



A NATIONAL MOMENT

Local NAACP branch attends national NAACP convention in Las Vegas, days before President Biden steps aside and Kamala Harris announces run for top U.S. job. **PAGE 5**

ALSO INSIDE: POLICIES MATTER
The weight of the Black ballot
Racial discrimination in housing
Fear of the Fearless Fund
Rising cost of insulin
PAGES 3-6



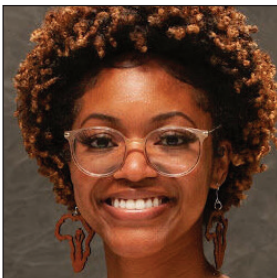
THE BLACK LENS

AUGUST 2024 - VOL. 9 - ISSUE NO. 6

ELECTIONS 2024: POLICIES MATTER

ELECTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

The momentous legislative rights acquired during the Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed barriers that prevented Black Americans from voting. Voter suppression tactics have been a dirty little trick since the muscle behind our vote was realized and became a threat to the American power structure. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 paved the way for us to exercise our democratic and constitutional rights, ensuring that Black Americans not only have a seat at the table, but a voice.



By **Priya Osborne**
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



in the United States Air Force, was murdered in his own apartment by a Sheriff's deputy when he answered a strange knock at the door, and as he exercised his 2nd amendment right in his own residence, was shot dead. This was a young Black man whose job was literally to

defend the constitution of the United States. Or in states where Black farmers are unable to access USDA programs, to include direct loan programs that, in 2022, of the 36% of loan applicants who were Black, 16% of these Black farmers were rejected, in contrast to 72% of White farmers who were able

to access the same loans, wherein only 4% were denied. Or in Jackson, Mississippi, where, for decades, inadequate maintenance and poor funding have created an environmental crisis where, in 2022, the largest water treatment plant in the state failed, leaving 160,000 people without safe drinking water, if they had any water at all. This included hospitals, fire stations, and schools. This is in an area where 80% of residents are Black and about 25% live in poverty and exemplifies generations of neglect by politicians and policymakers.

The lie of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896 further fueled the monetization of our human rights, increasing the racial wealth gap that we

See **ELECTIONS, 10**



COURTESY

"Our Stories: African Americans in Spokane" Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture event coordinator Julie Williamson Serquinia, retired MAC Curator of History Marsha Rooney and MAC volunteer coordinator Linda Strong pose in front of the display for the MAC's recent exhibit showcasing local Black families.

'DAY TO CELEBRATE, HONOR, AND ACKNOWLEDGE'

Julie Williamson Serquinia, whose family ties family ties to the Pacific Northwest go back seven generations, was born and raised in Spokane.

With the inspiration of her

mother, Jerrelene Williamson, a well-known historian and author of the book "Our Stories: Black Families in Spokane," Serquinia coordinated "Our Stories: Black Families in Spo-

kane," a June 28 event at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, appropriately named after her mother's book.

READ MORE ON PAGE 7

Spokane proclaims July 14 'Drey Day'

The Black Lens staff

On July 14, multiple bands, musicians, artists and families came out to honor the late Quindrey Davis on his 30th birthday.

This day was proclaimed as "Drey Day" by Mayor Lisa Brown, who reflected on the hometown hero.

"His goal was to promote unity, create long-lasting friendships, and leave an imprint in Spokane," she said.

A superior drummer, father, husband, son, grandson, band teacher, but most importantly, a friend to so many, Drey's ambition to bring people together has not been lost.

Even in high temperatures, the community came out to the Riverfront Park Lilac Bowl to celebrate his life. There was a lot of love and camaraderie in the atmosphere, and the healing balm of fellowship showed all in attendance how comfort can come through grief.

A talented cadre of performers, some traveling from Seattle to participate, lifted positive energy in remembrance of Drey. Musicians included: Sessionz, Latrice Williams, Alvin Flores and King Danielle. Each performance carried a piece of Drey and allowed the hundreds of people watching and

See **DREY, 10**



JESSE TINSLEY/SPECIAL TO THE BLACK LENS

Erica Davis, right, mother of the late Quindrey Davis, claps after Spokane Mayor Lisa Brown, center, proclaims July 14 as "Drey Day," a tribute to the late Quindrey Davis, a beloved musician and music teacher, before a concert in Riverfront Park. At left is Allison Davis, Drey's widow, holding their child Rhythm, who was born after Drey died.

INSIDE

BLACK GENEALOGY: WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE

Understanding our heritage is not just a matter of curiosity; it is a fundamental part of our identity. **COMMUNITY AND CULTURE, 7**

YOUTH HELPING YOUTH: LEARNING TO LEAD AT MLK CENTER

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of "the Beloved Community" comes to life through summer program. **COMMUNITY AND CULTURE, 8**

REST IN POWER: HONORING THOSE RECENTLY LOST

As we remember Sonya Massey, we also reflect on those who have left their imprint on our community. **IN MEMORIAM, 13**

POLICY MATTERS



BLACKLENS.NEWS

Corrections for July 7 issue

- The wrong image was used for Mya Jefferson due to a designer’s error.
- The article “Calvary Baptist Church” was written by Teresa Hemphill.
- The “Body and Soul Health Fair” was written by April Eberhardt.
- The article “Spokane Mayor seeks input on next Police Chief” erroneously stated Karl Thompson’s convictions. He was convicted of a civil rights violation resulting in injury as well as obstruction of justice

Why the Black press?

By April R. Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS

The history of disenfranchisement carved the road for the Black press, whose roots spawned our national protest mission. It became the catalyst for our autonomy as a newly freed people during Reconstruction. It was our rebellion against anti-literacy laws.

The Black press made space for us to see ourselves out from the shadows of subjugation, coming into our own as conscious American citizens. It had the moxie to be our messenger, our defense, our teacher and our historian. It deliberately addressed matters in the local, national, and international landscape and gave a place for us, a people disjointed by trafficking and alienation, to dialogue through the written word. It helped us navigate our daily lives in a way that enslavement never could have imagined.

Intentional in calling to account injustice, when the “math wasn’t mathin” in America, the Black press asked why. It spoke to things that were not said aloud, out of the confines of small intimate gatherings, and dared to be heard. It gave us power to walk in freedom. Today, the



More online

Watch the documentary “The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords” at youtube.com or by scanning the QR code above.

Black press is still a herald, a beacon, a promoter, a connector, a mobilizer, an advocate, an advisor, a challenger, and an uplifter. It was and is the mosaic of our voice. It has shown us, and the world, our existence, because we are here. Hindsight inspires foresight.

“We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the public been deceived by misrepresentations in things which concern us dearly.”

Rev. Samuel Cornish and John B. Russwurm, Freedom’s Journal, 1827

INDEX

NEWS	2
COMMUNITY AND CULTURE	7
TRAVEL	9
ARTS AND INSPIRATION	11
HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY	12
COMMENTARY	13
LISTINGS AND EVENTS	14
COMICS AND CROSSWORD	15
LEISURE	16

NEWS

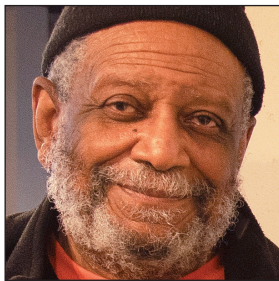
FROM THE BOARD

DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE, WE NEED YOUR VOICE

Dear Young People, I am writing to you as an 80-year-old civil rights advocate who has seen and experienced the struggles and triumphs of fighting for what I believed in. I was there in the 1960s, participating in demonstrations, getting arrested, and paying the price for standing up for my beliefs.

I understand that sometimes, you may feel that no one will allow you to express yourselves. But remember this, if someone ‘allows’ you to do something or have a voice, they can also take it away. Your voice is your own, and if your beliefs are strong, express them. But be prepared, for there is a price for speaking your voice.

Communication is key. Understand the language of those you’re communicating with, know how your message is being received. What do you want out of this communication, both in the short term and the long term? Do your homework. Ask yourself, how much is my voice going to cost and how much am I willing to pay? Speaking out can lead to various perceptions. You could be seen



By Robert Lloyd
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



as misinformed, a loudmouth, or someone with good intentions. You might even be expected to lead the charge. The cost can be great. You may lose friends, allies, and loved ones. You may even be ostracized from the community you think you want to help. Many before you have been met with adversity of all types for using their voice. It was their sacrifice. But if your voice is to become

How to write for The Black Lens

- Email interim editor April Eberhardt at april@blacklensnews.com; for questions and concerns, email editor@blacklensnews.com
- Pitch her story ideas, and if approved, submit stories by the 15th of each month.
- Get paid for each article after submitting direct deposit paperwork.
- Watch for your story to come out the first Sunday of each month.

an advocate or a leader, make sure your people are with you. If you’re willing to pay the price, buy your own microphone and say whatever you like.

Remember, this old man is speaking to you too and believes in truth, justice, and self-sacrifice. I have paid the price and I can tell you, it’s worth it.

The BLACK LENS is asking for your voice.

With Love,
Robert Lloyd
info@4comculture.com



Washington state attorney general candidates, from left: Manka Dhingra, Nick Brown and Pete Serrano.

CARL MAXEY CENTER HOST TO ATTORNEY GENERAL TOWN HALL MEETING

Two candidates for statewide office make pitches at Spokane event

By Teresa Brooks
THE BLACK LENS

On July 16, the Carl Maxey Center hosted a town hall meeting organized by Washington for Black Lives (W4BL) and the Washington Community Alliance. The event featured prospective attorney generals Manka Dhingra and Nick Brown, providing the public an opportunity to engage with the candidates on critical issues affecting the community.

Pasco Mayor Pete Serrano is also running for the seat. The town hall covered

a wide range of pressing issues, including:

Criminal Justice Reform: Discussions centered on strategies for reforming the criminal justice system to ensure fairness and equity.

Police Accountability: Candidates addressed the importance of holding law enforcement accountable for their actions and implementing policies to improve community trust.

Opioid Epidemic: The conversation included plans to combat the opioid crisis and support affected individuals and families.

Judicial Transparency: Both candidates emphasized the need for greater transparency within the judicial system.

Public Safety: Strategies for enhancing public safety while respecting civil rights were discussed.

Community Policing: The candidates shared their visions for fostering better relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Dhingra, an Indian-born American attorney, is a state senator representing the 45th legislative district, on Seattle’s Eastside in King County. Brown is a former West Side U.S. attorney.

After the question-and-answer session, attendees participated in a ranked choice voting

activity that included rating different varieties of Washington apples. This engaging activity allowed the community to experience ranked choice voting in a fun and interactive way.

The event was well received by attendees, who appreciated the opportunity to hear directly from the candidate. Both Dhingra and Brown impressed the audience with their extensive experience and thoughtful responses to the issues raised.

“We need to continue to remind each other of our shared goals,” Brown said.

The town hall meeting at the Carl Maxey Center was a significant event that highlighted the community’s commitment to civic engagement and informed decision-making.

THE BLACK LENS

Serving Spokane’s Black community since 2015

IN MEMORY OF SANDRA WILLIAMS
FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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Statement of Independence

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

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

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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

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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.



ICONIC ‘WAKE UP!’ LINE IN SPIKE LEE CLASSIC IS CAUTIONARY TALE FOR BLACK AMERICANS

From the Supreme Court

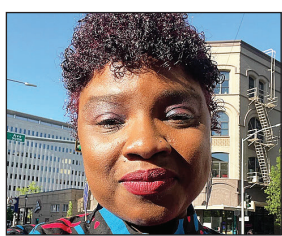


"If the structural consequences of today's paradigm shift mark a step in the wrong direction, then the practical consequences are a five-alarm fire that threatens to consume democratic self-governance and the normal operations of our Government."
Ketanji Brown Jackson


"In every use of official power, the President is now a king above the law. This majority's project will have disastrous consequences for the Presidency and for our democracy."
Sonia Sotomayor

To read the entire Supreme Court ruling made on July 1, visit supremecourt.gov/opinions/23pdf/23-939_e2pg.pdf or scan the QR code above.


