

THE BLACK LENS

MAY 2025 - VOL. 10 - ISSUE NO. 5

BLACK MIND, WHOLE SELF: THE WORK OF WELLNESS

Charting a path forward rooted in mental wellness



By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS EDITOR



The May issue of The Black Lens aims to catalyze an honest, community-rooted conversation about what it means to heal while Black – and to spotlight the tools, voices and knowledge that help us break cycles, build awareness, and claim our right to rest, care, and joy. It is a reminder: We deserve to be well, and we deserve to thrive.

We examine the lived experiences, inherited legacies and systemic conditions that shape Black mental wellness. From generational patterns to cultural narratives and institutional racism, we explore how these forces continue to impact our

collective well-being – and how we begin to chart a path forward rooted in healing, affirmation and thriving.

At the heart of this issue is an in-depth interview with Dr. Charina Carothers, a licensed clinical social worker and scholar whose work centers anti-racist frameworks in mental health care. Her insights underscore the vital importance of recognizing race, identity, and culture as essential to providing effective and affirming support for Black individuals.

As the interim has officially dropped off of my title as Editor,

this feels like the right time to say plainly: the work of wellness is a conversation we need to have out loud. Everything around us – politics, parenting, school, jobs, community, survival – stimulates our minds, bodies, and spirits. And yet, what's often missing in these conversations is how deeply all of these factors affect our health.

We are navigating sweeping political changes, financial strain, the challenges of raising children, graduating college, holding onto jobs – and still, the conversation around how we're doing is too often silent.

We believe wellness is not a luxury – it's a right. And just like we

analyze economic trends or policy shifts, we must normalize checking in with our inner world. Prioritizing well-being is not a detour from justice work – it is part of it. Mental health, when centered in conversations, becomes a path not only to survival but to health wealth.

As we honor May as Mental Health Awareness Month, this issue of The Black Lens affirms that wellness deserves to be front and center. We hold space for honest dialogue, cultural insight, and Black-centered healing practices that recognize our full humanity. History has shown us that struggle is real – but now, it's time we also look toward thriving.

Mental health is a priority, mental wellness is practice

Kibi Anderson workshop offers ‘radical reset rooted in rest’

NAACP
Spokane Branch

By Lisa Gardner
SPOKANE NAACP PRESIDENT

I am delighted to invite each of you to this special event where we gather as a united front, inspired by our shared commitment to advancing civil rights and justice. At 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 15, we are privileged to hear from an esteemed business coach, Kibi Anderson. Kibi Anderson is an Emmy Award-winning storyteller, best-selling author, executive coach, and leadership strategist who helps senior leaders and mission-driven organizations manage capacity, communicate with impact and build high-functioning

See **REST, 12**



MORE INSIDE

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND GUIDES

Where to go when you need help. **PAGES 12 + 16**

THE WEIGHT WE CARRY

UNPACKING AND EVOLVING BLACK MENTAL WELLNESS

An interview with Dr. Charina Carothers

“I want a group. I don’t know what it looks like yet, but I want a space where we can begin to talk about our health as individuals and as a community.”

This quiet but powerful declaration by Dr. Chaina Carothers encapsulates the heart of a conversation on Black mental wellness that moved beyond stigma and toward something far more radical: healing in community, learning together, on our own terms.

A licensed clinical social worker and the Director of Equity and Belonging at the University of Washington, Dr. Carothers wears many hats. By day, she works to train child

welfare professionals across the state. On Saturdays, she provides direct therapeutic services, supporting clients who are “ready to try something

different.” And in every space, she advocates for wellness with both honesty and cultural

See **CAROTHERS, 12**



COURTESY

Dr. Chaina Carothers is a licensed clinical social worker and the Director of Equity and Belonging at the University of Washington.



Post-production specialist Maya Roseman was raised in Spokane.

FROM SPOKANE TO THE SCREEN

Maya Roseman on community, creativity and carving her own lane in film

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

Maya Roseman may live and work in Los Angeles now, but her story begins right here in Spokane. “Born and raised,” she said proudly. “Spokane is the hometown.”

She credits her parents and grandparents for grounding her

in Black history and culture. Her childhood home, she recalls, was deeply Afrocentric. “We were taught the history, saw the pictures and videos, and got taken to all the events – whether we wanted to or not.”

Community gatherings like the African American graduation and the longstanding Juneteenth celebrations at Liberty Park left a

lasting impression. Youth programs like Xinos and Kudos, along with the Saturday Academy at East Central Community Center, offered structure, mentorship, and cultural grounding. These community pillars, she reflects, helped shepherd Black youth from adolescence into adulthood.

When Roseman left Spokane to attend Howard University in Washington, D.C., she was following a dream seeded early in her life: to work in entertainment.

See **HOMETOWN, 16**

IN HER WORDS

CIRCLE UP

Words are currency. I certainly admire the careful construction in placement and the stringing of phrases together to help us make meaning for a concept. As a writer and teacher, I tend to use my words carefully. At times, too carefully. Sometimes, I maneuver too much – sentiments that manifest in sanitized versions of truth that fail to register because it lacks true substance. Sometimes, I overflow like a fountain – syllables that won’t stop gushing from fingertips in text. And sometimes, I stay silent – muteness in moments as phrases lodge heavily in my mouth, stuck behind my teeth.

These struggles are often worst when I feel something deeply – when I make a mistake, when I’m feeling mushy, holding everything tender a little too gingerly and close to my chest, or when I am forced to reveal words I imagine are going to be hurtful for another to hear. In the midst of these situations, my range of expression feels limited.

Christabel Mintah-Galloway offered some insights on struggles of this type in a series of posts on Instagram, explaining: “The tension: but when it comes to staying ... Staying in your body. Staying with your people. Staying with the hard conversations ...



By Inga Laurent
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



you freeze. Or flee. Or fold. “The hidden truth: Because no one taught you how to stay in relationships without disappearing. Without over-explaining. Without shrinking yourself or shutting it all down. The skill gap: Understanding your triggers isn’t the same as knowing what to say in the moment. Knowing your trauma history isn’t the same as knowing how to repair after rupture. The invitation: That’s where relational skills come in. Not because you’re broken. But because this is a language most of us were never taught. You’re not behind. You’re not too much. You’re just under-practiced.”

That felt real. “Un-

See **CIRCLE UP, 12**

NEWS AND POLITICS

LEGISLATIVE LENS

Natasha Hill: Fighting for justice, a thriving Spokane



COURTESY

Gov. Bob Ferguson signs House Bill No. 1361 on April 11, relating to updating process service requirements in Washington state for business entities and motorists. Rep. Natasha Hill, center left, was the primary sponsor. Here she is joined by Reps. Jamila Taylor, Timm Ormsby, Brianna Thomas, key staffers from the Secretary of State Office, legislative assistant Dasha Ventura, first page Isha and intern Stella, Gov. Bob Ferguson signed Hill’s bill into law.

Black Lens staff reports

The first legislative session of 3rd District Rep. Natasha Hill, D-Wash., has come to an end.

In her time, she championed four bills that passed the House and Senate and had her first bill signed into law.

“There is of course still a ton of work to do to dismantle barriers, strengthen civil rights, protect democracy and ensure our budget reflects our values and needs of the people across our state,” Hill said in a statement.

Alongside Reps. Jamila Taylor, Timm Ormsby, Brianna Thomas, key staffers from the Secretary of State Office, legislative assistant Dasha Ventura, first page Isha and intern Stella, Gov. Bob Ferguson signed Hill’s bill into law.

HB 1361, regarding modernizing service of process laws, “removes confusion, cuts unnecessary costs and removes barriers – all while making the law more accessible to the people,” Hill wrote.

“It’s a small but powerful step toward making our legal system work better, especially people navigating it without an attorney,” said Hill, who is also an attorney.

Here are some other highlights of her first session, in the words of Hill:

Public Works Transparency (HB 1633) – When we invest in public projects, we need to know our tax dollars are being used responsibly. This bill helps ensure a fair, competitive process

for subcontractors, preventing shady bidding practices that cut corners and leave workers vulnerable.

Fixing Service of Process Laws (HB 1361) – Legal processes should be clear and consistent. This bill cleans up outdated and confusing rules, making it easier to serve legal documents properly and ensuring everyone–businesses, individuals, and the courts–follows the same standard.

Expanding Affordable Homeownership (HB 1516) – Washington needs more housing options. This bill explores insurance options to make condominiums more affordable to build, helping more Washingtonians own property and build wealth and stability.

Tribal Health Representation (HB 1946) – Every tribe deserves a seat at the table when it comes to healthcare decisions. This bill ensures that all federally recognized tribes have a voice on their local boards of health, leading to better outcomes for Indigenous communities and beyond.

“When we center fairness and equity in our policies, we make better laws,” Hill wrote in a statement, “and I will continue to bring this focus to the work I do for the 3LD. With your support, I will continue to fight for working families, expanding housing and health care access and ensuring that everyone – regardless of income, background or ZIP code – can thrive in Spokane and across Washington.”

SAVE Act: A new barrier to voting rights

Black Lens staff report

The U.S. House of Representatives passed HR22, known as the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, a bill that poses a significant threat to voter freedom and election access across the country imposing bureaucratic barriers.

While supporters claim the SAVE Act is meant to protect elections from non-citizen voting, it is already illegal for non-citizens to vote in federal elections. This law exaggerates the risk while imposing new barriers on eligible American voters, echoing what many are calling a new poll tax – a deliberate barrier to the ballot box.

Key concerns about the act include:

- Increased burdens on military and service members:

Military IDs alone will no longer be sufficient to prove citizenship. Service members moving between assignments will be forced to present extensive documentation each time they re-register.

- Hardships for disaster survivors:

Survivors of hurricanes, wildfires and natural disasters – who may have lost essential documents – would face significant barriers trying to replace paperwork.

- Impacts on women, trans voters and others who have changed their names:

Marriage, transition or legal name changes would now require updated citizenship documents. An estimated 69 million American women lack paperwork.

- Disenfranchisement of rural, Black, Indigenous, and working-class voters:

Many Americans may not possess passports or readily available birth certificates.

Tribal citizens would no longer be able to use tribal IDs unless they include a place of birth, which they currently do not.

- Real IDs, driver’s licenses, military and tribal IDs would no longer be enough:

Voters would now need additional proof, such as a passport or certified birth certificate, even if they hold valid government-issued identification.

How you can fight back

Contact your Senators and demand they vote NO on the SAVE Act.

Stay informed and make sure your documentation is current, but advocate for systems that do not burden voters unnecessarily. Fore more, visit bit.ly/44InXE0.

IN HIS WORDS

Spokane Valley’s ‘Not a Sanctuary City’ stokes fear

By Lucas Cahow

THE BLACK LENS

Speaking during public comment at the recent Spokane Valley City Council meeting, a Spokane resident argued the proposed resolution “**will lead to the disintegration of the already flimsy trust that exists here with the police and members of the community.**” On April 1, the Spokane Valley City Council voted 5-2 to reaffirm that the city is not a sanctuary city. In 2016, the city first affirmed that it is not a sanctuary city, but with the passing of the Keep Washington Working Act, this resolution conflicted with state law. The city council argued they needed to update the resolution to make it comply. But why now? The 2016 resolution has conflicted with state law for over five years.

During the meeting, City Council Member Al Merkel assured that this new resolution had “no teeth.” In theory, he is correct. Spokane Valley Police Officers are required to follow state law. Among other things, the Keep Washington Working Act “prohibits local law enforcement

agencies from ... providing information to federal immigration authorities for purposes of civil immigration enforcement.” Breaking state law would lead to a lawsuit similar to the one against Adams County Sheriff’s Office where the Washington State Attorney General argued they illegally collaborated with federal immigration officers. That being said, the City Council’s decision is absolutely going to have an impact. The “Not a Sanctuary City” resolution will only serve to deeply frighten our greater community.

A nationwide wave of fear is on the rise. Due process is not being followed, Brown and Black North, Central and South Americans are demonized as ruthless gang members, and a green card seemingly means nothing. This resolution is nothing but a message. Spokane Valley does not support immigrants and is itching in wait for the Keep Washington Working Act to be eliminated. The only outcome of this message is more fear. Fear that police will be encouraged to break state law. Fear that constitutional protections will be broken. Fear that the city you live in is out to get you.

SPOKANE CITY COUNCIL ROUNDUP

Black Lens staff reports

Council votes in opposition to potential Medicaid cuts

The Spokane City Council voted unanimously April 15 on a resolution opposing any proposed Federal or State cuts to Medicaid.

Council Member Paul Dillon issued the following statement: “Proposed federal and state cuts would have a disproportionate impact in Spokane that would devastate our service system, as one in four Spokane residents is covered by Medicaid ... It pays for mental health services, people with opioid disorder, and our homeless response, and so much more.”

The city clerk is directed to send copies of this resolution to the governor and the city’s legislative representatives.

Council quickens amendment on abandoned vehicles

During April 15’s City Council Legislative Session, the members voted to amend the service contract with Evergreen State Towing to provide towing, impound and disposal of abandoned recreational vehicles. The council expedited the amendment to address the growing neighborhood issue of abandoned RVs.

“I’ve consistently advocated for re-establishing this program throughout its unfortunate six-month hiatus, during which public safety concerns have markedly increased,” Council Member Michael Cathcart, co-sponsor of the ordinance, said in the release.

The amendment aims to improve operational efficiency for Evergreen State Towing and the city and to extend the duration of the contract immediately.

TAKING POLITICAL ACTION

Funding for the Community Reinvestment Fund (CRP) and Small Business Resiliency Fund (SBRN) is at risk. These programs provide critical financial support for historically underserved businesses and communities, and we need your help to ensure they are fully funded.



CALL TO ACTION: Contact legislators in the 3rd, 4th, 6th, and 9th districts and urge them to fully fund these programs:

Community Reinvestment Fund (CRP): www.commerce.wa.gov/crp/

Small Business Resiliency Fund (SBRN): www.commerce.wa.gov/sbrn/

Find your legislators here: app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/

Your voice can make a difference – **let’s ensure our communities and small businesses get the support they deserve!**

Coded language and divisive narratives abound in Trump order over National Museum of African American History and Culture

By Brianna Fields

THE BLACK LENS

President Trump proposed a new order concerning the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The order was presented on March 27, titled, “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History.” Bill Barrow, a writer for the American Press, says that the order accuses “the Smithsonian Institution of not reflecting American history notes correctly that the country’s Founding Fathers declared that ‘all men are created equal.’” However, what the order DOES NOT contain, is “that the founders enshrined slavery into the U.S. Constitution and declared enslaved persons as three-fifths of a person for the Census.” Knowing this, how can all men be equal if most of the population isn’t even considered a whole?

