


BLACK VOICES SYMPOSIUM

“ Sometimes just showing up is a revolutionary act.”

Words inspired by Audre Lorde

PAGES 8-9



APRIL EBERHARDT/  
THE BLACK LENS

SPOKANE'S BLACK COMMUNITY NEWS SOURCE

BLACKLENS.NEWS

THE BLACK LENS

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# Iron sharpens iron: Building from within

With a few learned skills, barber ‘Big Lee’ believes we can break cycles

By April Eberhardt  
THE BLACK LENS

Lee Lewis, known as “Big Lee,” is a Spokane barber with aspirations far beyond cutting hair. Owner of the Chop Shop, Lewis is originally from Las Vegas, Nevada, and moved to Spokane in 2003 to work at Kaiser Aluminum – a decision he says saved his life. Reflecting on his 20s, Lewis de-

scribes himself as being directionless. “I wasn’t doing anything positive in Las Vegas,” he recalls. “Everyone I went to school with ended up in prison, in trouble with the law, or worse, dead. I needed a fresh start.” Working at Kaiser gave Lewis that fresh start, but he soon realized he wanted more. “I realized I couldn’t just work in that warehouse day after day for 30

years, you know what I’m saying? Making somebody else rich. I couldn’t do it,” he said. “And I remember barbering was something I always wanted to do.” Many people thought he was crazy for leaving a well-paying job, but Lewis was determined. Lewis emphasizes the importance



COURTESY  
“Big Lee” Lewis cuts hair at the Chop Shop, 1428 S. Lincoln St.

See LEWIS, 13



PHOTOS BY APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS  
NAACP Youth Council and regional BSU members brave the cold to march in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.

# ‘How can I love you better?’

MLK Day march honors the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; students awarded at rally

By Black Lens staff reports

Hundreds of people turned out for the MLK Day Unity Rally in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Monday, Jan. 20. The annual event was held in the Spokane Convention Center

and hosted by the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. As part of the celebrations, some students were honored with the gift of education. Genae Langford, a senior at Ferris High School, who plans to attend Washington State University, re-

ceived the newly endowed Happy Watkins Scholarship. Emmanuel Eberhardt, a Rogers High School freshman, received the Ivan Bush Community Service Award. Michael Bethely was one of the

See MLK DAY, 13



Kemo Patrick and Rose McCollum talk with a Buffalo Solider member during the march.



Latisha Hill walks with Fannie Busch, widow of Ivan, co-founder of the MLK March and Rally.



Michael Bethely speaks during the MLK Day Unity Rally at the Spokane Convention Center.

# BLACK LIBERATION AND ASCENSION THROUGH MUSIC

Milton Suggs, on tour with Jazz at Lincoln Center ensemble, makes stop in Spokane

By April Eberhardt  
THE BLACK LENS

Music has been a part of Atlanta-raised Chicagoan Milton Suggs’ environment his entire life. A vocalist currently touring with the Jazz at Lincoln Center ensemble, their latest tour kicked off at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center on Thursday, Jan. 22. “I’ve practiced music



Suggs from a young age. I started in third grade, on the upright bass (and played in) the school orchestra. Then I transitioned to other instruments, such as the saxophone, a brief stint for

See SUGGS, 12

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERIES (PART II)

# THE MEANING OF ‘UBUNTU’

Some years ago, author Dirk Louw penned an illuminating and beautiful article entitled “The African Concept of Ubuntu and Restorative Justice.” While I’d certainly suggest reading it in full, I’ll attempt to do my best to convey its flavor – a snippet of content but more importantly, the spirit of the message. “Ubuntu” carries a multitude of meanings and values, not entirely easy to capture. It’s an “aphorism” – akin to what we know as a cliché. So, the word manages to serve as both pithy yet deeply and collectively resonant, especially for those who’ve lived their way into its felt reality. Here, it’s also critical to acknowledge that attempts to translate the term and



By Inga Laurent  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



accompanying conceptions without immersive context will largely prove insufficient. Additionally, the

See UBUNTU, 12



POWER BY COURAGE

BL

NEWS

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**CLARIFICATION:** A Decemeber article on the Northwest Credible Messenger Beauty and Barbershop Behavioral Health Community of Practice failed to mention funding sources for the organization. It is funded by the state Department of Commerce Community Reinvestment Project.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former Seattle Children’s doctor wins \$21M in discrimination lawsuit

A jury on Monday found Seattle Children’s hospital created a hostile work environment based on race against Dr. Benjamin Danielson, the former medical director of the hospital’s Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic.

The jury awarded \$21 million in damages in the racial discrimination case, concluding a weekslong trial that centered on the effects of systemic racism in the workplace and health care, and the hospital’s responsibility to address it.

“I’m in shock,” Danielson said in an interview shortly after the verdict was read. “I’m full of deep gratitude to the jury. There have been so many amazing people from the community, from this journey, willing to show up.”

Danielson, who is Black, led the clinic for over two decades, positioning himself as a well-known advocate for increasing health care access for marginalized communities. Founded more than 50 years ago and named after a prominent community organizer who called attention to the disparate treatment and health outcomes of Black people, the Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic primarily serves families of color and low-income families.

Trump executive order reflects his promise to end DEI programs

President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Jan. 20 terminating diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the federal government in what he described in his inauguration speech as a move to end efforts to “socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life,” stated in an article published by the Associated Press.

This is a major shift for federal policy and is in line with Trump’s campaign promises.

The order aims to halt federal agencies’ DEI programs. Conservatives have long condemned them, arguing they violate the Constitution by using preferences based on race, gender and sexual orientation. Trump got big cheers at a rally in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 19 when he said he’d end DEI requirements from the military and schools. The order does not directly address what schools do, though, according to the Associated Press.

Biden pardons the late Black nationalist Marcus Garvey as well as 4 others

President Joe Biden posthumously pardoned Black nationalist Marcus Garvey, who influenced Malcolm X and other civil rights leaders and was convicted of mail fraud in the 1920s on Jan. 19. Also receiving pardons were a top Virginia lawmaker and advocates for immigrant rights, criminal justice reform and gun violence prevention, according to a report published in the Associated Press.

Congressional leaders had pushed for Biden to pardon Garvey, with supporters arguing that Garvey’s conviction was politically motivated and an effort to silence the increasingly popular leader who spoke of racial pride. After Garvey was convicted, he was deported to Jamaica, where he was born. He died in 1940.

“We don’t turn on each other. We lean into each other. That’s the sacred covenant of our nation. We pledge an allegiance, not just to an idea, but to each other,” Biden said.

From wire reports

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NEWS

BRAVERY IS NOW

The toxic positivity of colorblindness

History doesn’t lie and denial doesn’t make manufactured truths real. But – history does prophesy. Colorblindness and the toxic positivity it nurtures is a deceptive and pathological theory that aids and abets accountability avoidance for wrongs that laid the quicksand of disenfranchisement for centuries. Color was the basis of the Dred Scott Decision of 1846 and Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896. Color prejudice is and has always been the indoctrination that has never been broken in the United States of America. Colorblindness is the lie of racial superiority, unspoken but adhered to in silence, and the defense of those who don’t really want you there in the first place, and a scapegoat of deflection from seeing all the sons and daughters of this country as equal. Colorblindness convinces cowards and complicit good citizens that merit has always been a fair test, that patriotism is defined by a flawed definition of liberty, and that integrity does not matter for everyone. Colorblindness is a security blanket for those who brainwash them-



By April Eberhardt  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



selves into thinking that they are not prejudiced, the silent denial of those who consider themselves the biological children of America.

Colorblindness is the lie that the game was never fixed, that the double standards don’t really exist, and that corruption is okay if it serves the interest of those of the same ilk. We are witnessing American Reconstruction 2025, a setback that threatens hard fought battles for America’s underdogs, the fight not to be seen as invisible. We are watching the ascent of hypocrisy and corruption, the exploitation and manipulation of equality that thrives in wealthy whiteness. “DEI” has become the new attack

word, hurled by complicit history deniers that will make moral concessions on one hand, while upholding morality on the other. What happens to the least of us is only a template for what can happen to all of us.

As indoctrination has convinced many that America’s transgressions are not real, the question of bravery hangs over us. This era of politics will determine, with certainty, the trajectory of this nation. The delusion of “e pluribus unum” has come undone, there are no more dog whistles being blown. DEI is now a battle cry for those who they want to erase. It is the battle cry for the Tuskegee Airmen whose merit led them to fly planes in the Second World War as their color locked the door of opportunity. DEI is the mechanism of accountability for the Declaration of Independence to ensure that people in positions of power with biases won’t block access, so that the merit they require can be acquired. DEI is the insistence that we will not be counted out when the forces of politics have aimed to limit our progress. Bravery is now. Resistance to corruption will tell us who our neighbors are. Our ability to see the conflation of real issues with gross abuses of power is the alarm that we cannot turn off. Rome is falling. Will we watch?

Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Program:  
Honoring ancestors, empowering futures

By Shamerica Nakamura  
MISS JUNETEENTH  
PLANNING COMMITTEE

We are proud to announce the Spokane Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Program, a transformative initiative whose mission is to “position young Black/African American women to embrace their unique identities, celebrate their heritage, and pursue higher education while fostering a strong sense of community and leadership.”

Applications are open to Black teen girls between the ages of 16-18 who currently reside in Spokane County. Selected participants will explore the significance of Juneteenth, develop skills in public speaking, mentorship and leadership. Participants will be able to showcase their talents and share their aspirations at the Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant on Saturday, April 26. At the pageant, one participant will be awarded with a scholarship that will help in the pursuit of achieving their educational dream. The community is invited to join in on the celebration of these extraordinary young scholars.

Sponsorships and donations are welcome to support the program and mission. For more information about the Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Program, please follow us on Facebook & Instagram @miss-juneteenthspokane or reach out by email missjuneteenthspokane@gmail.com.

## Who Will Be The First Miss Juneteenth Spokane?

A TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVE EMPOWERING YOUNG BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN TO:

- Embrace their unique identities
- Celebrate their heritage
- Pursue higher education
- Foster community and leadership

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Learn the significance of Juneteenth
- Develop public speaking, mentorship, and leadership skills
- Showcase talents and aspirations

WHO CAN APPLY:

- Black teen girls, ages 16–18
- Must reside in Spokane County

FOR QUESTIONS, CONTACT MISSJUNETEENTHSPOKANE@GMAIL.COM

Spokane’s Miss Juneetenth Scholarsip Program

@missjuneteenthspokane

Other scholarship opportunities

Gonzaga Prep is pleased to announce the launch of a scholarship initiative that will support first-generation college-bound students with significant financial need. The program honoring the late Rev. Happy Watkins – a beloved member of the community – will ultimately serve 100 students annually, providing access to a life-changing Jesuit college preparatory education, according to a G-Prep news release.

The program launches with 25 scholarships, each valued at \$15,000 per year, available to exceptional eighth-grade students entering Gonzaga Prep in the 2025-26 academic year. Over the next four years, the program will expand by adding 25 new scholars annually, reaching a total of 100 students, the release said.

The school is accepting applications and nominations and will host evening information and interview events on Feb. 3 and 12 from 6-7:30 p.m. at Gonzaga Prep. Interested applicants must attend one of these two events to be considered. To sign up for an event or to nominate a potential scholar, please email Alix Lee, director of Admissions, at alee@gprep.com.

THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane’s Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS

FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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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.



CULTURE



PHOTOS BY KATIA JASMIN/THE BLACK LENS  
The Spokane community turns out to honor Haitian Independence Day on Jan. 6 at Spokane City Hall.

# Haitian Independence Day offers reflection on resilience

By Katia Jasmin  
THE BLACK LENS

Jan. 6 was a day to remember as Spokane came together to celebrate Haitian Independence Day. This historic occasion, marked by unity and reflection, highlighted the rich contributions of the Haitian community to our city. I am deeply honored to have been presented with a proclamation by Mayor Brown recognizing this important day – a testament to Spokane’s growing commitment to inclusivity.

Haitian Independence Day, celebrated annually on Jan. 1, commemorates Haiti’s remarkable achievement as the first Black-led republic and the first independent Caribbean nation. It is a celebration of freedom, resilience, and the enduring spirit of those who fought for equality. In Spokane, it is also an opportunity to honor the contributions of Haitian immigrants who are helping to shape our city’s vibrant future.



The Spokane community turns out to honor Haitian Independence Day on Jan. 6 at Spokane City Hall.

Haitian Independence Day is more than a celebration of history – it is a call to action to uphold the freedoms we all cherish and to build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Let us continue to support initiatives that bring us closer together, celebrating the contributions of all cultures that call Spokane home. However, the lead-up to Spokane’s celebra-

tion wasn’t without its challenges. Some hurtful, racist comments on social media served as a stark reminder that racism persists, even in a community as welcoming as Spokane. These remarks were especially painful for members of our community, including Lili, a Haitian adoptee and the Project Manager at Creole Resources. Lili’s story is one of incredible resilience. Adopted from Haiti after the

devastating earthquake, she faced racist taunts and exclusion growing up in Colville. Yet, she turned her experiences into fuel for advocacy and service, becoming a pillar of strength for our Haitian community in Spokane. Her journey reminds us of the importance of fostering understanding and support for immigrants navigating new cultures. Thank you to everyone who made this celebration possible, especially the Spokane City Council, Spokane Mayor Brown, Spokanites, Peirone Produce, and Teamsters. Special shout-out goes to Maranatha Baptist Church, Thrive, ANHPI, MIA, Refugee, and Immigrant Connections, Latino En Spokane Manzanita House, and The Spokane Alliance. Your support reminds us that Spokane is a city where resilience is honored, diversity is embraced, and the spirit of freedom endures. Together, we can continue to build a brighter, more inclusive future.

“

The power we hold as Black men cannot be suppressed into a silence that slowly kills us from the inside. Our stories are insightful yet often untold. Our lives are roadmaps filled with potential and humble beginnings – stories that deserve to be shared.

IN HIS WORDS

# UNIFYING THE VOICE

## AMPLIFYING THE POWER OF BLACK MEN TO CREATE LASTING CHANGE

By Anthony Burt  
THE BLACK LENS

In a world where systemic racism, oppression and marginalization continue to disproportionately affect Black communities, the need for unified action among Black men has never been more urgent.

For far too long, the voices and perspectives of black men have been silenced, ignored, or overlooked; leaving a power vacuum that has been filled by systems of oppression. However, it is precisely the collective voices, experiences, and perspectives of black men that hold the key to unlocking transformative change. By unifying and amplifying their voices, Black men can reclaim their power and become a driving force for justice, equality, and liberation.

Throughout history, Black men have played a pivotal role in shaping the course of human events, from leading slave revolts and civil rights movements to creating art, literature and music that has inspired generations. Yet, despite these contributions, Black men continue to face some of the most daunting challenges in society, including racial profiling, police brutality, mass incarceration and economic disenfranchisement. It is time for Black men to come together, to organize, and to mobilize their collective power in pursuit of a more just world. By doing so, we can create a brighter future not only for ourselves, but for our families, communities, and the world at large. The time for unity, action, and transformation is now.

I can still remember the sound of my grandfather’s voice – a voice of strength and confidence. His tone alone commanded presence, filling any room with an undeniable authority. When I close my eyes, I can hear that deep, rich resonance, wrapping around me like a warm, comforting hug. It’s a sound that’s etched in my memory, a sound that makes me feel safe, loved, and protected. I can remember as a boy when I first heard Malcolm X speak. The way he spoke with sure confidence, intelligence and such unapologetic passion, his words were like swords, cutting through the veil of ignorance.

The power we hold as Black men cannot be suppressed into a silence that slowly kills us from the inside. Our stories are insightful yet often untold. Our lives



By Anthony Burt  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



are roadmaps filled with potential and humble beginnings – stories that deserve to be shared. God created the world through words, and that same creative power has been bestowed onto us.