The 1988 iconic closing scene of Spike Lee's classic "School Daze" is a cautionary call to action with as much relevance today as it had 36 years ago. Students and faculty of the fictitious Mission College awaken at dawn to the unapologetic social and political activist Vaughn "Dap" Dunlap frantically running from residence hall to residence hall yelling "Wake Up!" while rousing his contemporaries out of deep sleep. The toll of a bell resounds across the yard as the haze of the day's sunrise descends upon the slumbering campus. Sweating and out of breath, Dap beckons his classmates and university leaders, who, in their pajamas, meander out of their living quarters to congregate on the quad in the middle of the yard. He and his ideological nemesis, Julian "Dean Big Brother Almighty" Eaves find each other in the crowd. Julian walks through the befuddled mass of people to the front, where Dap is standing. They meet face to face, each one staring earnestly into the eyes of the other, as they come to terms with all the social, cultural, and political divergences that have erupted between them throughout the movie. In this last cinematic sequence, the rivals turn and stare into the camera, to an unseen audience. Shoulder to shoulder they stand, weary and exhausted in front



By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS
INTERIM EDITOR



of the assembly of Mission College students and faculty, as Dap makes one last appeal: "Please, wake up." An alarm clock sounds, and the frame of the two leaders fades to black and white. There is a saying that goes "you hunt where there are ducks." The fear of continuing disenfranchisement, a return to subjugation, and abject poverty have been the Achilles heel of Black Americans since 1863, as we have tried to balance hope, advancement, and our survival with how we circumnavigate America's promise of democracy. In 2024, with a SCOTUS ruling of immunity for a president, Americans, collectively, are worried about the state of the union this election cycle. A government run by a unitary executive is as dangerous today as it has ever been, and the threat of an imperial state with any leader who has been given immunity positions



COURTESY

The ending scene from Spike Lee's "School Daze."

the entire country in a state of dangerous vulnerability. Black people aspired to freedom even when "no refuge could save the hireling and slave from the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave." Our predecessors knew what the potential of liberty would do for them and their children's children. Today, in 2024, we are their children's children, attention is critical. To paraphrase the late el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, when America catches a cold, Black people get pneumonia. We are all at the precipice of a paradigm shift. Now is the time to focus hard on policies, because they matter. On July 6, 36-year-old Sonya Massey was fatally shot in her Illinois home while ducking to the floor in her kitchen, during a police response about a prowler. As she tended to a pot of boiling water, a deputy, who stood several feet away, drew his weapon when she raised the pot of hot water,

seemingly concerned that she would throw the boiling water on them. According to the released video, words were exchanged. Sheriff's Deputy Sean Grayson threatened to shoot Massey in the face when she said: "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus" followed by her apology. Massey proceeded to place the boiling pot back onto the stove, crouched down, while holding oven mitts. Grayson then shot Massey in the face, as she was crouched down to the floor in her kitchen. He is in custody without bond. He was denied pretrial release, and is being charged with first-degree murder, aggravated battery with a firearm and official misconduct. The egregious question of the necessity of deadly force being deployed against a Black person is once again center stage. Some of the policy rhetoric being floated this election cycle is indemnity for law enforcement, to give them their power back. For Sonya Massey,



Rest in Power, Sonya Massey.


Your life mattered.
SUNRISE: Feb. 12, 1988
SUNSET: July 6, 2024

and nameless others, we the people, must reject power abuse and demand accountability; the cost is too great if we do not. Now is the time to look at history's timeline and see where the breadcrumbs lead us back to. Now is the time to discern between power and winning. Now is the time to pay attention to the devil in the details, and interrupt sweeping generalizations. Now is the time to be wary of bait and switch persuasion. Now is the time to harness the wisdom of our elders and the young people's energy. Now is the time for participation, not just observation. Our wake-up call is long overdue. Now is the time for courage. The August issue of The Black Lens is centered on the importance of the vote and policy awareness.

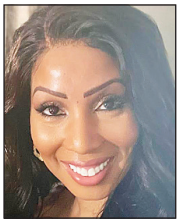
WE THE PEOPLE

Awareness of Black Americans' voting history is paramount in being an educated voter

By Dr. Gina Clarke-Sutton and Dr. Shari Clarke
THE BLACK LENS



Clarke



Clarke-Sutton

In November, voters will choose the president of the United States in an election reflective of a democratic process that happens every four years, a process that has become the hallmark of the American political system since the country's founding in 1776. The foundational principle of voting has defined America as a nation that rests on the concept of collective selection, wherein governance is decided by "we the people."

Elections are designed to give citizens who are eligible to vote the right to have their voices heard by the candidate who best reflects their views, values, and hopes for a better future. National conversations of late have focused on threats to democracy, whether it be the advanced ages of the presidential candidates, threats of dictatorship on Day 1, cognitive health concerns, and the 900-page Project 2025 transition plan, which illustrates a collection of conservative, right wing policy proposals that will impact Americans, in every facet of life. Newscasts, podcasts and kitchen table discussions across the country are inundated with what this next election cycle will behold.

Participation in the election process has been a hard fought, painful and often brutal experience for disenfranchised citizens. The Voting Rights Act signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on Aug. 6, 1965, remains one of the most significant

achievements of the Civil Rights movement. This act outlawed discriminatory voting practices that suppressed the ballots of marginalized voters. The law specifically targeted literacy tests, poll taxes, and other methods used to obstruct Black Americans from exercising their right to vote.

Awareness of this voting history is a key component of being an educated voter. Understanding how to be an informed voter is a civic responsibility that we should all prioritize. You can register and check the status of your registration with votewa.gov. It is paramount that we all research issues and candidates. Vote411.org provides detailed profiles of political candidates running for office. Utilizing the Vote411.org platform to access comprehensive information about candidates including their background experiences, key policy positions, and endorsements is a way to know what issues are affecting the constituencies across the nation and offers in depth issue guides that explain complex topics and provide unbiased analysis of ballot measures and policy issues.

This was compiled with information from the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area.

THE POWER OF THE BLACK VOTE

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

The Black voter base in America is one that generates a lot of political interest and possibly even fear. It is not uncommon to see the gamut of those running for public office courting the Black community for political loyalty. This sends a message to us as a people: organizing and strategizing together can create leverage to further advance the issues that best serve the community. Just as every American, the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is the bullseye of what we want to experience as citizens.



What we can glean from the era of Reconstruction is that solidarity and progress within the Black community was so noticeable that it caused enough alarm to dismantle what had been accomplished in the first 12 years post-slavery. It would be another century before Black Americans would be able to have that much access to social, economic and political power.

Politicians have always sought to appeal to and mobilize Black voters, often employing tactics that leave suspicion for ulterior motives. Political exploitation is real. Political leaders in general leverage relationships with the Black community when it seems most convenient, rallying around culturally significant touchstones in attempts to curry favor. It is crucial for us to be a barometer of these interactions once the election is done. Ultimately, this pattern of using vulnerability and manipulation to secure the Black vote is concerning and should never leave our peripheral vision.

Historically, Black Americans overwhelmingly voted for democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt, even though the Democratic Party had

To watch

For videos on Black history in two minutes or less, scan these QR codes or search @BlackHistoryinTwoMinutes on YouTube.



traditionally denied them basic civil rights. The Great Depression devastated Black American workers, as it had the entire country; this caused a shift in party loyalty for FDR, to maintain his standing, had to keep the southern Democrats in his pocket, a party that was known for outright race hate. While FDR did not move to reverse legal segregation, he invited several Black American leaders to serve as advisors, granting them a voice in his administration. It is argued that to stay in power, he leveraged his relationships with Black leaders, which won votes for the Democratic party for decades. The promise of equality under federal law was delayed until the presidency of Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was

Informed voters

To make more informed voting decisions, visit these links:

- democrats.org/where-we-stand/party-platform/presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/2024-republican-party-platform
- donalddjtrump.com/agenda47
- project2025.org
- democracyforward.org
- kamalaharris.com

passed, and subsequently, the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, which was pushed through by a largely Republican Congress.

Politicians across the board have used a variety of gimmicks to secure and/or suppress the Black American vote, whether it is through sensationalism, emotionalism, gold high top sneakers, references to criminality to be relatable, the federalization of holidays, visits to Black churches in some of America's most prestigious, or most impoverished communities, use of rappers or social media icons and celebrities to draw in popular culture relevance, visiting the local Waffle House, using criminality as a generalization to sow seeds of prejudice, or even capitalizing on high profile murder cases with personal invites to the White House. Strategically, Black people are used to advance other peoples' agendas. Candidates often use fear, speculation, conjecture, and manifestations that aren't necessary. Authenticity, and accountability – these should be our standard. We are not a monolith, but our historical narrative has context in elections. As the world tends to fetishize over Black identity, we must beware of the Trojan horse. Our vote does matter and politicians know it.

THE WEIGHT OF THE BALLOT

"Every vote counts. As someone who experienced the disappointment of losing by just 4 votes in a primary, I understand the weight of each ballot. Let's elect leaders who understand our struggles and will fight for our rights! Our voices are powerful, and this year, more than ever, it can dramatically shape the future."

Luc Jasmin III, NAACP Civic Engagement



NEWS

WHY POLICIES MATTER

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING APPRAISALS



GETTY IMAGES

Although redlining was outlawed in 1968 through the Fair Housing Act, many Black Americans find that racial rental and housing discrimination is still alive and well.

Homeownership and entrepreneurship are two common avenues to build generational wealth within Black communities. But, what recourse is there when you play the game correctly, and then the rules suddenly change when it's your turn to play? Rules that leave you at disadvantage. You cannot cut off a person's legs and then blame them for not being able to walk.

When Paul Austin and Tenisha Tate Austin got an initial appraisal of their four-bedroom home in Marin City, California, they were quoted at \$1,450,000 in 2019. Located near San Francisco, this community was a historically redlined neighborhood. Their home overlooks the San Francisco Bay. There were substantial renovations made to increase the home's value. In 2020, when the couple wanted to refinance, they sought out an appraiser through their lender. Janette Miller, already knowing that their home had been previously valued at over \$1 million, quoted them at nearly \$500,000 less than what they had been quoted just two years prior, at \$998,000.

Understandably alarmed by the low appraisal, the Austins contested it, arguing that several factors were incorrectly or inappropriately assessed, and that the appraisal was biased due to their race. Persuaded by the Austins' concerns, the lender agreed to send a different appraiser. This time, the couple took steps to whitewash their home. They removed family photos, artwork, books and other personal effects that could identify them as a Black family. They also arranged for a white friend to greet the appraiser and display their own family photos, posing as the homeowner. With the Austins absent during the inspection, the new appraiser valued the property at \$1,482,500, nearly half a million dollars higher than Miller's quote. While the higher appraisal was a victory of sorts, the fact that they had to erase their identity from the home raises a whole different issue around anti-Blackness in America.

The Austins filed a lawsuit for money they lost while they waited to get a second appraisal. The amounts of appraisal quotes were drastically different. When Black homeowners are shortchanged on properties that would rank at high value when assessing the market and finding similar properties like it, this is the practice of modern redlining.

Ronald Garland is an appraiser who notes that when there are two different values for the same property, the appraisers have used different comps, which are market assessments of properties based on a set of criteria; comps can be skewed by the person doing the appraising. In this case, a house that is valued over \$1 million came up short when the owners are Black, which reinforces the power of bias. Even though redlining was outlawed in 1968 through the Fair Housing Act, the Austin's experience in 2021 show us how the old tricks of racial discrimination are still around.

In response to the housing discrimination faced by the Austins, Miller, the first appraiser, was mandated not to discriminate in the future. Described in the case as an older white woman, she was required to pay an undisclosed amount and attend a training session on the history of segregation and real estate discrimination in the area, provided by the Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California. This included watching a documentary called "Our America: Lowballed" which explores discriminatory practices in the appraisals industry that adversely affect people of color. While there are attempts being made nationally to strip away DEI initiatives and programs, this incident shows why we still need them. The Austins, who also likely had to endure social and emotional stress, also had to become their own advocates, or risk losing wealth.

The Austins' actions remind us that policies and accountability are important. The work of dismantling discriminatory practices cannot stop, and should not be stopped, even as there are laws designed to prevent it. Vigilance is as important now as it was in 1968.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, but it is cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps."

We shouldn't have to pretend not to exist to have access to the bootstraps that some Americans get without incident. Policies matter.

FEAR OF THE FEARLESS FUND

Founded by Ayana Parsons, Arian Simone and Keshia Knight Pulliam in 2019, the Fearless Fund is a unique venture capital firm built by Black women focused on investing in businesses led by women of color. The fund aims to advocate for equity and belonging for women of color in the marketplace by offering grants as a tool for advancement; it is a game changer in the racial wealth equity divide.

According to the organization, only 0.39% of venture capital funding went to women of color in 2022. This has clear implications on the accessibility of robust resources for historically marginalized groups, and lends to the argument behind the racial wealth equity gap.

As a part of its mission, the Fearless Fund has collaborated with a variety of sponsors, partners and investors to share resources that will assist with the business aspirations of its portfolio companies; it has built a robust network of investors and sponsors to support its mission of empowering Black women-owned businesses.

They have partnered with a diverse range of organizations, to include Ally, Bank of America, Carta, Costco, Equity Alliance, Fifth Third Bank, Florida A&M University, General Mills, Invest Atlanta, Insight Partners, JP Morgan Chase, LISC, Mastercard, PayPal, The JumpFund, Wellington Management, Nike, and Salesforce. Additionally, the fund has secured sponsorships from companies such as Bumble, Close the Gap, Coca-Cola, Facebook, Honest, Microsoft, Mielle Organics, Porsche, Simple Truth, Spanx, Steve Madden, UrbanSkinRX, Shea Moisture, Tory Burch, UPS, and Walmart.