Many people, including Black historians, civil rights advocates and political leaders have contended that Trump’s executive order (that is specifically targeting the Smithsonian Institution) is his “administration’s latest move to downplay how race, racism, and Black Americans themselves have shaped this nation’s history.” In addition to “quash recognition of Black Americans’



MARVIN JOSEPH/WASHINGTON POST

Historian Lonnie G. Bunch III, the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, poses for a photo in 2019. President Donald Trump in March issued an executive order targeted at eliminating “divisive narratives” from the Smithsonian Institution’s museum.

contributions to the nation and to gloss over the legal, political, social and economic obstacles they have faced.”

The executive order references the National Museum of African American History and Culture and disputes that the Smithsonian Institution as a whole is partaking in a “concerted and widespread effort to rewrite our nation’s history.” Looking into the opinion of Black America via social media, I’ve found that some

people believe that this order is an attempt to distract America from the (what I like to call) “war plan group chat” that was made public not too long ago.

It’s also believed that the order is part of Trump’s administration to cut funding to the museum, along with other organizations such as other minority museums, public libraries, etc. Barrow writes that the “order argues that a “corrosive...divisive, race-centered ideology” has “reconstruct-

ed” the nation ‘as inherently racist, sexist, oppressive, or otherwise irredeemably flawed.’”

In addition to the executive order, Trump has directed Interior Secretary Doug Burgum “to determine if any monuments since January 2020 ‘have been removed or changed to perpetuate false reconstruction of American history’ or ‘inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures.’”

Dating back to the murder of George Floyd, Trump has voiced his disdain for Confederate monuments that were removed. Clarissa Myrick-Harris – historian and professor at Morehouse College – says, “It seems like we’re headed in the direction where there’s even an attempt to deny that the institution of slavery existed, or that Jim Crow laws and segregation and racial violence against Black Communities, Black Families, Black individuals even occurred.”

Ibram X. Kendi has spoken on the order and says that the approach is “a literal attack on Black America itself. The Black Smithsonian, as it is affectionately called, is indeed one of the heartbeats of Black America.” There’s a mutual agreement that museums that focus specifically on the history of marginalized groups have

been beneficial, especially when they’re up against a curriculum that will only focus on the subject matter for at least a month.

“Attempts to tell the general history of the country always omit too much ... and the place that we’ve come to by having these museums is so we can, in total, do a better job of telling the complete story of this country,” said former NAACP President Ben Jealous.

The African American Museum opened in 2016, the last year President Obama held office, and is one of the 21 Smithsonian entities. In 2024, the museum welcomed 1.6 million visitors. About a week after the executive order was announced, the museum’s director, Kevin Young, stepped down from the position.

“We do not run from or erase our history simply because we don’t like it. We embrace the history of our country – the good, the bad, and the ugly” said Congressional Black Caucus Chair Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y. She also suggests that Trump wants to distort the national narrative to racist ends.

Creating a narrative that negates history is not only tone-deaf but dangerous. How do you feel about the executive order? Let us know on The Black Lens social media pages.

HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

JOB WELL DONE
TO A PILLAR



MICHAEL BETHELY/THE BLACK LENS

The Rev. C.W. Andrews has retired from the helm of Calvary Baptist Church.

Celebrating the retirement
of the Rev. C.W. Andrews

By Lisa Gardner
SPOKANE NAACP PRESIDENT

As I pen this heartfelt tribute to the Rev. C.W. Andrews, I do so not just as the president of the Spokane NAACP but as a community member who grew up within the welcoming embrace of Calvary Baptist Church – the oldest Black church in Washington state. With my humble heart, I celebrate a remarkable milestone: Reverend Andrews’ retirement after an incredible 50 years of dedication to his congregation and the broader community.

The Rev. Andrews has been more than just a pastor to us; he has been a mentor and powerful pastor for many he served throughout the years.

The celebration took place at Double-Tree Hotel, where community and congregation members gathered to celebrate the Rev. Andrews’ remarkable legacy. We were all reminded of the countless individuals whose lives he had touched. I am one of many who grew up attending services at Calvary Baptist Church with my grandparents, Levi and Sarah Gardner. Having been christened by the Rev. Andrews, it was an honor to present a salutation from the NAACP saluting his retirement. Memories filled my mind as



I saw old family friends and listened to the “Voices of Calvary.” The nostalgia brought tears of joy and memories.

As he transitions into this new chapter of his life, we wish him well; his presence at Calvary Baptist Church will undoubtedly be missed. The roots he has planted will continue to flourish long after his departure, reminding us that his legacy is not merely about a single individual but rather about the spirit of service, love, and unwavering faith that he has instilled within us.

The Rev. Andrews, on behalf of the entire Spokane community, we thank you for your lifetime of service and dedication. As you retire, may you find joy and peace, knowing that your impact will resonate for generations. We commit to honoring your legacy by continuing the work you’ve inspired within our community, ensuring that Calvary Baptist Church remains a beacon of hope and solidarity for all.

SPOKANE, WA CHAPTER
OF LINKS, INC.
PRESENTS

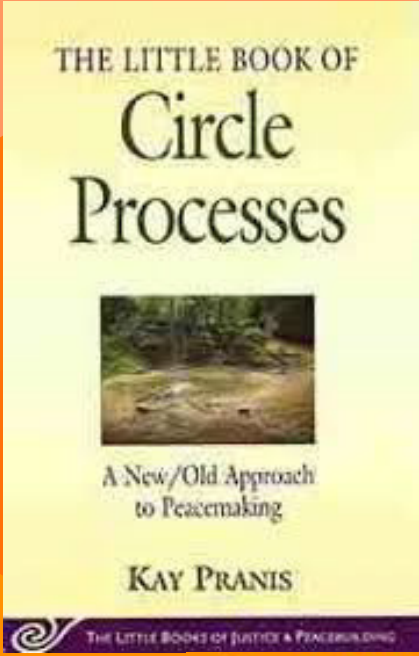
*White Rose
Brunch*

The White Rose Brunch

TICKETS
ON SALE
\$75.00

Saturday, May 31, 2025
11:00am
CenterPlace
2426 N Discovery Pl,
Spokane Valley, WA 99216

Join BRC for a Discussion of
Restorative Justice!



NAACP
Spokane Branch

BUILDING
RESTORATIVE
COMMUNITIES

Spokane
Central
Library:
Room B

Wednesday
May 7th
5-6pm

Free event!

For Youth 11-16yrs old



Transformations
Camp
2025

Sign up at ywcaspokane.org/camp
Free Empowerment Camp for 11-16 Years Olds.

20 spots are available in each camp.
Enrollment opens about a month
before each camp.

Camp 1: July 21-25
Camp 2: August 4-8

Questions?
transformations@ywcaspokane.org



eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
SPOKANE

Brought to you through a partnership
between SWAG & YWCA Spokane.
This camp would not be possible without
sponsorship support from James Sheehan.

Curly Godmother

Black Hair Expo

Join us for the Curly Godmother event, a celebration
of self love and pride in black hair!

Where : nxwxyetk^w HALL 1906 W.Main Ave, Spokane, WA 99201
When: May 18 @ 1PM - 4PM

What to Expect:

Hair Fashion Show : Enjoy a display of hairstyles by local professionals:
Breakout Sessions : Gain insights on caring for curls, locs, braids, and
fades.
Booths : Discover more about businesses and hair care professionals
in Spokane.

Are you a Haircare professional or want to partner with us for this event scan here

Event By ~ Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated
Pi Xi Zeta Graduate Chapter Washington State

BUSINESS

SIPS 'N' TIPS: FIGHTING FINANCIAL LITERACY

Financial independence is not a dream – it’s a decision

By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith
THE BLACK LENS

You often hear the phrase, “I live paycheck to paycheck.” Money is a constant topic of conversation. People dream of having enough to cover bills, fund education, enjoy relaxation and retirement, and – most importantly – have peace of mind. But the truth is: **Money isn’t the problem – cash flow is.**

Paychecks come in, but dollars seem to vanish just as quickly. As a society, we are bleeding cash. At some point, each of us must reflect: Which path am I on– the wealth path or the broke path?

- **The wealth path:** earn > save > invest
- **The broke path:** earn > spend > debt

Stop the Bleeding: Increase Cash Flow

To reclaim control, we must increase cash flow. How?

By reducing debt, developing healthy financial habits and increasing earnings. One of the most immediate ways to improve your financial health is through debt management.

The key isn’t how much money you make – it’s how much you keep. That means saving more and spending less. Start by:

1. Paying less for expenses through smarter purchasing
 2. Creating an excess of cash by eliminating unnecessary spending
- As debt decreases, more money becomes

available for saving and investing. One of the biggest financial drains is **credit card debt**. Consider the following strategies:

- Live below your means
- Use cash, debit or prepaid not credit
- Pay for essentials only – food, housing, clothing, insurance, utilities
- Eliminate nonessential expenses (e.g., cable TV or unused subscriptions)
- Call your credit card company and ask to freeze your credit limit
- Stop carrying credit cards with you

Break the Cycle

We are creatures of habit. Breaking old spending habits is one of the biggest challenges. Many people develop the routine of using extra funds solely to pay off debt – without saving. The result? An endless cycle of debt and interest.

Interest never sleeps. It compounds over time, leading you to pay back double – or more – of what you owe.

To break the cycle, try the **roll-up method**:

3. List all debts from smallest to largest
 4. Pay the minimum on all debts except the smallest
 5. Apply extra funds to the small balance
 6. Once it’s paid off, roll that full payment onto the next smallest balance
 7. Repeat until all debts are paid
- Consider keeping a few credit cards open to maintain your credit score, but perform “plastic surgery” on the rest – cut them up.



By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



debt shrinks. You’re creating a subconscious habit for your future.

Pay Yourself First

Would you rather pay yourself and your family first – or try to save whatever is left after spending? Start putting your family and future first.

Here’s a simple exercise:

Track your spending. Carry a small notebook or use a phone app to write down everything you spend – whether it’s gas station snacks, groceries or online purchases. At the end of the month, add it up. What was a need, and what was a want? Redirect those “wants” toward savings and debt reduction.

Short, Mid, Long-Term Goals

Think of saving in three parts:

Build the Habit

Debt reduction must be paired with saving. If you have an extra \$500, don’t put it all to debt. If you never build a saving habit, you’ll default to spending when cash flow increases.

Instead, split the funds – use half to pay debt, and invest the rest. This way, your savings grows as

Short-term (20%): Debt repayment, enjoyment and flexibility

Mid-term (30%): Emergency fund (start with three months of income)

Long-term (50%): Retirement, college savings, investments

- Create habits like:
- “If I charge it, can I pay it off next paycheck?”
 - “Have I saved 10% of my income this month?”

Cut costs where you can:

- Eat out during happy hour
- Watch movies at home
- Cancel unused subscriptions
- Wash your own car
- Plan meals and shop with intention
- Comparison shop online

Know Your Net Worth

Determine what percentage of your income you’ll save first, then live on the rest. Next, calculate your **net worth**:

Net Worth = Assets – Liabilities

- **Assets** are things that add value or put money in your pocket
- **Liabilities** take money out of your pocket (debt)

Do you own more than you owe? Are your pockets full – or empty?

Final Food for Thought

The wealthy buy assets. Everyone else buys liabilities, mistaking them for assets.

Trying to “keep up with the Joneses” often means buying things that drain wealth instead of build it.

How the choke-out method aims to deter Black-owned beauty supply entrepreneurs

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

For Shania Wright, entrepreneurship wasn’t always the plan – it was the pattern. A military veteran and spouse, Wright found herself launching businesses wherever the Air Force stationed her family. From Alaska to Washington, what began as a side hustle in commercial cleaning evolved into a calling.

“It wasn’t until a friend pointed it out that I realized – yes, I’m an entrepreneur,” Wright says, reflecting on her journey that began with cleaning contracts and grew into community-rooted retail. “I was just trying to solve problems and provide services. I didn’t

See **WRIGHT, 15**



COURTESY OF WRIGHT WAY BEAUTY SUPPLY

RECLAIMING THE BLACK BEAUTY SUPPLY INDUSTRY

Confronting systemic exclusion and building collective power

ANYLA’S TAKE

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

Non-Black-owned beauty supply stores have a documented history of discriminating against and harassing Black business owners and

customers, often restricting access to essential products. This dynamic has led to an ethnically segmented beauty supply market – where non-Black stores dominate distribution channels and Black-owned stores struggle

See **ANYLA, 15**

Don’t lose your home

FUNDING ENDS SOON

Homeowners, call for support:

1-877-894-4663



EDUCATION

THE INTERSECTION OF FOOD SUPPLY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Last month, Dr. Sharah Zaab launched a powerful series exploring the intersection of food systems, climate change, and the Black community. As this issue of The Black Lens



By Dr. Sharah Zaab
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



centers collective wellness, it's impossible to ignore the critical role of nutrition, food access, and sustainability in our health outcomes. Food is not just fuel—it's one of the most significant factors shaping our overall well-being. In this second installment, Dr. Zaab continues the conversation, examining how equitable food systems can serve as a pathway to community resilience and climate justice. Dive in.

The link between food and climate is not just an environmental issue—it is also a racial and social justice issue. Addressing climate change means rethinking food systems in ways that empower African American communities to:

- Reclaim food sovereignty
- Fight food waste
- Build sustainable alternatives to indus-

trial agriculture

By supporting Black farmers, expanding urban agriculture, investing in food recovery programs, and advocating for climate justice policies, individuals and communities can take meaningful steps toward a more equitable and sustainable food future.

