

THE BLACK LENS

JUNE 2025 - VOL. 10 - ISSUE NO. 6

GROWTH AND REGENERATION

BREAKING CYCLES, BUILDING BROTHERHOOD



Ervin Jones, founder of Locked In Fathers Alliance, spends a few moments with the littles.

COURTESY

The healing work of Locked in Fathers Alliance

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

In a world that often teaches Black men to armor up, isolate and carry their burdens alone, Locked In Fathers Alliance offers something radically different – community, connection and healing. Founded by Ervin Yashar Jones, the Spokane-based initiative is more than a support group. It’s a movement to break generational cycles, restore emotional wellness, and rebuild the strength of the Black family – one father at a time.

“I started Locked In because I needed it myself,” Jones shares. “This work helps me stay grounded, but it also lets other men know they’re not alone in what they’re carrying.” A certified peer support specialist, Jones launched the group after noticing



Jones

IF YOU GO

Fathers Day BBQ,
A Celebration of Fathers

ABOUT: This Father’s Day, Locked In Fathers Alliance invites the community to come together for a celebration of fatherhood, family, and fellowship at our Father’s Day BBQ.

WHEN: 2-5 p.m. June 15

WHERE: Blessings & Beyond, 12928 E. Mansfield Ave. #1, Spokane Valley, WA 99216

RSVP: Online at www.lockedinfathers.com/event-list

INFO: This event is open to fathers, families, and supporters of all ages. Come out, grab a plate, connect with others, and help us make this a Father’s Day to remember. Hosted by Locked In Fathers Alliance, in partnership with the Juneteenth Coalition. Venue and Catering by Blessings and Beyond. With support from fiscal sponsor, the Shades of Motherhood Network.

the glaring absence of spaces where Black fathers could be open, honest, and vulnerable—without judgment. Rooted in his

own story of healing and accountability, Locked In provides a safe haven where

See **FATHERS, 10**

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The world we (will) make



By Inga Laurent
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



From a fairly early age, I knew that I would be a lawyer. Whether that was my own decision, or a response to the influence of others’ opinions, or some combination of both, is uncertain. People frequently said, “you’d make a good lawyer.” So as early as six, when prompted, I remember consistently responding “I’m going to be a lawyer.” But in truth, it stands to reason that I never chose the law so much as it chose me.

Singularly focused, I slid relatively smoothly from mock trial in high school to pre-law in college to law review in law school and finally home into the legal profession with very few obstacles. And it wasn’t until post-graduation that I would stop to question my chosen profession.

My first job after school was as a civil legal services attorney for victims/survivors of domestic violence in rural Ohio. It was awful. The job – though an important one to be sure – did have some satisfying moments of fulfillment. But by and large, those times were crowded out by the dysfunction present at the nexus of poverty and its resultant powerlessness. Witnessing generational and cyclical devastation was a pain that my heart was not equipped to handle and eventually couldn’t abide. It was abysmal: structural barriers, cultural and socio-economic biases, and well-intentioned folks – like myself, judges, opposing

See **LAURENT, 13**



AFRICAN AMERICAN GRADUATION

Spokane-area community members were singing praises of African American students who graduated this spring as part of an event at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center. **PAGE 8**

Wellness without permission

LaVitta Williams talks on movement as medicine and Black Women Hike

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

“Racial trauma is not just emotional. It dysregulates your nervous system. It mimics PTSD,” explains LaVitta Williams.

In the heart of the Pacific Northwest – where towering evergreens, winding rivers, and snow-kissed peaks offer both beauty and solitude – Williams is cultivating something rare: a space where Black women can reconnect with nature, community, and themselves. As a be-



Williams

havioral health counselor and social work graduate student, and founder of Black Women Hike Spokane, Williams is reshaping what healing looks like.

But this isn’t just a hiking group. It’s a radical reimagining of mental wellness – one that pushes back against the individualism and Eurocentrism that dominate Western models of

therapy. “Wellness, for us, is not a solo journey,” Williams says. “We heal in community.”

Decolonizing Wellness

Williams’ work is rooted in the understanding that Westernized therapy was never built with Black bodies, minds, or experiences in mind. “People hold trauma physically,” she says. She continues to share that before we can “reframe thoughts, we have to move, release, and reconnect with our bodies.”

This critique of popular models like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) isn’t theoretical.

See **WILLIAMS, 10**

PINE STATE GOLF CLUB: THRIVING ON THE GREEN, IN BLACK

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

When it comes to Black history in Spokane, it’s easy to assume that this corner of the Pacific Northwest pales in comparison to other hubs of Black culture. Yet for decades, powerful markers of Black solidarity have existed here. One such example is the Pine State Golf Club, founded in 1976.

“It started out with several of the Black men around here in Spokane – Larry (Roseman) and Billy Poindexter, Roscoe Dykes,” shared Yolanda Everette-Neufville, club historian. “They wanted to play

golf, and the only place that would allow them to golf was Indian Canyon.” When racial discrimination limited access to most

courses, Pine State became an act of resistance.

See **GOLF, 10**

“You don’t know where you’re going until you know where you’ve been.”
Yolanda Everette-Neufville

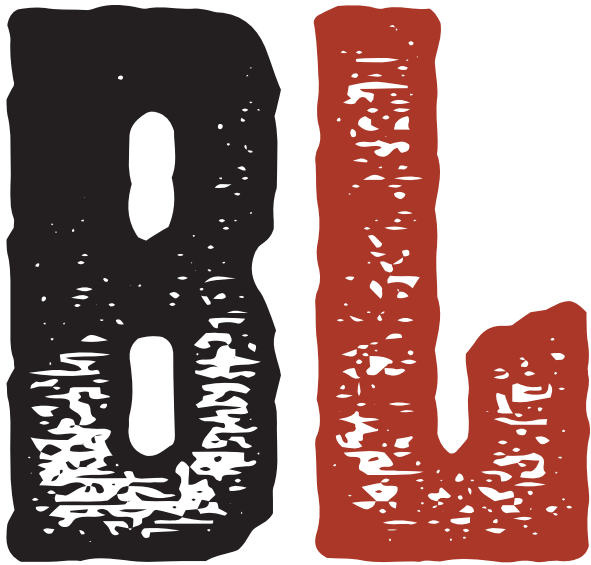


COURTESY

Members of the Pine State Golf Club.

NEWS

GROWTH AND REGENERATION



NEWS

BLACKLENS.NEWS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump lectures South African president in televised Oval Office ambush

WASHINGTON – In an astonishing confrontation in the Oval Office on Wednesday, President Donald Trump lectured President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa with false claims about a genocide against white Afrikaner farmers, even dimming the lights to show what he said was video evidence of their persecution.

The meeting had been expected to be tense, given that Trump has suspended all aid to the country and created an exception to his refugee ban for Afrikaners, fast-tracking their path to citizenship even as he keeps thousands of other people out.

But the meeting quickly became a stark demonstration of Trump's belief that the world has aligned against white people, and that Black people and minorities have received preferential treatment. In the case of South Africa, that belief has ballooned into claims of genocide.

At first, the two leaders seemed to glide over the most contentious issues, focusing instead on golf and a bit of foreign policy. Ramaphosa brought along two South African golfers, Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, as guests, in a nod to the American president's favorite sport.

But the discussions took a turn when a journalist asked what it would take for Trump to change his mind and see there was no "white genocide" in South Africa.

Ramaphosa said: "It will take President Trump listening to the voices of South Africans."

Trump was ready with his response. "Turn the lights down and just put this on," he told his aides.

A booming video mash-up began to play, including footage of people calling for violence against white farmers in South Africa.

By the end, with the stunned South African president looking on, Trump began flipping through a stack of papers, apparently showing white victims of violence in South Africa: "Death, death, death," he said.

Ramaphosa said the video did not show the full picture.

Ga. mother forced to keep brain-dead pregnant daughter alive under law

A pregnant woman in Georgia, who was declared brain-dead, is being kept alive by ventilators due to the state's law banning abortions, according to her mother. The mother told local news that the family has no say in the matter, as reported by an article from NBC News.

April Newkirk, the woman's mother, said her 30-year-old daughter, Adriana Smith, began experiencing intense headaches in February. At that time, Smith was nine weeks pregnant with her second child, as reported by NBC affiliate WXIA-TV in Atlanta.

Smith sought treatment at Northside Hospital but was released and given medication, Newkirk told the station. Newkirk said the hospital did not run any tests or scans.

A day after seeking treatment, Smith's boyfriend woke up to find her gasping for air and making gargling noises, Newkirk told WXIA.

Smith was rushed to Emory Decatur and then transferred to Emory University Hospital, where a CT scan showed multiple blood clots in her brain, the news station reported.

Newkirk told the news station that her daughter was declared brain-dead and has "been breathing through machines for more than 90 days."

According to WXIA, the plan is to keep Smith alive until the baby can survive on his own, most likely at 32 weeks.

From staff and wire reports

INDEX

NEWS AND POLITICS	2
BUSINESS AND FINANCE	4
EDUCATION.....	5
YOUTH CONNECTION.....	6
JUNETEENTH.....	7
GRADUATION	8
WELLNESS	11
REST IN POWER	13
EVENTS AND LISTINGS.....	14
COMICS AND LEISURE	15

LETTER FROM THE BOARD

JUNE HONORS DEFIANT, DAZZLING RESILIENCE OF BLACK, QUEER PEOPLE

June holds a sacred weight for Black Queer individuals. It's a month where joy becomes a form of resistance, remembrance becomes ritual, and survival itself is a revolutionary act. It is a time for celebration, reflection and righteous rage. It is a time to honor the defiant, dazzling resilience of Black people who, even after being "freed," have never truly known freedom without a fight. And it is a time to uplift the powerful and too-often overlooked role of Black Queer people in shaping every major social justice movement in this country. Because too often, the progress is celebrated, but the names are left behind.

We are the children of resistance. From the blood-soaked soil of slavery to the front lines of civil rights, from the ballroom to the voting booth, from the streets of Stonewall to the chants in Ferguson, Black Queer folks have always been there, loud and unapologetic. While this nation tried to bury us under chains, under silence, under shame, we rose. We sang. We marched. We danced. We dreamed. We built the culture, even as we were written out of it.

June, internationally recognized as Pride Month, was born from the fire of the Stonewall riots in 1969. But what the sanitized versions of history fail to tell you is that it was Black and Brown Queer and Trans folks, like Marsha P. Johnson, who were the first to rise up. Pride is not just a celebration; it is a rebellion rooted in pain, in power, and in our right to exist fully and freely. And for Black Queer individuals, it is a time to hold every part of ourselves with pride and to demand that the world do the same.

We honor the radical legacy of our trailblazers: James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Bayard Rustin, Angela Davis, Gladys Bentley, Lorraine Hansberry, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, Willi Ninja, local leader Sandy Williams, and so many more who carved out space for us with blood, brilliance, and boldness. These ancestors didn't just make noise; they



By KJ January
THE BLACK LENS
BOARD CHAIR



made change. They laid the path we now walk, march, and fight along.

And still, our fight is far from over.

We are still battling narratives that label us as sick, as predators, as threats to tradition and family values. These lies, rooted in fear, ignorance, and centuries of white supremacist oppression, are tearing at the fabric of our communities. The truth is: we are not here to harm your legacies. We are your legacy. We are your children, your siblings, your cousins, your choir directors, your kin. All we ask is the same grace you give that creepy uncle you don't want around your kids ... because even he gets a plate at the cookout.

We deserve more than tolerance. We deserve dignity. We deserve love.

We are not a monolith. Our community holds multitudes. And when harmful beliefs go unchecked, they rob our youth, our future, of joy, of discovery, of the freedom to move beyond the confines the world and especially our own people have placed on them. Do not let your shame or fear dictate the lives of others, especially your children. We were never meant to be boxed in.

To be Black and Queer is still to live in the crosshairs; shunned by

parts of the Black community for our queerness and erased by the Queer community for our Blackness. Our culture is copied, our slang adopted, our style imitated... but our names? Often left unspoken. We are a part of the blueprint, the heartbeat of fashion, language, resilience, and innovation. And yet, we are treated like an afterthought.

But still ... we rise.

June is not just a month. It is a mirror reflecting all that we are and all that we continue to fight for. It is a battle cry, a hymn, and a homecoming. Black Queer people are not a footnote we are a headline. We are the movement. We are the proof that liberation is possible when we refuse to let go of each other and of who we are.

This is our legacy. This is our power. This is our Pride.

And so, as we celebrate our freedom from the chains of our enslavers, let us also free our minds from the hate, the fear, and the biases toward the Queer community that too many of us still carry. These are not our truths. They are the burdens passed down by white oppressors. And it's time that we lay them down.

Happy Juneteenth and Happy Pride Month, Black Spokane.

Read more about all the Black and Queer leaders who have helped shape America at nbcnews.com/nbc-out/nbc-out-proud/black-history-month-17-lgbtq-black-pioneers-who-made-history-n1130856

These people include, but are not limited, to:

- Angela Davis
- Audre Lorde
- Gladys Bentley
- Lorraine Hansberry
- Marsha P. Johnson
- Miss Major Griffin-Gracy (known as Miss Major or Mama)
- Bayard Rustin
- James Baldwin
- Willi Ninja – The Grandfather of Vogue and mother of the House of Ninja, (1961-2006)

Support The Black Lens

Read. Write. Turn the Page.



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



THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane's Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS
FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

THE BLACK LENS EDITOR & BOARD MEMBERS

April Eberhardt, Rick Williams, Luc Jasmin III, Alethea Sharea Dumas, Michael Bethely, KJ January and Shamerica Nakamura

Contact us about delivery
Email.....info@blacklensnews.com

Would you like to advertise?
Email.....info@blacklensnews.com

Have a news tip?
Email.....editor@blacklensnews.com
Call.....(509) 245-1660

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



About The Black Lens

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

Copyright © 2025

The Black Lens newspaper is published daily online and monthly in print by Comma, a nonprofit community journalism lab. For information on Comma, or to make a donation, visit www.blacklensnews.com/donate.

Statement of Independence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



NEWS / HAPPENING AROUND TOWN

Angela Jones garners Sandy Williams Trailblazer Award

The Sandy Williams Trailblazer Award was given to Angela Jones.



Black Lens staff reports

Congratulations to Angela Jones, J.D., on receiving the prestigious Sandy Williams Trailblazer Award. Jones, who leads at the Gates Foundation, was honored for her unwavering commitment to equity, justice, and inclusion.

The Sandy Williams Trailblazer Award recognizes alumni who are pioneers in promoting diversity, social justice, and accessibility.

Named in honor of the late Spokane activist and Black Lens founder Sandy Williams, the award celebrates individuals who break new ground in advancing equity and inspire others to contribute to a more inclusive and just world.

Jones's leadership and dedication to systemic change continue to make a lasting impact both regionally and nationally.



Angela Jones, right, at the ceremony where she received the Sandy Williams Trailblazer Award.

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO CREATE PLAY STREETS PROGRAM

From Black Lens staff reports

During May 20's Legislative Session, the Spokane City Council voted to approve and adopt a new section to 16A.84.090 of the Spokane Municipal Code titled, "Play Streets & Neighborhood Block Party Program," an ordinance allowing neighbors to temporarily close nonarterial streets for recreational use and community gatherings, according to a city news release.

"True safety begins with knowing your neighbors," said Council Member Kitty Klitzke. "This ordinance provides a unique opportunity for residents to unite and create a supportive network that enhances our collective well-being. The Play Streets ordinance promotes safer neighborhoods and community-oriented engagement through active neighbor engagement and connection."

Set to launch this June and run through Halloween, a special event permit will be required for a play

street or block party closure, the release said. However, permit and application fees shall be waived for any play street or block party that is free and open to the public, on a non-arterial street no greater than one block, does not include an intersection, and does not require traffic control personnel.

With the passing of this ordinance, the city shall develop program policies and procedures consistent with this section, the release said.



COURTESY

Dahveed Bullis has stepped into the role of Artistic Director at Stage Left Theater as the first African American Artistic Director in the theater's history.

Bullis is first African American Artistic Director in Stage Left Theater's history

Theater announces new team ushering in era of tri-leadership

From Black Lens staff reports

Dahveed Bullis, an award-winning actor and co-founder of Spokane Playwrights Laboratory, has stepped into the role of Artistic Director at Stage Left Theater as the first African American Artistic Director in the theater's history – a significant milestone that deepens the company's commitment to inclusive leadership and diverse storytelling, according to a news release.