Compared to other funding programs, the Fearless Fund has proven more effective economically, politically, culturally and socially as it champions leveling a playing field that was never set up for them to win. To date, they have awarded 346 grants totaling \$3 million to over 32,000 women of color who applied. Additionally, the fund has built \$10 million in capital, provided 1,000 hours of mentorship, and delivered 500 hours of business education.

Sounds like economic progress for those who have been historically left out, right? To the dismay of those invested in the Fearless Fund, last year, the American Alliance for Equal Rights, an anti-affirmative action

What is Venture Capital?

Venture capital is a form of private equity and a type of financing for startup companies and small businesses with long-term growth potential. Venture capital generally comes from investors, investment banks, and financial institutions. Venture capital can also be provided as technical or managerial expertise.

Venture capitalists provide backing through financing, technological expertise, or managerial experience.

VC firms raise money from limited partners to invest in promising startups or even larger venture funds.

Source: investopedia.com/terms/v/venturecapital.asp

group of conservatives led by Edward Blum (who also supported the end of Affirmative Action in college admissions) launched a lawsuit against the Fearless Fund on the grounds of discrimination. The lawsuit states that the Fearless Fund violates section 1981 of the 1866 Civil Rights Act, a law which was intended to protect formerly enslaved people from economic exclusion during Reconstruction.

In 2024, as there still exists a pronounced racial wealth gap, the 1866 Civil Rights Act has been weaponized against Black women who aimed to build a prosperity base for other women of color. The case won in a 2-1 ruling in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Miami, led by two conservative judges and one liberal judge. Blum claimed that the program is discriminatory and polarizing. As a result, the Strivers Grant Fund, which offered up to \$20,000 to help its clients who were venturing into entrepreneurship, was suspended, a devastating blow to the progress that has been made.

The legal team for the Fearless Fund filed a brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, asking the court to uphold a previous ruling and reinstate the grant program. They presented arguments to a three-judge appeals panel in Miami. Additionally, they successfully opposed a request by the AAER to halt the grant awards process, arguing that the program qualified as protected free speech under the First Amendment. Despite this, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit blocked the grant program, finding it to be "racially exclusionary" and "substantially likely" to violate federal anti-discrimination laws, and the case is presently tied up in litigation.

The question of why the Fearless Fund exists is what's not being asked. Is it the lack of accessibility to venture capital funding due to proximity to power? Is it due to a deficit in lack of balanced selection? Is it prejudice? Is it inadequate exposure?

Strangely, if one reflects on American history, discrimination never mattered more to the ruling class, the status quo, if you will, until the moment it was realized that they could lose what

has been hoarded and safeguarded for generations.

According to digitaldivided, an advocacy group, only 1% of venture capital funding goes to Black or Hispanic women owned businesses. There is a notable history of exclusion in this industry. Despite this, the sudden concern about balance and fairness has never sounded the alarm the way it has against the founders of the Fearless Fund.

If fairness was ever a leading motivation, a program like the Fearless Fund wouldn't even be necessary. Make no mistake in understanding that in 2024, there is still a gaping disparity in the marketplace for historically marginalized groups, even in the realization that economic prosperity is the road that leads to social empowerment. There is an undoing of programs that recognize this inequity by people who have historically had the advantage, and the finish line has been moved, again.

But economic bullying against Blacks is nothing new, except in many accounts of our collective struggle, the word bullying can be replaced by the word terror. It is the story of Black Wallstreet in Tulsa Oklahoma, which was met by destruction when the Black community began to thrive. It is the story of how Jim Crow emerged to avenge Black progress just 12 years after Reconstruction. It is the story of Rosewood, Florida, where a town that showed just how self-reliant Blacks could be, was sabotaged by a racist mob. The game has not changed, just the strategies and the players have.

Simone, in the midst of the legal battle that threatens the Fearless Fund, remains fearless herself as she fights for the principles of DEI in business, in an area where Black women are grossly under-represented. She continues to enter every room as a bold advocate, not tip-toeing or whispering, but standing on the principles of fairness, equity and access. This case and its implications speak to the larger politics of policies that affect entrepreneurs who are trying to enter into industries that are dominated by a ruling class, a class that aims to fortify its position.



By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



Fair housing resources

Under the law, everyone has the right to be free from discrimination in housing. Any individual who believes that he or she has been discriminated against based on protected class status may file a charge of discrimination with the Washington state Human Rights Commission.

A discrimination charge in housing must be filed with the WSHRC within one year from the date of the alleged violation.

For Fair Housing complaints, contact the WSHRC directly at (800) 233-3247.

For more information, visit www.hum.wa.gov/fair-housing.

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU VOTE AUG. 6

The primary elections, Aug. 6, are voting processes by which voters can indicate their preference for their party's candidate in an upcoming local and general elections.

Aug. 6, primary day, is also, the deadline for Washington state voter registration or updates (in-person only).

To register to vote in the state of Washington, you must be:

- A citizen of the United States

- A legal resident of Washington state for at least 30 days prior to election day
- At least 18 years old
- If you are 16 or 17, you can sign up as a Future Voter and be automatically registered to vote when you qualify
 - Not disqualified from voting due to a court order
 - Not currently serving a sentence of total confinement in prison under the jurisdiction of the department of corrections for a

Washington felony conviction

- Not currently incarcerated for a federal or out-of-state felony conviction

Effective Jan. 1, 2022, if you were convicted of a felony in Washington state, another state, or in federal court, your right to vote will be restored automatically, as long as you are not serving a sentence of total confinement in prison.

Future voter information is available at www.sos.wa.gov.



GETTY IMAGES

An elections worker opens ballots at the King County Elections headquarters on Aug. 4, 2020, for the Washington state primary election.

'I left feeling activated'



COURTESY OF SPOKANE BRANCH OF NAACP
Mya Jefferson, of the Spokane-branch NAACP Youth Council, stands at the annual NAACP National Convention.

Spokane student attends NAACP National Convention

By Mya Jefferson
THE BLACK LENS

As a first time attendee of the annual NAACP National Convention, I was able to participate as a member of the newly formed Spokane-branch NAACP Youth Council. Youth and college activities began for us with the “All In: Playing in Color Masterclass” led by special guests Tiffany James, Czaria Valentine, Gia Greenidge, and Tenaj Ferguson. These impressive, motivating, inspirational Black women spoke about their experiences in life, in school, and in their careers.

These women encouraged self-expression and empowerment, sharing a message to the youth to do what they truly want without being shackled by society or the need to make money. They gave us useful advice and lessons, even going out of their way to speak with us individually. The welcome session for the youth allowed us to meet many other students from all over the United States. Speakers Terayle Hill, Quentin Savvoir, William McCurdy, and others focused on civic engagement strategies and mobilizing young Black voters. Voter registration and activation was a key focus. Other important social issues were a part of the sessions to include a rally to protest gun violence, and access to education. Actor Michael Rainey, Jr. hosted the Day 1 welcome party.

Learning to operate as a delegate was also an important part of this experience and Day 2 of the convention started with regional breakouts where nominees were voted on for positions within the organization. This was followed by the youth and college lunch and learn session called “AI for Advocacy” which delved into how artificial intelligence can be used as a benefit. A key focus in this session was the goal of activating youth from underrepresented backgrounds to become more informed about STEM careers and how AI can help support this.

Useful resources were provided to help us learn more about college and for future careers. A youth and college social at Atomic Golf and a young professional's reception allowed for a time to socialize. On our last day for the youth and college portion of the convention, President Joe Biden, among many other political dignitaries, gave us a speech at a morning plenary and the day ended with the Juanita Jackson Mitchell Youth Awards Gala and afterparty.

My takeaway from the event as a youth delegate was this: inspiration to achieve my goals and to aim high. My ideas about what I could accomplish grew by attending this conference, I left feeling activated and more motivated than when I arrived. Seeing so many people from all over the United States showed me the importance and power of voting and collective action. A principal message I'll remember was the call to not fight among ourselves but to unite in situations like the current run for the presidential election.

A quote from the NAACP to “reaffirm our commitment to using our collective ingenuity, creativity, and strength to continue the fight for civil rights and social justice” was evident at this 115th convention. I left feeling ready to get involved, to be invested in my community, and ready to be “all in.”

Mya Jefferson is an 11th-grader at West Valley High School.

NEWS



'WE'RE ALL IN'

A NAACP National Convention recap from the Spokane branch

By Lisa Gardner
THE BLACK LENS

Every year, representatives from the Spokane branch of the NAACP are chosen to participate in the national convention. The Convention brings together NAACP branches nationwide to pass resolutions that set essential policies and programs for the coming year. The 2024 convention, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, was hot and politically heated.

In 2024, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held its National Convention in Nevada, recognizing the strategic significance of the state as a swing state during a political year. With two polarizing candidates, the NAACP emphasized “policy over the politician.” One of the main topics discussed during the four-day convention was the importance of focusing on “Project 2025.”

Project 2025, an initiative organized by the Heritage Foundation, consists of policies designed by far-right conservatives, including some of former President Trump's cabinet. The project's primary focus is to place the executive branch under the control of the President, reclassifying federal service workers with political party appointees who align with Trump's policies. While Trump denies association with Project 2025, he has proposed a package of policies called “Agenda 47.” Project 2025 has seemingly dominated the rhetoric and narrative of the GOP. The convention, however, underscored the crucial role of the NAACP in scrutinizing Project 2025 and its list of priorities, which, if implemented, could pose a significant threat to our democracy as we know it.

The convention featured prominent celebrity guests known for supporting the NAACP, including actors, athletes, and organizational leaders. Notable figures included Judge Greg Mathis, Vivica A. Fox, Brandon Marshall, Dr. Wes Bellamy, Maryland Governor Wes Moore, Jemele Hill, and many others. One of the most distinguished guests and presenters was President Joe Biden. President Biden delivered a message reinforcing his commitment to resisting divisive rhetoric, unconstitutional policies, and out-of-touch opposing views. President Biden has since dropped out of the presidential race and is now endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris as the prime Democratic candidate. This sudden change comes after concerns from the DNC and donors about President Biden's health, age, and competency to fulfill a second term.

At the heart of the convention were plenary sessions where NAACP delegates voted on and amended policies supported by the organization. These policies are crafted by a National Board and Branches nationwide and are crucial for uplifting and protecting the civil rights of Black Americans. The resolutions passed at the convention, which focused on Civil Rights, Communications/Media, Criminal Justice, Economic Development, Health, Education, Housing, and more, are a testament to the NAACP's impactful work. These resolutions, which are a direct result of the collective efforts of the NAACP delegates, serve as a strong reassurance of the organization's commitment to the cause. One resolution focused on international affairs, calling for humanitarian aid for Haiti. Spokane Branch Secretary Hadley Morrow proposed an amendment related to this resolution, which was accepted and applauded by the delegates.

Notably, the growth and involvement of the NAACP Youth and College Councils were remarkable. The Spokane Branch appointed Priya Osborne, the Director of Student Success at Spokane Community College, as its Youth and College Council Advisor. Since her appointment, Priya has led recruitment efforts and established a council of 25 local youth members aged



COURTESY OF NAACP
NAACP President Derrick Johnson shakes hands July 16 with President Joe Biden at the NAACP National Convention.



COURTESY OF SPOKANE BRANCH OF NAACP
Members of the local NAACP branch, including president Lisa Gardner second from right, pose at the NAACP National Convention on July 16.



COURTESY OF NAACP
Student members of the local branch of the NAACP Youth Council pose for a photo July 16 at the NAACP National Convention.

16 to 25. Priya and two youth delegates from Spokane attended the convention, engaging with other youth councils, participating in workshops, and gaining a deeper understanding of the NAACP's role in the community.

The Women In NAACP (W.I.N.) luncheon is another prestigious event that celebrates women in the NAACP who have excelled and made significant contributions. This year, the WIN luncheon recognized two young women from New Orleans for proving the Pythagorean Theorem using trigonometry. For those unfamiliar with complex mathematics, the Pythagorean Theorem describes the relationship between the three sides of a right triangle. It states that the

area of the square formed by the longest side (the hypotenuse) is equal to the sum of the areas of the squares formed by the other two sides. This theorem has been proven using geometry, algebra, and calculus, but not previously with trigonometry. This achievement by high school seniors Calcea Johnson and Ne’Kiya Jackson is a significant contribution to mathematical research, which has been ongoing for over 2,000 years.