Solutions: Building Sustainable, Community-Driven Food Systems

- 1. Expanding Black-Led Urban Agriculture and Community Farms**
- Urban agriculture has become a powerful tool for increasing food access and environmental sustainability. By transforming vacant lots, abandoned properties, and underutilized spaces into food-producing hubs, communities can reduce reliance on industrial food systems while strengthening local economies.
- Examples of Successful Black-Led Urban Farms**
- D-Town Farm (Detroit, MI)** – Operated by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network
 - Fresh Future Farm (North Charleston, SC)** – A Black-owned urban farm and grocery store in a former food desert
 - Soil Generation (Philadelphia, PA)** – A Black- and Brown-led coalition promoting land access and food justice
 - How Individuals and Families Can Contribute:**
 - Start a backyard or community garden
 - Support Black-owned urban farms by volunteering or purchasing from them

- Advocate for policies that repurpose vacant land for food production
- 2. Strengthening Black Food Cooperatives and Community-Owned Grocery Stores**
- Food cooperatives empower communities by giving them direct control over food distribution. Unlike traditional grocery stores, co-ops operate on collective ownership models, keeping profits within the community.
- Examples of Black-Led Food Cooperatives:**
- The Renaissance Community Co-op (Greensboro, NC)** – A community-owned grocery store
 - Mandela Grocery Cooperative (Oakland, CA)** – A Black worker-owned grocery sourcing local, organic food
- Action Steps for Families and Communities:**
- Join or support a Black food cooperative
 - Start a buying club to purchase fresh food in bulk
 - Work with local leaders to develop community-owned grocery initiatives
- 3. Restoring Black Land Ownership and Supporting Black Farmers**
- Reclaiming Black farmland is critical for both food sovereignty and climate resilience. Historically, Black farmers have practiced sustainable agriculture methods that reduce environmental harm.
- Ways to Support Black Farmers**

- and Increase Land Access:**
- **Support Black-Owned Farms** – Purchase through CSA programs
 - **Advocate for Land Grants** – Promote policies that allocate land to Black farmers
 - **Utilize Legal Support** – Programs like the Heirs' Property Retention Program assist with land retention
- Notable Organizations:**
- National Black Food & Justice Alliance (NBFJA)
 - Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network (SAAFON)
- 4. Reducing Food Waste and Expanding Food Recovery Programs**
- Food waste is a major contributor to climate change, yet many Black communities lack access to food recovery infrastructure.
- Solutions for Reducing Food Waste:**
- **Expand Food Rescue Networks** – Encourage donations of unsold food
 - **Increase Composting Programs** – Invest in composting sites in Black neighborhoods
 - **Establish Redistribution Hubs** – Use churches, schools, and community centers to distribute food
- Notable Black-Led Initiatives:**
- **The Black Church Food Security Network** – Connects farmers and churches
 - **The Love Fridge (Chicago, IL)** – Community fridges that redistribute surplus food

EQUITY FOR ALL 2025

CENTERING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

By Nikita Habimana
THE BLACK LENS

On April 17 at Hamilton Studios, the YWCA hosted its annual Equity for All Summit, an event dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, promoting peace, justice, and freedom, and strengthening families and communities. Designed to foster open, critical dialogue, the summit engaged participants in purposeful conversations aimed at broadening perspectives, learning new tools, and building connections across a diverse community passionate about equity.

The 2025 theme, Restorative Practices, highlighted the importance of building relationships and fostering healing. Over the past year, the Spokane branch of the NAACP has piloted a Building Restorative Practices program to increase awareness of how restorative circles can cultivate community strength, healing, and interdependence.

The event featured trained Circle Keepers from Spokane Public Schools and panelists including Inga Laurent (J.D., Restorative Practices Consultant and Black Lens columnist) and April



By Nikita Habimana
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Eberhardt (editor of The Black Lens, educator and NAACP Education Chair), with Jaime Stacy (Vice President of Spokane NAACP, educator and founder/CEO of SWAG), serving as moderator. After the panel, attendees broke into restorative circles to put these practices into action, focusing on building relationships, repairing harm, and fostering sustainable community connections.

Key Principles of Restorative Practices

Relationship-Based: Prioritizes building meaningful connections within



More Information

Watch more on the YWCA's equity summit event by scanning the accompanying QR code.

the community to foster unity.

Conflict Resolution: Addresses conflicts openly to foster understanding and promote actionable change.

Harm Repair: Focuses on acknowledging harm, identifying root causes, and offering grace rather than focusing solely on punishment.

Responsibility and Accountability: Encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and work toward healing and growth.

One major example of restorative practice is a circle process which gathers people around a circle to actively listen to one another discuss issues and meant to encourage active listening and engage in dialogue with each other. Within the circle process, is a circle, a circle keeper who ensures that everyone is being heard and they also keep and ask the topics and questions being discussed. In the circle process there

is a person holding a talking piece which allows them to speak. A person is only allowed to speak within a circle process when they're holding the talking piece.

Some questions that were asked during the circle process at the equity for all were:

- What is it like to be in a space where you aren't welcome?
- How does it feel when you are not welcomed and how do you act in those situations
- On the contrary, how do you feel when you are welcomed in a space and how do you make that same space more inviting to others?

Restorative practices ask us to understand one another deeply, fostering trust, communication, and stronger bonds. By emphasizing accountability, healing, and collective growth, restorative practices are crucial for building healthier, more connected communities.

Uplifting stories. Bridging generations. Championing community.

CONTRIBUTOR SPOTLIGHT ON TERESA BROOKS

Black Lens staff report

Teresa Brooks is a powerful voice in community journalism, known for using her pen to celebrate legacy, uplift culture, and foster understanding across generations. A regular contributor to The Black Lens, Teresa has authored ten impactful articles covering topics such as literary legacy, cultural competence, economic resilience, intergenerational wisdom, and regional Black leadership. Her storytelling honors the richness of Black life in Spokane and beyond.

Raised in Spokane's East Central neighborhood, Teresa is a familiar and joyful presence at local events – supporting, laughing, and engaging with community. Her deep-rooted commitment to collective progress extends beyond journalism. As the founder of Africa Movement, she works to build long-term, self-sustaining community impact through four foundational pillars: Economic Development, Social Development, Environmental Development, and Educational Development.

Her featured articles include:

- The Legacy of Nikki Giovanni: Lessons for Writers in Every Generation
- Mr. Clarence Freeman: Building Spokane, Building Legacy
- Celebrating Momma Williams' 90th Birthday
- Happening Around Town: East Central Community Thanksgiving
- Having Cultural Competence: Images and Insights
- A Journey of Discovery: From Spokane to Africa and Back
- Invitation to Weekly Game Days with Our Elders at Carl Maxey Center
- Nonviolent Communication: A Path to Empathy and Understanding
- How Communities Can Take Action to Curb Inflation
- Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve: The Legacy of Dr. Maxine Mimms

Through her work, Teresa Brooks continues to inspire, educate, and elevate – bridging generations while championing community.



COURTESY

Black Lens contributor Teresa Brooks has fun with some bubbles.



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ARTS AND CULTURE

Bianca Appiah invites viewers to partake in diasporic healing

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

“I didn’t feel Black when I stepped foot in Ghana,” she reflects. “I was just... me. I didn’t have to carry the weight of being Black in America. I was just a person.” -Bianca Appiah

For Bianca Appiah, storytelling is more than a hobby – it’s a tool for connection. The middle school educator and YouTube creator uses her channel to bridge cultural understanding between African Americans and the African continent, offering a deeply personal perspective grounded in lived experience, reflection, and purpose.

Her YouTube channel, titled Michele Mazell – which incorporates her middle name and variations of her mother and grandmother’s names – has reach and impact that extend far beyond family ties. What began as a fashion-focused platform took a pivotal turn after a vlog documenting her trip to Ghana resonated with thousands of viewers.

While she hails from Tennessee, her husband’s family is from a village called Nkonya-Wurupong.

“I started off doing fashion,” she said, “but it segued into what I’m doing now after I vlogged about going to Ghana. That video did really well, and I realized there was real interest in showing the positivity of the African continent.”

Appiah’s connection to Ghana is both familial and spiritual. Her first visit in 2003 came after the passing of her father-in-law. Since then, she’s returned several times – whether for medical missions, a funeral, cultural festivals, or simply leisure.

“Most of the times I’ve gone, it’s been for a purpose,” she explains. “But a couple of years ago, I got to go just to enjoy the country. That was the first time I really saw Ghana–eating at restaurants, visiting cultural landmarks like the W.E.B. Du Bois



COURTESY

Bianca Appiah has a YouTube channel with reach and impact that extend far beyond family ties.

Museum, and exploring areas of Accra we usually don’t get to see.”

Appiah’s YouTube channel began to take shape around a powerful observation: There is a gap in how African Americans and Africans understand each other–and themselves.

“There’s a lot of content about Black culture,” she said, “but it’s often from a Westernized perspective. What’s missing is the viewpoint of the African continent – and how they see us.”

Her marriage to a Ghanaian man and years of interaction with his family gave her firsthand insight into the cultural nuances and historical misunderstandings between Black Americans and Africans.

As we discussed what’s often referred to as the “diaspora wars” on various social media platforms, what emerged was the complexity of Black identity – like a Rubik’s Cube, outwardly unified by shared aesthetics, yet internally shaped by distinct histories, environments, and cultural influences.

Tensions often arise in how Black people from different parts of the world perceive one another, and much of this can be traced back to media-driven propaganda. From

reductive portrayals of Africa as a continent of famine and poverty to persistent stereotypes of African Americans as lazy or violent, both communities have been fed incomplete – and often damaging – narratives.

“When we come together, there’s tension because both sides have been misinformed,” Appiah said.

Broaching this subject is inherently controversial and comes with no shortage of challenges. When confronting harmful rhetoric and misinformation rooted in stereotypes, questions of loyalty and belonging inevitably arise – especially for Appiah. She is no stranger to backlash from those who question where her allegiance lies.

“It turns into, ‘You’re not supporting Black power,’ or ‘You’re not for us,’” she explained. “But really, I’m correcting harmful narratives – just like I would if someone outside our community said something that wasn’t true.”

Her message is grounded in humility and compassion. She urges her followers – especially African Americans – to remain open and curious.

“If we want people to understand our struggle, we have to be willing to understand theirs,” she said. “Just because one person from a country mistreated you doesn’t mean you can dismiss the whole continent. We don’t want to be judged as a monolith – so we shouldn’t do that to others.”

Walking the difficult but necessary line of accountability, Appiah aims to foster honest dialogue within the Black diaspora – starting with self-reflection. She cautions against falling into the trap of self-hatred and anti-Blackness – mindsets that persist as remnants of colonization and systemic disenfranchisement.

True growth and healing, she believes, begin when we acknowledge both our individual and collective roles in shaping how we see and treat one another. Reaching that

point requires a shift in focus – one that fosters deeper connection while honoring our shared experiences and distinct identities.

Her hope is that more Black Americans travel, engage with African culture beyond tourism, and embrace the full spectrum of global Blackness.

She explains that while racial identity in the U.S. may feel familiar, understanding Black identity and race on a global scale is an entirely different conversation. As such, Appiah’s channel isn’t just travel vlogs or cultural commentary – it’s a lived invitation. An invitation for diasporic healing, for honest dialogue, and for mutual respect.

“I’ve seen that the more I allow myself to be in the cultural space of Ghana – not just visiting but living in it – the more I’m accepted. That’s what I try to show in my videos.”

Her long-term vision includes creating a physical space in Ghana where members of the African diaspora can feel welcomed, guided, and grounded.

“There’s a missing piece,” she said. “People come to Ghana looking for home, but they don’t always know where to start. I want to be that bridge – to help people navigate, acclimate, and really experience what Ghana has to offer.”

As someone deeply immersed in both African American and Ghanaian life, Appiah offers a rare perspective. She’s not a tourist. She’s family.

The work is personal – and powerful. From emotional visits to slave dungeons in Cape Coast to hearing “Welcome home” each time she lands at Kotoka International Airport, Appiah understands that cultural reconnection is both spiritual and ancestral.

“I might not be Ghanaian by birth,” she said, “but when I’m there, I feel like I belong.”

Find Appiah online at youtube.com/@MicheleMazelle

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU

By Rosalie Boole
WHITWORTH UNIVERSITY

Every year, the conversation around Black history seems to follow the same pattern. It’s always “let’s talk about Black history,” usually relating to Black hardships and adversities, but never “let’s talk about Black excellence and Black glory.” Usually our options are either trauma or slavery. It’s not that we don’t value the story in Roots, but how can you teach us about the African family tree and fail to mention its fruits? We use the word enslaved and not slave because we did not start as slaves. We were kings and Queens.

- What if I told you the African family tree was royalty,**
Kings and queens, scholars and visionaries, built on loyalty.
- What if I told you Black history didn’t start with chains,**
But with pyramids so precise, even time bows to their names?
› “The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” (Deuteronomy 28:13)
- What if I told you we didn’t just survive,**
We thrived, we built, we led – our genius still alive?
› “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20)
- What if I told you innovation flows through our veins,**
From the traffic light to the supercomputer mainframes?
› “Do you see a person skilled in their work? They will stand before kings; they will not stand before obscure men.” (Proverbs 22:29)
- What if I told you we turned pain into poetry,**
Blues into jazz, hip-hop into prophecy?
- What if I told you Black women are the blueprint,**
The backbone, the brilliance, the movement’s imprint?
› “God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.” (Psalm 46:5)
- What if I told you we don’t just break barriers –**
We build bridges, rewrite narratives, and shatter limits?
› “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)
- What if I told you resilience is our birthright,**
And no history book could dim our light?
› “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)
- What if I told you our story isn’t just about what we endured,**
But about what we created, uplifted and secured?
› “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)
- What if I told you we are more than conquerors,**
That no struggle could ever take what’s ours?
› “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37)
- What if I told you you wouldn’t have open-heart surgery,**
If Dr. Daniel Hale Williams hadn’t paved the way medically?
- What if I told you our hands built more than chains,**
We laid the railroads, the White House, and rewrote the game?
- What if I told you the microphone you use,**
Was fine-tuned by a Black man so your voice could cruise?
- What if I told you home security got its start,**
Because a Black woman refused to live in the dark? (Marie Van Brittan Brown – home security system)
- What if I told you the first clock in America to chime,**
was built by Benjamin Banneker, ahead of his time?
- What if I told you the world moves because of us?**
From the spotlight to the elevator doors, we made life adjust. (Garrett Morgan & Alexander Miles)
- What if I told you our skin is kissed by the sun,**
A glow so rich, even gold looks undone?
› “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:14)
- What if I told you our melanin isn’t just skin deep,**
It holds history, strength and promises we keep?
- What if I told you my melanin is too dark to throw me shade?**
- What if I told you our hair defies gravity,**
Coils and curls reaching up like a galaxy?
- What if I told you our locs, braids, and twists aren’t just trends,**
They’re stories of survival passed down through our hands?
- What if I told you our crowns were never meant to be tamed,**
Afros standing tall, unshaken, unchained?
- What if I told you Black don’t crack,**
Because our beauty moves forward and never looks back?
- What if I told you our features aren’t just admired,**
They’ve been copied, stolen, and still left unmatched, inspired?
- What if I told you our lips, full and bold,**
Speak truth, drop wisdom, and let our stories be told?
- What if I told you the world tried to dim our light,**
But we shine too bright, too fierce, too right?
› “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14)
- What if I told you our beauty is not up for debate,**
It’s art, it’s power, it’s something no one can recreate?