Stage Left Theater has also announced the establishment of a new Tri-Leadership model. After a yearlong, deliberate search focused on alignment, purpose and community vision, Stage Left has named Kearney Jordan Olson as Managing Director and James Landsiedel as Technical Director. While Landsiedel has served as Technical Director for the past year, the appointments of Bullis and Olson reflect the culmination of a thoughtful and community-centered leadership transition.

"This marks a new era for Spokane theatre," Bullis wrote in a news release. "We are dedicated to solidifying Stage Left's legacy as a place where high-quality work is the standard. Our focus is on new works, local writers, and the true voice of the community. Spokane is not just a place where good art tours – Spokane is a place where great art begins."

WA HOUSE DEMOCRATS

GOVERNOR SIGNS RENT STABILIZATION

House Bill 1217 will bring REAL RELIEF to Washington renters and manufactured home owners.

PASSES HOUSE PASSES SENATE PASSES LEGISLATURE GOVERNOR SIGNS INTO LAW

JUNE 20 2025

INLAND NORTHWEST JUNETEENTH COALITION PRESENTS

THE PILLAR AWARDS

A BLACK CARPET EVENT CELEBRATING PILLARS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY!

A Semi-Formal Event

6PM | SOCIAL HOUR 7PM | AWARDS SHOW

Featuring: AMAZING LOCAL ARTISTS!

FOX 1001 W SPRAGUE AVE, SPOKANE, WA 99201

www.INWJC.org

RSVP HERE (VIA EVENTBRITE)

RSVP AT WWW.THEPILLARAWARDS.COM

NATION IN BRIEF

Louisiana antebellum mansion burned - and took a lot of Black history with it

With its 200 windows and 165 doors fashioned by enslaved craftsmen and put in place with enslaved labor, Louisiana's Nottoway Plantation was the South's largest antebellum mansion, or "big house." It was also a place that tour guides infamously sold a romanticized and sanitized version of plantation life about, and for generations, those who ran the plantation hosted weddings, graduations and school field trips where Black schoolchildren and their parents often felt diminished and alienated. As The Associated Press has noted, Nottoway "makes no mention of enslaved former inhabitants on its website."

A fire on Thursday that destroyed Nottoway's big house led to a predictable response. Some Black people posted selfies presumably taken at Nottoway that showed the burning house behind them. People shared memes that added the images of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, uncharacteristically grinning, to photos of the mansion on fire. Other memes showed Black people enjoying an outdoor cookout with the burning house in the background.

"We're very devastated, we're upset, we're sad," Dan Dyess, a co-owner with his wife of the plantation resort, told The Times-Picayune | The Advocate. "We put a lot of time, effort and money to developing this property." Still, after the fire, some voices wryly expressed that all such sites should burn.

Simultaneously, some white people wistfully mourned an irreplaceable architectural gem and moment in American — read Southern — grandeur and responded to the celebrations of the fire as an assault on their "heritage," the same way many responded in 2017 to the removal of Confederate monuments downriver in New Orleans.

I'm not mourning in the same way that those embracing myths of the "Lost Cause" and the idea of "moonlight and magnolias" are, but I'm mourning the loss of another opportunity to teach about the history of enslavement. Our material history, including at places such as Nottoway, has messages for us. There are bricks where our ancestors' fingerprints remain, spiritual caches, crystals and sometimes lone cowrie shells reflecting traditional African beliefs.

Source: By Michael W. Twitty, culinary historian and author of "The Cooking Gene"

BUSINESS / COMMENTARY

SIPS 'N' TIPS

Building a strong foundation with proper protection

June is upon us, half the year is over, plans for the year should be well under-way. What about financial plans? Ask yourself: Do I have a strong foundation in place should the unexpected happen? If a major emergency were to happen, it could wipe out one savings, one's investments and one's retirement. The best plan would be to have a strong foundation initially in place, then tackle debt management, follow this with setting up an emergency fund and then consider investments. Unfortunately, there are a lot of people who do the reverse ... focus on investments and then maybe an emergency fund ... debts are when they can get to it and just pay the minimum and protection is just something that might throw in just in case someone might die. A strong financial foundation, however, should be the first and foremost in a financial plan. In this way, should something happen to the major breadwinner or that stay at home parent, the entire lifestyle and house-

hold will not be turned upside down. Also, wealth will be there to supplement retirement. There are certain challenges that families will face that concern protection, including: protection of life, protection of health, disability protection. There are challenges that concern money, including reducing liabilities and getting out of debt; dealing with the monetary impact of constant changes in job, career, or business or living a secure long life with adequate income. This can all be addressed with a proper protection foundation. When we are younger and starting families, there are certain responsibilities that the breadwinner may have. Responsibilities that can be devastating should the breadwinner be gone and adequate protection not be able to take over. Such things as paying the bills, the mortgage, health insurance, paying debts, educational expenses. The mistake that is often made is getting insurance to cover



By Rhonda Leonard-Horwith
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



these expenses, but only for the breadwinner which has traditionally been the man. The stay home spouse does not have insurance. But consider the responsibilities of the stay home spouse that would have to be replaced at great expense should something happen to the stay home spouse and there's no protection. Things such as cooking, taking kids to and from school, taking kids to and from sports, shopping, preparing meals, staying home while the other parent is at work all would cost thousands of dollars to replace. Just how do you determine how much protection is needed? How do you determine what this foundation should be so the family can go on even with

the devastating death that takes away major contributors to the household. How does one also plan to make sure there's enough money in the future should both spouses continue on and live a happy life into retirement so that responsibilities have decreased and wealth should have increased and they can enjoy without worrying about running out of money? There are ways of determining how much protection is needed. One such way is the D.I.M.E. method. With this method for each spouse or each partner that supports the household, whether they're working as a bread winner or stay home parent... total the amount of debt, amount of income, (10 times the annual income) the mortgage payment, educational costs. For a stay home parent total what a childcare person would cost, a housekeeper that also cooks and grocery shops, and someone to transport the kids. Or consider how much retirement supplement will be needed per year. This will give you an idea of the total amount insurance needed by each spouse or partner in the household. This will also determine how much cash will need to be accumulating inside the policy. It is important to get the exact amount needed. In fact it's imperative. One

would not have a \$50,000 car and get \$10,000 worth of insurance nor would one have a \$500,000 house and get \$100,000 worth of insurance. In planning for protection, the family must consider what is needed and get the amount of insurance to cover that need. Next, examine how insurance premiums or monthly payments are calculated and how you measure up in the calculation. There are various rate classes: preferred elite, preferred standard, preferred non-smoker, smoker and table rated. Table rated is going to be the more expensive because that includes people who have major health issues. Insurance companies consider such things as health, medication, tobacco use, driving record, criminal record, height, weight, family health history, ailments, if you have risky hobbies, risky jobs, or anything in your lifestyle that could shorten a lifespan. The more risk or decline in health, the higher the premiums will be. Where do you fit in? Next, consider what kind of protector you need. Do you want temporary or term which only covers a certain amount of years, is cheaper but has no cash value? Do you want permanent insurance which has cash accumulation that will also allow you to plan for retirement

and not outlive your money? Fo you want whole life or universal life. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. In the end you must ask yourself: If I buy term, and invest the difference, do I have enough investment at the end of the term so I do not have a need for insurance? • Do I need final expense insurance? • Do I want a policy that gives tax deferred earnings, tax free withdrawals and tax free loans? • If I have a limited budget, but want to protect my spouse/partner and children would the less expensive term be best? • If my parents have health issues, but I want them to have some coverage what is available? • If I want long-term growth and don't want to lose money, should I consider an IUL? • **WHAT IS BEST FOR ME AND MY FAMILY?** The information in this article should not be interpreted as accounting, legal, investment or tax advice. That is not an offer or solicit any insurance or investment product. It is merely me sharing some of the information. I have learned over the years in hopes that it gives you a little more enlightenment in the world of finance.

Start on the path to homeownership — with help every step of the way



- Get help to buy a home!
- Free, expert help from a real person
- Downpayment assistance of up to \$150,000
- Free homebuyer education



Washington State Homeownership Hotline
Call to be connected to support, guidance and financial help for homebuyers.
1-877-894-HOME (4663)



ANYLA'S TAKE

Dealing with racism with a systemic approach requires realizing its detriment

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

Racial bias remains a profound challenge within the education system, significantly shaping the experiences and academic journeys of Black students. When instances of racism arise, the typical response of expressing regret and asking the affected students for solutions – phrases like “I’m sorry this has happened to you, how do you think we should fix it?” – can be particularly harmful. This reaction places the burden of addressing and resolving the issue on the very individuals who are victimized by it. Such a stance trivializes the severity of racism and unfairly suggests that Black students should be responsible for rectifying problems that they did not create. It is imperative for educational leaders to reconsider their approaches, implementing robust, zero-tolerance policies toward racism. These policies must foster genuine inclusivity and enforce accountability, ensuring a supportive environment for all students. Zero tolerance in educational institutions mandates that any occurrences of racism, bullying, harassment, or hate speech are addressed with immediate and suitable consequences. Schools must establish a framework that assures prompt intervention against wrongdoers, thereby fostering an environment where Black students feel secure and supported. This involves developing clear policies to delineate unacceptable conduct, providing comprehensive staff training on racial sensitivity, and creating easily accessible systems for students to report their concerns. For example, numerous schools are now adopting restorative justice programs, which prioritize dialogue and rehabilitation over mere punishment. These strategies can be instrumental in educating offenders and fostering a sense of understanding. Creating an authentically inclusive organizational culture demands dedication across all leadership tiers. Schools, in particular, need to emphasize diversity within their staff, striving for teachers and administrators that mirror the demographics of their student body. Such representation brings a range of perspectives that enrich the learning environment and cultivate empathy. Equally important is the incorporation of anti-racism in school culture and anti-bullying campaigns.

By educating students on the historical and societal effects of racism, schools can influence understanding throughout the student community. Educational administrators should prioritize cultivating a setting where accountability is essential. This goes beyond merely disciplining individuals who exhibit racist conduct; it encompasses encouraging a shared responsibility among the entire student body to resist hate. By offering incentives for positive behaviors, such as commendations or awards for actions that promote inclusivity, leaders can strengthen a culture rooted in respect and comprehension. Ultimately, it is essential to provide emotional support for Black students. Educational institutions should offer resources such as counseling services that specialize in recognizing the impact of racism on a student's success, allowing them to fully experience the feelings associated with such incidents. The aftermath of racially biased incidents erodes motivation in students. Validating the realness and depth of racialized fear, gaslighting, stereotyping, insults, and different forms of intimidation and bullying of those who are racially targeted is an important step in counteracting the culture of racism in the school system. Allowing affected students to share their feelings and experiences within a secure environment of people who understand and are aware of the nuances of racial identity struggles is critical, and must be done without empty empathy, but with accountability and corrective action being the intention. Empowering these students entails actively listening to their voices and integrating their needs into the development of school policies. In summary, tackling racism within the educational system necessitates a deliberate and effective reaction from school leaders. Implementing a zero-tolerance approach, combined with a dedication to inclusivity and accountability, is essential. Schools must recognize that it is not the responsibility of Black students to resolve issues that have been entrenched in our institutions from the start. Rather, schools need to take initiative in developing environments where every student can flourish, realizing that this cannot be done with a status quo mindset but one that radically challenges the status quo.

EDUCATION

MAKING YOUR HOME
A SPACE FOR LEARNING
IN THE ERA OF
ZOOM CLASSES

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new era of online education for K-12 students. However, it was introduced as an emergency solution – more of a backup plan than a carefully crafted shift. Despite the fact that online learning had been a proven and successful educational tool for over two decades prior to the pandemic, many students struggled with it when it was suddenly made the norm. Why? Because it was rolled out quickly and haphazardly, handed to educators who were mostly trained in traditional, in-person teaching methods.

Online learning can be – and often is – an effective way for K-12 students to learn. It offers many benefits, but success depends on proper preparation. Teachers must be trained specifically for online instruction, and students must be taught about the unique challenges they may encounter. Now that the urgency of the pandemic has passed, we have the opportunity to do it right.

One of the most common issues during the early days of virtual schooling was inappropriate behavior on camera – something teachers and families hadn't known to anticipate. It was uncharted territory for most, except for those who had experienced online learning before 2020.

If you're considering enrolling your child in an online K-12 program, here are a few key strategies to set them up for success:

1. Create a Dedicated Learning Space

Families must commit to the idea that the home is now a schoolhouse. Identify a specific area to allocate for learning and set it up with purpose. A proper desk and chair – not a couch or bed – signal to the student that it's time to switch from "relax mode" to "learning mode." This clear physical boundary helps with focus and engagement during class sessions.

2. Treat Online Learning Like Traditional School

While the flexibility of virtual education allows for learning on the go – such as from a hotel or in the car – this should be the exception, not the norm. Consistency is crucial for developing good habits and maintaining academic focus.

3. Dress for Success

Even though you're at home, dress as



By Dr. Shantara Smith
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



if you were attending school in person. If you wouldn't wear pajamas to a physical classroom, you shouldn't wear them on Zoom. Always assume your camera might need to be turned on, and be ready to present yourself appropriately.

4. Involve the Whole Family

Online learning requires a family-wide commitment. Everyone in the household – parents, siblings, even visitors – needs to understand that when a student is in class, noise and distractions must be minimized. Loud conversations, banging pots, background TV shows, and even pets or babies can be disruptive over Zoom, especially when a student unmutes their microphone. If possible, set up the learning space in a separate room with a door that can close. If that's not an option, choose a spot with minimal background noise and have the student sit with their back to a wall to avoid visual distractions for classmates.

5. Use Technology Wisely

Virtual backgrounds and background blurring tools can help minimize distractions on camera. While online learning offers flexibility, maintaining a quiet, respectful environment remains essential for productive classes and study sessions.

By incorporating these tips, you can have a more successful online learning experience!

Shantara Smith, Ph.D., is a certified educator with a doctorate in Online Education. She has 20 years of experience in the field of education as an online teacher and teacher trainer, and enjoys learning online professionally, academically, and personally.

FINAL INSTALLMENT

Advocating for food policy
change and engaging
the next generation –
a call to collective action

As this series draws to a close, we end where many movements for justice take root: in policy and in the power of youth. Both are critical to transforming the food system in ways that truly serve Black communities – now and for generations to come.



By Dr. Sharah Zaab
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



Policy change is essential for addressing systemic barriers in food access, climate resilience, and land justice. African American communities can influence food policy by engaging in local government, supporting food justice organizations, and voting for policies that prioritize community food sovereignty.

Key Policy Changes to Advocate For:

- Incentives for Black Farmers – ensure that Black farmers receive equitable access to USDA grants and subsidies.
- Zoning Reform for Urban Farming – push for city policies that allow more land to be used for community food production.
- Expansion of SNAP & Nutrition Assistance – strengthen government programs that support healthy food access in marginalized communities.
- Investment in Climate-Resilient Agriculture – advocate for policies that fund regenerative farming practices to combat climate change.

Notable Advocacy Organizations:

- The HEAL Food Alliance – works to create a food system that is sustainable and equitable.
- Soul Fire Farm – trains Black and Indigenous farmers and fights for land justice policies.

Encouraging Youth Engagement in Food and Environmental Justice

Educating and engaging youth in food justice initiatives ensures long-term sustainability. Programs that teach children about farming, cooking, and environmental stewardship help cultivate a new generation of food activists.

Ways to Engage Youth in Food Sovereignty:

- Create school gardens and farm-to-school programs.
- Encourage participation in youth-

led food justice groups.

- Offer internships and apprenticeships at Black-owned farms and food co-ops.

Successful Youth-Led Food Justice Initiatives:

- Grow Dat Youth Farm (New Orleans, Louisiana) – provides young people with hands-on experience in farming and food justice.
- Detroit Food Academy (Detroit, Michigan) – teaches youth about entrepreneurship and sustainable food systems.

Conclusion: Collective Action for a Sustainable Future

This series has explored the roots of food injustice and the many ways African American communities are reclaiming their power through land, labor, and leadership. But if there's one takeaway from these efforts, it's this: collective action is the way forward.

Addressing food insecurity and climate change in African American communities requires a shift from individual action to collective governance. By expanding urban agriculture, restoring Black land ownership, reducing food waste, advocating for policy change, and engaging youth, communities can reclaim control over their food systems while mitigating climate harm.