We must come together and engage in a workshop that empowers the voices of our men, equipping them with the confidence to lead, take on positions of leadership and become agents of change. Driving home as a model for men, the action begins with intentional spaces designed to uplift, empower, and equip black men to embrace their voices and lead boldly.

At Family Matters Inc., we are committed to fostering unity, empowerment and the sharing of real-life stories that can inspire, guide, and transform our communities. Workshops for Black men serve as incubators of leadership, spaces where men can gather to reflect, learn and grow together. These workshops offer tools to build confidence, develop leadership skills and cultivate a deeper understanding of the power of storytelling.

By sharing our journeys, our struggles and triumphs, we break generational cycles of silence and create a culture where every voice matters. Together, we can rewrite the narrative for Black men, shaping a future where we lead as fathers, brothers, mentors, and community builders.

These workshops are more than gatherings; they are catalysts for change, teaching us to support one another, uplift our youth and stand as pillars of strength in our families and communities. The time is now for Black men to step into their power, harness their voices and lead the charge for a brighter, more just world.

Through unity, action and faith, we will build the legacy our ancestors dreamed of and our descendants will inherit.



Support The Black Lens  
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Donations will grow grassroots community journalism and special youth projects at The Black Lens





HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

# Raze Early Learning Center set for North Side

Nonprofit to offer 170 slots for children as young as 4 weeks with focus on meeting diverse needs

By Black Lens staff reports

Raze Early Learning and Development Center broke ground (and broke down barriers) in north Spokane in mid-January.

The center is set to offer 170 child care slots for children ages 4 weeks to 12 years and will provide before and after school care with transportation.

“This pivotal event represents a commitment to addressing Spokane County’s need for high-quality childcare and extended hours care for working families. Our goal is to raze the bias-driven narratives that feed the preschool to prison pipeline,” Kerra Bower, CEO of Raze Early Learning and Development Center, said in a news release. “This facility will serve as a safe haven for children and families, providing quality care and critical resources to help them thrive.”

To meet the diverse needs of families, Raze will operate Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., ensuring flexible, extended hours for working families, the release said.

As a nonprofit organization, Raze is dedicated to supporting families through a range of wraparound services, including:

- On-site mental and behavioral health supports teachers, students and families.
- Culturally responsive, individualized curriculum that affirms Black culture and fosters inclusion for all students.
- Family engagement and partnerships to ensure every child reaches their full potential.

This expansion reflects Raze’s commitment to answering Spokane County’s urgent call for affordable, high-quality child care.



COURTESY

Kerra Bower, founder of Little Scholars Development, smashes through unfinished drywall that will be a future entrance at the groundbreaking of Raze Development Center on Jan. 17. Raze will be located at 6519 N. Lidgerwood St. in Spokane.

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FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOP

March 1, 2025

The Financial Literacy Workshop is designed for english and Spanish speaking young adults of all ages. Attendees will learn skills to develop and manage finances, establish a portfolio that will benefit them into retirement, and understand the challenges of establishing their first household.

The following topics will be discussed:

Introduction to Financial Basics

Budgeting and Savings

Understanding Credit and Debit

Date: March 1, 2025

Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Location: Seattle Credit Union

824 MLK Jr. Suite A. Tacoma, WA 98405

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# S.I.P.S. 'N' TIPS

## Fighting financial illiteracy with budgeting



By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Many people make resolutions for the new year such as: organize the house, clean out the garage, pay off bills, get in better physical shape, exercise more, go to the gym, eat better, lose weight. What better way to start the new year than with a resolution to give your finances a health check-up?

Here are some questions to consider in giving yourself a financial health checkup include:

Do I have a budget designed around my needs?

What does a good budget sheet include?

Do I have an emergency fund with enough money to pay my expenses for three to six months?

- What is my total debt?
- What is my plan to reduce or pay off my debt?
- Do I have a savings account or retirement account?
- Do I have a list of my monthly/yearly expenses?
- Do I have protection in place should I not be able to work or to take care of my family should I no longer be around?
- What is my total after tax income?
- Do I have financial goals in place for the month, for the year and/or retirement?
- Do I have a plan to achieve those goals and action steps to handle obstacles that get in the way as I work on my goals?

There are numerous budget sheets that can be found online. Consider one that addresses fixed expenses such as mortgage or rent, car payments, insurance and loan payments, expenses that fall into the same dollar amount category monthly. The budget should also include a section for variable expenses like groceries clothing, fuel, and phone bill – those expenses whose dollar amount change from month to month.

Finally, a good budget sheet should provide for a listing of luxury expenses i.e. numerous cable channels, travel, entertainment, eating out; those are things that one could reduce or delete if the fat needed to be trimmed from your budget. For starters, consider the using a budget sheet which you can add to or delete from to make this budget outline fit your needs.

See the following template for tips:

### Income

Monthly Income 1:  
Monthly Income 2:

**Total:**

### Expenses

#### Fixed need costs:

- Mortgage/rent
  - Property taxes
  - Homeowners insurance
  - Auto insurance
  - Personal liability umbrella
  - Personal articles policy
  - Dental insurance
  - Health insurance
  - Personal loans
  - School loans
  - Car loan
- #### Variable need costs:
- Life insurance
  - Electric/water
  - Gas
  - Cell phones
  - Supplies
  - Car fuel
  - Auto maintenance
  - Groceries
  - Day care
  - Children hygiene/clothes
  - Business travel
  - Dry cleaning
  - Health
  - Haircuts/grooming
  - Clothes
  - Donations/tithing

#### Interest:

Amount:  
Balance:  
Rate:

**Total Fixed Need Cost:**

**Total Variable Need Cost:**

**Total Need (Fixed + Variable) Costs:**

**Total Available to Save:**

**Luxury Costs (fixed and variable):**

- Amazon Prime
- iCloud Storage
- Gym Memberships
- Cleaning Service
- Cable
- Starbucks
- Home Upgrades
- Eating Out
- Travel
- Gifts/donations

**Total Luxury Costs:**

**Total Monthly Costs (Need + Luxury):**

**Total Left Over from monthly income**

**after Luxury Expenses:**

## BUSINESS

# How communities can take action to curb inflation

*Double-digit price hikes at grocery store are devastating low-, middle-class households*

By Teresa Brooks  
THE BLACK LENS

Rising inflation is leaving millions of American families struggling to make ends meet, particularly low- and middle-income households who already operate on tight budgets. The cost of basic necessities such as food, gas, and housing has increased dramatically, with grocery store prices leading the charge. For families living paycheck to paycheck, these price hikes are nothing short of devastating, forcing difficult choices about what to cut and where to save.

The good news is that while inflation is a complex, nationwide issue, local communities can take actionable steps to mitigate its effects. Through community engagement, education and smart policy changes, we can take back some control over our financial futures.

### What is inflation and why does it matter?

Inflation occurs when the cost of goods and services rises, decreasing the purchasing power of money. A moderate level of inflation – around 2% per year – is considered normal and even healthy for economic growth. However, the U.S. has recently experienced inflation levels well beyond this norm, with food and housing costs seeing some of the highest increases.

When prices rise faster than wages, households – especially those on fixed or low incomes – are left struggling to afford essential items. For many families, this means cutting back on healthy food, delaying necessary medical care, or falling behind on rent or bills.

### Why grocery price hikes hurt so much

Double-digit price hikes at the grocery store hit families where it hurts most. Food is a non-negotiable expense, and rising prices on items like milk, eggs, bread, and fresh produce mean that families either have to stretch their budgets further or resort to less nutritious, more affordable processed foods. For low-income households, who already spend a higher percentage of their income on groceries, these increases can be catastrophic. The added financial stress has also been linked to declines in mental health, as families grapple with the daily fear of not being able to provide enough.

While inflation is influenced by national and global factors, communities don't have to wait for federal solutions to take meaningful action. Here are some ways local

groups, businesses, and individuals can work together to combat inflation and support struggling households:

### Educate and empower the community

Start the conversation about inflation by educating your community on what it is, what causes it, and how to navigate it. Host workshops or informational sessions to explain topics like

“What is normal inflation?” and “How does inflation impact my budget?” Empowering people with knowledge can help them feel more in control of their finances.

### Monitor and adjust budgets

Encourage community members to closely track their spending to identify which categories (e.g., food, gas, entertainment) are causing the most strain. Once identified, individuals can adjust their budgets by cutting back on non-essentials or finding ways to save on necessities.

### Support local food initiatives

Communities can combat grocery price hikes by investing in local food systems. This includes:

- Supporting farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.
- Establishing community gardens where residents can grow their own produce.
- Expanding food pantries and free meal programs to ensure no one goes hungry.

### Advocate for small businesses

Small businesses are the backbone of local economies, but many struggle to keep prices low due to rising costs and excessive regulations. Advocating for reduced regulatory burdens and supporting local entrepreneurs can help businesses thrive, create jobs and keep costs down for consumers.

### Promote sustainable living practices

Encourage sustainable practices such as reducing waste, sharing resources, and buying in bulk to cut down on costs. Programs that teach families how to cook healthy meals on a budget or use reusable goods instead of disposable items can also make a big difference.

### Advocate for fair policy changes

Local governments can play a role in curbing inflation by:

- Cutting taxes to give families



COURTESY

**The Fairwood Farmers Market in May 2020 in north Spokane. Supporting farmers markets is a way to combat grocery price hikes.**

more take-home pay.

- Reducing unnecessary regulations that drive up the cost of doing business.
- Reforming occupational licensing laws to help low-income workers find jobs more easily.

### Organize cooperative buying programs

Community-based buying programs allow residents to pool their money and purchase items like food and household goods in bulk at a lower cost. These cooperatives can help families access affordable essentials while fostering a sense of community.

### Hold landlords accountable

Rent is one of the largest expenses for many families, and inflation has driven up housing costs dramatically. Advocating for stronger tenant protections and holding landlords accountable for fair practices can help prevent housing instability.

### Increase access to financial resources

Work with local banks and credit unions to offer financial literacy programs, savings incentives, and low-interest loans to help families weather the effects of inflation.

Inflation is not a problem that will disappear overnight. However, by taking proactive steps, communities can reduce its impact and build a stronger foundation for the future. Supporting local food systems, advocating for fair policies, and empowering individuals with the tools to manage their budgets are just a few ways we can combat the rising cost of living. At the heart of these efforts is the idea that no one should face this challenge alone. By working together, we can create a more resilient, equitable community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of economic conditions.

Let's make inflation a conversation – and a problem – we solve together.

THE CARL MAXEY CENTER PRESENTS

# SANDY WILLIAMS ANNUAL BLACK BUSINESS EXPO

2025

SCAN TO REGISTER

### EXPLORE, CONNECT & GROW!

Join us for the Black Small Business Expo, a vibrant showcase celebrating the talent, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit of Black-owned businesses in our community—connecting businesses with opportunities, resources, and support.

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

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**Exhibition:**  
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## FEB. 15TH

10AM - 6PM

MLK Center  
500 S Stone St,  
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EDUCATION

# ‘Right to Read’ screening event highlights need for phonics-based instruction

By Spokane NAACP Education Committee

On Jan. 7, Northwest Passages, in partnership with the Spokane branch of the NAACP and The Black Lens, held a screening of the documentary “The Right To Read” at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, which highlighted the literacy deficits implied when phonics based instruction is replaced with whole language, balanced literacy. The latter model leaves many students unable to decode words because phonics is deemphasized and replaced by memorization, picture clues and context to build a literacy foundation.

The documentary highlights that such a method is not based on the science of reading, and does not use letter sound recognition. This has resulted in lower-than-average reading levels across the board, which are more pronounced in historically marginalized communities. The panel (pictured in order) consisted of Reading Specialist Dororthy Whitman; Executive Director of Communities in Schools Deb Raub; founder of Little Scholars Development



The panel at the Spokane Right to Read event hosted by Northwest Passages, the Spokane branch of the NAACP and The Black Lens.

Center and Raze Development Center Kerra Bower; and retired educator Bernice Buchanan. Editor of The Black Lens, April Eberhardt (seated center) moderated the panel.

Two high school seniors at St. George’s School, Braden Chambers (back left) and Bryson Hill (back right) shared their capstone project – a literacy initiative wherein they built little

libraries to support reading in underserved communities.

The little libraries will be utilized by Glow Early Learning Center.

As a follow-up to the docu-



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS  
Eighth-grader Jordyn Bower reads to a younger student at a reading circle event held at The Black Lens office.

mentary, reading circles were held by The Black Lens and the Spokane NAACP where teenagers read to smaller children, done as a service initiative in honor of Dr. King’s legacy.

## Lack of STEM educators and how it impacts STEM careers in America



By Dr. Sharah Zaab  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



As the global economy continues to shift toward technology-driven industries, the demand for skilled professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields has never been greater. From innovative advancements in artificial intelligence to breakthroughs in renewable energy, STEM careers are essential for progress and economic growth. However, in the United States, a troubling shortage of qualified STEM educators is hindering the pipeline of students entering these critical fields, creating a potential crisis for the nation’s future workforce.

The U.S. has long been a leader in scientific discovery and technological innovation. However, the country’s ability to maintain that leadership is increasingly under threat due to a lack of qualified STEM teachers at the K-12 level. According to a 2020 report by the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 60% of American high schools report having difficulty finding qualified STEM teachers. The shortage is especially pronounced in fields like computer science, mathematics, and engineering, where demand for educators has outpaced supply. As a result, many schools struggle to provide students with the foundational skills they need to pursue careers in these disciplines.

This shortage of STEM educators is directly affecting the future of STEM careers in America. Without access to high-quality STEM instruction, students are less likely to develop the critical thinking, problem-solving, and technical skills that are essential for success in these fields. Additionally, many students in underserved communities, where STEM teacher shortages are most acute, are missing out on opportunities to enter the workforce as skilled STEM professionals. This lack of diversity in STEM fields perpetuates the cycle of inequality, as



GETTY IMAGES

By investing in STEM education, the U.S. can ensure that the next generation is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly technological world.

underrepresented groups, including African American students, are often excluded from high-paying, high-demand careers.

The impact of the educator shortage is especially concerning for African American students, who are already underrepresented in STEM fields. According to the National Science Foundation, Black students make up only 9% of STEM degree earners, despite comprising a much larger portion of the U.S. population. Without access to qualified STEM educators, these students are less likely to pursue and succeed in STEM careers. The absence of role models and mentors in the classroom further exacerbates this issue, leaving African American students with fewer opportunities to envision themselves in technical fields.

Programs like the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Pre-College Initiative are crucial in addressing these disparities, but they can only do so much without a strong educational foundation. The NSBE Pre-College Initiative, which introduces African American high school students to STEM disciplines and provides them with mentorship and resources, has helped many students achieve success in engineering and other STEM careers. However, these programs cannot replace the need for well-trained teachers in schools. Without sufficient support for STEM educators, programs like NSBE’s Pre-College Initiative risk being less effective, as students may not have access to the quality instruction that prepares them for these opportunities.

The repercussions of this shortage are not just limited to students. Employers across the country are facing increasing difficulty in filling STEM positions. In fact, a recent study by the National Science Foundation revealed that there are over 2 million unfilled STEM jobs

in the U.S. annually. This skills gap is limiting the growth potential of American industries and causing businesses to look abroad for talent. While foreign workers often fill some of these gaps, the reliance on global talent raises concerns about national competitiveness and security.

To address this issue, experts agree that a multifaceted approach is required. First and foremost, there needs to be a concerted effort to attract and retain high-quality STEM teachers. This could involve increasing teacher salaries to make the profession more competitive with the private sector, providing more professional development opportunities, and offering incentives for teachers to work in high-need areas. Additionally, colleges and universities should be encouraged to produce more graduates with degrees in STEM education, ensuring a steady supply of qualified teachers.