LIVE AND IN COLOR

Psychic Fever concert offers underrepresented groups a special Seattle concert amid tour

By Brianna Fields
THE BLACK LENS

On Wednesday, Feb. 12, I saw Psychic Fever during their first U.S. tour. I mentioned Psychic Fever in the previous month’s article, Black Artists to Look Forward To in 2025. The seven-member Japanese boy group went on a six-city tour across America including Washington D.C., New York, Chicago, Dallas, Seattle and Los Angeles. I got the chance to attend Psychic Fever’s Seattle show at the Neptune Theatre. There was no opening band, just Psychic Fever, the crowd and great music!

In February’s issue, I only introduced Jimmy, but since this is about their concert, it only seems right to introduce the rest of Psychic Fever. In order from oldest to youngest, the members are: Tsurugi, Ryoga, Ren, Jimmy, Kokoro, Ryushin and Weesa. The concert itself lasted about two hours, including the encore. They played a majority of their discography with some of the songs including “Just Like Dat,” “What’s Happenin’,” “Paradise,” “BEE-PO,” “BAKU BAKU,” “Talk To Me Nice” and many more. The show allowed each member to have their moment to shine in front of the crowd, whether they wanted to show off their vocal, dancing or DJ skills.

Since Psychic Fever is an overseas group, I was worried that there weren’t going to be a lot of people in the crowd, let alone people who have heard of and know the songs. However, when I walked into the venue, I was shocked to see that the floor was practically full and that they knew the words to every song. Not only was the audience having the time of our lives, but the



BRIANNA FIELDS/THE BLACK LENS

Psychic Fever performs in February at Neptune Theatre in Seattle

boys were having a good time because of the crowd’s energy.

What stood out to me about this specific concert and why it was so different from the others, is what happened at the end of the show. As soon as the two encore songs ended and they turned on the house lights, out came one of the members of the entertainment company telling us to not leave because we were about to have a game time with Psychic Fever themselves! There were at least two different types of games; a version of Guess the Song and a blindfolded Guess the Member. Participants for the game were randomly selected by the entertainment staff. And for each game played, there was a new group of three people.

Having representation in a foreign pop group has been shown to mean a lot to underrepresented groups, especially in a niche field like Eastern Asian pop music. Just take a look at the entertainment company that brought Psychic Fever to the United States, Konnect’d

Entertainment. Konnect’d was started by friends and K-pop fans, Thandi and Chelcy. The company’s purpose was started with the idea that all voices are to be heard in the K-Pop community. Their mission is to “increase safe spaces, produce content for multicultural communities, and foster a better connection between artists and fans with a focus on diversity and inclusion” (via Konnect’d’s website).

Psychic Fever is one of many groups the business has brought to the states. Other talent includes Seo In Guk, KARD and an upcoming tour with Jay B from Got7, the concert that began Konnect’d. Psychic Fever signed with Warner Music Group in February of this year, so we anticipate seeing more of them in the future! You can listen to Psychic Fever’s music on Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube.

To learn more about Konnect’d Entertainment, visit konnectdent.com.

BLACK FUTURISM

In the vast expanse of the universe, where stars twinkle and galaxies dance, there exists a movement unlike any other – Afrofuturism. A vision of the future that is rooted in the cultural traditions and experiences of people of African descent, Afrofuturism is a celebration of Black excellence, resilience, and creativity.

Imagine a world where technology and ancient wisdom coexist harmoniously, where the past, present, and future are intertwined in a beautiful tapestry of culture and innovation. This is the world of Afrofuturism, a world where the possibilities are endless and the imagination knows no bounds.

In this world, Black heroes soar through the cosmos, wielding the power of the stars and the wisdom of the ancestors. They journey to distant planets, encountering alien civilizations and facing unimaginable challenges. But

through it all, they remain true to themselves and their roots, drawing strength from the rich tapestry of African culture that surrounds them.

The landscapes of Afrofuturism are as diverse as the people who inhabit them. From the gleaming township of Wakanda to the ancient pyramids of Kemet, each world is a testament to the beauty and resilience of Black culture. Technology melds seamlessly with tradition, creating a vibrant and dynamic society that is both familiar and wondrous.

But Afrofuturism is more than just a vision of the future – it is a call to action, a challenge to imagine a world where Black voices are heard, Black stories are celebrated, and Black lives matter. It is a reminder that the future is not set in stone, but is shaped by the choices we make today.

So let us dream together, my



By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



brothers and sisters, of a world where injustice and inequality are echoes of the past, where all people are free to be their true selves, and where the beauty of Black culture shines brightly for all to see. Let us embrace the power of Afrofuturism and walk together to create a future that is truly worthy of our ancestors’ dreams.

YOUTH CONNECTION

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN WITH YOU

Navigating interpersonal relationships carefully

In life, we often make hasty decisions based on situations that don't directly involve us. Relationships are frequently damaged because we rush to pick sides between people who both expect our support – even in conflicts where we could have chosen neutrality. Many of us have experienced those tough moments where we feel pressured to take a side, and, being human, we often do – leading to strained relationships with family or friends.

Take a simple example: two siblings arguing at home. You decide to support one over the other, when you could have just stayed out of it altogether. Over time, that choice may build quiet blocks of resentment. These moments remind us how easy it is to get caught in a situation that wasn't ours to begin with.

As human beings, we tend to think in binaries – yes or no, positive or negative, good or bad. But there is always a "neither." Sometimes, choosing not to choose is the right



By Mufaro Whacha
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL



choice.

Selfishness shouldn't be a way of life, but in situations where you're expected to take sides in conflicts that don't involve you, it's okay to choose yourself. It's important to prioritize your peace, your reputation, and your emotional well-being. You can maintain healthy relationships with others without sacrificing your own self-worth.

Carrying others' emotional burdens can be exhausting. It's OK not to

fix everyone's problems. It's OK to let go of toxic relationships if doing so protects your mental health. Supporting someone occasionally doesn't mean you've signed up to carry their world.

What frustrates me is when people begin to expect that kind of constant caretaking. That's not my job. Just because I supported someone once or twice doesn't mean they're entitled to my ongoing help. I can't live a balanced life with everyone expecting me to choose them every time. That's simply not possible – so I step back and let God take control.

If your mindset is always trying to be seen as the dependable one, people will take advantage. When they get into trouble, they'll expect you to step in – and if you can't help, suddenly you become the problem. That's why boundaries matter. In any relationship, people need to know where they stand, and you must learn not to pick sides every time.

SETTING CLEAR BOUNDARIES

"As much as we feel like people wronged us, we wronged ourselves first"
–Anesu Whacha

Let us just be honest for a second – we all know how we want to be treated before even getting into any sort of relationship. Now, the question is: why don't we make it clear from the very start? I guess we all have different answers to that, but I truly believe the main reason we don't set boundaries upfront is because of fear. The fear of being judged. The fear of being treated differently.

Which is completely insane – because the more we compromise our boundaries, the more we suffer ... not the other person.

Growing up, my mother always told me: *If you don't speak up about something you're not comfortable with, no one will ever know – and you'll stay uncomfortable until you find your voice.*

It's funny how much we get disrespected, belittled, or even abused while "banking" our voices. We

need to stop shutting up. We need to stop letting it go. We need to stop giving people chance after chance to change – while compromising our own sanity and peace of mind.

With that being said: **If you want that respect – THOU SHALT SPEAK.**

I know that for some of us, it's hard to say no. It's hard to clearly set boundaries with people. But hear this: Boundaries are like promises of protection you make to yourself – and we all know that promises shouldn't be broken.

It's okay to be selfish sometimes. Because in this case, being selfless will only cause you harm while benefiting the next person. In the long run, you only have you. So treat yourself with dignity and pride. You are not some toy that people can play with. You are not some object people can choose to ignore. And most importantly – **you have a voice. So speak up.**

A wise person once said, "As much as we feel like people wronged us, we wronged ourselves first."



By Anesu Whacha
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL



And here's why: we set boundaries – a clear sign that we have personal limits – but then we turn around and prioritize other people's comfort over our own. That opens the door to disrespect. That's when people start walking all over you.

You're not responsible for how people act – but how they treat you is up to you. You have full control over your life. So don't act otherwise. You have a voice – **raise your volume.**

You deserve respect like everyone else.

People will tell you the same thing I just did.

The rest? That's up to you.

Don't let anyone walk over you. **Don't be that guy.**

The alchemy of Black resistance

From eugenics to empowerment

There is an alchemy to Black survival that defies all logic – an ability to transform oppression into oxygen, sorrow into symphony, and concrete into fertile ground. This is not poetic exaggeration but historical fact, written in the hardened hands of sharecrop farmer, the fire of freedom fighters, and the unbroken spirit of generations who refused to vanish. Black resistance has never been a single act but a continuous practice – a rhythm passed down through spirituals, protest chants, and the quiet determination to exist unapologetically.

History's fingerprints remain on our present – from the pseudoscience of racial eugenics to the weaponization of IQ tests, the past isn't dead; it's not even past. As the Equal Justice Initiative documents, the racial eugenics movement wasn't just history – it was policy, sterilizing Black and Brown women under the guise of "science" well into the 20th century. Today, we see its legacy in everything from biased algorithms to healthcare disparities. Yet against this backdrop, Black resistance persists – not as reaction, but as creation.

The TED Talk by Stefan Dombrowski exposes IQ tests as tools of exclusion, designed to "prove" white superiority while locking marginalized groups out of education and opportunity. The Guardian's investigation into race and intelligence reveals how these discredited theories keep resurfacing, repackaged as "human biodiversity" or "race realism." Like the forced sterilizations PBS reports on, these ideas weren't just wrong – they were weapons.

Yet in response, we created our own systems of knowledge. The same communities targeted by eugenics birthed freedom schools. The children labeled "slow" by racist IQ tests produced jazz, hip-hop and algorithms that now power the world. As the EJI notes, oppression keeps changing uniforms – but so does resistance.

The False Racist Theory of Eugenics (PBS) claimed Black bodies were only fit for labor. So we made our joy revolutionary: Cookouts where the potato salad



By Ian Aloyce
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY



recipe is a mathematical masterpiece; HBCU homecomings that double as economic engines; TikTok dances that algorithmically outmaneuver shadow bans. This isn't escapism – it's evidence. Every Black born circle disproves eugenics. Every viral #BlackBoyJoy clip refutes the stereotypes IQ tests were designed to "prove."

All this reveals a truth: oppression always claims scientific justification. But our existence is the experiment that disproves their hypothesis. When the EJI documents forced sterilizations, we answer with birthworkers. When IQ tests label us, we respond with innovation. They wanted their pseudoscience to be the last word. But we're still here – calculating, creating, compiling our own data set of survival. The numbers don't lie: resistance isn't just possible; it's already multiplying.

So, to my people, to those turning pain into power, trauma into triumph, protest into policy; they told you that you wouldn't make it. But here you are – not just surviving, but building. Not just marching but creating. Not just dreaming, but manifesting. Your existence defies their logic. Every time you pass down a story, protect a Black child's wonder, or reclaim what was stolen, you are writing scriptures for a faith they can't destroy.

They keep trying to bury us. They forget we are seeds. And seeds don't just grow – they multiply. The revolution won't be televised because it's already here – in our kitchens, our group chats, our laughter, our tears. We are the harvest of a hundred midnights.

QUESTION OF MERIT

How status quo has shaped education

By Z'Hanie Weaver
LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL

Merit. It's a word that evokes images of earned success, intellectual prowess and individual grit. In theory, it should be an equalizer – a fair measurement of ability, potential and talent. But in practice, especially in American education, the concept of merit has long been engineered to uphold a status quo rooted in racism, classism, and exclusion. At the center of this design is the legacy of standardized testing – a tool often praised as objective but born from ideology far from neutral. To understand how "merit" was socially and politically constructed, we

have to look back to the early 20th century.

Carl Brigham was a psychologist and a eugenicist – not just by association. He was a proponent of theories that sought to rank racial and ethnic groups by intelligence. After World War I, Brigham analyzed data from the Army Alpha test, the first mass-administered IQ test given to over 1.7 million soldiers. His interpretation concluded white Americans of Nordic descent were intellectually superior to immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe and Black Americans. His 1923 book, "A Study of American Intelligence," stated the U.S. was "diluting" its gene pool and that immigration and

racial mixing would lead to national decline. It wasn't long before he adapted these ideas into the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), hoping to standardize college admissions and reduce what he saw as the problem of subjective judgment. But instead of leveling the playing field, the SAT became a powerful gatekeeping mechanism – one shaped not to lift the best minds, but to elevate the "right" ones. Brigham would later retract some views, admitting his work had flawed assumptions and that social and environmental factors played a larger role than he thought. By then, the system was built.

The rise of standardized testing coincided with the expansion of elite higher education institutions like Harvard, Princeton, and Yale – schools that historically admitted students based on family connec-

tions and social standing. With the SAT, universities found a justification for exclusion: supposed intellectual superiority. In the mid-20th century, this led to the emergence of what some call the "cognitive elite" – a term popularized by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein in "The Bell Curve" (1994). The book argued intelligence, which they claimed was inherited, determined socioeconomic outcomes.

The book's claims have been widely criticized for their racial bias. Still, the idea of a cognitive elite persists – those who excel at standardized tests, attend prestigious universities and move into positions of power and influence. What is rarely questioned are the flaws in the methodology by which those elites are selected – and, more importantly, who was left out.

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SCAN ME

FINDING VOICE AND PURPOSE

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

When Lynette Holmes introduces herself, she does so with clarity and a touch of humor: “I’m Lynette Holmes – like Sherlock.” Beneath that wit lies a deep sense of purpose and a career anchored in science, compassion, and purpose.

As a clinical pediatric speech-language pathologist at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston, Holmes has spent more than three decades helping children reclaim their voices – literally and figuratively. Her journey is one of persistence, faith and legacy, grounded in the belief that healing is about more than medicine.

Holmes didn’t set out to become a speech-language pathologist. Her path was circuitous, rooted in an early dream of becoming a pediatrician.

“I always loved the medical setting,” she said.

That exposure began early, through her late mother – a dedicated rehabilitation nurse.

“I’ve always loved working with kids,” she shared. “And I’ve always loved the medical setting.”