The examples throughout this series show that change is not just possible – it's already underway. Black farmers, activists and community leaders are forging a path toward a more equitable and sustainable food future. Now, the challenge is to scale these efforts, amplify their voices, and ensure that every community has access to fresh, locally sourced, and environmentally responsible food. The movement is growing. The moment is now. Let's keep planting the seeds.

NAACP ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
FOR TWO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

From Black Lens staff reports

The Spokane NAACP is accepting applications for two scholarship programs aimed at supporting local students in their pursuit of higher education.

Michael P. Anderson Scholarship

Available to high school seniors graduating in the Class of 2025 or GED recipients residing in Spokane County. Applicants must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and demonstrate community involvement, academic achievement, and an awareness of racial and social justice issues. Required materials include a cover



Umpqua Bank Business Equity Scholarship

Open to undergraduate or graduate students residing in Spokane County who are enrolled in a business or finance program at an accredited institution of higher learning.

The deadline to apply for both scholarships is June 30.

For full eligibility requirements and to apply, visit naacpspokane.com.

letter, 4 short essay responses, a transcript, two letters of recommendation, and proof of residency.



YWCA SPOKANE IS SEEKING OUR NEXT

CHIEF
EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

YWCA Spokane is looking for our next CEO to lead the agency in creating a community where every individual has a safe place to live. A place where everyone, inclusive of all genders, race, and accessibility needs, can earn a livable wage and live with dignity in peace, free from violence.


ARE YOU A STRATEGIC LEADER WITH A PASSION FOR
ADVANCING EQUITY AND JUSTICE?

We invite you to apply for the CEO position at YWCA Spokane.



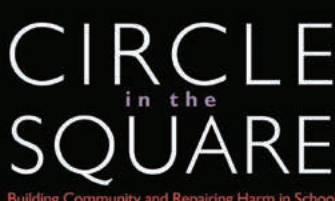
APPLY AT
YWCASPOKANE.ORG





"Circle in the Square"


Join BRC as we dive into "Circle in the Square: Building Community and Repairing Harm in Schools". In June, we'll explore how Restorative Schools center reaffirming, repairing, and rebuilding relationships, and how schools use circles to repair harm.



June 4th
4-5:30pm
South Hill Library

&

June 16th
4-5:30pm
Hillyard Library



NANCY RIESTENBERG

YOUTH CONNECTION

Shared origins, divergent journeys – identity in the Black diaspora

The terms African and African American may sound similar, but they carry distinct identities, histories, and experiences. While both are connected by shared ancestry and the African continent, the way this connection is lived, remembered, and expressed can be very different.

Cultural Roots and Heritage

Africans are people born and raised on the African continent. They grow up deeply immersed in their specific cultural traditions, languages, and customs. Whether it's through food, music, religion, or family dynamics, African identity is rooted in a strong sense of community and homeland. Africans know where their grandparents are buried, the stories of their ancestors, and the meaning of their ethnic names.

African Americans, on the other hand, are descendants of enslaved Africans brought to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade. As a result, many African Americans have lost direct ties to their ancestral homelands. Their culture has evolved uniquely – blending African traditions with the painful legacy of slavery, segregation, and resilience in America. Their history is marked by struggle, triumph, and a continuous search for identity in a country that often marginalized them.

The experience of identity

Being African often comes with pride in one's country, tribe, or region. But when Africans move to America, they may face stereotypes, discrimination, or even tension with African Americans who feel that Africans view them unfairly.

African Americans, meanwhile, have a different journey. Their Blackness is central to their identity in America, often defined by resistance to oppression, pride in the civil rights movement, and deep cultural contributions in music, art, and politics. Some African Americans may feel a longing to connect with Africa, but lack the resources or knowledge to do so. Others may struggle with being seen as “less African” by those who immigrated more recently.

Shared challenges, different contexts

Despite the differences, Africans and African Americans face common challenges: racism, discrimination, and



By **Jenny Musesambili**
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



cultural misunderstanding. However, the way these challenges are experienced can differ. African Americans often carry the generational trauma of slavery and systemic racism in America, while Africans might be navigating a new cultural landscape

after immigration.

Moving toward unity

Instead of seeing these identities as separate, there is power in embracing the shared roots and recognizing the beauty in both stories. Understanding the difference helps build respect. Unity comes from listening to each other, learning from each other, and standing together in pride.

Poem: Two Branches, One Tree

By *Jenny Musesambili*

I come from lands where drums still speak,
Where elders' wisdom flows deep each week.
I danced barefoot on sacred ground,
With every step, my roots were found.
But I was born where freedom bled,
Where chains were broken, tears were shed.
I carry stories in my skin,
Of battles lost, and hope within.
You wear your name like royalty,
I search for mine in history.
You knew the land, the songs, the way –
I learned to fight just to stay.
Yet when I hear your language rise,
My heart responds, though tongue denies.
And when you see my power burn,
You see the fire you helped me learn.
So let us not build walls of pride,
When blood and soul are still allied.
Two branches, reaching endlessly –
One struggle, one strength, one ancient tree.

QUESTION OF MERIT

PART II: When privilege masquerades as merit – the broader architecture of educational exclusion

By **Z'hanie Weaver**
THE BLACK LENS

In Part I, we uncovered the manufactured origins of standardized testing through Carl Brigham's eugenicist lens, tracing how the SAT was never designed to measure pure intellect, but rather to uphold a racial and class-based hierarchy. These tests didn't just determine college admissions – they shaped who would be invited into the American Promise and who would be systematically excluded. Now, in Part II, we zoom out to examine the broader architecture of exclusion that testing helped reinforce. As we peel back the language of fairness, we expose a system built not to elevate potential but to preserve privilege.

What the language of “merit” hides is the deeply organized and systemic effort to disenfranchise Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), poor people, immigrants, and others from full and equal participation in education and society. This is not just about the SAT or ACT. It's about unequal school funding based on property taxes. It's about redlining, school segregation, and the school-to-prison pipeline. It's about how students from under-resourced communities often have fewer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, outdated textbooks, and lower-paid teachers. When the system

is already rigged, calling the outcome “merit-based” is dishonest at best – and deeply harmful at worst. Standardized tests measure familiarity with the dominant culture – its language, values, and ways of thinking – more than raw intelligence. Students who grow up immersed in that culture are more likely to succeed on these tests, while others are penalized for not having the same exposure. The tests don't measure potential; they measure privilege.

So what happens when access to opportunity is shaped by tools designed to keep certain people out? The result is a “permanent underclass” – a population deliberately denied upward mobility. Brigham's work wasn't an error in judgment; it was a calculated move to uphold a racial hierarchy. The early architects of these systems wanted to sort people – not just to identify talent, but to maintain social order.

Although Carl Brigham recanted his earlier work, the system he helped design lives on. The SAT and ACT became cornerstones of college admissions, restricting access to elite education for generations. Even as some universities shift to test-optional policies, the cultural weight of standardized scores still looms large. We see its impact on racial disparities in test scores. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Black and Latino

students consistently score lower on average than their white and Asian peers – not because of lesser ability, but because of systemic barriers: underfunded schools, biased curriculum, test prep disparities, food insecurity, and generational trauma. Add to that the emotional toll – the internalized pressure to “prove” one's worth through a test designed to discriminate – and the result is damaging in the extreme. For many BIPOC students, this test doesn't just measure academic ability; it becomes a psychological referendum on belonging.

Standardized testing is one part of a broader architecture of exclusion. The students who score highest on these tests are often tracked into gifted programs, honors classes, and elite college admissions pipelines. From there, they access social capital: internships, alumni networks, fellowships, and eventually leadership roles in law, medicine, finance, and politics. This is how the “cognitive elite” maintains power. But the term is deceptive. It suggests that intelligence alone drives access, when in fact, it's intelligence plus a host of unspoken privileges: generational wealth, legacy status, racial identity, and social grooming. The result is a society where opportunity masquerades as merit, and discrimination is coded into spreadsheets and score reports.

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER FROM THE INSIDE

By **Daniella Musesambili**
THE BLACK LENS

The Black community is built on generations of resilience, power, and creative brilliance. From slavery to the civil rights movement, and now to modern-day activism, Black Americans have fought not only against systemic injustice, but also for unity and pride within themselves. Yet, beneath that legacy lies an uncomfortable truth: internal divisions still exist. These divisions are rarely talked about openly, but they shape the way people experience community, identity, and belonging. From issues of class and colorism to questions of authenticity and modern influence, the Black community continues to wrestle with how to come together without tearing each other apart.

Class and Economic Status

As the economic landscape shifts, not every member of the Black community moves forward at the same pace. Some families are able to build wealth, access higher education, and enter professional careers. Others remain in cycles of poverty, facing underfunded schools, housing insecurity, and limited job opportunities. These differences in access and opportunity have created a quiet but growing class divide. Wealthier Black individuals may feel pressure to separate themselves from their roots in order to “make it,” while those left behind may feel judged or forgotten. This disconnect can lead to resentment, misunderstandings, and a sense that success means leaving your people behind. Instead of lifting each other, class differences can sometimes lead to separation and silence.

Colorism: The Shade Within

Colorism is one of the oldest and deepest wounds in the Black community. Rooted in slavery, where lighter-skinned Black people were often given preferential treatment, this bias continues today. Lighter skin tones are often seen as more “acceptable” or “beautiful” by mainstream society, leading to unspoken privilege within the community itself. People with darker complexions may be unfairly labeled as aggressive, less attractive, or less educated. The damage of colorism isn't just external – it's internalized. It impacts self-worth, dating preferences, media representation, and family dynamics. While the Black community fights against racism from the outside, colorism creates division from within, making unity harder to achieve.

Authenticity and Identity

One of the most painful divisions comes from within – when members of the community question each other's “Blackness.” Some people are told they're “too white” because of the way they speak, dress, or behave. Others are criticized for being “too Black” if they embrace African culture, wear natural hair, or reject assimilation. These labels create confusion and insecurity, especially among youth who are just trying to understand who they are. Being Black should never be a performance or

something to prove. But when authenticity is constantly questioned, it makes the community feel less like a home and more like a competition. This division limits expression and causes unnecessary harm, when in reality, Blackness is broad, diverse, and powerful in all its forms.

The Role of Social Media

Social media has changed how we see each other and ourselves. It offers a platform for Black voices, movements, and creativity – but it also creates pressure to perform. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter) often highlight idealized versions of success, beauty, and Black identity. This digital world can make it seem like if you don't have designer clothes, a certain body type, or a viral voice, you're invisible. It also fuels division through online arguments, “cancel culture,” and competition for clout. Instead of building bridges, social media sometimes reinforces the very walls we're trying to break. It distracts from real conversations about mental health, generational trauma, and healing – and replaces them with curated images and unrealistic expectations.


The Path Forward

If we want real unity, we have to be honest about what's breaking us apart. That means calling out colorism, checking class privilege, creating safe spaces for all expressions of Blackness, and moving past the surface-level images we post online. Healing begins with listening – to our elders, to our youth, and to the voices that have been silenced. Division doesn't mean defeat. But ignoring it only delays the work. The future of the Black community depends not just on fighting racism outside, but also on loving and supporting each other inside. That's the revolution we need now.

Poem: Cracks in the Mirror


By *Daniella Musesambili*

We wear the same skin, but not the same crown,
Some build empires, others feel left out.
One chases checks in designer threads,
Another fights to keep their brother fed.
Light skin praised like a golden prize,
While dark skin queens hear whispered lies.
“Too ghetto,” “too loud,” “too much to bear” –
Yet silence follows when pain fills the air.
College talk vs. corner slang,
“A sellout,” they say, “You forgot where you came.”
But who's to blame for the splinters we feel,
When even our love comes with wounds to heal?
We scroll and flex for likes and fame,
But numb ourselves with shame and game.
TikTok dances, perfect pose –
While trauma hides behind the glow.
Still – we're one story, scattered in parts,
One heartbeat, split between hearts.
It's time we heal what hate began,
Together, not just where we stand.
No more judging from different lanes –
Let unity grow where pride once reigned.
Because even cracked mirrors can reflect light,
If we face the truth and fight what's right.




SPOKANE CITY CREDIT UNION

Come see us at **1930 N MONROE**
or visit us anytime at **sccu.net**
509-325-7228



EDUCATION!




TRAVEL!

NEXGEN


LOCAL & LEGENDARY
SCCU IS HERE FOR SAVINGS SUCCESS!

Spokane City Credit Union's NexGen accounts are specially designed for our members under 18:

- NexGen Savings featuring 5% APY* on the first \$1,000! Balances over \$1,000 will receive our standard savings rate; call for rates.
- NexGen CD only requires \$100 opening balance!



OUTDOOR EXCITEMENT!



ALL SORTS OF SAVINGS GOALS!

*Members under the age of 18 will only be allowed to have 1 NexGen Savings Account. When a member turns 18, at the next quarter cycle the NexGen Savings will be converted to an SCCU regular savings account. (ex: Joe turns 18 on May 22, 2025, he will earn the higher dividend on his first \$1,000 through the end of June 2025. On July 1, 2025, his entire balance will be converted to a SCCU regular savings account and earn that dividend rate).

Your savings federally insured to at least \$250,000 and backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Government

NCUA

National Credit Union Administration, a U.S. Government Agency

JUNETEENTH

'I Am a Man': The unbreakable legacy of the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Davis

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

Juneteenth is more than a date on the calendar – it is a mirror held up to our collective memory as Black Americans. It reminds us that freedom, for us, has never simply been declared; it has always been demanded and too often delayed. The reality that some of our ancestors didn't know they were free until after the Emancipation Proclamation is not just a historical fact – it's a metaphor for the continued struggle against systems that promise liberation but deny its full reality.

From emancipation to Jim Crow, from redlining to mass incarceration, our journey is an active reminder to continue the work. It asks us to honor the past not only in times of national recognition, but in our daily choices to teach and build upon the foundation laid by those who came before us.

Juneteenth stands as a solemn call to honor those who struggled with no promise of arrival – and a vow that their fight was not in vain.

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Davis, now in his 80s, stands as a living link to that era.

Roots in Argo

Before the South Side of Chicago shaped him, the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Davis was grounded in the soil of Argo, Illinois – a small industrial town just outside the city. For Black families migrating north from the South, Argo offered more than factory jobs as an incentive for the Great Migration. It was a place to plant roots, raise children, and build lives in defiance of the odds stacked against them. Argo represented a legacy of self-determination.

"My grandfather was one



GETTY IMAGES

Civil Rights activists are blocked by National Guardsmen brandishing bayonets while trying to stage a protest on Beale Street in Memphis, Tenn. The marching demonstrators, who are wearing signs which say "I Am A Man," are also flanked by tanks. The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Davis is second from right.

of the first settlers to come up from Georgia to Argo," Davis recalled. "People came to work at [Argo] Corn Products—where they made Argo starch, Bosco, all kinds of things from corn. That's what built the town."

"Fred Hampton's daddy was from Argo. My people had businesses, bars, and homes right there. We had giants come out of that little place," he said. "That was my root. We were a close-knit community."

Davis started school at just four years old. "I told them, 'I sure will be glad when I can go to school – so I can read and write and y'all can't keep no secrets from me,'" he laughed, recalling how his mother and her friends would spell words to speak in code around him.

His family later moved to Altgeld Gardens, a wartime housing development on Chicago's far South Side – built for Black laborers but located atop a former nuclear waste site.

"Dirt roads, no paved streets," he said, "but it was a tight-knit, working-class Black community. That's where I came from."

Still, life in Chicago was no refuge from racism.

"Chicago racism is a different kind," Davis said. "Sophisticated racism. You didn't always see it, but you felt it every day."

From segregated parks to housing discrimination, the reality of systemic exclusion shaped his boyhood.

"When we passed Palmer Park, we saw the swimming pool – but we couldn't go in. We had to fight just to get into public spaces that were supposed to be for everyone."

The struggles in the South were also unfolding in his own backyard.

At Jackson Park Golf Course – one of the only places where Black people were allowed to play – he and a friend once tried to hustle golf balls for snack money. Instead of getting in trouble, they were mentored by Black golfers who turned them into caddies.

"That's how I met people like Joe Louis," he said. "But even there, they shot over the fence at us. Just for being there."