Furthermore, the federal government and private industry must play a larger role in supporting STEM education. Increased funding for K-12 schools, particularly those in underserved areas, would help ensure that all students, including African American students, have access to high-quality STEM instruction. Partnerships between schools and tech companies can also offer students hands-on learning experiences and internships, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

Ultimately, the lack of STEM educators in America is a critical issue that affects the nation’s ability to compete in a global economy. By investing in STEM education and addressing the teacher shortage, the U.S. can ensure that the next generation, including African American students, is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly technological world.



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

Sian Armstrong reads alongside James Smith and his grandson after “The Right To Read” event.

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL LANGUAGE ON LITERACY

By James Smith  
THE BLACK LENS

Language is about community. I recently attended a documentary screening of “The Right to Read,” which was a collaboration between the NAACP and The Black Lens. Although reading literacy was the primary focus, my afterthought was how oral language that we use in our homes can impact a person’s literacy.

Using an exchange between myself and my grandson as an example of my quandary, in my excitement to see my 2-year-old grandson, Isaiah, I often say (in jest): “What up, man?” In hindsight, my thinking was whether that was a proper way to greet a 2-year-old in the early stages of his learning development, and what impact what he hears will have when goes out the door, into society. What message am I sending to him when I use informal language? I also think about rap music and other ways that language is demonstrated outside of official or professional situations. Ultimately, I wonder, when looking at how literacy has evolved through generations and its impact on language development in the Black community.

Here’s some of my observations: We must play to win! Academic and social language are essential in how we navigate the world, and understanding the difference between them is important. Generally speaking, it helps our literacy when we know things like the etymology of words (suffixes and prefixes), vernacular (specific to different settings), and how to use language in context. It’s not a question of whether it is okay or not okay

to use social language over academic language, we have to know how and when to use them both. Knowledge is power, so here are some language references to best understand our literacy journey:

**AAVE:** African American Vernacular English

**BICS:** Basic interpersonal communication skills

**CALP:** Cognitive academic language proficiency

**Colloquialism:** A word or expression that is informal, regional, or slang. Learn the synonyms, examples and history of different colloquialisms.

Assimilation raises an important question in the Black community. Do we lose ourselves by fitting into the dominant culture? How important is assimilation in society? We must engage in the process through which individuals and groups of differing heritages acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing culture. One thing we need to realize is that we have always been literate, orally. The spoken word was how we carried information. We were just without the proper tools, such as books, understanding letters and sounds, but no one can take away from us the innovation and intuition it took to survive through the use of language—spirits, songs, carried over words from the native tongue of a land we never knew; we knew how to use language to navigate spaces and open doors.

Valerie Fridland, a professor of linguistics, Department of English offers in “The Sound of Racial Profiling: When language leads to Discrimination” the notion that the problem isn’t with the speech itself but

with attitudes that interpret the speech – that is linguistic profiling?

More broadly, research both in linguistics and social psychology has looked at how subtle and often unconscious linguistic practices predispose us to react to and think about people differently depending on their race. Dr. Gholdy Mohammed offers in her book Cultivating Genius: “When Nina Simone sang the uplifting lyrics of her song ‘Young, Gifted and Black’ in 1970, she invited her listeners into a powerful way of re-envisioning Black excellence in themselves and Black people around them. But even half a century later, there are a host of barriers that continue to undermine the flourishing of Black excellence in educational settings.”

What does it mean for Black youth to cultivate intellectual excellence in a society that disavows their intelligence and their capability? What does it look like to disrupt these patterns and empower Black students in meaningful ways? We have never been an illiterate people. Understanding self is paramount in identity.

There is no organization that doesn’t have a standard of conduct or behavioral expectations: Church, sporting events, schools, the military, the theater, etc. When it comes to language, there needs to be differentiation and understanding of time and place, so that we can be prepared in different spaces. It is a life skill. It is our responsibility to teach both. When was the last time you checked the language that you use and reflected in its impact?

*The Black Lens staff contributed to this report.*



ARTS AND INSPIRATION

BLACK ARTISTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2025

By Brianna Fields  
THE BLACK LENS

As the new year makes its entrance, new artists and tours are starting to make waves. Whether it's rap, punk rock or international groups, here's a list of artists to keep an eye out for in 2025.

**Meet Me at the Altar.** A three-person, all woman pop-punk band that formed on the internet in 2015. The band had its first tour in 2018 and was eventually signed to Fueled By Ramen in 2020. Their musical style has been compared to Paramore. The members consist of Edith Victoria (lead vocals), Téa Campbell (guitar/bass), and Ada Juarez (drums). Meet Me at the Alter currently has two studio albums, one live album and around 10 EPs.

**Magnolia Park.** An American pop-punk band that hails from Orlando, Florida. The band consists of five members and was formed in 2018. They are signed to Epitaph Records and currently have released three studio albums and five EP's. Magnolia Park will be having their first headline tour in the spring of 2025 titled the Vamp Tour.

**De'Wayne.** An alternative rock singer from Houston, Texas, De'Wayne has been in the music scene for at least a decade and doesn't have any intention of slowing down. His "music combines elements of rock, punk, and pop with a mission to show people we shouldn't live in boxes, and neither should our music," Fearless Records quotes.

**Bryce Vine** is an American rapper and singer. Vine started



GETTY IMAGES

Kendrick Lamar performs onstage during The Pop Out – Ken & Friends, presented by pgLang and Free Lunch at the Kia Forum on June 19 in Inglewood, Calif. He is back on tour with SZA this summer.

his music journey when he auditioned for the Glee Project in 2011. He is the son of soap opera actress Linda Tracey Ross. He describes his music as an "east-meets-west coast sound." Vine has released one studio album and six EPs, with his songs "Drew Barrymore" and "La La Land" charting on the Billboard Hot 100. His upcoming tour kicked off in Spokane on Feb. 1.

**Sleep Theory** is an American rock band that comes from Memphis, Tennessee. They are a four-member band that formed in 2020 and are signed to Epi-

taph Records. They've released one EP with a sound that blends the styles of R&B and metal.

**Fatou from Blackswan.** Blackswan is a multinational four-member Korean pop girl group that was formed by DR Music. Blackswan debuted originally as Rania in 2011 and went through a couple of rebrandings before finally becoming Blackswan in 2020. Fatou is the leader of Blackswan and is of Senegales-Belgian nationality. Before being a K-pop trainee, she modeled under Celine Entertainment. Fatou can also

speak five different languages.

**Jimmy from Psychic Fever.** Psychic Fever is a Japanese boyband that formed in 2019. They are the seventh group to form from Japan's artist collective within Exile Tribe and have released one studio album and two EPs. Jimmy is half Nigerian and half Japanese. You can see him and the rest of Psychic Fever during their first-ever U.S. tour starting in February.

**Manon from Katseye.** Katseye is a Korean pop girl group based in Los Angeles, California. The group consists of six mem-



SPOTIFY

Four-member Korean pop girl group Blackswan.

bers and was formed in 2023 via the reality show, "Dream Academy." They debuted in June 2024 and are currently releasing one EP. Manon is half Swiss-Italian and half Ghanaian, speaks five languages, placed sixth in "Dream Academy," and is a photography model.

**Mo from Alamat.** Alamat is a six-member boy group that resides in the Philippines. They formed in 2020 and have released one studio album and one EP. One of the members, Mo, is from Castillejos, Zambales, and is half Filipino and half Black American.

To wrap it all up, **Kendrick Lamar** and **SZA** have recently announced they are doing a combined tour across nineteen stadiums across the United States starting on April 19 and ending on June 18. We can expect a compilation of songs from Kendrick's latest album, GNX and SZA's latest album: "SOS Deluxe: LANA." All these artists, and many more, look to have a bright 2025. Listen to their music and keep track of the tours via their social media accounts.

ANYLA'S TAKE

TikTok and Black identity

How do we interrupt stereotypes?



By Anyla McDonald  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



TikTok, a popular social media platform, has become a prevalent source of entertainment and communication for young people around the world. However, the platform also has a negative impact on Black students, affecting their mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance.

Historically, Black students have faced systemic racism and discrimination in education. TikTok exacerbates these issues by perpetuating harmful stereotypes and promoting negative behaviors. The platform often showcases harmful trends and challenges that can be damaging to the mental health of Black students. These trends may glorify violence, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors, leading Black students to internalize negative messages about themselves and their communities.

Additionally, TikTok can negatively impact the self-esteem of Black students by promoting unrealistic beauty standards and idealized lifestyles. The platform is saturated with content that emphasizes physical appearance and material wealth, leading Black students to compare themselves to others and feel inadequate. This can contribute to feelings of insecurity and low self-



More information

Learn more about the intentional perpetuation of stereotypes that have impacted Black people throughout centuries by scanning this QR code.

worth, impacting their overall well-being and academic success.

Furthermore, TikTok can be a significant distraction for Black students, affecting their academic performance and overall success in school. The platform is designed to be addictive, with endless scrolling capabilities and constant notifications that can detract from studying and other educational activities. Black students may spend hours on TikTok instead of focusing on their schoolwork, leading to lower grades and missed opportunities for learning and growth.

Influential individuals in the field of education have highlighted the negative impact of TikTok on Black students and called for greater awareness and action. Researchers and educators have conducted studies to explore the relationship between social media use and academic performance, finding that excessive use of platforms like TikTok can have detrimental effects on students' ability to concentrate and retain information. Advocates have also raised concerns about the lack of diverse representation on TikTok, noting that Black students may not see themselves reflected positively in the content they consume.

Moving forward, it is important for parents, teachers, and policymakers to address the negative impact of TikTok on Black students and implement strategies to mitigate these effects. Parents can establish boundaries and monitor their children's use of social media, ensuring that they are engaging in healthy and positive online

interactions. Teachers can integrate digital literacy education into their curriculum, teaching students how to critically evaluate online content and understand the potential consequences of their online actions. Policymakers can work with social media companies to promote diversity and inclusion on their platforms, ensuring that all students feel represented and valued.

As of Jan. 17 the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a law requiring TikTok's China-based parent company to divest from the app, teeing up a ban set to take effect Sunday.

The justices sided with the Biden administration, the Hill reported, finding the divest-or-ban law does not violate the First Amendment just three days before President-elect Trump is set to take office. Trump had urged the justices to delay the deadline so he could negotiate a deal, but the court instead acted with breakneck speed. TikTok went dark days later, but returned when Trump pledged he would work a deal to continue the service.

In conclusion, TikTok negatively impacts Black students by perpetuating harmful stereotypes, promoting unrealistic beauty standards, and distracting them from their academic responsibilities. It is essential for stakeholders to recognize these effects and take proactive steps to support the well-being and success of Black students in the digital age. By fostering a culture of awareness and empowerment, we can help Black students navigate the challenges of social media and thrive in their educational journey.

TikTok can affect Black youth's mental health, self-esteem and academic performance.



TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Widespread and pervasive stereotypes of African Americans

Stereotypes of African Americans grew as a natural consequence of both scientific racism and legal challenges to both their personhood and citizenship. In the 1857 Supreme Court case, Dred Scott v. John F.A. Sandford, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney dismissed the humanness of those of African descent. This legal precedent permitted the image of African Americans to be reduced to caricatures in popular culture.

Decades-old ephemera and current-day incarnations of African American stereotypes, including Mammy, Mandingo, Sapphire, Uncle Tom and watermelon, have been informed by the legal and social status of African Americans. Many of the stereotypes created during the height of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and were used to help commodify black bodies and justify the business of slavery. For instance, an enslaved person, forced under violence to work from sunrise to sunset, could hardly be described as lazy. Yet laziness, as well as characteristics of submissiveness, backwardness, lewdness, treachery, and dishonesty, historically became stereotypes assigned to African Americans.

Source: nmaahc.si.edu

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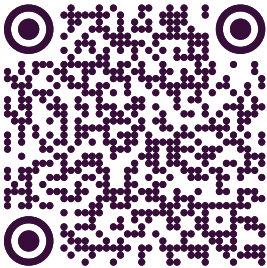
PATHWAYS FORWARD

Supporting Youth

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

Join us Feb 27th @ noon for Pathways Forward, YWCA Spokane's free, virtual discussion series.

We will talk with local experts about supporting youth experiencing dating violence.



Scan QR code with phone.

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eliminating racism  
empowering women  
ywca  
SPOKANE



# BLACK VOICES SYMPOSIUM

Poems, essay excerpts, art and heart by local students sharing thoughts on courage

In light of Black History Month, The Spokesman-Review's Northwest Passages and The Black Lens is hosting its fourth annual Spokane Black Voices Symposium on Feb. 10. The 7 p.m. event will take place at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center Coughlin Theater, at 211 E. Desmet Ave. The following writings

and artwork are submissions by Black Voices Symposium participants, new and returning. To read the essays and the poems in full, visit blacklens.news.

What does it take to keep fighting these demons? She asked, and I responded: "It takes courage to keep fighting these demons."

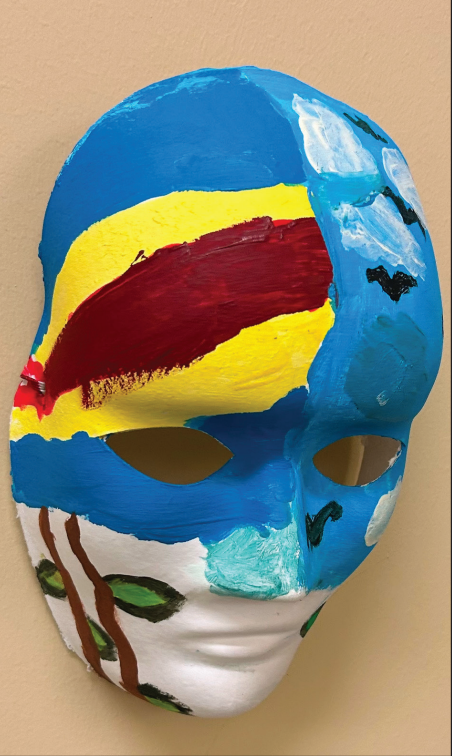
## DEFINING YOURSELF

Daniella Musesambili,  
Shadle Park High School senior

Then she asked, what is your definition of courage? I responded: You as a person define courage. Courage is to keep going to the same place everyday Even when people are telling you that you don't belong. Courage is turning "you can't" into "I can and I am" Courage is taking discouraging messages And turning them into courageous messages Because you as a person define courage The same way a basketball player makes their jersey number And the number don't make him Courage is not letting people define you But it's you showing them your own definition of yourself It is all courage; you are courage You define courage. I am courage. I live to prove Not to be proven by anyone.

## COURAGEOUS CONGO

Claudia Musesambili,  
Shadle Park High School freshman



Shadle Park High School freshman Claudia Museambili painted this mask representing the colors of the Congolese flag.

## COURAGE TO STAND OUT



Anesu Whacha,  
Shadle Park High School junior

Excerpt: ... Courage can also be found in the silent battles that many of us fight daily. It takes courage to stand against the pervasive inequalities that still exist today. It takes courage to speak out against injustice, even when our voices feel small compared to the systemic forces we face. Each time we confront bias, advocate for change, or support one another in times of need, we engage in a profound act of bravery.

Consider the countless men and women who have fought for civil rights – their unwavering commitment reminds us that real change

often comes from the courageous stands taken within communities and at kitchen tables. They transformed their personal struggles into collective resilience, demonstrating that courage isn't always loud; it often whispers in the hearts of those who fight for what is right, even in solitary moments.