After earning a degree in biology with minors in mass communication and chemistry from Catham University, Holmes discovered speech-language pathology through various lab and clinical experiences. The University of Oklahoma offered her financial aid and a different route to medicine – one



Clinical pediatric speech-language pathologist Lynette Holmes interacts with a patient.

that combined her passion for children, communication, and science. It was there that she began to understand how language, brain development, and medical complexity intertwine. She completed her master’s degree and clinical fellowship, launching a career that has spanned more than 30 years at one of the nation’s leading rehabilitation hospitals.

Her work extends far beyond speech. Holmes supports children with cognitive challenges, voice disorders, language delays, and – critically – swallowing difficulties, a lesser-known but essential part of speech pathology.

“It’s not just about communication,” she said. “It’s about helping kids eat safely, manage oral secretions and regain functions we often take for granted.”

She added, “Most peo-

ple think of speech therapists in the school setting. But I work in an inpatient acute rehab hospital. We’re treating medically complex cases – children who’ve had strokes, car accidents, brain tumors or swallowing disorders.”

Holmes recalls how she initially disliked her graduate class on swallowing, yet she would eventually specialize in it – particularly in pediatric cases.

“You never know where life is going to take you or where your gifts are going to shine,” she said.

In the world of inpatient rehab, where traumatic brain injuries are a common reality, Holmes often witnesses what she calls “tiny miracles” – children emerging from unresponsive states, slowly regaining their ability to speak, eat and engage with the world around them.

One of the most meaningful parts of her work? Telling her patients, “Come back and visit me.”

As a Black woman in a predominantly white field, Holmes knows that presence alone can be powerful – but her expertise also speaks volumes.

“When people say, ‘I don’t see race,’ I tell them, ‘Then you don’t see all of me.’ My Blackness isn’t something I hide – it enriches everything I bring to my work.”

Lived experience, she believes, is key to building communities rooted in empathy. She recalls an early and awkward interaction with a family: “I was the first Black professional a young patient had ever seen. That moment mattered – for him and his family.”

She continued, “Representation isn’t just about

A conversation with Lynette Holmes on healing, representation, legacy

being in the room. It’s about how we treat people at every level—from patients to janitors.”

Over the years, Holmes has inspired not only patients, but also students, parents, and hospital staff – some of whom have pursued careers in speech-language pathology after witnessing her work.

She remembers how, early in her career, she often had to explain who she was. Before staff badges and branded clothing, people didn’t always recognize her as the clinician. Her epiphany in those moments was to let her work speak for itself—choosing to educate through action and focusing on the knowledge she could offer.

“I’m a Black woman who knows her stuff,” she said – and she stands confidently in that fact.

A long time member of Charles Street A.M.E. Church in Roxbury – one of Boston’s oldest Black congregations – Holmes sees her work as both profession and ministry.

“I used to think ministry had to happen inside the church walls,” she said. “But every child, every family teaches me something.”

Holmes has also taught at Massachusetts General Hospital’s Institute of Health Professions and guest lectures at Boston University and Northeastern. Since 2015, she has presented regularly at the International Pediatric Brain Injury Society (IP-BIS) Conference, sharing research on school reentry

after head trauma, disorders of consciousness in children, and innovative treatment activities like her therapeutic “Escape Room” concept.

At the most recent IP-BIS Conference in Scotland, Holmes experienced a full-circle moment. A young Black woman – now a PhD candidate and presenter – approached her with excitement. She had been one of Holmes’ former graduate students.

“That reminded me just how much representation matters,” Holmes said. “We’re not just fighting for seats at the table – we’re building new ones for the people coming behind us.”

The conversation turned personal as Holmes reflected on how rarely Black families discuss health history – and how that silence can be harmful.

“It’s about changing patterns,” she said. “When we talk about it, we take away the fear. Genes talk. We just have to listen.”

She believes cultural connection is key to resilience. “We carry more than our history – we carry each other.”

Wellness in the Black community, Holmes emphasized, is holistic – it is cultural, encompassing the physical, emotional, spiritual and ancestral, interwoven across generations.

Lynette Holmes reminds us that helping others reclaim their voice begins with embracing your own purpose – and using it as a catalyst for others to discover theirs.

Reclaiming birth, rebuilding trust

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

Dalia Philbeck has spent more than two decades walking with women through one of life’s most powerful journeys – childbirth. For the past 12 years, she has worked as a midwife, a path forged by a love of medicine and a vision for reclaiming birthing experiences rooted in dignity, trust and wholeness.

A graduate of Gettysburg College with a bachelor’s degree in community health, Philbeck earned her bachelor of science in nursing at Johns Hopkins University. She began her nursing career in labor and delivery before joining the Navy in 2003, continuing her focus on maternal care. After her active-duty service, she pursued her master’s degree in nursing, now holding credentials as an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ANRP) and also became a certified nurse midwife (CNM) through Frontier Nursing University in Kentucky.

She laughs when asked how many babies she’s delivered: “I probably stopped counting after my first year, but on average, I deliver 10 to 12 babies a month.”

Philbeck’s clarity came early.

“As a little girl, I was the one playing with the plastic medical kit and the toy stethoscope,” she said. “It was during an internship that I met a nurse midwife working with Spanish-speaking migrant farmworkers in Pennsylvania. She was an older woman who spoke fluent Spanish, and she gave everything to her patients. I remember thinking, ‘I want to be her.’ That sealed it for me.”

When asked why she chose midwifery over traditional obstetric medicine, Philbeck is clear: “Midwifery means ‘with woman.’ It centers the person giving birth.”

She doesn’t believe that midwifery and modern medicine have to be at odds. Done intentionally, she sees value in cooperative strategizing to prepare for the unexpected during childbirth.

As a CNM, Philbeck is licensed not only to attend births but also to provide full-spectrum women’s health care – from annual exams and birth control to



Philbeck

managing gynecological issues. She prescribes medications, conducts wellness checks, and collaborates with OB-GYNs. In her role, she acts as a bridge between the intimacy of midwifery and the safety net of medical intervention.

“Historically, birth happened in the home,” she said. “It was communal, it was family centered. Then medicine came along and said, ‘We’re taking this into the hospital.’ But something was lost in that shift.”

Philbeck views pregnancy and childbirth as a process of reclamation that centered in autonomy. She has also witnessed how fear can pass down generationally.

“Sometimes a mother is in the room while her daughter gives birth, and she starts sharing her own horror stories,” she said.

Daughters, she reflected, often carry this into their own experiences. That fear transfers. “We have to interrupt that cycle.”

Seeing each patient as an individual is central to building trust.

“Your story is not your mother’s story,” Philbeck said. “It’s not your sister’s. It’s yours.”

Philbeck emphasized the importance of preparing for birth while honoring its natural beauty while also being prepared for the unpredictable, if things go off track, she wants to be a voice of clarity and reason for the patient.

“I always say, ‘here’s what’s happening, here are your choices, and here’s what might happen with each one,’” she said. That restores power to the patient, even in a crisis.

Philbeck practices in a collaborative model in Jacksonville, Florida, where six midwives and six physicians work side by side.

“Every laboring person is primarily cared for by a midwife, with physicians available in the background for emergencies,” she explained. “It’s the best of both worlds – intimate, holistic care with immediate access to medical intervention if needed.”

She encourages families to take ownership of their

A conversation with certified nurse midwife Dalia Philbeck

health care journey.

“They bring what they’ve read, and I bring my medical knowledge,” Philbeck said. “Together, we make informed choices.”

One example is delayed cord clamping, now a standard practice that began with patient advocacy.

“It wasn’t always part of the routine, but patients kept asking,” she shared. “Eventually research confirmed its benefits – like increased iron and red blood cell levels for newborns.”

She also educates families on cord blood banking and placental donation, noting the potential of stem cell preservation. She is a bridge of information and leaves it to the patient to decide. For Philbeck, access and agency are central to patient advocacy.

“You have every right to understand what’s happening to you and why,” she said.

She believes rebuilding trust in the medical system requires acknowledging bias on both sides and creating new ways for providers and patients to relate.

“You deserve care that sees you, hears you, and believes you,” she said. “Never accept less.”

Philbeck also reminds patients that care providers are people, too, and wants to enhance individualized experiences.

“People have learned to mistrust the medical system,” she said. “So, I ask them to meet me as a person. Not just a provider. When you see me, don’t see me as part of the medical system. I’m Dalia. I’m a nurse, a midwife. I’m a person, I’m a mother. I’m not the system, and I’m here to help you.”

Framing birth as a communal and meaningful family event is also part of the experience Philbeck seeks to restore. Joining the conversation, Stephanie Courtney, founder of the Shades of Motherhood Network, echoes the importance of redefining the narrative.

“If we don’t talk about the full spectrum of birth—the pain, the joy, the power—we can’t change the system,” she said.

Both Courtney and Philbeck underscore that pregnancy and birth are not just physical milestones – they are deeply emotional and mentally transformational.


“From the moment a woman finds out she’s pregnant, she starts forming dreams about who this child is going to become and just what her experience in pregnancy and birth is going to be like; for the majority of

women, it’s a positive thing, but for some women it’s terrifying,” Philbeck said.

She relates that birth is not just a medical event – it is a sacred passage.

“A woman never forgets the day she gives birth –

ever. Whether it was joyful or traumatic, she carries that memory. And she brings it into every future birth. So, my job is to help create an experience she can carry with strength, not sorrow.”




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SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK

Black Maternal Health Week didn't disappoint

DEEP ROOTS, STRONG WOMEN

By Stephaine Courtney

SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK

Spokane's Shades of Motherhood Network proudly hosted Theresa Fortune as the keynote speaker for this year's Black Maternal Health Conference, held April 12 at WSU's Downtown Campus during Black Maternal Health Week. Her powerful advocacy, personal journey, and deep commitment to advancing maternal health equity made her the perfect voice to lead this vital conversation.

In a deeply moving keynote, Theresa shared her personal battle with postpartum depression (PPD) following the birth of her child, reminding us that maternal health is not just about physical well-being – it encompasses emotional and mental health too.

What is Postpartum Depression (PPD)?

Postpartum depression is a serious mental health condition that can affect birthing people after childbirth, causing intense feelings of sadness, anxiety, exhaustion and detachment from their baby or life itself. Without support, it can severely impact a mother's ability to heal and bond with her child. Theresa's openness helped destigmatize this important issue, offering hope to mothers who may still be suffering in silence.

Adding another powerful layer to her story, Theresa is the creator of the film *From the Ashes*, which chronicles her journey through pain, healing, and resilience. Through her storytelling, she sheds light on the realities of postpartum depression and the strength it takes to rise from life's most challenging moments. Her film stands as a testament to the importance of recognizing and treating maternal mental health struggles, particularly within Black communities.

Why Black Maternal Health Week Matters – Especially in Spokane

This year's conference aligned with Black Maternal Health Week, a national campaign dedicated to raising awareness about the alarming disparities Black birthing people face. In the United States, Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women – a crisis that demands urgent action.

Although Spokane is often seen as a smaller, quieter city, Black birthing families here face the same systemic barriers seen across the nation: limited access to culturally competent care, the dismissal of health concerns, and a lack of community resources. Black Maternal Health Week in Spokane serves as a powerful reminder that change must happen locally – not just nationally. It gives voice to mothers and families who deserve to be heard, supported and celebrated.

We are deeply grateful to Theresa Fortune for her courage, storytelling and leadership. Her message inspired attendees to take action, support one another and reimagine a health care system where every Black mother receives the care and dignity she deserves.

A special thank you to our partners and sponsors – the Health Equity Club, the Washington State Department of Health, and Providence Health – for their unwavering commitment to advancing Black maternal health initiatives. Together, we are building a stronger, healthier future for Spokane's families.



PHOTOS BY ALEX LOCKETT/BREWCITY FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY

Fathers speak as part of a panel during Black Maternal Health Week in Spokane.



Doulas speak on a panel during Black Maternal Health Week in Spokane.



Zadora Williams talks about wellness practices.



Theresa Fortune talks about postpartum depression.

How Black families evolved in U.S. through the century

By Leola Rouse

THE BLACK LENS

Black families have stood at the gateway of unimaginable forces – the societal pressures, systemic racism and public attitudes designed to strip them of their dignity and wreak havoc from within. But through it all, they have endured – forging a legacy of resilience that embodies not only their struggle but the very heart of America.

This essay takes you deep into the evolution of Black families in the last century – a sensory history filled with sound, sight and spirit. We'll learn how these families coped with enslavement, economic exploitation and disenfranchisement while creating communities centered on love, culture and resistance.

The Historical Context

To grasp the contemporary Black family experience, we need to rewind and return to its roots – to the horrific institution of enslavement. Enslaved Africans were uprooted from their homelands, robbed of their identities and thrust into a foreign world that tried to treat them like less than human. Families were torn asunder on auction blocks, with children sold away from parents, husbands sold away from wives. But even in such destruction, connections were forged. Slave quarters were sanctuaries, places where love was nurtured, customs handed down and survival techniques taught. These founding Black families set the stage for a legacy of resilience.

Reconstruction revived hopes. After emancipation, it brought little relief. Economic exploitation continued to be rampant, and Jim Crow laws enforced segregation, ensuring that Black families stayed on the margins. During this period, scientific inquiry emerges, often in the hands of white scholars who reproduce stigmatizing narratives. They described Black families as “broken” or “weak,” denying the systemic barriers that hampered their progress. Black scholars rose up in the meantime, using research to show the strengths and adaptability of Black families. Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were

also incubators, where daring studies were undertaken, contesting the dominant narrative, providing alternative explanations.

Another turning point was the Great Migration. From 1916 to 1970, millions of African Americans moved from the rural South to urban centers in the North and West, looking for better opportunities and fleeing racial violence. This mass movement changed the social fabric of Black families, and it came with challenges and new opportunities. Cities provided access to education and jobs but also subjected families to overcrowding, poverty and discrimination. In face of such obstacles, Black families adapted to forge tight-knit communities that emphasized mutual support and cultural preservation.

The Power of Music and Art to Empower

If you've ever paid close attention to the haunting melodies embedded in the spirituals sung by enslaved ancestors, you understand there's more than music in those notes – it's a language of liberation, a call for freedom. To Black families, music has always meant something deeper than just entertainment; it's been a lifeline. Spirituals expressed despair and hope during slavery, encoded escape plans along the Underground Railroad. As time marched on, jazz, blues, R&B and hip-hop all came along, each carrying the torch for storytelling and protest.