The experience of resistance wasn't abstract. It was



Rev. Davis

because we had no other choice."

Nothing brought that reality closer than the murder of Emmett Till. Till's family lived just a few doors down.

"He slept in the bed next to me the week before he went to Mississippi and died," Davis said.

He attended Till's open-casket funeral, a memory that still haunts him.

"My mama fainted when she looked in that casket and saw that boy. I wanted to kill every doggone thing I could. That image of Emmett still lives in me. I remember how I felt. I still see that."

As he spoke those words, the intensity of the fury that racial hatred invoked was almost tangible – an unembellished and grim reminder of why we must fight. Davis didn't just learn about history – he lived inside it. The community that raised him was a battleground, a classroom, and a crucible that helped shape the young man who would one day wear the iconic "I Am a Man" sign on his chest – now a photographed remnant of struggles not far removed from the present day.

Becoming the Movement

Davis began protesting as a youth in the belly of the beast, organizing in his community, and eventually stood shoulder to shoulder with civil rights giants. His path was not always straight.

"I didn't know how I ended up in a nonviolent movement," he admitted.

a lived, daily fight.

"In the streets, in the schools, in the workplaces. We fought

"I come from a place where we fought back."

He remembers meeting Malcolm X in his earliest days as a minister, fresh out of prison and still finding his voice. On one occasion, Malcolm visited the housing projects where Davis lived, speaking at a local children's center. Davis recalls watching him at the blackboard, developing as a young leader still shaping his message and presence.

As he came of age in a world steeped in racial tension, Davis found himself among men and women who, like him, were searching for a different path to liberation – figuring it out as they went along. He recalls candidly meeting and learning from Dr. King as he became enmeshed with other fired-up freedom fighters, all determined to grab the world by the tail in the name of justice.

"Dr. King would referee us. He'd get us all in the room, and we didn't always agree, but he'd pull us together," Davis said. "He talked to us about unity through adversity – that even when we don't see eye to eye, we have to find one thing we all agree on and fight for that."

He still carries the weight of one of Dr. King's most pressing questions: "Where do we go from here? That question still sits with me."

For Davis, it's a lasting reminder that unity isn't automatic – it's something we must choose.

In reflecting on how we work together across differences, our conversation moved toward a powerful metaphor. In the Bible, Peter was fiery and bold – quick to act – while John was gentle and full of love. This example demonstrates that every kind of leadership, every style of communication, has a purpose. Unity doesn't

mean uniformity. It means recognizing the value in each other's gifts and standing together with a common goal. You need a Peter, and you need a John.

"We've got to stop letting doctrine or denomination divide us," he added. "Let's stop fighting over differences," he said. "And start loving one another enough to rise together."

The Burden of Memory

Now in his elder years, the Rev. Dr. Davis is unrelenting in his message: we must tell the truth about the past. "That's where people like me come in." He worries that today's youth are disconnected from that history. "They think we're lying when we tell our stories," he said, noting the absence of elders in many family structures and the generational trauma that remains unhealed. "We were taught to hate ourselves. That's the worst damage racism has done."

On Love, Legacy and Liberation

From critiques of Black elitism within social class, to the fractures caused by assimilation, Davis doesn't shy away from the hard truths. But he also leaves space for restoration. "My generation laid the foundation. Yours has to build the house. Start with love."

He is not just a witness to history, but an elder whose voice still speaks with urgency. As he now sits and tells the history that we watch in documentaries or read about in books, he has one final word. Over 60 years after he marched in city streets, facing Jim Crow and taking risks, he still says he gets mad about injustice.

"But I ain't giving up. And neither should you."

INVAJUNETEENTH

UNION

Juneteenth

Celebration

JUNE 19th

GRANT PARK

1015 S Arthur St,
Spokane, WA 99202

12pm - 4pm

FOOD!

ENTERTAINMENT!

FAMILY FUN!

VENDORS!

VENDOR

SIGN UP!

NAACP
Spokane Branch

Celebrate
JUNETEENTH

19, JUNE
6:30PM

Gonzaga
Hemmingson
Center

CLIFF
AVRIL

FORMER SEATTLE
SEAHAWKS SUPERBOWL
CHAMPION &
PHILANTHROPIST

Join us for this special fireside
chat with a former Super Bowl
star turned activist.

MUSICAL GUEST:
ALETHEA DUMAS

LIBERATION IN UNITY

Miss Juneteenth honors Black
excellence, heritage, hope

Black Lens staff reports

On April 26 at Spokane Community College, eight young women stepped into their power through confidence, oration, creative expression, and a shared celebration of identity and liberation. The inaugural 2025 Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant – coordinated by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center alongside a dedicated committee and volunteers – was not just a pageant, but a moment of unity, vision, and cultural pride.

The presence and passion of the community served as a powerful reminder that celebrations like this are not only about honoring Black excellence, heritage, and sisterhood, but also about collective solidarity. Juneteenth is more than a date – it is a living symbol of our struggle, our resilience, and our shared pursuit of liberation. This theme echoes across communities and generations,

COURTESY OF GLOS

Left to right are Ovianna Williams, Makayla Roberson, Mwajuma Ishibaleka, Anesu Whacha, Daniella Musesambili, Genae Langford, Auda Muneza and Mya Jefferson.

Anesu Whacha was named Miss Juneteenth.

Genae Langford: Ferris High School

Auda Muneza: North Central High School

Mya Jefferson: West Valley High School

The 2025 Miss Juneteenth Slate of Candidates

Anesu Whacha: Miss Juneteenth, Shadle Park High School

Mwajuma Ishibaleka: 1st Runner Up, Lewis and Clark High School

Daniella Musesambili: 2nd Runner Up, Shadle Park High School

Makayla Roberson: Lewis and Clark High School

Ovionna Williams: Lewis and Clark High School

reminding us that true freedom is a collective journey.

Board member Shamerica Nakamura reflects on relationship between religion, faith, resilience, liberation

By Shamerica Nakamura
THE BLACK LENS

On May 1, I attended the screening and discussion of the powerful and deeply moving documentary "Juneteenth: Faith & Freedom." This event was hosted by the BSU at Whitworth University and included the co-producer of the film, Reverend Rasool Berry, who led the discussion at the end of the

film. The film is tremendous in framing the story of Juneteenth through the lens of faith and resilience while centering the voices and experiences of Black Americans. Its approach of unpacking how Christianity was both weaponized to justify slavery and reclaimed by the enslaved as a source of liberation was done very thoughtfully.

I walked into this documentary believing it would

be a history lesson but left with so much more. It prompted me to reflect on how faith, culture, and community remain essential pillars in our ongoing pursuit of freedom, justice, and healing. It was a great reminder that as we continue to confront injustices today, we must remember our past while also focusing on the future (Sankofa).

See JUNETEENTH, 16

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHTS

A message about the power of the human mind

We should all know that the human mind is a potent instrument, capable of shaping not only our perceptions of reality but also our very destinies. One such potent tool for unlocking human potential is the practice of visualizing success. This technique involves vividly imagining oneself achieving a specific goal, experiencing the emotions associated with achievement, and mentally rehearsing the steps necessary to get there. The act of visualizing success significantly bolsters an individual's self-belief. By repeatedly immersing oneself in mental imagery of triumph, individuals begin to internalize the belief that they possess the necessary skills and resilience to achieve their goals. This heightened self-confidence translates into increased risk-taking, improved decision-making, and a greater willingness to embrace challenges. As self-doubt diminishes, individuals are more likely to step outside their comfort zones, explore new avenues, and ultimately achieve greater heights. Furthermore, visualization



By Anesu Whacha
MISS JUNETEENTH 2025/
BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



enhances focus and clarity. When an individual vividly imagines their desired outcome, it helps them identify the specific steps and actions required to reach that goal. This clarity of vision allows individuals to prioritize tasks, eliminate distractions, and allocate their resources effectively. By focusing on the end goal, individuals are better equipped to navigate the complexities of their journey, anticipate potential obstacles, and develop effective strategies to overcome them.

JARELL HADLEY OF SHADLE PARK HIGH

By Anesu Whacha
THE BLACK LENS

I recently had the opportunity to interview Jarrell Hadley, a fellow schoolmate who is interested in being a pharmacy technician. Our conversation provided a fascinating glimpse into the future of healthcare, as seen through the eyes of a driven young man. Jarrell hopes to work in a hospital after graduation.

He spoke passionately about his coursework, emphasizing the importance of understanding not only the medications themselves but also the intricate details surrounding their administration. Before switching to a program called Project Search, Jarrell was at Newtech Skills Center. He described how he learned about drug interactions, side effects, and the vital role of accurate patient information while there. Inspired by his mother's work in the nursing field, this undoubtedly played a significant role in inspiring his interest in healthcare.

One notable aspect of Jarrell's learning journey through these programs is the emphasis on real-world application – a clear contrast to traditional high school. He particularly valued the focus on developing essential professional skills such as communication, teamwork, and workplace etiquette, lessons he believes will definitely serve him in the future.

Midway through his senior year, Jarrell transitioned into Project SEARCH, a better fit for him. Like Newtech, this program aims to support students pursuing careers through hands-on ex-



COURTESY

Jarell Hadley demonstrates what a pharmacy tech does in the classroom.

perience and on-site training. He shares more about this opportunity in the interview below.

Q: Tell us about Project SEARCH.

A: Project SEARCH is a great way to start your career, especially if you're interested in working in a hospital setting. They reach out to students during their senior year and guide you through the process. You get to explore different roles in the hospital, go through interviews, and figure out what path you want to take. Once you graduate, you go

through about two weeks of paid training. If everything goes well and they like how you perform, you can get hired on the spot.

Q: How did you find out about Project SEARCH?

A: One of my teachers at Shadle told me about it and encouraged me to apply. The Project SEARCH team came to our class during advisory and talked about all the opportunities available. Since I was already interested in being a pharmacy technician, they explained how I could continue that path through the hospital or even transition into other roles like nursing later—all while getting paid.

Q: Do you see Project SEARCH as a good opportunity after high school?

A: Definitely. It really helps students who want to work in health care get a head start. Project SEARCH puts you into hands-on training right after graduation. If they like how you work, you can get hired quickly.

Q: Do you think Project SEARCH is a good fit for you?

A: Yeah, it is. It lines up with my goals and gives me the support I need to move forward.

Jarrell exudes a quiet confidence as he envisions his future in health care. His journey serves as a powerful reminder that education should not merely impart knowledge but also equip students with the skills and mindset necessary to succeed in the real world.



AFRICAN AMERICAN GRADUATION IN PHOTOS

From Black Lens staff reports

In an effort to acknowledge our past, honor our present and build a brighter future, dozens of Black students from various levels, schools and universities walked the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center stage at Gonzaga University as part of the 29th African American Graduation on Saturday, May 3. Here are some photos highlighting the event.



Laila Traylor, a Shadle Park High School graduate, stands with her family.



Shadle Park High School graduates Jase Bower, left, and Arius Esiwini, pose for a photo.

Khamari Hills, left, and Yeta Holloway Jr., graduated from Medical Lake High School.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Devol Yokley-Griffin, of Cheney High School, flashes peace signs.



Mwajuma Ishibaleka graduated from Lewis and Clark High School.



Courtney Bowers graduated from Ferris High School this spring.



Kylia Harris graduated from Spokane Community College.



Mayah Eberhardt graduated from EWU's dental hygiene program.



JERISSA JONES OF LAKESIDE HIGH SCHOOL

From Black Lens staff reports

Q: What college are you planning to attend in the fall?

A: I'm going to the University of Portland in the fall.

Q: What are your career interests?

A: I'm going into education. I'd like to be a special education teacher, primarily at the elementary level. I'm also thinking about getting a minor in history and possibly teaching that for a few years as well.

Q: What accomplishments are you most proud of during your high school journey?

A: I'm most proud of being a Spokane Scholar. I was awarded the Spokane Scholar Award

for Fine Arts at my high school and recognized for my time doing theater over the past four years. With my GPA being above 3.5, I was able to qualify, and it felt really special to be recognized for the hard work I put into both my academics and the theater department. Being at the Spokane Scholar banquet and surrounded by other students doing impressive things was an amazing experience.

Q: Who or what has inspired you the most along the way? How has your identity shaped your goals?

A: My family is my biggest inspiration. I've had opportunities that my parents didn't have, so I try to make the most of them—to show appreciation

and to better myself for them. I go to a rural high school in Suncrest where there aren't many other Black students, so sometimes it felt like I had to prove myself. I've worked hard to show that I'm just as capable and valuable as anyone else. I want people to know that my community is smart, talented, and deserving of every opportunity.

Q: What message would you share with younger Black students who are still trying to find their way?

A: I would tell them that the world is yours. You can do anything you see your peers doing. Don't let anything hold you back. Go after every opportunity you're interested in and nev-

er get discouraged. Put in your best effort—because you really can do anything you set your mind to.

Q: You mentioned earlier that being a Black student has been part of your motivation. Could you share more about what that means to you?

A: For me, being a Black student means showing people that we are educated, smart, and deserving of the same recognition and opportunities as anyone else. I go to a school where there aren't many students who look like me, so I've worked to make sure they see me as just as capable. I take pride in representing my community and proving that we belong in every space.



Jerissa Jones proudly wears her medal of achievement after receiving top honors in Fine Arts at the Spokane Scholars Awards Ceremony.

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHTS

GENAE LANGFORD GRADUATES FROM FERRIS HIGH SCHOOL

From Black Lens staff reports

Q: What accomplishment are you most proud of during your high school journey, and what does it mean to you as a young Black student in Spokane?

A: Most proud is probably just gonna be my grades and my work ethic. Because it's gotten me multiple scholarships and multi-

ple opportunities. It's important to me as a Black student because the stereotype is that we can't be good students. But then I just prove them all wrong.

Q: Who or what has inspired you most along the way, and how has your identity shaped your goals for the future?

A: The person who inspired me the most is my great-grand-

ma, Mary Langford. She taught me how to be a good student and work hard for everything in my life. Since I had to care for her, it really shaped me—I really want to be in the medical field. That's why I chose to become a pharmacist—so I can help other people like how I helped my grandma.

Q: What message would you share with younger

Black students who are still finding their way?

A: That they should work hard and make sure they know what they wanna do, and not what others want them to do.

Q: Where are you going to school in the fall, and what career are you choosing?

A: I'm going to Washington State University, where I'll be studying to become a pharmacist.



Genae Langford

Kamryn Richardson of North Central High

From Black Lens staff reports

Q: What accomplishment are you most proud of during your high school journey, and what does it mean to you as a young Black student?

A: One of the accomplishments I'm most proud of during my high school journey was serving in a leadership role where I helped plan events and create meaningful change within the North Central High School family. Our school saying is "We are family always," and being part of a team that worked to build school spirit and make everyone feel seen, truly made that saying possible. As a young Black student, it was empowering to be in a position where I could lead by example and help shape a positive environment for others. It showed me that representation is needed and reminded me that my voice and the voices of others like me deserve to be heard and respected.

Q: Who or what has inspired you most along the way, and how has your identity shaped your goals for the future?

A: Honestly, my greatest source of motivation has always come from within. During challenging times, I consistently drew strength from that inner drive. I was also fortunate to have the unwavering support of mentors like Shamerica Nakamura and Ingrid Rivera, two incredible women who made it their mission to ensure I never lost faith in myself, even when the path became difficult. My identity has deeply influenced my future goals by instilling in me a sense of purpose. To take the knowledge, encouragement, and sense of belonging I've received from the Spokane community and share it with others, empowering them to feel confident, seen, and comfortable in who they are.

Q: What message would you share with younger Black students who are still finding their way?

A: Surround yourself with people who are moving in the direction you aspire to go, those who will inspire you, push you to grow, and stand by you as you pursue your goals.

Q: Where are you going to school in the fall, what career will you choose?

A: I will be attending Seattle Pacific University, where I'll be majoring in Exercise Science with a concentration in Kinesiology as I pursue my goal of becoming an Occupational Therapist. This path reflects my passion for the human body and helping others feel like they have someone in their corner when life isn't being easy on them. From witnessing family members with serious illnesses, I am making it my goal to help people in times of crisis.



Kamryn Richardson

From Whitworth to what's next

Isaac Price on faith, leadership and inclusive student advocacy

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

For Isaac Price, leadership isn't just a title – it's a responsibility carried with clarity, humility, and vision. A senior at Whitworth University majoring in political science with minors in Spanish and philosophy, Price has served as student body president and held multiple campus roles, including Residence Hall Senator, Resident Assistant (RA), Community Outreach Coordinator, and Vice President of the Black Student Union (BSU).