NAACP Convention commenced with the annual signature “Freedom Fund Gala.” The Freedom Fund Gala is NAACP's signature fundraiser, held nationally and at local branches. The Freedom Fund Gala directly supports a scholarship fund for local high school students

entering higher education. The dinner also promotes the work of the NAACP's fight against human and civil rights injustices. Most significantly, the Freedom Fund gala honors and recognizes the achievements of individuals who contribute to the empowerment and uplifting of Black Americans. This year, the NAACP recognized the outstanding achievements of Dr. Henry Louis Gates with its highest award—the Spingarn Medal, a moment that filled the audience with pride and inspiration. Dr. Gates has been instrumental in his relentless dedication to uncovering and preserving Black History and culture through his Emmy-nominated PBS series “Finding Your Roots.”

As president of the local branch, I would like to take a moment of personal privilege to recognize and thank our dynamic delegates for 2024. These members of our Executive Committee represented Spokane and the NAACP with excellence, exhilaration, and effectiveness to move our work forward. I am proud of our Executive Committee members' growth, commitment, and can-do attitude as they served as delegates.

Thank you for being “All In!”

- Jaime Stacy, 1st Vice President*
Hadley Morrow, Branch Secretary
Fay Baptiste, Branch Treasurer
April Eberhardt, Education Committee Chair
Quinton Baker, Health and Wellness Committee Chair
Priya Osborne, Youth, and College Council Advisor
Elliot Fabric, Member-at-Large

NEWS

City Council OKs resolution to include Prop 1 sales-and-use tax for community safety on November ballot

The Black Lens staff

In a July 22 Legislative session, the Spokane City Council voted 5-2 to pass a resolution authorizing the county auditor to place on the November ballot a proposition to OK an increase to the local sales-and-use tax in Spokane of one-tenth of 1% (or 0.1%), the city

wrote in a statement.

The revenue from the tax will be used for enhanced community safety purposes, including, but not limited to, operation enhancements for the Spokane Fire Department, Spokane Police Department, Municipal Court, and the Office of the Police Ombudsman.

“I am grateful to the Council for their support in placing the Community Safety Sales Tax on the ballot and allowing voters to weigh in on their priorities,” Mayor Lisa Browns said in a statement. “If passed, money from this sales tax will go toward critical investments like new, reliable vehicles for

our firefighters, reviving the Neighborhood Resource Officer program, and overall improved community safety for all.”

Council President Betsy Wilkerson concurred. “Ensuring that the Fire and Police Departments have the necessary equipment to perform their safety duties has

always been my priority,” she said. “Community Safety also involves fully supporting and maintaining the functionality of our courts.

Essential items, such food and prescription drugs, would not be subject to the tax. If adopted by the Spokane voters, the sales tax would go into effect early 2025.

WHY POLICIES MATTER

BENEFITS OF TEACHING PHONICS IN CONTEXT OF REAL READING



GETTY IMAGES

Phonics instruction plays a crucial role in literacy development for elementary readers.

I loved reading, writing, listening and research in literacy and earned an Ed.D. in Literacy and Curriculum Development. I still love reading and writing. I was a Title IV Reading Teacher in Spokane Public Schools, taught elementary and middle school Language Arts/English and was an administrator. Skills to read, write, speak and listen are vital to success in school and in life.

I will discuss the importance of children learning phonics in the elementary grades. My son learned phonics in early elementary grades and could read and attack polysyllabic words. My daughter learned to read by the whole language method of teaching reading and writing that emphasized learning whole words and phrases by encountering them in meaningful contexts rather than by phonics exercises. Different methods work and are successful with different children.

Phonics instruction plays a crucial role in literacy development for elementary readers. By learning phonics, students can decode unfamiliar words by sounding them out, which helps them become more confident and independent readers. Understanding phonics also helps students improve their spelling, reading fluency, and overall language skills. Phonics is important because it allows children to read on their own and builds up a good print word dictionary that can be quickly assessed. The English lan-



By Dr. Gloria Baynes
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



guage can be challenging so once students understand the letters and letter combinations that represent each sound, it's easier to learn how to pronounce and/or spell the words. It is also an important factor in a child's improvement in reading comprehension, as it is difficult to understand a word you cannot pronounce.

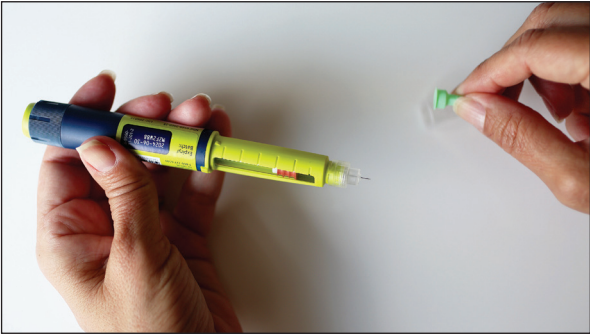
The Department of Education states that deploying a phonics education at an early age can also help children develop culturally, socially, and emotionally. Research shows that phonics when taught correctly is one of the most effective ways of teaching children to learn to read and can lay a proper foundation for the success of a child. This foun-

dation supports their fluency and with practice, the action becomes so automatic that they can easily understand the overall meaning of words while they are reading.

Reading is a complex mental task as students learn to read and read to learn. Phonics allows children to see letters written on a page and provides them with the tools to understand it properly. Syllable structure is important as it allows students to understand polysyllabic words. Beyond reading and writing, it helps children develop general thinking skills such as reasoning skills. Children who practice reading through phonics often develop reading fluency. Children can develop into fluent readers who can quickly recognize unfamiliar words and easily sound out new words they encounter. Being a fluent reader increases comprehension and academic performance.

Children who learn reading through phonics will have an excellent phonemic awareness-which is the ability to hear and identify letter symbols with their appropriate sound. Extensive reading helps children broaden their vocabulary and general knowledge. During my experience in teaching, students who had a strong foundation in phonics gained confidence in reading as they progressed through school.

Learn more about the impact of reading instruction that does not use phonics at therighttoreadfilm.org.



GETTY IMAGES

An insulin pen manufactured by the Novo Nordisk company is on display March 14, 2023, in Miami, Fla.

AFFORDABLE MEDICATION

By Luc Jasmin III
THE BLACK LENS

Something has to change! The soaring cost of insulin has emerged as a pressing concern for individuals with Type 2 diabetes, especially within Black communities. For many diabetics, insulin is essential for survival and maintaining a quality of life. Unfortunately, skyrocketing prices have left countless individuals grappling with tough choices like choosing to pay their light bill or needed prescriptions for their health.

In 2020, the average price of insulin in the U.S. rose to nearly \$400 per month, a staggering increase from approximately \$120 in 2001 (American Diabetes Association, 2020). This surge in cost places a heavy burden on those already facing economic challenges. According to the Washington state Department of Health, Black adults in Washington are close to 50% more likely to have diabetes compared to their White peers (Washington State Department of Health, 2019). Yes, you read that correctly, 50%!

These elevated rates are clearly a sign of systemic inequities, including limited access to healthcare, education, and economic resources. Many Black people live in neighborhoods with fewer healthcare facilities, leading to delayed diagnoses and poor management of chronic diseases.

On top of access and affordability issues, the complexities of insurance coverage add more barriers to the situation. A study from the American Journal of Public Health highlights that Black individuals are more likely to be uninsured or underinsured, directly impacting their access to necessary medications (American Journal of Public Health, 2019). This lack of coverage often results in out-of-pocket expenses that force individuals to choose between buying insulin and covering daily living costs.

What do we do? Addressing this crisis calls for urgent policy changes. Some states have introduced measures to cap the price of insulin, reflecting a growing national movement aimed at making the life saving medication more affordable. In Spokane, community organizations and advocates are working tirelessly to raise awareness about these disparities and push for legislative reforms that prioritize health equity.

Access to insulin is not merely a financial issue; it's a matter of life and death. It requires collaborative efforts from local leaders, health providers, and policymakers to dismantle the barriers that continue these inequities.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; Washington State Department of Health; and American Journal of Public Health.

Divestment of historically Black colleges and universities

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS

In 1862, the Morrill Act started federal support of postsecondary education in the United States by authorizing land grant institutions. This allowed for a steady financial support system for post-secondary institutions to mitigate the cost of attendance for students.

The Morrill Act demonstrated a historical commitment to making higher education accessible for everyone, removing barriers for those who were not financially positioned to pay for college. As such, state sponsorship allowed for many to further their aspirations towards education, careers, and essentially, upward mobility.

There are land grant institutions in 18 states, primarily in the Midwest and Southeast. Of these states, only two have properly funded their land grant institutions, in a crisis that has been brewing for the past 13 years.

Divestment of millions of dollars are owed to historically Black colleges and universities by their state legislatures. Tennessee State University has been amplified in the news in recent months as having the largest financial shortfall of all land grant institutions. TSU has been marred by high turnover, neglect from authorities, leadership upheaval and discriminatory practices.

In September, the Biden Administration dispatched a letter from Education Secretary Cordona and Agriculture Secretary Vilsack to the governors of the following 16 states regarding the financial shortfall being faced by land grant institutions.

An excerpt from the letter to the governor of Tennessee states: “Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority Serving Institutions make innumerable contributions to our country through the research produced by their faculty,

achievements of their students and alumni, and services that they provide to the immediate community. As noted in the HBCU PARTNERS Act, while HBCUs, including 1890 land-grant institutions, represent 3 percent of post-secondary institutions, they enroll about 10 percent of all Black college students. Furthermore, these institutions generate close to \$15 billion in economic impact and over 134,000 jobs annually in the local and regional economies they serve.”

“Using readily available data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Survey (IPEDS) that ranges from 1987 to 2020, we calculated the amount that these institutions would have received if their state funding per student were equal to that of 1862 institutions,” the letter continued. “Unequitable funding of the 1890 institution in your state has caused a severe financial gap, in the last 30 years alone, an

additional \$2,147,784,704 would have been available for the university. These funds could have supported infrastructure and student services and would have better positioned the university to compete for research grants. Tennessee State University has been able to make remarkable strides and would be much stronger and better positioned to serve its students, your state, and the nation if made whole with respect to this funding gap.”

In March, legislators in Tennessee decided to dismiss the board immediately, which garnered visceral criticism. When the board pressed the legislature, they were dismissed in an act of political power abuse. The state failed to identify legal wrongdoings made by the board but actions taken were to conduct audits and suggest areas for improvement. Within just minutes of the dissolution, the governor had appointed eight new members. This decision occurred

without debate and seems by many to be void of legitimate scrutiny by the lawmakers. The majority GOP Tennessee State House passed a vote with a tally of 66 to 25 in favor of vacating the TSU Board of Trustees.

TSU has struggled to survive with limited resources. Rep. Justin J. Pearson has denounced this as perpetuating racism from past generations into current legislation. Conversely, the University of Tennessee, a predominantly white land grant university in the state has consistently received their full state funding each year, sometimes even exceeding requirements.

The divestment of land grant HBCUs raises many questions about discriminatory practices and is reminiscent of the dog whistle tactics that were employed after 12 years of the Reconstruction era. What is happening has implications of classicism, elitism, racism and political abuse. Attention to policies matter.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

BLACK GENEALOGY

WHO ARE WE? Embark on a Journey of Self-Discovery by Exploring Your Heritage with Black Genealogy and History. Understanding our heritage is not just a matter of curiosity; it is a fundamental part of our identity.



By Patricia Bayonne-Johnson
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



“In all of us there is a hunger, marrow-deep, to know our heritage, to know who we are and where we come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is still a vacuum, an emptiness, and the most disquieting loneliness.” This quote was made by Alex Haley, the writer whose bestselling book “Roots: The Saga of an American Family” was the basis for the groundbreaking TV miniseries by the same name. The miniseries was eight nights long and aired on network television in 1977 from January 23rd to January 30th. Alex Murray Palmer Haley was born in Ithaca, New York, on August 11, 1921, to Simon and Bertha Palmer Haley. The family later moved to Henning, Tennessee, where Alex spent his formative years. His early graduation from high school at age 15 and subsequent two-year stint at State Teachers College in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, were just the beginning of his remarkable journey. His time in the Coast Guard, where he honed his writing skills by crafting love letters for his fellow sailors and writing short stories, was a significant chapter in his life. After leaving the Coast Guard in 1959, he dedicated himself to writing full-time, with his first considerable work being “The Autobiography of Malcolm X.” Haley’s 1965 discovery of the names of his maternal great-grandparents in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., was the catalyst for tracing his ancestry. “Roots” is not just a story; it is the story that Alex

Haley’s grandmother told him when he was a child. This intensely personal journey, a connection to Haley’s great-great-great-grandfather, Kunta Kinte, who was kidnapped in Africa and sold into slavery in the United States, is what makes the story of ‘Roots’ so compelling and relatable to all of us. It is a story that resonates with the universal theme of family and self-discovery, a narrative that connects us all and makes us feel a part of something bigger. It reminds us that we are all part of a larger story of resilience, survival, and the unbreakable bond of family. My genealogy journey began 30 years ago. Back then, genealogy was far from the instant gratification of today’s digital age. Researchers like me had to rely on traditional methods, such as writing letters to archives, libraries, and courthouses and enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope known as “SASE.” The journey was slow and often challenging, but the rewards of self-discovery and understanding my heritage were immeasurable, making every obstacle worth overcoming. This dedication and perseverance are not just essential but also the most rewarding aspects of successful genealogical research. Generation Z, known as Gen Z or Zoomers, is the first generation to grow up with access to the Internet and digital technology. They have a head start with their computer skills. Genealogy was once the hobby of old people, but computers have changed the face of family history. Technology makes it easier to find and organize data, write books, share your findings by way of a blog or website, preserve your family history, and communicate with like-minded people. Not everything is on the internet, especially in small towns without this technology; millions of records are added daily. All Gen Z needs is a spark of interest in genealogy and time to do it. Commercial genealogy websites like Ancestry (www.ancestry.com) and My Heritage (myheritage.com) are expensive but offer free 14-trials. Additionally, many free websites exist, such as Family Search (familysearch.org), The US Gen Web Project (usgenweb.org), the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), Find a Grave (findagrave.com), and National Archives (www.archives.gov).