Take the blues, for example. Hailing from the Mississippi Delta it expressed the plight of sharecroppers and laborers, turning pain into beauty. Or think about hip-hop, which ascended in the second half of the 20th century, providing disenfranchised youths with a voice to speak truth to power. Hits like Kendrick Lamar's “Alright” or Beyoncé's “Formation” are more than music – they're slogans for justice, a deep well of defiance in line with what we heard in slave spirituals generations ago.

Art has also played a crucial role in crafting Black identity. Artists like Aaron Douglas and writers like Langston Hughes celebrated Black culture in the 1920s Harlem Renaissance in

ways that unmasked it from racist caricature. Today artists such as Kehinde Wiley and Kara Walker carry on that legacy, using their art to subvert oppressive standards and elevate the voices of Black people. As a combined creative force, music and art empower, inspire Black families with a reminder of who they are and what they came from while encouraging that for the next generation.

Stereotypes

For decades, countless damaging stereotypes have defined the families of Black people in academia and media. Historically, white scholars told a narrative of Black families that centered on dysfunction, emphasizing the prevalence of either single parent households or absent fathers without paying much heed to the historical patterns of structural inequality. Such narratives moved away from examinations of redlining, underfunded schools and mass incarceration – realities that disproportionately impacted Black communities.

But there still exists within these families great wealth – not financial, but emotional, cultural and communally. Bonds formed in relation to shared struggle are the ones that also form networks of support that sustain whole communities. There's the practice of “kinship care,” when family members take over raising children when parents can't. Such a practice is a commitment to collective well-being that stands in stark contrast to the individualist ideals often celebrated in mainstream society.

Healing starts when we see the humanity behind these numbers. We must avoid weak band-blue programs that do not address the deepening of the wound inflicted on Black families to repair. Restoration involves healing wounds within – of intergenerational trauma, self-doubt and fear – which lead the forming of self-awareness, compassion and resilience. When people get better, their families get better, and then the community at large gets better.

Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter

The path of Black families in America has been inseparable

About the author

Leola Rouse, a.k.a. Antwinette Scott, holds a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's degree in Human Services with a focus on Marriage and Family. Anticipating a Doctorate in Traumatology centered on children by 2027, Leola has dedicated her career to understanding the intricate dynamics of family life. As a certified Parenting Coach, Child Resilience Coach, and Play Therapy Coach, she is equipped with a diverse toolkit to support families in various ways.

Leola is also an award-winning author of children's books, including “The Land of Hearts,” which has received several accolades, including the Literary Titan Little Peeps Award, the Book Excellence Award, an Honorable Mention in the London Book Festival 2024, the PenCraft Award, and the Christian Book Award. With a heartfelt desire to help families discover their “why,” she aims to empower parents to understand their unique parenting styles and identify areas for growth and improvement.

The Black Lens is proud to welcome Leola as our newest columnist. Beginning next month, she will debut her column, “Roots and Wings: Parenting With Purpose,” which will explore themes of empowerment, resilience, and intentional parenting within the Black family.

Courtesy

from the movements that sought to uplift them. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s is one of history's great examples of the power of collective action. Iconic figures Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and countless nameless heroes fought suffocatingly hard to break down segregation and achieve voting rights. Their work led to landmark laws including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that opened up doors of opportunity previously closed to Black families.

Move forward to the 21st century and we have the emergence of movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM). Fueled by the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin, and gaining steam over the deaths of Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, BLM was a new wave of activism focused on fighting police brutality and systemic racism. BLM's focus on intersectionality is what makes it so different; the forward movement recognizes that Black families experience layers upon layers of oppression – as victims of their race, gender, sexuality, and class.

These eruptions serve to remind us of an important fact: progress is not linear. Though there has been considerable progress, the battle still rages on

for equality. Generation upon generation receives the uncompleted work left to them by their predecessors, and pass it on, hands grasped on that torch to be carried elsewhere.

Final Thoughts

For the future, there is one thing that is clear, we must allow the voices of Black families to drive the conversation.” Too often, research and policy-making have been done to, rather than with, those most impacted, based on external interpretations that fall short. Collaborative approaches are critical and should involve Black communities as equal participants in the process. By focusing on their experiences and priorities, we can develop solutions that genuinely meet their needs.

Furthermore, our knowledge of Black families should reflect their diversity. Not all Black families are alike, and not all face the same challenges. Some are headed by single mothers, others by two-parent families; some live in cities, others in the country. Socioeconomic conditions vary widely, and so do cultural backgrounds. Acknowledging this complexity also allows us to celebrate the unique strengths present in each family structure while tackling the systemic risks they face.

WELLNESS

IN REMEMBRANCE: 1887-1979

BLACK GENEALOGY
HONORING SGT. MALBERT
MONTGOMERY COOPER



By Patricia Bayonne-Johnson
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Sgt. Malbert Montgomery Cooper serves as a poignant reminder of our duty to honor those who have served. I sought to uncover his story as part of my Eastern Washington Genealogical Society's "cold case"



SPOKESMAN-REVIEW PHOTO ARCHIVES

Sgt. Malbert Montgomery Cooper lived Feb. 2, 1887, to April 29, 1979. After returning from military service, he made Spokane his home, where he was later laid to rest.

genealogy project. Cold Case Genealogy involves researching individuals unrelated to you and utilizing local records.

Born on Feb. 15, 1885, in Baltimore, Maryland, Malbert Montgomery Cooper was the only child of Charles Henry Cooper and Margaret Harvey Cooper. After graduation, he ventured into the world, taking on various jobs that showcased his versatility – working as a bellhop in Atlantic City, a factory laborer in Chicago, an elevator operator, a funeral home attendant, and even an ambulance driver. Additionally,

he had an adventurous stint as a roustabout with the famous Ringling Brothers Circus, which reflected his lively spirit and adaptability.

In 1910, Cooper made a significant decision to enlist in the United States Army. He was assigned to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri, before arriving at Fort George Wright in Spokane, Washington, in August of that same year. As a member of H Company in the 25th Infantry, he quietly rose to 1st Sergeant. His service included a trip to Honolulu and an 18-month deployment in the Philippines, where he honed his leadership skills.

After returning from military service, Cooper made Spokane his home and became integral to the local community. He formed strong friendships with Black and White families, often participating in social dances and community events. Despite facing challenges as an African American, he generally felt welcomed.

Malbert was married twice: Delia Lavendar in 1915 and Esther Walker Graves around 1925. Esther had a son named Clarence Edward Graves from her previous marriage. Malbert did not have any children of his own. He dated Selma Clark, who was the informant on his death certificate.

Initially, I focused on a woman, but the lack of available records, especially because her name changed after marriage, prompted me to search for other subjects. Then, I discovered Cooper's name in Joseph Franklin's "All Through the Night" book. His distinctive first name captured my attention and motivated me to explore his background further.

On May 11, 2009, I visited Spokane Memorial Gardens on South Cheney-Spokane Road with my husband to locate and photograph Cooper's grave to put with my article. We were directed to the Masonic Lawn at the cemetery office, specifically Space 2, Lot 52C. After searching for over an hour without success, we returned to the office for assistance. There, the staff delivered unsettling yet hopeful news: Sgt. Cooper had been buried without a headstone because Public Assistance only covered burial expenses. Fortunately, they informed us that he qualified for a

government-issued headstone as a veteran, but I needed his discharge papers to proceed.

I contacted Chuck Elmore, the administrator of Spokane County Veterans Services, for assistance navigating the process. We undertook a lengthy journey that spanned six years, during which I met with Chuck twice to present documents and photographs relating to Sgt. Cooper's life. Throughout this period, Chuck maintained contact by sending regular updates via email—some with good news and others detailing setbacks. When asked to locate the next of kin, I struggled to find viable leads.

Ultimately, the VA denied the initial request for a government-issued headstone, citing that I was not recognized as the next of kin. The Department of Veterans Affairs referenced CFR 38.632, which states that applicants for government-furnished headstones must be the veteran's direct descendants, authorized representatives, or personal representatives.

Chuck escalated the situation by contacting Sen. Patty Murray's office; however, these efforts produced limited success. The VA said he would need a court order to obtain the headstone.

In January 2015, the case took a positive turn when Chuck enlisted the help of Nadel Barrett, a Navy veteran and attorney. With her expertise, she secured a headstone for Sgt. Cooper without needing a court order. Updated regulations made this change possible, allowing a cemetery administrator to apply for a government-issued headstone without being the next of kin. This finally enabled Cooper to receive the honor and recognition he deserved.

When Chuck received the headstone, he informed Kip Hill, a reporter for The Spokesman-Review. Hill met Chuck Elmore and Nadel Barrett at the cemetery for a photo and an interview published in The Spokesman-Review on Sunday, May 24, 2015. I was credited with bringing Sgt. Cooper to Elmore's attention. I did more than that; I researched Cooper's genealogy.

I received a call from Chuck, who informed me that Sgt. Cooper's headstone had been installed. My husband and I immediately went to the cemetery to see and photograph the headstone.

A full military burial ceremony occurred on May 27, 2015. I had never attended an Army burial ceremony before, and it was very moving – honor Guards, flag folding, the firing party, and Taps. What a day! Every Memorial Day weekend, we visit the cemetery to place flowers and a flag on Sgt. Cooper's grave.



COURTESY

The burial site of Sgt. Malbert Montgomery Cooper.

We're a 'big small town' filled with Black entrepreneurs

FROM THE WATER'S EDGE

Let me confess, I am not one of those sociologists who loves statistics or find percentages particularly helpful. I am far more interested in the conversations they have the potential to tell. Numbers alone are not narrative – words are necessary in order to give them meaning. They provide a starting point for much bigger conversations. For example, what do the numbers say about our day to day lived experiences in the Spokane/Spokane Valley area? Let's look at some numbers and some local/regional positive recognition you might have missed.

Spokane and the area have a "big small town" feel. For a city of over 200,000 and a county population of over half-a-million, all covering over 1,700 square miles, it's surprisingly easy to get to know a lot of people and their interconnectedness. Our Black population here has always been a small fraction of the overall population yet it's challenging to get to a significant percent of us. Although there appears to be more of us here now than when my family and I moved here from Pullman in 1989, we remain scattered and scarce.

According to the U.S. Census we have historically been a small percentage of the whole in the city and county. For example, in 1890 the city of Spokane boasted a population of 19,367. There were only 1,601 Black folks or 0.9% of the population. While the white population in the city climbed exponentially between 1890 and 1940 our numbers declined to an all-time low of 0.5%. What happened?

According to the 2020 census Spokane city reports a population of well over 200,000 and the Black population at approximately 5,100 or 2.58%. The Spokane Valley reports a population of nearly 103,000 and a Black population of approximately 1,500 or 1.39%. No matter how you cut it, if you are a Black/African American person living in Spokane or the surrounding area you feel and experience this place being overwhelmingly white. However, in spite of our low numbers there is some surprising news!

In January, Vinny Saglimbeni, a KREM 2 reporter, cited a new study by Baldwin Digital on Spokane/Spokane Valley and the number of Black-owned businesses in the area. The numbers in their study indicate that we are doing better than the vast majority of cities in the entire Nation in that category!

According to them, Spokane/Spokane



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



Valley ranks third in the United States in Black-owned businesses for every 1,000 Black/African American persons in it. They report 12.46% Black-owned businesses for every 1,000 of us here. According to their findings there are 234 black-owned business

license holders in our two cities.

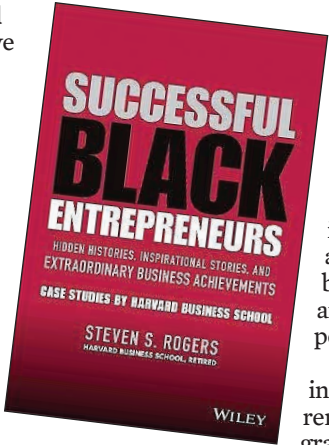
Their study lists Bellingham, Washington, No. 2 nation. You might never guess who is number one – Corvallis, Oregon! Corvallis leads the country with 42.68% Black-owned businesses for every 1,000

Black people. There are 1,743 Black residents in Corvallis and 74 Black-owned businesses in the area. Baldwin Digital took this data from the 2021 U.S. Census on businesses (my guess is, that number includes anyone who holds a business license) owned by Black/African Americans and compared it to the Black population in each area.

After 40 years of living in the "upper left" which remains the whitest geographical region in the United States I am proud of our recent ranking and recognition. At the same time, I am deeply curious to know more about who our local Black entrepreneurs are. I would like for someone to add voice to those reported numbers by highlighting their individual stories and to make finding them easier rather than hard.

It sounds like we need to do a better job getting the word out about our Black entrepreneurs and not just for the good of the Black community but for the good of the entire region! Spokane/Spokane Valley are likely to continue to have the feel of a "big small town" and our Black numbers are likely to stay a small percent of it. However, a surprising number of us are all about business! Congratulations! This is my view from the water's edge.

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



KAZUKO WELLNESS

GRIEF IN BLOOM

When sadness and joy co-exist



By Jasmine Linane-Booe
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Breathe in.
Breathe out.
Begin.

Spring – no matter how long the lead up, no matter how many signs of change show themselves, Spring sometimes feels like deep sleep in a dark room when suddenly the curtains rip open and the lights flick on. Jarring. This time is an invitation, sometimes a pushy one, to show more of ourselves to the world.

We've been resting in darkness, hidden under layers, cocooned in the slow pace of short days and frozen nights. Then, as if suddenly, the sun comes out to say, "show me your knees and shoulders". Nature bursts with life and color and it is a process. When I look at leaves unfurling on trees and tulips pressing up from the Earth, I think of the stretch marks on the backs of my legs at age 11 when my bones grew so fast my skin couldn't keep up. The dull ache of age in my muscles. As if the stretch, the sensation, the tension, the pain was simultaneously preparing me for what will be and softening the child-like innocence of my body to release what was.

The sensations of transition, of change, of movement are complex. In this time of the year we hold both joy, hope, possibility, a surge in energy – and all at once, the darkness from winter lingers on the skin. The space between what was and what is – is grief. The ache of love of energy, of plans, of hope with nowhere to land. In the midst of all this blooming life, we are reminded of what no longer is. Grief arrives in waves, sometimes soft, sometimes crashing.

It often feels like we can only hold one thing at a time: grief or joy, life or death. But as whole humans, whole souls, we are everything, all of it, all at once.

I am the playful little girl growing faster than I understand. I am the stretch marks pushing me into maturity. I am the carelessness, the liberated joy, and the sudden, deep, sometimes critical self-awareness and doubt. I am joy and I am despair.