But his journey into leadership started far from campus meetings or public speaking engagements. Raised in Hillsboro, Oregon, by a Nigerian mother and a Californian father, Price grew up in a largely white, evangelical environment and was homeschooled through high school.

"Representation wasn't something I really understood until I got to college," he reflects. "Being homeschooled meant I was mostly in insulated spaces. It wasn't until I joined the BSU that I really began connecting with my identity as a Black person."

His entry into leadership was organic. After joining BSU, he volunteered, stepped into formal roles, and eventually took on the highest student government office.

Being one of the few students of color in predominantly white academic spaces has sharpened Price's awareness of his presence. "It abso-



Isaac Price graduated from Whitworth University.

lutely influences my motivation," he says. "I often find myself thinking about how I can advocate not only for underrepresented students but for all students – while still honoring my own identity and convictions."

That balance of serving all while staying true to self is something Price navigates daily. "There's tension, especially when you're in both spaces," he explains. "I'm a BSU member, and I'm also the student government president. Sometimes, those roles conflict."

Inclusion, Price believes, is more than a talking point – it's a lived experience. "To truly bridge gaps across cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs, you have to do a lot of listening and a lot of supporting," he says.

He credits much of his growth to mentorship from three dynamic women of color in administration at Whitworth: Rhosetta Rhodes, Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students; Dr. Micki Abercrombie-Do-

nahue, Interim Chief Diversity Officer; and Dr. Shari Clarke, Director of Student Success, Equity, and Belonging.

"They've taught me how to lead with strength and strategy, how to stand firm in conviction while navigating institutional realities," he says. "They've been mentors, sounding boards, and anchors."

Faith, combined with a strong belief in the inherent dignity of every person and a commitment to making each student feel heard, has grounded Price's work. These values have shaped his approach to fostering an environment where all students feel seen, respected, and empowered.

This model of mentorship informs how Price interacts with underclassmen and aspiring student leaders. Whether it's offering encouragement, checking in with students of color, or engaging in honest conversations, Price believes deeply in planting seeds of possibility.

"Representation opens doors. Just being visible lets others imagine themselves in these roles," he says.

His leadership hasn't been without its challenges. A recent controversy involved a student government-approved speaker who publicly criticized critical race theory. As a BSU member, Price shared the community's concerns – yet as student body president, he had to uphold the broader commitment to campus dialogue.

"That was hard," he ad-

mits. "But I made sure to tell the BSU, 'I see you. I support what you're doing. I have to navigate this role – but I'm still with you.'" His approach: transparency, empathy, and a willingness to hold space for multiple truths.

Faith is a grounding force for Price, guiding his values and decisions.

"It keeps me centered," he says. "But so does community – my friends, my day-ones – people who knew me before the titles. They remind me who I am."

Following his recent graduation, Price sees law school or nonprofit work on the horizon.

"I'm drawn to the intersection of policy and human impact," he shares. "Maybe ministry too – wherever I can serve with purpose."

His advice to young Black students considering leadership?

"That hesitancy you feel? It's real – and it's valid. But you already have the gifts within you. When you show up, even if it feels like you're standing alone, you're making space for others to follow. Believe in that. Test it. You'll be surprised how it shows up."

Isaac Price's journey is a reminder that leadership rooted in faith, purpose, and integrity can create lasting impact – and that one student's voice, guided by values, can make small impactful ripples. Representation doesn't just matter – it has the potential to change outcomes and is a vital part of building a sense of belonging.

Elysee Kazadi of Whitworth follows journey of purpose, perseverance

From Black Lens staff reports

Elysee Kazadi's academic journey is more than a personal milestone – it's a statement of endurance, identity, and community service. Now holding a master's degree in Administrative and Nonprofit Leadership, the Whitworth University graduate reflects on what it means to reach this point as a Black student and former refugee determined to give back.

"I'm proud that I was able to finish the race though many people around that look like me or have been through the same circumstances as me, have stayed long to finish the race and now that I'm having my master's in administrative and nonprofit leadership, which is a totally different and unique degree. I am proud that I am one of a kind and I have the degree which represents the community," Elysee says.



Elysee Kazadi

Education has always been more than a personal pursuit – it's a tool for transformation. His journey has been shaped by both his roots and the communities he's connected with in Spokane. Elysee's commitment to service and growth is grounded in the belief that

change starts with vision.

"What inspired me mostly was just the community at large, me being able to be part of the community and provide solutions to help alleviate the suffering of community was what pushed me to go ahead ... I can't say right now that I've fully found my identity, but ... the hope that the future that we have will be even greater and better."

Now working in higher education as a retention specialist, Elysee supports students in staying enrolled and thriving – contributing to shaping policy in real time. Looking ahead, he aspires to influence public policy on a broader scale. But his message for those coming up behind him remains simple and powerful:

Dream so big that it scares you. "You might think you don't have resources, but I mean, you're gonna make it."

Noah Gadd-Lewis of W. Valley

From Black Lens staff reports

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: To attend Northern Arizona University and study dental hygiene.

Q: What inspired you to go into the health sciences?

A: I've never had a bad experience with my health appointments, and I've always wanted to help people while working with my hands.

Q: You mentioned liking to work with your hands. Why is that important for your learning style?

A: I feel like some people get lost choosing jobs that are easy or just pay well instead of doing something they actually enjoy. I want to do something that lasts and doesn't keep me sitting at a desk all day. I want to be active.

Q: Does being active match your learning style?

A: Yes, for sure. I like to work with others – I can't really sit in a room all day. That's just not fun.

Q: When did you realize that about yourself?

A: Around the start of my junior year. I realized sports won't always be there or be reliable, but academics can get you far in life.

Q: What accomplishment are you most proud of during high school?

A: Being able to say I'm going to graduate high school. High school has a lot of challenges, and it's a big feat – especially because my father didn't graduate. It'll be great to be the first in my family to go to college.

Q: What does it mean to you to be a young Black student?

A: It means a lot – more than people know. I go to a majority-white school, so being one of the few African-American students means a lot. When you see someone who resembles you, there's an automatic connection. It's nice to be different.

Q: Who or what has inspired you most, and how has your identity shaped your goals?

A: My father, Lee Lewis. I've seen him on his journey since I was



Noah Gadd Lewis graduated from West Valley High.

6 – not coming from much, but now living the dream he wanted. That inspires me to choose what I want and go after it.

Q: How do you think your identity will impact you as you move to Arizona and meet new people?

A: I'll carry my identity with me. I know I'll still run into situations where I'm one of the few people of color, but that doesn't change who I am. I have a proud background and ancestors behind me.

Q: Is it hard to be one of the only Black students in the room?

A: I'm OK with it. I've gotten used to being the only one, even though some topics can be hard to talk about. But I manage.

Q: What message would you like to share with younger Black students?

A: Stay true to yourself. Don't change who you are to fit in—those groups usually aren't the best for you anyway.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

A: Just enjoy the little moments in life.

Michael Kamau of Spokane Community College

From Black Lens staff reports

Q. What accomplishment are you most proud of during your college journey, and what does it mean to you as a young Black student? What is your degree in?

A. I am proud of sticking it out through the college program. It was really tough because of many factors – whether it was people at the clinical setting or not having free time for anything else besides schoolwork and studying. I was also dealing with microaggressions daily.



Kamau

has your identity shaped your goals for the future?

A. My mother has always been a cornerstone, backbone, and guiding beacon. With all that she has sacrificed and experienced in life, she is still supporting me and my goals – while pursuing her next pas-

sion each step of the way.

Q. What message would you share with younger Black students who are still finding their way?

A. No matter where you go, you will face a lot of challenges simply from the color of the skin we are gifted with. You can sink or swim – which is easier said than done. However, remember that at the end of the race, only you will know what you could have truly accomplished versus what you did accomplish.

Q. What career are you pursuing?

A. Invasive Cardiovascular Technology

ARTS AND INSPIRATION / FROM THE FRONT PAGE

GOOD STEWARDS OF THE GIFT

Art, love, legacy of Acute Inflections

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

“We like to say we’re good stewards of the gift. This calling found us. We didn’t set out with a plan, but we knew we wanted to make music with purpose – music that moves you emotionally and spiritually.”
-Sadiki Pierre, Acute Inflections

When you step into an Acute Inflections show, you’re entering more than a concert—it’s an experience. The dynamic duo, Sadiki Pierre and Elasea Douglas, are not only married musicians but also visionaries rooted in culture and connection. With an eclectic blend of jazz and R&B – infused with swagger and social consciousness – they are redefining what it means to be independent artists in today’s world. They introduce themselves simply as eL and Sadiki. Behind the music is a deeper ethos: legacy, Black cultural affirmation, and honoring the past. Unabashedly, they demand excellence, walking

boldly through the front door, and never asking for permission.

Spokane audiences have felt this energy firsthand. In 2024, the duo performed a soulful June-teenth set, followed by a recent show at the Montvale Theater on April 8. That night, the crowd sang along to a blend of ’90s R&B layered with jazzy soul textures and original melodies – all styled in vintage fashion. For many in attendance, including myself, the night was more than a musical showcase – it was a celebration of Black brilliance and artistic freedom.

Their performances are known for their intimacy and emotional resonance, blending humor, narrative, and spontaneous moments with intentional giveaways from Black-owned businesses. Nothing is scripted. “We leave space for the moment—that’s where the magic lives,” Sadiki shares.

A Name That Sparks Wonder

The name Acute Inflections



ACUTE INFLECTIONS MEDIA KIT

Sadiki Pierre and eL comprise Acute Inflections, a jazz and R&B duo.

invites curiosity. “It makes you pause—that’s intentional,” Sadiki explains. “‘Acute’ is both cute and sharp; ‘Inflections’ hints at subtle layers. It captures our vibe.”

Their multidimensional artistry is like motion, reflecting both their musical complexity and a message steeped in veneration for Black history and cultural truth. The name’s playful yet powerful tone – sassy and potent – mirrors the duo’s dynamic presence.

A sound infused with jazz, soul, Afrobeat, and classical influences, Sadiki says, “Music is the original universal language. Even if we

don’t speak the same tongue, a rhythm can still move us. That’s power.”

The Chemistry Behind the Craft

Behind the seemingly effortless synergy lies a dynamic creative process. Both eL and Sadiki are highly driven artists who often find themselves negotiating ideas and visions. There’s definitely a tug-of-war, admits Sadiki. “But we don’t hold back. We put everything on the table and sift through it.”

Their rule: “Eat the meat and spit out the bones.” This open, unfiltered collaboration allows their work to be authentic.

That deliberateness extends to style. The couple performs in Harlem Renaissance elegance, encouraging their audience to do the same. What began as a branding idea has evolved into a signature experience – one that honors Black tradition, elevates the energy of the room, and inspires listeners to show up in their finest attire.

Origin Story

Acute Inflections came to life in 2013 when eL, a Broadway performer, invited Sadiki, a bassist, to join her for a show. When other band members failed to show, the two were left to perform alone. Sadiki recalls feeling exposed and vulnerable – but the audience,

silent at first, was captivated. “That’s when we knew we had something,” he reflects.

With just vocals and an upright bass, their minimalist sound defied convention. Though some urged them to add more instruments, they leaned into their uniqueness. Sadiki refined his style, incorporating percussive bass techniques and layered storytelling. The result was unmistakable – audiences gravitated.

On Integrity and Independence

When asked why they remain independent artists, Sadiki is clear: it’s about freedom, integrity, and autonomy.

“Freedom to be a decent human being and not get taken advantage of; the freedom to use music to deliver the message we want.” He emphasizes the importance of not conforming to trends or chasing profit. Additionally, he values having full control over where they perform, who they work with, and how proceeds are directed – including choosing to support causes aligned with their values.

For those entering the industry, he offers this advice: Don’t sell out. Bend, but don’t break. He underscores being open to growth while staying grounded in core values, connecting with audienc-

See **INFLECTIONS, 13**

GOLF

Continued from 1

Since then, Pine State has grown through nearly five decades of deepening cultural connections. From its annual Juneteenth tournament – now in its 49th year – to Easter egg hunts, coat drives, scholarships and partnerships with Black churches, it has remained a hub of intergenerational connection. In 2023, the club rebranded and reorganized with new leadership to revitalize its presence and ensure its legacy continues.

Today, a younger generation is ushering in Pine State’s next chapter. “People say, ‘Y’all are still around?’ Yes, we’re still here – and we’re coming back strong.”

“My vision for Pine State is that we’re not just a little dot on the map,” Everette-Neufville shares. “We’re going to be the big dot again. We’re going to be an oak tree – with deep, strong roots – and nothing will be able to tip us over.”

Pine State Golf Club serves as both a refuge and a reminder for Black Spokane. In a city where visibility often feels scarce, the club creates space for belonging and celebration.

Welcoming golfers of all skill levels, the focus isn’t on perfection—it’s on connection.

“We’re not pros,” Everette-Neufville laughed. “Some of us are out here chasing balls in the woods. But it’s not about being perfect – it’s about community, laughter, and just being your authentic self.”

Pine State also maintains ties with Black golf clubs nationwide, participating in national tournaments and building a wider network of connection and solidarity—echoing the spirit of the Green Book era, where safe spaces and shared culture made travel and fellowship possible for Black communities.

“What I love about our club,” Everette-Neufville said, “is that we didn’t wait to be given an opportunity. We created our own. And we’re still going. Nothing is stopping us.”

With a commitment to legacy, Pine State is more than a golf club – it’s a foundation of identity, pride, and progress. As Everette-Neufville puts it: “Too many outside forces try to divide us. But we say—this is us. We’ve got each other. And we walk it, not just talk it.”

Billy Poindexter, a longtime Spokane resident, has been part of Pine State since its heyday. It all started with a call from a friend.

“I was into baseball. I didn’t know anything about golf,” he says. “But my friend called and said he was playing down the street. I told him, ‘Ain’t no ballfield up there.’ He said, ‘No, a golf course.’ I said, ‘You sure?’ He said, ‘Just come ride with me for two days.’ So I did.” When he arrived, he was stunned. “Everybody looked like me. I said, ‘Where’d all these brothers come from?’ I’d never seen anything like it.” He was instantly drawn in. “I thought, I’m a baseball player, I can do this. But it took me 10 tries to hit that first ball on the driving range. After that, I said, ‘I’m gonna master this game.’”

He began inviting others from the baseball world. “Some of them never played, just paid dues. But eventually they started picking it up. Next thing you know, we’re back up to 30 members.”

Poindexter, who held multiple leadership roles over the decades, including vice-president, remembers when the club joined the Northwest Golf Association and competed in the legendary “Shootout,” a regional tournament for Black golfers from Portland, Seattle, and beyond. “We were the only Black golf group in Eastern Washington. Shootout started in May – we played at the same course in Umatilla for 20 years. It was our thing.” He even recalls meeting the legendary Bill Russell. For Poindexter, Pine State’s magic is simple: “It’s the camaraderie. It’s the community. This game is ours too.”

Leon Smith, current president of Pine State Golf Club, has served in the role for the past two years. “I’ve been in this for the fellowship – for the brotherhood and all of us getting together,” he says. “We really take a lot of pride in our communities, and we try to bring our communities together.”

His vision centers on growth and impact. “We want to get more people in our community involved with the club and involved with each other,” he explains. “Through golf, through our kids—that’s a big thing. We really stress bringing in our juniors and helping them come up. It’s about using the club to help serve the community even more.”

Pine State Golf Club remains a living legacy of self-determination, community, and cultural preservation.

WILLIAMS

Continued from 1

cal—it comes from experience. “CBT focuses on changing your thoughts to change your behavior. But for many of us, healing doesn’t start in the mind—it starts in the body.”

Raised between Spokane and Senegal, Williams brings a transcontinental perspective. She describes traditional West African healing as deeply communal: rooted in storytelling, spirituality, movement, and mutual care. “Individuality doesn’t promote healing – especially in communities of color. We need spaces where we can be seen without having to justify why we’re showing up the way we’re showing up.”

The Land Remembers

While the outdoors is often framed as a site of healing, for Black Americans, nature can be fraught with inherited fear. “There’s intergenerational trauma connected to the land,” Williams explains. From slave patrols to sharecropping to modern environmental racism, Black people’s relationship to nature has been systematically distorted.