STARTING YOUR GENEALOGICAL PURSUIT
African American genealogy can be challenging, but Alex Haley demonstrated that tracing our ancestors back to Africa is possible. While we may not be able to trace our specific ancestors back to a village in Africa as Haley did, we can take a DNA test to reveal the countries where our ancestors originated.

Basic Principles of Genealogy:

1. Start with what you know. Begin with yourself and work backward one generation at a time. Talk to your parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Write down oral traditions that have been passed down through your family.
2. Gather old records, photos, letters, vital records (birth, marriage, and death records), military papers, newspaper clippings, etc., in your home. Locate ancestors with census records after 1870, the first census that enumerated formerly enslaved people.
3. Organize the material you gathered for a single person or couple into three-ring binders, file folders, or genealogy software. Keep a research log so you do not repeat your searches. As you research, take notes and be sure to date them.
4. Prepare a plan. What questions about your ancestry do you want to answer? Finding the questions will become your goals.
5. The pedigree chart (or five-generation chart) and the family group sheets are two charts that will help you organize and summarize information. Free charts and family group sheets can be found on the internet. Cite your sources. Research without sources is worth absolutely nothing.
6. Visit local, regional, and state libraries. They may have special collections and computers for patrons’ use.
7. Join a genealogical society for support. I am a member of the Eastern Washington Genealogical Society (Spokane), the National Genealogical Society, the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, and the New England Historic Genealogical Society.
8. Study the social history of your ancestors. Social history puts your ancestors

in the context of where they lived. A few things to consider: What was their community like? Who were their neighbors? What significant events happened during your ancestors’ lives? How did the economy, religion, and politics impact their lives?

WHO AM I?
I am Patricia Bayonne-Johnson, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, and a retired Biology teacher. I am the family historian for my paternal and maternal lineages. I have traced my roots back to slavery and to the last slaveholders of most of my lineages. My most significant and most recent project is writing a blog in 2011 about my great-great-great-grandparents, Nace and Bibby Butler, and their 14 children whom the Jesuits of the Maryland Province enslaved. My blog was discovered on November 16, 2015; the rest is history. The connection between Jesuit enslavement and our ancestors was found in 2004 while planning a reunion in New Orleans for the Hicks/Estes family, my maternal ancestors. My Jesuit enslaved family was sold downriver to plantation owners in Louisiana in 1838 to pay down the debt of Georgetown College, now known as Georgetown University. I also found the Katharine Jackson of Georgetown, the ship that transported my family to Louisiana on July 4, 2008.

LET’S GET STARTED

Embrace the empowering principle of Sankofa. Sankofa means “go back and get it.” This principle is symbolized by a mythical bird from Ghana’s heritage. The bird is characterized by its unique features, including a backward-facing head and forward-facing feet, symbolizing a deep connection to the past while moving forward to the future. This symbol serves as a reminder to honor our roots, acknowledge them, and strive for a better future. My genealogy society, the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California, has a motto that we all can live by, “It’s Your History. Isn’t it time you told your story?” If you don’t, who will?

Stay tuned for more tips for your genealogy.

OUR STORIES EVENT DRAWS IN THE COMMUNITY

By April Eberhardt
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



Julie Williamson Serquinia was born and raised in Spokane. “I went to Lincoln Elementary School, Libby Junior High and Lewis and Clark High School.” After moving from her hometown in the 1980s, Julie returned in 2020 when her mother, Jerlene Williamson, a very well-known historian in the city and author of the book “Our Stories: African Americans In Spokane” turned 88 years old. Her mother’s commitment to telling the stories of the Black community was the impetus for the June 28th event at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, appropriately inspired by her mother’s book. Serquinia’s family ties to the Pacific Northwest go back seven generations. “My great-great grandmother, Lucy Breckenridge and her husband Henry, moved to Roslyn, Washington in 1888 to work the mines, and in 1899, they moved to Spokane.” Her grandfather was recruited to work in the mines by a man named James Shepperson. Migrating from Staunton, Virginia, her grandparents were in search of a better way of life. Shepperson went all over the country to recruit Black families to work in the mines. Unbeknownst to her grandfather, he was walking into a volatile situation; he was not told that he was being hired during a labor strike. This tactic of breaking up labor strikes was commonly used to keep the work going and caused extreme tension between the miners. Sometimes these tensions could lead to death. “They didn’t know that they were coming to break the strike. So, when they got there, the reception was hostile. The miners, they were strapped, everybody had their guns on. However, by the end of it, when they got into the mines and started working, they realized everybody’s covered in soot, all the same color, and so they made a peaceful coexistence out of it. But at one time, it was actually pretty touch and go.” When the mining industry declined, the family had to pivot, and that is how they ended up in Spokane.



COURTESY

Top: Local basketball legends challenge youth in a game of shoot-around outside the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture as part of the “Our Stories” event. Bottom right: Patricia McClain Osborne shares local history with “Our Stories” participants. Below left: Reggie Perkins extends a hand of fellowship as he serves food outside the museum.



Seven generations later, they are still here. Serquinia says being a transplant in other cities like Portland or Los Angeles for years always raised the question of where she was really from. She recalls some of those conversations, when people would say, “you’re not from here. And I said, ‘no, I’m not. I’m from Washington.’ And they’d go, ‘D.C.’? I’d be like, ‘Oh Lord, here it goes again.’” When she would explain that she is from the other Washington, the one in the West, the city of Spokane to be exact, the next question, not unfamiliar to those who have settled here from other places, curiously pops up: “are there Black people in Spokane?” For Julie, it is really important for her to shine a light on her city. “As my mother has said, we are here. We have always been here

and we ain’t going nowhere.” She wants to reiterate this message, especially for the young people so that they know that there’s a foundation here. “So, when they’re walking down the street, they know that this is where the first barbershop was, you know, or this is Dick’s Drive-In, built by a Black man. So they know that they’re very much rooted in this community; you can leave if you want to, but you don’t have to.” The June 28 event was spawned from a collaborative relationship between retired curator Marsha Rooney and Serquinia’s mother. The two did a lot of research together about the African American experience in Spokane. Williamson had the diary of her great-grandmother, Breckenridge, which unintentionally got lost in the shuffle throughout the years. Breck-

enridge’s diary showed up on a resale auction-like website, and eventually made it back to the family; it is currently archived at Central Washington University. The search for Lucy Breckenridge’s diary forged a new partnership between Serquinia and Rooney, and many of the artifacts that her mother donated were revisited. Serquinia wanted to do something innovative with these gems. She wanted people to learn from those stories. With the support of the MAC education department and community members, the concept of a one-day cultural event was born. The results? A documentary screening of Black youth talking about their families, a basketball shoot-around, living descendants talking about their families, an art workshop, food trucks, a DJ, and approximately 300 people in

Who Was James Shepperson?

James Edward Shepperson is considered one of the most influential leaders among Black miners in Washington during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Shepperson was born in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1858. In the 1870 census, he was listed living with his mother, Matilda, and his and stepfather, Parker Robertson, a blacksmith. Shepperson, 12, was working as a farm laborer and his little sister, Clara, 9, was already working as a “domestic.” His mother died after the family moved to Farmsville, Virginia, when Shepperson was 14. He attended public schools in Jacksonville, Florida and Greensborough, North Carolina. In his 20s, he spent seven years in Iowa and Illinois, likely working in the coal mines. Shepperson moved to Kittitas County in Eastern Washington in 1888, where he worked around the coal mines in Roslyn, a mining town founded in 1886 by the Northern Pacific Railroad. He was also a businessman and labor recruiter into the 1890s and he was involved in the initial recruitment of Black workers for the coal mines in Roslyn. Learn more by going to blackpast.org or scanning this QR code.

attendance. “It all kind of snowballed into a day to celebrate, honor, and acknowledge, so that people might be more accepting of the African American experience in Spokane because it really is here and has never gone anywhere.” The success of this event has left behind the residue of enthusiasm and Serquinia is already brainstorming and strategizing about what comes next. “The goal is just to continue to design events with the groundswell of inspiration that we have right now, so that we’re not waiting another year; other things are going to happen out of this. All we needed was the belief in ourselves to make it happen and then we were off to the races. Stay tuned. There will be more.”

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

BLACK DIASPORA WARS



By Nikita Habimana
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



Identity is a powerful thing for every human being. The Black diaspora encompasses Black people from a variety of native lands across the globe, resulting in cultural pride that can often lead to misunderstandings. Diaspora wars can be defined as the rising conflicts amongst diasporic groups that create a negative impact on our communities, creating disunity. The term “diaspora wars” depicts the intercultural struggles between Black diasporans. It is a conversation on social media, in living rooms, neighborhoods, schools, dorm rooms, and within the entertainment industry. Black diasporans also have real world

experiences that pinpoint the tensions in the diversity of identity within the global Black community.

Often, gaps of understanding and cultural distinctions fuel rivalries: Caribbeans versus African Americans, African Americans versus Africans, Africans versus African Europeans, and the list goes on. From stereotypes, to our lost or untold histories, the root of the conflict within the Black diaspora have not been properly exposed, and we as a collective must come to terms with the reason why. The main arguments within diaspora wars are caused by prejudice, ignorance and inexperience.

As much as we think the diaspora war is a modern problem, it has existed for a while and unfortunately will not be solved until we sit down and have serious and open-minded dialogue about the divisions within Black community. Diaspora wars ultimately distract us from problems within the Black community that are more demanding of our energy, efforts, and attention, and this is why a shift is needed. The only way to solve diaspora wars is to understand the history and diversity of the African diaspora.

Prior to the 15th century all Black people existed on the

continent of Africa. When Europeans claimed the “discovery” of Africa, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the most horrendous example of human trafficking and capitalism in history, relocated stolen Africans to the Western hemisphere. Displacement to the America’s created new enclaves of Black people in North America, South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Colonization on African soil also spurred subjugation of those Africans who were not displaced.

Decolonization and the abolition of slavery created an aftermath that was still soaked in oppression and injustice, atrocities that still have social implications and effects on Black communities present day. Atrocities that include Jim Crow in the United States, apartheid in South Africa, the colonial tax in Haiti, the exploitation of the Congo by King Leopold II, and more. The strategy of colonization and enslavement, to divide and conquer as a way to manipulate vulnerable people, keeps them collectively weak, and this is the principle conversation that needs to be had in the Black diaspora. We are all, regardless of where you are from, impacted by strategic and systemic oppression.

WHY DOES BLACK GLOBAL SOLIDARITY MATTER?

“In order to achieve some sort of global liberation amongst Black people, it will require us to be links with each other. For example, Haiti’s reparations and repayment for all that the French and the United States committed against them cannot be achieved without the help of other Blacks pushing and holding their

governments accountable and it would be the same in Africa, the same in Europe, the same in Australia, the same in the Caribbean. In order for us to receive reparations in whatever form that looks like, monetary repayment, free education, we have to be united in holding our governments accountable. Black people, globally, have and still feel the aftermath of colonization.”

Jada Richardson, aspiring social worker at EWU



BACKSTAGE BRUNCH: CELEBRATING BLACK EXCELLENCE IN SPOKANE

The Black Lens Staff



Yes, there are Black people in Spokane! There are attorneys, early childhood educators, nonprofit leaders, artists, entertainers, teachers, and much more. For years, Black leaders have been making Spokane a vibrant place. New leaders are emerging, sharing their unique strategies, and contributing to our community.

Allies in Spokane are committed to ensuring communities of color feel they belong. They speak up against injustice and inequity, this is not to be discounted or overlooked. One challenge does remain: the lack of safe spaces intentionally created for us, by us, places that deprioritize dominant culture expectations and standards, where the Black community can unswitch from the code that forces assimilation.