We are all of it all at

once. Grief doesn't ask to be healed before we bloom. It just wants to fortify the journey.

You are the blooming and the breaking. The warm sun on your skin and the cold rigidity in your bones. You are laughter at the dinner table, even with an empty seat. You are the tears that come without warning. Grief doesn't cancel joy. It just reminds us how much we've loved, lived, existed.

This season doesn't ask you to be fully healed. It asks you to open – even if it aches. Even if part of you still longs for winter's quiet. Do it with a hug, do it with community. Spring!

Witness the breathable discomfort, the sensation in the blooming. Let the joy be messy and full and whole. Let the grief walk with you into the light.

Jasmine Linane-Booe of Kazuko Wellness is a Somatic Energy Guide. Contact hello@kazukowellness.com for more.

Wellness Invitation

Breath Practice

- Close the eyes and take three full breaths.
- Let the breath become circular – no breath holds at the top or bottom, simply let the breath flow in a continuous circular motion.
- Witness how your inhales gently become your exhales and your exhales become your inhales.
- Stay here for several breaths – as long as feels good.

Reflection Question

- What is blooming for me right now?
 - ◆ Where do you feel joy in your life? In your body?
 - What may be breaking down, becoming compost?
 - ◆ Where do you feel grief in your life? In your body?
- Reminder:** Grief comes when anything that was, no longer is. This can be a loss of a loved one, employment, relationship ending or shifting, moving, etc.
- Who is one person I can connect with?
 - ◆ Make a plan – connect. The grief and joy are all meant to be shared.

IN MEMORIAM

REST IN POWER
in Memoriam



MIA LOVE
(MARCH 23, 2025)

As the daughter of two Haitian immigrants, Mia Love marked the history books in 2015 when she became the first Black Republican woman to be elected into the House of Representatives. Love also served as the first Black mayor of Saratoga Springs, Utah from 2010-14.



KENNETH SIMS
(MARCH 21, 2025)

Kenneth Sims began his legacy with the University of Texas Longhorns earning both All-American honors and team MVP twice. As a overall No. 1 draft pick in 1982, Sims played with the Patriots for eight seasons where he appeared in the 1985 Super Bowl. Sims received College Football Hall of Fame honors in 2021.



GEORGE FOREMAN
(MARCH 21, 2025)

After winning a gold medal in the 1968 Olympic games, George Forman became a pro boxer and a staple name in household grills. Foreman earned the world heavyweight champion title when he beat Joe Frazier in 1973 and again as the oldest champion in heavyweight history after defeating Michael Moorer at the age of 45.



DERRICK GAFFNEY
(MARCH 17, 2025)

University of Florida star wide receiver, Derrick Gaffney set the long-standing record for the Southeastern Conference and the Gators when he caught a 99-yard pass in 1977 also tying the NCAA record. Gaffney spent six seasons with the Jets after being drafted in 1978. His legacy continued when his s son, Jabar, attended UF and was drafted in 2002.



JOE HARRIS
(APRIL 15, 2025)

Sgt. Joe Harris served in the U.S. Army's first all-Black parachute infantry battalion where he helped protect the U.S. from Japanese balloon bombs. With his group nicknamed the Triple Nickles, Harris had over 70 combat jumps and was believed to be the oldest WWII paratrooper before he passed at 108.



ALICE TAN RIDLEY
(MARCH 25, 2025)

Shortly after moving to New York City in to continue her career as a teacher, Alice Tan Ridley started to sing in the subway. Ridley became a 30-year mainstay in the city because of her compelling sound that carried her to an 'America's Got Talent' audition. Making it all the way to the semi-finals, Ridley went on to become an acclaimed artist.



RAY SEALS
(APRIL 4, 2025)

Ray Seals took the unconventional route on his journey to the NFL skipping college play and going straight to the semi-pro Syracuse Express in hopes of helping his family financially. Seals' hard work paid off earning his first NFL contract with the Buccaneers. Seals played in the NFL for eight years appearing in Super Bowl XXX with the Steelers.



GEORGE FREEMAN
(APRIL 1, 2025)

Chicago native George Freeman was a jazz guitarist who spent his entire lifetime performing. Making a name for himself as a teen by playing in the local clubs, with legend Charlie Parker and later touring with Gene Ammons, Freeman was a dedicated artist and composer with a sound that brought light into every room he played in.

JUNE 2, 2012 - APRIL 13, 2025

In Loving Memory of
Sarah June Niyimbona

From the family of Sarah

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of our beloved Sarah June Niyimbona, who left this world far too soon on April 13, 2025, at the tender age of 12. Born on June 2, 2012, Sarah brought light and color into the lives of everyone who knew her. She was a gifted artist whose drawings spoke the words her heart sometimes couldn't express. Her creativity also shone through in the intricate braids she lovingly styled, and the volleyball games she gave her all to.



Sarah found solace in music – it was her therapy, her comfort and her safe place. Through the darkest times, she turned to melodies and lyrics to help her navigate life's challenges.

Despite her long and difficult battle with depression and anxiety, Sarah fought with remarkable strength, resilience and grace. She made meaningful progress, and she tried – so very hard – to stay.

Her sudden passing leaves a void that cannot be filled. She is survived by her loving mother, Nasra Gertrude, and her cherished siblings: Asha Joseph, Hashim Victor, Mugisha Constance, Isaiah Teah, Isaac Cameron and Emanuella Prince. Each of them carry a piece of Sarah in their hearts – a memory, a laugh, a hug or a song they shared together.

Sarah was more than her struggle. She was love, light, talent and potential.



COURTESY

Sarah June Niyimbona died on April 13.

Her story is a reminder that behind every smile, there may be battles unseen – and that kindness and connection can mean everything.

We will miss her more than words can say. May she find the peace she searched for, and may we honor her memory by loving a little harder, listening a little closer, and holding on to each other a little tighter.

Rest peacefully, sweet Sarah. You were never alone. You were always loved.

SARAH'S LIGHT

Black Lens Community Contributor

The melody in her heart
Appears in her smile
Struggles within were
A rhapsody carried
So fragile
She was light with brightness in her eyes
Light that she found in between the sighs

We will not forget the times that gave us
memories to share
These are the moments
That will breathe fresh air
Sarah's memory we will handle with care
She will not be forgotten
In the words of our prayers.



Black Lens editor April Eberhardt poses with longtime NAACP leader Dr. Hazel N. Dukes at the 115th NAACP National Convention in Las Vegas, which took place in July 2024. Dukes died on March 1.

APRIL EBERHARDT/
THE BLACK LENS

Nation mourns passing of
NAACP leader, trailblazing
icon Dr. Hazel N. Dukes

By Black Lens news and wire reports

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes passed away on March 1. The death of the New York state Conference president and organizational leader, was mourned nationally. Dr. Dukes was also a member of the NAACP National Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and an active member of various Board of Directors sub-committees. She also served as President of the Hazel N. Dukes & Associates Consultant Firm and held several leadership positions within her New York community.

NAACP Chairman of the Board, Leon W. Russell, NAACP Vice Chair of the Board, Karen Boykin Towns, and NAACP President & CEO, Derrick Johnson, released the following joint statement on March 1: "No words can convey the devastation that this loss brings upon us as individuals, and the NAACP as an organization. Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, known to many as 'Ma' was a living embodiment of the NAACP. She led with conviction, always put her community first, and stood up to those who tried to bring us down. From leading our National organization to carrying our New York State Conference, serving as a passionate voice on our National Board of Directors, and mentoring our youth, there is no corner of the movement that has been untouched by Dr. Dukes' legacy.

"While she may have passed on, hers is a legacy that will outlive us all. The NAACP is proud to have served as

a home, and our members and fellow leaders an extended family for a force of nature, and source of light as bright as Dr. Dukes. Our hearts are with the Dukes family as we hold her memory close to our hearts while carrying the torch she lit."

Dr. Dukes received the Association's highest honor, the Spingarn Medal, at the 114th National Convention in Boston, Massachusetts. The medal was presented by Hillary Rodham Clinton, who commended Dr. Dukes for her many decades of service to the people of New York and her dedication to bettering the lives of Black Americans across the country.

A daughter of the South turned Harlem legacy, Hazel was born in Montgomery, Alabama, where her father taught her to question racial segregation, and her community showed her the power of organizing, according to the NAACP. After her family's migration to New York in the 1940s, Dr. Dukes got involved in the movement for racial equity across healthcare, education and housing, the NAACP stated, and was ultimately selected by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the Head Start program.

Dr. Dukes began her leadership at the NAACP in the 1990s, and has been a leading voice in the organization for nearly 40 years, the NAACP said, but her list of accomplishments runs long. Most recently, she made history by becoming the first civilian person in the United States to administer the oath of office to a governor – Kathy Hochul.

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.

4AM Vintage – Vintage clothing store owned by Christian Jones. (832) 652-4580 or 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.

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

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

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

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

Allowing Change, LLC. – Pre-Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Certified Life & Relationship Coach Brittney Richards (she/her). (509) 795-0376 or 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. P.O. Box 1629, Veradale, Wash., 99037.

BrewCity Flash Photography – Photography services. (509) 862-9057 or email 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. 480 8 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.

Bethely Entertainment Group – Owned by Michael Bethely. (509) 710-1338 or 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. 2926 E. 29th Ave., Spokane, 99223. Online at 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 – Barber-shop. 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. 4407 N. Division St., Suite 200, Spokane, 99207. Online at brendan.spokanearearealestate.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. 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. 1011 W. Railroad Alley, Suite 100, Spokane, 99201. Online at bbpvideo.com.

Cascadia Public House – Restaurant owned by Jordan Smith. (509) 321-7051 or 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. 414½ W. Sprague Ave., Spokane, 99201.

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

Compassionate Catering LLC – Catering services. (509) 934-1106 or compassioncatering2023@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. 9116 E. Sprague Ave., Suite 66, Spokane Valley, 99206.

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

Discovery Counseling Group LLC – Mental/Behavioral Health Counseling by Melissa Mace. (509) 413-1193 or 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. 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. 2010 N. Ruby St., Spokane, 99207.

Exclusive Barber Shop – Barber shop owned by Keno Branch. (509) 862-4723 or 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.

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

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

I Hear You Sis LLC – Nutrition/health coaching by Prosparetti Coleman. (509) 995-7044 or ihearyousis@gmail.com. Online at 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. 59 E. Queen Ave., Spokane, 99207. Online at www.intertribalbeauty.com, Instagram: [instagram.com/inter_tribal_beauty/](https://www.instagram.com/inter_tribal_beauty/).

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

Koala Koi Massage – Massage therapy by Joy Robinson. (509) 900-8968 or 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. 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. 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 Villella, day care director. (509) 535-4794 or lwca.gmail@hotmail.com. 2227 E. Hartson Ave., Spokane, 99202. Online at www.southeastdaycare.org.

Legacy Barbershop – Barbershop owned by Dougie Fades. (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 or 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. Online at 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. 1835 W. Broadway Ave., Spokane, 99201.

Mo-Nu Hair City – Wig retailer Jackie Douglas. (509) 443-3193 or 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. 1803

W. Pacific Ave., Spokane, 99201.

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

Natasha L. Hill, P.S. – Lawyer Natasha Hill. (509) 350-2817, (509) 357-1757 or [natasha@nlhlhawoffices.com](mailto:nhlhawoffices.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. 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. 3026 E. Fifth Ave. Spokane, 99202.

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

Operation Healthy Family – Dental and youth programs by Tommy Williams. (509) 720-4645 or 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. 5122 N. Division St. Spokane, 99207.

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

Providential Solutions – Counseling and coaching by Charina Carothers, LICSW. (509) 795-0150 or 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. 5759 E. Broadway Ave., Spokane, 99212.

Queen of Sheba – Restaurant owned by Almaz Ainuu. (509) 328-3958 or 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 2gn2tyt-hoon@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. 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.

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

Spacehub Production – Photography Studio owned by event photographer Eugene Muzinga. (509) 216-1072 or 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. 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), wrightbeautysupply@outlook.com or visit 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 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.

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 – Interim Rev. Amos Atkinson. 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. 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 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.

The Spokane Area Ministers Wives and Ministers Widows Fellowship – Meets at 10:30 a.m. every first Saturday of the month (except June, July, August) at the Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Court. Questions? Contact President Faith Washington at spokanemwmw@gmail.com.

NAACP MEETINGS

To join, visit naacpspokane.com/contact.

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

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

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

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

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

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR

MAY 13: AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES – A conversation about leadership strengths. Panel of female leaders includes: Karlee Agee, Vice President of Operations, Bouten Construction; Mandy Baird, Certified Gallup CliftonStrengths Consultant; Kirsten Bohlen, Sales Operations Manager, Marsh McLennan Agency; Julie O'Berg, Fire Chief, Spokane Fire Department; Priya Osborne, Director of Student Success, Spokane Community College and Youth Advisor for NAACP Spokane. 4:30-6:30 p.m. May 13. Steam Plant Rooftop, 159 S. Lincoln St., Spokane. \$25 registration at [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com).

MAY 15: THE RESTED REBEL EXPERIENCE – A restorative event for Spokane's advocates, activists, community leaders and changemakers hosted by Spokane NAACP and led by Kibi Andersona an executive coach, strategist and Emmy Award-winning storyteller. Reclaim your breath, reflect on what's weighing you down, reconnect with a community of changemakers. 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 15. Spokane Community College, 1810 N. Greene St., Spokane.

MAY 18: BLACK HAIR EXPO – This Curly Godmother event is a celebration of self-love and pride in Black hair.

There will be a hair fashion show – featuring a display of hairstyles by local professionals; breakout sessions – where attendees can gain insights on caring for curls, locs, braids and fades; and booths – where visitors can discover more about businesses and hair care professionals in Spokane. Event is hosted by Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated. 1-4 p.m. Sunday, May 18. Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave., Spokane.

MAY 28: BLACK LITURGIES FOR STAYING HUMAN PRESENTS “A COMMUNITY PRACTICE: ARTISTRY” – This community gathering invites nonviolent, intersectional and interfaith meditation and reflection practice. The theme for this month will be Artistry. 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. It also features some short passages and reflections from the book itself. Professor Rossing from Gonzaga University will be facilitating this gathering. 5:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 28. South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry St., Spokane.

Black Lens pickup and distribution: Get on our list!

For newspaper pickup and distribution, please contact 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.

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

THE BLACK LENS

In remembrance

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

LEISURE AND COMICS / FROM THE FRONT PAGE

CURTIS • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY



CRABGRASS • BY TAUHID BONDIA



PETS: A KID'S COMIC • BY MJ BETHELY



WRIGHT
Continued from 5

know that's what entrepreneurship looked like."

