in the medical

field for a long time. She lost her mom to cardiac problems and was moved to medicine to help others like her mom. Taking classes like chemistry, physics, and soon AP Biology, Angel has always had an eagerness to learn about the field so she may one day help save lives.

See NURSING, 10



Marissa Angel, Rogers High

INSIDE



AFRICAN AMERICAN GRADUATION HONORS BLACK EXCELLENCE SINCE '90S

This year's celebration honoring students from K-12 schools, colleges and universities in area will be held at Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center at Gonzaga University on May 4. Get registered by April 12. PAGE 2



LEGISLATIVE RECAP: PASSED BILLS AND AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT YEAR

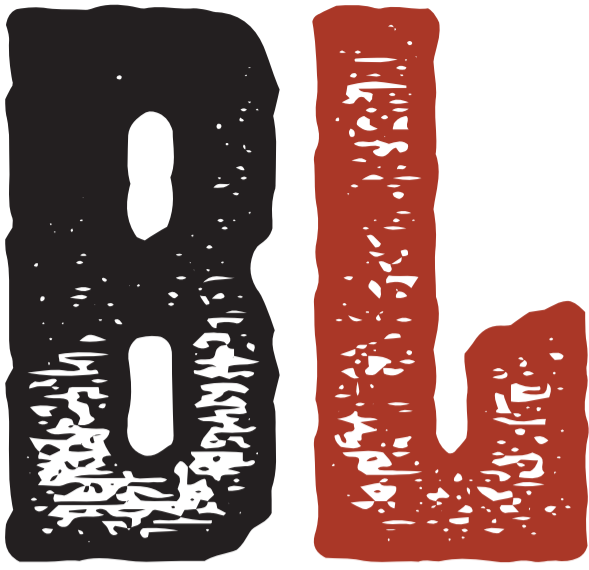
Washington state legislative session ending March 7 included mix of wins, losses and extension of Sandy Williams' vision for East Central. Plus, Natasha Hill announces run for 3rd Legislative District seat. PAGE 3



COUNTRY MUSIC HAS LONG HISTORY, ROOTS IN BLACK CULTURE

Country music, often associated with rural, Southern white culture is facing a reckoning. Black musicians have been making significant contributions to country genres since inception and can no longer be ignored. PAGE 13

CELEBRATING BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH



NEWS

BLACKLENSNEWS.COM

We want to hear from you!

THE BLACK LENS would like to hear from the Black community in Spokane on how it believes Spokane can live its motto, "IN SPOKANE, WE ALL BELONG." Please send ideas to editor@blacklensnews.com with the motto in the subject line.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAFSA

FREE MONEY, LOW-INTEREST LOANS

By April Eberhardt THE BLACK LENS

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as FAFSA, is something every graduating senior or student pursuing post-secondary education and training should apply for.

The FAFSA must be renewed each year a student continues in post-secondary education. Oct. 1 is the usual time the FAFSA opens. However, due to changes this year, the application open date was delayed to Dec. 31, and it is currently open for students and their families to complete.

A common misconception about the FAFSA is that it is only applicable to colleges and universities. There are many other education and training programs that also qualify for financial aid. These include cosmetology programs, specific allied health education and training programs, massage training schools, and vocational programs.

The FAFSA has undergone major changes, and the term contributor is now a part of the language regarding who should complete a portion of the FAFSA on behalf of the student. Students under 24 years of age, who are not deemed independent, need contributors to complete the FAFSA. Typically, this is the custodial parent or guardian, who provides financial support for the student more than half of the year, and whose tax information must be used to help verify eligibility for funding. As a part of the new changes, step-parents are considered contributors.

Under the umbrella of financial aid are federal grants, state grants, and low interest federal student loans. The PELL grant is the most known source of federal funding for income eligible students. In Washington, when students apply for FAFSA, they are also applying for state aid, a separate pot of money that can offer grants. The Washington College Grant is an example of another opportunity for students to receive funding.

Many income-eligible students who attended middle school in the state of Wash-

ington were enrolled in the College Bound Scholarship Program. Essentially, this program works in collaboration with the federal student aid program to offer additional grant funding. Students who are in the foster care system in Washington also have greater access to funding because of high need due via the Passports to Careers Program.

Federal student loans are available for both students and parents. Students pursuing an undergraduate degree are capped each year on how much they can borrow; this amount increases yearly, and these loans belong to the student. Parents also have to borrow federal Parent Plus Loans on behalf of their student. These loans are also offered at a lower interest rate via federal loan servicers and belong to the parent. A credit check is done to determine eligibility. Student loans can be declined and do not have to be a part of the financial aid package if that is not desired. If students and parents borrow student loans, they must complete online loan entrance counseling and sign a Master Promissory Note via www.studentaid.gov. Loans go into repayment after 6 months of ending an education program, whether by graduating or discontinuance. Students pursuing post-bachelor's graduate degrees are no longer eligible for federal grants, but there are student loans available.

Once the FAFSA is complete, the Department of Federal Student Aid looks at all factors related to a family's income and uses a Student Aid Index to determine how much funding the student is eligible for.

Washington state students who are undocumented or do not qualify for federal aid because of immigration status cannot complete the FAFSA but can complete the Washington Application for State Financial Aid by going to wsac.wa.gov.

If you have questions related to completing financial aid, please contact April Eberhardt, M.Ed., who has been trained in financial aid and can provide support and resources via e-mail at: aprilriv1976@gmail.com.

NEWS

FROM THE BOARD

CELEBRATING ALL OUR DIMENSIONS

By Renika Williams THE BLACK LENS

We too often reserve our deepest appreciations and celebrations for the moments that follow loss. My mother, Sandy Williams, a visionary Black activist who we tragically lost in 2022, taught us through her life and even more in her passing, the immense value of giving flowers to our community members while they can still smell them.

Losing my mother was the hardest thing I've ever had to go through, and I can't say that I've dealt with it very much at all, to be honest. The outpouring of love and the rallying around her legacy has been overwhelming in both good and bad ways. While it shows what we, as a community, are capable of when we come together to honor and continue the work of those who've paved the way for us, we also tend to paint these visionaries - these leaders - as one-dimensional heroes. My mother was a radical idealist, true, but



ULYSSES CURRY/INATAI FOUNDATION

Renika Williams speaks at the Black Lens launch party in February.

she was also complex and sometimes her life wasn't as neat and unblemished as the celebrations of her life would make it seem.

And it begs the question: Why do we only celebrate those we deem perfect and special? And why do we only see people as special once they've moved on to another life?

Our Spokane Black community is a tapestry of stories, dreams, hardships and achievements that too often go unrecognized until it's too late. Sometimes these stories are messy.

Sometimes they are complicated. Sometimes, they are brimming with intricacies, triumphs, and yes, even flaws. But these stories, ALL stories, illustrate the rich, vibrant lives led by our community.

The Black Lens acts as a celebration of who we are in all our dimensions. These aspects of our humanity deserve recognition and celebration too. It's the laughter amidst sorrow, the resilience in the face of adversity, and the everyday heroism that should make the headlines of our lives.

Reflecting on my experiences, especially in moments of flux and vacillation, I've learned the value of pausing to appreciate what we have, and where we are in our life journeys right now. So, let's make it a point to celebrate all the bits of our lives, not just the shiny parts. Let's hand out those flowers amid the chaos and the uncertainty. Let's make sure we're celebrating each other today, not waiting until it's too late.

Life's too short and too filled with twists and turns to only acknowledge the good stuff after the fact. My mom lived knowing that every part of her journey, every challenge, and every victory, was worth recognizing. And that's how we should be looking at each other - celebrating the full story, not just the highlights.

So, let's do it. Let's celebrate the whole messy, beautiful, complicated thing now. Because honestly, waiting until someone's not around to hear it? That's just missing the point.

African American Graduation has celebrated Black excellence since '90s

By Dr. Jeanie Baynes THE BLACK LENS

IF YOU GO

28th Annual African American Graduation Celebration

WHEN: Saturday, May 4 from 2-4 p.m.

WHERE: Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga University

REGISTRATION: Deadline on Friday, April 12, via aagspokane.org/

The African American Graduation Committee has been organizing and funding the Annual African American Graduation Ceremony for 28 years. This is a cultural salute for outstanding academic achievement and honor students of African American/Black descent graduating from K-12 schools, colleges and universities from Spokane and the surrounding areas. This year's celebration will be held at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center at Gonzaga University on May 4 from 2-4 p.m.

The organization of the African American Graduation began at the Spokane Community College under the leadership of Dr. James Williams in the early 1996. Dr. Williams was the Dean of College of Arts at California State Polytechnic University and became the first Black president in Spokane's Community College system. He earned his doctoral degree in education from Washington State University.

The Ceremony is representative of African and African American culture and heritage, embraces the value of community and scholarship, and culminates with a Kente Stole presentation, awarding of the scholastic achievement medals, and scholarship recipients. From the singing of the Black National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" to the dancing to the step show on stage from Black students to the treasured remarks from a few Black profes-

sors and administrators who encouraged our students along the way.

This is a celebration for graduates to be recognized for their accomplishments and provided an opportunity to honor significant people who have helped them achieve their goal. Students are honored together in one setting and their families also get the opportunity to celebrate their hard work and dedication. It is a celebration of Black Excellence!!

This annual celebration gives African-American, African, and Black-identifying students and families an opportunity to celebrate blackness and the success of students attending our schools. For many underrepresented and first-generation students, a college diploma represents a long road marked by hard work and success - not just for the individual students, but also for their family, friends and supporters. These smaller cultural events provide more intimate settings for students to share these personal milestones with their communities and hear the achievements and inspiration from the speakers.

Although our language and home country were stripped from us, the

wearing of the Kente cloth is a reminder of our interconnectedness, echoing the African proverb, "It takes a village." During the Kente Ceremony, each graduate will be gifted a Kente stole. Kente is native to Ghana and was developed in the 17th century by the Ashanti people. It has its roots in a long tradition of African weaving, dating back to about 3000 B.C. Often reserved for royalty, the stole is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, religious beliefs, social values and political thoughts. Students with a G.P.A. of 3.0 will receive scholastic achievement medals during the Kente Ceremony and the Richard B. Williams scholarship recipients are acknowledged.

The scholarship is named after Mr. Richard B. Williams who spent his entire life giving back to his Spokane community, through his commitments, and support of many organizations both in time and financially. In 2016, following his passing in 2015, the African American Graduation Committee elected to create the Richard B. Williams Memorial Scholarship in his honor, a fund intended to assist African American high



school graduates entering into higher education. Mr. Williams was active at Eastern Washington University and in the Africana Studies Program for more than twenty years. Those who knew Richard speak to his generosity and willingness to always offer a helping hand, to always ask, "What do you need and how can I help you?" He was also a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., and was one of the four founders of Chi Alpha Alpha, the local Spokane Chapter.

Increased community support is key in helping the African American Graduation Committee continue to provide this celebration for Spokane and the surrounding area students as our black community grows. Please consider supporting African American Graduation with a donation to: African American Graduation Committee, PO Box 40395, Spokane, WA 99220. For more information, go to www.aagspokane.org or spokaneaag@gmail.com.

THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane's Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS FOUNDED EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

THE BLACK LENS INTERIM EDITOR & BOARD MEMBERS

Natasha Hill, Rick Williams, Renika Williams, Luc Jasmin III, Alethea Sharea Dumas, Robert J. Lloyd and Michael Bethely

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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

Mixed results from Legislature

By Jonathan Teeters
THE BLACK LENS

The 2024 Washington state legislative session ended on March 7 and included a mix of promising wins and some notably disappointing losses that will reverberate for some time to come. Most notably, legislators are heading home from Olympia without fully addressing critical housing affordability issues affecting over a million renter households across the state, including those in Spokane.

Despite the continuation of historic investments from the 2023 session, key bills like rent stabilization did not pass, despite significant compromise by supporters, highlighting the session's limitations and its impact on Black, Indigenous and People of Color and financially constrained households.

The focus was partially diverted by debates on six ballot initiatives, three of which legislators passed during the session in lieu of sending them to voters in November that addressed issues of vehicular pursuit regulations, educational content restrictions, and preventing income tax on gross income. These legislative decisions, coupled with the announcement of Sen. Andy Billig's retirement and the upcoming changes in Spokane's legislative representation, underscore the session's ongoing challenges in effectively addressing the region's housing crisis.

The good

The 2024 Washington state legislative session saw significant achievements, with lawmakers focusing on housing affordability, economic development and inclusivity. Key legislation aimed at combating the housing crisis and spurring economic growth was sent to the governor for signing:

Professional licensure expansion: Simplifies professional licensure for all individuals, enhancing workforce inclusivity and economic contribution.

Workforce housing accelerator: Creates a fund to aid the development of low-income housing, making affordable options more accessible.

Co-living housing options: Eases restrictions on co-living spaces, offering economical alternatives to traditional housing.

Nonprofit housing development: Grants local governments flexibility to offer property tax exemptions for nonprofits providing affordable rental housing built with city and county funds, directly addressing the housing shortage.

Transit-oriented housing: Adjusts housing requirements near transit hubs, boosting urban housing density and affordability.

These successes mark a deliberate move

Sandy's Vision: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

State Sen. Twina Nobles, D-Fircrest, has ensured that the Sandy Williams Connecting Communities Program will not expire. Nobles sponsored Senate Bill 6283, which eliminates the end date for this program passed this legislative session. This program, administered by the Department of Transportation, is part of the Move Ahead Washington package in 2022 that allocated \$50 million over five years to:

- Repair transportation inequities by directing investments to environmentally overburdened, vulnerable and underserved communities.
- Improve access to community destinations and services.
- Provide contracting opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses and community-based organizations.

Sandy led the efforts in Spokane to reconnect the East Central Neighborhood she lived in after Interstate 90 split it in half.

"Sandy dedicated her life to healing and uplifting Black communities in Spokane," Nobles said. "By getting rid of the expiration date, we ensure her legacy lives on and continue to make a difference in our communities most in need."

The new law will go into effect June 6.

by the Legislature to address the housing crisis, enhance inclusivity and support community economic participation, notably benefiting BIPOC individuals in Spokane.

The bad

It wasn't all good though. Several significant bills failed to pass in the 2024 legislative session, underscoring the complexities of legislative processes and the difficulty in implementing reforms:

Rent stabilization: Proposed a 7% annual cap on rent and fee increases, with exemptions and enhanced tenant protections, including better notice for rent hikes and limitations on fees. Aimed at fairness in rental agreements, it included landlord and tenant support measures.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - TANF: Sought to extend eligibility for parents with children under 2, aligning with WorkFirst participation exemptions to support working families.

Integration of tribal entities in involuntary treatment actions: Aimed at integrating tribes in involuntary treatment processes, enhancing collaboration, recognizing tribal court orders, and promoting culturally sensitive mental health care.



Sandy Williams

Language assistance in elections: Intended to mandate language assistance in elections for various language minority groups, enhancing electoral participation and inclusivity.

Although these pieces of legislation were successful in becoming law, they spotlight the need for ongoing advocacy in housing, family support, tribal integration and improving electoral inclusivity.

The budget

The 2024 Washington state budget, critical for addressing community needs, significantly impacts Spokane, BIPOC communities, and addresses housing and homelessness through both operating and capital budgets:

Operating budget highlights:

- Allocates \$3.7 million, including \$1 million for Spokane's Street Medicine initiative, targeting homeless individuals with substance use disorders.
- Provides \$1.5 million from opioid settlement funds for substance disorder treatment in non-traditional settings.
- Invests \$4 million in a Spokane emergency housing shelter and \$2 million for emergency housing assistance for vulnerable groups.
- Increases the document recording fee backfill to \$25 million, supporting the Covenant Homeownership Program aimed at addressing housing discrimination and promoting affordability.
- Expands health care coverage with \$25.5 million for undocumented immigrants, enhancing access without additional outreach funds.

Capital budget highlights:

- Allocates \$127.5 million to the Housing Trust Fund for housing initiatives, focusing on homeownership and repairs.
- Funds Eastern Washington projects including \$5 million for the Kalispel Tribe's Camas Health Inpatient Treatment; \$2 million for the Seven Nations Healing Lodge; and \$1 million for Mujeres in Action's Casa Mia Casa, supporting domestic abuse survivors.

These budgets play a pivotal role in enhancing living conditions, health care access, and housing support, especially for Spokane's BIPOC families and workers.

The future

Now that the 2024 legislative session has wrapped up, attention turns to the upcoming election and the 2025 legislative session. With a newly elected governor and shifts in Spokane's legislative leadership, there is uncertainty and opportunity for fresh approaches to our region's housing crisis.

NATASHA HILL RUNS FOR 3RD LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT SEAT

Black Lens staff reports

Community advocate Natasha Hill announced her campaign for state representative for Position 1 in the 3rd Legislative District of Washington.

"I am excited to announce my run for Washington's House of Representatives for the 3rd Legislative District. Our legislators have had a strong track record of fighting for working families and I'm excited to keep that tradition going. We need a legislator to push forward protections for women and fight for ALL working families of Eastern Washington regardless of race, gender, sexuality, citizenship or socio-economic background. Representative Ricelli has been an incredible leader for our district, and I look forward to continuing his work while sharing new views and a different perspective to get results for families with my lived experience who've been left behind," Hill said in a news release.



Natasha Hill

Hill, who was endorsed by state Rep. Timm Ormsby, of the 3rd District, lives with her family on the South Hill and works as the principal attorney at Natasha L. Hill, P.S., interim editor for The Black Lens relaunch, and event venue co-owner of JasmineHill Events. She is a determined community leader and activist and serves on various nonprofit boards. Natasha ran a strong campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2022 as the first Black woman to run for the seat.

Growing up in the Hillyard Neighborhood, in one of the poorest ZIP codes in our state, Natasha experienced firsthand the ways smart investments into social services, education and labor can positively impact communities.

"I grew up here, left to finish college and law school, and brought my experience back home to make a difference for the community that raised me. I'm looking forward to being the next House Rep for the 3rd L.D. I'm excited to bring both my legal and lived experiences to represent Spokane in the Washington state Legislature," Hill said.

For more, visit hilltothehouse.org.



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NEWS

FINANCIAL ADVICE

KEEP YOUR MONEY RIGHT, TIGHT – AND GROW YOUR LIGHT



By Jacquelynne Sandoval
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



cessities, that is everything from Mortgage or Rent, Utilities (Electric, Water, Sewer, Garbage, phone etc), transportation, food, toiletries, and other personal expenses. Now add all of these items up. This will be your Expenses.

Step 3 – Evaluate your bank statements. Look over every dollar you spend to track your spending and learn your habits. Try and find items that are not true necessities and see what you can remove or cut back on so you free up funds for savings. Small sacrifices can add up to big investments down the road.

Step 4 – Set a savings goal – Place a specific amount into a savings account each paycheck. I found a bank that was not easily accessible to my family and after opening we only had an ATM Card for it. Find free ways to reward yourself for reaching your savings goals, whether weekly or monthly. Think an outdoor walk, trip to library or museum, family movie at home, to recognize the work you're doing.

Step 5 – Stick to your plan. After you have set your goals, remind yourself every paycheck that you have a goal of Financial Peace and Freedom and that you are not willing to compromise on that. Having something visual to focus on like a vision or dream board, or a calendar or chart to track your progress so you can actually see your growth.

You'll also want to schedule a day and time every time you get paid that has you re-evaluate all of these steps and see where you can tighten up – we all need reminders and can find room for improvement. Following these 5 steps will help you keep your Money Right and Tight – and soon you'll be shining an even brighter light.

After moving to the Spokane area, I re-entered the real estate industry and when speaking to people about homeownership, the most common thing I heard was people didn't know how to manage their money. I could absolutely relate to this. I had gone through a period in life that made me have to re-evaluate how I was managing my money.

From that process, I have put together 5 steps that helped me get from a "I'm Broke Mindset" to a "I'm on my way to Financial Peace and Freedom Mindset" – that anyone can do!

Step 1 – You must know about your income. Get your paycheck stub. This will tell you not only how much you get paid but also how often, how much is being taken out for taxes and if you are currently investing into 401K plans. Locate your Net Income, the amount after all deductions, to calculate your monthly income. If you are paid twice a monthly take your net pay and multiply by 2.

Step 2 – You need to write down your expenses. To be successful in budgeting you need to look at your fixed and fluctuating expenses. Write down all of your monthly ne-

COMMUNITY BLACK STUDENT UNION AVAILABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS IN AREA

By Mya Jefferson
THE BLACK LENS

A community-wide Black Student Union was formed recently in Spokane. Their first meeting was at the end of February in celebration of Black History Month.



Jefferson

They meet on the last Sunday of each month and welcome any students in Spokane. They are working on getting a BSU re-started at West Valley High School, but are running it as a community wide chapter – meaning no matter what school you attend, you are welcome and can participate! Their goal is to make this Black Student Union an option to all and to create a strong community in which we are all united and respected with a common goal and purpose.

Here is the founder, Mya Jefferson, in her own words on what this area-wide BSU means:

Before moving to Spokane, I lived in cities where the Black population was much higher and tightly knit. In states such as Texas and Missouri, I was only ever surrounded by people who shared my same race and culture. We went from a street in St.Louis where everyone was African American, to one where we were the only Black family on the block. I naturally gravitated to people of color at my schools, sports, or any events I attended. I felt more accepted and free to be myself. I realized that as people of color we needed and craved unity and a sense of togetherness. I wanted to create a community where people of color could find comfort in being part of a group. I was inspired by the influential adults in my life and by seeing other Black Student Unions host events and work together. With help, we have started our own BSU and are still in the



COURTESY OF SAMYRA WILLIAMS JEFFERSON

Students and parents gather in March for the first meeting of the communitywide Black Student Union. Mya Jefferson and her mother Samyra Williams Jefferson co-founded the citywide BSU in response to a lack of representation in the West Valley School District.

If you go

WHAT: Engage in discussions pertinent to school and community experiences. The aim is to unite Black and Brown students, provide access to resources and foster community involvement.

WHEN: 1-3 p.m. April 21

RSVP: Direct message @HPP_SPOKANE on Instagram

process of building it. We have great hopes for the future of this BSU.

The city of Spokane is predominantly white with a 2% black population. That makes finding a community where you feel safe, embraced, and close to your culture crucial. The Black Student Union provides that and creates a safe setting to form connections. We focus on striving to educate our members, introducing cultural awareness, fostering unity among ourselves, contributing to our community, and creating a reliable support system for all members. We plan to accomplish our goals with regular meetings where we address each point and let our youth speak to their peers while teaching them about the experience of growing up Black in Spokane.

Along with our focuses and goals, we want our members to develop and improve their leadership skills and other attributes to help them excel, encourage them to challenge each other, and use their voices to speak about issues they are passionate about.

Having a strong community is important for support, giving us a sense of belonging, and giving us a strong foundation to lean on. A strong community also gives us strength and courage. It gives us pride to be who we are and embrace our history and culture proudly and without shame.

A strong community representing different shades of brown encourages us to be unapologetically Black. This is the vision for the new Community BSU, come out and join us.

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NEWS

It's past time to stop harboring regional hate

Sundown towns are defined as all-white municipalities or neighborhoods in the United States that practice racial segregation by excluding non-whites via some combination of discriminatory laws, intimidation, or violence directing non-whites, mainly Blacks, to leave the town by sundown.



By Lisa Gardner
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



exercise their civil and human rights without discrimination. We are committed to a world without racism, where Black and Brown people enjoy equitable opportunities in thriving communities. That is what we fight for here in Spokane

Sound familiar? Last week in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a group of racists revving their truck engines, spewing racial slurs, and waving their confederate flag at the University of Utah women's basketball team. An act that, since the turn of the century, has been a tactic of intimidating people of color.

Last year, the Spokane NAACP received an email from a concerned community member who had received a flyer calling for a "Northwest American Republic" in Post Falls, Coeur D'Alene, Liberty Lake and the surrounding area. As the flier described, this Northwest American Republic is "a cradle for renewed civilization and white re-birth." The flyer goes on to give the tainted illusion of a white supremacist utopia free of non-whites, high Christian values, and a true nation spanning from Washington to Montana where young whites can seek refuge from the "woke" rhetoric and anti-white laws that are supposedly taking over the country. While it may sound ridiculous and farfetched, it's happening right before us, and for Spokane, it's right next to us.

How does the "Northwest American Republic" form?

It happens when elected officials are complacent about having purely white communities without intentionally seeking to diversify their communities and systems.

When a local prosecutor has extreme numbers of convicting Black and Brown justice-involved citizens and a wife who is a proud white nationalist, the region becomes a harbor for hate.

When the Idaho police chief, sheriff and other officials and business owners hold a press conference and are in pure denial of the racism and consistent racist undertones of the region, it becomes a harbor for hate.

A Northwest American Republic forms when they ban DEI books in local libraries and school curricula. A "Northwest American Republic" forms when Juneteenth is banned from the Kootenai County Library system as a holiday.

Lastly, they create a "Northwest American Republic" through acts of intimidation, such as the incident that happened to the University of Utah women's basketball team.

It seems that there is a robust agenda, and the acts of racial intimidation that the basketball team experienced are just one of the many tactics in the arsenal of keeping these regional towns exclusively white-mirroring an America that is reminiscent of the Jim Crow era.

And it's not just Idaho; the racism that Spokane experiences is just as appalling, despicable, and at times cleverly disguised under "liberal" and "progressive" rhetoric. At the beginning of March, Wilson Elementary School deployed a newsletter to parents promoting a music program, "We Haz Jazz," that called for students to dress like "hobos" and "slaves" as part of the performance. It is a dog whistle to the days of performing in "Blackface" and "Minstrel" shows. While some may argue that was not the intent, the impact of the suggestion should make it clear that it was hurtful and insulting. Slavery was not a period in time in our country to turn into cosplay for music class. Trivializing past wrongs and harm makes for fertile soil to repeat them.

Our NAACP vision calls for an inclusive community rooted in liberation, where all persons can

and the region. However, in 2024, in the Inland Northwest, we are fighting yearly, weekly and daily the overt and implicit biases of our communities. In a city where the first Black City Council President was elected, we have our basketball teams visiting neighboring schools and towns where they're being called racist slurs, and they're forced to still perform under the emotional and mental strain of racism.

Spokane, in the 1980s, was proud to have the first Black Mayor in Washington State, yet last summer, Mission Park was vandalized with graffiti of anti-Black racist slurs. When we think we're progressing, racism rears its ugly head. NAACP cannot prevent racism, but what we can do is continue to educate, be allies and protectors, and advocate, agitate, and litigate for our rights. Together, with organizations, neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and elected officials on both sides of the aisle, we can be vigilant, intentional, and pro-equity in our efforts to stand against racism.

The beautiful cities of Spokane and Coeur d'Alene must wake up and not deny the racism, discrimination, implicit biases and micro-aggressions that are plaguing our region. National news has highlighted our region's bad behavior. This is another wake-up call for everyone to listen to what people of color have been saying for years in this region. We are still a safe harbor for hate – and it's past due time to destroy this harbor for good.

Spokane City Council passed an ordinance proclaiming, "In Spokane, We all Belong." Well, Spokane, now is the time to prove it. It is time to help protect our community and region from anti-Black racism; help stop Asian hate, find our kidnapped Indigenous sisters, stand up and speak out against any threats of border patrols in our schools, protect our community mosques and synagogues, be in community with people of color and help to drive out hate.

Racism is taxing on our emotions and mental health, and soon, the region will find out it will be taxing on your economy, because this type of blatant act of racism drives people away. Let's drive away the hate Northwest American Republic and groups like it bring to this region.

NAACP co-founder Ida B. Wells once said, "The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them." So let's work together as a region to bring truth to light and shine the brightest light we can to right these wrongs.

Our Spokane NAACP community stands with the Utah Women's team – we hear you, we see you, and we are sorry you had to experience the harsh realities of our region firsthand when you were only here to give us your best and play to win your tournament. We will continue to rally against the hate you experienced here in hopes we can awaken our region to stop harboring hate groups and electing officials who live and condone this hate.



GETTY IMAGES

Utah Utes celebrate their upset win over the Colorado Buffaloes at the Jon M. Huntsman Center on Feb. 16 in Salt Lake City. The Utah team faced racist taunts when they traveled a month later to Coeur d'Alene to attend the NCAA Tournament in Spokane.

CdA racist taunts reflect unacceptable tolerance of hate, violence in the PNW

The Black Lens staff

The racist taunting and truck revving directed at the Utah Women's basketball team during the NCAA tournament, with teams playing at the Spokane Arena, isn't anything new to this region. Anyone traveling to this area should be on notice that the Northwest's racist roots are alive and no one is safe, even our student athletes during what should have been a time of celebration.

There is no excuse in 2024 that this overt racism is occurring or being accepted in these communities. Folks living in this region cannot pretend they aren't aware. So what are we doing about it? Not enough to prevent incidents like this, experts say.

Shari Williams-Clarke, former executive director of the Carl Maxey Center and former vice president for diversity at Eastern Washington University, has been following news coverage of the Coeur d'Alene incident throughout the week. "To throw out a racial, really negative commentary ... to a group of students who are guests in our community, coming here to do their best at a basketball tournament," Williams-Clarke said, "is just horrific."

Still, knowing the history of racism in Coeur d'Alene, she wasn't surprised.

"When I interviewed for the position of vice president for diversity at Eastern Washington University, I think almost eight years ago now, I was told by the students that that was a real area of concern," she said. Knowledge of the history of the area "really left a negative impact on folks who were considering faculty and administrative positions in the region because of the racism affiliated with that particular area."

In the 1970s, white supremacist Richard Butler built an Aryan Nations compound in North Idaho. The group, which grew to more than 100 people, held parades in downtown Coeur d'Alene and annual summits at the compound.

The racial harassment in Coeur d'Alene shows "very, very clearly that there is work still to be done around issues of understanding differences, issues of respecting people who are different from what people consider the majori-

ty population in a particular area," Williams-Clarke said.

Williams-Clarke said it's important to acknowledge that racial issues aren't just a problem in Coeur d'Alene.

"Certainly, Coeur d'Alene has work to do, but I don't think it's isolated to just that particular area. I think it's a national conversation that needs to happen, and it needs to happen with frequency and with intensity."

Here in Spokane, we've seen a quartet of elected officials who have turned a blind eye to racist, discriminatory and bigoted conduct and results.

County Prosecutor Larry Haskell has created a legacy of racial bias in what some legal experts say disproportionately prosecuted and sentenced Black and Native community members. He has also defended racist rhetoric from his wife Lesley Haskell, who is a self-proclaimed and proud "White Nationalist," who openly uses racial slurs on social media, including the N-word and claims white people are the only ones under attack.

From data collected in 2019, under Spokane's former police Chief Craig Meidl and former Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich showed that Black people in Spokane County were about six times more likely to be jailed than white people and were jailed about twice as long, with average stays of 29 days for Blacks and 15 for whites as reported in 2019. From 2014 to 2019, Black people were also about twice as likely to experience police use-of-force. These findings come from arrest data and use-of-force records released by the Spokane Police Department and 2019 census estimates.

Former Spokane Mayor Nadine Woodward in 2023 stood with white Christian nationalist, religious extremist and alleged domestic terrorist Matt Shea.

Everyone can do their part to end racism, Williams-Clarke said. The truth is, too many are not and are tolerating racist, hateful, extreme rhetoric in this region.

"There needs to be a great deal of training and conversation and continuous follow up on these issues. That has not happened on a regular basis. I think we're very reactionary, we see something happen and then we respond to it and then

it quickly evaporates or we forget about it."

The Northwest and the nation need to stay the course on addressing racial issues, she said.

"We want safe communities," Williams-Clarke said, "safe communities for all citizens."

Claude Johnson, founder of the Black Fives Foundation, a nonprofit whose mission is to preserve and teach the pre-NBA history of African Americans in basketball, said a history of racism in the area is no excuse.

Johnson contrasted the treatment of the Utah players with that of independent all Black basketball teams that visited the Northwest as early as the 1930s.

Teams like the Chocolate Co-Eds, a women's team from Chicago, and the New York Harlemites, a men's team from St. Louis, toured extensively throughout the upper United States, playing local teams or bringing their competitors with them, Johnson said.

"When a team came to Idaho, it meant that people from miles around that town would come in to watch that game. They would spend money on local restaurants, saloons, merchants, hotels, stores and other ways to spend money," Johnson said. "They were kind of like a mobile economic stimulus for that region."

These teams were invited to town, and then invited back year after year.

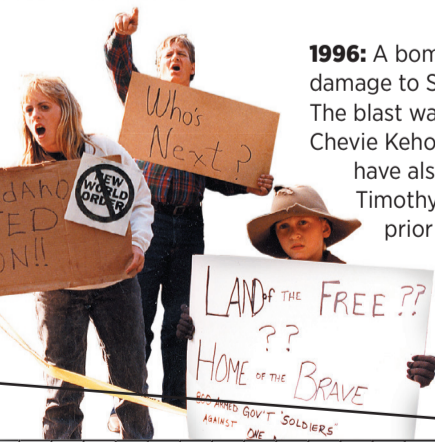
"They were welcomed to town, they didn't sort of have to fight their way into town. The local promoters wanted them there because that's what people wanted to see," Johnson said.

When the racial harassment in Coeur d'Alene is put into that context, Johnson said, "this isn't anything like, 'Guys, you should be used to this.' and 'It's normal.' Like, come on. Are you kidding?"

It is clear there is still a lot of work to do in this region to exterminate these undying hate groups, and unlearn the tolerance and acceptance that's been taught here. Hate and violence cannot be condoned and there must be a stronger stance and effort to hold elected officials accountable for the roles they play in allowing it to continue to thrive in this region.

Snapshot of North Idaho's long history of racism

1992: White supremacist Randy Weaver is involved in an 11-day standoff with the federal agents at Ruby Ridge in Idaho's Boundary County.



1996: A bomb blast causes damage to Spokane City Hall. The blast was later linked to Chevie Kehoe. Kehoe may have also been visited by Timothy McVeigh in 1995 prior to the Oklahoma City bombing.



2000: The Aryan Nations loses a lawsuit and is bankrupted. The property is auctioned off to satisfy a \$6.3 million judgement and is torn down. Richard Butler dies in 2004.

June 2022: A group of 31 Patriot Front members from across multiple states planned to instigate a riot at a Pride event in Coeur d'Alene City Park.

March 2024: The University of Utah's women's basketball team is harassed by racists in downtown Coeur d'Alene where they are staying for the NCAA Tournament.

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020



1973: Richard Butler moves to Hayden Lake in North Idaho. He establishes the Aryan Nations, which eventually draws more than 100 white supremacists to the region.

1981: In response to hate groups in North Idaho, the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations is formed.

1996: Four members of the Phineas Priesthood, with ties to the Aryan Nations, bomb the Spokane Valley office of The Spokesman-Review and a Planned Parenthood clinic as part of a failed distraction for a planned bank robbery.

1999: Neo-Nazis associated with Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler march in a parade in downtown Coeur d'Alene.

2011: Kevin Harpham, who had ties with the white supremacist movement, leaves a bomb with shrapnel laced with rat poison along the route of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Unity March in downtown Spokane.

2017: The Charlottesville Unite The Right protest turns deadly. David Reilly, who later become associated with the Idaho Freedom Foundation, promoted the event.

NEWS

Wilson Elementary's racist flyer shines spotlight on generational trauma in Spokane Public School system

Community at NAACP Town Hall asks: How do we activate?

By Jordy Blaine
THE BLACK LENS

Turning their monthly meeting into a town hall for the public, the Spokane NAACP transformed the Central Library's top floor into a stage for the voiceless. Wilson Elementary, located on Spokane's South Hill off Bernard Street, has been the talk of the town after their music teacher released a newsletter March 1 encouraging students to dress like slaves.

The NAACP welcomed local education experts and Spokane Public Schools students to the stage the night of March 20 to speak about the Wilson Elementary newsletter and their own experience in Spokane and the Spokane Public Schools system. Panelists included Adams Elementary teacher Allie Campbell; Eastern Washington University Africana Studies professor Dr. Scott Finnie; Lewis and Clark educator, Natasha Carpenter; and James Alexander with the Washington State Education Association.

With over 60 members of the public in attendance, the town hall began with: "Seemingly each year, we have some form of racial incident, microaggression, and insensitivity or pure racism and each time we hear that there will be training - is training enough anymore?"

Dr. Scott Finnie from EWU shared, "The basic issue is, just like what Dr. King was all about, his whole nonviolent approach was to awaken people's conscience and to admit that something is seriously broken and I think the key to this is not more training, but more of a widespread universal coming to truth that what is happening in Spokane is a symptom of something that is seriously broken."

"I think the first step is to admit that something is really wrong and to have that voiced, put out in a public statement is the beginning of that," Dr. Finnie said.

From question to question surrounding racism in Spokane schools, the microphone flowed through the semi-circle on stage, with every question, their answers raising red flags for Spokane's past, current and future children.

"Why are our kids learning more about the Holocaust than they are about their own history? That is a crime," stated Natasha Carpenter from Lewis and Clark High School.

Adams Elementary teacher Allie Campbell spoke up to echo Carpenter's message by saying, "I will fight for some type of curriculum only because by the time my kids get to fifth grade and we've talked to them about - sometimes their first experience with being anti-racist is slavery, and that needs to change."

Among the panelists was a senior student from Shadle Park High School, Kanani Park, who shared her experience of moving from the Mead School District into SPS.

"I feel like switching was probably the best decision I ever made for myself. I feel like I rescued myself from drowning waters," Park shared. She gave a nod to Shadle as her best experience learning about Black history.

"I remember when I switched to Shadle, I was put in African American literature and it was probably the best class I've ever taken in all of high school. I learned so much."

The conversation on stage transitioned to the question and format part of the night, which shined a long-deserved spotlight on Spokane's Black community's heartbreak and hurt in the school system.

One student's mother kicked off the conversation about the Wilson Elementary newsletter when she



A panel speaks and race and education at a Spokane NAACP Town Hall event on March 20. From left to right is Allie Campbell, Adams Elementary fifth-grad teacher; Kanani Park, Shadle Park High School senior; James Alexander, of the Washington Education Association; Natasha Carpenter, Lewis and Clark High School teacher; Dr. Scott Finnie, EWU Africana Studies senior professor; and NAACP President Lisa Gardner.



Connie Knipprath, a Sacajawea teacher and SPS parent speaks out at the NAACP Town Hall on March 20.



"If District 81 is oppressing, then it's time we tear it down. I am speaking from a standpoint of raising seven children in the district and every one of them has been the poster child that has suffered racial discrimination."

Virla Spencer, mother and founder of the Way to Justice

"I've only been in this community three-and-a-half years and experiencing racism, the way I've experienced it here, never in my life."

Connie Knipprath, Sacajawea teacher

was the first to stand up and say, "I haven't heard a lot of conversation about what happened at the elementary school, I haven't heard ... We're talking about racists," Kerra Bower said, re-directing from the conversation about training to the post at issue.

"What we should be talking about is why is it OK that a school adult, administration, or administrators, teachers thought it was appropriate to ask students to dress up like hobos and slaves" she stated. She then asked "How do we activate?"

A double standard was called out, in which a Black woman speaking passionately is labeled an "Angry Black Woman," but a white teacher can say the N-word in class with little repercussions.

Men and women from Spokane Public Schools and parents of the system stood in line to advocate for final change within Spokane. Parents and recent graduates expressed that they don't want their younger family members to have the

same experience they did in public school. "We learned history from a white man's perspective ... We didn't learn the confidence, because it was taught we were so heavily oppressed," an audience member said, describing the lack of Black history beyond slavery and civil rights.

"I teach at Sacajawea Middle School and I wanted to say that I've only been in this community three-and-a-half years and experiencing racism, the way I've experienced it here, never in my life," stated Sacajawea teacher Connie Knipprath, who moved here from Louisiana and grew up in the deep South.

It wasn't just an outside perspective: Women who have lived in Spokane for decades shared the same shocking sentiment. One woman, Virla Spencer with the nonprofit Way to Justice, stood up to advocate for her seven children, all affected negatively by the Spokane Public School system.

"...If District 81 is oppressing, then it's time we



NAACP President Lisa Gardner speaks before the crowd March 20 at the NAACP Town Hall event.

"I think the key to this is not more training, but more of a widespread universal coming to truth that what is happening in Spokane is a symptom of something that is seriously broken."

Dr. Scott Finnie, EWU

"We are asking children to fight a battle that grown adults need to stand up against. And if you hear me speaking passionately and saying no, that doesn't mean I am being hostile, that means you've crossed a boundary a child may not recover from."

Stephaine Courtney

tear it down," she said. "I am speaking from a standpoint of raising seven children in the district and every one of them has been the poster child that has suffered racial discrimination. I'm talking about teachers, I'm talking about people we are supposed to trust our kids with, harming our kids."

"So when I come to these types of spaces, I am trying to figure out what are we asking the district to do. It's been 20 years and we are still having the same conversation and nothing is happening."

Another woman from Spokane Valley, Leslie McCauly, shared how her children were deeply affected by racism while under the care of area schools.

"As long as I can earth, I'm going to walk right up to that Central Valley District and I'm going to talk to them about how they treated my children," she said. "I don't get over that and how your children are being treated. It's the same conversation for 30 years."

After many shared thoughts on the school sys-

tem, a representative from the Wilson Elementary community and father of a student there, Mike Dicks, stood up to read a letter on behalf of the Wilson community.

"I'm sorry for this issue," Dicks stated. "We are sorry for this issue. It was a mistake using inappropriate words in a music flyer in Wilson's weekly newsletter. I know the Wilson community is compassionate, open, and never intended to cause anyone harm," he said.

"I feel this issue was blown out of proportion," he said. "I wrote that, now listening to everyone, maybe it wasn't blown out of proportion."

"In no way should music teacher Miss Knapp have been punished so harshly and removed from her position as a music teacher at Wilson where she has taught for 20-plus years the art and history of music to our kids."

"Overall, the Wilson community is sorry for the issue, has learned and should move on positively.



Watch online

To watch the full NAACP Town Hall, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZWQsBsAtg or scan this QR code.

Miss Knapp should be welcomed back to Wilson as a music teacher," he said before the room erupted with backlash.

Through discussion and more listening, the town hall continued and addressed the serious impact racism has on a students psyche, overall well-being and sense of belonging in community. How the history of slavery and the harmful stereotypes propagated by minstrel shows and black-face as discussed in the work of Donald Bogle, are often mocked, speaking to the overall offensiveness of trivializing slavery, while ignoring the numerous notable contributions of black people to America that go far beyond jazz.

Community leader Stephaine Courtney shared that there are often misconceptions about what slavery is: "It's more than picking cotton, realizing your grandmother's hands are bleeding." Reminding us how during slavery, "about wetnurses, Black families being pulled apart during slavery ... ancestors that were murdered, killed, watching their fathers and grandmothers hung and burned ... it's more than Black people living on the plantation. It's knowing the essence of when you're pregnant and feel the kicking of your child they will not stay with you, because they do not belong to you, your body does not belong to you, your child doesn't belong to you, your life doesn't belong to you."

"We are asking children to fight a battle that grown adults need to stand up against. And if you hear me speaking passionately and saying no, that doesn't mean I am being hostile, that means you've crossed a boundary a child may not recover from. Not every child comes from a supportive family that when being knocked down they can stand back up."

With so many unheard voices coming to the forefront, they all called upon the Spokane Public School District to enter the conversation.

A white teacher who worked on culturally responsive training informed the crowd their training was discontinued by the district without explanation. He further proclaimed, "Training doesn't work, because it defaults to white comfort." "As long as white people are comfortable in what they've always done in schools, curriculum wise, behavior wise," he said. "Nothing is going to change," advising that until privileged white males like himself show up, nothing is going to change.

"Where is Adam (Swinyard)?" one mother asked into the microphone referring to the Superintendent of Spokane Public Schools. "We all know you show up to the things that matter."

One parent's call to action, "Let's shift from safety to accountability," resonated across the room. Another community member suggested small groups organizing and calling for change.

Before the town hall came to a close, the president of the NAACP, Lisa Gardner, introduced the next phase of initiative towards change in Spokane's schools. She along with other executive members of the Spokane NAACP will be sitting down with Swinyard in April to receive answers that generations of Spokane residents have been asking: "What is going to change?"

NEWS

A POEM



Dr. Gloria Baynes
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



The Son of Prayed Up Mother

By **Dr. Gloria Baynes**
THE BLACK LENS

My son is now a pharmacist with a Doctor of Pharmacy added to his name. God blessed him as he endured pain and trauma on his journey through school seeking no fame. He was a target by some teachers and some bullies with the assistance of an insensitive principal. However, he chose to play games, attend church and participate in the leadership for youth government. My son was so excited to enter kindergarten

until he was identified as not listening and sent to processing, a place outside of his classroom. How insensitive for the kindergarten teacher to send him out to complete a form for his behavior and then forget about him as he missed the bus, and felt the gloom. My son was disciplined for defending himself for being called a racial slur and being himself wearing a curly afro. When he attended the school one of the students said to me, Ms. Ellers hates me but hates your son more, did you know? Schools can be unwelcoming to Black young men as they are disciplined and remain targets for teachers who have biases.

For school systems, it is important for teachers to have culturally responsive training but for schools the intent has been a crisis. I am so proud of you, my son, the young man with strength, compassion, courage, and the heart to forgive. Your youth was the highlight of a praying mother, as you had an adventurous spirit, and took risks. This I wish I could relive. Someone asked why raise your children in an environment that a village like yours it was not ... she said in a stupor. I gave my children the tools to persevere, keep God in your life, and keep your eyes on the prize ... your future.



A crowd listens to Lisa Gardner speak at a NAACP Town Hall event regarding racism in Spokane Public Schools.

ROBERT LLOYD/THE BLACK LENS

COMMENTARY

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SPOKANE SCHOOL BOARD



The corner of the Spokane Public Schools administration office building.

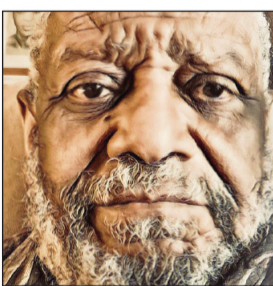
COURTESY

Dear Spokane School Board Members,

I am writing to bring to your attention a matter of great concern regarding the cultural sensitivity and inclusion of minority students within our school community. As an African-American retired educator it deeply troubles me to report instances where teachers have asked black and white students to dress up as slaves for educational purposes.

This practice, while perhaps well-intentioned from an educational perspective, is highly insensitive and could have lasting negative effects on the affected students. It reinforces harmful stereotypes, perpetuates historical trauma, and fails to acknowledge the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the students in our school.

As a member of a minority group, I believe it is crucial for educators to be more enlightened about the backgrounds of the students they serve. It is essential that our teachers understand and respect the cultural identities and sensitivities of all students,



By **Bob Lloyd**
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for everyone.

I urge the school board to take immediate action to address this issue and implement measures to ensure that such incidents do not occur in the future. This may include providing cultural competency training for teachers and staff, revising curriculum materials to reflect diverse perspectives, and promoting a culture of inclusivity and respect within the school community.

I am confident that by working together, we can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all students at Wilson. Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to seeing positive changes that reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Sincerely,
Robert Lloyd
Retired Professor of Art
EWU

Jazz program a thinly veiled minstrel show

By **Lisa Gardner**
THE BLACK LENS

On the surface, “We Haz Jazz” (purposely misspelled as a dog whistle to old minstrel shows) seems like an innocent curriculum to introduce to fourth- and fifth-graders because of the incorporation of jazz music. However, the more profound and damaging factor is that it signals the very core of minstrel shows. Asking kids to dress up as hobos and slaves, asking kids to sing jazz songs that at their core derive from old slave songs, all are recycled minstrel shows.

Our nonmelanated educators who did not learn about the harms of blackface and Minstrel Shows do not consider the deeply rooted impacts of “We Haz Jazz” because of the deliberate omission of these American historical events. Without a doubt, the jazz genre should be taught, but not thinly veiled as a Minstrel show, intentionally or unintentionally. When you ask kids to dress up as hobos and slaves, it reflects a serious lack of education, cultural competency and social awareness that is unacceptable in our education system, especially in 2024.

Jazz, a music genre created by Black Americans, along with the Blues and Gospel, has been central to Black American culture since the beginning of slavery in America. These genres, which originated from slavery, are deeply rooted in the fabric of Black American culture. Although these genres have branched into many sub-genres, their ancestral significance to descendants of slaves remains. Jazz originated in the mid-1800s in the Deep South, when enslaved people would congregate to share their sorrows through song. Often, those songs held hidden messages to pass from slave to slave. The music was sacred and kept quietly amongst slaves as their only way of communicating with each other in an artistic expression. The slave hymns and chants were cries of oppression, yet early verbal manifestations of freedom.

Before slavery ended, poor and working-class White Americans felt politically, socially, and economically left out of American elitism. To make a mockery of feeling “left out” was the invention of “blackface” and minstrel shows, where white Americans would paint their faces

TAKE A TRIP FROM TODAY. WAY BACK TO THE TIMES OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA. WE WILL DISCOVER HOW AMERICA'S OWN MUSIC, JAZZ GREW IN OUR OWN COUNTRY.

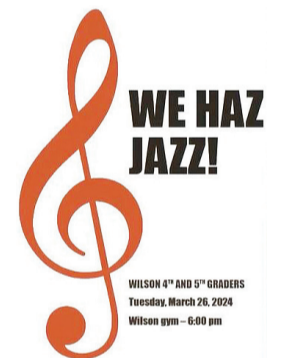
SOME STUDENTS WILL BE DRESSED AS FAMOUS MUSICIANS AND SINGERS. PLEASE HELP YOUR CHILD RESEARCH THEIR MUSICIAN AND TRY TO RECREATE THEM IN THEIR COSTUME.

OTHER STUDENTS COULD DRESS AS SLAVES, HOBOS, OR READY FOR A NIGHT OUT TO THE JAZZ CLUBS.



Black, paint their lips red, wear clothing that was torn and ragged, and assume the stereotype of an enslaved person. Blackface entertainers would dance and mimic slave hymns of feeling oppressed. Ironically, blackface was popular in the northern states like New York, where there wasn't slavery, but white Americans who believed they were politically and economically insignificant – like slaves. After the Civil War, blackface and minstrel shows grew in popularity. They made their way into Hollywood, where stars like Shirley Temple and Judy Garland would dress up in Blackface as a form of entertainment, perpetuating the stereotype of Black Americans as lazy, ignorant, and superstitious. Therefore, when teaching Jazz, Blues, and Gospel in schools, it is essential to approach them with cultural competence, historical knowledge, and an understanding that even seemingly innocent activities like asking children to dress up as hobos should be avoided.

“We Haz Jazz” is a marketed music curriculum that introduces elementary students to the origins of jazz music in the United States. Music curriculum in schools are important—they teach students the importance of counting and coordination, how to be in concert with each other, and what genre is better to do that than jazz. So, the “We Haz Jazz” programs combination of song, instrumentation, and history of the jazz genre if done correctly may not have been such a problem. But Wilson Elementary added offenses that reflect outright



“Amplifying our Voices,” left, is a better alternative to “We Haz Jazz.” The supplemental music curriculum does not reinforce damaging stereotypes. Movies, such as “American Fiction,” question the erasure of Black identity through the gross mockery and reinforcement of harmful tropes.

racist and a serious lack of education by someone entrusted with the care and education of our children.

When racial incidents happen in our schools, the community becomes polarized with a cocktail of emotions. Anger, frustration, rage, confusion, sadness, disappointment, and all these emotions are valid. Then we hear the canned responses of “We’re implementing sensitivity training,” “We’re doing more DEI and Anti-Racist training,” or the big one, “We’re bringing in a specialist from out of Spokane.” Sure, those solutions put a band-aid on the wound, but when it’s an internal disease, a band-aid isn’t going to work. Attempting to placate the Black and Brown community with insufficient training only pacifies; it doesn’t solve the problem.

Racism is deeply rooted in America, and while we can train people, it doesn’t change systems. Racism is a system problem that is in the fabric of this country. Racism, discrimination, microaggressions, prejudices – all of them cannot be eradicated, but what we have to do is learn to recognize them, call them out, and be unmoved in wanting more for ourselves and our community. Our allies and co-conspirators must understand their roles and not be afraid of persecuting hate. Most importantly, as a community, we must protect our children from being subjected to bigotry and racial insensitivity to have a future where racism can hopefully have a chance at being eradicated.

Lisa Gardner is the president of Spokane NAACP.

NEWS

SPOKANE SEARCHES FOR NEW POLICE CHIEF UNDER RECENTLY ELECTED MAYOR BROWN

By Teresa Brooks
THE BLACK LENS

When searching for a new police chief under Mayor Lisa Brown in Spokane, it's crucial to prioritize the needs and concerns of the Black community to address past and current issues within the police department.

The relationship between the Black community in Spokane and the Spokane Police Department has been fraught with anger, mistrust, and disappointment, rooted in a dark history of systemic racism and unequal treatment. Despite the small percentage of Blacks in the population, their interactions with law enforcement have often resulted in negative outcomes, perpetuating a cycle of resentment and alienation.

On June 12, 2023, the Spokane City Council was poised to make an emergency change to the city code, marking a significant step in addressing the longstanding grievances of the Black community. This move followed months of advocacy and pressure from organizations like Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR), which have been vocal in demanding accountability and reform within the police department.

The catalyst for the emergency change stemmed from revelations uncovered by the city's police ombudsman, whose investigation unearthed hundreds of emails exchanged between Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl and members of the Spokane Business and Commercial Property Owners Council. These findings ignited a firestorm of controversy, prompting calls for Chief Meidl's resignation.

Under the current city code, complaints regarding the chief of police are directed to the mayor and investigated by the city's human resources department. However, in light of the serious allegations against



Lisa Brown speaks at the launch party for The Black Lens. She will soon be finding a police chief for the city of Spokane.

former Chief Meidl, there was a growing consensus within the community that external oversight and accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure a fair and impartial investigation by the Office of Police Ombudsman.

The proposed emergency change to the city code reflects a recognition of the need for greater transparency, accountability, and community involvement in addressing issues of police misconduct and systemic racism. By empowering independent oversight bodies and establishing clear procedures for investigating complaints against high-ranking officials like Chief Meidl, the city aims to rebuild trust and foster a more inclusive and equitable relationship between law enforcement and the Black community.

However, this emergency change is just one step in a larger journey toward justice and reconciliation. It will require ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and collective action to address the root causes of racial injustice and create lasting systemic change.

The Black community in Spokane, along with allies and advocates, remain

steadfast in their commitment to holding those in power accountable and advocating for a police department that serves and protects all members of the community, regardless of race or background.

Here are some steps and considerations to ensure that the new Police Chief is fair, inclusive, and committed to positive change within the community:

- **Community Engagement and Input:** Encourage active participation from the Black community in the selection process. Hold community forums, town hall meetings, or listening sessions where residents can voice their concerns, priorities, and expectations for the new Police Chief. This ensures that the community's needs are considered and reflected in the selection criteria.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Advocate for transparency in the selection process, including clear criteria for evaluating candidates and a commitment to public disclosure of information. Ensure that the candidates' track records on issues such as accountability, use of force, community relations, and diversity are thoroughly examined and

openly discussed.

- **Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:** Prioritize candidates who have a proven track record of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within law enforcement agencies. Look for individuals who have experience working with diverse communities, understanding cultural sensitivities, and implementing inclusive policies and practices.

- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Advocate for the implementation of accountability mechanisms within the police department to address misconduct, racial bias, and excessive use of force. This could include establishing civilian oversight boards, implementing body cameras, and enhancing training on de-escalation techniques and cultural competence.

- **Community Policing and Relationship Building:** Look for candidates who prioritize community policing approaches that emphasize building trust, collaboration, and positive relationships between law enforcement and the community. This includes investing in community outreach programs and partnering with local

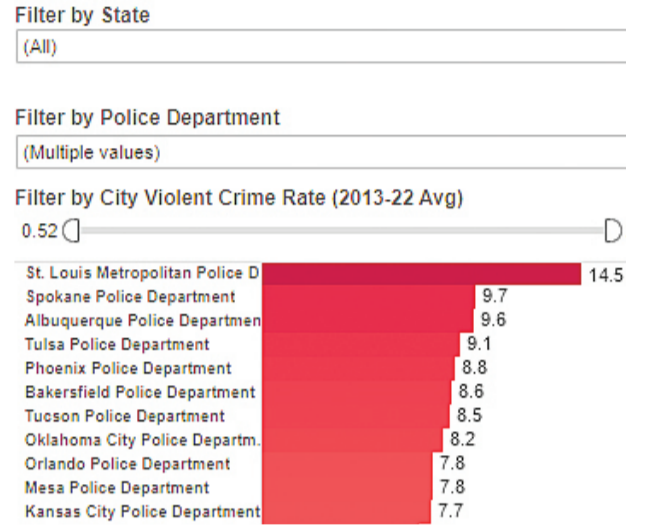
SPD still has 2nd-highest police killings in nation

As of February 2024, Spokane Police Department ranks No. 2 in the number of police killings, 9.7 per million, after St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department with 14.6 deaths per million. Seattle, meanwhile, sees 3.9 deaths per million. This is not the first time the SPD has been ranked No. 2. In September 2022, they were also ranked No. 2.

It is important to note that "Rates of violent crimes in cities did not determine rates of killings by police. For example, in Buffalo and Newark, police departments had relatively low rates of fatal police violence despite high crime rates. Spokane and Orlando, on the other hand, have had relatively low crime rates and high rates of police killings."

Source: Police Accountability Tool. Mapping Police Violence, mappingpoliceviolence.us/cities.

Rate of Police Killings per Population
Data from Jan 1, 2013 through Mar 23, 2024



organizations and leaders.

- **Reforming Policies and Procedures:** Advocate for candidates who are committed to reviewing and reforming existing policies and procedures within the police department to ensure they are fair, unbiased, and aligned with community values and priorities. This could involve revising use-of-force policies, enhancing training on implicit bias, and implementing alternative crisis response strategies.

- **Prioritizing Mental Health and Social Services:** Support candidates who prioritize addressing underlying social issues such as mental health, substance abuse, and homelessness through collaborative

approaches that involve mental health professionals, social workers, and community organizations. This can help reduce reliance on law enforcement for issues better addressed through social services.

By prioritizing community engagement, transparency, diversity, accountability, and reform-minded leadership, Spokane can select a Police Chief who is responsive to the needs of the Black community and committed to fostering positive change within the police department. This approach can help build trust, promote healing, and create safer and more equitable communities for all residents.

Justice Not Jails' voter turnout strategy has historic impact

By Jonathan Teeters
THE BLACK LENS

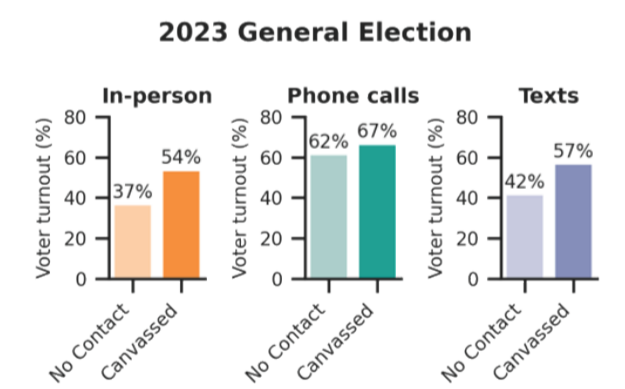
The Justice Not Jails coalition (JNJ) was formed by a group of community organizers to develop and advocate for policies related to criminal justice reform, behavioral health care access, and public safety in Spokane County. JNJ's work in 2023 was centered around Spokane County's Measure 1, a ballot initiative that would have enacted a sales tax to pay for two new jails.

Rather than just opposing Measure 1, the organizers used this campaign as an opportunity for long-term movement building and centered impacted people, including a decolonized campaign leadership comprised of those who have been impacted by the carceral system.

The impact of JNJ's work is evidenced by Measure 1's resounding defeat: Measure 1 failed 63.3% to 36.7%, with 99% of precincts voting against it (447 vs 4). JNJ's work in 2023 is a prime example of how organizations can successfully organize around a ballot initiative, and should be used as a template for groups planning on organizing around initiatives in 2024.

JNJ fostered a network of staffers, volunteers, and community partners with common goals and values, building capacity to continue the work beyond 2023 and to grow into a statewide coalition.

The campaign organized canvasses every weekend for supporters and volunteers with a special focus on looping in impacted folks, and provided compensation



Teeters

as needed. Weekend canvassers were followed by bbqs and other gatherings, providing a space to build community among supporters.

The campaign also organized both phonebanks and textbanks for canvassing the community: JNJ organized weekly phone banks for volunteers who made calls and sent texts every Friday, emphasizing outreach to very low propensity voters.

JNJ's direct voter outreach work prioritized reaching out to voters who have been disenfranchised - whether through the legal system, or through historic lack of engagement and/or representation. This outreach centered on educating voters about the carceral system and other systems of racism and oppression, and having honest conversations about alternatives to mass incarceration for improving public safety and the lives of community members.

JNJ also used persuasion programs to oppose Measure 1, including

mailers and a combination of broadcast, cable, streaming, and digital ads.

In total, JNJ made 277,927 outreach attempts to 93,613 unique voters in the 90 days leading up to Election Day, canvassing more than a quarter of the electorate in Spokane County - more than any other WCA Data Hub partner in 2023.

This included 17,845 door knocks, 39,530 phone calls, 22,552 text messages, and 197,271 mailers. JNJ's direct voter outreach work was extremely successful: 73.2% of voters canvassed by JNJ voted in the 2023 General Election, compared to just 43.2% of all voters in Spokane County. The relative increase in turnout among canvassed voters was highest among those canvassed via in-person outreach (+170%), followed by voters who received text messages (+15.2%) and voters who received phone calls (+4.2%).

The vast majority of Justice Not Jail's funding came from the Seattle-based Inatai Foundation and the Spokane-based Empire Health Community Advocacy Fund, of which Teeters is the policy director.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
SPOKANE

TOPIC: MATERNAL HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

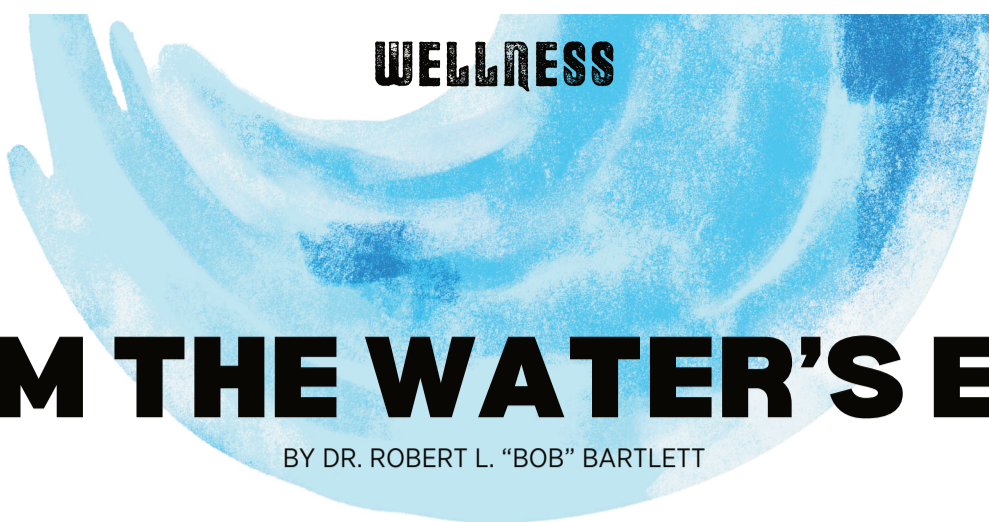
EQUITY FOR ALL

JOIN US ON **APRIL 25**
5-7PM @ THE HIVE

RSVP: ywcaspokane.org/equity4all

Performances by local artists
Panel of community experts
Doors open at 4:45pm
Light refreshments provided

Scan to learn more!



FROM THE WATER'S EDGE

BY DR. ROBERT L. "BOB" BARTLETT

I am a storyteller who's learning to write. I want to write a column on the subject of black folks and nature. Small rural towns are still some of my favorite places. I love green spaces. The need to spend time in nature resides in my bones. My wife and I raised our four children to know and love nature.

I grew up "country." My hometown was not much: fewer than five thousand souls, two stop lights, a few bars, lots of churches and a main street that was dead-end on both ends. It was a West Virginia railroad town with nearby operating coal mines and a paper mill. Town folk were overwhelmingly white; Jim Crow laws prevailed.

There were three black enclaves in the valley. From the town's beginning black families settled side-by-side in the few areas where they were allowed to own property. Black families had large gardens and raised animals for food and for sale. They foraged for wild greens and berries and spent their leisure time in the mountains and on the river that runs through it.

The mountains and two-lane curvy road that feeds the valley protected us from the Civil Rights movement of the early '60s and from the urban riots happening a hundred plus miles away. It's not that we didn't care what was happening outside the valley, we just wondered what all the fuss was about. We were more concerned with serving our country and the escalating war in southeast Asia.

We lived separate lives from white folks. We owned our homes



By Dr. Robert L. "Bob" Bartlett
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



and the land they sat on. We attended all-Black schools, attended all-Black churches, frequented our own night spots and when we died were buried in the town's all-Black cemetery. We liked it that way.

I do not remember a leisure time when I was not outside – my father insisted on it. At a very young age he taught me that hunting small game and fishing was serious business. We did not hunt or fish for the sport of it. Everything shot or caught was meant for the table.

Dad's parents and grandparents were neighbors. They lived along the river's edge where the land was cheap and where floods were common. My great grandfather had horses and a delivery business. My grandmother's parents raised dairy cows. Black people were crazy about their mountains and rivers. Learning to survive off the

land was a right-of-passage and I loved it.

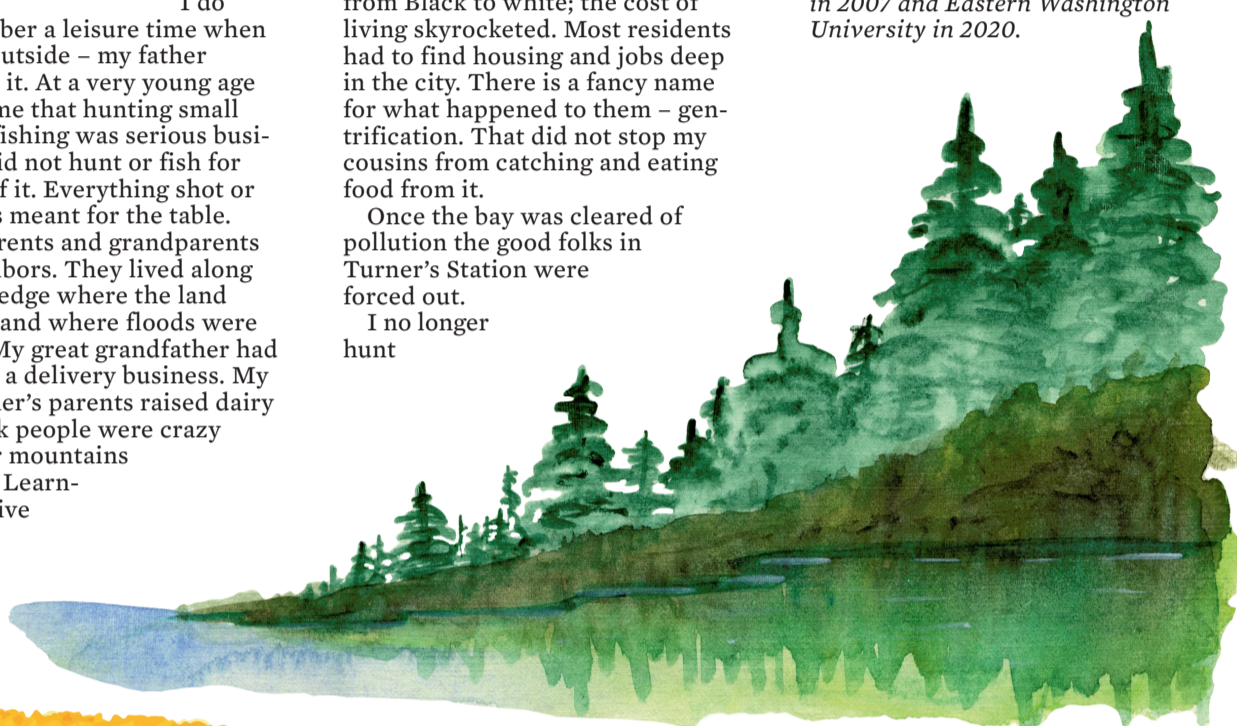
On rare occasions we would travel to Baltimore to visit family relations. They lived along the Chesapeake Bay in a place called Turner's Station. The homes looked alike and so did everyone who lived there. It was 100% Black. Most everyone worked at the nearby factory and earned modest wages; no one owned their homes. There were large neighborhood gardens but no cows or horses. They were "city." They made fun of their country relatives. The bay was really dirty back then, actually toxic enough to burn. I remember the water smelled bad and had a thin oily film on it at times. Turner's Station changed overnight from Black to white; the cost of living skyrocketed. Most residents had to find housing and jobs deep in the city. There is a fancy name for what happened to them – gentrification. That did not stop my cousins from catching and eating food from it.

Once the bay was cleared of pollution the good folks in Turner's Station were forced out.

I no longer hunt

but I am a passionate fly fisherman and a fly-fishing instructor. I am an environmental activist and continue to work when and how I can to protect rivers like the Spokane and its inhabitants. I want to educate and inspire current and future black and brown environmental activists. If we don't, it will be to our peril and to the peril of our natural world. In this column I will be edgy, confrontational and critical if the subject calls for it. I will also have some funny stories to tell. Most of all, I promise to speak my truth but not to harm. Stay tuned and please read my column.

Dr. Bartlett is a retired educator. He retired from Gonzaga University in 2007 and Eastern Washington University in 2020.



WALKING FOR HEALING & LIBERATION: GIRLTREK



BY APRIL EBERHARDT / THE BLACK LENS

The GirlTREK revolution is a call to pull the emergency brake on our daily grind in the name of healing and liberation, and put self-care and holistic health first. GirlTREK is a national Black women's walking revolution. It focuses on transformation through the rhythm of movement that prioritizes care for the caregiver. According to their Facebook page: "It is the largest health movement nonprofit organization for Black women and girls in the U.S."

Duaa-Rahemaah Hunter has lived in Spokane for 8 years, relocating from the west side of the state. She walked with other Black women in Seattle who were doing GirlTREK. As a Spokane transplant, she wanted to create a chapter here. In 2022 she started walking, advertising, and inviting others via Facebook. Last year, Spokane became officially recognized as its own chapter. "We are on the dot; we are on the map," says Hunter.

As word spread, Saturday morning treks in different neighborhoods around Spokane and surrounding areas ensued as far out as Medical Lake to Mirabeau Park in Spokane Valley. In the winter, the walks take place in one of the local malls. Sometimes 1 or 2 people show up; sometimes there may be 10-15 women.

It answers the survival needs that have often become minimized in the generational and cultural survival of Black people. Self-care, by today's standards, have become the luxury that most of our foremothers (and fathers) never had time to consider as they sojourned through the lesser told narratives of Americana. Stories of reaching for opportunities in a bag of tricks with a hole at the bottom while trying to keep everyone else from falling apart, in a race of futility; tales of trying to make a dollar out of 15 cents. These experiences held a much different meaning for the term self-care, one that doesn't equate to taking me time, leisurely walks around the neighborhood, gym memberships, or talk therapy. The grind of basic survival for those who came before us has become the legacy that was passed down, for better or for worse. Fast forward to GirlTREK and what you will see is the conscious effort to elevate intentional self-care as the rule and not the exception.

"It's needed, we need more positivity...and somebody who has that much energy and is positive, to see that ... is a beautiful thing. Like, we have enough things that we need to worry about..." says Hillard. Coming into community with other Black women opens new conversations and new knowledge about what's happening in the community.

On the topic of self-care, Hunter reflects that Black women are at a higher risk for heart disease, obesity, mental health issues, and there is a strong need to pour the same care into themselves that they pour into others. "We are really good at taking care of each other and our community, because that's what we do, but we're not really as good at taking care of ourselves. Mind, body and soul. With GirlTREK, that's kind of like what it was about; taking back your neighborhoods but also taking care of your physical health and mental health...if we are not okay then how can we pour out into everybody else?"

Doing what brings you joy, finding work life balance, and meditation – these are all ways that Hunter says self-care can be prioritized. She asserts that it's okay to say no, and that it is not something automatically realized by most. It took her 50 some odd years to realize the power and necessity of saying no. Because, she says, Black women are dying young. "Stress and hypertension are the number one silent killer," she states. The Superwoman persona has also become a double-edged sword for Black women. Hillard goes on to share, "They give us that power because we can; but also, we need to take care ourselves... the reason we have to have self-care is nobody's going to give you that care." Factors affecting one part of our health create a domino effect, which can result in a vicious cycle. Faith Washington is a nurse who works during flu season. She participates in GirlTREK when she can. "I like GirlTREK because I get to walk with my sisters. Walking alone is boring," she says. She shares that a recent surgery interrupted her exercise routine, but GirlTREK has given her the perfect opportunity to get involved. "I love the camaraderie; I like the scenic route and I am on board because ... it's a national organization and our host is so

friendly."

Coming together as Black women is vital for individual and collective survival. Whether networking or encouraging each other, "we need something for us, by us," emphasizes Hunter. GirlTREK certainly checks that box. There are challenges, sharing of podcasts, playlists, Black history bootcamps, and there is even a national GirlTREK retreat. GirlTREK Spokane happens on Saturdays between 9 AM and 10 AM, depending on the time of the year. Currently, Kendall Yards is the location. Hunter beckons Black women to come out, get liberated, and meet someone new. It's a light 30-minute walk. On the power of community, Hunter says, "Regardless how we feel about each other, you know they have been trying to separate us for centuries, we've got to put our differences aside for the good of our community and start coming together and supporting what we do...and not talk about what we can't do or what we are not doing." Showing up matters, she contends. "It takes a community to build a community."

Find out more about GirlTREK Spokane by joining the *GirlTREK Spokane Facebook group*. You can find out about the national GirlTREK organization by going to the following website: <https://www.girltrek.org>.

A 5-STEP GUIDE TO MEDITATION FOR BEGINNERS

FIND A QUIET SPACE

Choose a peaceful environment where you won't be disturbed for a few minutes. Sit or lie down comfortably.



FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH

Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths. Notice the sensation of the air entering and leaving your body.

LET GO OF THOUGHTS

As thoughts arise, acknowledge them without judgment and gently bring your focus back to your breath. Don't worry if your mind wanders; it's natural.



RELAX YOUR BODY

Scan your body for tension and consciously release it. Start from your head and work your way down to your toes, relaxing each muscle group.

END WITH GRATITUDE

After a few minutes, gradually bring your awareness back to the present moment. Take a moment to express gratitude for this time you've given yourself.



FROM THE FRONT PAGE

MEDICAL APARTHEID AND BLACK WOMEN

Understanding the history of how Black bodies have been objectified, desecrated, and/or robbed of both autonomy and humanity is often the elephant in the exam room. Medical apartheid against Blacks has existed since the inception of America.

Poor Black women in Mississippi were stripped of their right to bear children so frequently between the 1930s and the 1980s that the moniker “Mississippi appendectomy” was coined for the involuntary sterilization. North Carolina also had eugenics laws to control the population of those considered too promiscuous or feeble-minded to have children, or those who were mentally or cognitively impaired. During this era, approximately 8,000 women were sterilized and 40% of them were women of color.

Fannie Lou Hamer, unable to conceive children, went to have a uterine tumor removed and was unknowingly given a hysterectomy.

Or let’s look at Margaret Sanger and the Negro Project, launched in 1939, which focused on limiting the birthrates of poor Blacks. The Trojan horse of contraception education was used to reduce the Black population, not to give Black families autonomy to make this decision for themselves. Sanger worked with Black leaders to pilot birth control programs in Black communities under the guise of socio-economic uplift. The Negro Project was undergirded by eugenics. Sanger said in a 1939 letter: “We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members.”

Lastly, the butcher deemed as a revolutionary in the field of gynecology, J. Marion Sims, experimented on enslaved women to perfect surgical procedures on their anatomy without consent or anesthesia; consent they could not give because they were considered property. Fistulas were done on Black women, thought to have a high pain threshold, multiple times over many years. Knowing the extreme agony they were in, he continued procedures that disabled them for life, stripped them of their agency, and deprived them of dignity. Three of those women were foremothers Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsey.

– April Eberhardt

MOTHERHOOD

Continued from 1

most importantly they build a strong relationship of rapport and connection with the family, which in return helps with vulnerability and being transparent about how they are feeling.”

Creating a BIPOC workforce that bolsters doula services is a priority. Presently, SOMN has 17 doulas who are funded to provide services and resources tied to culture, language, and connection. She shares that in a data driven field like health care, it is often hard to quantify Black women’s experiences with numbers (i.e. how many times have their needs been ignored?) which is why the advocacy of doulas is extremely valuable. Last year the organization distributed over 500 wellness boxes containing fresh fruits and vegetables, serving over 44 families.

It was a doula that helped Courtney recognize that a persisting headache was a sign of infection during her first pregnancy, which allowed her to get the care that she needed.

When reflecting on the power of culture, Courtney says that it reminds us how to treat, care for, and bond with one another.

“It reminds us of our roots and strength,” she said. “Focusing on cultural care empowers Black women to stand in their truth and their beauty when it comes to maternal health.”

This prioritizes their journey and allows their stories to be heard, giving them the respect of care that has been denied through time immemorial. Courtney says she wants to see Black women stand in the maternal health space in a powerful and joyful way.

“Not owning their own bodies or their own children stripped them of their choices,” she continued.

Black Maternal Health Week is needed to crush the crisis once and for all.

“When you elevate peoples’ voices, you can actually hear the problems that

are going on and it allows people to create real solutions that are focused on the individual and not focused on a theoretical idea.”

A case in point is the partnership that SOMN has with the Washington Blue Band Initiative for preeclampsia. When a woman has this diagnosis, SOMN steps in to provide education and resources. Women are given a blue band to wear on their wrist so that it can be recognized by health care providers that there is an existing health concern.

“We encourage them to keep that blue band on so that people know they have preeclampsia,” she said, “and if it turns for the worst, there’s not additional questions that are asked for them to prove what they are saying. That symbol helps communicate that this is a serious situation.”

Preeclampsia is a common condition in Black women that can lead to organ failure or death. It is correlated to high blood pressure and many signs are overlooked because a lot of times, women normalize their pain, particularly black women.

Shades of Urgency is this year’s SOMN theme for Black Maternal Health Week, and its aim is to inspire resiliency through joy, healing and reclaiming one’s story. The SOMN is a vanguard in terms of healing the fractures in the Black community and breathing new life into the process of bringing life into the world, while protecting Black womanhood. This grassroots approach to maternal health emphasizes sisterhood, reinstating both beauty and power, and spurring collectivism while also honoring the individual.

Black Maternal Health Week is April 11-20. It will include workshops by local experts, a birth justice film screening at the Magic Lantern, and a special keynote address of author of “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome – America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing,” Dr. Joy DeGruy. These events will take place at the WSU downtown location. Please see the flyer for details.

ROBINSON

Continued from 1

nities, amplifying their struggles, triumphs, and aspirations. Through their pages, the Black press championed the cause of integration in baseball, recognizing it as a microcosm of broader societal inequities.

Robinson’s historic debut on April 15, 1947, marked a watershed moment in American history, catalyzing the dismantling of segregation in sports and beyond. Yet, his success was not solely his own; it was the culmination of decades of struggle, sacrifice, and solidarity within the African American community and the Black press. Through editorials, features, and investigative reporting, Black newspapers challenged the status quo, demanding justice and fair treatment for African American athletes.

The Black press played a multifaceted role in Robinson’s integration into Major League Baseball. Not only did it provide a platform for advocacy and awareness, but it also served as a beacon of inspiration, galvanizing African Americans nationwide to rally behind Robinson and the cause of racial equality.

Jackie Robinson’s journey from the Negro Leagues to the Brooklyn Dodgers epitomized the resilience and fortitude of African American athletes. However, his path was fraught with obstacles, both on and off the field. Enduring racial slurs, death threats,



COURTESY

Jackie Robinson’s historic debut on April 15, 1947, marked a watershed moment in American history.

and systemic discrimination, Robinson remained steadfast, buoyed by the unwavering support of his community and the Black press. The Black press served as a counter-narrative to the prevailing stereotypes and prejudices perpetuated by mainstream media. They illuminated the hypocrisy of a nation that extolled the virtues of democracy while denying basic rights to a significant segment of its population, while highlighting the beauty, talent and perseverance of Black athletes and their accomplishments.

Today, as we celebrate Jackie Robinson’s legacy, let us also remember the unsung heroes of the Negro Leagues and the Black press. Their contributions were not confined to a baseball diamond or the pages of a newspaper; they reverberated throughout American so-

More information

The Spokane Indians opened their 2024 season at Avista Stadium on Friday, April 5, against the defending Northwest League champion Vancouver Canadians. King Carl uniforms, produced in partnership with The Black Lens, will make their on-field debut at Avista Stadium on Friday, April 19, in conjunction with Jackie Robinson’s birthday, and will also be worn on Wednesday, June 19, in celebration of Juneteenth. Tickets are available now for all 66 home games at mlb.tickets.com.

ciety and culture, they ignited spark of change that continue to illuminate the path toward justice and equality across our nation – sparks that we need now more than ever.



PHOTOS BY THE BLACK LENS STAFF



Above: Rogers High School students do simulated, hands-on practice with Providence Medical Center staff, including with diverse infant simulators, like the one at left.

Left: Fay Baptiste, left, is a retired nurse and a member of the NAACP Spokane chapter executive committee.

NURSING

Continued from 1

“When I was super, super young, like second grade, I was researching like medical positions, and I wanted to be a heart surgeon for the longest time,” Angel said. “And then I went to cardiologists, but then I was like, I don’t know if I could do surgery. So then I went to a nurse practitioner in cardiology,” she said.

She shared that she rarely saw a black nurse or doctor helping her mom.

“I think that now that we are getting more into the 21st century, and we are advancing more, I really like the fact that there are more Black nurses, Black doctors, Black providers, because it makes me personally feel welcomed and understood,” Angel said.

Working with Angel that day was someone who shares the same sentiment as her, the Chief Nursing Officer at Sacred Heart, Neil Apeles.

Apeles has been working at Sacred Heart for eight years and at Providence for nearly 15. Originally from Los Angeles, he shared that Spokane showed him a diverse cul-

ture shock. “I especially saw it in the workforce, which poses a set of challenges, you know, when you’re caring for our communities of color. For me, personally, I needed to try to find my community here, which was very difficult,” Apeles shared.

Both Angel and Apeles have the same goal, bring diversity into our healthcare field not just in Spokane, but the United States as a whole. Diversifying the nursing program at Providence and Sacred Heart is just one way that the hospital is helping aid in diversifying our health care system. They agreed that having representation in doctor’s offices and hospitals isn’t negotiable. Angel added that many times Black or Brown patients often feel unheard and experience poorer outcomes.

“I just feel like they do name us as overdramatic, and sometimes they don’t take our problems as serious. So like, if I say I have personal experience, I had a herniated disk,” she said.

From her experience of being dismissed and Black in the health care system, she is encouraging young people to not give up.

“I kept going back to the ER and I kept saying,

I have this problem, I have this problem. I’m not just gonna let it be dismissed. Like, I can’t even stand up. I can’t take a shower with more than two minutes. I can’t do anything. So I just kept, keep going back, keep voicing your concerns your problems, because eventually someone will hear you,” she said.

All of her future hard work and dedication to medicine, coupled with her focus on people, is exactly what will help Angel excel in this field, according to Apeles.

“I started my career very early in my high school program, very similar to this, you know, getting exposure to what types of options and health care professions are available, and then start using that as a kind of a launching pad,” he shared.

“It’s not just medicine, it’s not just nursing, and then also making sure that all our kids know that, you know, we need you, we need you in health care, and we need a diverse health care workforce. Okay. And we need different backgrounds and cultures, because it just offers to teach each other. And I think we’ve got a lot of work to do in our community.”

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH IN FULL COLOR

SHADES OF URGENCY

BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

SCAN HERE

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Joy DeGruy

SOMN Director:
Stephaine Beans

BMHW APRIL 2024

A	P	R	I	L	L
11TH	Art Exhibit				
12TH	Live Book Reading				
13TH	Black Maternal Health Conference				
14TH	College Tour				
15TH	Birth Justice Film				
16TH	Policy & Poetry				
17TH	Black Maternal Health Walk				
20TH	Evening Of Joy Fundraiser				

WWW.THESHADESOFMOTHERHOODNETWORK.ORG

FOCUS

GAME CHANGER

By Black Lens staff

Seventy-seven years ago, in front of 26,623 fans — more than half of them Black — at Brooklyn's Ebbets Field, Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play Major League Baseball.

The 28-year-old Robinson had been the first athlete to win varsity letters in four sports at UCLA. He won the 1940 NCAA championship in the long jump but hit only .097 in his one season of baseball.

Robinson served in the Army during World War II, became one of the few Black soldiers admitted to Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a lieutenant. He was nearly kicked out of the Army in 1944 for refusing an order to move to the back of an Army bus. An all-white panel of military judges acquitted him.

He worked briefly as a coach and athletic director before joining the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro baseball leagues, hitting .375 and four home runs in 34 games in 1945.

That's when Robinson came to the attention of Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey, who was secretly hunting for an African American player with the talent, maturity and temperament to withstand the ugly reaction he was likely to get by breaking Major League Baseball's color barrier.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
Robinson with the Kansas City Monarchs in 1945.

Robinson was that man. He started out slowly, going hitless in a 5-3 win over the Boston Braves and was still struggling a few weeks later when he was mercilessly insulted from the dugout by the Phillies in Philadelphia. When some teams threatened to boycott games in which Robinson played, Baseball Commissioner Happy Chandler countered by promising to suspend striking players.

Robinson's performance improved over the course of the season. He batted .297 and was named National League Rookie of the Year while the Dodgers finished 94-60 and won their first pennant in six seasons.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

In 1949, the Dodgers moved Robinson from first to second base. Robinson went on to lead the league in hitting and in stolen bases that season and was named National League MVP. Robinson went on to play 10 seasons, helping the Dodgers win the 1955 World Series.

By 1956, Robinson was showing his age — 37 — and the effects of diabetes. After he struck out to end Game 7 of the 1956 World Series, Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley traded Robinson to the New York Giants for \$35,000 in cash. Robinson declined the trade, retired from baseball and became an executive with the Chock Full o' Nuts coffee company.

JACKIE ROBINSON'S CAREER MAJOR LEAGUE STATS

YEAR	TEAM	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	BA	OBP
1947	Brooklyn	151	590	125	175	12	48	29	.297	.384
1948	Brooklyn	147	574	108	170	12	85	22	.296	.367
1949	Brooklyn	156	593	122	203	16	124	37	.342	.432
1950	Brooklyn	144	518	99	170	14	81	12	.328	.423
1951	Brooklyn	153	548	106	185	19	88	25	.338	.429
1952	Brooklyn	149	510	104	157	19	75	24	.308	.440
1953	Brooklyn	136	484	109	159	12	95	17	.329	.425
1954	Brooklyn	124	386	62	120	15	59	7	.311	.413
1955	Brooklyn	105	317	51	81	8	36	12	.256	.378
1956	Brooklyn	117	357	61	98	10	43	12	.275	.382
10 seasons		1,416	4,997	972	1,563	141	761	200	.313	.400

BOLD indicates led the league

After his departure from the game, Robinson took up high-profile political causes and worked to support civil rights.

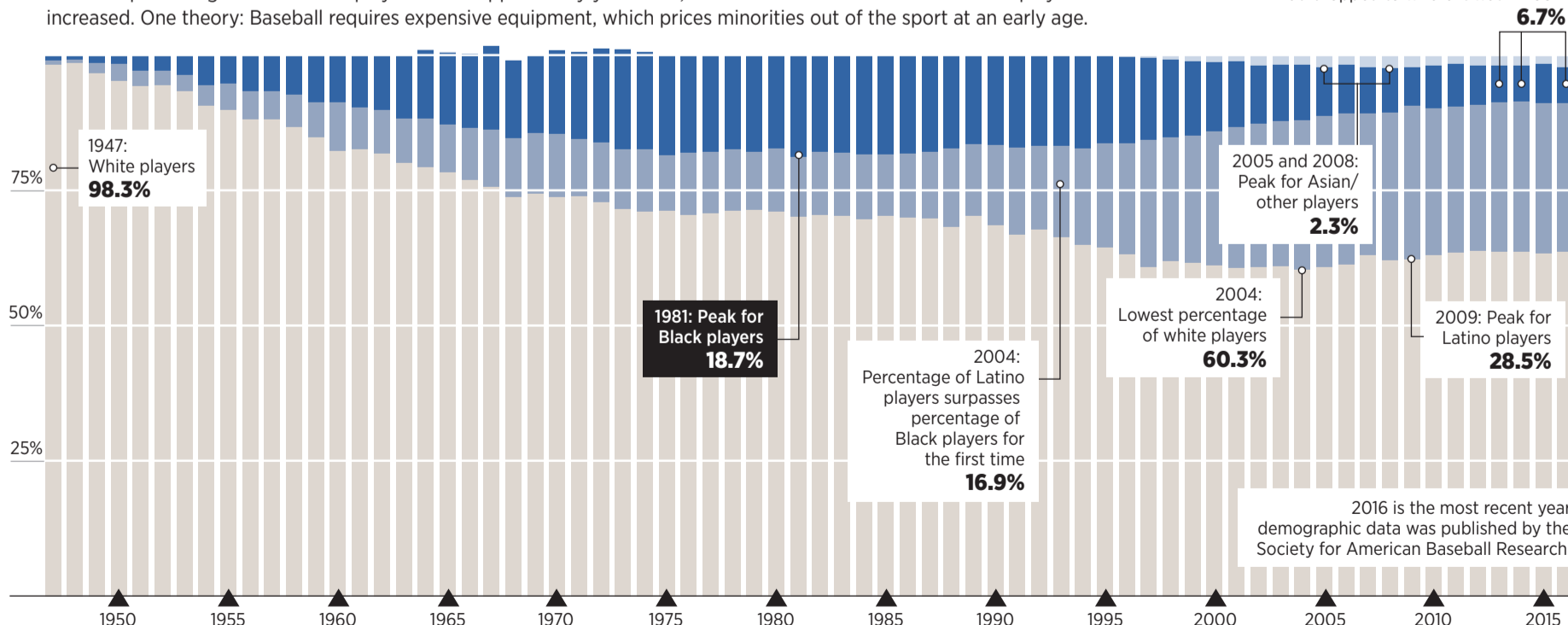
He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962, his first year of eligibility. He became the first Black TV baseball analyst for ABC Sports in 1965. Robinson died of a heart attack in 1972 at age 53.

In 1987, both the National and American leagues renamed their Rookie of the Year awards after Robinson. In 1997, every MLB club retired Robinson's jersey number, 42. In 2004, players throughout the league were invited to wear No. 42 on April 15, which became known as Jackie Robinson Day.

THE CHANGING LOOK OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

After Robinson pried the door open for African Americans in the major leagues, the percentage of Black players peaked in 1981. The percentage of Black MLB players has dropped every year since, even as numbers of Latino and Asian players has increased. One theory: Baseball requires expensive equipment, which prices minorities out of the sport at an early age.

By 2013, 2014 and 2016, the percentage of Black players in Major League Baseball had dropped to where it was in 1957.



■ The Spokane Indians will wear King Carl uniforms during the team's Jackie Robinson celebration on April 19.

■ The Black Lens is partnering with the Indians for the game, and throughout the season, to help celebrate Spokane's Black community, including a Juneteenth celebration game on June 19.

Sources: "I Never Had It Made" by Jackie Robinson, "Numbelievable!" by Michael X. Ferraro and John Veneziano, Baseball-Reference.com, Society for American Baseball Research, National Baseball Hall of Fame, Major League Baseball, JackieRobinson.com, Cronkite News, Library of Congress, History.com, Biography.com, Routine.com

CULTURE

BOOKS IN REVIEW

'LOVE IN COLOR' BY BOLU BABALOLA AND 'THE CONJURE-MAN DIES' BY RUDOLPH FISHER

By Emmarae McLendon
THE BLACK LENS

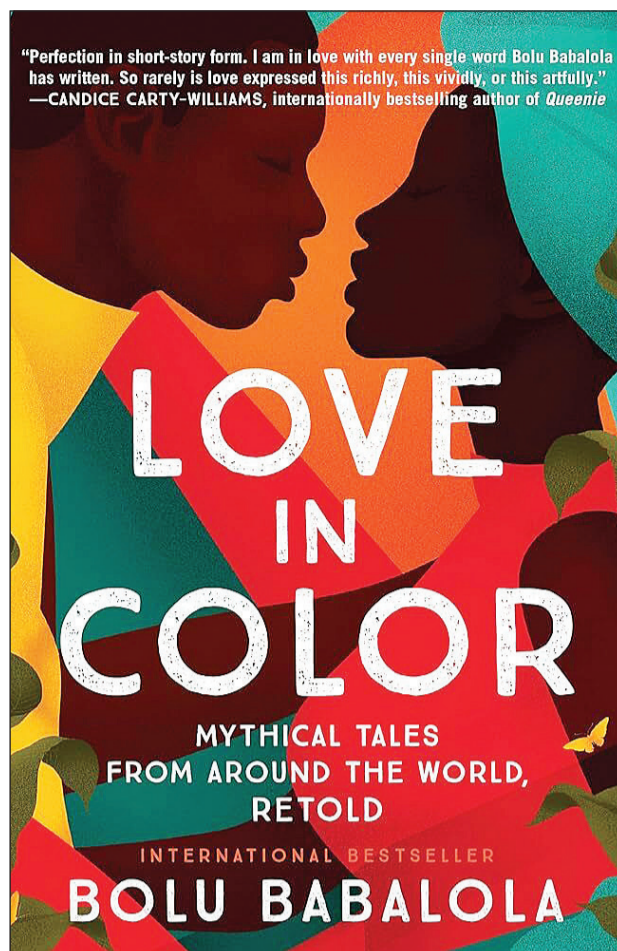
'Love in Color' by Bolu Babalola

In this debut collection, internationally acclaimed writer Bolu Babalola takes to retelling the most striking and beautiful love stories in history/mythology. She focuses on the stories of West Africa but ventures a few into Greek and Middle Eastern stories.

Now I'm gonna be real with y'all – I'm not a romance reader so I avoided this book for a while. My friends kept recommending it to me saying "Girl, I know you don't read romance but this right here! This you gotta check out!" I am so glad that I finally did!

These captivating stories really express love on different scales and what it means to other people while honoring the origins of the stories. She gives back power to the women in the stories where their power or voice was stripped from them.

One of my favorite things was doing some quick research on the stories in the book so I knew what they were based off of. The table of contents is the names of the women: Osun, Scheherazade, Nefertiti, Attem, Yaa, Siya, Psyche, Naleli, Zhinu, Thisbe, Tiara, Orin, and Alagomeji. Now for some of these women I knew of their stories but a lot of these names were new to me. I had a thrilling time looking up their stories so I could know what to expect to see what changes have been



"Love in Color" by Bolu Babalola

made to amplify their voice and presence in the upcoming story. (Note: You don't have to do this extra bit of research in order to enjoy this collection. My curiosity just overtook me and led me to extra reading)

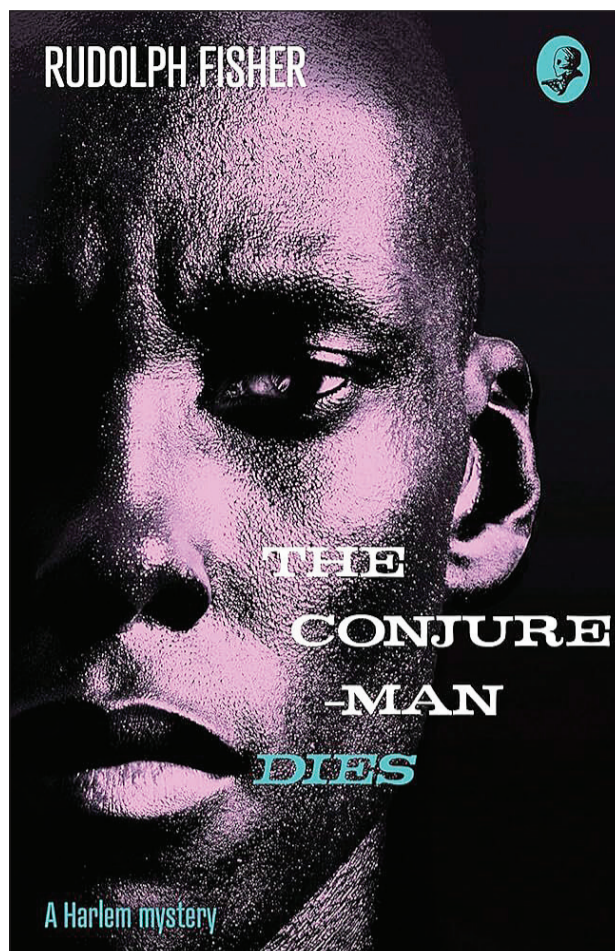
While the stories were short their pacing was very enjoyable and I felt like I had enough time to feel connected to the characters and understand the love they were seeking.

If you have always loved reading about powerful women throughout history or in mythologies

I strongly suggest you pick up this collection of stories! Even if you're like me and don't tend to pick up romance I think you'll enjoy this. If you also have an interest in learning more about West African tales I think this is a cool place to start by gaining a modern interpretation on the stories. I know for me it has driven my research further as I look up more stories about these women.

'The Conjure-Man Dies' by Rudolph Fisher

"The Conjure-Man



"The Conjure-Man Dies" by Rudolph Fisher

Dies," a Harlem mystery – the first ever African American crime novel by Rudolph Fisher! First published in 1932 (2 years before the author's unfortunate early death), an all Black cast – the detective, the victim, the suspects, the doctor, and the policemen. The story opens up with the body of N'Gana Frimbo, known as the conjure-man, being found in his consultation room by two men named Bubber Brown and Jinx Jenkins. They both rush to Perry Dart who is one of Harlem's ten Black detectives to investigate

who killed him.

Dart is highly motivated to figure out how Frimbo came to his demise, Bubber and Jinx are of course determined to clear their name of any suspicion since they were the ones that found the body so they help (...eh more like hinder) Dart's investigation.

Reading this story was an experience! This book is the earliest written crime fiction that I have ever read. It wastes no time getting to the mystery! You are immediately warped into the story of figuring

out who killed Frimbo. Mind racing and catching clues to solve the murder before the pages run out. It was interesting to see how crime solving was handled in the 30s compared to now. There was a discussion between characters about how blood types were just being used to help identify a person as well as dental records.

Anyway – back to the mystery. Frimbo was a man shrouded in mystery and the pace of the story highly reflects that. As I approached the half-way mark of the book I figured I had the mystery solved and it must wrap up soon...yet, there was the whole half of the book left. Well reader, the twists and turns that ensued after this point was absolutely thrilling! I finished the last half of the book in the car and as my husband drove I kept shouting "No way!", "How?!", as well as numerous gasps which made him laugh and exclaim "what's happening?? Tell me everything!"

While this murder case is being solved the characters Bubber and Jinx add a fantastic level of comedic relief. Their bickering back and forth feels like listening to my cousins at a BBQ bickering back and forth.

This Black classic is definitely one to add to your shelves! Rudolph Fisher's writing is extremely magnetic and offers a unique lens to what it was like being Black in the 30s.

Emmarae McLendon can be reached online at @EmmaraeEmpowered.

Have you lost a dear loved one, who was part of Spokane's Black community?

THE BLACK LENS
In remembrance

We are offering free obituary services. Email info@blacklensnews.com with "Obituary" and your loved one's name in the subject line. Please limit obituaries to 400 words or less. A photo of the loved one is encouraged, but not required. We may lightly edit the obituary for brevity and clarity, but will otherwise leave it in its entirety.


THE BLACK LENS
Contributor Meeting

APRIL 11 2024

JOIN EDITOR NATASHA HILL AT THE CENTRAL LIBRARY TO GET ASSIGNED STORIES FOR UPCOMING ISSUES OF THE BLACK LENS.

APRIL 11, 2024 CONFERENCE ROOM A
4:30 - 6 P.M. CENTRAL LIBRARY
DOWNTOWN SPOKANE

RSVP: [BIT.LY/493E9MW](https://bit.ly/493E9MW)



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Drop-ins welcome, but save time by pre-registering through the QR code or by emailing selfhelplegal@carlmaxeycenter.org.



CULTURE

COUNTRY MUSIC HAS ROOTS IN BLACK MUSIC

Genre is rooted in African American traditions

By Teresa Brooks
THE BLACK LENS

The intersection of Black artists and country music has a complex history that reflects broader societal dynamics. Country music, often associated with rural and Southern white culture, has traditionally been dominated by white artists. However, Black musicians have been making significant contributions to the genre since its inception.

Beyoncé's new country music album highlights the ongoing challenges and debates surrounding race, representation, and identity in the genre. While her presence may unsettle some within the industry, it also underscores the need for greater diversity and inclusivity to ensure the continued evolution and relevance of country music in a rapidly changing world.

Rooted in African American musical traditions such as blues, gospel, and folk, Black artists have played a crucial role in shaping country music. Early pioneers like Charley Pride, DeFord Bailey, and Ray Charles paved the way for future generations by breaking racial barriers and earning recognition within the predominantly white country music industry.

Despite these contributions,



GETTY IMAGES

Beyoncé attends the Luar fashion show during New York Fashion Week on Feb. 13 in New York.

Black artists have faced challenges and systemic racism within the country music establishment. Limited opportunities for airplay, lack of representation in mainstream media, and stereotypes about the genre have often marginalized their presence.

Beyoncé's foray into country music has been met with mixed reactions within the industry. As a highly successful and influential Black artist, her ventures into country music challenge traditional notions of the genre's identity and audience. Beyoncé's collaboration with the Dixie Chicks on the song "Daddy Lessons" from her album "Lemonade" sparked controversy and debate about the boundaries of country music.

Some critics argue that Beyoncé's incorporation of country elements is a natural evolution of the genre, reflecting its diverse roots and influences. They view her involvement as a positive step toward inclusivity and innovation within country music.

However, others contend that Beyoncé's presence in country music is a form of cultural appropriation or commercial exploitation. They argue that her fame and mainstream appeal overshadow lesser-known Black country artists who have struggled for recognition and acceptance within the genre.

Furthermore, Beyoncé's success in country music raises questions about the industry's willingness to embrace diversity and provide equal opportunities for Black artists. Critics argue that the country music establishment often perpetuates a narrow and exclusionary image of the genre, which limits the visibility and success of minority artists.

Despite facing systemic oppression and exploitation under slavery, African Americans played integral roles in shaping the landscape and culture of the American West. Their contributions, often overlooked in mainstream narrative, are increasingly being reconciled and celebrated as essential components of Western History and heritage.

As early as 1850s, African American comprised the majority of cowboys in Texas, playing essential roles in the burgeoning cattle industry of the region.

Black Country Artists to Know

Mickey Guyton



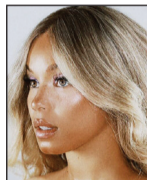
A notable trailblazer, Mickey Guyton is the first Black solo female artist to be nominated for a Grammy in a country music category. She was the first Black female country artist to perform at the Grammy Awards in 2021, when she sang with her song "Black Like Me." Guyton released her official debut album in 2021, "Remember Her Name," to positive reviews.

Reyna Roberts



Considered an "Outlaw Country," Reyna Roberts has taken the country music world by storm. She is a powerhouse vocalist and takes pride in writing her own music. Roberts is an Amazon Music Breakthrough Artists and CMT's Next Women of Country, as well as featured in the Amazon original documentary "For Love and Country."

Tanner Adell



A year before Beyoncé dropped her new country album, TikTok star Tanner Adell referenced her own style as "Lookin' like Beyoncé with a Lasso." Adell is an up and coming country artist who is going viral since the release of Beyoncé's country songs, helping promote her own song "Buckle Bunny."

Cedric Burnside

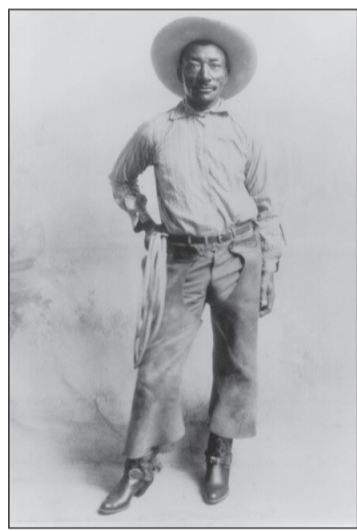


This Grammy Award-winning blues artist is releasing a new album in April, "Hill Country Love." Burnside won for best traditional blues album at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards in 2022 for "I Be Trying." His new album explores the genre of hill country blues, encompassing his musical background from Northern Mississippi.

Kane Brown



Modern, contemporary country Artist Kane Brown rose to stardom quickly, topping the charts with hit singles like "Heaven" and "What If's" and selling out tours. He is breaking down barriers for black country artists with his impressive stage presence and captivating, soulful sound.



Longest-running Black rodeo: BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL

The establishment of the Bill Pickett Invitational in 1984 by Lu Vason marked a significant milestone in highlighting the often overlooked contributions of Black figures into American's Western expansions.

Since its inception, it has grown into a national event, crisscrossing the United States and drawing Black rodeo fans and aspiring Black rodeo

stars from all corners of the country.

By showcasing the talents and achievements of black rodeo performers, the rodeo serves as an inclusive gathering place that celebrates the rich heritage and cultural legacy of Black cowboys and girls.

Through events like the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo the stories

of Black figures who played integral roles in shaping America's Western frontier are brought to the forefront, reclaiming their rightful place in history.

By amplifying these voices and honoring their contributions, the rodeo not only preserves the legacy of Black rodeo pioneers but also inspires future generations to embrace their heritage and pursue

their passions in the world of rodeo. We can't talk about cowboys without mentioning Bass Reeves, a runaway slave, gunfighter, farmer, scout, tracker, and deputy U.S. Marshal.



Reeves

-Teresa Brooks

17-year-old Jessa Thomas is first Black Miss Teen Rodeo Washington

Jessa Thomas is a 17-year-old, first-generation cowgirl from Kittitas County, Washington. She is the reigning Miss Teen Rodeo Washington 2024. Her journey began in a yellow velour tracksuit at a pumpkin patch on a pony at age 2.

Her love for animals would continue to grow from that point on. At age 5 her family would purchase their first horses and she would spend countless hours working at the barn learning everything she could about horse care and horsemanship.

Thomas is an advocate for the equine world, dedicated to demonstrating the power of the horse-human connection.

Through her family's Winney Wellness organization, they bring ponies to events such as schools, retirement homes and more, allowing individuals to experience the bond and joy of equines. Her passion for the animals, as well as the rodeo culture, has driven her to become an active supporter of Rodeo, Grange, FFA and 4H.

Outside of rodeo Thomas lives at home on Windswept Farms where she raises miniature Herefords. Thomas hopes to continue her education to reach her goal of becoming a veterinarian. Helping ensure that animal athletes remain healthy, happy, and able to participate in their sport.

Thomas, the first African American state title holder, is passionate about providing greater representation for the many different demographics in our great state. Through her platform

"Be YOU-tiful," she is determined to inspire people to be proud of who they are and to embrace their uniqueness.

Thomas encourages everyone to find their purpose and to Be YOU-tiful. She believes that everyone should have the chance to experience the feeling of standing in an arena surrounded by a patriotic community, coming together to pray, to cheer and to laugh.

Source: missrodeowashingtoninc.com



Jessa Thomas, 16, is the reigning Miss Teen Rodeo Washington 2024.

CAN WE UNSEE WHAT WE HAVE SEEN?



ROBERT J. LLOYD

IN HIS WORDS



By Robert Lloyd
THE BLACK LENS

After attending the talk "Challenging Stereotype: Reworking Aunt Jemima" given by Meredith Shimizu of Whitworth University on Feb. 11 at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, I was inspired to do an art piece on Aunt Jemima.

The complaints about the Aunt Jemima character and similar images

have been voiced for many decades, dating back to the early 20th century. African American activists, scholars, and community leaders have consistently raised awareness about the harm caused by racial stereotypes and have advocated for the removal of such imagery from popular culture.

In recent years, with the rise of social media and increased public dialogue about racial representation, the criticisms of the Aunt Jemima character gained more visibility and traction. This led to a broader awareness of

the problematic nature of the character and ultimately contributed to the decision by Quaker Oats to retire the brand in 2020.

There are historical images that appear in the media and on the pancake boxes. In the 1960's, artists such as Betye Saar created images to give push back. Now I want to create images that ask the question can there ever be a positive image of a Black woman with pancakes? Or has the stereotype done too much damage. Can we unsee what we have seen?

I remember in the 1950s, there was a significant among Black kids: "Ain't your mama on a pancake box?" One can

see the damage done by stereotypes.

The use of the Aunt Jemima character and imagery has been a subject of criticism and concern within the African American community for many years. Some of the key complaints and issues raised about the Aunt Jemima character and similar stereotypical images include:

1. Racial Stereotyping: The Aunt Jemima character is seen as perpetuating racial stereotypes of Black women, particularly the "mammy" stereotype, which portrays black women as subservient, nurturing, and dedicated to serving white families. This por-

trayal is demeaning and offensive, as it reinforces historical power dynamics and dehumanizes Black folks.

2. Negative Historical Context: The character's origins in minstrel shows and its association with racial caricatures from the Jim Crow era contribute to a legacy of racism and discrimination. Many in the African American community view the Aunt Jemima imagery as a painful reminder of a time when Black people were marginalized and dehumanized in popular culture.

3. Lack of Authentic Representation: Critics argue that the Aunt Jemi-

ma character does not authentically represent the diversity and complexity of Black women's experiences. Instead, it reduces an entire group of people to a one-dimensional caricature, ignoring their individuality, achievements, and contributions to society.

The ongoing discussions about racial stereotypes and representation in media and marketing, continue to be important topics within the African American community and the broader society. A lens gives a view but it is more important to have a voice about things that are seen in order to awaken discussions and solutions for future actions.

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 amanandruckspokane@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 Prosparetti Coleman. Contact (509) 995-7044 or ihearyousis@gmail.com. Online at www.ihearyousis.com, TikTok: tiktok.com/@i.hearyou.sis.

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/therealestateauntie/.

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.

Larry's Barber & Styling – Barbershop owned by Larry Roseman Sr. and operated with Master Barber QC. Contact (509) 869-3773 or ljrbarberman@aol.com. 3017 E. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202.

League of Women for Community Action, Nonprofit, dba Southeast Day Care Center – Nonprofit Child Care Center owned by Day Care Director Sug Villella and the League of Women for Community Action. Contact (509) 535-4794 or lwca.gmail@hotmail.com. 2227 E. Hartson Ave., Spokane, 99202. Online at www.southeastdaycare.org.

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@mooreassistedliving.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.

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 Beginnings Hair & Beauty Salon – Hair styling and braiding salon owned by Stephanie Tullos-Brady. Contact (509) 475-3556 or tullos_stephanie@yahoo.com. 3019 E.. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202.

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.

Providential 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 Ainnu. 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.

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

Smoov Cutz Barber Shop – Barber shop owned by Jason "Smoov" Watson. Contact (509) 703-7949 or jsmoov923@gmail.com. Two locations at 13817 E. Sprague Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216, and 14700 E. Indiana Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216.

Spacehub Production – Photography Studio owned by event photographer Eugene Muzinga. 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.

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.

Are you a Black business owner and you don't see your name or business in this directory? Contact info@blacklensnews.com with your name, business, contact information, address or website, if available. Put "Black Business Directory entry" in the subject line. This listing was made with the help of the Black Business and Professional Alliance and the Carl Maxey Center. If you are part of the Maxey online directory but not seen here, The Black Lens needs your updated contact information in order to publish.



COURTESY

Spokane's Calvary Baptist, led by the Rev. Dr. C. W. Andrews is located at 203 E. Third Ave. in Spokane. Sunday School is at 9:30 a.m. Sundays, while the main service beings at 10 a.m.

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.

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR

APRIL 8 and APRIL 10: Genealogy for Beginners – Eastern Washington Genealogical Society shares tools and tips to help get started on genealogical discoveries. 5-6:30 p.m. April 8 at Hillyard Library. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. April 10 at Central Library.

APRIL 11-20: Black Maternal Health Week – Turn to page 11 for event details.

APRIL 11-13: Cascade District Conference – Regional convocation hosted at Spokane's Bethel AME. 645 S. Richard Allen Ct., Spokane. (509) 534-3007. Email: info@bethelamespokane.com.

APRIL 8: Learn about the Fig Tree – Marijke will share about the Fig Tree's history and mission, media literacy, the importance of nonprofit, independent media in a civil society, and the Resource Directory as a self-help tool. 5:30-6:30 p.m. April 8 at Shadle Park Library.

APRIL 18: Multicultural Art Night – Hosted by SHADES. 5-7 p.m. North

Central High School. \$5. Email taraw@spokaneschools.org.

APRIL 18: Working Families Tax Credit Help – Get 20 minutes of help with your application for the Washington state Working Families Tax Credit. Details in the long description. Registration required. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Central Library, Events B Room.

APRIL 20: 'The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store' Book Club – Join the library for a book discussion of "The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store" by African American author James McBride. 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. April 20 at Indian Trail Library.

APRIL 25: Equity for All – Panel of community experts join local artists 5-7 p.m. at The Hive. Light refreshments provided.

MAY 4: 28th Annual African American Graduation Ceremony – The ceremony takes place 2-4 p.m. May 4 at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga University.

NAACP MEETINGS

To join, visit 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.

WE ARE HIRING!

RACIAL/SOCIAL EQUITY REPORTER

- Cover race-related topics for The Black Lens and The Spokesman-Review.
- Develop stories that discuss race and culture on a personal, community and national level.
- Educate readers about racial equity and how it affects the Inland Northwest.

For more information, visit spokesman.com/careers

APPLY NOW!

COMICS

CURTIS • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

APRIL 1

I BROUGHT HOME A DELUXE FAMILY-SIZED PIZZA WITH ALL THE TRIMMINGS FOR DINNER

SOUNDS GOOD! WHAT WILL THE REST OF YOU BE HAVIN'?

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

YEAH, WE LAUGH, BUT BOTH YOU AND I KNOW HE WASN'T JOKING

APRIL 2

CAN I HAVE SIXTY DOLLARS TO BUY A LIMITED-EDITION SUPERCAPTAINCOOLMAN STATUE?

SURE! BETTER JUMP ON THAT RIGHT AWAY!

WHAT ARE YOU DOIN'?

PULLIN' IT OUT OF THIN AIR

APRIL 3

DAD IS SO TIGHT WITH MONEY

HE MAKES SCROOGE LOOK GENEROUS!

HE'S "FRUGAL," CURTIS. THE WORD YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS FRUGAL.

THE WORD I'M LOOKIN' FOR IS "CHEAPSKATE," "PENNY-PINCHER," "STINGY"!!

APRIL 4

YOUR DAD DOESN'T SPEND MONEY FREELY BECAUSE OF HIS CHILDHOOD

HIS FATHER HAD A GAMBLING HABIT AND OFTEN LOST RENT AND GROCERY MONEY...

HIS FAMILY SPENT TIME LIVING IN A SHELTER... HE VOWED NOT TO LET IT HAPPEN TO H/S FAMILY

HE NEVER TOL' ME

IT'S A SIDE OF HIM HE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

APRIL 5

UMM, DAD... I'M BROKE, CURTIS.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

APRIL 6

STREAMING SERVICES ARE KILLING THE GOING-TO-THE-MOVIE-THEATER EXPERIENCE

I DON'T MISS GOING TO THE THEATER ALL THAT MUCH

I USUALLY SIT NEXT T'A BIG MOUTH IN THE AUDIENCE WHO TALKS DURING THE MOVIE AND RUINS IT

BUT I SIT NEXT TO YOU IN THE THEATER

AND THE BATTER HITS A HOMER!

CRABGRASS • BY TAUHID BONDIA

FEBRUARY 15

WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND TO PRANK THE SUBSTITUTE?

CHECK THIS OUT. WHEN HE CALLS YOUR NAME FOR ATTENDANCE, I'LL RAISE MY HAND, AND YOU RAISE YOURS WHEN HE CALLS MINE!

THAT WAY, HE THINKS I'M YOU AND YOU'RE ME ALL DAY!

AND IT TOOK YOU HOW LONG TO COME UP WITH THAT?

IT JUST CAME TO ME!

I CAN TELL.

FEBRUARY 16

WELCOME, CLASS, AS YOU CAN SEE, MS. CAMPBELL ISN'T HERE TODAY.

MY NAME IS MR. BENNETT, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME MR. B.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR TEACHER HAS LEFT SOME NOTES FOR ME...

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS KEVIN?

FEBRUARY 17

OKAY, CLASS, WHICH ONE OF YOU IS KEVIN?

NOT ME!

MY NAME IS MILES WALLACE: NOTORIOUS KNOW-IT-ALL AND EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE TEACHER'S PET.

WELL, IT SAYS HERE YOU'RE SITTING IN KEVIN'S SEAT.

FEBRUARY 19

HONEST, MR. B, I'M NOT KEVIN! HE IS!

THAT'S ME! KEVIN BEECHAM! I'M A VOLATILE AGENT OF CHAOS WHOSE GREATEST FEAR IS BEING BORED FOR EVEN ONE SECOND.

YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, KEVIN.

THAT'S PRETTY MUCH EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS HERE IN THE TEACHER'S NOTES.

FEBRUARY 20

LOOK, BOYS, YOUR TEACHER LEFT A NOTE SAYING I COULD EXPECT TROUBLE FROM YOU TWO...

...BUT I'VE BEEN IN THE SUBSTITUTE TEACHER GAME FOR A WHILE NOW.

I'VE SEEN EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK.

WELL, IF IT'S TRICKS YOU'RE AFTER, LOOK NO FURTHER! FOR I, KEVIN BEECHAM, AM THE BEST PRANKSTER IN THE THIRD GRADE!

LAYING IT ON KINDA THICK, AIN'T YA?

MILES WOULD NEVER SAY "AIN'T."

FEBRUARY 21

HEY, CARLA, CHECK IT OUT! I'M MILES TODAY. I CAN'T TELL A JOKE WITHOUT MESSING UP THE PUNCHLINE!

YEAH, AND I'M KEVIN! I STILL THINK FRANKENSTEIN IS THE NAME OF THE MONSTER!

OKAY, BUT WHO DO I TRADE MY YOGURT TO, BECAUSE--?

STILL ME.

NEGRO LEAGUE CROSSWORD

Buck O'Neil was a star first baseman and manager in the Negro Leagues and a pioneering scout and coach in the major leagues. He devoted the final decade of his life to chronicling the lost world of Black baseball.
 NEGRO LEAGUES BASEBALL MUSEUM

Larry Doby

Jackie Robinson with rookie catcher Roy Campanella (right).

Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson

DOWN

- Buck O'Neil called him the greatest player
- Jackie's First Black MLB teammate
- Spokane's own MLB announcer
- "Hammerin' _____"
- 13-time Negro League Champions
- Five-time Hall of Famer
- Father of Black Baseball
- Home of NLBM
- Seattle's Black baseball team

ACROSS

- "The Black Babe Ruth"
- The "Say Hey Kid"
- Broke AL color barrier
- First NLB player in MLB Hall of Fame
- MLB retired his number
- "_____-Storming"
- Homestead's Negro League Team
- Fastest man in baseball
- Manager of Monarchs, first Black MLB Coach
- NLB's "bright" idea
- The only woman in the MLB Hall of Fame


Answers on page 16

CULTURE

THIS MONTH ON...

BLACK SOCIAL

01 **BEYONCE'S COUNTRY ANNOUNCEMENT**
act ii COWBOY CARTER 3.29



nymag Earlier this month, Beyoncé offered some rare insight into her decision to make a country record, the imminently arriving *Cowboy Carter*. The new album, she explained in a revealing statement, "was born out of an experience that I had years ago where I did not feel welcomed... and it was very clear that I wasn't. But, because of that experience, I did a deeper dive into the history of country music and studied our rich musical archive."

02 **TARAJI TALKS PAY**


On this week's episode of the 'In Her Shoes' podcast, Cut editor-in-chief Lindsay Peoples speaks with Taraji P. Henson about 'The Color Purple' and her decision to speak up about pay inequality and racism for Black women in Hollywood.



03 **NAACP IMAGE AWARDS WINNERS**

Congratulations to @TheAmandaGorman, the winner of the Chairman's Award at the 55th #NAACPImageAwards. #BrillianceRecognized presented by @crest.

Congratulations to Damson Idris, winner of Outstanding Actor in a Drama at the 55th #NAACPImageAwards. #BrillianceRecognized presented by @crest.



04 **JILL SCOTT LOVES ORIGIN**

★ Jill Scott ★ @missjillscott - Mar 17
ORIGIN. @aunjanuejt Miss Ava DuVernay- I'm speechless and my nerves raw; my skin peeled from my body. I WILL cry aloud shortly. This awakening hurts, yet somehow, I'm relieved to know. Thank u!!! Be prepared- I will hug you too tight. Forgive me now about later please. 🙏



POETRY CORNER

3 stickers

Dedication piece to Sister Sandy and a certain experience that occurred on that day

By AJ the Wordsmith

3 difficult stickers that won't come off, I never thought that would be my cost, as if that significant emotional event was something so easily forgotten that even with meditation some people refuse to let their hate soften. I look at this situation in different regards.

3 stickers that obscure my view, as if I am not the one who pays their dues. City code says 5" away, so anything past that means we're allowed to feel a type of way. We have stickers of hate and ignorance placed on our driver side windows. And then we get lectured about not respecting other people's property.

3 stickers that talk about how the driveway between you and the idiot on the other side kept someone's Ford truck from getting back into their own home. As if it was necessary for you, to place 3 old crappy stickers on someone else's property.

Be the person who lives in a 3-story house, with a metal fence, chicken wire enclosure and two security dogs to protect your home, and yet you feel the need to call the cops because you don't feel safe. Why are your eyes filled with so much hate, I write what I feel, and speak what I think, I'm tired of living in a town filled with nothing but hate.



CROSSWORD ANSWERS

DOWN
1. OSCAR CHARLESTON
3. ROY CAMPANELLA

5. PAUL OLDEN
6. HANK AARON
8. MONARCHS
9. MARTIN DIHIGO
10. RUBE FOSTER
13. KANSAS CITY
17. THE STEEL HEADS

ACROSS
2. JOSH GIBSON
4. WILLE MAYS
7. LARRY DOBY
11. SATCHEL PAIGE
12. JACKIE ROBINSON

14. BARN
15. THE GRAYS
16. COOL PAPA BELL
18. BUCK O'NEIL
19. NIGHT GAMES
20. EFFA MANLEY



THE BLACK LENS

ITSA

INFO@BLACKLENSNEWS.COM

COOKOUT

Do you have treasured family recipes you'd like to share with The Black Lens? Please email us with "Cookout Recipe" in the subject line. Send us the recipe with a blurb explaining its history. A photo of the food is strongly encouraged.