Creole Resource’s Katia Jasmin explains about her organization. At right: Community members converse over community resources.

Allies are welcome, but these events emphasize experiences and expressions distinct to Black diaspora

in Spokane and realize the value of cultural representation. Successful models like the Black Lens, The

Carl Maxey Center, and The MLK Center show this approach works. What was noticeable was the lack of



spaces run by and designed for the local Black community. Out of a desire to establish an environment of fellowship and connection within the uniqueness of the Black community, JasminHill was born.

Recognizing the brilliance within our community, the Backstage Brunch was started as a monthly series to highlight local leaders and activists to a small audience of about 30 people, as a way to build awareness and fellowship. Each facilitator shares

their mission and volunteer opportunities. This year, the Backstage Brunch has hosted Creole Resources, Raze Early Learning Development Center, and Shades of Motherhood, among other remarkable speakers. Brunch is always catered by a local Black-owned food establishment.

Black solidarity is the goal, and it has always been foundational in our collective rise. This series is just one of the many ways we are creating space for each other!



Learning to lead at MLK Center

Annual summer program stimulates recreation, learning, relationship-building

Stori Taylor reads to a younger student at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center to stimulate near peer mentorship and support.

COURTESY

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center was founded in 1970. It originally started as a safe place for kids to go to after school and to provide resources to the community and to be culturally responsible. Previously it went under the name East Community Center.

It’s now 2024 one of the anticipated programs for local youth is the summer program. There is a teen leadership summer program for kids 12 years and above. This program has happened every summer for the past 25 years. In the Teen Leadership Program, we partake in activities that help us build leadership skills and do so interactively with younger children in a program called FAME; FAME stands for fulfillment, achievement, maturity, enrichment, this is a school age program for kids under 12-years-old participate in fun, activities, cooking, crafts, and trips to the pool.

In the Teen Leadership Program, we meet new friends, and learn from guest speakers. Here we can be ourselves, free of judgment. Working together with my peers also helps to build trust as we learn to work together.

er. Young adult leaders supervise us throughout the day, doing learning activities with us, and they plan our field trips. Some outings include college campus

By Stori Taylor
SHADLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL,
12TH GRADE



visits (like EWU) and Hamilton Studios. At the MLK Center, there are also social workers, food bank volunteers, and facilities/maintenance support.

To put the cherry on top, lastly, we have Ms. Freda Gandy, who oversees the MLK Center as the Executive Director. She has been with the center for 25 years, the first to have this position. In talking to Ms. Freda, she says that she has one very important rule for the MLK Center: respect. “As long as you respect others and people’s belongings then everything will be just fine.”

I wanted to be a part of the MLK Center this summer because I get excited at the idea of meeting new people and being around different personalities. I like doing the activities while we are there. Part of the day gives us time to work with younger kids, helping them through different things. By supporting them, it shows them we are there and gives them a chance to see what it’s like being a teenager.

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TRAVEL

EXPLORING BLACK CULTURE WITH ‘THE ROOTS’ IN PHILLY



This year I made plans to go to the Roots Picnic in Philadelphia for a fun, cultural experience with my Black community. It did not disappoint.

The Roots Picnic Festival, organized by the legendary hip-hop band The Roots, is a celebration of Black identity, music, and the arts. Held annually in Philadelphia, the festival features a dynamic line-up of artists across genres, from hip-hop to soul, and includes performances, art exhibits, and panel discussions.

This year's line up was star-studded from classics like headliners Jill Scott, Nas, Lil Wayne, Andre 3000, Babyface, Method Man and Red Man, Scarface, to innovators like Robert Glasper, The Dream, Smino, and Sexxy Red. I personally enjoyed seeing Jill Scott in all her glamor and style, soothing the crowd with her deep, sweet vocals. From “Gettin’ in the Way” to “Golden,” she was as impressive as I imagined she would be.

During Marvin Gaye inspired R&B artist October London's set, he brought out special guests, The Shindellas, a soulful trio, continuing the legacy of Black women's groups in music. One of The Shindellas, Kasi Jones, reigns from Seattle, WA (yes, pun intended!) and happens to be a friend of mine from college; to see her shine on the stages she's been on, from the Country Music Television Awards to the Roots Picnic, has been nothing short of magical; it hits differently when there is a personal connection to the artist.

The VIP section at the festival showcased art pieces from artists across the nation, including

Tacoma, WA artist Christina Martinez, known on Instagram as Sew Trill. I was once again blown away to see talent from my home state across the country in Philly! Martinez was

with her family and let me snap a photo with her and her daughter, a special moment for me as a fan and follower. As a fellow mother, I truly appreciate seeing a working mom with her kids in tow. This paradigm shift

has become a new standard and I'm here for it!

These connections to home were a pleasant surprise and solidified that I chose the right place and right time. Immersive engagement with Black culture, music and art can offer a deeper connection to Black community and the diaspora of blackness across America. These experiences filled and enriched my spirit, replenishing energy that's often drained by having to exist and persist in mostly White spaces.

Philly's cultural vibrancy is matched by its history and connections to pop culture, such as the legendary Rocky Balboa movies and his classic run up the stairs of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I couldn't resist reliving this iconic moment from the movie, and found a fellow tourist to take my photo with the Rocky statue, while representing The Black Lens of Spokane.

This trip was enjoyable, enriching and re-energizing. Whether it's The Roots Picnic 2025, or some other festival or destination that speaks to you, I recommend being intentional about finding Black spaces to experience. My travel reinforced the importance of creating and caring for these spaces here locally in Spokane as well.

By **Natasha Hill**
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



The Shindellas performer as part of the Roots Picnic Festival.

COURTESY OF DAVID DIXON

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

ELECTIONS

Continued from 1

still, in many segments of society, feel the reverberating effects of. A visit to Black communities in the rural South of that time would be all that was needed to know that equal did not accompany separate in most cases. And that decision codified institutional oppression. There has been a strategy in operation for a very long time. Capitalism and greed undergirded the oppression of Black Americans and other marginalized communities propelled by institutionalization of colonizer ideologies that have been cleverly shaped into white supremacy, still around to corrupt the institutions meant to protect all citizens. No, the playing field is still not even, despite false equivalencies that suggest it is.

We are at a tipping point, reminiscent of the 1960s. This upcoming election has life altering implications at play. We cannot turn a blind eye to this turbulent political climate in complicity; political violence is a threat to us all. We are America's conscience. Systemic oppression upheld by racialized capitalism, perpetuated through fear, misinformation, reliance on compliance, and indoctrination of people not to question, challenge, or hold accountable the politicians responsible for representing the constituency is the behavior of betrayal. This is a true threat. Political bullying is the converse of democracy. What we saw unfold on Jan. 6, 2021, in the nation's capital, would not have been tolerated if the perpetrators were different. But the label of "patriot" has taken a vainglorious trajectory that depicts America inaccurately; lest we forget that 60 years really was not that long ago.

We the people have the power to make this country equitable and accessible for all, especially Black Americans. We have the right to demand equitable policies for our benefit; what benefits Black people will benefit all people. We have the power to ensure this country will not fall under corruption, but will continue the struggle towards true liberty, justice, and equality. We hold that power and exercise it through our right to vote.

The Black vote has historically been manipulated to prevent our contribution to transform systems. When we vote, we hold politicians accountable to ensure there are no second-class citizens. This is a critical election year. So, vote! While all eyes are on the presidential election, the importance of voting locally – for school boards, city councils, mayors, judges, and governors – cannot be overstated. These are the people whose decisions impact our daily lives. So, vote!

We have an opportunity to make history like our foremothers and forefathers. We stand on the shoulders of ancestors who walked by faith and not by sight. They did not know when their efforts would be realized, but they persisted, regardless. Despite their differences, they took their civic duty seriously. Our unity is our flex and the biggest threat to greed, marginalization, erasure, and divisive manipulation. As we approach the election, remember the power we hold and our collective responsibility to ensure progress and the prevention of regression. Our right to vote should not be taken for granted but should be utilized for demanding change, holding those in power accountable, and shaping a future where liberty, justice and equity are realities for all.

Priya Osborne is the local NAACP Youth Council Advisor and the Director of Student Success, Equity & Diversity at Spokane Community College.



(Drey Davis') goal was to promote unity, create long-lasting friendships, and leave an imprint in Spokane."

Mayor Lisa Brown

During a proclamation naming July 14 "Drey Day"



PHOTOS BY JESSE TINSLEY/SPECIAL TO THE BLACK LENS

The extended family of the late Quindrey "Drey" Davis assembled for a tribute concert Sunday, July 14, 2024 in Riverfront Park. They day was proclaimed as Drey Day by Mayor Lisa Brown and coincided with what would have been Drey's 30 birthday. The family members are, from left, Jaylen Hairston (a nephew), Patricia Hairston (aunt), Eugene Hairston (uncle), Janae Hairston (niece), Erica Davis (mother) and grandfather Earon David Sr.



Cairo Davis, 6, right, helps Tessa Conrad, left, hand out free cupcakes to concert goers at an event to honor his father, Quindrey Davis, in Riverfront Park on July 14. Mayor Lisa Brown proclaimed it Drey Day in Spokane.

DREY

Continued from 1

passing by, to be impacted by the groove and the rhythm that Drey left us with.

Drey's joy was in full swing with singing, dancing, and recreation. There was a silent auction that included items like facials, artwork, and photo sessions.

In his 29 years of life, Drey's capacity to inspire people and his legacy of love will pay dividends in Spokane for years to come. Through his genuine smile, infectious demeanor, and his dedication to music, those who met him experienced his heart firsthand. July 14 in Spokane will have a different ring to it from now on, as "Drey Day" becomes a pillar that will keep him alive in the hearts of many.



The face of Quindrey "Drey" Davis is on a custom bass drum head used July 14 in Riverfront Park at a fundraiser.

HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY

WATERS' EDGE: ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLOITATION IS NOT FAKE NEWS

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



Environmental racism is real. It negatively impacts individual and community health and wellness. I've been on a terror lately writing about the negative health consequences associated with the toxic natural environments black and brown folks find ourselves in. In this column I want to offer an important back story, that, in retrospect, should have been my first, my bad! Understanding the past informs our present and our future.

The Eurocentric conservation/environmental movements as we know them, began in this country as early as the 1800s. Early activists warned that unregulated development would lead to overcrowded cities and would destroy our nation's natural wild places. Conservationists began promoting policies to clean up the air, land, and water in and near our cities and promoted protecting our natural wild areas and wildlife. They pushed to protect natural habitat from logging, mining, and dams, especially in the West. Although this column might read like a tribute to their early work, it is anything but! There is a dark side to both movements.

One of the most prominent environmentalists was a Scotsman named John Muir. Muir was born in 1838. His family emigrated to the United States from Scotland in 1849. Muir eventually made his way West and was soon overcome by its vast, natural, unspoiled beauty. He would spend much of his time in California's Sierra Mountains. Muir became known as the "Father of the National Parks" helping to establish such places as Glacier National Park, Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park, and Yellowstone established in 1872. These places were established as public parks or pleasuring-grounds for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. People, meaning individuals white in color and of European descent.

In 1892 Muir founded the Sierra Club, the first environmental preservation organization in the world. The Sierra Club's stated mission is "To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth." The Sierra Club he founded deliberately screened-out non-white applicants.

Muir and others like him held unapologetically blatant racist attitudes. They especially held harmful attitudes toward Black and Indigenous peoples. Muir felt that the continued presence of Native Americans in California's Sierra Nevada was a "blight". He had no love for native peoples or African Americans, referring to them as both "dirty and lazy." Twenty-seven current Tribes alone have historic connections to Yellowstone.

The Yellowstone National Park Protection Act of 1872, led to the practice of forced removal of Indigenous Tribes who lived in and around Yellowstone and in other designated parks for thousands of years. Historian Mark David Spence argued then, "... the creation of national parks must be connected to the removal and confinement of Native peoples to reservations. As more settlers and businesses move West, the federal government has to move Native people to reservations as part of a larger process of destroying Tribal sovereignty and "civilizing" Native Americans. Environmental organizations were established by and for white people and our National Parks as white spaces".

When I started doing the research for this piece, two things became blatantly clear. The gap that exists between conservation/environmental movements and racial integration started popping up again and again in the literature. I started reflecting on the many awkward, lonely experiences I have had as a black outdoorsman, conservationist and environmental activist; and how racist these early individuals, places and organizations were, and, in many cases, remain.

Black and brown people have historically been excluded from environmentally minded organizations in the United States and from accessing and enjoying

unabated the large tracts of wild and urban green places and beaches that were set aside for public use. Environmental racism is real and any black or brown person who has been involved in such pleasures or work, knows it. As Dr. Carolyn Finney, in her book Black Faces, White Spaces poignantly states, "It's hard being green, when you're black." Understanding the past and the efforts and the places we have been historically excluded from are key to living well.