Today, Wright owns Wright Way Beauty, a Black-owned beauty supply store in Spokane. But the journey to becoming a successful business owner in an industry hostile to Black ownership has not been easy.

The Black beauty supply industry generates billions of dollars each year – much of it from Black consumers. And yet, Black ownership remains startlingly rare. The supply chains are controlled, in large part, by non-Black entities. When Wright first attempted to open accounts with hair vendors, she was met with silence, roadblocks, and refusal.

Many Black beauty supply entrepreneurs find themselves shut out before they even begin. Calls go unanswered. Basic requests – like opening an account – are met with suspicion or excessive demands, such as providing personal identification without explanation. The obstacles often go beyond poor customer service – they reveal a legacy of exclusion embedded in the industry.

Some vendors delay or deny access entirely, creating barriers that stall progress and isolate new business owners. It's often through word-of-mouth and informal networks that the unspoken rules of the industry are revealed. One experienced store

owner in Texas once explained to a newcomer that help rarely comes until a physical storefront is secured – and even then, resistance continues. The message is clear: Access is limited, support is conditional and the playing field is far from level.

The inference is hard to ignore – this is racially based business bullying. Black entrepreneurs are not just navigating a competitive market, they are contending with an industry structure that profits from consumer power while actively obstructing their ownership and growth.

In the Black hair care industry, a widely recognized tactic known as the "choke-out method" has long been used to push Black-owned beauty supply stores out of the market. This strategy involves flooding communities with lower-priced competitors, making it nearly impossible for independent stores to compete. As a result, Black entrepreneurs have been forced to find creative ways to survive and adapt.

Out of this challenging environment, a survival culture of collaboration has emerged. Black business owners have begun banding together – pooling resources, placing bulk orders and sharing supplier information to stay afloat. Despite these efforts, major barriers remain. Some vendors deny Black store owners access to catalogs, while others provide inconsistent pricing. In the face of these

inequities, they've built a network of mutual support and knowledge-sharing to navigate a system not designed for their success.

The result? Systemic exclusion thrives – benefiting from the steady spending power of Black consumers while continuing to deny them meaningful ownership opportunities.

Despite the lows, Wright's store has thrived – one relationship, one lesson and one shipment at a time. She credits her resilience to faith, family, and the mentorship of people who genuinely care. Her HR department? A trusted stylist friend who now screens all new hires. Her customer base? Loyal and growing.

"I'm not where I want to be yet, but I've come a long way," she says. "The only reason I have the accounts I do is by the grace of God. This wasn't strategy – it was favor."

Wright's advice for aspiring Black entrepreneurs?

"Don't pay anyone for information you can learn for free. If you pay someone to help, make sure they're teaching you how to do it yourself. Start where you are, and don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle. And above all, protect your business like it's your baby – because it is."

In a market that was never designed to serve or support her, Shania Wright is creating her own playbook – determined to be a light for others navigating from within.

ANYLA
Continued from 5

to survive. In many cases, non-Black businesses profit heavily from the Black beauty industry while shutting Black entrepreneurs out of ownership opportunities and supply chains.

According to Tequila Fletcher, owner of Tresa Holic Beauty Supply, a cosmetologist who honed her craft in several Tampa salons before taking the leap to open her own, many non-Black distributors and retailers of other ethnicities refuse to do direct business with Black entrepreneurs, often citing vague or false reasons such as "incomplete applications" or "out-of-stock products." These tactics are part of a larger pattern of gatekeeping, where Black beauty supply owners are routinely denied accounts, withheld catalogs and excluded from competitive pricing. This makes it difficult for them to secure inventory and turn a profit. In some instances, Black customers have even reported being harassed, falsely accused, physically assaulted, or locked out of non-Black-owned stores.

This has fostered an uneven playing field, where Black-owned beauty supply stores operate at a significant disadvantage – facing higher wholesale costs, limited inventory access, and fewer distribution partnerships. Meanwhile, non-Black-owned businesses continue to monopolize the Black cultural beauty market, controlling the flow of products while reaping the

profits generated by Black consumers.

Ethnographic Segmentation: Race as a Market Divider

The phenomenon unfolding in the beauty supply industry is a textbook example of ethnographic segmentation – a market practice where race, ethnicity and cultural identity are used to divide consumers and producers into separate economic categories. In this framework, Black consumers are targeted for their spending power, yet Black entrepreneurs are blocked from ownership, distribution and upstream control.

Ethnographic segmentation goes beyond simple demographic marketing. It reflects systemic exclusion by creating racialized boundaries around who gets to participate in various parts of the economy. In the case of the beauty industry, this means Black women are the primary consumers in a \$6 billion wig and hair extension market, yet are systematically denied access to the supply chains that drive it. This segmentation ensures wealth generated from Black cultural aesthetics flows outward – often to communities with no direct investment in or cultural connection to the products they sell.

Just as racially restrictive covenants once kept Black families out of certain neighborhoods, ethnographic segmentation in commerce restricts Black participation to the consumer role. It is a business model rooted in exploitation: Rely on Black spending, deny Black equity.

A Call to Rebuild

To break this cycle, we must reduce dependency on non-Black suppliers and redirect investments into our own communities. This includes building manufacturing and supply relationships with African nations and Caribbean partners, expanding the reach and control of Black-owned distribution networks. The responsibility also lies with us to be intentional with our spending. Supporting Black-owned beauty supply stores challenges the monopolies built on our economic power.

The reality is the popularity of Black hair and beauty products would not exist at their current scale without the ongoing support of Black women. If we want to shift the tide, we must go beyond critique and take decisive steps to reclaim our market share. Strategic cooperation, mutual purchasing and shared resource networks among Black entrepreneurs can turn exclusion into empowerment.

In short, non-Black-owned beauty stores have long benefited from the Black beauty market while restricting access to ownership and high-quality products for Black entrepreneurs and customers. This racial segmentation continues to disadvantage Black owners. Addressing this inequity will require strategy and collective commitment to investing in Black-owned beauty businesses – and exposing the practice of disfranchisement that still prevails.

The Black Lens staff contributed to this report.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE / LEISURE / CULTURE

POETRY CORNER

Diversity Disco

By AJ the Wordsmith
The Black Lens

Power over mindset

We defeat through transformation

Defying identity by way of automatization

Preserving current information

While refining old codes built on flawed interpretations

Varying stories of survival and humanity

Under the hued skins that cloak our dignity

Perceiving a snare imposed for deceiving

When we let others do all the reading and writing.

This is a Rubik’s Cube of cultured stories and identity

Parallel truths woven through nuances of media driven narratives

Wedges erected

Harmony defected

Neglected imperatives

Yet WE refine what is positive within US

Preparing for a world that is not ready for the beauty and wholeness of us

Propaganda is not us

False narratives we cannot trust

Starving, lazy, violent, uncivilized—

The disrespect enough is enough

Time to ask ourselves

“what’s next?!”

Manifestation of An invitation for diasporic healing

An honest dialogue revealing

Our hued skins of dignity

The Cry for the strength of our unity

So we can mentally catalog and store new information more effectively let’s have discussions with disparities, conversations with compromises and bold boundaries that humbles humanity.



HOMETOWN

Continued from 1

“I didn’t necessarily know what or how, but entertainment was always the goal,” she said.

Her eyes had always been set on Los Angeles. But it wasn’t until she landed at the Mecca of HBCUs that she began to understand just how wide the world could be.

Graduating from Lewis and Clark High School in 2002, Roseman found that Howard exposed her to a powerful spectrum of Black identity – students from across the diaspora, from Jamaica to Ghana to Haiti – each bringing with them a strong pride in their heritage.

“There was this strong sense of cultural connection,” she said. “It made me want to explore more, to travel and learn.”

Howard also challenged her sense of identity and accomplishment.

“In Spokane, I stood out,” she said. “At Howard, I entered a large pool of people all doing great things.”

She remembers how being surrounded by her peers reminded her just how capable and driven she really was.

After earning her degree in television and film production at Howard, Roseman went on to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Producing at UCLA. It was a step not just toward another degree but toward a new life in Los Angeles – the heart of the entertainment industry. There, she found her niche in post-production, specifically on the finishing side of the business,

where trailers and final edits come together before public release.

“I’m the last stop before a project hits theaters or goes online,” she explained.

For nearly eight years, Roseman worked with major studios, helping guide projects through color correction, sound design, and final delivery. Her portfolio includes work on Marvel properties like She-Hulk, Ant-Man and the Wasp, and Thunderbolts, as well as trailers for Into the Spider-Verse, The American Society of Magical Negroes, and Back to Black, the upcoming Amy Winehouse biopic.

When asked where she draws inspiration in the industry, Maya points to screenwriter and director Gina Prince-Bythewood.

“I don’t think she could ever make a bad movie,” she said.

“People often don’t realize how many jobs there are in entertainment beyond acting or directing,” she said. “There’s a whole world – from IT to accounting to labor.” She emphasizes that it’s important for young people to know those opportunities exist.

Grad school, she added, opened her eyes to the business side of the film industry.

“Film schools don’t always teach you how to sell what you make,” she said. “They don’t talk about staying power, the corporate side, or jobs outside directing and acting.”

As a Black woman navigating a predominantly white and male industry, Roseman has learned to balance authenticity with adaptability.

“In the words of Nike, I just do it,” she said. “The space will be the space, and I choose to be in it.”

While she acknowledges that code-switching is often necessary, she doesn’t let it define her. “I am who I am. Get on my page or get off.”

Now, she’s stepping into a new chapter – working with a company that integrates AI tools into creative storytelling.

“The industry is changing,” she explained. “I want to be part of where it’s headed – not just where it’s been.”

“AI won’t destroy creativity,” she added. “There will always be a human element. But it’s changing the game, and it’s creating new opportunities.”

To young creatives, Roseman offers this advice: “Your future is not defined by your circumstances. Be open to learning. Have a good heart. Build a sense of self so strong that it can survive any space.” She continued, “You can’t just stay in your circle. You’ve got to expand. Sometimes that means showing up alone, finding your people, and building new circles. That’s what I did.”

Despite having lived nearly 20 years in Los Angeles, Roseman still carries Spokane with her.

“I have a love and appreciation for Spokane. It’s part of my makeup. The people I grew up with – my elders, my peers – they were amazing,” she said.

She sees herself as part of a larger continuum – one where the elders once created safe spaces for Black youth, and now, it’s her generation’s turn to pick up the torch.

LIST OF BLACK MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Mental Health Practitioners
Discovery Counseling Group

Melissa Mace
(509) 413-1193
Bobby Richmond
(ages 10-19)
(509) 910-2618
Providential Solutions
Charina Carothers
(509) 795-0150
ALC Counseling Services
Brittney Daniels
(509) 779-6879
620 N Argonne Road, Suite 5
Spokane Valley, WA 99212
Online at: psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/brittney-daniels-spokane-valley-wa/1014911

New Developed Nations
newdevelopednations.com
3026 E. 5th Ave., Spokane, WA 99202
info@newdevelopednations.org
A prevention program serving underprivileged youth ages 13-25 in Spokane, WA. Provides the community with ex-



Scan this QR code for an African American Therapist Directory for Spokane (subject to ongoing updates and changes)

ceptional service by training chemically dependent and at-risk youth to be positive, functional and empowered citizens through music, sports, nutrition and education, providing them with a voice that may have been once unheard. Program provides groups and individual sessions that include coaching in the production of music (beat making) and lyric writing.

Websites

- therapyfundfoundation.org/resources
- dmhsus.org/find-a-bipoc-therapist-or-healer
- multiculturalcounselors.org



Mental Health Awareness

FIND WORDS RELATED TO DEPRESSION IN THE GRID, CIRCLE THEM AS YOU EXPLORE IN ALL DIRECTIONS. RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS.

X L T F K E D O O N L Q O F X Y A P A T H Y U P Q
A K O L J M A Q T H S M X Y C P I C Q X D M D A T
P U D R R O C I N W R J U L N Q X J H E T T C X E
I H N U E T E S L Y O M E C L B E M R C J O S G A
Q W F P S I E O K P Z X X I H J B D W Y W W I O R
J E A Z I O N L W Y O W F I N S O M N I A F Q A F
L Z T X L N A A S W W T A C J I T A P D L D D S U
D T I D I A G T A O C H L D C H O P E L E S S O L
P K G C E L S I D U Y U O G A G V D E S P A I R J
I B U R N L F O N R B E N C E U C P F P A M Q R D
S T E M C K V N E T P J E S N I A G K S T M A O S
W S U E E C Z F S M G O H X P L P E C Q X B L W X
N A H E L P L E S S N E S S C T O L H M T V K F W
A A R Y J D B H D I H J S K V O K X X A Z E S H X
R H J H C T D V S U Z D V N Z I A S W Y Y F Y L F

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|--------------|---------|
| APATHY | ISOLATION | FATIGUE | ALONE |
| TEARFUL | RESILIENCE | HOPELESS | GUILT |
| INSOMNIA | SADNESS | HELPLESSNESS | DESPAIR |
| SORROW | EMOTIONAL | | |

ROLL THE DICE

TAKE TURNS. ON YOUR TURN, ROLL THE DICE AND ANSWER BASED ON THE NUMBER ROLLED



What brings you joy?



What's something that worries you?



Describe a place where you feel safe and calm.



Is there something that makes you sad?



Talk about a hobby you enjoy and why it's special



Is there something that makes you angry?

CIRCLE UP

Continued from 12

actions are co-creating something important – a new shared reality we’ve dialogically built together. You can hear it in the way voices are often soft and hushed – essentially reverent. You can see it in the way our bodies are aligned, turning into the center, toward each other. You can sense it the silence of our communal “bated breath.” The thing about a circle is that no

two are ever alike. The experience is dynamic, unpredictable, and you have very little choice but to go along for the wild and beautiful ride. Or as Tyra from Collective Justice explains, “Really, you don’t know where the circle is going to go. Because a circle is shaped by everyone’s influence, by everyone’s sharing.”

Circles also create opportunities for authenticity. Because when you give up rehearsing, your true self is free to contribute. In choosing

to be genuine, you do give up a certain measure of control – primarily, the ability to whittle those self-censoring narratives – but you gain, as well. By putting your trust in the circle – the process, each other, and your self – you accept that “what is meant to be shared will be” (wise words from my co-partner in this work, Julie Schaffer). And in doing so you gain the gift of something holy – pure, unfiltered truth emerging from an authentic collective.