“A lot of Black folks say they’re afraid to hike,” she shares. “They don’t always know why, but that fear has been passed down. It’s tied to what our ancestors endured.”

Even a peaceful trail can trigger deep discomfort: Will I be stared at? Will I be safe? Will someone call the police because I ‘look suspicious’? These aren’t hypotheticals—they’re historical patterns playing out in real time.

Black Women Hike Spokane offers a counter-narrative. It’s a space for Black women to be outdoors on their own terms – to move, rest, and exist without the burden of explaining their presence. Healing on the trail is about more than breathwork and boots – it’s about reclaiming psychological safety and collective belonging.

Movement as Medicine

Williams’ approach to wellness is deeply somatic and culturally grounded. She integrates the science of movement with the lived realities of Black communities:

- Trauma lives in the body: Whether it’s systemic stress or racial microaggressions, the body stores these tensions. Movement—walking, stretching, hiking—helps release it.
- Activating the vagus nerve: Gentle, rhythmic movement soothes the nervous system, shifting the body out of fight-or-flight mode.
- Endorphins and serotonin: Physical activity boosts these natural mood regulators, improving emotional resilience.
- Sunlight and cortisol regulation: Outdoor exposure lowers stress hormones and boosts vitamin D – critical in combating seasonal depression, especially in sun-limited regions like the Inland Northwest.

Still, Williams acknowledges the barriers. “Even I struggle in winter,” she says. “It’s hard to move when it’s gray and cold.” Her advice? Start small. Ten minutes outside. A walk around

often absent in male-centered spaces, especially for Black men.

“We don’t come together enough on the positive,” Jones notes. “Only on the negativity. We need to talk about what’s really going on in our minds. That’s how we grow.”

His words speak to the heart of what Locked In represents: “We’re just fathers trying to figure it out. And when we realize we’re not alone, that’s when the healing starts.”

Work of Emotional Literacy

Jones is open about his own struggle with depression, anger, and the internalized pain of a system that too often fails Black men.

“I didn’t understand who I was at the time, and it took a toll on my mental and physical health,” he says. “But I started learning how to forgive myself. That’s what this journey is about – grace.”

One of the group’s most powerful interventions is emotional intelligence.

“We’re reactors,” he says. “If something happens, we explode. But emotional literacy teaches us there’s another way. You don’t have to be the hardest person on Earth. You can feel. You can cry. That’s strength too.”

Bringing in Black mental health professionals has been key to making these conversations accessible and relatable.

“I’m a stickler for inviting somebody who looks like us,” Jones says. “Because some-

Learn More About Black Women Hike

Instagram: @blackwomenhikespokane

Online: bit.ly/3EWEUQQ

the block. A kitchen dance session. “If it feels like a chore, you’re less likely to stick with it. Find what brings you joy – even if it’s quiet, even if it’s

just for you.”

Healing Isn’t a Hashtag

Wellness isn’t one-size-fits-all. And it definitely isn’t a social media trend. “A lot of wellness content isn’t created with us in mind,” Williams says. “We have to listen to our bodies – not the algorithm.”

She encourages people to define healing on their own terms. Whether that means hiking every weekend or stretching before bed, it’s valid. “You don’t have to perform wellness. You just have to live it.”

Black Women Hike Spokane’s Next Chapter

After early pushback – including safety concerns from those resistant to the group’s mission – Williams restructured Black Women Hike Spokane to protect its members. Today, participants register privately, and hike locations are shared confidentially.

Her long-term vision? Turning the initiative into a nonprofit that removes barriers – financial, emotional and systemic – to nature-based healing. That includes:

- Providing quality gear like hiking boots, hydration packs, and outdoor apparel
- Covering park entry fees and offering annual passes
- Hosting safety and navigation workshops
- Organizing restorative retreats centered around Black women’s wellness
- Partnering with schools and community organizations for greater access

Williams asserts that you don’t need to perform healing – you need to live it. And sometimes the most radical thing you can do for your wellness is to step away from the noise and listen to yourself. “We have to reject the ‘strong Black woman’ narrative and start centering care, softness, and support for ourselves.”

The solution is a clear mandate to decolonize wellness. We have to start with understanding that colonization taught us to see whiteness as the standard – the algorithm that subconsciously defines our actions. So when Black people create space for themselves, it’s seen as exclusionary, or even a threat, instead of restorative and necessary. “Representation alone can be healing,” she says. At its heart, Black Women Hike Spokane is not only about healing on the trail – it’s about rewriting the narrative around who belongs there.

Threaded through every step she takes is a truth that refuses to be silenced: we don’t need permission to heal. And we never did.

FATHERS

Continued from 1

Black men gather bi-weekly to process the highs and lows of fatherhood, life, and legacy.

From Hurt to Healing: A Father’s Reckoning

Jones’s journey hasn’t been without struggle. Despite having a present father and grandfather, he didn’t always get it right.

“With my oldest son, I didn’t get the chance to be in his life the way I wanted to,” he says. “Some of that was my doing, and some of it was the system. That hurt ran deep.”

But healing, he explains, started with looking inward and asking “why.”

“There wasn’t a lot of room for expression growing up,” he says. “My dad was a no-nonsense guy. What he said went. You didn’t have an opinion, and your feelings didn’t matter.”

With a decade between his oldest son and his two daughters, Jones has had a second chance to break that mold.

“Now I let my daughters have a voice. I allow them to express themselves, because it’s important. I wish I could’ve done that growing up.”

IF YOU GO

June Fatherhood Meetup

WHEN: 3:30-5:30 p.m. Sunday
LOCATION: TBD
TOPIC: Continuing Conversation On Self-Care
RSVP: Online at www.lockedinfathers.com/event-list
TO STAY CONNECTED AND GET UPDATES ON FUTURE EVENTS:
FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM: @LockedInFathers
LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: Locked In Fathers Alliance

Brotherhood as a Blueprint

At the heart of Locked In Fathers Alliance is the idea that vulnerability is not weakness – it’s a gateway to freedom.

“We’ve been taught not to trust each other, not to ask for help. But healing requires trust,” Jones says. “We’ve got to come together and talk about these things. That’s how we build.”

The group emphasizes trust, integrity, and emotional literacy – concepts that are

WELLNESS

BLACK GENEALOGY
HAPPY JUNETEENTH!

June 19, 2025, marks the 160th anniversary of Juneteenth. Juneteenth is derived from combining “June” and “nineteenth.” Also known as Freedom Day, Emancipation Day, Jubilee Day, or Juneteenth Independence Day, this day commemorates the end of slavery in Texas, not the entire United States. Slavery officially ended when the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on December 6, 1865.

Although President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order that ended slavery in the states rebelling against the Union, on January 1, 1863, enslaved people in Galveston, Texas, did not learn of their freedom until June 19, 1865. That morning, General Gordon Granger arrived with General Or-

ders No. 3, which liberated all enslaved Black people in Galveston.

The order recommended that people stay in place. However, during the Great Migration, many formerly enslaved individuals left Texas. They migrated in large numbers to the northern and western United States to pursue better job opportunities and escape racial injustice. Others searched for their loved ones who had been sold and separated from their families. Those who participated in the Great Migration brought these celebrations to the rest of the country.

On June 19, 1866, one year after General Orders No. 3 was announced, newly freed individuals organized Texas’s first annual Emancipation Celebrations. Initially, Juneteenth was celebrat-

ed in Galveston through churches, church picnics, and family gatherings. Freedom brought great joy, and Juneteenth is recognized with festivities that unite families and communities. Over time, the celebrations expanded to include park parties, block parties, parades, music, barbecues, family reunions, festivals, Miss Juneteenth contests, and historical reenactments.

Some traditions include the public reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, singing songs like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” and reading works by African American authors such as Maya Angelou and Ralph Ellison.

Red symbolizes many things, including resilience and the blood shed by our African ancestors. On



By Patricia Bayonne-Johnson
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Juneteenth, foods, drinks, and condiments associated with the color red include red beans and rice, red barbecue sauce on ribs and chicken, hot sauce, hibiscus iced tea, strawberry soda, red punch, watermelon, and red velvet cake.

Juneteenth is not just about food, fun, and games. Contemporary celebrations highlight the importance of teaching African American heritage. Some honor Juneteenth by supporting Black-owned businesses, while others explore their roots and

cultural history. It serves as a day to learn about the significance of the Juneteenth holiday, including educational components and honoring our ancestors.

Initially, family reunions served to share stories and celebrate our ancestors’ journeys. Nowadays, family historians frequently offer pedigree charts and Family Group Sheets for heads of households to complete, encouraging family members to write their own stories.

Do you have an ancestor who served in the Civil War as part of the United States Colored Troops (USCT)? You can research at FamilySearch.org and Fold3.com (subscription required). Consider visiting the African American Civil War Memorial Museum online at afroamcivilwar.org or in person in Washington, D.C. This museum honors the service of 209,145 African American soldiers and sailors who fought in the Civil War, offering exhibits, educational programs, and research services.

Opal Lee, known as the grandmother of June-

teenth, was one of the activists in the movement to establish Juneteenth as a federal holiday. She walked across America, gathering more than 1.5 million signatures for her petition to the United States Congress. Although it was rejected, that did not stop her; she persisted. Each year, she walked 2.5 miles to represent the 2.5 years it took for the news of emancipation to reach Texas. She also walked from Fort Worth, her hometown, to Washington, D.C., departing in September 2016 and arriving in January 2017. At 94, her efforts succeeded when a bill was passed to make Juneteenth a federal holiday.

Legislation establishing Juneteenth National Independence Day was passed by Congress on June 16, 2021, and signed by President Joe Biden on June 17, 2021. It became the second African American federal holiday in the USA, the first being Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In 2024, President Joe Biden awarded Opal Lee the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

FROM THE WATER’S EDGE



Living a ‘river bug’s life’

This article is personal – it’s about living well and dying. It seems, the more people we grow close to – the more we increase the likelihood that we will walk with them through some good times and bad ones. This is what comes from having caring relationships.

Last October I hosted a small group of Black and Brown fly anglers here in Spokane. I wrote about the amazing time we had in a previous issue of this paper. Even though we were meeting for the first time, it instantly felt like a family reunion.

We spent days and nights together on the north side of town. We stayed up late like teenagers, played board games, laughed until our sides ached and poked fun at one another. We even shed a few tears during the weekend. One in the group, in his mid-40, was particularly playful and we often laughed out loud at his silly antics. We all have unforgettable memories of him smiling and having the time of his life. There is one picture in-particular of him diving into the unexpected arms of some of us standing in the front row of a group photo shot. He was surprisingly caught by the first three people in line. He was the life of the party!

On one occasion he went philosophical on us by leading us in a deep conversation about the importance of each of us living a “river bug’s life” – the kind of river bug fly anglers, like us, observe when stream-side and try to artificially imitate. River bugs have a very short lifespan, some only living a few days once they become adults. What if, he said, we, like them, knew that we only had 72 hours of life. In that short span of time, we must learn to fly, find a mate, lay our eggs and die. Bugs, he posed must live a purposeful life. They live well, never taking the life they are living for granted. We should, like bugs, he suggested, live purposeful lives. Thank-



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



fully after that bit of heart felt sharing, he was back to his playful self. Those philosophical moments live on in me and in the others who were there. That was October 2024.

Early winter 2025. While everyone in the country was dealing with the shocking reality of who is back in the White House, our fun-loving brother and his family received heartbreaking news. Their news was the worst kind: his medical lab results came back, stage three/four pancreatic cancer! Of all the cancers out there, this one is the most difficult to beat.

The news and shock spread among our new extended family like wildfire. Aggressive treatment began almost immediately as they discovered that the cancer had spread beyond his pancreas.

This past April I caught a direct flight from Spokane to his home in Minneapolis. We met for lunch within blocks of where George Floyd was killed. The police station in the neighborhood, scorched by flames, has been boarded-up since. There are other scorched buildings and empty lots nearby where thriving businesses once stood.

He greeted me with a half-smile and cautioned me not to hug him too tight. He was

noticeably thin and had the look on his face of an exhausted warrior fighting for his life. It was just the two of us seated in this black run restaurant.

He has to force himself to eat because the drugs suppress his appetite, but food helps fend-off the constant nausea. The conversation was awkward at first. I did not want to be the one to bring up the obvious. Fortunately for me, he did. It was hard to hear. We sat in silence a lot.

After the hard stuff was sufficiently covered, the conversation took an anticipated turn. Remember, we met through our mutual love for fly-fishing and for spending time outdoors. Secondly, we share a passion for being outdoors with others who look like us. After a slight pause, the question he raised was not a total surprise. “Bob, do you want to fish tomorrow? I’ll pick you up in the morning and don’t worry about the gear. I’ve got plenty.”

I told him before the trip that I was packing light, which translates to, I’m not packing any fishing gear, in-spite-of-the-fact that I know how important river time is to him. Fly-fishing and spending time outdoors saved his life once and he’s hoping that it will do it again. Hell yes, was my response!

After about an hour’s drive, we pulled into a parking lot next to one of his favorite stretches of river. One of his black fly-fishing buddies was waiting for us. This day was going to be about three brothers doing what we love to do, where we love to do it. It was going to be about living well and not dying. The three of us rigged up our fly rods and stepped, one after the other, into the Rush River and started casting.

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

KAZUKO WELLNESS

WHERE ENERGY
GOES, HEALING
FLOWS

Breathe in.
Breathe out.
Begin.

We are energy. The movement, the feelings, the thoughts – all energy. And, as I’m sure you recall from your middle school science classes, the law of conservation of energy tells us that energy cannot be created or destroyed – it can only be transformed.

If we know this, then we can start to see and feel how “holding in”, “pushing down”, that anger, sadness, discomfort, the grief is an unnatural and dangerous effort in the body. Energy wants to move, to flow, to transform. The energy of a moment, a thought, of history – lives lived before our own – cannot be destroyed. I believe it festers, like a dense thunder cloud fighting for space to release the weight of its water and exhale its roar. This effort to trap energy, to hold it in one spot is the process of manifesting disease in the body.

Let us rest with that for a moment. Trapped and unprocessed experiences, sensation, and feelings cause dis-ease in the body. This is the exact reason why mental health professionals exist. To help people move that experience from a stuck spot into motion. There are many ways this can be supported and at the root of it all, it’s about releasing the fear of what might happen if we feel the thing we are holding in. That fear is valid and surmountable. If ever you feel a stir inside, know that you are your first and greatest healer – you are wise, capable, and intuitive to shepherd yourself into expansion.

You are the catalyst. I believe that first, the spark of dis-ease must be observed. Perhaps it comes from an anger blow up in a situation that didn’t call for the size of response you expelled. An overwhelming sense of apathy and lackluster for life and anything in between. Perhaps it’s related to a specific situation or person. Just notice – witness.

Once you do that, you can decide how that energy wants to move through you. Maybe this is the moment you seek out guidance and support. Let this be whoever and whatever feels accessible to you and for you to begin the movement of energy. A family member, a friend, a mentor, a mental health professional, anyone you feel you can be open with and hold you in a space that prioritizes listening rather than counseling or advising you. The respon-



By jasmine linane-booe
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



sibility still rests with you to own your energy transformation. Talking is one form of release. Make a goal to find at least two. It could be through journaling, meditation, appropriate movement (yoga, weight lifting, dancing, etc.).

Let yourself explore. Maybe you try journaling for a while and it sparks that you’d rather be singing or painting, or hiking. Follow what brings you peace and release. This effort isn’t about “solving the problem”, it’s about simply letting energy move. In “Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and Strategies”, Renee Linklater shares the seven natural ways of healing as talking, sweating, yawning, sighing, crying, shaking, and laughing. What is it that you can pull into your life to let the body experience these forms of release on a regular basis?

The intention you put into your body and the energy that moves through and around you is yours to own. You can’t create more, you can’t destroy what’s there but you can transform it. You can plant seeds of good thoughts, loving community, and a healthy body and use the wisdom, the nourishment, the compost, to make it grow.

Talk through it. Laugh through it. Cry through it. Rest through it. Dance through it. Breathe through it. Sweat through it. Move through it.

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

SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD NETWORK

MORE THAN A HAIRCUT
How a Spokane barbershop became
a haven for healing and brotherhood

DEEP ROOTS, STRONG WOMEN

By Stephaine Courtney
SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD

In the heart of Spokane, where clippers hum and conversations flow, Jay Trout’s barbershop has become more than a grooming space – it’s a sanctuary. A space of healing. A cultural cornerstone for Black and Brown men navigating life’s hardest moments. Jay became a Washington State Peer counselor and helped answer the call to the lack of

mental health support. For Perry Martinez, the barbershop wasn’t just about a fresh cut. It was a lifeline. Diagnosed recently with stage four colon cancer, Perry turned to a familiar place – not just for a haircut, but for strength. “I told my wife, ‘I don’t want to look how I feel,’” he shared. “So I went to see Jay. No appointment, no heads-up. He just knew something was off. We sat for four hours during a 45-minute

cut, and we talked about life, legacy, and faith. He reminded me how to think positively – something I didn’t even realize I had lost.” Jay’s shop is that rare space where vulnerability meets trust. “When somebody you know and trust challenges your mindset, it can shift everything,” Perry reflected. “Jay gave me more than a cut – he gave me the courage to face my future.” Jay Trout never set out to be a mental health advocate – he just wanted to cut hair and contribute to his community. But what grew

from that dream is something much deeper. “I didn’t realize the kind of impact I’d have,” Jay says. “I just wanted to do what I love. But these guys – they’re not just customers, they’re my friends. They come in, they stay, they talk, and we build something real.” Peer support, especially among men of color, is often overlooked in traditional mental health models. Perry, with his background in counseling and parole, knows the system well. “You can’t teach empathy from a textbook,” he says. “People want someone who’s been there. Someone who sees them.” And that’s exactly what Jay’s barbershop offers: authentic connection. A space where pain can be shared, joys celebrated, and cultural identity affirmed.

Jay’s interest in becoming a formal peer support specialist grew naturally from his lived experience. “I always knew I’d be in the community, but I didn’t know how much the community would be in here,” he says. “We talk about everything – race, life, grief, fatherhood – and we don’t apologize for it.” Even those who’ve moved away still return – not just for a cut, but to reconnect with a man who has quietly become a mentor, counselor, and brother. As Spokane continues to grapple with how to support mental health, especially in communities of color, Jay Trout’s barbershop stands

as a model – a place where the clippers may be sharp, but the real power is in the conversation. Jay is a part of the Barber’s and Beautician’s project, led by The Northwest Credible Messenger through the HUB located in Spokane, Washington and The Shades of Motherhood Network. To learn more about how Washington State is building mental health support in the community, explore the House Bill HB 1427 (Certified Peer Support Specialists).

Classic Cuts, West is located at 327 W. Third Ave., Suite B, Spokane, WA 99201.

Scholarships for care with

COMPLETE FAMILY MEDICAL & SPECIALTY

We are providing scholarships for care with Ebony Graham!

Ebony Graham is a Native of Florida. She graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a bachelors degree in Registered Nursing. Furthering her education, she graduated from Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas as Advanced Nurse Practitioner in 2017. She completed her residency at CHAS Health in Spokane, Washington in 2019 and has been serving the Spokane community since. She enjoys traveling, history and making memories with family and friends.



www.completefamilymedical.com

WELCOME TO ROOTS AND WINGS

Welcome to “Roots and Wings,” where purposeful parenting is at the heart of our vision. Our parenting style goes beyond simple day-to-day choices; parenting is a deep and meaningful journey that intertwines with the very foundation of our children’s futures. This heritage extends far beyond the present; it reaches into future generations beyond what we can currently see. Parenting is like planting seeds of wisdom, strength, and love that later bloom into enduring virtues that pave the way for future generations. As we walk this path as one people, our goal is not just to be outstanding individuals, but to be excellent parents who promote resilience and compassion in our children. The age-old saying, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” is a powerful reminder that parenting is a constantly evolving practice that requires patience and flexibility. It is a path marked by the lessons we learn from our failures and the approaches that we find successful. In the African-American community, we face distinct challenges, yet we are steadfast in our mission and purpose, ready to face difficulties and learn as one. Let us carefully identify the opportunity to foster a nurturing environment, one that ensures our children are gifted by us, the village, with both roots and wings.

Understanding Parenting Styles

In the rich fabric of African-American life, parenting is more than “Raising Children”; it is the careful, mindful crafting of a great legacy that is rich in strength and resilience, shaping the leaders and thinkers of the next African-American generation. It is about infusing values and cultivating strong spirits that will carry our heritage proudly forward. Our history, experiences, and the unique challenges we face will determine how we parent. To navigate this complex terrain, it is essential to understand the four basic parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved. Each has its own implications for our children’s development and eventual successes or failures. Which category do you fit into? What is your main parenting style, or do you find yourself combining two or more? Reflect on how this may influence your child and their future.

Authoritative parenting is generally viewed as the most balanced and effective. It is a blend of warmth and nurturance with firm boundaries and clear expectations. Within the African American community, this style of parenting is not only the most effective but is extremely beneficial as it promotes open communication and respect within the family unit – this is essential to building resilience in children. Children raised by authoritative parents are more likely to develop high self-esteem, better social skills, and the resilience to overcome challenges successfully. This approach counteracts societal pressures and challenges by building a foundation of support and allowing children to excel.

Authoritarian parents are firm in establish-



By Leola Rouse
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



ing rules and standards with limited scope for discussion. While this can encourage conformity, it tends to suppress imagination and independence. Within African-American society, some families practice this style, prompted by external pressures and the need to equip their children for a harsh world. However, this often results in adverse consequences, such as resentment and rebellion among the children. This absence of open communication makes the children feel misunderstood and unappreciated, hindering their emotional growth and ability to establish trusting relationships. Children can also develop heightened anxiety and low self-esteem, which makes it difficult for them to deal with life’s complexities on their own.

Permissive parents are less strict, providing children with much freedom and few limitations. Although this style promotes creativity and spontaneity, it also leads to a lack of discipline and responsibility. The lack of structure may cause children to have problems with self regulation, making it difficult for them to navigate situations that demand awareness of social norms and expectations. Consequently, such children may struggle to stay focused and motivated, thus inhibiting their academic and social growth.

Uninvolved parents offer limited guidance and emotional support, significantly impacting a child’s social and emotional growth. Children raised in such environments frequently contend with feelings of abandonment and neglect, resulting in low self-esteem, unsatisfactory academic performance, and challenges in forming healthy relationships. Furthermore, the absence of emotional support can intensify behavioral problems and foster a profound sense of isolation.

Knowing Our Parenting Styles

It is crucial that we take the time to thoroughly reflect on our own parenting style, as it is one of the most significant responsibilities and gifts that we can give to our children. The way in which we parent will undoubtedly have a profound and lasting effect on our children, influencing their development and behavior both today and in the future. As parents, many of us have naturally adopted the parenting styles that were given to us by our own parents, often replicating the methods and approaches that we experienced during our upbringing. This inheritance can be invaluable, as our own upbringing can serve as a wealth of wisdom and a rich source of

imperative knowledge that is needed to build a solid foundation for our children. By carefully examining and possibly adapting the lessons and practices passed down to us, we can create a nurturing and supportive environment that fosters growth, learning, and emotional well-being, ensuring that our children are well-equipped to face the challenges of the world.

Matching Parenting Approaches to Goals and Values

As I strive to raise capable, confident and knowledgeable children, I find it essential to ask myself: How was I parented? How did that affect me as a child? What is my parenting style? What effect is that having on my child? Are there things I must change? What are my personal values, and what goals do I have for my children? My parenting style should reflect the goals and values I envision for my child. When it aligns with these principles, it becomes a force that supports my child’s growth, personality, and abilities. However, if my parenting doesn’t harmonize with my long-term aspirations, it can negatively impact my child’s development. By adapting our approach to more closely resemble our ideals, we can establish a culture of care in which our children are set up to thrive both individually and socially. Take the opportunity to develop as a parent. Examine your own parenting style, recognize its effect, and consciously make adjustments that align with the vision you see for your children.

This journey encompasses more than the creation

of roots and wings for our children; it demands the growth of our own foundations, the reclaiming of the wings we have lost along the way, and the restoration of the ability to fly. Through active, conscious choice, we shape a tomorrow in which our children can truly thrive with the strength, wisdom, and love we have imparted to them. Let us unite as one, bound together in a shared purpose to build a collective legacy that inspires and empowers the future generation of African-American children and parents everywhere.

Cultural Connections
Counseling PLLC

Counseling Services

Bobby is a dedicated mental health therapist from Tacoma, Washington, now based in Spokane Washington with over 10 years of experience in the social work field. Throughout his career, he has worked with individuals and families facing various challenges, specializing in trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, and emotional well-being. Bobby is passionate about helping clients navigate their mental health journeys with empathy, compassion, and evidence-based strategies. He now focuses on providing therapy to individuals seeking support for anxiety, depression, PTSD and life transitions. With a deep commitment to his community, Bobby continues to create safe spaces for healing and personal growth.

Book a session today!

(509) 213-7870
thetherapist@culturalconnections-counseling.org

FREE MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY FOR BLACK MOTHERS AND RELATIONSHIP COUNSELING IN SPOKANE COUNTY

ALLOWING CHANGE



Brittney Daniels (She/her) is a passionate therapist and coach with a deep commitment to understanding love, relationships, and personal growth. Her life motto, “what you allow is what will continue,” reflects her belief in the power of choice and self-healing. With a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Washington State University, Brittney further honed her expertise with certifications in Life Coaching and Relationship Coaching, as well as a Master’s in Marriage and Family Therapy from National University.

Throughout her journey, Brittney has dedicated herself to supporting youth, young adults, and neurodivergent populations, always striving to help others heal and grow. As a married mother of two, she continues to embrace her own healing journey, choosing love and positive relationships even when faced with challenges. Brittney is passionate about creating a judgment-free space where others can explore their own path to mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

WWW.ALLOWINGCHANGE.COM

REST IN POWER / CULTURE / FROM THE FRONT PAGE

REST IN POWER



DICK BARNETT
(APRIL 27, 2025)

Hall of Famer Dick Barnett or “Fall Back Baby” was a ’60s and ’70s New York Knicks star. Barnett began his basketball journey at what is now Tennessee State University winning three consecutive NAIA championships. He went on to grab two championship titles with the Knicks and retired in 1974 later earning a PhD in education and teaching sports management.



CHET LEMON
(MAY 8, 2025)

American League record setter and three time all-star centerfielder Chet Lemon was one of the great baseball stars of the ’70s and ’80s. Lemon is most known for his time with the Detroit Tigers where he spent nearly a decade helping the 1984 team win the World Series. After retiring, Lemon coached youth baseball and created the Chet Lemon Baseball school.



JIM DENT
(MAY 2, 2025)

Although he grew up right next to it, Jim Dent was not allowed to play in the famed Masters Augusta Country Club. Dent, determined to break barriers and follow his golfing dreams, took his talents and shaped a career from the ground up becoming a caddy at Agusta National and engrossing himself in the game. Officially becoming a pro golfer in 1966, Dent earned his tour card 16 years in a row, competed in five U.S. Opens and six PGA Championships, became one of only 12 Black players to make the PGA tour during the 70s and was inducted into the African American Golfers Hall of Fame .



ANDY BEY
(APRIL 26, 2025)

Jazz artist Andy Bey stunned the music world with his four-octave range and piano playing talents. Bey began gaining attention in his teen years as a member of a band he formed with two of his sisters. After recording three albums, Bey went on to use his unique and versatile range to build an acclaimed solo career. He accompanied jazz legends like Stanley Clarke and Max Roach, became a 2005 Grammy nominee and was awarded the 2014 Best Vocal Album winner of NPR’s Jazz Critics Poll.



JOE LOUIS WALKER
(APRIL 30, 2025)

Joe Louis Walker was strumming away to his favorite records at an early age. Growing up in a house full of music and blues, Walker decided to leave home at 16 and follow his dream of playing music. Walker almost instantly landed gigs opening for Thelonious Monk and Muddy Waters eventually leading to the development of his innovative, technical and critically acclaimed albums and records.



JOHN EDWARDS
(MAY 11, 2025)

Starting his career with performances in Germany as he served in the U.S. Army, John Edwards made his way his way to the top ten of the R&B charts after returning home and taking on singing full time. Edwards joined the already well known group the Spinners in 1977 where they continued blowing up the charts and working their way into the National Rhythm & Blues and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame.

POWER OF A WORD

Reckoning with the N-word

By Anthony Faine
FOR THE BLACK LENS

There has long been a painful and emotional debate within the Black community – my community – about the use of the N-word. Is it appropriate to use? Who, if anyone, has the right to say it? Is there ever a context in which the word is acceptable, or does its history carry too much pain for it to be reclaimed?

I won’t pretend to have all the answers. I can’t tell you definitively whether the word should be used or who can or cannot say it. I also can’t speak for the full weight of its historical trauma, but I can speak from my own experience as a 36-year-old Black man who grew up hearing the word regularly – in my neighborhood, in my music, and in my daily life. I came of age in an environment where the N-word was common, even casual – often spoken by people of color, not just Black folks. By the time I was growing up, NWA had already brought the term into mainstream American culture. The word wasn’t hidden. It was shouted, chanted, and repeated until it became normalized in many circles.

To me and many others in my generation, the N-word has always been part of our world – in our language, our culture, and our identity. But today, things feel different. The word isn’t just confined to our neighborhoods anymore. Now it seems like everyone is using it in every context, regardless of their background or connection to its history. Black culture drives popular culture, and in that influence, many outside the community have adopted the language, style, and even the pain – without understanding it.

Some say imitation is the highest form of flattery, but when it comes to the word, the flattery can feel more like theft. Even a word that some feel is so ugly can’t just be called our own.

I’ve gone to the elders in my community to learn more. I’ve asked them to help me understand the pain they associate with the word. Because while I’ve heard the stories, I didn’t live through segregation. I didn’t feel the sting of that word being used to dehumanize, terrorize, and oppress in the

same way they did. Their pain is real, even if I didn’t directly experience it.

So I ask them honestly – how can I not use the word when it’s all I’ve ever known? I’ve learned to show them respect by not using it around them, or by reducing my own usage. But still, I struggle with the complexity. I want to understand how we got here – how a word with so much hate behind it became part of everyday conversation.

It’s important to acknowledge that my generation didn’t invent the casual use of the word – we inherited it. We watched how it was used before us, especially in hip-hop and rap music. Those platforms amplified the word to the point where it now feels embedded in youth culture, regardless of race. In some circles, it’s used as a term of endearment, camaraderie, or even empowerment. But that doesn’t erase the fact that, for many, it remains a symbol of hate.

Have we gone too far to go back? Can we, as a community, truly honor the struggle and suffering of those who came before us while still embracing a word that once defined their oppression? Can we ever find common ground between the youth who see it as a part of their identity and the elders who see it as a reminder of injustice?

I didn’t have the answers. I don’t have the answers. But I know this much: something needs to change. There’s too much derision between our elders and our youth – too much misunderstanding, too much pain, and not enough respect.

If we want to grow as a community, we need to open honest conversation. We need to educate ourselves on the past, even if it’s painful – but also respect the present to build a brighter future. We need to act. We need to ask ourselves: What does the N-word really mean to us? What are we willing to sacrifice to come together?

Words have power. And how we choose to use them will define who we are.

Anthony Faine is the president of the Black Prisoner’s Caucus at the Airway Heights Corrections Center.

LAURENT

Continued from 1

counsel, and guardians ad litem – continually failing to fit family well-being into an inflexible framework of hierarchical, adversarial mechanisms for decisionmaking.

In the end, I obsessed. I stopped sleeping. I cried – a lot. I flamed out, fast – within a few years. The bit of harm reduction I could provide felt far too inadequate to sustain. I had participated enough in a profession that consistently failed the families it perceived itself serving. I watched procedures exacerbate and enflame everyday issues (like pickup and drop offs and parenting time), whitening away necessary and continuing connections, making them brittle over the course of a divorce/custody proceedings. That might have been the first – but would be far from the last – time I truly comprehend the phrase “the system is broken.”

Eventually, I wound my way into a quasi-different profession – a law professor. Part of my responsibilities now include a commitment to scholarship – typically critical – which basically means I am afforded opportunities to (academically) trash talk, complaining about existing systems.

But criticizing, calling out, and kvetching about complex issues is ultimately unsatisfying. Yes, I always want to speak truth – to be honest about what ails us individually and societally – but if those issues can’t be accompanied by some forward focus, I’m being kinda problematic. We need currents that allow us to drift toward the dream of a better future not drown us in the dire reality of the present day. In the academy, we have devised a framework for dreaming. We call it “prefiguration” – constructing alternative futures within the contemporary timeline.

Movement powerhouses – Tricia Hersey and Mariame Kaba – often make prefigurative moves. In her book, *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto*,

to, Tricia Hersey (founder of the Nap Ministry) calls us into DreamSpace: “A blessing whispered over your body and around your head.” She implores “Imagine a world without oppression. Take more time here. Visualize softness. Breathe deep. Envision a world centered in justice.” Author Mariama Kaba’s asks us to forgo beginning with the question “What do we have now, and how can we make it better?” Instead, let’s ask “What can we imagine for ourselves and the world.”

Thus, for my final article in this justice series, I figured I would prefigure a bit. On a rainy, languid Saturday, I put on the “Sinners” soundtrack, sat down and wrote, tasking myself to envision. But something strange happened because I went backward instead of forward, and had an epiphany of sorts.

I realized that I do not need to imagine the world we will make in this city, because we are already building it. Memories from the prior week flooded my head as pressure from prickly tears built behind my eyes. I thought of watching Sinners with sister-friends for the (respective) 3rd, 4th, and 5th times, I thought of more sinking into separate couches with more sister-friends at SCC, exhausted but still willing to discuss succession planning after a super long day that ended with the NAACP’s Rested Rebel event, I thought of fielding a bunch of questions during the Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR)’s Platform for Change relaunch party, and I thought of connecting in Circle with the Building Restorative Communities ambassadors as we bring a new paradigm into existence.

The prickles turned into tears, seeping – but don’t worry, they were the good, clean kind – tears that come with a sense of knowing. I rested in the awareness of two truths 1) Sandy Williams is proud of us and 2) this might be the first – but hopefully not the last – time I truly comprehend the phrase “we are our

ancestors’ wildest dreams.”

The Dream lives on through women who care for and uplift other women in the Shades of Motherhood Network and it then continues being passed on and handed off to a best friend who creates spaces to care for the babies of those women with the creation of centers like Little Scholars and Raze. The Dream persists because of scrappy, steady, and small OGs who tirelessly work to realize peace like the veterans who advocate for it and PJALS. The Dream stays alive because of the powerhouses – large and small teams of care – that aim to keep us holistically healthy like The Native Project, The CHAS Health Street Medicine Team, Compassionate Addiction Treatment (CAT), and Yoyoy Spq’n’i. The Dream is rooted in the growth and reclamation done by The Spokane Tribal Network. The Dream stays current because of newly forming groups of men striving for better – folks like Everyday Mentors and The Locked in Fathers Alliance. The Dream is safeguarded by organizations like Mujeres in Action (MiA) and Manzanita House, and through Antifascist academics and Western States Center reps who augment our safety when hostilities fester within this region. The Dream celebrates our strength and beauty through cultural organizations building solidarity like Creole Resources and Asians for Collective Liberation. We get to witness the Dream in the scores of art designed by artists that Terrain nurtured and supported to stay, and we get to hear the Dream reverberate in music from the Spectrum Singers and in our stories told by Range, the Fig Tree, and of course, Sandy’s visionary publication – The Black Lens. And the Dream lives on in countless other ways ... in the many organizations not mentioned here who do the work daily and through all the individuals who care deeply and commit to this city and its people. We make the Dream real day by day.

INFLECTIONS

Continued from 10

es authentically without sacrificing artistic integrity.

A Legacy of Liberation

When asked what they want their legacy to be, eL responds: “To be remembered as unrelenting.” She carries that sentiment with her every time she steps on stage. For her, honoring those who came before is not performance – it’s practice.

“Forgetting where we come from makes us complacent, and that complacency costs us dearly. We move with deep reverence for those who paved the way – not in a surface-level, cliché kind of way, but with a true understanding that it is our duty to honor them in how we carry ourselves.”

Her posture isn’t symbolic – it’s intentional.

Sadiki agrees: “We want people to free their minds – musically, spiritually, emotionally ... even people

with dementia forget their children’s names but remember songs,” Sadiki says. “That tells you something about how deeply music lives inside us. It’s a kind of collective memory. A weapon, even. One they try to silence, but can’t.”

This couple understands music is sacred – a vessel for grief and joy, resistance and rebirth. They uphold a high standard, where tribute and homage are woven into the undercurrent of everything they do.

More Than Music

Their artistry doesn’t end on stage. Sadiki is also a pilot and chief instructor with the RedTail Flight Academy in New York, which honors the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. The program trains a new generation of Black aviators, reinforcing the message that Black youth can – and always could – fly.

“Most kids don’t even know they can be pilots,” Sadiki says. “They’ve never seen anyone who looks like them in that role. But 67 years ago, we had the best pilots in the worst

conditions. That history matters.”

Beyond aviation, the academy teaches leadership, spatial reasoning, and the power of imagination – skills that, like music, show young people just how capable they are.

Unboxed. Unapologetic.

Acute Inflections is carving a path many are afraid to walk. They are artists without compromise, educators without titles, entrepreneurs without gatekeepers. In a culture dominated by clickbait and conformity, they are proof that music can still be meaningful, message-driven, and magnetic.

“We don’t want to be in a box,” Sadiki says. “Our name reflects that. Our sound reflects that. Our life reflects that.”

eL and Sadiki offer a powerful reminder: our stories are sacred. Our artistry is revolutionary. And our legacies are still being written.

Acute Inflections is available on all major streaming platforms. Learn more at: www.acuteinflections.com

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.spokanearea-realestate.com or Facebook: [Blocker Real Estate](https://www.facebook.com/BlockerRealEstate).

Brittany Trambitas Hair Design – Natural hair stylist Brittany Trambitas. (509) 768-3925 or btrambitas1228@gmail.com. 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 Jacquelynne 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 Vilella, 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@moore'sassistedliving.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@nlhlawoffices.com](mailto:nhlawoffices.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.

SmooV Cutz Barber Shop – Barber shop owned by Jason “SmooV” Watson. (509) 703-7949 or jsmooV923@gmail.com. Two locations at 13817 E. Sprague Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216, and 14700 E. Indiana Ave., Spokane Valley, 99216.

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

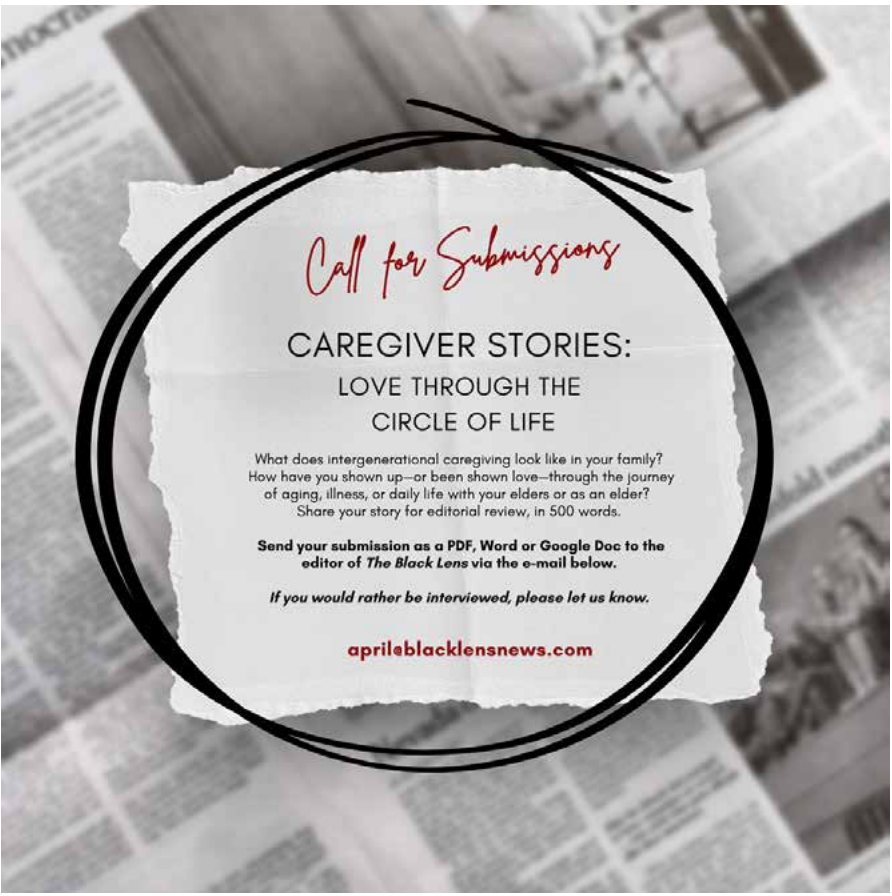
EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Fourth Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

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

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR

JUNE 26: BLACK LITURGIES FOR STAYING HUMAN PRESENTS “A COMMUNITY PRACTICE: POWER & PRIDE” – 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. Thursday, June 26. Liberty Park Library, 402 S. Pittsburg St., Spokane.



LEISURE AND COMICS

COMICS

CURTIS • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

MAY 26

MAY 27

MAY 28

MAY 29

MAY 30

MAY 31

CRABGRASS • BY TAUHID BONDIA

MAY 26

MAY 27

MAY 28

MAY 29

MAY 30

MAY 31

A KID'S COMIC • BY MJ BETHELY

PETS

by: MJ

JUNETEENTH / POETRY

Lit by legacy: Keeping Our Stories aglow



EASTERN WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY / NORTHWEST MUSEUM OF ARTS AND CULTURE
To advertise the Pirate’s Den, later called the Harlem Club, a truck carried band members and banners through downtown Spokane. Photographer W. Richards snapped this 1931 image in front of the Masonic Temple on Riverside Avenue. Club owner E.J. Brown stands at right; musician Buck Pierce Campbell sits on the truck bed, 3rd from right.

OUR STORIES:
BLACK FAMILIES IN
SPOKANE

When

Friday
June 27th
11:00 AM
–
3:00 PM

Where

Northwest
Museum
of
Arts and
Culture

Featuring:

Artmaking for All Ages

Community Stories: Black Pioneers’
Histories & Memories

Food Trucks, DJ, & More!

Multigenerational Poetry Presentation

Free Admission!

M Northwest Museum
of Arts and Culture

Lucy Breckenridge Happy Watkins
*A sneak peak at
Our Stories 2025*
Black Lens staff reports

Mona Lake Jones

Join us for the second-annual Our Stories event on June 27 at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture where we honor the rich, layered history of Black Spokane while cultivating deeper connection in our present-day community. From storytelling and cultural reflection to celebration and fellowship, Our Stories is more than an event – it’s a living tribute to our legacy and our future. Save the date – and stay tuned.

I SHINE LIKE JUNETEENTH

By Genae Langford
THE BLACK LENS

They ask me,
“Why do you shine like that?”
And I say--
Because I carry Juneteenth in my bones
Freedom in my blood
Juneteenth is a legacy that I spread
With every step I take.

You see--
My shine isn’t created by sequins or spotlights
It was created by the sounds of broken shackles,
By voices that rose,
By the day that told us
“We are no longer property, but a symbol of power.”

Juneteenth is not just history.
Juneteenth is the heartbeat of freedom,
The rhythm of resilience,
It’s the sound of chains falling
And a community rising.
I come from a long line of survivors--
Who turned their sorrows into song,
Who have bent but never broke,
Who have taught us a world of hope is beautiful
When it was born from struggle and crowned in strength

So I stand here

I don’t just represent myself-
I represent Harriet’s courage,
Rosa’s strength,
Malcom’s truth,
Martin’s dream
And every ancestor
Who made the American dream into a reality.

Juneteenth has taught me
That freedom isn’t just a date.

It’s a declaration
And I declare

I am brilliant with no boundary
I am excellent beyond expectation
I am magic
With the power of a million suns
And the blessing of a million prayers

Tonight I shine--
Not just for a crown
But for a cause.

I shine for the past
I shine for the future,
And I shine like Juneteenth

Bravely, boldly
And finally free.

JUNETEENTH

Continued from 7

Dr. Shari Clarke, Director Student Success, Equity & Belonging, shares a reflection on Juneteenth

The Juneteenth Celebration provides a time for reflection and to honor the unbreakable courage, soul searching stories and resilient hope that define past generations. Rev. Rasool Berry, producer and host, takes us on a compelling journey into the legacy of slavery in Texas. Berry’s presence on campus during the documentary screening and personal insights provide an additional layer for understanding the pivotal importance of Juneteenth, the role of Christianity and the strength of those who were enslaved and their descendants who continue the fight for justice.

COURTESY

Left to right: Dr. Shari Clarke, Director of Student Success Equity & Belonging; Rhosetta Rhodes, Vice President for Student Life; Isaac Price, President of the Associated Students of Whitworth University; the Rev. Rasool Berry, Writer & Producer; Vernon Glass, BSU Member; and Andrew Lubbock, BSU President.

JUNETEENTH:
A POEM

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

In the heart of a sun-drenched day,
Black joy dances, bright and gay,
A symphony of laughter fills the air,
In the warmth of community, love laid bare.

Children twirl in a kaleidoscope of hues,
Their laughter echoes, a vibrant muse,
With skin like polished mahogany, they shine,
Each smile a testament, each gaze divine.

Braids weave stories, intricate and bold,
Afros like clouds, rich and uncontrolled,
They sway with the rhythm of ancestral songs,
In these moments of joy, where every heart belongs.

A table set with abundant delight,
Collard greens, cornbread, all in sight,
Family gathered, with hands joined tight,
In each bite, a history, a beautiful fight.

From grandmothers’ whispers to children’s play,
Traditions celebrated in a lively array,
Every hug a promise, every tear a balm,
In the embrace of each other, our spirits are calm.

Oh, the colors of life, from deep browns to gold,
Like threads in a tapestry, stories unfold,
Each shade a melody, each tone a refrain,
Binding us closer, through joy and through pain.

In parks where the blossoms sway with the breeze,
We dance with abandon, our hearts at ease,
Music spills forth, the sound of our pride,
In every beat, our heritage won’t hide.

For those who look on, with hearts open wide,
Feel the rhythm that our souls can’t hide,
Though paths may diverge, and experiences bend,
In celebration of joy, we find a shared friend.

So come, join the revelry, take in the sight,
Of black joy unbridled, a radiant light,
Feel the warmth of our laughter, the strength of our song,
In the tapestry of life, we all belong.

Let this celebration of who we are be a bridge,
A moment of unity, we forever will forge,
For in every heartbeat, in every sway,
The essence of black joy shall forever stay.

POETRY CORNER

Spiritual Shout

By AJ the Wordsmith
The Black Lens

In the heart of Washington, where voices intertwine,
Sacred geometry builds a community, the spirit of our time.
Whispers of the ancients, echoes from the past,
The Flower of Life blooms, a harmony that’ll last.
In the web of connections, in patterns we find,
Weaving together, the threads of humankind.
Each line, each curve, tells a tale untold,
Linking us together, in a tapestry bold.
Remembering our roots, our shared history,
In the dance of creation, we find our mystery.
The pulsing rhythm of life, a beat we all share,
In the geometry of existence, we find we truly care.
So let us come together, in this circle of light,
Embracing the flow, in this symphony of delight.
The Flower of Life, a symbol of unity,
Building a world where love is our community.
This is where we take root from every walk of life to the very first fruit, let that knowledge soak in before your imagination goes broke, take a toke curious why you’re always quick to say nope.
This is the hope, to be treated equally not based on race or political ethnic chase, but what your willing to commit to the human race, don’t be a disgrace hopelessly deprived seed unable to take in everything that opens up ya mind, instead remind that it’s easier to be present rather than hoping for a be kind and rewind moment in time.
We come from greater and refuse to settle for less, some say we stress while the others say we blessed this is a cosmic mess, both emotions, and the notion that no one on the path is ready to hear the answer, hence why the world is always quick to kill another black panther.
We chose you because we can!
“You’re a brother from another mother, or sister from another mister to be a part of this dude.”
No second guessing allowed!!
just making sure you can be proud,
How ’bout we set up for success ‘cause we blessed, rather than prepare for another political mess.
Let us connect the dots, so we can finally see a connection, what’s the selection, my brother from another mother, or my sister from another mister, we all have more in common then we realize, that real eyes see through fake lies see.