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



KINLOW ELEVATED FROM COGIC SUPERINTENDENT TO AUXILIARY BISHOP



By The Black Lens Staff



"God's been good to me." These are the words that the newly appointed Auxiliary Bishop, Ezra D. Kinlow says on a daily basis. His recent elevation to Bishop not only points to the faithfulness that God has shown him, but to the dedication and faithfulness that Kinlow has shown as well. By the testimony of community members throughout the Lilac City (and beyond), he is a man of integrity, character, and faith who has garnered respect on the local, state, and national scene from people from all walks of life.

As the pastor of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, Kinlow has been serving the Spokane community since 1981. When he and his family moved here from Tacoma, Washington, they weren't sure what to expect; one thing he did know was that he was going to do what he needed to do: present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who needed to hear it.

During his 42 year tenure, Kinlow has also advocated, fought for, and moved the meter for the Black community in Spokane. From helping to get the city to hire Black

police officers, to advocating for the schools to hire more Black teachers, counselors, and administrators, his contribution to uplifting the Black community has not gone unnoticed.

In May, Kinlow was celebrated for his elevation to Bishop within the Church of God in Christ, at a gala that was held at the Davenport Grand Hotel. Family, friends, pastors, and other dignitaries came from all over the country to celebrate and honor Kinlow for his service to God's people in the church and in the community. It was a night of worship, preaching, and reflection on the years of service and loyalty marked by his dedication to servant leadership.

Kinlow started ministry in 1972, at New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ, in Tacoma, Washington, under the tutelage of Bishop TL Westbrook. He initially served as an announcer for the church's radio broadcast, while also serving as the choir president and choir director. Additionally, at that same time, he started to serve as a deacon in the church. All of these appointments laid the foundation for the future ministry that God was preparing him for in Spokane.

He has served in multiple capacities within the church. Early on, he became the youth president at New Jerusalem

COGIC as well as for the Washington State Church of God in Christ Jurisdiction. His trajectory is marked by progressive elevation, from minister, to elder, pastor, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. Because of the desire of Bishop TL Westbrook to have Kinlow on his own leadership team, he created the position of special assistant to the bishop and Kinlow was elevated to that position. This year, a milestone was reached and Kinlow was elevated to the position of bishop. When asked what this journey of promotion has meant to him, Kinlow stated, "It continued to encourage me to be faithful. Elevations came to me, I never sought them."

The journey of serving and being in ministry is one of humility, faithfulness and obedience. Kinlow has demonstrated endurance in his ability to lead by example. At 86 years old, Bishop he shows that he's still serving and trusting God to direct his path. His unwavering example of servant leadership opened the doors of promotion, and is a testament of God's favor in his life. Bishop Kinlow, a man of integrity, character, and faith never had to pursue advancement, as God's providential hand has manifested milestone after milestone.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

THE WINDOWS AND MIRRORS OF BLACK CINEMA

By Bob Lloyd
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



For 28 years, The American Black Film Festival (ABFF) has been a significant platform for empowering Black artists and showcasing a wide range of entertainment content made by and about people of African descent. It has played a crucial role in recognizing and promoting Black talent in the film industry. Held annually in Miami Beach, the festival has also expanded its reach to include virtual segments, such as ABFF PLAY, to cater to a wider audience and provide accessibility to Black culture enthusiasts globally.

This festival has provided a platform for Black filmmakers to showcase their work and has been instrumental in discovering new voices in the industry. Filmmakers have had the opportunity to compete for various awards, including Best Narrative Feature, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Documentary Feature, Best Series (Television or Web), and the HBO Short Film Award. It has been a space for networking, screenings, and talk events, providing an opportunity for Black filmmakers to connect with industry executives and content creators from around the world.

The question of whether there are Black filmmakers who don't know about or don't feel welcome at



Oscar Micheaux

industry film festivals is an important one. While the ABFF has been a significant platform for Black filmmakers, it's essential to recognize that there may still be barriers to entry and representation for some Black filmmakers in the broader film festival circuit. It is also important to continue discussions around inclusivity and representation in the broader film festival landscape.

Oscar Micheaux: The first Black indie filmmaker

African Americans have a long history of exposing social injustices through the media; cinema has always been a vehicle for advocacy. Oscar Micheaux is regarded as the first major African American film-

maker. His work belongs to a genre called race films, which were produced for all-Black audiences, and featured African American actors.

According to Henry Louis Gates in a May 26, 2021 video episode of "Black History in Two Minutes (or so)", Micheaux, after working as a train porter and a homesteader, turned to writing. In 1917 his novel "The Homesteader" attracted the attention of a producer, but Micheaux decided to produce it himself. His films broke the stereotypes of Black people in Hollywood films.

"You are seeing a whole range of Black characters on the screen: assertive, articulate, often sophisticated. Strong characters who are trying to do something for themselves in the community," says historian Donald Bogle in Gates' video.

His fifth film, "Within Our Gates" was a direct response to "The Birth of a Nation" and counteracted the skewed and hyperbolized stereotypical depictions of Black people. While "Birth of a Nation" aimed to glorify white supremacy in the South, Micheaux addressed issues that were not being covered in film: lynchings, discrimination, unemployment, and class differences within the African American community, to name a few.

Though often censored or rejected, Micheaux funded his own work and marketed uncensored versions, creating more than 35 films over three decades. His work broke the ground for modern day Black filmmakers such as Spike Lee, John Singleton and Julie Dash.

WATCH OSCAR MICHEAUX
FILMS STREAMING ONLINE

Within Our Gates | Library of Congress



Body and Soul | YouTube: Reel Classics

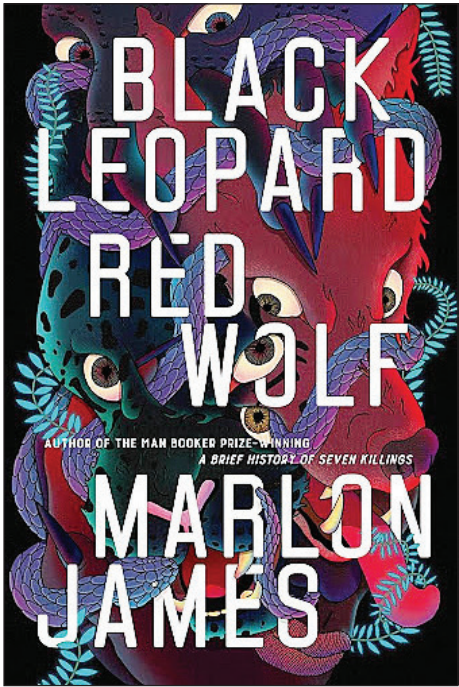


The Symbol of the Unconquered | YouTube



Find another "Black History in Two Minutes (or so)" episode on Oscar Micheaux on YouTube with Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr.

MY FAVORITE BOOK I NEVER RECOMMEND



By Emmarae McLendon
THE BLACK LENS
CONTRIBUTOR



notes scattered against the wall, and Teddy Pendergrass playing on my bluetooth speaker in the background. My brain cells start to scan through all the black tennis players in our generation. At this moment, I felt as though I was scanning a QR code, the back of my debit card, or the barcode to my grocery items. Through this process of skimming, browsing, and searching. I squinted at phenomenal individuals like Serena Williams, Venus Williams, CoCo Guaff, Taylor Townsend, Sachia Vickery, Naomi Osaka, Bryan Shelton, Frances Tiafoe, and Madison Keys.

10 minutes later, my brain peaks and blinks through a historical figure within African American tennis history. That amalgamated and consolidated the impending propagations probability to set the tone for the new African Americans children's children. So that they could have the aptitude and potency to break new records within tennis history. This African American woman contained strands that curled like ribbons, nostrils as wide as the top of a spoon, eyes that were shaped like a peanut, eyebrows that were thick as dough but as slim as a stick, full lips that were shaped like a rainbow and as pulp as a peach, eyelashes as tiny as a bead, with a mole placed under her bottom lip that reminded me of a tiny roly polly, with teeth as white as a cotton flower or a daisy, with ears as pointed as the tip of a pencil or the spikes that rest upon a cactus, and with legs that extend like a giraffe or a flamingo. Her name was Althea Neale Gibson!

Althea was one of the first black athletes to intersect the pigment line of worldwide tennis. While also becoming the first African American to win a Grand Slam occurrence. She was even the African American on the LPGA tour and she was inaugurated into the Tennis Hall of Fame in 1971 as well. Then soon interpolated and intercalated into the Women's Sports Hall of

Fame in 1980. She was ceaselessly remunerated and acclaimed for her ascendancy in winning five grand slam tournaments as she progressed. All because she decided to push through, even when lighter individuals repudiated her from putting her black hands on their tennis racks, tennis balls, and black feet on their tennis courts. Praying that she would never have the feasibility to contend against a race that was pale. Because of them not viewing her as laudable enough, light enough, felicitous enough, or meritorious. Just because she didn't have fair skin, straight hair, blonde hair, flat lips, and a narrow nose.

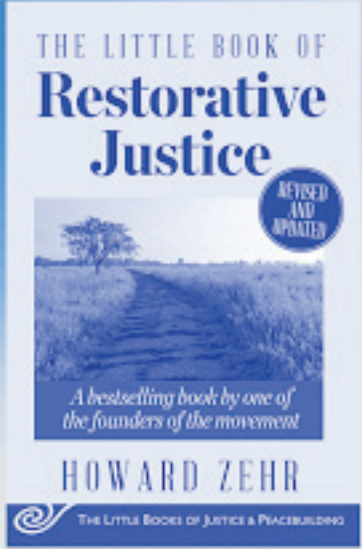
That is and will be the chocolate wax museum, caramel silhouette, and mocha mannequin of tennis. That will become the brown statues of liberties, holding on to the fire that electrifies within them. As they begin swinging their tennis rackets, running across tennis courts, throwing tiny tennis balls in the air, and wiping the sweat that flows through their scalps onto the flesh upon their foreheads. Wearing the fabric that hangs and yells out with power. Clinging on to the tablet that upholds the map to glory. As their torch reboots the energy within their right and left arm muscles. Wearing the hat that protects them from the sun's gaze and the rain drops that drip from the heavens up above. Completely withholding the declaration of independence in Roman numerals: July 4, 1776. Representing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

This experience has taken me on an adventure of planting a spotlight on the black tennis players that elate little black boys and girls in today's world. Which helps me to better treasure and honor the adherence that these individuals put in. Even while enduring racial tautness and ignominious backlash. That happened over 30 years ago and has continued to happen now in 2024. That happens just to be worded differently, covered up with giggles, covered up with fake smiles, and stored within hidden news. With the intent of stripping them of their perseverance, willpower, and notoriety. But still they rise and walk the walk. In the most blackity black form, that will forever be remembered as blacknificent!



"Moon Witch Spider King" by Marlon James.

join us for a discussion of
THE LITTLE BOOK OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



Wednesday
August 28th
6-7 PM

Spokane Public Library - South Hill

3324 S Perry St

★ this event is free and reading the book in advance is not required

NAACP
Spokane Branch



Questions? Email
brcspokane@gmail.com

**BUILDING RESTORATIVE COMMUNITIES PRESENTS
THE PRISON WITHIN**



THE PRISON WITHIN

A film by Katherin Hervey exploring San Quentin Prison's Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG) program through the lens of its participants. A profound perspective of the inner-workings of restorative justice in United States prison systems.

Wednesday, August 14th
4-6 PM
Spokane Public Library - South Hill
3324 S Perry St

Questions? Email us!
brcspokane@gmail.com



this event is free

NAACP
Spokane Branch

IN MEMORIAM / COMMENTARY

REST IN POWER
In Memoriam



Marian Robinson
7/29/37 - 7/30/24

Mother of former First Lady Michelle Obama and a significant figure in her family, celebrated for her grace and wisdom.



Bill Cobbs
6/16/31 - 7/10/24

Veteran actor known for his extensive work in film, television, and theater, with a career that highlighted his versatile talent.



Willie Mays
5/6/31 - 7/27/24

Legendary baseball player, often regarded as one of the greatest to ever play the game, with a career spanning over two decades.



Chet Walker
2/22/40 - 7/14/2024

Hall of Fame basketball player known for his successful career with the Philadelphia 76ers and Chicago Bulls, and for his leadership on the court.



SrA Roger Fortson
5/6/31 - 7/27/24

U.S. Air Force member recognized for his dedication and service to his country, shot and killed in his Florida home by a sheriff's deputy.



Sheila Jackson Lee
1/12/50 - 7/25/24

U.S. Congresswoman known for her long-standing service and advocacy on civil rights and social justice issues.