As we reflect on the legacy of courage throughout our history, let us remember the battles won and the silent victories achieved. Today, we honor the past while acknowledging the power we each hold to make a difference. We are tasked with carrying forward that legacy of courage – to show up, to support one another, and to continue the fight for justice and equality.

## A LETTER TO FEAR

Donalda Brantley, Rogers High School alumna, first-year student at the University of Washington

Dear fear,

You've held on for so long  
Even when I was alone  
You were there to hold me close

I closed the door and sat with you  
Many nights I tossed and turned to every side  
With no one to turn to cause all that surrounded me was you  
I thought of you when I woke up.  
I thought of you when I tied my shoes.

I walked across many stages  
I've read from many pages  
I broke away from many cages  
Still, you've held onto me for ages

I showed courage as I spoke in public  
But you called to me in private  
The feeling of you made me sick  
So, Courage became my only answer  
It was the best medicine to pick.

Whether it's being scared of the dark or being scared of not being able to turn the lights on.  
I've known you for so long  
It's time for me to move on.

To the world I am an amazing girl but to you fear, I am nothing but small.  
I'm sure we'll meet again but my feelings for you are long gone.

Before I close this letter  
I need you to know, I don't despise you.  
If I'm being honest, I admire you.

Truthfully, I hold no animosity.  
You only fueled my curiosity.  
I wondered what it was like to feel that brave while I was alone.  
Without the world watching me.  
When eyes closed, I kept mine open.  
My eyes adjusted to the dark.  
Soon enough light came in.

So, Stand in front of me  
Still I see right through you  
Because even though you're in my way  
Courage is standing right behind you.

I'm afraid I have to say goodbye  
If I say I'll miss you then I'm lying  
So, before I lie down, I'll tell you farewell

I'll go to sleep with the bravery to wake up the next morning.  
I'll tie my shoes with the courage to walk away  
I'll no longer need you to make me stay.  
Sincerely,  
Me today. Sincerely, me always.

## BLACK VOICES SYMPOSIUM

## LEAP



"Leap," by Shadle Park High School freshman Janet Tumsifu

## COURAGE TO KEEP GOING

Jason Tyree Green,  
North Central High School junior

Excerpt: My definition of courage is not only when you are strong enough to face your problems, but includes the courage to be kind, even when the world isn't being kind back. I have had to have courage throughout many points in my life, and one specific time I had to have courage was when I was going to a hardware store, I was with my uncle, who is white; he had gone into the store just a minute before me and had no troubles walking in. When I got out of the car and walked into the store, an older man questioned me with "what are you doing here?" While I can't be certain of why he stopped me, whether it was my race or my age, at that moment I had the courage to walk away. My definition of courage includes the courage to work through your anger or sadness, sometimes with restraint.

## BEING PROUD

Meaquiyah Tomeo,  
Rogers High junior

Excerpt: Courage to me means being proud about who you are and loving yourself for who you are. As well as being brave and bold, sticking up for yourself when needed. Having courage is being brave to open new doors in life and try new things. And being confident and knowing who you are and knowing what you are doing and knowing how to act. Having courage is being a leader not a follower.

The definition of courage is "The ability to face fear, danger, or uncertainty, and to make good choices despite those challenges." I had courage when I moved to Rogers to have a better school experience and be around people who will respect and appreciate me for who I am. And now I am around more of my people, and it made me feel more at home and comfortable to be myself. And now I surround myself with people who love and help push to become a better person. I am so thankful I got a chance to move and meet more people that I get to learn and grow with.

## SURGERY



"Surgery," by Heavyn Williams, a Ferris High School senior. Williams wrote this about her art: "My piece depicts a young Black woman undergoing surgery. It shows her passed out but it also shows her chest cavity cut open from open wounds passed on throughout history, it shows her being sewn up with a pocket watch, the pocket watch represents time and the fact that she's being sewn up with it represents society trying to heal her history with time itself. Her mouth is also sewn shut because it represents society trying to silence her making it so she's never able to speak about black history. The black and brown hands surrounding her represent her ancestors reaching out to her, trying to make her remember what was done to them and remember what she goes through everyday living life as a Black woman. The colors surrounding everything represents aura, the surgical tools on the side are what was used on her. On the clock itself it has the dates of when slavery started, ended, and today's current year with the last space blank. Showing we will always remember what happened to us but will continue to move forward in life."

## LIKE THE SUN



"Courage to rise like the sun," by Sian Armstrong, of Ferris High School

## ANGRY BLACK GIRL

Jetaime Thomas,  
Ferris High School Black Student Union president

Imma straight hurl  
The things that are out on the backs  
Of little black girls  
They're too grown for this  
They have too much attitude for that  
Can we just sit back and observe  
How these girls are kicked to the curb  
Separated and ignored  
Constantly made a joke  
I wish someone sooner woulda spoke  
Spoke up for me  
Spoke up for we  
Spoke up for us as a community  
But they disregarded and discarded us  
When they were done with the torture and the devilish acts they brought upon we

I hope they start to care about us and our kinky hair  
Maybe let even let us feel safe over here  
Can we move on and up to the level of our white peers  
Their white fears of us and the way we talk  
The way we lead and the way we walk  
Can we live in peace  
Can we have justice  
I sincerely doubt it  
For they only see us as Angry Black girls  
Not as teachers, or judges, or doctors, or lawyers  
No we're loud and ghetto  
These words they echo  
Through the minds of all black girls  
That's what they call us  
And how they see us  
But when will they really see us  
When will they see the liberty and justice we need  
We feed our minds and souls to someday conquer the roles that demean us

If we rise and stand hand in hand  
And truly stand for what we say  
Everything might be okay  
Okay enough for us to survive past the age of 25  
Okay for us to be ourselves without fear that we'll die  
That's courage to me  
And it should be an example of courage to our entire community

## AS IT FALLS

Micaela Eberhardt,  
Third-year student at Eastern Washington University

Sometimes there are days where you will wake up  
And you will feel as heavy as the rain  
That pitter-patters on your window.

On those mornings,  
Where you open your window  
Staring out, observing  
And as you evaluate the state of your world,  
Your soul sets to the mood of the sky  
And sinks into itself.

The doom and gloom  
Will make you feel as though you are  
Sinking into the sandpit of life.

Those are the mornings where you have to snap out of it.

Those are the mornings where  
You have to shut the window,  
Close the curtains,  
Put on your raincoat and boots  
And stand in the rain.

And as you wake the storms that  
Life pours down,  
Just know  
That letting it all hit you and roll off of your back  
Is the only way to become resilient  
To the weight of it all.

## BUTTERFLY, BUTTERFLY



Jaaylah Rose Williams, Shiloh Hills Elementary third-grader, did this art piece, writing, "Butterfly, butterfly, high in the sky, no fear of falling, just flying."

## THE DEFINITION OF COURAGE

Marie-Therese Bengheya, Rogers High School student

What is courage  
What does courage mean  
The simple definition of courage is the ability to do something that frightens you  
Its having strength in the face of pain or grief  
Courage is so much more than this though  
Courage is waking up every morning to face life, even when you don't feel like it  
Courage is being vulnerable and choosing to trust  
Courage is continually stepping out of your comfort zone  
Courage is taking heart in a world full of trials and tribulations  
Courage is having a heart of compassion and love  
Courage is expressing your whole being freely without fear of judgement  
Courage is to speak your mind by telling all your heart  
Courage is not something you're born with; it is something you build in the journey of life.  
When I lack courage, I remember that the Lord my God is with me wherever I go (JOSHUA 1:9)

## BEING PROUD

Meaquiyah Tomeo,  
Rogers High School junior

Excerpt: Courage to me means being proud about who you are and loving yourself for who you are. As well as being brave and bold, sticking up for yourself when needed. Having courage is being brave to open new doors in life and try new things. And being confident and knowing who you are and knowing what you are doing and knowing how to act. Having courage is being a leader not a follower.

The definition of courage is "The ability to face fear, danger, or uncertainty, and to make good choices despite those challenges." I had courage when I moved to Rogers to have a better school experience and be around people who will respect and appreciate me for who I am. And now I am around more of my people, and it made me feel more at home and comfortable to be myself. And now I surround myself with people who love and help push to become a better person. I am so thankful I got a chance to move and meet more people that I get to learn and grow with.

## HAVING FAITH

courage is having faith in what you cannot see.



"Having Faith," by Emmanuel Eberhardt, Rogers High School freshman

## NOT JUST A WORD

Nikita Habimana,  
Shadle Park High School junior

Courage is not just a word.  
It is a statement. Courage is a lifestyle.  
She calls to me, on days when eyes are many, and friends are few.  
When adversity overcomes, oppression reigns.

I hear her whispers and dwell in within her sweet sweet embrace

I recommend you pay heed her callings.  
she tells me to bloom, in a word overridden of thorns of racism, hatred and war to sow seeds of love, seeds of peace, and seeds of joy.

"Shine, black child shine.  
Your smile's as bright as diamonds, skin's pure as gold."  
Eyes clear as the night sky with a soul nobody can control.  
Wear your Fro Loud, puffy and picked out.  
Keep your cornrows tight, fresh and follow the patterns to Freedom.

And never forget that you come from greatness!  
Great warriors, politicians, Kings and Queens.  
So when the world forsakes you, which it will.  
When it casts thorns of doubt, and sows' seeds of hatred.

Wear your smile proudly,  
Keep your head up high, raise your fist in the air,  
Show them they can't kill your vibe.

Courage.  
She's the reason I smile.

## OVERCOMING

Jase Bower,  
Shadle Park High School senior

Excerpt: What I've learned from the challenges that I have experienced in my high school career is that community plays a big role in my life, especially in helping me get through trauma. Make connections builds courage because support means I am not alone. I know success doesn't always come easy. I have learned over the past four years how to use healthy coping skills and how to lean on my village. I have also learned that hard work creates success. This is how I have seen the power of courage in my life.

## KNOW IT BY ITS NAME

Jeane "Jenny" Musesambili,  
Spokane Community College

EXCERPT FROM POEM

I have never known courage by its name  
But lately I have learned to appreciate it, in all its forms  
Whether it's when you stand in front of people to tell you story

Or wake up in the morning and live when really, you don't want to  
It's smiling even when all you want to do is cry  
It's crying and never stopping  
Courage is being able to own up to

your mistakes and errors  
It is taking accountability  
When you least believe  
Pressing on, any way:

That is when you are being courageous



BLACK VOICES SYMPOSIUM

DEFINING YOURSELF

Daniella Musesambili,  
Shadle Park High School senior

What does it take to keep fighting these demons?  
She asked, and I responded:  
“It takes courage to keep fighting these demons.”

Then she asked, what is your definition of courage?  
I responded:  
You as a person define courage.  
Courage is to keep going to the same place everyday  
Even when people are telling you that you don't belong.  
Courage is turning “you can't” into “I can and I am”  
Courage is taking discouraging messages  
And turning them into courageous messages  
Because you as a person define courage  
The same way a basketball player makes their jersey number  
And the number don't make him  
Courage is not letting people define you  
But it's you showing them your own definition of yourself  
It is all courage; you are courage  
You define courage.  
I am courage.  
I live to prove  
Not to be proven by anyone.

LEAP



“Leap,” by Shadle Park High School freshman Janet Tumsifu

COURAGE TO KEEP GOING

Jason Tyree Green,  
North Central High School junior

Excerpt: My definition of courage is not only when you are strong enough to face your problems, but includes the courage to be kind, even when the world isn't being kind back. I have had to have courage throughout many points in my life, and one specific time I had to have courage was when I was going to a hardware store, I was with my uncle, who is white; he had gone into the store just a minute before me and had no troubles walking in. When I got out of the car and walked into the store, an older man questioned me with “what are you doing here?” While I can't be certain of why he stopped me, whether it was my race or my age, at that moment I had the courage to walk away. My definition of courage includes the courage to work through your anger or sadness, sometimes with restraint.

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SURGERY



“Surgery,” by Heavyn Williams, a Ferris High School senior. Williams wrote this about her art: “My piece depicts a young Black woman undergoing surgery. It shows her passed out but it also shows her chest cavity cut open from open wounds passed on throughout history, it shows her being sewn up with a pocket watch, the pocket watch represents time and the fact that she's being sewn up with it represents society trying to heal her history with time itself. Her mouth is also sewn shut because it represents society trying to silence her making it so she's never able to speak about black history. The black and brown hands surrounding her represent her ancestors reaching out to her, trying to make her remember what was done to them and remember what she goes through everyday living life as a Black woman. The colors surrounding everything represents aura, the surgical tools on the side are what was used on her. On the clock itself it has the dates of when slavery started, ended, and today's current year with the last space blank. Showing we will always remember what happened to us but will continue to move forward in life.”

LIKE THE SUN



“Courage to rise like the sun,” by Sian Armstrong, of Ferris High School

ANGRY BLACK GIRL

Jetaime Thomas,  
Ferris High School Black Student Union president

Imma straight hurl  
The things that are out on the backs  
Of little black girls  
They're too grown for this  
They have too much attitude for that  
Can we just sit back and observe  
How these girls are kicked to the curb  
Separated and ignored  
Constantly made a joke  
I wish someone sooner woulda spoke  
Spoke up for me  
Spoke up for we  
Spoke up for us as a community  
But they disregarded and discarded us  
When they were done with the torture and the devilish acts they brought upon we

I hope they start to care about us and our kinky hair  
Maybe let even let us feel safe over here  
Can we move on and up to the level of our white peers  
Their white fears of us and the way we talk  
The way we lead and the way we walk  
Can we live in peace  
Can we have justice  
I sincerely doubt it  
For they only see us as Angry Black girls  
Not as teachers, or judges, or doctors, or lawyers  
No we're loud and ghetto  
These words they echo  
Through the minds of all black girls  
That's what they call us  
And how they see us  
But when will they really see us  
When will they see the liberty and justice we need  
We feed our minds and souls to someday conquer the roles that demean us

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Where you open your window  
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And as you evaluate the state of your world,  
Your soul sets to the mood of the sky  
And sinks into itself.

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Will make you feel as though you are  
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You have to shut the window,  
Close the curtains,  
Put on your raincoat and boots  
And stand in the rain.

And as you waded the storms that  
Life pours down,  
Just know  
That letting it all hit you and roll off of your back  
Is the only way to become resilient  
To the weight of it all.

POWERED BY COURAGE: AN ACT TO SAY YES

Z'Hanie Weaver, Liberty High School student

Excerpt: When I was 16, I made the decision that took every courageous ounce of me to make: to escape. Clutching the screen in a moment of desperation, I waited hours for the judge's decision, my heart pounding in my ears.

From the chaos, I found refuge. It was there I learned what courage truly was. I confronted the lies I had been told: that I was unworthy, that my dreams were out of reach because of where I came from. Writing became my lifeline, the one place where I could express myself freely without fear of punishment.

Through writing, I found my voice – a voice I had silenced for years. Words became my way of reclaiming power, of saying “yes” to myself when the world tried to tell me otherwise. I wrote until no more blood could be drawn from my pen, spilling my truth onto the page. In those moments, courage wasn't just an abstract idea; it became my foundation.

RIPPLE EFFECTS OF COURAGE

Mwajuma Ishibaleka, Lewis and Clark High School senior

Excerpt: Courage is not just about showing up physically, it is about engaging, contributing and stepping outside of your comfort zone. I learned this during my time in class, where I often attended but refrained from putting input, I remained silent and not contributing to the conversation. My fear was not solely rooted in my childhood shyness – but also the overwhelming sense of imposter syndrome by reason of being; almost always the only person of color let alone black person in my classes, constantly questioning if I was qualified enough, even though I deserved to be in the room as much as anyone. This self-doubt seeped into my academic performance, clouding my confidence.

Over time it took courage to find my voice and speak up on several topics and share my thoughts not only in the classroom but outside of it as well. I noticed a dramatic shift in my academic performance and overall mental well-being, I did not dread going to school as I did before, all because I took that first step to get out of my comfort zone. For me courage means taking risks – whether it is enrolling in a challenging AP class, trying out for a new sport, joining a club

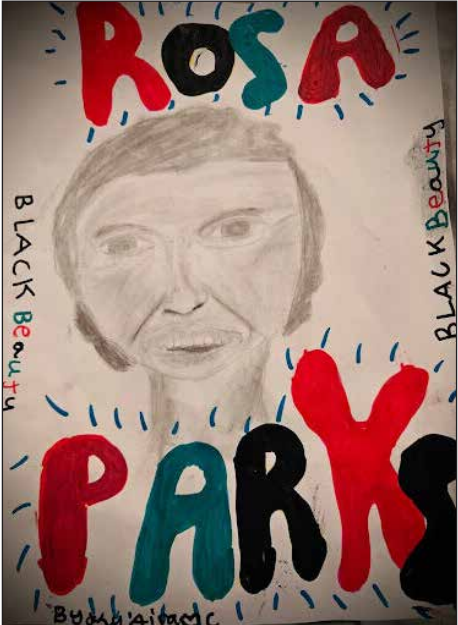
out of your bubble, or going out your way to invite a peer into a simple conversation. Once you take that first step, courage becomes contagious, it inspires others to seize opportunities. Once I took that step, I not only opened doors for myself, but also inspired others to do the same, encouraging them to customize their own paths and break down barriers. This courage has sparked a ripple effect of empowerment: inspiring those of similar background to push themselves in joining honors classes, taking on leadership roles and experimenting with different activities.

Courage is about being an example of fearlessness and change for those who are underrepresented; demonstrating that they can show up, speak up, and make a meaningful impact. Courage is about remaining true to yourself and not diming your light in efforts of being scared to shine.

We often fear making mistakes or sounding “stupid” but that is precisely what the learning process is about, learning and growing.

Remember courage is transferable. Courage is transformative. Most importantly courage is revolutionary.

ROSA PARKS



“Rosa Parks,” by Progress Elementary fifth-grader Ky'Aira Carter.

MUTED

Michaela Daou, Rogers High School junior

People say I'm a good student  
That I'm enough  
Then why do I feel like I have to prove myself  
Every time I step into a classroom  
Or every time I step onto a softball field?  
Yeah, I'll be quiet, smart and funny,  
Poised and pretty  
I'll shape myself to fit these standards  
To get one step closer to success  
Because if I'm me  
I'm too disruptive, too social  
I'm not proud of it  
But success matters more than authenticity  
So, I'll wear a mask  
Paint myself to be perfect for society  
Hide myself so I can climb  
Up this ladder  
But sometimes I wonder  
Why it even matters



WELLNESS

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Black history, Native American history, Jewish history and all of U.S. history were taught from one book – just U.S. history?”

Maya Angelou

Finding Jules Bayonne

Genealogy: The rest of the story



By Patricia Bayonne-Johnson  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR

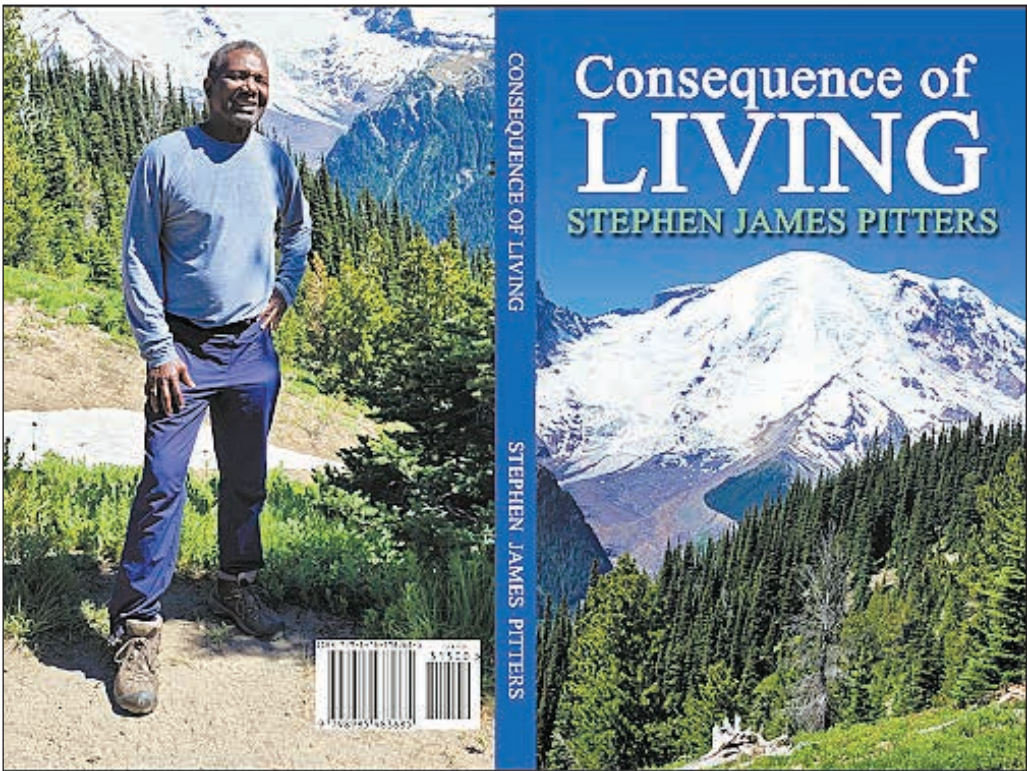


“Jul, enfant de couleur libre” is what the baptismal record indicated when I received a copy of the Certificate of Baptism obtained by professional genealogist Judy Riffel. I hired Judy to fill in the gaps in my research, and she delivered! Born in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, at the time of slavery, Jules was an infant of free color! According to American law, a child took the mother’s status. This means that Jules’ mother was free. Jules’ mother was born in Virginia, which suggests that she was enslaved and gained her freedom in Louisiana. The Certificate of Baptism was a godsend. It was a primary source for Jules’ baptism and included the names of his mother, sponsors, and the church where he was baptized. More importantly, it was a secondary source for his birthdate ... which I did not have! When I hired Judy, I wanted an answer to my research question: Was Jules Bayonne enslaved? I sent her everything I found about the Bayonne family. After Judy reviewed my documents, she asked if I had contacted the Diocese of Baton Rouge for a search of slave baptismal records. Being a newbie in genealogy, I knew nothing about the Diocese or the slave baptismal records housed there. It was as if Jules had emerged to adulthood without a childhood. Thirty years of research for Jules has revealed nothing of his early years. Nothing is known about his parents besides his mother’s first name on the baptismal record, his father’s name on Jules’ marriage license (his mother’s name is illegible), and his father’s birthplace on the 1900 Pointe Coupee Parish Federal Census. I do not know if he has siblings or not. Jules learned to read and write, but how, when, or where are mysteries? Many Black people left Louisiana after the Civil War, but Jules was not one of them. Forty days after the 1870 Federal Census, the first census to enumerate formerly enslaved people by name, Jules and Francois Francis,



Jules Bayonne

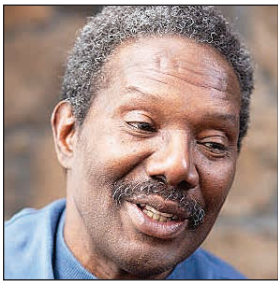
a farm laborer at the Parlange, purchased 71 arpents (one arpent is two-thirds of an acre) of land between present-day communities of Frisco and Livonia for \$1,000. Their tract of land was bounded on the east by the Parlange Plantation. Between 1870 and 1880, Jules left his domestic servant job at the Parlange and began working on his property. When the census taker visited John Randall’s household in Pointe Coupee Parish in 1880, he found Jules Bion (sic) residing there with Victorine, John’s daughter, and their 6-month-old son. Jules was enumerated as a son-in-law. All were identified as farm laborers. The 1900 federal census of Pointe Coupee Parish provides a statistical snapshot of the Bayonne family. Jules, head of household, and his wife, Victorine, are now the parents of 10 children, only nine of whom were enumerated. The census also shows that they were married for 22 years, suggesting a marriage around 1878 and before the formal one in 1890. Jules is enumerated as a farmer on his home farm. This is the only census that includes most of the family. Jules lived only three years after the 1900 census was taken. Jules Bayonne was 59 years old when he was buried. The cause of death is not known, but I suspect it was tuberculosis. I discovered two of his daughters and his grandson died from tuberculosis. Jules was buried in St. Mary’s Catholic Church Cemetery in New Roads, Louisiana. Victorine was enumerated as the head of household in the 1910 and 1920 censuses. She was noted as a farmer on both censuses. Two of her children lived at home; two grandchildren lived with her in 1920 after her daughter’s death. Victorine died on Nov. 28, 1929, from uterine carcinoma. She was residing with her daughter Edwidge in New Orleans at the time of her death. I suspect Victorine went to New Orleans for cancer treatment at Charity Hospital. She is buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery.



Stephen Pitters’ book “Consequence of Living.”

Discovering one’s family genealogy

My journey through time started in the past when a spiritual mind provided information that would change the trajectory of my life. Claire said to me: “We are only bridges over which others may cross.” We met at a small community center, Casita Maria in the South Bronx. She gave me information that led to my change of direction regarding my advanced educational choices. Claire was a nun who worked in communities in South America. Her compassion for others was genuine. She was brave and lived a life of service to humanity. It was the fall of 1971. I worked two jobs to earn enough money to continue my educational dreams. By day I labored in the Bronx and by night I drove a taxi in Manhattan. I had modest means but lavish dreams. The information Claire provided took me to Boston where I entered Simmons Graduate School of Social Work. I arrived there in my three-thousand-dollar Subaru which I had paid for in cash after working six days a week for the entire 1971-72 year. Being new to Boston in 1972 was invigorating. I found an apartment behind Fenway Ballpark on Jersey Street. The Red Sox played there. I never went to a game in the five years I lived in that neighborhood. I was a Met fan at heart. I didn’t like the Yankees either even though I would see into that stadium from the Lexington Avenue subway line platform on a 161st. daily on my way to Cardinal Hayes high school. One day in my first year at Simmons, one of my teachers decided to spend a class period reading to us a story from a manuscript that a friend of hers had provided. It was the story of a black African slave who spent his life trying to find his way back home from America but never made it. His name was Kunta Kinte. He would be the relative to the noted author Alex Haley. Listening to the story, I thought it



By Stephen Pitters  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



to be very interesting. The school day came and went and so too the years after graduation in 1974. In the winter of Jan. 23-30, 1977, a bold new miniseries was launched. The world over knew it as Roots. Its viewership reached 100 million. Later that summer, I went to visit my grandmother, Ellen in Costa Rica and taped the beginning of what would be my first attempt to know our ancestry. I relocated from the east coast to Spokane and worked at Fairchild, AFB in the Med Group’s Mental Health flight. The year was 1989. Family Advocacy was a part of that flight. It was there that I met my buddy Garth who was a member of the Church of Latter-day Saints. His knowledge of genealogy was extensive. It was then that my desire to seek out the family history took flight. I played him the tape I made when I visited my grandmother in 1977. I began to visit the northside Church of Latter-Day Saints library twice a week. Garth instructed me step by step in how to search for ancestry information. Patience would be the primary mode required. My pursuit began in 1994 and lasted until 2000. I requested microfiche tapes from the main library in Salt Lake City, Utah. It took two weeks or so for the tapes to be sent. The process was slow then, compared to the present use

of computers. Once the data was sent, I went to the library and viewed them scrolling ever so slowly. The first step was the name of the person, the proper dates in 20-year time frames. I searched through births, baptisms, confirmation records, death, marriage licenses, church or religious records, civic records, cities, towns, districts records. I played Grandmother Ellen’s tape over and over making sure I had not missed any family or geographical clues. She was born in Jamaica and moved to Costa Rica, which is where my father was born. He moved to Panama as an adult. I was born there. I found her mother, my great grandmother Johanna, who was a Beadle. Her father was Henry Beadle, and they lived in the district of Old London in the parish of Manchester. This information was on a death certificate. The Beadle’s were the main direct family lineage. I was able to trace that back to 1807-08 through William Beadle, the patriarch of the family. He was Henry’s father who married Susan Sleight. Henry Beadle then married Johanna’s mother Roseann Woods. Johanna Beadle married Henry Pitters. They have Thomas Theophilus Pitters. He marries Ellen True, my grandmother. They have my father Reinold Pitters. I discovered a Venus Elizabeth Beadle born on September 20, 1778, described as a “free nigra.” She is perhaps the earliest family member since I don’t have her parents’ information. The four families therefore are Beadle, Sleight, Woods, and Pitters. My father Reinold Pitters married Miriam Darley. They spawned Stephen Pitters. The key in the search for one’s history is narrowing down the geography where these people lived. The risk is rushing and being drawn astray when the name can be the same but not a direct person in one’s individual tree.

FROM THE WATER’S EDGE

IN TIMES LIKE THIS, WE MUST COMMIT TO CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

From my viewpoint at the water’s edge, the times ahead don’t look good. They actually look like the worst of times. My mother, who turned 101 this year, has seen a lot since her birth in 1923 – even she agrees with me. By the time this piece goes to press it will be 2025. It will be Black History Month. And, a familiar person will once again occupy the White House. The years 2024-2028 will definitely be hard to forget – a sitting president struggled to convince the American people that his age and health were not a serious factor – his abrupt ‘seventh inning’ withdrawal from the presidential race – a Black woman, once a criminal prosecutor then Vice-President thrust into the game (race) – and most ironic: her opponent a convicted felon! As best we can tell, Vice President Harris lost in a fair election to a felon, who will be sworn into office by now. Whether we like it or not the

people have spoken. VP Harris ran a good race and her loss was tragic, gravely disappointing but honestly not a total surprise. She had two strikes against her – race and gender – before she even stepped into the batter’s box. The bases were loaded with two outs. It was, for the second time, wishful thinking that the majority of the American people would elect a woman, let alone a black one, to the highest position in the free world. Being Catholic I voiced my frustration to a friend saying, “given the overall culture of this country, the Blessed Virgin Mary wouldn’t have a chance of getting elected even if she were running against Satan himself!” Mary was a woman, likely with dark skin and from the Middle East – strike three! We have a lot of healing and reckoning to do before that change has a chance. What’s done is done. What can we expect in the years ahead? How might our re-elected leader’s promises and ap-

pointments affect our health and wellness? Of primary concern should be his reference to wanting to be and act like a dictator. That word and way of acting is not something to be frivolously thrown about. Countless Americans have died in wars against such leaders. However, he recently said, that he would “not be a dictator except for Day 1” of his presidency. He has promised to act swiftly and without mercy against his adversaries and on his major campaign promises. Those promises include: mass deportations of certain immigrants and casting them as criminals, pardoning Jan. 6 rioters and casting them as “patriots,” imposing steep tariffs on our nearest neighbors Canada and Mexico, cracking down on trans gender rights, cutting federal funding for schools that teach “critical race theory,” supporting closing Equity and Inclusion departments, banning women’s rights to an abortion, reversing President Biden’s

climate policies in order to push more oil and gas production and lowering air and water quality standards. We should also be concerned with at least two men with interesting histories and perspectives: Robert Kennedy Jr. who is reportedly anti-science to lead The Department of Health and Human Services and multi billionaire Elon Musk to lead the newly created “department of government efficiency.” The cost of living will definitely go up and our access to affordable health care and retirement benefits will become harder to come by. All of the above are guaranteed to have a negative impact on our health and wellness. So, what can we do? Times like these force us to be more vigilant and forceful in saying “enough is enough.” It won’t be enough just say it, we must genuinely act. We must commit to actively caring for one another and our community. We cannot stand idly by as bad things happen to good



By Dr. Robert “Bob” Bartlett  
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



people or to our natural world. Whether he is truly a threat to democracy is yet to be determined. His plans are, without a doubt, a direct threat to our health and wellness. The years ahead will be a reminder of the dangers of growing too comfortable. We must now be prepared to draw a line of resistance in the sand and find positive and peaceful ways to push back! We must be a light in the darkness just like members of my mother’s generation were during their worst of times! Dr. Bartlett is a retired educator. He retired from Gonzaga University in 2007 and Eastern Washington University in 2020.



SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK

STRONG WOMEN, DEEP ROOTS

Dream like a mother

Embracing the power of vision and nurture



COURTESY

Stephy Nobles-Beans, at 6 months, and her mother.

I really believe in my heart that every mother wants the best for their children. Whether biological, chosen, or metaphorical, carry within them an extraordinary ability to nurture not just life but also dreams. She dares to dream not just for herself but for the family, her community, and something even for the world. Imagining a future where her children can thrive where kindness flourishes, where challenges are met with strength and wisdom.

To dream like a mother is also to understand the power of perseverance. Life throws its challenges – moments of doubt, fear, and exhaustion. Yet, mothers embody resilience. They keep moving forward, guided by an unshakable belief that dreams are worth the effort. In this way, dreaming like a mother becomes an act of defiance against limitations and negativity.

To dream as a mother for your children and their future is to hold a deeply rooted vision of possibility, growth, and well-being for them. Here are some ways that may help mothers who need words of encouragement when daring to dream:

See the potential beyond circumstances

Mothers often see their children's potential, even when obstacles loom large. To dream as a mother is to imagine a future where those barriers are overcome, where challenges become stepping stones, and where children rise to embrace their unique gifts and talents.

Fostering a strong foundation

Dreaming for their



By Stephy Nobles-Beans  
SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK



children means cultivating an environment where those dreams can grow. This involves providing education, moral values, emotional support, and opportunities that align with their children's aspirations and strengths.

Building a legacy of resilience and love

Mothers dream with an understanding that life is unpredictable. Their vision includes equipping their children with resilience – the courage to face adversity and the grace to learn from it. They hope to pass on values like kindness, empathy, and determination, leaving a legacy.

Dreaming of a better world

A mother's dream often transcends her children. It encompasses a broader vision of a world where fairness, compassion, and opportunity prevail. She dreams of a society where her children can grow into individuals who contribute meaningfully and positively.

Creating a vision of fulfillment

To dream as a mother is to hope for her children's happiness, health,

and success – not according to societal standards, but based on what brings them true fulfillment. It's about seeing their joy, however they define it, and supporting them unconditionally in their pursuit.

Dreaming boldly in love and action

Mothers turn dreams into action, whether by small daily acts of encouragement or significant sacrifices to pave the way for their children's success. Their dreams are rooted in love and expressed through effort, guidance, and belief in their child's ability to achieve greatness.

Lastly, know this one thing, whether you're an adoptive mother, a guardian, or a mentor, dreaming for someone is a courageous act of hope. It's the willingness to imagine a brighter future, fueled by love, and to nurture that vision into reality. In doing so, you become a catalyst for transformation, proving that dreams, like love, know no boundaries.

So, let your dreams weave a vision of possibility with the threads of love, patience, and unwavering faith. It's a powerful expression of hope for a future that their children – and the world – can someday make real. On a personal note, I look at this photo, it's me and my mother, I was 6 months old. My mother was truly a mother that dreamed. She was 25 years old in this picture holding me, and I know that some of the dreams that she had for me did come true. We here at the Shades of Motherhood Network want mothers to know that we are here for you to support you and to help you along the way as you dare to dream for your children!

“

We can take adequate maternity leave, take time off, hire backup doulas – things like that. Now the work is more equitable and sustainable for us.”

Tiara Calahan, a holistic birth doula from Skyway who's part of Doulas For All, in an interview with the Seattle Times



ERIKA SCHULTZ/SEATTLE TIMES

Trinity Landrum works with doula LaShaye Stanton-Phillips during an appointment a few days before the birth of her son at Swedish First Hill Campus. “When I’m receiving my care, I want more additional feedback, perspectives, information, and I felt like that was something that a doula could provide me,” says Landrum.

WASHINGTON STATE DOULAS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR HIGHEST MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT IN U.S.

From wire services

Some doula services are now covered for Washington residents on Apple Health, the Seattle Times reported, signifying a significant change in the way the state pays for pregnancy and labor care for almost half its annual births.

As of Jan. 1, birth doulas are eligible for a \$3,500 payment per delivery, the highest Medicaid reimbursement for doulas in the country, according to advocates of the change. The new benefit took years of work and reflects a step toward addressing birth inequities – especially among Black and Indigenous communities, who face higher risk of negative birth outcomes – Senait Brown told the Seattle Times. Brown is the policy director of Seattle-based Surge Reproductive Justice and its group Doulas For All, which is composed mainly of doulas and childbirth educators of color who led the push for legislative change.

State lawmakers approved the reimbursement during the 2024 session.

“Moving forward, doulas can practice without having that burden of worry or fear they won’t be covered,” Tiara Calahan, a holistic birth doula from Skyway who’s part of Doulas For All, told the Seattle Times. “We can take adequate maternity leave, take time off, hire backup doulas – things like that. Now the work is more equitable and sustainable for us.”

Doulas in the U.S., which along with midwives have roots within Black and Indigenous communities, primarily serve as patient advocates, Calahan told the Times. They differ from midwives, who also center holistic birth practices but are clinically trained.

“Doulas are certainly not a silver bullet,” Elizabeth Tinker, clinical nurse consultant at the state Health Care Authority, told the Times. “They’re not expected to solve all of the problems that exist, but they are an evidence-based intervention that has been demonstrated to improve outcomes for all people.”

Doula care is not generally covered by insurance. Apple Health covers about 45% of annual births in Washington, including care during and after pregnancy, Tinker told the Times.

As of this year, about 21 other states are actively reimbursing for doula services through Medicaid, according to National Health Law Program, which tracks similar efforts across the country. At least six others are in the process of implementing benefits.

“No one is quite exactly like Washington,” Brown said. Apple Health members interested in doula services can look through the state’s online Find-A-Provider search tool, but the website isn’t the most user-friendly, Michelle Madrigal, HCA’s doula services program manager, told the Times. She encouraged people to reach out to their primary or pregnancy care providers first.

Families can also start by connecting with Doulas For All, which is building out a statewide referral system and a “doula hub,” or an online portal that provides resources, education and peer support for patients and doulas-in-training, the Seattle Times reported.

As of this week, more than 260 doulas are state-certified or are pending enrollment, Brown said.

“It took a lot of work and organizing and strategy to get this across the finish line,” Calahan said in an interview with the Times. “A government agency didn’t come and save us. Our community gathered and saved ourselves.”

Stephaine Courtney M.Ed  
Executive Director

509-217-2993  
<https://linktr.ee/Tiptalk>

SOMN The Shades of Motherhood Network Resource Book

# Mental Block

SPOKANE MENTAL HEALTH GUIDE TO ACCESS CARE AND CULTURE

## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.<sup>1</sup> Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

## Resource Book

STEPHAINE COURTNEY  
CEO OF SOMN

ARTICLE VIDEOS/ RECORDED SESSIONS  
LOCAL CARE / HISTORY OF MENTAL HEALTH  
STRATEGIES/ COMMUNITY



# WELLNESS / FROM THE FRONT PAGE

## IN SYNC WITH THE SEASONS

### Kazuko Wellness: We are wintering

Breathe in.  
Breathe out.  
Begin.  
I invite you to take a few breaths – let them be as deep and as long as the body craves. Now, imagine yourself either swimming upstream along the river or perhaps walking into a strong consistent wind. Really visualize it – be there. Feel the effort, notice the tension in your hands and on your face. Hold this feeling and then when your next exhale comes, turn around and let yourself become part of the flow. Safely, held and carried by water or dancing like a dandelion in the wind’s embrace. Breathe deep and witness again the body’s response. A softening of the muscles, a letting go of effort.

To live in sync with the natural ebb and flow of life’s rhythms is giving grace to the body, the mind, the soul. It is the releasing of expectations and the giving of permission to be in flow. As we witness the natural world move through its seasons, we can perhaps feel the desire to rush through one to get to the next but ultimately, that urgency is destruction. We need the winter snow and ice for our spring and summer lakes and rivers to fill and be plentiful. We need the falling of foliage to blanket the earth to keep that which rests in winter below the surface warm and safe so when spring is sprung, the daffodils, the irises, the tulips are ready to emerge and blossom. Each element gives harmony to the next.

During winter, depending on where you are in the world, it’s easy from our fast-paced, productivity-centered perspectives to see death, dormancy, and darkness. And, those things do exist ... we see them outside, we feel them within and around. And, at the same time, there is so much life above and



By **Jasmine Linane-Booe**  
THE BLACK LENS  
CONTRIBUTOR



below the surface of the Earth that thrives in and relies on stillness. The strength and power lies in the patience, the preservation, the collecting and holding tight, the snuggling in and the hunkering down,

the resting, rejuvenating, and alchemizing. As we sit at the beginning of this new year, give yourself grace that we are still in winter and this time is critical. The days are still cold and dry and the nights long. Move slow, sleep long, preserve your energy. Make slow methodical plans for when spring comes, you’ll be satiated with the gifts and nourishment of winter’s energy and thirsty for spring’s.

I want us to hold that your internal winter may not happen during the winter outside and your spring may not be sprung by the time the weather does. Perhaps we think of our internal seasonal cycles as the way we move through a day, a week, a phase in life, whatever those seasons may be. As we mirror our lives to the world that holds us, recognize too that different plants and animals behave differently – in a way that serves them. Is winter a time of hibernation for you? Or are you energized by this time and out on

### Invitation to listen to this month’s offering



Scan the attached QR code to listen to this month’s article.  
Perhaps you choose to journal

whatever comes up for you. There are questions for reflection at the end of the article. Feel invited to journal, reflect, share, and converse within community.

the hunt – inspired with ideas?

On your next inhale, find winter within ...

Explore the sensations, emotions, urges, reluctancies ...

Are there states of depression during your winter? Grief?

By allowing this winter to be whatever it needs to be ... what opportunities for growth are you making space for in spring?

We can’t rush spring ... it comes when it comes.

So, stay in winter for just a few more breath cycles.

You have to give yourself time to bloom.

*Jasmine Linane-Booe* of *Kazuko Wellness is a Somatic Energy Guide. She holds two certificates in Reiki (Paris, France and Spokane, WA), over 10 years experience as a certified yoga and meditation guide (Goa, India), a certification as a Somatic Energy Practitioner (Spokane, WA), and is a trained Psilocybin guide and wellness coach. Contact: hello@kazukowellness.com | www.kazukowellness.com*

## PCOS and women of color

By **Shanel Harris-Rittermann**  
THE BLACK LENS

According to the CDC, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder increasingly diagnosed in individuals with ovaries, often during their reproductive years. My passion for studying this condition stems from hearing stories from family and friends about its impact, which inspired me to study holistic nutrition. I believe the earth provides what we need to heal and that natural approaches can help us manage and treat diseases effectively.

PCOS is characterized by irregular menstrual cycles, elevated androgen levels like testosterone, and ovarian cysts. Symptoms include irregular periods, excessive hair growth (hirsutism), acne, and weight gain. PCOS can also cause infertility and increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Doctors typically treat PCOS by managing symptoms, usually prescribing medication. According to the Mayo Clinic, Birth control pills are prescribed to regulate cycles and reduce androgens. At the same time, drugs like clomiphene or letrozole induce ovulation for those trying to conceive. Metformin has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity, and anti-androgen medications like spironolactone manage acne and hair growth. Yet, some treatments often manage symptoms rather than address root causes, which makes a holistic approach valuable.

Women of color, particularly Black women, are disproportionately affected by PCOS and often experience more severe symptoms such as

insulin resistance, which increases the risk of Type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome. They are at greater risk of complications such as gestational diabetes, preeclampsia and infertility. The emotional toll PCOS can have, including anxiety and depression, can be worsened by societal pressures and healthcare discrepancies.

Despite becoming more common, PCOS remains underdiagnosed, particularly in communities of color. This is mainly due to cultural barriers and limited awareness among healthcare providers, with delayed diagnoses, which often worsen symptoms and lead to long-term complications. As a woman of color studying nutrition, I am passionate about fostering change. One way to achieve this is by raising awareness of these barriers, allowing us to work together for earlier diagnoses and a holistic approach to preventing more severe complications.

Managing PCOS holistically involves changing our diets, adding exercise, and taking care of our mental health. A nutrient-rich diet, regular physical activity, and stress management can improve insulin resistance and hormonal imbalances. Culturally competent care and lifestyle changes tailored to individual needs are critical to managing the condition effectively. Educating ourselves and advocating for equitable healthcare can empower women of color to take control of their health.

For natural management, herbs, supplements, and lifestyle changes can help:

**Spearmint Tea** may reduce hirsutism with its anti-androgenic properties.

**Cinnamon** has been shown to im-

### How to break barriers, build health

prove insulin sensitivity and menstrual cycle regularity.

**Vitamin D** helps regulate insulin and cycles, addressing common deficiencies.

**Omega-3s** reduce inflammation and improve insulin sensitivity.

According to the Mayo Clinic, **a balanced diet focusing on whole foods**, lean proteins, healthy fats, and lots of vegetables is essential for managing our insulin levels and promoting overall health. Regular exercise, including strength training and cardio, also supports weight management and improves insulin sensitivity. Since everyone is different, working with a nutritionist or healthcare provider is vital to finding the right balance for you. What works for one person may not necessarily work for another.

In conclusion, managing PCOS naturally requires a proactive, holistic approach. For women of color, understanding the connection between PCOS, insulin resistance, fertility, and mental health is critical. By combining balanced lifestyle changes, natural remedies, and medical treatments when needed, we can minimize PCOS’s impact and lead healthier, more empowered lives.

### References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: “Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)”

Mayo Clinic: “Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)”

Thatcher, R. (2023). “Natural remedies for PCOS: What works and why.” *Journal of Holistic Nutrition*, 15(4), 12-19.

### UBUNTU

Continued from 1

word is defined differently depending upon who and where you ask about it. Regionally, the Zulu and Sotho versions (both Bantu languages) translate the word to mean: “A person is a person through other persons ... (ubuntu as) both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic.”

In addition to aphorism, ubuntu is also a jurisprudence. According to Dial Dayana Ndim, ubuntu alongside “African customary law, and the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights ... (are) sources of African jurisprudence from which to extract common principles that represent uniquely African views of law and society.” Echoing this notion, Louw also writes about ubuntu’s prominence in the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (which Dial notes was “the first authoritative document to publicly proclaim the concept at a time of intense national anxiety in the transition towards majority rule and national reconciliation.”) South Africa’s first Constitution met and addressed gross human rights violations in restrained, poignant, and what we now recognize as “restorative” ways. Where retribution was a seemingly right fit for the harms and degradation of apartheid, a different ethos reigned. One that prioritized truth – through the acknowledgment of harms and their resultant consequences – over vengeance as the starting point for justice.

In showcasing the jurisprudential connection between restorative justice and ubuntu, Louw isolates some key points of overlap and symbiosis. Specifically, Louw highlights the following: **agreement, community, religion/spirituality**, particularly individuality and historicity. I’ll cover these first few now and the remaining points next month.

**Agreement:** Ubuntu and its restorative kin both underscore the importance of building consensus. Coming to an agreement in a restorative process can be arduous, including pre-conferencing to assess readiness/capacity. If appropriate, in a standard “victim-offender dialogue,” those who have caused harm as well as those who have been harmed and possibly community members will be invited to meet and move toward a shared understanding of and resolution of the harm – both its inception and impacts. Louw jokes while pointing out that Africans have “an almost infinite capacity for the pursuit of consensus and reconciliation.” He highlights the large vari-

### More readings

Dirk J. Louw: “The African Concept of Ubuntu and Restorative Justice” (Chapter 9 from “Handbook of Restorative Justice: A Global Perspective”) (2006)

Dial Dayana Ndim: “Reconceiving African Jurisprudence in a Post-imperial Society: The Role of Ubuntu in Constitutional Adjudication” (2015)

ety of consensus building dialogue options, such as an indaba – open discussion for those with a common interest, a lekgotla – discussion at a secluded venue, and an imbizo – mass discussion for issues of national concern.

### Community:

Generally, ubuntu and restorative justice both emphasize inclusivity, belonging, interconnectedness, or “a sense in which humanity itself constates a kind of family.” Importantly, the African notion of this interconnectedness is augmented to include an “unbroken and infinite chain of relation ... (among) the living, the living-dead ancestors) and the yet-to-be born.” This continuity of community extends our responsibility, asking us to align with right action not just for our present selves but for our past and future selves.

### Religion/Spirituality:

Both ubuntu and restorative justice strive for communal harmony and equilibrium. For ubuntu this approach is one naturally integrated/ woven. Take a moment. Drink in the wisdom that follows, an explanation by M. Griaule that personifies this approach:

“The alter gives something to a man, and a part of what he receive(s) he passes on to others ... A small part of the sacrifice is for oneself, but the rest if for others. The forces released enter into the man, pass through him and out again, and so it is for all ... As each man gives to all the rest, so he also receives from all. A perpetual exchange goes on between men, an unceasing movement of invisible currents. And this must be so if the universal order is to endure ... for it’s good to give and to receive the forces of life.”

Breathe. Let these ideas soak their way deep into your bones. Luxuriate in the passing of knowledge that continues to flow between us despite untold attempts at disruption. While many of us were not afforded the opportunity to grow up intimately with the word ubuntu, we know its meaning. Our truths perpetually reside within us.

### SUGGS

Continued from 1

one year,” Suggs said.

He participated in his high school’s marching band and later, as a freshman at Florida A&M University, made the pivotal decision to pursue music as his calling and career.

Music runs in Suggs’ bloodline. Both his father and grandfather, both whom he is named after, were musicians. His father, Milton Suggs Jr., performed with jazz legends such as Mary Lou Williams and even appeared on an episode of “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” in 1973, playing the bass.

“I come from a family of conscious thinkers who actively participated in the Black Arts Movement of the ‘60s and ‘70s,” Suggs said, citing the influence of poet and educator Haki Madhubuti and his late uncle, Rev. Clarence James, who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement. “They were invested in the spiritual upliftment and the liberation of our people.”

Suggs sees music as a profound tool for self-discovery, emotional expression, and cognitive stimulation.

“You see musicians who have practiced all their lives, and they live into their eighties and their nineties. Musicians like Marshall Allen, who’s a hundred now, and he’s still putting out new music,” he said.

According to Suggs, music opens neural pathways and touches different aspects of our being. That spark of creativity, he explains, is what sustains musicians throughout their journey. But this spark must be accompanied by discipline to reach the heights of one’s potential.

“Love is great; it’s necessary. But it only goes so far. Love doesn’t necessarily make you get out of bed ... sometimes you have to push yourself. Love doesn’t automatically translate into discipline.”

For Suggs, becoming your most authentic self in any endeavor requires consistent practice and effort. He also underscores the communal aspect of music, comparing it to the interplay of harmony and synergy.

“There are times when you hone your skills by practicing alone, but there is a communal aspect to being a musician, and that is how you establish harmony,” he said.

Music, in this sense, validates our identity, our experiences, and



APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

**Milton Suggs and Quiana Lynell sing on stage at “New Orleans Songbook” presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center on Jan. 22.**

our shared humanity.

“A lot of times, there’s an innate ability that many of us have, and it communicates a spiritual existence on Earth so that we can carry through, I guess you might say, certain seasons of life. Culturally, as Black people, (music) has been a tool for our liberation. It’s how we have communicated with each other, how we have resisted, and how we have fought

back.”

To Suggs, the purpose of music transcends entertainment; it is sacred. It serves as an expression of the soul and a means to resist injustice. Throughout Black history, music has been an essential force in both spiritual and social liberation. Suggs honors this legacy by looking to the past for inspiration while carving his own path forward. He acknowledges

that the struggles of previous generations resonate in the creative process today.

“There’s a reason we have that impulse to create,” he said. “Music is intangible. It’s something that we’ll always have access to. As long as you have a voice or hands, you’ll have access to making music. It’s a tool that cannot be bound.”

Suggs also advocates for the value of arts in education, believing children will naturally create but will thrive with proper guidance and opportunities.

“It’s something that will continue to stimulate our minds so that these other academic pursuits can grow on a higher level,” he said.

For Suggs, art is essential to fostering a holistic sense of self. He further emphasizes the importance of creating spaces for artistic expression outside traditional educational institutions.

The capacity of music to heal, inspire, and unite is an enduring testament to its heritage and power. As Suggs continues to share his talents with audiences worldwide, his work reflects a deep commitment to the ascension of his people through the transformative power of music.



IN MEMORIAM / FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Empowerment Through Action MLK Service Day Conference features swatch of local experts

By Dr. Gloria Aston-Baynes  
THE BLACK LENS

A grant from the Washington Campus Coalition for the Public Good funded the Co-Sponsored Empowerment through Action MLK Service Day Conference with Africana Studies, Office for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and Black Student Union at Eastern Washington University. The conference was held at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center by director Freda Gandy on Saturday, Jan. 18.

Angela Schwendiman, director of Africana Studies, welcomed guests, and introduced Gandy, thanked sponsors and

introduced the EWU Black Student Union officers and professors. The purpose, objectives and outcomes of the conference were shared. Derrick Mobley provided the lunch that included fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, rolls, cornbread and a variety of pies.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Philip Appel, who presented on “Encouraging and Developing Entrepreneurial Opportunities for BIPOC Communities.” Dr. Appel is currently the director of the Center for Entrepreneurship at Eastern Washington University where he spent the last five years helping students turn their ideas into businesses. His work with the Commercialization Academy and the Eagles Pitch Competition has helped

launch numerous new businesses in the region.

Break-out sessions began with Anna Franklin who brings a wealth of experience with a remarkable 30-year career in health care, including her current role as the Executive Director of Health, Equity & Environmental Sustainability for Providence Central Division. She spoke on the topic of assessing culturally responsive health care. The nonprofit organization she founded, Maji Rising, a health care and education center coming to Spokane to serve those who are experiencing the most need. Dr. Bob Bartlett discussed cultural-responsive empowerment in environments, learning spaces, and contexts that foster a sense

of belonging, respect and inclusivity, ensuring that all students feel valued for their unique identities and experience. Elaborating on “Creating More Sustainable Environments for Marginalized Students and Residents” Dr. Bartlett discussed spaces that are designed to validate and empower students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Dr. Claudine Richardson represented the Washington State Department of Health and is the founder of Neima Education LLC. Richardson presented a disparities map that compared communities across our state for health needs, concerns and effects. Participants received \$100 electronic gift cards at the end of the presentation.

LEWIS

Continued from 1

of showing young people there are many roads to success.

“Schools often teach us that success is about memorizing and reproducing information,” he said. “But we’re not asking kids what they can do. We’re just testing if they can regurgitate facts.”

His entrepreneurial journey began as a teen when a mentor introduced him to landscaping and lawn maintenance. Equipped with tools and advice to “knock on doors and mow lawns,” Lewis started his own business at 19. Over two years, he learned the industry under the tutelage of his mentor, discovering how attainable entrepreneurship could be.

“You have to be disciplined and willing to do the work,” he said.

He believes this generation’s drive for innovation, combined with modern tools and resources, creates opportunities for success.

Lewis champions the value of real-world experience over theory alone. Theory over application is ineffective in his eyes, something that can be missed with just college alone. This notion was the impetus behind launching Everyday Mentors, a grassroots initiative helping young men discover their strengths within a supportive peer cohort.

“If you’re passionate about something, we help you build on that while focusing on six life skills: a growth mindset, a positive outlook, daily discipline, emotional maturity, financial literacy, and mental toughness,” Lewis said. “Whether or not you have a college degree, these skills lead to success.”

A pivotal moment in Lewis’ journey came through a customer who became a mentor, Gerald Daniels. Lewis learned about the community work Daniels was doing in Tacoma and got inspired. Daniels encouraged him to act on his vision to uplift young men.

“He’s always been someone I look up to,” Lewis said. “When I told him I wanted to do something community-based, he said, ‘Whenever you’re ready, let me know, and we’ll do it.’”

Partnering with the Brotherhood RISE Center of Spokane, an offshoot of the Rise Center in Tacoma, was a catalyst for Everyday Mentors. According to a news release, the RISE Center aims to “empower individuals experiencing homelessness to overcome challenges and rebuild their lives through holistic support and strategic partnerships.” Everyday Mentors extends this mission by offering mentorship to young men, helping them navigate life’s challenges and unlock their potential.

One cornerstone of the program is the Game Changer Workshops, which teach practical skills and self-empowerment. Lewis speaks on the power of collective action when we forsake the culture of gatekeeping.

“We can make a difference sometimes when we start taking other people off certain pedestals, right? The thing is, I think sometimes we forget that we got our own doggone keys to our own gate,” he said.

By inspiring curiosity and then encouraging action after curiosity, Lewis believes we can break cycles. He highlights the survival skills many youth develop out of necessity, skills that can often surpass what’s taught in high school.

When asked what it means to be powered by courage, Lewis emphasized that balancing logic with intuition and emotion is important. He shared that listening to your gut can silence doubt and teach you to trust yourself when seeking transformation.

“It’s courageous to be vulnerable,” he said.

Breaking cycles is possible within the framework of community power. Lewis shows us that mentorship is essential to effectively build from within.

MLK DAY

Continued from 1

speakers as part of the rally. His speech was titled, “How Can I Love You Better?”

Here is an excerpt from the speech of Michael Bethely:

“I stand here to ask you, neighbor, my fellow man, my fellow woman, my fellow children: How can I love you better? What can I do to show you that it’s not about me getting over on you or me being more successful than you – that it’s not about me at all, but it’s about us coming together fulfilling the needs of the hungry. Us coming together to help build up communities that have no foundation to stand on. Us collaborating and creating opportunity for our fellow man or woman to have the best possible outcome for their lives. It’s about us serving each other in love.

“What will it take for us to go from ‘me’ to ‘we’? What will it take for us to leave the comparison and begin the companionship? Let patience have its perfect work.”

After the rally, people braved the cold and marched through downtown.



PHOTOS BY APRIL EBERHARDT/THE BLACK LENS

Jetaime Thomas, the Ferris High School Black Student Union president, speaks at the MLK Day Unity Rally at the Spokane Convention Center.



Genae Langford, at left, a senior at Ferris High School, who plans to attend Washington State University, received the new Happy Watkins Scholarship at the MLK Day Unity Rally on Jan. 20.

Spokane City Council President Betsey Wilkerson talks to retired educator Mary Langford outside the rally.



Wilhelmenia Williams and Sherry Merritt greet one another in the Spokane Convention Center during the MLK Day Unity Rally.

REST IN POWER  
in Memoriam



RUTH ANN BUTLER  
(JAN. 15, 2025)

Ruth Ann Butler spent her life as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement of Greenville, South Carolina. With her ideals of Black historical preservation, education, economic empowerment and resistance through nonviolence, Butler founded a Cultural Exchange Center based on building connection.



BOB VEALE  
(JAN. 5, 2025)

Bob Veale was known as one of the hardest throwing pitchers in the MLB throughout the '60 and '70s. Still second in all-time strikeouts for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Veale left the field with a World Series ring, as a strike out king, inspirational instructor and Alabama Sports Hall of Famer.



GUS WILLIAMS  
(JAN. 15, 2025)

Two-time NBA All-Star and beloved Seattle SuperSonics player Gus Williams began his legacy with his astonishing high school play that led to a second-round overall draft pick and the All-Rookie team honors in his first year. Earning “The Wizard” nickname, he led the Sonics to the '79 NBA Finals victory.



JERRY T. HODGES JR.  
(DEC. 19, 2024)

In light of wanting a contrasting experience from his peers being drafted into the Navy for WWII, Jerry T. Hodges Jr. joined the U.S. Army Air Corps where he trained and became a Tuskegee Airmen. Hodges Jr. later served as president of the Tuskegee Airmen Scholarship Foundation.



CHARLES PERSON  
(JAN. 8, 2025)

As the youngest member of the first ever Freedom Riders, Charles Person committed his advocacy to desegregating the south. Plagued by the KKK, countless beatings and violent intimidation tactics, Person fought to uphold just laws and shut down unconstitutional practices and racial disparities.



RICHARD PARSONS  
(DEC. 26, 2024)

Richard Parsons was a visionary business man. Some of Parsons’ greatest achievements include serving as president of Time Warner, on Barack Obama’s economic advisory team and being appointed co-chair by George W. Bush for the commission of Social Security.



BRENTON WOOD  
(JAN. 3, 2025)

Brenton Wood boomed into the L.A. music scene in the late '60s when his first of three hits, “The Oogum Boogum Song,” landed in the Top 40 hits and among the Top 20 in the R&B charts. The singer-songwriter is still heard today through shows and movies like “The Umbrella Academy.”



NANCY LEFTENANT-COLON  
(JAN. 8, 2025)

As the first woman to join the U.S. Army Nurse Corps following the end of segregation in the military, Nancy Leftenant-Colon served 17 years where she began with aiding those in the Korean and Vietnam wars. She is remembered for opening doors and instilling “the sky is the limit.”

To learn more about the Brotherhood RISE Center, visit [risecenterofhilltop.org](http://risecenterofhilltop.org) or follow them on Instagram @therisecenterofhilltop. For updates on Everyday Mentors, follow @everydaymentors on Instagram and sign up for their email list.



BLACK BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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

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

**A Do Good Cleaning Service LLC** – Janitorial service by Daryl Givens Jr. (509) 714-8113 or [dgjzzle21@gmail.com](mailto:dgjzzle21@gmail.com).

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

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

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

**Allie & Austin Accounting Services** – Bookkeeping by Dorothy Hood. (509) 242-3324 or [dhood@allieaustin.com](mailto: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). (509) 795-0376 or [allowingchangelc@gmail.com](mailto:allowingchangelc@gmail.com). 9 S. Washington St., Suite 420, Spokane, 99201.

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

**BrewCity Flash Photography** – Photography services. (509) 862-9057 or email [alexanderlockett@icloud.com](mailto:alexanderlockett@icloud.com) On Instagram @BrewCityflash33 and Facebook as Leon Lockett.

**Spokane Beard Papa's** – Cream puff bakery owned by Marc Bryant. (509) 290-5128 or [spokanebeardpapas@gmail.com](mailto:spokanebeardpapas@gmail.com). 480 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 204. Spokane Valley, 99212.

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

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

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

**Black London's** – Barbershop. 1618 W. Second Ave., 99201, and 904 E. Wellesley Ave., 99207. (509) 537-1188 and (509) 309-7155. On Facebook as Black London's.

**Brendan Blocker Realty Services** – Real Estate Agent Brendan Blocker. (509) 290-9645 or [brendan.blocker@gmail.com](mailto:brendan.blocker@gmail.com). 4407 N. Division St., Suite 200, Spokane, 99207. Online at [brendan.spokanearea-realestate.com](http://brendan.spokanearea-realestate.com) or Facebook: [Blocker Real Estate](https://www.facebook.com/BlockerRealEstate).

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

**Bummy Boss Clip's & Beauty Supply** – NorthTown mall hair care. (509) 315-8963 or visit [bummybossclips.apointeddd.com](https://www.bummybossclips.apointeddd.com).

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

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

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

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

**Compassionate Catering LLC** – Catering services. (509) 934-1106 or [compassionatecatering2023@gmail.com](mailto:compassionatecatering2023@gmail.com). 1014

N. Pines Road, #120, Spokane Valley, 99216.

**Dennis Mitchell Empowerment Seminars** – Education services by Dennis Mitchell. (509) 981-0646 or [dennis-speaks@gmail.com](mailto:dennis-speaks@gmail.com). 9116 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 66, Spokane Valley, 99206.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**I Hear You Sis LLC** – Nutrition/health coaching by Prosparetti Coleman. (509) 995-7044 or [ihearyousis@gmail.com](mailto:ihearyousis@gmail.com). Online at [www.ihearyousis.com](http://www.ihearyousis.com), TikTok: [tiktok.com/@i.hear.you.sis](https://www.tiktok.com/@i.hear.you.sis).

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

**JSandoval Real Estate** – Real Estate Broker Jacquelynne Sandoval. (509) 460-8197 or [JSandoval@windermere.com](mailto:JSandoval@windermere.com). 1620 E. Indiana Ave., Suite 1250, Spokane Valley, 99216. Instagram: [instagram.com/the-realestateantlie/](https://www.instagram.com/the-realestateantlie/).

**Koala Koi Massage** – Massage therapy by Joy Robinson. (509) 900-8968 or [koalakoi-massage@gmail.com](mailto:koalakoi-massage@gmail.com). 1008 N. Washington St., Spokane, 99201.

**Lacquered and Luxe** – Nail salon owned by Lisa-Mae Brown. (509) 993-7938 or [brownlisamae@yahoo.com](mailto: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. (509) 869-3773 or [ljrbarberman@aol.com](mailto:ljrbarberman@aol.com). 3017 E. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202.

**League of Women for Community Action, Non-profit, dba Southeast Day Care Center** – Nonprofit Child Care Center owned by League of Women for Community Action and Sug Vilella, day care director. (509) 535-4794 or [lwca@gmail.com](mailto:lwca@gmail.com) or [lwca@gmail.com](mailto:lwca@gmail.com). 2227 E. Hartson Ave., Spokane, 99202. Online at [www.southeastdaycare.org](http://www.southeastdaycare.org).

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

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

**Mary Kay** – Beauty Consultant Nicole Mills. (509) 666-4929, (252) 365-4971 or [MKwithNicole@gmail.com](mailto:MKwithNicole@gmail.com). Online at [mkwithnicole.wordpress.com](http://mkwithnicole.wordpress.com), Facebook: [facebook.com/MK-withNicoleM](https://www.facebook.com/MK-withNicoleM).

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

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

**Moore's Boarding Home** – Residential care by Betsy Wilkerson. (509) 747-1745 or [betsy@mooresassistedliving.com](mailto:betsy@mooresassistedliving.com). 1803

W. Pacific Ave., Spokane, 99201.

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

**Natasha L. Hill, P.S.** – Lawyer Natasha Hill. (509) 350-2817, (509) 357-1757 or [nathasha@nlhlawoffices.com](mailto:nathasha@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. (509) 475-3556 or [tullos\\_stephanie@yahoo.com](mailto: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. (509) 964-1747 or [info@newdevelopednations.com](mailto:info@newdevelopednations.com). 3026 E. Fifth Ave. Spokane, 99202.

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

**Operation Healthy Family** – Dental and youth programs by Tommy Williams. (509) 720-4645 or [tommy@ohfspo-kane.org](mailto:tommy@ohfspo-kane.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. (509) 326-5610 or [parkviewelc@gmail.com](mailto:parkviewelc@gmail.com). 5122 N. Division St. Spokane, 99207.

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

**Providential Solutions** – Counseling and coaching by Charina Carothers, LICSW. (509) 795-0150 or [info@psurnotal-one.com](mailto:info@psurnotal-one.com). Richard Allen Court, Spokane, 99202.

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

**Queen of Sheba** – Restaurant owned by Almaz Ainuu. (509) 328-3958 or [info@queenof-sheeba.com](mailto:info@queenof-sheeba.com). 2621 W. Mallon Ave., Suite 426, Spokane, 99201.

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

**Raging Success Holistic Financial Solutions** – Rhonda Leonard-Horwith, in partnership with World Financial Group. Contact (818) 399-6295 or [rhonda@ragingsuccess.consulting](mailto:rhonda@ragingsuccess.consulting). 2818 N. Sullivan Rd, Suite 100, Spokane Valley, 99216.

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

**Smooov Cutz Barber Shop** – Barber shop owned by Jason “Smooov” Watson. (509) 703-7949 or [jsmooov923@gmail.com](mailto:jsmooov923@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. (509) 216-1072 or [spacehub@gmail.com](mailto:spacehub@gmail.com). 1023 W. Sixth Ave., Building 1, Spokane, 99204.

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

**The Way to Justice** – Community law firm led and created by women of color. The Way to Justice is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization located in Eastern Washington. (509) 822-7514.

**WrightWay Beauty Supply** – (509) 703-7772 (call/text), [wrightsbeautysupply@outlook.com](mailto:wrightsbeautysupply@outlook.com) or visit [www.wrightway-beautysupply.com](http://www.wrightway-beautysupply.com). 2103 N. Division St., Spokane, 99207.

*Are you a Black business owner and you don't see your name or business in this directory? Contact [info@blacklensnews.com](mailto: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

The Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, at 806 W. Indiana Ave., has worship service at 11 a.m. and Sunday School at 9:45 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, 99202. Sunday School is 9 a.m. Sunday Service is 10 a.m.

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

**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 Christian Center** – The Rev. Otis Manning. 9212 E. Montgomery Ave., Suite 202, Spokane Valley, 99206. Sunday Service is 10 a.m. Info: [wordoffaith13@aol.com](mailto:wordoffaith13@aol.com) or (509) 919-4150.

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

**Mount Zion Holiness Church** – Pastor Claudia “Tommy” Whitman and First Lady Karen Whitman. 2627 E. Fifth Ave., Spokane, 99202. Sunday Service is at 10 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.

**Refreshing Spring Church of God In Christ** – The Rev. Elder Timothy B. Buchanan. 1206 E. Broad St., Spokane, 99207. Info: (509) 482-7408.

NAACP MEETINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR

**FEB. 2: BUILDING LIBRARIES IN ETHIOPIA** – Eastern Washington University Associate Professor of Sociology, Kassahun Kebede, shares his mission to improve literacy in Ethiopia, one child, book, and library at a time. 2:30-3:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 2. South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St. Free.

**FEB. 10: POETRY RISING: BLACK HISTORY MONTH** – Celebrate Black History Month with poets Stephen Pitters, Gaye Hallman, Stephanie Noble Beans, jazz singer Inez Rahman, and author Teresa Brooks. 6-7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 10. South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St. Free.

**FEB. 27: A COMMUNITY PRACTICE: LOVE & BELONGING** – This community gathering invites nonviolent, intersectional, and interfaith

meditation and reflection practice. The theme for this month will be Justice & Dignity. The program adapts Cole Arthur Riley’s “Black Liturgies: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations for Staying Human” into a type of spiritual “liturgy” that draws quotes and insights from Black intellectuals, ancestors, authors and mentors. Riley describes her hope for the Black Liturgies event to provide safe harbor for people who have “escaped the trauma of white Christian nationalism, religious homophobia and transphobia, biblical ableism, and ecclesial misogyny.” Gonzaga University professor Rossing will be facilitating this gathering. 6-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 27. Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburgh St. Free.

Black Lens pickup and distribution: Get on our list!

For newspaper pickup and distribution, please contact [info@blacklensnews.org](mailto:info@blacklensnews.org). Pickup is at Carl Maxey or Schoenberg at Gonzaga on Fridays before Sunday publication. The Black Lens is published the first Sunday each month.

THE BLACK LENS Contributor Meeting

FEBRUARY

5

2025

JOIN EDITOR APRIL EBERHARDT VIA A VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING TO GET ASSIGNED STORIES FOR UPCOMING ISSUES OF THE BLACK LENS.

FEB. 5, 2025

4:30 - 6 P.M.

ZOOM MEETING  
EMAIL FOR LINK:  
[APRIL@BLACKLENS  
NEWS.COM](mailto:APRIL@BLACKLENSNEWS.COM)

Got Topics? Pitch Your Ideas & Become a Contributor

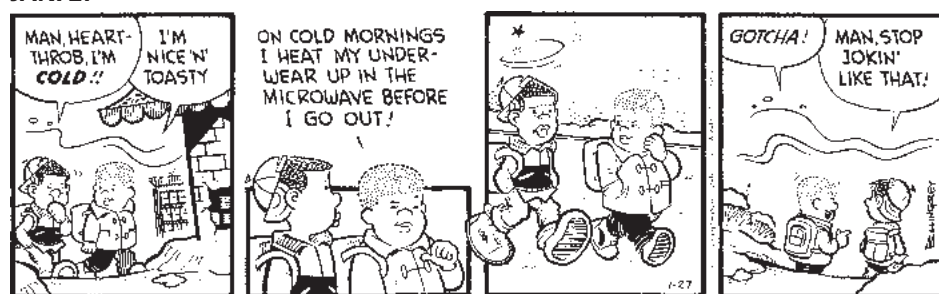




# COMICS

**CURTIS** • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

JAN. 27



JAN. 28



JAN. 29



JAN. 30



**JAN. 31**

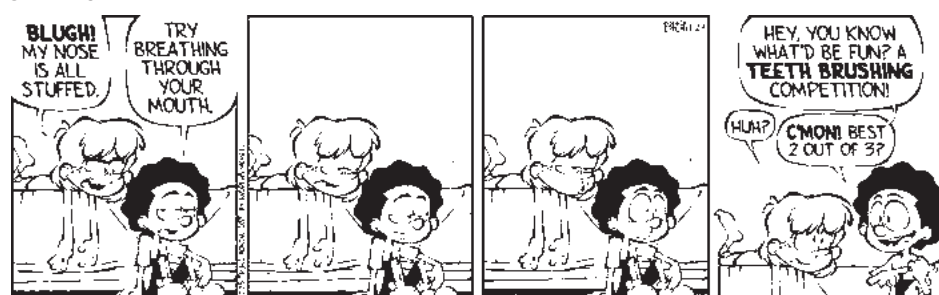


FEB. 1



**CRABGRASS** - BY TAUHID BONDIA

JAN. 29



JAN. 30



JAN. 31

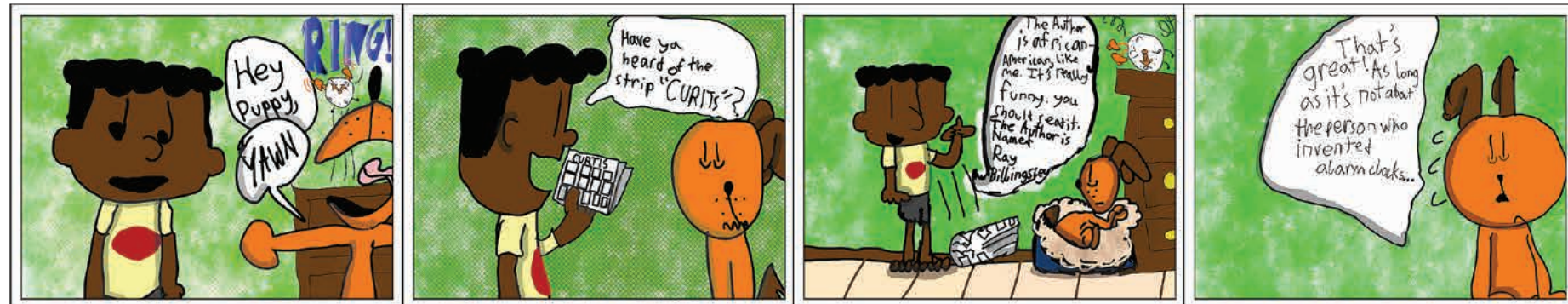


FEB. 1



**A KID'S COMIC • BY MJ BETHELY**

**PETS** by: MJ



JAMES &amp; TOM • KARSON L. PRIER





LEISURE AND CULTURE

Stigma 🙄

By AJ the Wordsmith

They look at me as if I'm the plague, some approach, some resist, the majority pretends as if I do not exist.

As you drive by you sigh, waiting for the light skin man to pass by I ain't Father Time.

As I look to the left and the right, I close my eyes and wait for heavens light

"I say heaven must be a true delight."

I feel more pain, begging and begging for the rain to never go away, it's the only thing that seems to settle my unstable brain.

I'm Texan born, Seattle raised, Spokane spoken!! so you can understand, Rain was the only consistent thing that I've ever seen.



### KIDS CORNER

#### Help the bunny find the carrot

A combination of funny sketches, interactive moments and engaging activities for kids.

When: 2-3 p.m.  
Where: Blue Door Theatre, 319 S. Cedar St.  
Phone: (509) 747-7045  
Email: [info@bluedoortheatre.org](mailto:info@bluedoortheatre.org)  
Website: [www.bluedoortheatre.com](http://www.bluedoortheatre.com)

Comedian Lyv Babinski Presents

# COMEDY FOR KIDS

DID YOU KNOW?

Black history is American history

Black Lens staff report | Sources: Spokane Historical and Black Past



In 1889, Peter B. Barrow moved his family from Mississippi to Spokane. Almost immediately upon arriving, he began to involve himself politically and religiously in the city's early life.

In 1890, he and his wife, along with several others, established Calvary Baptist Church, the oldest historically black church in Spokane, where Rev. Barrow served as pastor from 1895 to 1906. In July 1902, he helped host the Third Annual State Convention of the Colored Baptist Church at Calvary, giving an evening address to the attendees. His life ended tragically, when, as his granddaughter related, "He was killed in a street car accident in Tacoma, where he had gone for a church convention." But his legacy lived on in the Deer Lake Orchard Company, founded in 1910 by Barrow's son Peter Barrow, Jr.

Inspired by Booker T. Washington, who championed the use of skills and labor as tools to advance the Black community, the orchard provided an opportunity for Black workers trying to build their place in the Northwest.

Deer Lake Orchard also boasted a resort for Black residents to unwind, relax and enjoy the Pacific Northwest's beauty as segregation was still the rule of the day. Though the orchard existed for only about 10 years its existence had a lasting impact on Spokane's Black community.

The company's treasurer, Charles Parker Stewart, cut his botanical teeth while working at the orchards and would go on to become a Professor of Botany at Howard University. With the plant samples he had collected still being used today.

The legacy of Barrow himself lived on with his son Charles who co-founded the



Chas Barrow

first Black newspaper in Spokane, The Citizen, published by Charles Barrow, which chronicled the history of

Spokane's Black community. While Charles' daughter Eleanor, would marry the first Black mayor of Spokane James Chase. As a tribute to Peter Barrow St., his likeness is featured prominently on the old printing press building of The Spokesman-Review on Monroe Street, a half-block north of Sprague Avenue in Spokane.

So, while the Deer Park Irrigated Orchard Company was not a permanent institution, its legacy provides a blueprint for our community today.



Rosa Malone

Bonus: Did You Know?

Rosa Malone, founded the Spokane's Booker T. Washington Community Center, a place for Black people to congregate and spend leisure time. A graduate of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, she also helped establish a USO for Black Military in Spokane.

Source: "African Americans in Spokane" by Jerrelene Williamson