Lou Gossett Jr.
5/27/36 - 7/21/24

Acclaimed actor and the first Black man to win the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in "An Officer and a Gentleman."



Bernice Johnson Reagon
10/4/42 - 7/16/24

Civil rights activist and scholar known for her work with the Freedom Singers and contributions to African American cultural history.



Mandisa
10/2/76 - 7/24

Grammy-winning Christian singer and former American Idol contestant known for her powerful voice and inspirational music.



Khyree Jackson
5/20/00 - 7/6/24

NFL rookie who died tragically in a car crash with two former high school teammates, had recently been drafted to the NHL in April.

PERCEPTIONS, DEFLECTIONS, AND MISCONCEPTIONS:
THE ANGRY BLACK WOMAN?

By Anyla McDonald
THE BLACK LENS CONTRIBUTOR



of the characteristics that are often assigned to Black women without full context. Many are biased observations. The "Angry Black Woman" trope is one that is pervasive in the workplace, weaponized through thinly veiled remarks that imply aggression or infer intimidation. This stereotype often has a negative psychological impact by those affected, which can further impact resilience on the job. The use of this caricature immediately undermines Black women's professional well-being, erasing their talent, skillset, and professionalism. High-profile figures like Viola Davis and Serena Williams are examples of how the media creates a brand that the masses are easily influenced by. Once that label is affixed, their professional contributions are overshadowed by exaggerated interpretations, and anger becomes an inherent character flaw versus a human reaction that everyone experiences. This harmful narrative contributes to emotional and physical challenges for many Black women while on the job. The assumption that a Black woman's frustration is simply part of her personality, image, and character is simply inaccurate and dismissive.

In instances of confrontation or disagreement, there is often an automatic perception of overconfidence or irreverence. Deflection becomes a tool of managers, which often leads to scapegoating as a way to avoid accountability and transparency. Instead of apologizing or seeking solutions, accusations of being overly emotional are used to weaken credibility, by labels such as pushy or bossy or even mean. Institutions tend to focus on the anger, and what the consequences should be, without examining the underlying causes or context of the situation. Research confirms that when Black women express anger in the workplace, their leadership potential and capabilities are called into question and the silent mark of "unfit" becomes a stain of embarrassment or shame, and ultimately, a deal breaker. Anger is treated as a conviction. This label can have costly implications to the health and well being of Black women in professional spaces.

Emotionally, there often feelings of marginalization, overwhelming stress, and beliefs of being devalued. There could be instances of hypervigilance or even paranoia,

Hostile. Aggressive. Overbearing. Illogical. Ill-tempered. Bitter. These are just some

which can fuel feelings of rage over the lack of fairness, and a sense of powerlessness. The emotional toll of being stigmatized can lead to profound loneliness, which can adversely impact motivation, commitment, and loyalty in the workplace. This, in turn, can hinder creativity, decrease attendance, and reduce performance to below average. Consequently, unhealthy coping mechanisms may become the norm for those who struggle to gain control of what has become a toxic work environment. Another side effect of this injustice is the internalization of failure.

In 2016, New York Times critic Alessandra Stanley sparked outrage with an article describing Shonda Rhimes' biography as "How to Get Away With Being an Angry Black Woman" and calling Viola Davis "less classically beautiful" than other Black actresses. Rhimes responded by questioning why she and other successful Black women characters are labeled as "angry" when White characters display similar behavior without issue. Similarly, during the 2018 US Open final, Serena Williams received a code violation for coaching, a penalty point for breaking her racquet, and a game penalty for calling the umpire a "thief." She was later fined. Her reactions to the referee's calls, which the Women's Tennis Association has since denounced as "sexist", were no different from how many other impassioned competitors react in the heat of a championship game. Williams has been docked before for her behavior on the court; in 2009, she was fined \$82,500 for an angry outburst. There is a double standard of perception between Black women and White women and racial bias leads to this double standard.

To address the problematic "Angry Black Woman" stereotype, all individuals must acknowledge this issue, become aware of the underlying biases and prejudices, and take time for self-reflection. Problem solving and analysis of every situation is critical to avoid sweeping generalizations and to also investigate our implicit biases. Research shows that when working collaboratively in a team, it is important to appreciate everyone's unique personality by creating meaningful social connections, whether by asking about their day at work or getting coffee together. This helps move beyond perceptions and humanizes the people we work with. Building a sense of belonging, understanding, compassion, respect, and openness in the workplace is crucial, and this is what can build trust. Humanizing anger and acknowledging the facts that may have contributed to what is likely an appropriate response also promotes accountability, healing, and can be validating.

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COMICS

CURTIS • BY RAY BILLINGSLEY

JULY 22

JULY 23

JULY 24

JULY 25

JULY 26

JULY 27

CRABGRASS • BY TAUHID BONDIA

JULY 27

JULY 29

JULY 30

JULY 31

AUGUST 1

AUGUST 2

SUMMER
WORD SEARCH

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

Summer days with family
are always the best!
What's your favorite part
of a summer gathering?
Find it hidden in the
jumble of letters below!

- AUNTIES
- LOVE
- BLACK JOY
- GREENS
- DANCING
- POTATO SALAD
- COUSINS
- SPADES
- FAMILY
- DOMINOES
- COOKOUT
- BARBEQUE
- MUSIC
- UNCLES
- LAUGHTER

*Answers on page 16

LEISURE

HEADLINES IN A BLINK
HEADLINES IN A BLINK
HEADLINES IN A BLINK
HEADLINES IN A BLINK
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HEADLINES IN A BLINK
HEADLINES IN A BLINK

JOE BIDEN DROPS OUT,
ENDORSES KAMALA HARRIS

President Joe Biden announced he was no longer seeking re-election and endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris to lead the Democratic ticket. This move positions Harris to potentially become the first Black woman president, reshaping the 2024 election dynamics

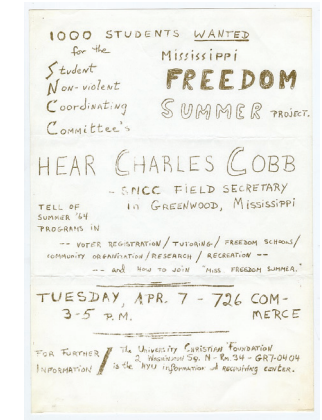


MISSOURI PRISON GUARDS
CHARGED

Four Missouri prison guards were charged with murder and a fifth with manslaughter in the death of a Black man, raising concerns about systemic racism in the justice system and the treatment of Black inmates

FIRST BLACK WOMAN
EPISCOPAL BISHOP

Mississippi appointed its first Black and first female Episcopal bishop, marking a historic milestone in the church's history. This appointment reflects ongoing efforts to increase diversity and representation within religious institutions



FREEDOM SUMMER

Faith communities mobilized for a new iteration of Freedom Summer, focusing on fighting poverty and voter suppression. This movement draws on the legacy of the 1960s civil rights activism to address contemporary issues affecting Black Americans

JUSTICE FOR
RONALD GREENE

Activists continue to demand justice for Ronald Greene, a Black motorist who died after a violent arrest by Louisiana State Police. The case remains a symbol of the struggle for police accountability and justice for victims of police brutality



WARNINGS ABOUT
PROJECT 2025

Project 2025 is a far-reaching initiative that has sparked concern for its potential impacts on Black communities. Outlined by conservative groups, this project aims to drastically reshape federal government operations and policies, with significant consequences for civil rights, social welfare programs, and economic opportunities for marginalized communities.



TULSA RACE MASSACRE
VICTIM IDENTIFIED

C.L. Daniel from Georgia, a World War I veteran was identified as the first victim from the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, shedding light on historical racial violence



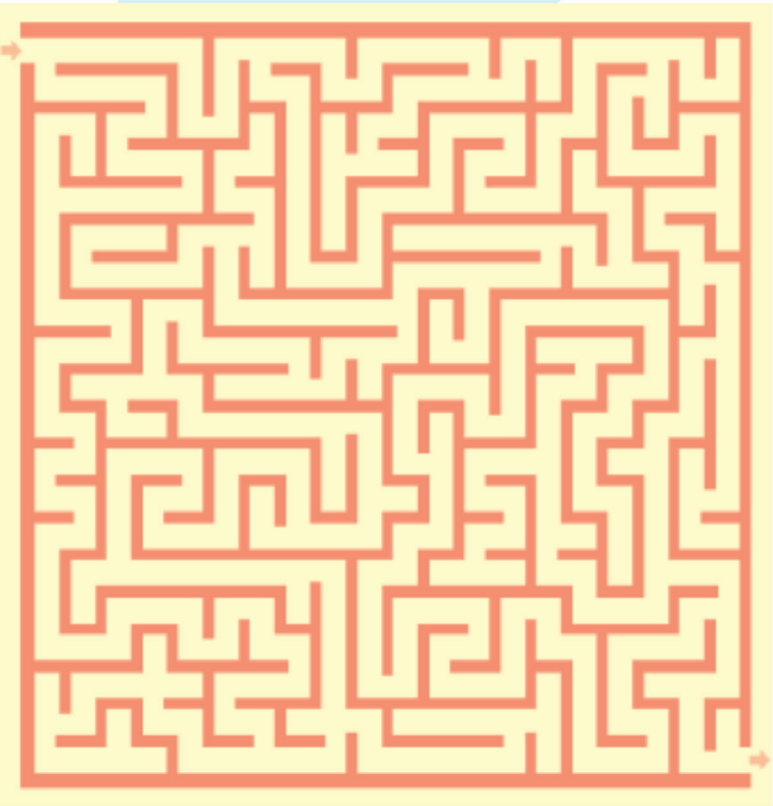
FLORIDA HBCU PRESIDENT
RESIGNS

Larry Robinson, the president of Florida's only public historically Black university, Florida A&M, resigned after a major donation controversy, highlighting challenges faced by HBCUs

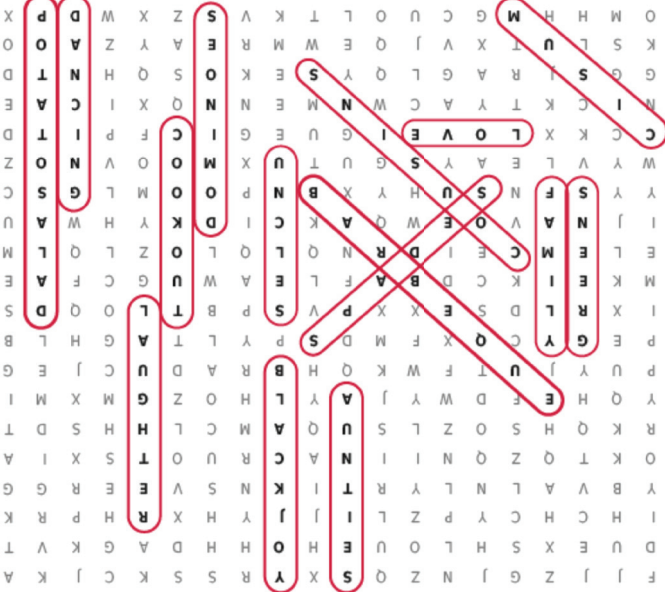
Kids Corner

MAZE
TIME

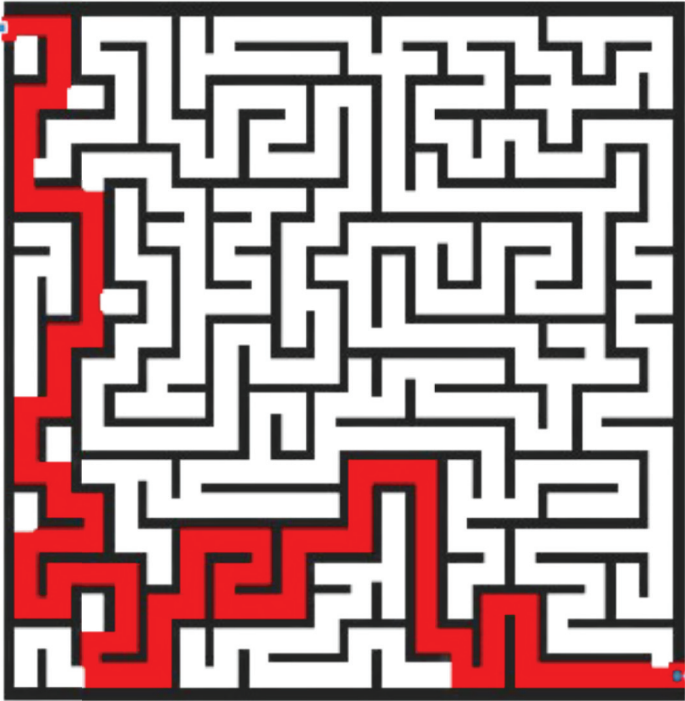
START



END



WORD SEARCH



MAZE

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS